Race War?

Inter-Racial Conflict Between Black and Latino Gang Members

in Los Angeles County

by

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ABSTRACT

Using an interdisciplinary critical theoretical approach and a mixed qualitative and quantitative methodology this research project aims to better understand the racial identities and perceptions of gang members and the causes of inter-minority racialized gang conflict in Los Angeles County and California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). The research methodology for this project consists of two years of ethnographic fieldwork, one hundred formal interviews, and statistical analysis using the interview data, census data, and data from CDCR. Existing research and theoretical perspectives that could account for inter-minority racialized gang conflict in Los Angeles are analyzed within this historical context, and evaluated against the qualitative and quantitative data produced by this research project and provided by existing demographic data sets. Both existing and novel theoretical perspectives are applied, which tie racialized gang conflict in Los Angeles in with larger macro-historical structures.

The project begins by analyzing the historical background of racial conflict between blacks and Latinos in Los Angeles. The second factor this research examines is the relationship between racial and gang identities and how these amalgamated identities are culturally defined and differentiated between the black and Latino gang communities specifically, and the black and Latino communities at large generally. Third, this research examines the extent of racial bias among and between black and Latino gang populations in Los Angeles County.

The dissertation goes on to examine the history of racialized prison gangs and the trajectory of inter-racial conflict between them in California's prisons, as well as the role that CDCR staff and administration play in provoking and perpetuating inter-racial conflict. Following that, the occurrence of inter-minority gang conflict between specific gangs on the streets of Los Angeles is subjected to an intense micro-analysis of specific conflicts between specific gangs in specific contexts. The proximate causes of specific conflicts are uncovered, and their trajectories are examined and analyzed. Respondents reveal the rules that govern interaction between black and Latino gang members in Los Angeles and California's carceral facilities, as well as the rules of engagement as to how targets are chosen during the course of racialized gang conflicts, and how gangs interpret and respond to the intentional or accidental victimization of innocent residents during the course of these conflicts.

The role local media, politicians and law enforcement officers and administrators play in provoking and perpetuating inter-racial conflicts on the streets of the Los Angeles County is examined. Finally the project concludes with a critical analysis of the role that conflict among and between marginalized criminalized populations both exacerbates and perpetuates their marginalization and criminalization.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

On the morning of Monday February 5th, 1996, as the golden warm sun began to cut through the chilly morning fog layer the West Side of Los Angeles is known for, two boys, 14 year old Eduardo "Eddie" Gamez and 16 year old Aldo Dominguez, were walking to Dorsey High School as they did every morning, accompanied by another friend who was unenrolled at the time, 14 year old Alberto Ruiz. Eddie was painting graffiti when suddenly a vehicle pulled up abruptly and an African American man in his mid-20s emerged with a gun and yelled out, "Fuck Faketeen!" He fired multiple times, hitting Alberto in the arm, Aldo in the lower back, and Eddie in the lower back. He walked up to Eddie, who was on the ground from the initial round to the lower back, and fired multiple times into his chest and head. The shooter then dropped a red rag (handkerchief) on Eddie's body, returned to the vehicle and drove off. Eddie died in a local hospital later that week.[1] Eddie, Aldo and Alberto were childhood friends of mine. While none of them were members of the local 18th Street gang the shooter apparently thought he was targeting, we were all members of a local tagging crew that drew its membership from local schools including, Culver City Middle and High Schools, Palms Middle School, Hamilton High School and Dorsey High School. Eddie was crossing out our enemy's graffiti and the shooter, who was looking to take revenge for an earlier shooting of a Black P Stone member on 10th Avenue the week before, had apparently mistaken Eddie for an 18th Street gang member. Not long before his murder, we had played a friendly game of football on the recreational yard at

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[1] Krikorian 1996

Palms Middle School with another local crew we had a friendly rivalry with. Afterwards we went to a local Shakey's pizza on Sepulveda Boulevard in Culver City to eat pizza, drink soda and play video games as kids often do. That was the last memory I had of Eddie before he was murdered on his way to school a few weeks later.

While Eddie's death was devastating for his family, our cohort of juvenile delinquents took it in stride. The normalization of violence was an unquestioned aspect of our existence at the time. We had grown up in Los Angeles during the peak years of the violent crime rate in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, and we were indifferent to the regularly occurring murders of our peers in our community. Shootings were so common when I was growing up that rarely did anyone in our communities even call the police when a shooting occurred, if no one was laid out on the ground. Funerals were such a regular occurrence that they had assumed a sort of ritualistic quality to them, not as a tribute to another life lost, but as another opportunity for childhood friends to pledge their allegiance to local gangs and plan their retaliation so that one funeral in one community would inevitably be followed by others in another community. As such we were unfazed by Eddie's death, or anyone else's for that matter. Death was a way of life for us at the time, and we accepted violence in our lives as inevitable as the sky is blue.

It wasn't until years later that I first began to question the circumstances that had led up to and followed Eddie's murder. Eddie's murder had occurred in the context of an inter-racial gang conflict that had erupted a few years before between a local Latino gang, West Side 18th Street and local African American Blood affiliated gangs, the Black P Stones and the Rolling 20s Neighborhood Bloods. Inter-racial conflict between black and Latino gangs was so endemic to

our existence that we never thought to question the animosity that had been instilled in us towards African Americans by our families, peers and our role models in the community, older gang members. Inter-racial gang conflict was then just emerging as one of the most acute sources of gang violence in our community. It was fed by a multitude of sources from our friends' and families' biased comments about African Americans, to narratives of members of our community being robbed and assaulted by African American gang members, to our older brothers, cousins and homeboys who served as role models to us, returning to the community with stories of savage battles between black and Latino inmates in the county jails and state prisons. Everything we were exposed to as adolescents fed the perception that African Americans were fundamentally different from us and therefore our natural enemies, and that conflict between predominantly Latino Sureno affiliated gangs with which we were aligned, and predominantly African American Crip and Blood gangs was virtually inevitable. That bias carried with me even to college, where as an undergrad student at UC Santa Barbara, lax general education requirements allowed me to decline to take even a single course from the Department of Black Studies, out of the wilfully ignorant perception that whatever happens to African Americans was of no concern to me. Such willful ignorance was not overcome until almost a decade later, when as a graduate student I first read through the plethora of literature on the history of race and ethnicity in the United States and realized that the perceived difference and hostility between Mexican Americans and African Americans that I had always assumed as inevitable, was anything but.

It was that epiphany, and the guilt and sorrow I began to feel for the first time in my life at the carnage my generation had unleashed on our communities, which compelled me ultimately to undertake this research project. Rather than joining together to resist the historical oppression and subjugation our communities had experienced as preceding generations had during the civil rights era, we instead devoted our lives to a fratricidal campaign of narcissistic gang warfare and inter-racial violence that wreaked untold carnage on our communities, our families, ourselves and each other. The overwhelming guilt I felt upon arriving at that epiphany, and continue to feel every day of my life since then, compelled me to seek an answer to the simple question, why was Eddie murdered? And moreover, why are so many young people in our communities like him murdered as a result of inter-racial gang conflicts? As I delved deeper and deeper in my quest to arrive at an answer to that question, I found that it was infinitely more complicated than I had been led to believe by simplistic narratives offered by popular accounts of inter-racial violence as rooted in the kind of archaic racism and racial bigotry modern "post-racial" society seizes on to disavow at every opportunity, if only to absolve itself of any responsibility for the substantive and pervasive racial inequity and injustice that continues unabated in American society, where a black man with a clean record has about as much chance of getting a job as a white man coming out of prison.[2]

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[2] Pager 2007; For an extensive review of the literature on the extent of racial inequity in American society see *White Washing Race: The Myth of a Color Blind Society*, Michael K Brown, David Wellman, Elliott Currie, Troy Duster, Marjorie M Shultz, Martin Carnoy and David B. Oppenheimer 2003

There are those in academia who suggest that inter-racial conflict between black and Latino gang members in Los Angeles is in fact negligible, and that inter-racial conflict between black and Latino gang members is not a significant enough social problem to warrant widespread concern.[3] They tell us that most gang conflict is in fact intra-racial, not inter-racial, and therefore inter-racial gang conflict is marginal at best.[4] There are those who tell us that relations between black and Latino gang members in California are typically amicable or at the least mutually tolerant, and that black and Latino populations typically coexist peacefully in the same communities throughout California.[5] Of course regardless of their own personal backgrounds, these voices are far removed from the raw reality on the streets of Los Angeles, and as such they do not see the rampant inter-racial gang violence that is pervasive throughout much of Los Angeles County. Their sentiments would certainly not be echoed by an African American gang member in Baldwin Village whose little brother was murdered by a rival Latino gang member, or a Mexican American gang member in Compton whose best friend was killed by a rival African American gang member, or a gang enforcement officer in Long Beach, who had to examine the body of yet another young man murdered in cold blood as a result of the sectarian conflict between black and Latino gangs in Long Beach that has spanned the better part of three decades, or the parents of those murder victims who had to suffer the life-altering tragedy of having to bury their children, instead of their children burying them. Those who live and work in the streets of Los Angeles know full well the extent of inter-racial gang conflict in

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[3] Hipp, Tita and Boggess 2007, 2009; Zamora 2011; Rios and Martinez 2011
[4] Curry and Decker 1998; Hipp, Tita and Boggess 2007, 2009
[5] Zamora 2011; Rios and Martinez 2011

Los Angeles because they have seen and suffered the effects of its occurrence over the course of their lives. The nightmare of inter-racial violence is the very real lived experience of those who grow up, live and work in the ghettos and barrios of Los Angeles County, the widely recognized gang capitol of the United States.

So let those who would doubt the extent and magnitude of inter-racial gang violence in Los Angeles tell the mothers of Eddie Gamez or Cheryl Green[6] that inter-racial gang violence is not a serious social problem in Los Angeles, and that the deaths of their children don't matter as much because they don't represent the majority of gang violence in Los Angeles. Let them tell all of the hundreds, if not thousands, of parents whose children have been murdered in the course of inter-racial gang conflicts in Los Angeles that their children's lives are not worth our every effort to understand and address inter-racial gang conflict. That is a call that will most certainly be met with a deafening silence. The same solemn silence that is repeated at every funeral that takes place in Los Angeles as a result of inter-racial gang violence, if only to be broken by the inconsolable weeping of an anguished mother in pain grieving for the death of her child. As any parent who has ever lost a child to the specter of gang violence will tell you, that grieving never ends – and neither should our efforts to understand and ameliorate the conditions that lead to such tragedies.

1.1 Existing Academic Perspectives on Inter-Racial Conflict

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[6] Cheryl Green was a 12 year old African American girl who was murdered by a Latino gang member. Her murder is discussed in chapter 8.

The first stop in my quest to understand inter-racial gang conflict in Los Angeles, as is necessarily the case for any self-respecting academic, was a careful review of the existing academic literature that might provide promising theoretical perspectives on inter-racial conflict between black and Latino gangs in Los Angeles. In recent decades scholars have begun to examine racial conflict outside the boundaries of the traditional black/white binary that has historically pervaded thinking on race in North America. Research has particularly focused on racial relations between blacks and Koreans[7], and between blacks and Latinos[8], much of which has been focused in Los Angeles – both the research and the racial conflict. However, as the scholarship of inter-minority racial conflict is barely in its infancy, much work has yet to be done.

While less work in the area of racial conflict existed when I began my journey in earnest in 2010, a flood of new work on inter-racial relations and conflict, particularly between Latinos and African Americans, was published during the course of this research, with two significant readers on the subject coming out in 2011 and 2014 respectively.[9] With those edited works published after my initial literature review, I began with more classical analyses of inter-racial conflict. It is important to keep in mind that almost all of these theoretical perspectives were conceived with racial bias and conflict between dominant whites and subordinate blacks in mind, rather than bias and conflict between two subordinate minority groups, as is the topic of this analysis. These classical perspectives must then be conceptually adapted to apply to inter-

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[7] Chang and Diaz-Veizades 1999; Kim Ed. 1999 (Kim has a dozen articles on black/ Korean relations in three different cities: Los Angeles, New York and Chicago)
[8] Mindiola et al. 2002; Vaca 2004; Umemoto 2006; Telles and Ortiz 2008; Hipp et al. 2009
[9] Telles, Sawyer and Rivera-Salgado 2011; Kun and Pulido 2014

minority relations and conflict, such as that between black and Latino gang members in Los

Angeles.

The first of these classical perspectives I examined was the *group threat* perspective.[10]

While better known for his later work on symbolic interactionism[11], the first and most

significant iteration of the group threat perspective was made by renowned sociologist and

anti-positivist Herbert Blumer, in his dedication to the Robert E. Park Building at Fisk University

in March of 1956, and later published in 1958.[12] Blumer suggested that the primary source of

racial bias and conflict is a perception of threat posed to dominant racial groups' interests by

subordinate racial groups. According to Blumer, the necessary precursor to the perception of

threat is of course a perception of difference, whereby the race concept defines two (or more)

groups as fundamentally distinct from one another. Members of the dominant group perceive

themselves as superior to members of subordinate group(s) and therefore view members of

subordinate groups as "intrinsically different and alien."[13] However, most important to

Blumer's theory of group threat is what Blumer calls "the sense of proprietary claim" that

dominant group members feel they possess, which grants them some advantage over

subordinate group(s).[14] According to Blumer, racial prejudice arises out of "a fear or

apprehension that the subordinate racial group is threatening, or will threaten, the position of

the dominant group."[15] Racial prejudice, according to Blumer's conception, is therefore a

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[10] Blumer 1958; Quillian 1995, 1996
[11] Blumer 1969
[12] Blumer 1958
[13] Blumer 1958 p. 4
[14] Ibid
[15] Ibid

defensive reaction to the potential prospect that another racial group might threaten the way of life members of the dominant racial group have come to enjoy.

Quillian found support for Blumer's theory in his research on perceptions of racial prejudice in Europe[16] and the United States[17]. In his research on racial prejudice in Europe and the United States, Quillian found that nations and regions where there is a greater perception of economic vulnerability demonstrated a higher degree of racial prejudice, as did countries and regions where subordinate groups make up a larger proportion of the overall population.[18]

Laurence Bobo advocated a modification to Blumer's group threat theory by suggesting that racial prejudice is not merely due to the perception of the potential threat that a subordinate group poses to the interests of the a dominant group, but moreover, could be due to the actual threat that a subordinate group poses to the "real resources and accepted practices" of a dominant group.[19] Thus, Bobo calls his conception of Blumer's group threat theory, *realistic conflict theory*, because in his view racial prejudice could be due to real tangible threats to a dominant group's interests rather than merely perceptions of potential threats, as Blumer suggested.[20] Bobo and Bobo and Kluegel use this distinction between potential and actual threats posed by subordinate groups to explain the duplicitous opinions of white Americans in supporting bans on explicit racial prejudice, while opposing efforts to alleviate substantive racial inequality at the expense of white Americans, like affirmative action programs or public school busing schemes. However, such a distinction can be useful in

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[16] Quillian 1995
[17] Quillian 1996
[18] Quillian 1995, 1996
[19] Bobo 1983 p. 1197
[20] Bobo 1983, 1988; Bobo and Kluegel 1993

considering inter-minority racial prejudice as well, such as where Latinos threaten the legitimate or illegitimate economic interests of African Americans.

While group threat and realistic conflict theories were conceived with the traditional dichotomy of a white-black binary in mind, they can also provide a possible theoretical explanation for inter-minority animosity and conflict. This is particularly applicable to conflict between black and Latino gangs in areas of Los Angeles that are undergoing, or have undergone, significant demographic encroachment by one group on the other. Examples in Los Angeles County abound, such as the massive Latino immigration to historically African American neighborhoods in South Central Los Angeles and surrounding communities like Crenshaw, Watts and Compton. The massive influx of Latinos to South Los Angeles in the 1980s and 1990s has drastically altered the demographic composition of neighborhoods where African Americans have historically enjoyed majority status. As such, group threat and realistic conflict theory provide a potent theoretical explanation for hostility African American residents, particularly gang members, feel towards Latino interlopers in their communities. Especially those who are members of Sureno affiliated gangs.[21]

Conversely, group threat and realistic conflict theory can also provide a theoretical explanation for hostility Latino gang members feel towards African American residents who have been moved into historically homogenously Mexican American housing projects and neighborhoods in homogenously Latino East Los Angeles. This dynamic can be particularly acute where those interlopers are members of Crip or Blood affiliated gangs. While African American

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[21] Vigil 2011

residents of South Central Los Angeles and Latino residents of East Los Angeles lack the kind of universal society wide dominance that white Americans have enjoyed historically, they do enjoy a degree of demographic dominance in their own respective neighborhoods, which have been historically homogenous since the beginning of the 20th century. Therefore group threat and realistic conflict theories provide a theoretical framework that can be appropriately applied to inter-minority conflict between black and Latino gangs in Los Angeles.

With twin publications in 1998, two separate partnerships of researchers presented what I would consider another variation on group threat theory, commonly known as *defended neighborhood* perspectives.[22] Breaking with past conceptions of racial relations along a black/white binary, Bergesen and Herman offer a conceptualization that is of particular utility to this analysis, of African American residents in South Central Los Angeles as a dominant group, and Latino immigrants as a subordinate group encroaching on historically African American neighborhoods.[23] Bergesen and Herman follow from the proliferous work of Susan Olzak (discussed below), who controversially suggested that one unintended effect of desegregation was that residential racial integration has the potential to intensify competition between existing and interloper groups, which could ultimately lead to inter-ethnic violence and rioting.[24] While not directly engaging with group threat or realistic conflict theory, Bergesen and Herman's analysis of areas affected by the Los Angeles Riot of 1992, demonstrate that the effects of the riots were most acute in areas where there had been the most demographic

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[22] Bergesen and Herman 1998; Green, Strolovitch and Wong 1998
[23] Bergesen and Herman 1998
[24] Olzak 1992; Olzak and Shanahan 1996; Olzak, Shanahan and McEneaney 1996

encroachment by Latino immigrants into historically African American neighborhoods.[25] Their

findings suggest that black rage expressed in the 1992 riots was at least partly an expression of

frustration and animosity at the influx of Latino immigrants into their communities, which upset

the traditional dominance that African Americans enjoyed in these neighborhoods as a result of

their majority status.

This "defended neighborhood" perspective, as a tripartite team of researchers from

Yale University called it later that year, was also evident in their analysis of inter-racial violence

between whites and minorities in New York City in the late 1980s and early 1990s.[26] They found

that racial violence directed at minorities by whites was most frequent in predominantly white

neighborhoods, which had experienced significant incursions of minority immigrants. This

additional finding suggesting that racial violence perpetrated by indigenous residents was a

response to residential incursion by racially differential immigrant groups, contributes further

evidence of a connection between racial prejudice and racial violence on one hand, and

perceptions of real or potential threats posed by immigrant groups to dominant groups in

urban contexts on the other hand.

The final line of existing theory I examined was *split labor market* theory.[27] Edna

Bonacich's classic piece on split labor market theory from 1972 suggests that "ethnic

antagonism", as she calls it, can be due to the threat posed to an existing labor force by a

differentially racially/ethnically defined group that would be willing to accept less pay for the

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[25] Bergesen and Herman 1998
[26] Green et al 1998
[27] Bonancich 1972; Olzak and Nagel 1986; Olzak 1992

same work.[28] This split labor market competition, as she called it, can lead to animosity and resentment between differentially defined racial/ethnic groups, as one group threatens the market position of another group in the struggle for employment. This theory of split labor market competition in the legitimate labor market is useful as a potential explanation for inter-racial animosity and conflict between black and Latino gangs in Los Angeles. However it is also useful as a potential explanation for conflict that results from competition in the illegitimate black market as well, as the influx of Latino residents and Sureno affiliated gang members into historically African American neighborhoods traditionally controlled by predominantly African American Crip and Blood gangs can potentially create competition for local narcotics markets traditionally controlled by African American gangs, which can then result in inter-racial gang conflict.

Similarly, Susan Olzak also uses labor market competition as an explanation in her analysis of inter-racial violence in the United States around the turn of the 20th century.[29] Her provocative analysis suggests that residential and labor market desegregation in the late 19th century actually increased the occurrence of inter-racial violence directed at non-whites, as whites reacted with violence to non-white interlopers encroaching on their residential and economic dominance in certain areas of the country in the decades following the Civil War. While her analysis also rests on analysis of competition in the legitimate labor market, like the other theoretical perspectives discussed thus far, Olzak's analysis is also potentially applicable to black market competition as well. As such, her analysis of the role of competition in inter-

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[28] Bonacich 1972
[29] Olzak 1992

racial conflict has potential, both in terms of legitimate residential and labor market

competition, as well as competition in the black market as well.

Olzak and Shanahan offer an even more prophetic analysis in their subsequent article in

1996.[30] Their analysis of race riots in the US from 1954-1993 suggests that inter-racial violence

is most likely where contracting labor markets and expanding populations operate in

conjunction to produce a contraction in the opportunities for employment. This contraction in

the labor market then results in animosity and conflict between differentially defined

racial/ethnic groups, as represented by race riots in their analysis. Such an analysis is even more

visionary now than it was then, as the great recession and accompanying labor market

contraction the United States has experienced in recent years, creates the conditions for the

sort of apocalyptic predictions made by Harris and Wilkins.[31] While Olzak and Shanahan

disagree with Harris and Wilkins that poverty alone is enough to engender the emergence of

inter-racial/ethnic conflict in and of itself, it is a moot point for an analysis of inter-racial conflict

in Los Angeles at this point in history, since both poverty and unemployment have increased

dramatically over the course of the last generation in Los Angeles, just as increasing

immigration has led to dramatic demographic realignments in many communities throughout

Los Angeles County.

Olzak, Shanahan and McEneany's complementary article from later that year provides

an even more salient theoretical framework for an analysis of inter-racial conflict in Los

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[30] Olzak and Shanahan 1996
[31] Harris and Wilkins 1988

Angeles.[32] Their analysis of racial riots in American cities from 1960-1993 suggests that high

levels of segregation followed by increased inter-racial contact due to demographic

encroachment tends to increase inter-racial/ethnic competition, which in turn increases rates

of racial violence. This prescient analysis fits the Los Angeles context so adroitly precisely

because of the history of residential segregation between black and Latino communities in Los

Angeles, followed by the massive demographic transitions Los Angeles has experienced since

the early 1980s. This dynamic will be discussed at length in chapter 3.

Finally, Banton suggests that as competition between differentially defined racial groups

intensifies, so does the salience of their racial/ethnic identities.[33] According to Banton,

membership in racial/ethnic groups can provide advantages for individuals who choose to align

themselves with racial/ethnic group identities, because some groups hold advantages over

others in terms of access to the market for employment. Again as with Bonacich, this

theoretical perspective can also be applied to black market competition, where competition for

local narcotics markets can consecrate racial identity as an axis of conflict between black and

Latino gangs. However, the idea that competition engenders the consecration of racial/ethnic

identities can also be applied to competition arising out of gang rivalries that do not originate in

the narcotics market, such as competition for girls, competition for notoriety, competition for

space, and fundamentally, competition for respect. Likewise, advantages for individuals that

encourage identification with racialized gang identities can also manifest in other ways, as gang

politics in carceral environments virtually require that incarcerated populations identify with

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[32] Olzak et al 1996
[33] Banton 1983

one or another racial faction in order to enjoy the security membership in each faction provides.

Taken together, these inter-related lines of theory relating conflict to competition can provide a potent explanation for conflict between black and Latino gangs in Los Angeles, particularly where racial animosity is rooted in Latino demographic encroachment into historically homogenously African American neighborhoods like South Central Los Angeles, or African American demographic encroachment into historically homogeneously Latino neighborhoods like East Los Angeles. However they are but merely one piece of the puzzle – a pushing off point from which to begin this analysis.

Adding to them I also consider perspectives taken from research on Korean and African American relations.[34] These perspectives suggest that cultural differences could be a potential cause of ethnic animosity and conflict, as Korean proprietors of businesses in African American neighborhoods and their African American customers, misunderstand and misinterpret each other's behavior as intentionally offensive, due to divergent behavioral and cultural expectations between the two groups. As Edward Chang puts it, "Cultural misunderstanding between the two groups plays an important role in fueling and sometimes escalating the confrontations."[35]

Ella Stewart, in her unpublished Master's thesis from California State University, Los Angeles, identified a range of cultural rules and mores within Korean and African American culture that clash and create resentment, animosity and conflict between Koreans and African

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[34] Stewart 1989; Chang 1999; Park 1999; Lee 1999
[35] Chang 1999 p. 49

Americans in South Central Los Angeles during her fieldwork in the late 1980s.[36] According to Stewart, Korean merchants saw their African American customers as essentially uncouth, with common complaints being that African Americans were too loud, used excessive profanity, and regularly shoplifted from their businesses. In contrast, African Americans viewed Korean merchants as essentially rude and disrespectful, with common complaints being that Koreans routinely failed to meet and greet customers appropriately, and tended to either rudely ignore customers, or unreasonably subject them to unwarranted scrutiny while they shop. Chang suggests that such misinterpretations and responses can form a chain of micro-aggressions that eventually coalesce into a confrontation. [37] Korean merchants interpret ostentatious behavior on the part of African American customers as being boorish and disrespectful and respond by ignoring them. African American customers then interpret their being ignored as a direct insult and react by being even more loud and confrontational, which then in turn causes Korean merchants to react aggressively towards them, until the episode erupts in a full blown confrontation, breeding further resentment and animosity, which then leads to future conflicts and confrontations. Such is the vicious cycle of cultural misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

Of course the role of cultural difference and corresponding misunderstanding and misinterpretation can also be a factor in inter-racial conflict between blacks and Latinos in Los Angeles. As chapter 4 explains, the cultural chasm between Sureno and Crip and Blood gang culture is wide. This cultural chasm can and does lead to the kind of bias and resentment that

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[36] Stewart 1989
[37] Chang 1999

Stewart, Chang, Park and Lee discuss in relation to black/Korean relations. As such, cultural difference is another potential theoretical explanation for inter-racial conflict between black and Latino gangs in Los Angeles.

Chang and Park also point to another theoretical explanation for the agitation and perpetuation of inter-racial conflicts, which is the role the media plays in inflaming inter-racial conflict by hyping it up when it does occur, and moreover, framing conflicts as essentially racial in character, thereby influencing the groups involved to perceive race as a primary axis of conflict between them.[38] Park makes the important point that, as he puts it, "The media reify and misrepresent the nature of interethnic tension by ignoring the historically situated social process that lies behind it."[39] According to this perspective, journalists and other media magnify inter-racial conflict with a simplistic reductionist analysis that construes all inter-racial conflict to racial bigotry alone.

This perspective is crucial to Karen Umemoto's vivid analysis of inter-racial conflict between black and Latino gangs in the Venice area of Los Angeles in the early 1990s.[40] Umemoto found that sensationalist reporting by local media sources had a deleterious effect on the trajectory of the conflict, encouraging gang members on both sides to redefine what was essentially an interpersonal and gang conflict into a wider racial conflict. Furthermore, inflammatory media coverage not only created a moral panic among the community at large, but also provided an additional malignant ambition for gang members to aspire to, perpetrating

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[38] Chang 1999; Park 1999
[39] Park 1999 p. 69
[40] Umemoto 2006

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acts of inter-racial violence so extreme that they would be publicized in the local media. As

Umemoto puts it, "News reports of the gang war... had two cumulative effects that affected

race relations: it raised the level of fear and racial distancing within the broader population, and

it intensified competition among named gangs whose reputations were now perniciously linked

to media coverage of the conflict."[41] The role of media in both aggravating and perpetuating

inter-racial conflict between black and Latino gangs in Los Angeles is another important

theoretical perspective to consider in the forthcoming analysis, as Umemoto's adept study of

inter-racial conflict in Venice clearly demonstrates.

1.2 Additional Factors to Consider and Chapter Outline

While these existing theoretical perspectives provide an initial range of factors to

consider in researching inter-racial conflict in Los Angeles, there are others that have come to

the fore during the course of this research that are important to enunciate at this juncture, if

only briefly. The first is the history of anti-black racial bias in colonial Mexican society that has

been passed down to modern Mexican and Mexican American communities, such as in Los

Angeles. The history of this bias is discussed in chapter 3. The second is the history of

segregated residential settlement that geographically separated the African American and

Mexican American communities in Los Angeles. The history of the settlement of Los Angeles is

also discussed in chapter 3. The final historical factor I consider is the effect of the collapse of

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[41] Umemoto 2006 p. 107

the civil rights movement on the emergence of what Ian Haney-Lopez calls "insular oppositional racial identities" in the African American and Chicano communities. This history is also discussed in chapter 3.

Of course racial bias is also a factor that must be considered for conflict between black and Latino gang members. The presence and extent of racial bias among gang members is presented in chapter 5. Another factor not previously considered in prior academic research on gangs in the United States is the role of prison gangs and prison gang politics in initiating and/or perpetuating inter-racial gang conflicts on the streets of Los Angeles and in carceral facilities throughout the state of California and beyond. The history of the emergence of modern prison gangs in the California prison system, and the role played by California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR hereafter) staff and administration in facilitating the emergence of racialized prison gangs and inter-racial conflict between them is recounted in chapter 6, as is the role of staff in continuing to provoke and perpetuate inter-racial conflict in California's carceral facilities to the present day.

Finally, the role of black market competition in the narcotics trade must be considered, as suggested above, in addition to competition that exists in legitimate avenues of employment and residential settlement. The role of competition and conflict in the narcotics trade in fomenting and perpetuating inter-racial conflict between black and Latino gangs in Los Angeles is also examined in chapter 7. Inter-racial gang violence and conflicts can also arise out of the kind of mundane provocations like territorial disputes, interpersonal conflicts, and mistaken identity that often play a role in intra-racial gang violence as well.

Many of these factors have been mentioned by Diego Vigil in 2011, "any specific episode might easily stem from youthful exuberance, perceived neighborhood boundary violations, drug turf contentions, a personal vendetta, a case of mistaken identity, and any number of other reasons as well as any combination."[42] What follows is a careful investigation, data collection and theoretical analysis of each of these issues and the role they play in provoking and perpetuating inter-racial gang conflict in Los Angeles.

Before beginning with the presentation of data and analysis, I first discuss the research methodologies employed in this research project in chapter 2. I situate my methodological perspective in line with that of my mentors and predecessors, James Diego Vigil and David Charles Brotherton, as well as my colleague Robert Duran, who have pushed the bounds of ethnographic research methodologies in gang research to a true inside observer perspective. I discuss the tripartite ethnographic project I undertook to produce this work, consisting of simultaneous ethnographies with Sureno affiliated gang members, Crip and Blood affiliated gang members, and gang enforcement officers in law enforcement agencies throughout Los Angeles County. I then describe my quantitative treatment of my formal interview data and incorporation of data from government sources.

Chapter 3 presents a historical narrative that recounts the historical background that has framed the circumstances that have resulted in the occurrence of inter-racial gang conflict in Los Angeles. First I discuss the origination of anti-black racial bias in colonial Spanish society, and how that historical bias has been passed down to modern Mexican and Mexican American

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[42] Vigil 2011 p. 325

populations through the Mexican period and in the wake of the sacrifice of half of Mexico's

territory at the altar of Anglo American expansion in the mid-19th century. I continue with a

narrative of historical settlement patterns in Los Angeles, and how racist policies like housing

covenants and harassment by law enforcement led to the ostracism of African American and

Mexican American Angelenos into different geographical locations, with Mexican Americans

settling in the barren hills and low lying flats of East Los Angeles, and African Americans settling

along the Central Avenue corridor in what has been henceforth known as South Central Los

Angeles. Finally I discuss the role that the collapse of the civil rights movement as a result of

State pressure in the late 1960s and early 1970s had on perceptions of racial difference among

subsequent generations of black and Latino youth in the ghettos and barrios of Los Angeles in

the post-movement era.

Chapter 4 explores the result of these historical divisions engendered by racist colonial

policies of the Anglo State, the cultural differences that are at the core of Sureno, Crip and

Blood racialized gang identities. Every conceivable cultural difference between Sureno and Crip

and Blood affiliated gang members is explored, including those that are shared by their larger

communities and those that are specific to gang members exclusively, such as differences in

aesthetic clothing and hairstyles; communication and lingual differences in dialect, accent,

slang, tone and volume; preferences in music, cuisine and vehicles, as well as differences in

traditions of faith.

Chapter 5 explores the extent of racial bias among modern populations of black and

Latino gang members in Los Angeles, as represented by the subjects formally interviewed for

this research. Racial bias is gauged according to three common measures of racial bias, perceptions of relationship bias, and perceptions of employment and housing competition and bias. The presence of existing racial bias in modern black and Latino gang populations in Los Angeles provides strong empirical evidence to support historical and theoretical perspectives discussed in chapter 1 and 3.

Chapter 6 examines the history of racial conflict between racialized prison gang factions in the California prison system, and the role that both historical and contemporary CDCR policies have played in the emergence of racialized prison gang factions and in the trajectory of the conflict between them. The first part of the chapter engages in a detailed historical analysis of the emergence of the major racialized prison gang factions in the California prison system in the 1950s and 1960s, the Mexican Mafia (Sureno) and the Black Guerilla Family, and to a lesser extent the Aryan Brotherhood and the Nuestra Familia (Norteno). The initial origin of the conflict between the Mexican Mafia and the Black Guerilla Family is revealed for the first time, and the trajectory of that conflict is recounted in both qualitative detail and with statistical data gathered from CDCR's Annual Prisoner Report(s). Chapter 6 then continues with a description of what I call, *la coda de la pinta*, the code of the prison, which is a set of rules, policies and practices that different inmate factions enforce on their members. I then explore how these rules play a role in the occurrence of race riots between different racialized gang factions in CDCR and Los Angeles County Jail facilities, and conclude with a critical analysis of the role that staff and administration play in provoking and perpetuating inter-racial gang conflict in CDCR facilities.

Chapter 7 puts it all together. The chapter begins with an explanation of how cultural

practices rather than primordial racial identities determine and define racialized gang identities.

Chapter 7 then goes on to explore the terms of what I call the Code of the Hood. These are the

rules, policies and practices governing interaction between Sureno and Crip and Blood affiliated

gang members in different communities throughout Los Angeles County, from the rolling hills

of Boyle Heights, to the flatlands of Compton and Watts, to the boardwalks in Venice and Long

Beach. The second half of the chapter consists of a series of micro-analyses of specific inter-

racial gang conflicts in specific communities between specific gangs. Drawing on the full range

of factors discussed through the course of this work, I explain how specific factors have

contributed to the initiation and perpetuation of specific inter-racial gang conflicts in various

neighborhoods throughout Los Angeles County.

Finally chapter 8 presents a neo-Gramscian critical analysis of how the emergence of

disparate racialized gang identities in Los Angeles, and the ensuing conflicts between them,

undermines class solidarity among marginalized minority populations in Los Angeles by turning

those who might otherwise unite together to resist their shared history of subjugation and

oppression, against one another instead. I conclude with an array of public policy suggestions to

ameliorate inter-racial gang conflict, both conservatively within the framework of neo-liberal

society, and by advocating more radical solutions, which I have no illusions about being rather

unlikely under the current system as it stands today.

Chapter 2 Methodology

The following chapter may not be of great interest to the lay reader, and to those in the general public, policy makers, law enforcement, or gang members themselves. However, since methodological discussions are required of academic publications, the following chapter is intended principally for an academic audience who possess a professional familiarity with the relevant issues and debates that exist in the discipline regarding the various perspectives and strategies researchers use in social science research.

One of the principal differences between academic research on the one hand, and the popular press and journalism on the other, is that academic researchers make a conscious effort to consider the research methods they will use to examine whatever social phenomena they are studying. Academics must consider the methods used in previous research and make a logical decision about what method(s) are most appropriate to use in their own research, and be able to justify those decisions. These decisions are usually explicit and presented in written form prior to the research process to dissertation committees, institutional review boards[43], fellow faculty, funding sources, and so forth. Journalists and authors in the popular press are not bound by the necessity of justifying what they are doing or plan to do, to anyone but their editor, while academics are subject to a dense bureaucracy of oppressive academic checks and balances. While there may be good reasons to hold academics to a higher standard, navigating

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[43] IRB hereafter

this labyrinth of academic checks and balances also has negative effects on the research process.

One principal effect of requiring prior conception of the endeavor before engaging in research is to favor a deductive approach, whereby researchers are compelled to spell out exactly what their theoretical, analytic and methodological approach will be, and what results they expect to find, thus rendering a positive outcome. This positivist approach to social research unconsciously influences many researchers to assume a particular perspective and research strategy, which structures their data collection and analysis in such a way as to prevent or hinder their consideration of additional and/or alternative findings and/or analyses that might be present. Like a draft horse walking down a cobbled road with blinders on to keep it on the straight and narrow, many researchers are blinded as to what is around them, even if they do physically enter the field to immerse themselves in their research population – which many arm-chair academics do not. However, just leaving the safe confines of the ivory tower is not enough to see everything there is to see in the field. When researchers enter the field with theoretical and methodological blinders on, they are in danger of failing to appreciate the full complexity that grants social phenomena its grandeur.

Furthermore, there is a fundamental disconnect between many sociologists and the populations they study. Modern sociologists typically use social phenomena to examine theoretical perspectives, instead of using theoretical perspectives to examine social phenomena. That is a major weakness in our field in my opinion, as we argue theoretical points among ourselves, we make ourselves more and more irrelevant to any practical discourse on

policies that might ameliorate the circumstances our research populations suffer from. I believe

strongly in public sociology and I want this work to provide specific analyses that change the

way these populations, policy makers and the public think about themselves and each other, as

well as specific policy solutions to the problem of inter-minority gang conflict specifically.

Second to that, are whatever generalizable theoretical revelations my sociologist colleagues

might take away from this work. Yes, I know that is heresy to some in the modern sociological

enterprise, who tout theoretical advancement as the holy grail of academic accomplishment.

However, my goal is more modest in that I only seek to make our society better than the one I

grew up in. I'm certainly willing to engage with existing theoretical perspectives, but I do not

primarily pursue their continued development. I instead favor a grounded approach to theory,

firmly embedded in the lived experiences of my subjects and their communities.

Another negative effect of the academic proposal process is to grant primacy to the

testing of existing theoretical perspectives in the field. Hypotheses are typically conceived as

tests of existing theories, such that social phenomena are used to examine theoretical

perspectives, rather than theoretical perspectives being used to examine social phenomena.

The typical sociological and/or criminological researcher focuses on confirming or disconfirming

a single, or a very limited range, of theoretical perspectives in the hope that by affirming some

particular theoretical perspective, that theory can then be applied to a wider array of social

phenomena the researcher did not examine. This is generally conceived under the rubric of

"generalizability", the expectation that theory should be confirmed or disconfirmed, so that it

can be applied in blanket fashion universally to all of society, and to all societies, as if there are

laws of universal human behavior the way there are universal laws of physics. They focus on testing social disorganization or control theory, strain theory or labeling theory, or whatever other theoretical perspective is in vogue during the era in which their research is conducted. Thus researchers are focused primarily on making an academic contribution based on episodic debates around specific theoretical perspectives, rather than using a wide range of theoretical perspectives to examine every aspect of the social phenomena they are studying.

This is exactly the type of "Grand Theory" approach C. Wright Mills warned against over half a century ago. As he put it, "The basic cause of grand theory is the initial choice of a level of thinking so general that its practitioners cannot logically get down to observation."[44] This ungrounded approach not only has the effect of blinding researchers from seeing the full complexity social phenomena present, but moreover, it makes academic publications inaccessible to those outside of the academy who have an genuine and sincere interest in the social phenomena being studied, but lack the theoretical and methodological sophistication to interpret and comprehend modern sociological research. Thus rather than creating works of public sociology, useful and accessible to policy makers, practitioners, and subject populations alike, academics typically engage in debates with themselves, as they are both the intended target audience and the only audience capable of interpreting and understanding the theoretical and methodological debates that most research represents.

While as undergraduate students and first year grad students we are compelled to digest Mills' classic *The Sociological Imagination*, we are just as soon steered away from his

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[44] Mills 1959(2000) p. 33

prophetic lessons as the pressure of conforming to the mainstream academic establishment looms over us like a dark and stormy cloud cracks with thunder and lightning on a hot desert night. We desperately struggle to produce and publish research that adheres to mainstream sociological and criminological expectations, else we risk being struck by the lightning of "career suicide" for daring to escape the theoretical and methodological iron cage the sociological discipline imposes on us as researchers. In this research project I attempt the almost schizophrenic feat of faithfully adhering to the lessons Mills taught us, while at the same time making every effort to appease the expectations of the mainstream academic establishment. However, where the one conflicts with the other, I will attempt to muster the courage to grant primacy to the sociological imagination over the specters of grand theory and abstracted empiricism. I can only hope that I succeed in that struggle.

Thus, I have chosen to employ both an interdisciplinary theoretical approach to my analysis and a grounded multiple methodology approach to my data collection. Rather than choosing a limited range of theoretical perspectives and testing them with a single methodological approach, I instead employ every theoretical perspective and every methodological approach that might grant any insight into the social phenomena this research examines. *I use theoretical perspectives and research methodologies to examine social phenomena, instead of using social phenomena to examine research methodologies and theoretical perspectives.* While I hope to expand upon existing research methodologies and make valuable insights into existing theoretical perspectives, I am primarily focused on providing an analysis of the social phenomena I examine. I do so in the hope that this research

results in substantive solutions to pressing social problems, accessible to academics, policy

makers, practitioners, and most importantly, to the people whose lives are most affected by

the issues this research examines, gang members, their families and their communities.

2.1 Intended Audience

The best sociology is that which appeals not only to sociologists, but moreover,

sociology that makes sense to the populations being studied. The best sociology is that which

informs their perspectives and brings into their consciousness alternative perspectives the

monotony of their daily lives conceals by its assumed inevitability, so that they realize their own

agency, both individually and collectively, to change the society we live in. That is the power of

sociology, the power to change the way people think about the society they live in. The true

test of good sociology is not just that it makes sense to other sociologists, but that it would

make sense to the populations we study if they were sociologists. Rather than being "drunk on

syntax"[45], sociological and criminological studies that intend to have a substantive effect on the

populations being studies from the ground up, as well as the top down, must be communicated

in a way that is perceptible and appreciable to a multitude of audiences from the academy to

the field, because unfortunately we can't all be sociologists.

We as sociological researchers need to practice a public sociology, a term coined by

Herbert Gans in his 1988 presidential address to the American Sociological Association and

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[45] Mills 1959(2000) p. 34

forced upon a resistant "professional sociology" by Michael Burawoy in his defense of public

sociology at the 2004 annual meeting of the American Sociological Association.[46] We as social

researchers must engage not only with one another, but with the society we study as well, from

the top of the status hierarchy to the very bottom.

For this endeavor there is a number of disparate audiences whom this research intends

to engage with, each of whom may take different lessons from my data and analysis. Some

parts of my analysis may appeal to some audiences, but not to others. While this is the

inevitable drawback of attempting to engage multiple audiences simultaneously, the potential

of being able to engage with multiple audiences and change the way they think about the

society we live in far outweighs the risk of offending some in doing so. Thus my analysis will at

times be written the way lay people talk and not the way scholars speak. I will use words that

make some readers feel uncomfortable or even indignant, as much as they are part of normal

everyday discourse for other potential readers. While not pandering to any one potential

audience, I will attempt to incorporate an honest representation of the perspectives of all

groups and factions involved in the very complex issues this research addresses.

In no particular order of importance, the first audience this research intends to target is

of course my colleagues in the academy, our students, and the sociological and criminological

discipline as a whole. A scholar must navigate the academic review process to get his or her

research published. However, my ultimate goal is to provide an example of how sociological

and criminological research should be conducted, make contributions to ongoing academic

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[46] Gans 1988; Burawoy 2004

debates about the validity of various theoretical perspectives, provide data and description that influences future research, and maybe earn some recognition in the field without succumbing to sheer careerism.

The second audience this research intends to engage with are public policy makers and practitioners – politicians, law enforcement officers and administrators, corrections officers and administrators, housing authority administrators and educators. As public sociologists we need to engage with public policy makers and practitioners, and influence the decisions they make. This need not involve naïve assumptions about the altruistic intent of public servants.[47] Where sociology cannot persuade policy makers and practitioners due to their privileged position, public sociology can embarrass them into addressing our policy recommendations, even where they may be hostile to our analyses. The results of this research have implications for specific public policies and practices, but moreover, provide a critical analysis that connects specific policies and practices to larger macro structural issues that frame the choices made by policy makers and practitioners in the field. Changing the way they think about the social phenomena this research examines is certainly high on the list of goals this project seeks to attain.

The third audience this research intends to engage with are of course gang members themselves and the ghetto and barrio communities they hail from throughout Los Angeles and beyond, wherever inter-minority urban gang conflict exists. The greatest power of sociology is the power to change the way marginalized populations think about the society they live in, so that they find themselves motivated to organize and take an active role in resisting the historic

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[47] Brady 2004

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and contemporary marginalization, subjugation and degradation of life. The ultimate goal of this research project, of the publications that will come out of it, is to educate, politicize, motivate and mobilize the most marginalized populations in our society, black and Latino gang members, so that they may understand, reject and resist their continued marginalization and hyper-criminalization in the bleak landscape of post-modern capitalist society.

There are some inherent risks in telling this story, as there are those involved in gang politics who might be offended by some aspect of my analysis or the very fact that I am discussing these issues at all. One of the rules enforced by prison gangs like the Mexican Mafia forbids any public discussion of gang politics. However, while this rule makes a lot of sense in terms of keeping low level gang members from providing fodder for politicians, law enforcement and the media to demonize gang members and the Mexican Mafia, failing to counter the narrative that politicians, law enforcement and the media propagate, circuitously enables opportunistic politicians, over-zealous law enforcement and the muck raking media to control the narrative of their lives, thereby virtually guaranteeing their continued criminalization and marginalization. Certainly my life could be in danger for violating the rule against public discussion of the Mexican Mafia and gang politics. That is a risk I am willing to take, with the goal of ultimately resisting and undermining the narratives that continue to criminalize and marginalize our communities. With generations of us having died in narcissistic fratricidal gang warfare, let us instead die for a free and equal society. For we have died a thousand deaths at one another's hands already. If we don't speak for ourselves, those who

have always marginalized and subjugated our communities will continue to control the

narrative of our lives as they have too often during the course of our history.

The fourth audience this project seeks to engage with and educate about the issues in

this dissertation is the general public, both in Los Angeles, where inter-racial conflict is an acute

social problem, and anywhere that such issues have the potential to produce violence the likes

of which Los Angeles has endured for generations now. The general public has often been

misled in their perceptions of crime and gangs in general, and inter-racial gang violence in Los

Angeles specifically. This work seeks to address and ameliorate those misperceptions and

misconceptions that ultimately steer public opinion in the wrong direction on these important

issues that affect all residents, not just those whose lives are lost and irrevocably altered by the

nightmare of inter-racial gang violence. I seek nothing less than to educate, motivate and

mobilize the ghettos and the barrios of our cities, and all of our society, to confront and

overcome the divisions among us that avert us from confronting the marginalization and

subjugation that besets our communities now as it always has throughout our history.

2.2 Subject Population

The primary subject population for this research, 92 Sureno and Crip and Blood affiliated

gang members in Los Angeles County, was recruited primarily at various gang intervention and

prisoner re-entry programs, supplemented with respondents observed and recruited at various

bars, barbeques, tattoo shops, parties, concerts, *quinceaneras*, weddings, funerals and the like

throughout Los Angeles County, in order to include respondents from neighborhoods that were not included in the semi-random sample from the primary field sites, the intervention and re-entry programs. While not a proper random sample, I would suggest that it is a very representative sample of the gang population in Los Angeles County. Recruitment of respondents was subject to the randomness of who might be at any given field site on any given day. As gang intervention and prisoner re-entry programs serve gang communities from throughout Los Angeles, there is no reason to believe that the clientele of these organizations does not reflect the actual distribution of the gang-active population throughout Los Angeles. While this is far from an ideally sized or sampled subject population, as few if any samples are in the soft sciences, it is robust enough to subject the data to some rudimentary logistic regression analysis, in addition to descriptive statistics that the data offers.

It is also incumbent upon me to note that some questions were added to the interview schedule after the start of formal interviews and therefore were not asked of the first few respondents. In addition, some respondents could not answer some questions. For example, respondents who were raised as a ward of the State could not report how their parents felt about inter-racial relationships, because they never knew their parents and/or were never in one household long enough to have parental figures in their lives.

While Sureno respondents (66) outnumber Crip and Blood respondents (26) more than two to one, I would suggest that this proportion is roughly commensurate with the overall gang population in Los Angeles County and carceral facilities, where Sureno affiliated gangs predominate. Respondents range in age from 18 to 59, with a mean age of 32.88 and a median

age of 31, which I would suggest also roughly coincides with the population of active gang members both on the streets and in carceral facilities. 87 of the respondents were previously incarcerated with a mean time of 9.66 years served and a median of 6 years served. This slight disparity is due to a dozen of the older respondents who had served in excess of 20 or 30 years in prison for murder(s) and/or other serious felonies.

2.3 Methodological Strategies

While the primary research strategy for this project is qualitative, there are some questions that are better answered with quantitative methodologies. Thus employing a mixed methodology strategy is the most effective approach to studying the social phenomena this research examines. The core of this project is based on two years of formal ethnographic fieldwork in Los Angeles, including hundreds of informal interviews, and one hundred formal interviews, 66 with Sureno affiliated gang members, 26 with Crip and Blood gang members and seven with gang enforcement officers in various law enforcement agencies throughout Los Angeles County. This deep and detailed body of qualitative fieldwork is complemented by quantitative analyses consisting of both multiple regression analyses and plain old-fashioned descriptive statistics.

2.4 Ethnography

The ethnographic portion of the fieldwork is composed of three completely different ethnographies. First was an insider participant observer ethnography with Sureno affiliated gang members, the likes of which promoted by Adler and Adler,[48] and exemplified not only by their work but by that of their student and my colleague, Robert Duran, in his recent book *Gang Life in Two Cities*.[49] Duran makes an adroit adaptation of Critical Race Theory critiques by arguing that the lack of former gang members in academic gang research represents a colonial mentality in the field. He argues that researchers who do not come from the communities they study, but who claim a privileged ability to tell the narrative of those communities are practicing a sort of colonial mentality by which outsiders control the fate of indigenous people by defining the narratives of their lives.[50]

Having grown up on the West Side of Los Angeles identifying as a Sureno affiliated gang member myself, I was naturally a participant observer with bona fide insider status in the minds of my Sureno affiliated ethnographic subjects, as they saw me, and see me to today, as a homeboy, rather than a researcher. Most of the South Siders I spent time with during the course of this fieldwork knew of my street identity independent of my identity as a researcher and many of them I had personally known from the streets before I began any formal IRB approved ethnographic research. During the course of my fieldwork I spent time on a daily basis

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[48] Adler and Adler 1987
[49] Duran 2013
[50] Ibid

in a plethora of field sites, frequenting neighborhood bars, barbeques and tattoo shops, clubs

and car shows, attending baby showers, bachelor parties, weddings and the occasional funeral,

kicking it in parks and at homeboys' residences in their neighborhoods, as well as spending

considerable time at gang intervention and convict re-entry/ rehabilitation programs that serve

barrio gang communities in Los Angeles. However, these activities would make up the bulk of

my social life even if I wasn't a sociologist, as such it seems a bit contrived to say that I

conducted two years of ethnographic fieldwork for this research project. My whole life is an

ethnographic research project on the issues this research addresses, and I draw on my life

experiences without reservation.

Thus my primary status in the minds of my subjects during the formal fieldwork portion

of this research project was that of homeboy rather than researcher, and I naturally assumed

that role with every subject I spent time with during the course of this research. I'm not

exploiting people I don't know for my own careerist research ambitions. I genuinely am their

homeboy in real life. I have their back and they have mine, just as it always was. In that way

commencing a formal IRB approved ethnographic fieldwork project was a bit of a contrived

formality in my mind, because unlike my academic colleagues with similar backgrounds as me,

like Victor Rios and Robert Duran, I never left the streets and abandoned my street identity and

group affiliations. I may not be active in the sense that I'm actively committing crimes as I once

was, but I never formally withdrew my membership in various groups I was a member of and I

am still a presence in the streets in the sense that I hang out with my homeboys from every

different neighborhood, from homeboys I grew up with in the Culver City/ Palms area, to

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homeboys from neighborhoods very far from where I grew up with whom I became very close friends with during the course of this fieldwork, my own prior criminal career and my life in general.

However, unlike the prototypical gang member, my criminal career spanned a much wider range of criminal activities and group affiliations than the local neighborhood gang I was affiliated with as a teenager. With that in mind, I have to acknowledge that my status as sort of an icon in the graffiti street subculture in Los Angeles also facilitated my entry into field sites that I did not start off with any contacts in. I had spent a considerable duration of my teens and twenties painting graffiti all over every corner of Los Angeles County. Even in neighborhoods where I didn't have any personal contacts, people who grew up during the era when I was active certainly knew who I was from my prolific graffiti career. Sureno affiliated gang members commonly start out their criminal careers as graffiti writers, and through their participation in the graffiti subculture they establish a reputation that makes them an attractive recruit for the local gang in the neighborhood they grew up in, by writing their moniker around the neighborhood, getting into fights with members of rival groups, etc. As such, many South Siders are aficionados of particularly prolific graffiti writers like myself, as famous graffiti writers have the same sort of status in the South Side subculture that popular rap artists have in the Crip and Blood subculture.

Since I come from the streets, when I meet other homeboys, I commonly identify myself by my street identity, even if I initially introduce myself as a researcher or professor. As a result, during the course of my ethnographic fieldwork there were certainly many subjects whom I

befriended who were all too happy to befriend me in return, because of the status of my street identity, and consequently felt much more comfortable telling me more than they might otherwise have. Indeed many subjects were willing to discuss taboo subjects like prison gang politics with me that could put them in serious danger if I were ever to reveal that they discussed such issues with me. Of course as a South Sider myself, I am already intimately acquainted with these issues, so most of what I was told in this regard, I already knew, but there were cases where details I was not aware of were disclosed to me in confidence, a confidence I would never have been afforded if I was not a homeboy myself.

This unique ethnographic advantage was also of particular assistance in entering field sites in various neighborhoods throughout Los Angeles County where I did not already have contacts. By hanging out with homeboys I didn't already know at various sites throughout Los Angeles, I was able to make contacts and connections with people I otherwise would never have befriended if not for this fieldwork. My street identity was an essential advantage in being accepted, at least initially, by homeboys I didn't previously know. It not only provided a reference point for potential subjects to feel like they already had some prior connection to me, but it also automatically dispelled any suspicions that I might use what I know or find out about them to assist law enforcement. My reputation for breaking the law with abandon as a younger man certainly shields me from any suspicions that I might be involved in enforcing the law. Therefore my subjects were almost universally trusting of me because I have an authentic connection to the street culture in Los Angeles and various well known conflict-oriented street organizations that is easily verified for any who did not already know who I am, or I should say,

who I was. In fact you can even google my (former) moniker, and your google search of my moniker will produce a medley of hits that far outweigh what a google search of my actual birth name ever will.

However, at the same time, my street identity and the particular trajectory of my criminal career was also a drawback in some cases. Most of the older *veterano* respondents whom I interviewed formally and spent time with ethnographically, look disparagingly on the graffiti subculture. Thus in making entry with those subjects, my association with graffiti, while it may have insulated me from suspicions of betrayal, didn't exactly earn any initial respect from older *veteranos* who had served decades in prison and had criminal careers that make my own look like a Baptist Sunday School picnic. In fact my own involvement in gangs was only a small part of my overall criminal career, and while the larger neighborhood gangs my own neighborhood group was affiliated with still exist as coherent street organizations, the specific group I was a member of as a teenager does not. Furthermore, though I have an arrest record many pages long, I have never served any significant amount of time in jail and have never been to prison. For career gang members like some of the *veteranos* I interviewed, crimes committed on the street pale in comparison to attacks carried out in a carceral environment in terms of the status earned in the status hierarchy of Sureno affiliated gang members. Therefore I am on the absolute bottom of the totem pole when it comes to social status among South Siders, most of whom have served significant time in prison and carried out numerous acts of extreme violence during their extended periods of incarceration.

Although I am recognized as a homeboy, I am what Vigil would call a peripheral gang member,[51] as I lack the lifelong commitment that career gang members like some of the *veteranos* I interviewed and befriended have made, with decades of time served in prison and countless acts of extreme violence in their history. While I can't remember to count every act of violence I was ever party to in my life, I know it is a hell of a lot less in both quantity and severity than some of the men whom I was fortunate enough to interview and spend time with during the course of this research, many of whom I stay in contact with to the present day. As such I was always cognizant of where I stand on the totem pole of street status among South Siders and made a point of extending my utmost respect to those who are above me in that stratification hierarchy, a strategy that has served me well both in my personal and professional lives.

The other drawback to my having a bona fide street identity upon entering the field, is the risk of encountering my prior rivals from gangs and other groups I had conflicts with when I was active. Of course this is a risk that I run every day of my life, as there are few places I can go and be completely secure that I won't coincidentally run into someone who still holds a grudge for something I did to them or their homeboy(s) back when I was active. However, the entry into the field to formally conduct fieldwork put me in harm's way a great deal more than I otherwise would have in the course of my own personal life. One of my desistance strategies when I withdrew from my own criminal career was to avoid frequenting locations and/or events where I might get into fights with former enemies, and run into old friends who were

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[51] Vigil 1988

still active themselves. In contrast, as a result of the fieldwork for this project, I intentionally

"put myself out there" at every social event I possibly could, in order to appropriate as large a

sample population as possible. I also spent considerable time at various gang intervention and

convict reentry/rehabilitation programs around Los Angeles County, where gang members from

every walk of life come to receive services on a daily basis. All of these ethnographic practices

exponentially increased the probability that I might coincidentally cross paths with a former

rival.

A number of times during the course of this fieldwork I did indeed run into my former

rivals, once at a gang intervention program Downtown, once at the beach in Malibu, once at a

benefit for a homeboy who has cancer in Downtown and again at a street fair in East

Hollywood. The first confrontation was with a single member of a rival group, who was at least

ten years my younger, and significantly smaller than I. I told him who I was just in case he had

any intentions of attempting to attack me for who I was, but he responded that he wasn't

intent on any conflict with me if I wasn't intent on any conflict with him. I agreed to those terms

and we shook hands. I've seen him around a couple of times since then, and on each occasion

we shook hands and exchanged pleasantries.

A second run-in almost became much more serious, but ended up in a détente without

any violence occurring. I was at a private beach with a couple of homeboys and our girlfriends

and one of their little sisters, in Malibu of all places, somewhere I would least expect to have a

run-in with any former rivals. We had enjoyed brunch on the beach, a few drinks and had spent

perhaps four hours there, when we decided to leave in the early afternoon. I was a bit ahead of

my homeboys as we left and suddenly a group of perhaps a dozen of my former rivals happened to be arriving at that very moment. One of them immediately ran up in my face, claiming their affiliation and challenged me with, "What's up fool?! This is _____!" As the others started encircling me, my body flooded with adrenaline, a familiar feelings from my younger years, as I thought they were about to start jumping me right there on the beach. However, when they saw one of my homeboys walk up, all 6'4" and 250 pounds of him, tattooed from head to toe, with a giant beard like Rasputin, they started to second guess themselves.

Suddenly I felt their intent to jump me fade away and another one of them, bigger than the first one, challenged me to a fair fight and I agreed. We immediately set off in search of location where we could fight where none of the civilians or security at the beach would see us. Along the way we agreed that the chance of being arrested for fighting in public was very high, so if that did happened we would all just remain mute and decline to press charges when questioned by law enforcement. We figured at the worst, we'd get a disorderly conduct, and in my case I couldn't exactly back down from a fair fight, when I was deeply outnumbered. As it were, we could not find a location to fight without being seen. The parking lot was crawling with security guards and Sheriff's Deputies, so we attempted to go behind some hedges on an access road, and as I relieved myself on a bush and we tightened our shorts and stretched to get ready to fight, an old woman saw us and came out yelling, "I've already called the police you hoodlums! They're coming right now!" We looked at one another and shrugged our shoulders, "Fuck it homes, it looks like it's gonna have to happen another day." We shook

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hands and parted ways, with the tacit understanding that the next time we saw each other, violence may occur.

The third time I ran into about a dozen or so members of the same rival group at a benefit show for a friend of mine who has cancer and who is a member of West Side White Fence 13 in the East Hollywood area. However at this event I had a number of homeboys there who are members of various gangs in the Rampart/NELA area including West Side White fence 13, West Side Crazies 13 and West Side Rockwood Street Locos 13. Apparently my rivals felt the odds were not in their favor and decided not to confront me, and as I am no longer active I decided not to confront any of them. I stayed for a couple hours with my girlfriend and then left.

The fourth time I ran into the ones from the beach, along with about thirty or so of their homeboys, at the annual Thai New Year Festival on Hollywood Blvd. in East Hollywood. I was there with a couple of my homeboys from South Side Kansas Street 13 and West Side Rockwood Street Locos 13 to watch some friends of mine from my muay thai team fight in the event being held to honor the Thai new year. Organizers set up a boxing ring in the middle of Hollywood Blvd. and have about two dozen muay thai fights in the open air. I suspected that my former rivals might be there, as I know that they train in muay thai as well, and sure enough, shortly after arriving and finding my friends from my muay thai team, the two rivals I was going to fight with at the beach the year before walked up from behind and tapped me on the shoulder. "What's up fool?" I responded without hesitation, "You tell me what's up! You fools want to get down (fight) today or what?!" The smaller one responded, "No, actually I'm fighting

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in the event today in a couple hours." I accepted, "That's cool homes, chok dee (good luck in

Thai) for your fight homey." I then turned my attention to the bigger one I was going to fight at

the beach previously with a confrontational tone, "What about you fool? You wanna fight today

too?!" He looked at me, looked at my homeboy standing next to me scowling at them, then

looked down at the beer in his hand and responded, "Naw I'm good, we're kinda having fun

here today." Happy with that, I responded, "Well I'm here to have fun too motherfucker, so

let's do that then." With that we shook hands and they parted ways with us. Ironically their

kickboxing team in the crowd was right adjacent to mine so we spent the rest of the day with

them little more than 20 feet from us, as we all enjoyed the fights and a few beers in the warm

spring sunshine. Ironically, when they confronted me, I not only had my two homeboys by my

side, but also standing nearby was one of my friends from my kickboxing team who happens to

be a 6'5" 300 pound Sheriff's Deputy. After they retreated to where their friends were watching

the fights in the crowd, he turned around to me and started laughing, "Oh man dog! I turned

around and was like, wow these fools are really about to get down right now! I was about to

pull out my gun and start pistol whipping motherfuckers before you stopped me! Ha ha ha!" I

laughed as well and told him, "Nah it's better if we keep it cool bro, but I appreciate that

brother."

     Another significant advantage that my own personal background confers on the

fieldwork that was conducted for this research project, is that not only can I understand these

issues from my own prior experience and easily gain entry and access to the social world of

gang members in Los Angeles, but moreover my prior involvement in that subculture grants me

an inherent understanding of all the minutiae of Sureno gang culture in Los Angeles. I know

what all the slang means, and I can speak it fluently. I recognize and understand all of the

various cultural symbols, and am capable of authentically displaying them. I am aware of and

understand the intricacies of gang politics, to which virtually every other gang researcher

before me has been ignorant of, and I am capable of navigating them. In fact, functioning

socially as a sociologist at one of the year's annual academic conferences requires a great deal

more ethnographic acumen on my part, than hanging out in the hood does on any given day of

the year.

The other major advantage my background as a gang member affords me is in terms of

the strength of my analysis. All prior gang researchers except perhaps, Rios and Duran, have

had to depend entirely on their subjects to provide them with an understanding of the

phenomena they studied, whereas I was able to evaluate the veracity of what my subjects told

me based on my own prior knowledge and experiences. I could tell when subjects were less

than honest in their narratives, or when they were simply exaggerating, interspersing the truth

in their accounts with the kind of bravado that gang members are well known for. However, as

a homeboy myself, I can either tell on my own, or check with other homeboys of mine, in order

to verify the veracity of what I was told by my subjects during the course of this research.

Thus, I have no reservations about making the modestly pretentious claim that I have

been able to achieve a level of insider status as a gang researcher that exceeds that of any

other researcher to come before me. Only Robert Duran's ethnographic work on gangs in

Ogden, Utah, where he was a gang active youth in his teenage years, even approaches the level

of insider status that I was able to achieve during the course of this fieldwork, but by his own

account his own involvement in gangs had ended many years prior to his entering the field.

My career as a sociological researcher and my fulfillment of this level of insider status as

a gang researcher is the culmination of a long line of prescient ethnographic researchers who

have pushed to bring ethnographic methodologies closer to the marginalized populations we

study, particularly in the field of gang research. Indeed almost a century ago now, the first

sociologist to formally research street gangs, Frederic Thrasher, employed what was a radical

methodological concept at the time in his seminal work *The Gang*, actually getting out of the

ivory tower and putting shoe leather to pavement to get out in the field and actually speak with

real gang members.[52] This was a radical concept at the time, because the vast majority of

scholars in that era, as many continue to do today, conducted their research and analyses from

the comfort and safety of their favorite armchair, bringing whatever phenomena they sought to

study to them in the University, rather than going out into the field to view the phenomena in

its own social milieu. Then, as some still do today, they used the authority of their status as

scholars to shield themselves from anyone arriving at the revelation that they actually didn't

and don't know the first thing about phenomena that they purport to be experts on. While

gang research took a step backwards during the post war years, with major works of classical

criminology and sociology of deviance being published without so much as a day in the field,[53]

in the post-Civil Rights era a new breed of researchers took the spirit of the social movements

of the 1960s and early 1970s, as well as the methodological practices of the early cohort from

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[52] Thrasher 1936
[53] Eg. Cohen 1955 and Miller 1958

the Chicago School and applied it to their research, resulting in a series of fresh approaches to gang research in the field of sociology in the later part of the 20th century and into the early 21st century.

Perhaps first in this fresh line of research was the groundbreaking work of Joan Moore, whose book on barrio gangs in Los Angeles was published in the year of my birth, 1978.[54] Moore adopted the radical methodological approach of using subjects, the gang members themselves, to actually contribute to the qualitative data collection process. This strategy not only granted Moore greater access to the subjects herself by proxy through her fieldworkers, but also enable the subjects to play a role themselves in shaping the narrative about their lives that Moore spun out of their fieldwork like a golden fleece, as bright today as it was almost four decades ago when she wrote it. The radical idea that researchers should unreservedly enmesh their own lives with those of their subjects, and that subjects themselves should play a role in weaving the fabric of the narrative of their own lives was a radical idea then, sadly as it is today in some circles, because it rejected the often colonial maintenance of privilege within academia, cloaked in the mantle of objectivity.

Ironically such a pretentious contention was promulgated from the same Chicago School Thrasher had come out of, pushed by a new breed of Chicago researchers in the post-war years spearheaded by Everett Hughes, who abandoned the case study approach that established the Chicago School as the preeminent department for sociological fieldwork and instead embarked

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[54] Moore 1978

on a pseudo-scientific pursuit of objectivity.[55] These new Chicago School researchers' lack of critical self-reflexivity led them to assume an ostensibly objective perspective, maintaining an intentional distance and detachment from their subjects during the course of sociological fieldwork. Such methodological "experts" ultimately acted as gatekeepers to a discipline they and their progeny continue to control.

Quixotically many researchers, particularly those tainted by post-war Chicago School methodological perspectives, intentionally remain aloof from their subjects with the misguided intention of promulgating the myth of objectivity. Of course no social researcher, or human being for that matter, can ever be entirely objective in their perspective as we all carry with us the baggage of our own prior experiences, biases, perceptions and preconceptions. Sadly many researchers boldly perpetrate a façade of objectivity, and in the process, uncritically assume the normativity of their own perceptions and perspectives. Other researchers knowingly and willingly reject the façade of objectivity, but come from significantly more privileged socio-economic backgrounds and social contexts than their subjects, and thus their ethnographies are hampered by their inability to assume the type of complete membership role advocated by Adler and Adler and Duran.[56]

Despite the continued marginalization of radical ethnographers in our field, which continues to the present day where even someone as venerable and unassailable as Patricia Adler could be forced from a tenured academic appointment under downright dubious circumstances, there have been a steady line of sociologists and criminologists who have

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[55] Reisman 1983; Adler and Adler 1987
[56] Adler and Adler 1987; Duran 2013

mounted a steady resistance to hackneyed approaches to research on street gangs. Following

Joan Moore was her student and one of my one of my primary mentors, James Diego Vigil,

whose background as a lifelong Angeleno and Brown Beret activist propelled him into a career

as an academic and ethnographic researcher studying the most marginalized populations in our

barrio communities, barrio gang members.[57] Vigil's flagship work, *Barrio Gangs*, and

subsequent books *Rainbow of Gangs* and *The Projects*,[58] represented a return to the roots of

Chicago School ethnography, employing life history case studies and participant ethnographic

observation without any contrived attempt to enforce a distance and detachment between

researcher and subjects. In fact, Vigil's methods were the polar opposite of what Everett

Hughes advocated in the post-war years at Chicago. Vigil made a career as a radical street

ethnographer deeply enmeshed with his subjects and their environment, having gotten closer

to and more intimate with the marginalized gang affiliated populations and communities he

studied than any other researcher had before him.

The break with conservative colonial ethnographic methodologies of the post war

Chicago School era was made even more explicit in the work of my other principal mentor,

David Charles Brotherton and his colleague, Father Luis Barrios, whose research and activism

with the Latin Kings in New York City, as well as throughout Latin America and Europe, broke

new ground in radical street ethnography and public sociology.[59] Barrios, an Episcopalian priest

whose congregation in Spanish Harlem consisted of multiple Latin King members and leaders,

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[57] Vigil 1988
[58] Vigil 1988; Vigil 2002; Vigil 2007
[59] Brotherton and Barrios 2004

was able to provide a level of access not previously seen in sociological or criminological

research up to that point. Brotherton and Barrios were not only invited to share the lives of

their subjects in their own communities, to participate in their meetings, and access to their

leaders, but moreover were granted a unique role as both spiritual, moral and political advisors

to the leadership of the Latin Kings in New York City. Their roles in this regard expanded to

other Latin King chapters in Latin America and Europe, where Brotherton and Barrios's activism

and guidance has resulted in a radical alternative to American strategies of gang suppression.

Through their scholarship, activism and engagement with public policy throughout Latin

America and Europe, Brotherton and Barrios have heralded the transformation of the Latin

Kings from a prototypical street gang, to a genuinely politically conscious radical social

movement, determined to provide for the needs of their members and communities, and to do

so through the kind of self-run positive social programs and political activism that is so direly

lacking in the US context. In fact in some European and Latin American countries, as a result of

Brotherton and Barrios's scholarship and activism, the Latin Kings have been granted formal

recognition as a cultural organization, and actually given government funding with which to

implement programs that positively affect the lives of their members and their communities.

Indeed the magnitude of such a conversion is practically unfathomable to mainstream scholars,

policy makers, journalists and practitioners who seek to sensationalize and marginalize gang

members in the United States at every opportunity.

Scholars who have had little to no personal involvement themselves with the gangs they

study prior to the commencement of their fieldwork, like Moore, Vigil, Brotherton and Barrios,

brought themselves and their research closer to the populations their work examines than has ever been accomplished in the relatively modest history of sociological and criminological research on gangs. However a new cohort of researchers are beginning to emerge within the disciplines of sociology and criminology… the gang member turned scholar. While there has been a modest, though respectable body of work assembled by a growing number of ex-convicts who have earned doctorates and used their experiences in incarceration as a springboard for careers as convict criminologists, there have been precious few sociologists and/or criminologists to study street gangs who have had personal involvement in gangs themselves.

These few unique researchers have experienced a mixed reception by the mainstream academic establishment. Ominously, perhaps the most authentic of us all, Doug Thompkins, who served the better part of two decades in prison in Illinois and was a recognized leader in the Gangster Disciples Nation, one of the largest gang factions in Chicago, before going on to earn a doctorate in sociology and embark on an academic career, was precipitously forced out of his academic position and effectively blacklisted from further employment in academia under extremely questionable circumstances. In contrast, Victor Rios, who was also a gang member as a teenager, has assumed a position of significant prominence among his academic colleagues for his work on the criminalization of inner-city youth.

Robert Duran, who also was involved in street gangs as a teenager, took a bold approach to participant observer ethnographic methodology in his book *Gang Life in Two Cities*, influenced largely by his academic mentor, none other than the great Patricia Adler. He is the

first bona fide gang member to earn a PhD with a research project that involved his own prior gang affiliation, unabashedly using his own experiences as a gang member as qualitative data for analysis in his work. His work beautifully splices his own personal experiences growing up as a gang member in Ogden, Utah, with the qualitative data collected during his extensive fieldwork in both Denver and in his hometown of Ogden.

His research strategy represents a new era in gang research in that he was able to push the boundaries of ethnographic insider methodology. However, perhaps more importantly, the result of his research was to push the current boundaries of theoretical conceptions on the marginalization of gang members with a discerning analysis of the neo-colonial role of gang enforcement and the hegemonic impact of the hyper-criminalization of gang members due to their own self-destructive behavior.[60] Indeed the efficacy of such a research strategy is apparent in the fact that such an important theoretical contribution was not achieved until an actual gang member became a gang researcher and applied his own unique perspective to the sociological analysis of street gangs.

There are other young scholars who also come from the kind of marginalized and hyper-criminalized backgrounds we do, who may not have been members of some specific gang, but who also have the kind of marginalized and criminalized backgrounds and experiences that we all share. My dear friend and colleague Randol Contreras's recent book *The Stickup Kids*, a beautiful ethnography of the lives of marginalized criminalized Dominican youth in the South Bronx who made a living robbing drug dealers, courageously drew directly on his own

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[60] Duran 2013

experiences as a participant in their crimes. His subjects were not strangers but his own childhood friends and neighbors, enabling him to tell the narrative of his own community in a way no outsider possibly could have.

However, I now know that we are not alone, as other budding scholars with even more extensive criminal careers than either I, Robert, Victor or Randol engaged in, like my dear friends and colleagues Danny Madrid and John Leverso, are queued up in line right behind us. I eagerly anticipate the completion of their doctorates and the product of the application of their life experiences to their research. I am sure there are other young scholars in line behind them who come from the kind of marginalized and criminalized communities and personal backgrounds we do and who will one day join us as researchers to tell the narratives of our own communities. While I once felt that I was, I know now that I am not alone. I am merely one among the vanguard of a new cohort of researchers who will ultimately change the way the sociological enterprise conceives social phenomena like urban street gangs. In fact I fully intend to make the recruitment, education and training of a future generation of scholars and researchers with gang membership in their backgrounds, as a primary pursuit in whatever future academic career I might be fortunate enough to enjoy. Nothing would make me happier than to inspire, educate and unleash a cadre of young gang researchers with bona fide street credibility into the ghettos and barrios of America and the world, in order to play an active role in defining the narrative of our their lives and communities, instead of letting the same old cabal of sociological researchers from backgrounds infinitely more privileged than ours, to

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continue their neo-colonial narratives of our lives and our communities, as if they have a monopoly on the ability to produce sociological understandings of other peoples' lives.

Sociological researchers who do not come from our communities or communities like ours, may not recognize the subjectively privileged perspectives they bring to the field with them, but we certainly do. They might enter our communities in order to make "the foreign familiar" as the ethnographic mantra goes, but it is they who are foreign to us and our communities, just as we are foreign to them. Their inherent unacknowledged biases rooted in the privilege of their personal backgrounds stands out to us as much as hipsters walking around the ghetto like they know what time it is.

Having said all that, I must acknowledge that the second facet of my ethnographic fieldwork consisted of a more traditional participant observer methodology. While I come from a gang active community, my affiliations were exclusively with predominantly Latino Sureno affiliated gangs. Therefore inherently, my ethnographic fieldwork with predominantly African American Crip and Blood gangs could not achieve the same level of insider access and perspective that my fieldwork with Sureno affiliated gangs did. I have to be honest with the reader, as I have to be honest with myself, about the biases my own particular background conferred on me prior to entering the field to conduct formal fieldwork. Ideally this project would have been conducted by a team of researchers, each with a personal connection and authentic street credibility with each of the three principal populations this research project engaged with, Sureno affiliated gang members, Crip and Blood affiliated gang members, and law enforcement officers tasked with gang enforcement. Unfortunately, we have yet to see the

emergence of an ethnographic researcher with bona fide street credentials and connections to

Crip and/or Blood communities in Los Angeles, and as this research came out of my own

doctoral dissertation with no research funding whatsoever, I had to conduct every aspect of the

fieldwork and analysis for this research project myself.

It is important at this juncture that I mention the work of demographer/ geographer

Alejandro "Alex" Alonso, who does have such a background as a former member of an African

American gang in Los Angeles and has published work on the history of Crip and Blood gangs.

However, the methodology of his work is primarily historical, and did not involve an extensive

ethnographic research project, although it is uniquely valuable nonetheless, and I cite it as such

in this work. Alonso was able to provide a historical analysis of the emergence of Crip and Blood

gang culture in Los Angeles, from the authentic perspective of an African American gang

member who grew up in Los Angeles.[61] His work was a significant influence on the historical

background chapter of this book, and I owe him a debt of gratitude for the perspective he

brings to our understanding of the history of marginalization the black community, and black

gang members particularly, have suffered over the past century in Los Angeles.

Having grown up affiliated with Sureno gang members in a community where inter-

racial gang conflict was pervasive, a background I did not actively attempt to conceal from my

Crip and Blood subjects, gaining access to Crip and Blood gang members in their own

environment was a considerable challenge, not least of which because of the racial animosity

this research addresses. Many Crip and Blood gang members feel animosity towards South

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[61] Alonso 2004; Alonso 2010

Siders as a result of their conflicts with Sureno affiliated gang members, both on the streets of Los Angeles, and in the county jails and prisons of California and beyond. In this regard, my newly assumed identity as a professor and researcher, as well as my demonstrated willingness to function with African American gang members across the boundaries of racialized gang identities, despite the rivalries our various gangs and prison factions have endured over the course of our lives, served to rupture some of the boundaries that might otherwise have precluded our ability to interact and function together on the streets.

In order to gain entry to Crip and Blood communities I employed a strategy of intentionally befriending any and all Crip or Blood gang members I encountered randomly at various gang intervention and convict reentry/ rehabilitation programs I am involved with in different parts of Los Angeles County, as well as everywhere else I could think of making friends with Crip and Blood affiliated gang members. As with my ethnography with Sureno affiliated gang members, I hung out at bars and barbeques, barber shops and tattoo parlors, night clubs and house parties, restaurants and concerts, and anywhere else my subjects invited me or I could think of to go. I also had a modest network of contacts to snowball from in a limited number of Crip and Blood affiliated gangs to start with, and I made my best effort to show face and be present for social engagements frequented by Crip and Blood gang members, from neighborhood bars and barbeques, to barber shops and tattoo parlors, to night clubs and concerts, to gang intervention meetings.

While my street identity didn't automatically earn me many admirers among Crip and Blood gang members, it at least served to assuage any suspicions that I might betray my

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subjects to law enforcement, as my prior propensity for criminal activity is easily verifiable from interacting with me, or something as simple as a google search of my former moniker. My identity as a graffiti artist also helped my entry in numerous field sites in the African American community, because while Crip and Blood gang members are typically unaware of the intricacies of the graffiti subculture the way Sureno gang members are, they often do have some interest in graffiti, and can tell from a simple google search of my moniker that, "Aww shit, you famous nigga!" Well not really, but I did paint a lot of graffiti when I was in my teens and twenties, and conveniently for my ethnography, contemporary urban youth culture venerates the urban graffiti subculture.

While I did not grow up immersed in a Crip and Blood gang culture, having grown up in Los Angeles I have had some contact with their culture over the years, and as a competent ethnographer I made every effort to code switch and conform to African American gang culture whenever I conducted fieldwork with Crip or Blood gang members. Although I must modestly admit that my mastery of their particular vernacular is clumsy at best, I made my best effort to walk as they walk, talk as they talk, and do as they do. I made a conscious effort to eat what they eat, to drink what they drink. I listened to their music, and watched music videos of popular local Crip or Blood gang affiliated rap artists on Youtube day in and day out, as that is unfortunately (for me at least) one of youngsters' most common activities on a mundane day in the hood with nothing to do. I also made every effort to dress according to black cultural mores in the ghetto, with a little more flair than I might otherwise display among my Sureno affiliated homeboys in Los Angeles. As the ancient adage goes, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do."

Fortunately I have a wardrobe of designer Nike sneakers and limited edition hats and hoodies from my years living in New York City during grad school, that are perfectly appropriate for this kind of fieldwork. In fact, my wardrobe was so "on point" that I would often get compliments on my outfits from young ladies in the black community who might have been interested in making my acquaintance.

The third facet of my ethnographic fieldwork couldn't have been more different from the other two, and probably required the most of my acumen as an ethnographic researcher. The final leg of my ethnographic fieldwork consisted of ethnographic participant observation of law enforcement officers (LEO hereafter) charged with gang enforcement in various agencies throughout Los Angeles County, and in Los Angeles County Jail. Of course I am not a sworn law enforcement officer myself, but I socialized extensively with LEO's, and was able to earn their trust to such a degree that I was often treated as if I was a sworn officer myself.

In order to accomplish this ethnographic challenge, I pursued a very successful strategy to gain entry into law enforcement officers' social circles, I became a competitive marksman. While I had somewhat of a substantial criminal career in my teens and twenties by square standards, I have no felony convictions and have never been arrested for a violent crime, as such, in the state of California, I am legally able to own firearms as I have since I was 18 years old. In the years prior to commencing the formal fieldwork for this research project I had the foresight to anticipate that I would need to develop relationships with LEO's throughout Los Angeles, and it dawned on me that shooting sports is the one endeavor I could pursue that would garner me the widest range of law enforcement contacts possible from law enforcement

agencies throughout Southern California. While most of my academic colleagues would frown

upon owning firearms and participating in shootings sports, particularly with the rash of

massacres committed with a firearm during the course of this fieldwork, from Aurora to

Newtown to Santa Barbara, none of my academic colleagues who do not have a background as

LEO's themselves have been able to develop the kind of extensive network of local LEO's at the

grass roots level that I have, and that level of access and personal connections are entirely due

to my participation and performance in shooting sports. I have become rather proficient in the

shooting sports I play, commonly known as IPSC/USPSA practical handgun and 3 gun

competition, and regularly place within the top 10% at local, regional and national level

matches. Once in a while I even win a local match, competing against dozens if not over a

hundred other shooters, many of whom have extensive military and law enforcement

experience.

My competence as a competitive shooter has thus earned the respect of my fellow

competitive shooters who work in law enforcement, and over the years I have become close

personal friends with quite a few of them, shooting together at local, regional and national level

matches, travelling to shooting matches together, working on our competition guns and rigs,

reloading ammunition together, as well as drinking beers and barbequing with them at

restaurants, bars and their homes with their coworkers, friends and family. In fact, every single

LEO interview I've done, formally and informally, every ride-a-long I went on, and almost every

LEO I know personally, came out of my participation in shooting sports. While I admit I enjoy

shooting sports very much, it is important for any ethnographer to remember, that as

ethnographic researchers we have to spend every hour of our lives living our ethnography, and all the better if we can have fun while doing it in the process.

In addition to participating in shooting sports as a competitor, I have also served as a volunteer range safety officer for yearly shooting competitions that draw competitors from a wide range of law enforcement agencies in Southern California, like the Green Beret Shooter's Cup charity match to benefit the families of Special Forces operators who have been killed in action, held at a local range in Norco California every year. As a result of my extensive knowledge and proficiency in shooting sports, I also regularly advise LEO's I know and their coworkers on choice of firearms and rigs to purchase and employ both on and off duty, and I help them select appropriate custom shops to perform the gunsmithing that their firearms and equipment require, which I cannot perform myself for lack of access to a proper machine shop. I also serve as an informal shooting coach to numerous LEO's I am friends with, as even a friend of mine with over fifteen years of law enforcement experience as a gang detective, SWAT operator and interagency task force team member, values my coaching because my shooting ability and knowledge is so far above that of even the most elite LEO's in the country.

Having access to LEO's in their own social milieu was invaluable in terms of informal interviewing and observation of their interaction with each other both on and off duty, in that I was able to garner their perspectives on the issues this research addresses in a context where they were totally at ease and could speak freely the way they never would in the presence of a stranger or ephemeral acquaintance such as a college professor. LEO's are easily the most difficult nut to crack for an ethnographer seeking to penetrate the perspectives of various

parties involved in the issue of gang violence in Los Angeles, but I am proud to report that I was

able to garner their sincere and unadulterated perspectives on gang conflicts in Los Angeles, on

a level that could never have been accomplished with a simple formal interview and/or ride-a-

long research schedule.

In addition, I conducted a half dozen formal interviews with LEO's who work in

specialized gang units and either lead those units and/or are assigned to areas where inter-

racial gang conflicts are endemic. I also went on over a dozen ride-a-longs with various agencies

throughout Los Angeles County, particularly in areas where inter-racial gang conflicts are

prevalent, including the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department's Century and Compton stations, the

Los Angeles Police Department's South Bureau, Huntington Park Police Department, Long

Beach Police Department, Culver City Police Department and Inglewood Police Department. Of

course every ride-a-long I went on was spent informally interviewing the officers and deputies I

rode with during the entire shift, which gave me the opportunity to extract a large cache of

information in a relatively short time, as I physically went to virtually every significant site of

inter-racial gang conflict in Los Angeles County over the course of a dozen plus ride-a-longs. I

went to and through every alley, street, corner, housing project, apartment complex, and

abandoned building of any interest in each of the neighborhoods I did a ride-a-long in, to a

degree that I could not have safely done on my own, without an armed officer or deputy at my

side. Paradoxically, with my reputation for proficiency with a firearm, many of the officers and

deputies I rode with joked that if we were engaged by suspects in a shootout, perhaps they

should throw me their firearm, as I would probably have a better chance of getting clean hits

than they would. They probably were right. A few of them even gave me access to a backup

firearm in their vehicle during my ride-a-long, just in case we were actually engaged by

suspects, particularly in jurisdictions where gang members engaging LEO's in shootouts is not

uncommon. Fortunately, I never saw so much as a shot fired during the course of my fieldwork

with law enforcement, though I have assumed a newfound appreciation for the danger and

difficulty of working the most violent gang active neighborhoods in Los Angeles as a LEO.

In addition to the access that my participation in competitive shooting sports conferred

on me, I made every effort to conform to cultural mores of LEO's, as LEO's have a distinct

subculture of their own, just as gang members do. I made a point of wearing the same clothes

as them, regularly donning cultural symbols of association with law enforcement like 5.11

Tactical brand pants, t-shirts from shooting competitions and gun companies, and reflective

ballistic mono-lens shooting/sunglasses like those commonly worn by LEO's and military

personnel. I also made every effort to use the lingo that LEO's use, though my adoption of their

vernacular was a learning endeavor in process, as I would pick up on terms, acronyms and

figures of speech that are commonly employed by LEO's in everyday speech. My ability to

assume the cultural identity of a LEO by speaking like they speak, dressing like they dress, and

carrying myself with the erect military bearing LEO's are known for, enabled me to more easily

penetrate the social world of LEO's and to earn their trust and confidence during the course of

my fieldwork.

Another issue that needs to be addressed is the issue of how much detail to reveal in

the course of this book. I have a very simple ethical rubric when it comes to my subjects and

their peers, both gang members and LEO's, which is reflected by a common informal oath LEO's often offer to one another, "I will never fuck you over." In my case, that applies not only to my respondents but also to their coworkers in law enforcement agencies, fellow gang members, and all the way up to the leaders of the major racialized gang factions. Qualitative researchers must be cognizant that the product of their research can potentially be used in the criminal prosecution of their research population, whether direct respondents or not. Therefore research ethics, and my own personal ethics, require that every effort be taken to prevent the disclosure of any specific information that could be used to prosecute anyone, ever. There are of course many crimes and many details about the lives of many people, both gang members and LEO's, that I have been privy to over the course of my life and during the course of this research, which I would never reveal to anyone under any circumstances no matter what. I am not now, nor have I ever been a snitch.

In fact it has not been uncommon for me during the course of this research to know who perpetrated a crime that LEO's I know are investigating, without me revealing any hint whatsoever that I even know any information at all about that crime. Likewise, I have been aware of investigations and warrants to be served by LEO's with whom I am intimately acquainted, where I could have warned the targets and undermined those investigations but did not do so. In addition to research ethics to which I am bound by oath, and my own personal ethics to which I am bound by honor, it would be very foolish to snitch on one side or the other, because today's homeboy could be tomorrow's dropout, and today's good cop could be tomorrow's bad cop.

To that end I have a very simple limit on the detail and identities of persons I am willing to reveal in the following chapters. I will not use the names of any persons who are still alive in reference to any crimes that could potentially be prosecuted in the future. While the identities of some prison gang members who are still active in prison gang politics are widely known to law enforcement, in an abundance of caution I will not use their names in reference to anything that has occurred since 1980 so as to not reveal anything that could potentially be used against anyone in a criminal or civil prosecution. There will be times when I may refer to someone, and some individuals in law enforcement and some individuals who are active in gang politics will know for themselves who I referred to, but I will not mention those individuals by name, so as not to confirm any suspicions of their activities. While my own depth of knowledge is much more detailed than what I reveal in the following chapters, I will not reveal any information about anyone or any crimes that are not already prosecuted and widely known to law enforcement. Likewise I will not reveal the identities of anyone in law enforcement or corrections who have spoken to me about these issues, some of whom may be guilty of crimes or malfeasance themselves, as they too could potentially suffer very serious repercussions both in terms of criminal prosecution, and with their coworkers and their superiors in the agencies they work for. Those are the lines that I will never cross.

2.5 Formal Interviews

The next major qualitative component of this research project consisted of 99 formal interviews conducted over the course of nearly two years. 92 Sureno, Crip and Blood affiliated gang members and seven gang unit detectives were formally interviewed using an interview schedule consisting of dozens of questions about every aspect of their lives, their activities and their perspectives with regard to inter-racial relations and conflict between Sureno and Crip and Blood affiliated gang members in Los Angeles, and in carceral environments throughout California. The duration of these interviews was anywhere from a half an hour to two and a half hours, depending on the extent of experiences each respondent had to offer. The average time would be around an hour or so per interview. Youngsters with only a few years of gang activity and no significant time served in carceral environments of course had much less to say than OG's and *veteranos* with decades of gang activity and time served in state and federal prisons to draw on in their descriptions. The depth and richness of this data cannot be understated, and I would estimate that the vast array of interview data presented in this book, doesn't even scratch the surface of the qualitative data I have collected during the course of this fieldwork. I probably didn't even use 5% of the quotes I could have used in the descriptions that follow, although I did use more extensive quotes from interview respondents than is commonly the case in existing research on street gangs in the United States.

I regularly employ the use of extended quotes from both formal and informal interviews, as I believe strongly in grounded qualitative research, and I believe it is of the

utmost importance to describe phenomena in the words of those who live it. This is important for a variety of reasons. First, I want to give a voice to those whose lives have been defined and whose narrative has been controlled by those who would seek to consciously or unconsciously marginalize them. Second, using respondents' own words to describe the phenomena studied, inherently provides a bulwark against the spectre of inaccurate analysis and interpretation that haunts so much sociological and criminological research in our field. Instead of working from the top down, redefining the terms of respondents' lives with existing sociological theoretical perspectives, I work from the ground up, building theory grounded in the lived experiences and perspectives of the populations I study.

Third, there is a great deal of significance to the gang affiliation of various respondents because of the relations and conflicts among and between specific gangs in specific communities in specific regions of Los Angeles, and it is necessary to identify the affiliation of various respondents in order to analyze the relationships and conflicts between them. Without considering the affiliation of respondents, their statements would be meaningless, precisely because it is their specific gang affiliation and the conflicts their gangs have engaged in across racial lines that confers the significance of their perceptions. For example, it would be meaningless to present quotes from respondents about the conflict between rival gangs like Florencia 13 and East Coast Crips, or 18th Street and the Black P Stones and Rolling 20's Neighborhood Bloods, without identifying that the quotes employed represent the perspectives of members of those specific gangs. Contrary to hegemonic post-war Chicago School

perspectives, I believe strongly that the significance of social phenomena is rooted in its specificity rather than its generalizability.

In addition to identifying the gang affiliation of each respondent who is quoted, I also include the general location of the specific gang clique or set that the respondent is affiliated with. This is important as a geographical referent because, as the data I present shows, there are significant cultural, social and demographic differences between different regions of Los Angeles, and it is important for the reader to be able to reference what region a respondent hails from when evaluating the content of their perceptions. It is also important to include the rough location of each respondent's clique or set, because some gangs like 18th Street, Florencia 13 and White Fence have semi-autonomous cliques in different regions of Los Angeles, and it is important to differentiate what region of Los Angeles any particular respondent is from. I also include the rough age of respondents, as there are also significant generational differences in the perspectives of gang members, even within the same gang in the same community. However, there are a number of cases in which I interviewed multiple respondents from the same gang, in the same area, within the same age range, so I must offer the caveat that the reader ought not assume that two quotes with the same age, affiliation and region are necessarily from the same respondent. For example I interviewed two members of East Side White Fence 13 who are in their fifties, three members of East Side Longos 13 who are in their twenties, two members of West Side Rolling 20s Neighborhood Bloods who are in their forties. Such is the inevitability of the mixed random and snowball sample that my subject population represents.

This subject sample was acquired with a mixed methodological approach, guided by a conscious effort to make the sample as representative as possible of gang membership in Los Angeles County. As such my respondents are overwhelmingly from areas of Los Angeles County that have a higher rate of gang membership and gang activity, like South and East Los Angeles or the Rampart District, and fewer respondents from areas where gang membership and gang activity is less prevalent like the San Fernando Valley, San Gabriel Valley or West Los Angeles. Some initial respondents were recruited from my own existing network of contacts in gangs throughout Los Angeles, but most were recruited randomly from field sites, and a few were intentionally sampled in order to provide their perspective on inter-racial conflicts their gangs are involved in, in regions of Los Angeles that my random sampling did not produce respondents from. While this is not the "objective" random sample that is the standard for quantitative analysis, I don't lose any sleep over it because I am confident from my own intimate knowledge of gangs in Los Angeles that my sample is as representative of gang members throughout Los Angeles County as it could be, given the inherent limitations of attempting to create a sample accurately representing perhaps the most marginalized population in our society, black and Latino gang members.

2.6 Quantitative Analysis

While the core of this research project is an extensive body of qualitative data, I have also applied modern quantitative statistical analyses to the data contained in my formal

interviews, supplemented by official data sources like the Federal Census and data compiled by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR hereafter). While I probably have less faith in statistical regression analysis than most of my colleagues in my field, I recognize the usefulness of quantitative methodologies in some aspects of sociological and criminological research and I employ them accordingly. Lamentably the small size of my sample precludes anything but the most unsophisticated multiple regression analyses, using at most a few controls at a time in one model, there were dozens of multiple regression analyses that were useful in supplementing and framing the qualitative data presented. Thus, while my qualitative data is grounded in the lived experiences of my subjects and their communities, it is also grounded in the facts that only statistical analysis can reveal.

In addition to multiple regression analyses, I have also employed descriptive statistical data in numerous graphs and tables. Line graphs demonstrating changes in demographics and crime rates were of particular use in supporting my narrative of the origin and trajectory of prison gangs in carceral environments in California, as my narrative is easily discernable in the descriptive data I assemble from CDCR's own yearly data on the prison population and facilities under its purview.[62] Simple descriptive data presented in tables was also helpful in giving rough comparisons of the differences in perception and perspective between Sureno and Crip and Blood affiliated respondents.

For comparison, respondents were divided into three areas of East, West and South Los Angeles roughly reflecting the popular definition of these areas by gang members in Los

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[62] CDCR 1955-2010

Angeles County. Respondents from neighborhoods roughly East of the Los Angeles River were considered East Side, respondents from roughly West of the 110 Freeway and North of the 105 and 10 Freeways were considered West Side, and respondents from East of the 110 Freeway and South of the 10 and 105 Freeways were considered to be from the South Side of Los Angeles. Respondents from the San Fernando Valley were grouped in the West Side category as there were too few of them to compose their own regional grouping, as those from the San Gabriel Valley were grouped in the East Side category. I would argue that these groupings make sense in that culturally and demographically these areas are indeed quite similar.

The data taken from respondents is combined in some analyses with data from the 2010 census indicating the proportion, by percentage, of black residents in the zip code where the respondent grew up. While it would have been ideal to be able to match that number to census data from when each respondent was in their teens, for example a respondent in their late 40s or early 50s would have been matched with data from the 1980 census, unfortunately such zip code data for past census years is not available prior to the 2000 census. Therefore I must use data from the most recent census in 2010 as an acceptable measure of the proportion of black residents in each respondents' immediate community, although we know that those figures are in many cases are considerably less than they would have been in the 1980 census, particularly in South Los Angeles.

While I believe quantitative methods of analysis and data representation are an essential component of a holistic mixed methodological analyses of social phenomena, nonetheless by itself, the quantitative data and analyses employed in this project would have

been woefully inadequate in developing a coherent, cogent and accurate analysis of inter-racial

relations between black and Latino gang members without the insight provided by extensive

qualitative data, fieldwork and analysis. That is why the qualitative portion of this research

project forms the core of this work, with quantitative data and analyses serving to supplement

and frame the rich qualitative data this work is rooted in.

Chapter 3 Historical Background

When Two Worlds Collide

"Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both." – C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*[63]

Many modern mainstream sociological and criminological analyses rely exclusively on quantitative or qualitative data and analysis, while ignoring historical factors that structure the social relations their data purports to explain. This is a deficiency in the literature that, while not ubiquitous by any means, is unfortunately prevalent in the discipline. With an academic culture driven by journal publications with word count limits offering barely enough room to report empirical findings, historical background is typically sacrificed at the altar of "objective" empirical data, a pattern that sadly all too often carries over to academic book publications as well. As a result, many researchers are often left with correlations and quotations they are unable to put a plausible causal narrative to, because they lack the historical context to properly understand and explain the data they have collected in their research. One only needs to attend any of the major annual academic conferences to observe tenured faculty endure the anxiety of struggling to invent a causal narrative to explain the correlations their empirical research has found, unsure in their own minds of the soundness of their analysis because they

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[63] Mills 1959(2000) p. 3

simply don't have the historical background knowledge to understand the context their data is

embedded in. Indeed, lacking historical context, causal narratives can be painfully elusive.

This is especially troubling for urban analyses, as modern urban life is heavily structured

by historical factors the vast majority of the lay public, and much of academia, takes for

granted. As each generation comes of age in a society where the journey down one side of a

prior historical crossroads occasions a perception of inevitability for those who are not

conscious of the past choices made before their time, critical analysis of the state of social

relations falls by the wayside. While there are some notable exceptions to this deficiency in

modern social science literature such as Randol Contreras's recent book *The Stickup Kids*,[64] it is

hardly fair to single out individual examples of academic literature that fail to consider historical

context, since those who fail to do so are unconsciously following a discipline in decline,

unaware of their own ignorance of the historical context(s) that structure and frame the

empirical findings their mentors taught them to tout as absolute "objective" evidence.

This is a pitfall the following chapter intends to avoid. This chapter examines the history

of racial bias that has structured and framed current racial relations in Los Angeles, and

elsewhere for that matter. This is a history not of years or decades but of centuries. It is a

history of crossroads, each of which influencing the possibilities for future generations; each

generation making choices that structure the realm of possibilities for following generations,

without knowing that the choices they make were structured in large part, by choices made by

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[64] Contreras 2013

prior generations. As C. Wright Mills put it in the opening to his classic *The Sociological Imagination*,

> "Seldom aware of the intricate connection between the patterns of their own lives and the course of world history, ordinary men do not usually know what this connection means for the kinds of men they are becoming and for the kinds of history-making in which they might take part. They do not possess the quality of mind essential to grasp the interplay of man and society, of biography and history, of self and world. They cannot cope with their personal troubles in such ways as to control the structural transformations that usually lie behind them."[65]

That is precisely why historical context matters, because like a family tree, where each branch leads to splits between further branches, the choices made at each historical juncture both open the possibility of future choices, while simultaneously closing the door on others. Thereby removing them not only from consideration, but moreover, often removing them from our very consciousness, making current circumstances and relations seem as natural and inevitable as the sky is blue. They most certainly are not.

As social creatures, human beings create the societies we live in. The circumstances we now find ourselves facing are not inevitable. They are the progeny of past decisions made by those who came before us and may not have had our interests in mind. However, the silver lining is that as human being we are conscious creatures, capable of realizing past mistakes, returning to those crossroads, and pursuing a different path. That is the power of sociology,

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[65] Mills 1959(2000) p. 3-4

helping people to change the way they think about the societies they live in, realizing the

agency that we all possess, both individually and collectively, to determine our own futures and

those of succeeding generations. Sociology is the power to change the world we live in.

As every juncture in history structures relations for its successors, beginning at any point

in time is in large part an arbitrary decision. However, some historical junctures have been

more significant in the development of modern social relations than others. Therefore, in

choosing a historical point in time to begin an analysis, it is important to choose a historical

juncture that was most significant in structuring the social relations one endeavors to examine.

For this endeavor, that decision is rather unproblematic to arrive at. That point in time is over

five hundred years ago, in 15th century Spain, where one of the most significant historical

junctures for modern social relations occurred, the invention of the race concept and the birth

of a system of racial stratification in the context of colonial expansion and subjugation of

peoples the world over.

3.1 Racism and Racial Bias in Mexican and Mexican American Society

As Mexican society has formed the historical core of Latino society in the Los Angeles

context, it is the trajectory of the race concept through Mexican history that I will focus my

attention on first, although the reader must not forget that the race concept had a similar

trajectory throughout Latin America in the post-Colombian epoch. While scholars and society at

large are very familiar with the history of racial prejudice in North America, following

Menchaca[66], I argue that racial bias in the Americas has formed in two separate trajectories, one primarily through English colonization, with which we are all too familiar, and a second trajectory through Spanish colonization of Central and South America. The existence of racial bias in Latin America is firmly established, as numerous scholars have pointed to the history of racial domination and subjugation of African and *Indigenas* populations in Latin America.[67] As a result of these historical circumstances, racism in the US has been a double gauntlet for Mexican Americans specifically, as well as Latinos in the US generally. Characterizing the experiences of Latinos in the US, Gomez has dubbed the historical experience of Chicano inhabitants of the Southwest as 'double colonization', whereby the *Indigenas* Mexican population have had to negotiate racial stratification systems first imposed by Spanish colonization, and then another racial status system imposed by Anglo-American colonization since the Mexican American War.[68]

The extent of racial inequality in Latin America has been effectively veiled by long standing paradigms and policies in Latin America, which assert that all Latino peoples are of a single shared mixed 'Mestizo' race, and therefore there is no racism in Latin American countries.[69] For example, most Latin American countries do not include a question on race in their national census, rendering it impossible to accurately quantify the level of racial disparity in Latin American countries.[70] Mexico is a pertinent example of this dynamic.

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[66] Menchaca 2001
[67] Boyd-Bowman 1969; Palmer 1976; Menchaca 2001; Gomez 2007; Wood 2010; Forbes 2010
[68] Menchaca 2001; Gomez 2007
[69] Vigil and Lopez 2004; Dulitzky 2005
[70] Ibid

The topic of racial bias in Mexican society is a sensitive subject that has not yet received the level of attention that Anglo prejudice has in the US, with most research on racial bias in Mexico focusing on bias against *Indigenas* peoples, rather than on Afro-Mexicans.[71] While there is at least some recent data that could suggest an anti-African racial bias among Mexicans[72] and other data that clearly demonstrates an anti-African American bias among Mexican Americans[73], this data and the corresponding conclusion, that anti-African racial bias in Mexico and among Mexican Americans is a very real phenomenon, and has not yet received the level of attention that is warranted by events in the public sphere

The historical roots of racism in Mexico trace back to 15th century Spain, where the first regular contact between Europeans and Sub-Saharan Africans occurred under the context of European domination, and where by no historical accident, the very concept of race itself was born.[74] This historical moment is an appropriate starting point in attempting to understand the historical roots of black and Latino racial gang conflict in Los Angeles not only because it was the root of what Smedley[75] calls "the racial worldview" in North America; but this historical juncture was also the beginning of a deeply seeded racial bias in Spain and in Spanish colonies as well, formed during the *Reconquista* of Spain and the *Conquista* of the Americas by the

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[71] Colby and Van Den Berghe 1961; Wagley 1965; Morner 1967; Vasconcelos 1997; Vigil 1998; Vigil and Lopez 2004; Villareal 2010; etc.
[72] Villareal 2010
[73] Mindiola et al. 2002; Telles and Ortiz 2008, Zamora 2011
[74] Marks 1995; Hannaford 1996; Fredrickson 2002; Smedley 2007
[75] Smedley 2007

Spanish, perpetuated and passed on by their descendants (and the descendants of the peoples

they colonized) in the five centuries since then.[76]

Following the defeat of the last Moorish kingdom from Granada in the 15th century, the

Spanish Crown and the Catholic Church enforced a series of policies popularly known as the

Spanish Inquisition, which demanded that all non-Catholics either convert to Catholicism, be

exiled from Spain, or be killed if they refused exile. Consequently all former Moors and Jews,

the principal non-Catholic populations in Spain, who wished to remain in Spain were forced to

convert to the Catholic Church and proclaim their allegiance to the Spanish Crown.

However, having little faith in the sincerity of their subjects' allegiance to Catholicism

and the Spanish Crown, Spaniards began to differentiate between those who were directly

descended from Catholics and those who were descended from Moorish and Jewish *conversos*.

As direct descendant Catholic Spaniards cast suspicion on the sincerity of the *conversos*'

conversion to Christianity, they began to equate a religion-based social status with bloodline

heritage. The concept of *Limpieza de Sangre*[77] established the idea that one's bloodline descent

determined one's status as a human being, with those descended from Christians having

intrinsically higher status than those who descended from Moors or Jews.[78] During the years

following the *Reconquista*, the Spanish came to use the word *raza*, a word that had previously

been used to denote different types of textiles or different breeds of horses, as a word to

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[76] Menchaca 2001
[77] Translation: cleanliness of blood
[78] Hannaford 1996; Smedley 2007

differentiate between what the Spanish perceived to be fundamentally different groups of

human beings, thereby creating the world's first system of racial stratification.[79]

While both the concept and the word "race" were expropriated from the Spanish and

exported to North America by the English through the slave trade, the concept that there are

fundamentally different racially-defined groups of people in the world, and the word *raza* itself,

were also carried to Latin America by the Spanish and their Portuguese trading partners. With

the emergence of the African slave trade, the race concept was in turn applied to Africans

throughout Spanish society, who occupied the lowest level of the racial hierarchy then as they

do now. This was due in large part to Catholic dogma during the period, which ascertained that

Sub-Saharan Africans were unfit for conversion to Christianity, due to the popular belief at the

time that black Africans were the direct bloodline descendants of the biblical Canaanites.[80] In

contrast, the Native American people the Spanish encountered in the New World were

eventually (after some vigorous debate) found to be fit for conversion. This led to the eventual

emancipation of all indigenous slaves by decree of the Spanish Crown in 1542, and the reliance

upon exclusively African slaves in Spanish colonies from that point forward.[81]

It is largely, and perhaps conveniently forgotten, both in Mexico and in the US, that

Mexico was once the foremost recipient of African slaves in the Americas. In fact, Mexico

accounted for around half of all African slaves imported to the New World up until the turn of

the 18th century.[82] Roughly 200,000 African slaves were imported to Mexico, with most of the

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[79] Marks 1995; Hannaford 1996; Smedley 2007
[80] Palmer 1976
[81] Ibid
[82] Palmer 1976; Forbes 2010

slaves going through Gulf Coast regions like Veracruz and many of them ending up in interior

provinces like the *District Federale* (Mexico City) and the mining region of Zacatecas in southern

Mexico.[83]

The African-descended population of Mexico was a proportionally significant segment of

the overall colonial population. For example, Palmer found that in 1612 the population of

Mexico City was composed of 50,000 African slaves, 80,000 *Indigenas*, and only 15,000

Spaniards of European origin.[84] Indeed African slaves were ubiquitous in Spanish society, both

in the New and the Old World. However, their place in the Spanish status hierarchy has always

been at the bottom, having been considered the least fit for conversion among the many

disparate populations ruled by the Spanish Crown during the colonial period.[85]

The position of Africans at the bottom of the Spanish status hierarchy was roughly

commensurate with the position of Africans in the North American status hierarchy. In Anglo

America, the "one-drop rule" was enforced such that persons of any African descent

whatsoever were considered black and effectively excluded from full participation in Anglo-

American society.[86] Similarly, in colonial New Spain, Afro-Mexicans, both freed and enslaved,

were subject to a litany of social, economic, legal and cultural restrictions.[87]

Not unlike their North American counterparts, having been denied many of the

opportunities enjoyed by the Spanish and *Indigenas* populations, and subject to constant

domination, subjugation and discrimination, the free Afro-Mexican population was socially

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[83] Palmer 1976; Menchaca 2001
[84] Palmer 1976
[85] Palmer 1976; Menchaca 2001
[86] Nobles 2000
[87] Boyd-Bowman 1969; Palmer 1976; Menchaca 2001; Wood 2010; Forbes 2010

conditioned to constitute a sort of permanentlymarginalized under-class in colonial Mexican society, which was understandably more prone to crime and deviance, given their lack of legitimate opportunities in colonial Mexican society.[88] Documents describing acts of deviance and criminality among Afro-Mexicans have been uncovered by Palmer and Boyd-Bowman, and show that Afro-Mexicans constituted and were perceived by Mexican society as a whole to be a criminalized permanent underclass in colonial Spanish society much as African Americans have been historically situated and perceived in Anglo American society.[89]

In attempting to understand how anti-black bias has been passed on to modern Mexican society from colonial Spanish times, it is worth considering what happened to the Afro-Mexican population between then and now. In examining the experiences of the existing descendants of Afro-Mexican slaves, Vaughn studied the relatively small surviving population of Afro-Mexicans in Costa Chica in the Veracruz region of the Gulf Coast, which he estimates to be around 50,000.[90] Although legal equality was achieved with the Mexican Revolution of 1811, both Menchaca and Vaughn found that modern Afro-Mexicans continue to occupy the bottom of the racialized social hierarchy in Mexico through the present day.[91]

As Vaughn and Dulitzky explain, since there are no statistics kept on the racial composition of the Mexican population, and the "Mestizo Myth" is at the core of the identity of the Mexican State, Afro-Mexicans are effectively in a state of social limbo, so to say, in that qualitative evidence clearly demonstrates that *Afro-Mexicanos/as* continue to suffer from social

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[88] Boyd-Bowman 1969; Palmer 1976
[89] Ibid
[90] Vaughn 2005
[91] Menchaca 2001; Vaughn 2005

and economic bias, but since they are not officially recognized as a distinct racial group, they

have no way of quantitatively documenting their subordination in order to collectively resist

it.[92] By perpetuating the "Mestizo Myth", the Mexican State and other Latin American nations

can conveniently ignore the subordination of Afro-Latinos by effectively rendering their socio-

economic position statistically invisible.[93]

So what then happened to the rest of the Afro-Mexicans? It is well documented that

some proportion of the African slave population in colonial New Spain perished due to inhuman

work conditions. In fact, Palmer and Boyd-Bowman both document that there was a constantly

increasing demand for new consignments of African slaves, in large part attributable to attrition

of the slave population due to death from hard labor and/or accidents in dangerous work

environments.[94] Coupled with the fact that the proportion of male to female African slaves

imported into New Spain was about 3 to 1, it is reasonable to assume that some significant

proportion of the Afro-Mexican population died without reproducing.[95]

Another explanation that must account for some significant proportion of the Afro-

Mexican population is miscegenation. Just as a significant proportion of the aborigine

population was absorbed into Anglo society in colonial Australia, where miscegenation over the

course of multiple generations resulted in the "breeding out" of native phenotypic markers and

skin pigmentation in much of the aboriginal-descended population,[96] the same must be true for

some proportion of the modern Afro-Mexican population in Mexico and the US. Unlike in North

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[92] Dulitzky 2005; Vaughn 2005
[93] Ibid
[94] Boyd-Bowman 1969; Palmer 1976
[95] Palmer 1976
[96] Wolfe 2001

America where racial intermarriage was strictly forbidden, intermarriage between *Afro-Mexicanos/as*, *Indigenas* and Spaniards of European origin at the bottom of the Spanish social hierarchy is well documented in colonial New Spain.[97] Therefore some proportion of the Afro-Mexican population, and their corresponding phenotypic markers and skin pigmentation, were undeniably absorbed into the general Mexican "Mestizo" population.[98] Combined with an unhealthy dose of historical amnesia due to the taboo status of blackness in colonial Spanish society, miscegenation certainly plays a significant role in explaining the absence of African identity among modern day Mexicans and Mexican Americans.

Data provided by analysis of genetic admixture in various parts of modern-day Mexico provides convincing evidence for the miscegenation hypothesis. Lisker and Babinsky found admixture of Sub-Saharan African genetic markers in populations throughout Mexico with the lowest levels in northern Mexico at around 10%.[99] However, they found much higher level of genetic admixture in areas of Southeastern Mexico where African slaves were transported in large numbers, where around a quarter of genetic markers in the modern Mexican population was determined to be of Sub-Saharan African origin.[100]

In addition, Villareal, in a recent article, documented a higher proportion of Mexicans in Mexico of darker complexion in the southern regions of the country, supporting with empirical data what has commonly been accepted in public perception, both in Mexico and in the US, that Mexicans in southern regions of Mexico tend to have a darker complexion than Mexicans

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[97] Boyd-Bowman 1969; Forbes 2010
[98] Forbes 2010
[99] Lisker and Babinsky 1986
[100] Ibid

in the northern regions of Mexico.[101] It is important to remember that these areas were among

the foremost recipients of African slaves during the colonial period, and so it would seem

reasonable to suggest that at least some of the darker complexion of populations in Southeast

Mexico is attributable to the presence of Sub-Saharan African genetic features, like melanin rich

skin tones, in the modern "Mestizo" populations of these regions.

Menchaca and Gomez elucidate how encouraging anti-black racial bias among Mexicans

was part of a "divide and conquer" colonial strategy employed by Anglo American occupiers

after the Mexican American War.[102] By granting nominal white status to Mestizo Mexican

Americans, Anglo-Americans planted the malignant seed of white superiority in the Mestizo

population, with the intent to undermine potential solidarity in Mexican resistance to Anglo

domination. While assuming a white identity under Anglo-American rule has proved

problematic for the Mexican population of the Southwest, the desire to pass as white and the

social and economic rewards for achieving a white identity has been a frightfully potent

incentive encouraging anti-black bias among Chicanos and a profound amnesia as to the partial

African descent of much of the Mexican population in the US.[103]

This point is not only germane to Mexicans in the US context, but also to other ethnic

immigrant populations in other parts of the US. Loewen found a similar distancing pattern in

Chinese relations with African Americans in Mississipi in the late 19th century. Imported as a

docile labor force, they too found social and economic incentives to assume a less than white

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[101] VIllareal 2010

[102] Menchaca 2001; Gomez 2007

[103] Boyd-Bowman 1969; Palmer 1976; Lisker and Babinsky 1986; Menchaca 2001; Vaughn 2005; Gomez 2007;
Forbes 2010

position in the racial stratification hierarchy, rather than risk parity with blacks at the bottom of

the totem pole, so to say.[104] Likewise, Mohl found that Cuban immigrants in Miami, finding

themselves the beneficiaries of generous government largess, sought to blend with the existing

Anglo population and viewed the existing African American population as a problematic

competitor, rather than a similarly situated potential class ally.[105]

Mexican bias against African Americans, and vice versa, has also been historically

documented in Los Angeles at the turn of the 20th century. Evidence of this bias can be found in

Sanchez's classic historical analysis of the formation of the Mexican American community in Los

Angeles.[106] Although he found that Mexicans typically lived in mixed race neighborhoods with

African-American neighbors at the turn of the 20th century, his examination of marriage records

found not one single case of intermarriage between a Mexican and an African American.[107] This

fact betrays not only a definite social distance, if not outright bias between the Mexican

American and African American communities at the time, but also reflects the legal framework

of the time that forbade racial intermarriage between nominally 'white' Mexicans and black

African Americans.[108]

At this juncture it is worth offering a caveat. I want to emphasize that I am *not*

suggesting that anti-black racial bias among Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Los Angeles is

solely or even primarily responsible for inter-minority racialized gang conflict, or that Latino

gangs are primarily at fault. Certainly the split labor market, consolidated inequality, group

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[104] Loewen 1971
[105] Mohl 1990
[106] Sanchez 1993
[107] Ibid
[108] Menchaca 2001

threat and defended neighborhood models can account for bias against Mexicans among black gang members and in African American communities, which has clearly been documented by Mindiola et al and McClain et al.[109] I only suggest that the bias that has been passed down to the modern day Mexican American and Latino community in Los Angeles is an important piece of the puzzle in constructing a causal narrative of the historical roots of black/ brown racialized gang conflict in modern day Los Angeles.

3.2 Historical Immigration, Segregated Settlement and Demographic Change

Having established the generally subordinate position of Africans in Mexican society and culture, and the existence of a definite racial bias against blacks in Mexican culture, I can turn the focus of this analysis to examine how historical migratory and settlement patterns since the Mexican-American War affected racial relations in Los Angeles and set the stage for the current climate of inter-minority antagonism. Ironically, California and the northern frontier of what was Mexico prior to 1848, were some of the most eclectic colonies established by the Spanish Crown, where Afro-Mexicans, *Indigenas*, Mestizos and Spaniards lived with little of the restrictions on social and economic mobility found in the more populous regions of colonial Mexico.[110] Indeed a segment of the original inhabitants sent by the Spanish Crown to establish

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[109] Mindiola 2002; McClain et al. 2006
[110] Robinson 2010

a colony at *El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Ángeles del Río de Porciúncula* in Alta

California in the late 18th century, were a number of free Afro-Mexicans.[111]

Roughly half of Spanish inhabitants in California prior to Anglo occupation were of at

least partial African descent and they freely intermingled, intermarried and interacted with the

Spanish, Mestizo and *Indigenas* populations in and around the pueblo. In some cases they even

rose to positions of high status and political importance in California from the colonial period

through the Mexican period, up to the sacrifice of half of Mexico at the altar of Anglo American

expansion and the doctrine of *Manifest Destiny*.[112]

It is arguable that prior to the arrival of Anglo Americans, Angelinos of Afro-Mexican

descent had little racial consciousness and considered themselves to be part of the general

Mexican Mestizo population like any other member of Californio society. Unlike in other parts

of the Spanish colonial empire in the Americas, Afro-Mexican Angelenos could own property,

businesses and accumulate wealth throughout both the Spanish and Mexican periods. In fact

one Mayor of Los Angeles during the colonial period and two Governors of California during the

post-colonial Mexican period were of at least partial African descent, including the last Mexican

Governor of California, Don Pio Pico, for whom Pico Boulevard is named. However, despite the

accomplishments of some prominent Afro-Mestizo *Californios*, the racial hierarchy of Spanish

society in the aggregate, with pure-blooded Spaniards of European origin generally at the top

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[111] Robinson 2010; Forbes 2010
[112] Ibid

and persons of mixed African descent at the bottom, was certainly in evidence in early Los

Angeles, just as it was pervasive throughout Spanish colonies in the Americas.[113]

The unprovoked invasion of Mexico by the United States and the subsequent collapse of

the unstable fledgling Mexican State compelled the sale of California and what is now the entire

American Southwest to the US in the one-sided *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo*, which was forced

upon the interim Mexican military government in 1848 by the American military occupation of

Mexico City.[114] With the transfer of half the country to US sovereignty in the wake of the

Mexican-American War and the miraculously timed discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill, the first of

several massive waves of immigration brought hordes of Anglo settlers to California. These

interlopers sharply shifted the demographic balance virtually overnight from a thoroughly

Mexican society, to a society where Anglos vastly outnumbered indigenous Mexican residents.

While scholars have often argued that the source of inter-minority racial conflict lies in more

recent waves of immigration from Latin America,[115] it is my contention that it was the influx of

massive numbers of Anglos, and the African-Americans who came to serve the Anglo

community over a century ago, that set the stage for the current inter-racial gang conflicts in

Los Angeles.

With the arrival of the Anglos to California, came the Anglo American system of racial

categorization, discrimination and subordination, which rendered all non-white peoples

subordinate to the newly arrived Anglo American population. Whereas in Mexico, *Indigenas*

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[113] Forbes 2010

[114] This is where the opening line of the United States Marine Corps hymn finds its origin: "From the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli, we will fight our county's battles, in the air, on land and sea. First to fight for right and freedom, and to keep our honor clean…" Ironic isn't it?

[115] Mindiola et al 2002; Vaca 2004; Hipp et al. 2009

passing as Mestizo was a common strategy for moving up the social status hierarchy in Mexican society[116], some Mexicans in the late 19th century, particularly those of lighter complexion with greater financial resources, attempted to elude the imposition of the North American racial worldview by asserting that they were of European "Spanish" descent, and not "Mexican".[117] While this may have been encouraged in other parts of the Southwest; the Mexican population of Los Angeles had been relieved of all significant property holdings by the turn of the 20th century, all within a mere few generations.[118] Thus virtually overnight, the existing Mexican population found itself robbed of its resources and reputations, and reduced to the lowest level of social status in American society, similarly situated as the new African American Angelenos who had arrived with the influx of Anglo settlers to California.

Thus by the turn of the 20th century, both the Mexican American and African American populations in Los Angeles had been reduced to the same subordinate class position, and consequently for future generations, had been relegated to more or less racially defined neighborhoods to the east and the south of the city center.[119] Originally inhabiting the center of the city around what is now Alvera Street, development in the city center by Anglo elites eventually pushed the Mexican population east towards the less desirable hills and low-lying flats in what are now areas of East Los Angeles like Lincoln Heights, Boyle Heights, El Hoyo, and The Flats. These areas were adjacent to orchards in the San Gabriel valley where much of the work for Mexican day laborers was located. Simultaneously, the center of black Los Angeles was

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[116] Wagley 1965; Vigil and Lopez 2004; Forbes 2010
[117] Gomez 2007
[118] Sanchez 1993
[119] Moore 1978; Vigil 1988, 2002a, 2002b; Davis 1990; Alonso 2004, 2010; Chapple 2010; Robinson 2010

pushed southward along the Central Avenue corridor in what has henceforth been known as

South Central Los Angeles, where there once stood a US Army base where black men could get

work shoeing horses and cleaning stables. Racially restrictive housing covenants and lending

practices proscribed encroachment by non-whites into Anglo neighborhoods, thus the black

and brown populations could only expand into tightly circumscribed areas deemed undesirable

to Anglos.[120]

Despite these historical circumstances, inter-racial tension between the black and Latino

communities in Los Angeles has only recently reached the level of deadly gang violence the city

has seen since the collapse of the civil rights movement. Certainly one of the factors in the

formation of racial opposition between these communities has been the massive influx of

Mexican and other Latin American immigrants to Los Angeles in recent decades.[121]

However, what has not been connected to the narrative is the role played by successive

waves of immigration, both internally and externally, that originally populated South Central

and the East Side, as well as other areas of the city where blacks and Latinos settled. Due to the

advent of convenient rail travel, labor demand in agriculture, railroads and industry in the

Southwest, as well as politics and economic conditions in Mexico, among other reasons, Los

Angeles experienced a constant influx of successive waves of immigrants into the Mexican

American community over the course of the 20th century.[122] Likewise, ease of travel, racial

oppression and economic conditions in the American South led to significant waves of African

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[120] Davis 1990; Massey and Denton 1993; Alonso 2004, 2010; Chapple 2010; Robinson 2010
[121] Davis 1990; Mindiola et al. 2002; Vaca 2004; Umemoto 2006; Telles and Ortiz 2008; Hipp et al. 2009
[122] Sanchez 1993; Gutierrez 1995; Massey 1995; Mindiola et al. 2002; Vaca 2004; Umemoto 2006; Acuna 2007; Gomez 2007; Telles and Ortiz 2008

American immigration to Los Angeles, particularly in the early to mid-20th century.[123] Thus, throughout the majority of the 20th century, South Central has remained historically majority African American, attracting black migrants from the South, and the East Side has remained historically majority Mexican American, attracting Latino immigrants, mostly from Mexico.

Although it has been the most recent arrival of immigrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries like El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, that has tipped the demographics in South Central, leaving blacks the minority in areas of the city where they had historically maintained majority status; this historical black majority in South Central, it is important to remember, was due to no enjoyment on the part of the African American population. Quite to the contrary, the large numbers of African Americans inhabiting South Central and other ghettos across the nation, were due entirely to very deliberately racist public policies, like racially restrictive housing covenants and discriminatory lending practices, that concentrated the black underclass of America into urban ghettos like South Central in the first place.[124] If blacks are defending their neighborhoods, as defended neighborhood and group threat theories suggest, it is important to remember that it is the fruit of forced segregation that they are defending, as these neighborhoods certainly were not chosen by African Americans of their own volition.

It is also worth acknowledging that recent demographic shifts in South Central Los Angeles are as much a result of black out-migration to places like Riverside, San Bernardino, Phoenix and Las Vegas, as they are a result of Latino in-migration. Some African Americans, no

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[123] Chapple 2010; Robinson 2010
[124] Davis 1990; Massey and Denton 1993; Alonso 2004, 2010; Chapple 2010; Robinson 2010

longer burdened with the type of racist restrictions that circumscribed the settlement patterns

of previous generations, have worked their way to higher economic status, as theories of

segmented assimilation suggest[125], the same way some proportion of the Mexican American

population has worked their way out of poverty, as theories of segmented assimilation have

suggested for Latinos as well.[126] When blacks' and/or Latinos' income and standard of living

increases, they move out of the ghettos and barrios to communities where generations ago

they would not have been permitted to walk the streets unmolested. In other cases, the return

of the privileged white gentry to the city center, what is commonly called "reverse white flight"

and what I would call "hipster colonialism", has priced poor blacks out of urban neighborhoods

in Los Angeles County to economically depressed areas further away from the urban core of Los

Angeles County, creating satellite ghettos throughout San Bernardino, Riverside and Clark

counties.

The combination of these circumstances certainly left a whittled-down black community

in formerly black-majority neighborhoods, whose feelings and perceptions could very well be

explained by group threat[127] and defended neighborhood[128] perspectives, and where economic

competition could also account for conflict between blacks and Latinos. Umemoto documented

these sentiments in the black community on the Westside of Los Angeles in Venice and Culver

City[129], and it seems to reason that the same dynamic exists in other areas where Latinos have

displaced existing black populations, like the ongoing Florencia 13/ East Coast Crips feud on the

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[125] Portes and Zhou 1993; Massey 1995; Telles and Ortiz 2008
[126] Grebler, et al. 1970; Telles and Ortiz 2008
[127] Blumer 1958; Quillian 1995, 1996
[128] Suttles 1972; Bergesen and Herman 1998; Green et al. 1998
[129] Umemoto 2006

East Side of South Central, or the West Side 18 Street/ Black P Stones feud in the West Side of

South Central. However, recent immigration and the resulting demographic changes are only

one piece of the puzzle that must be assembled in order to achieve a more coherent and

comprehensive understanding and historical appreciation of black on brown racialized gang

conflict in Los Angeles, or anywhere else for that matter.

3.3 Enforcing White Supremacy, Creating Insular Oppositional Racial Identities

Aforementioned racially restrictive housing covenants were among the more blatant

public policies, which contributed to the current culture of black/ brown racialized gang conflict

in Los Angeles. By funneling the black and Latino populations into tightly circumscribed

neighborhoods in South Central and East LA in the first half of the 20th century, the Anglo

bigotry that racially restrictive housing covenants enforced succeeded in concentrating the

black and brown underclass in these areas long after the constitutional validity of racially

restrictive housing covenants was successfully challenged in court in 1948.[130] By establishing

these racial enclaves, the Anglo Angeleno establishment succeeded in making them a common

destination for generations of black and Latino immigrants to Los Angeles, long after the

covenants themselves were legally dissolved. Furthermore, while the covenants may have been

formally removed from the legal structure in 1948, these racial, spatial, and social boundaries

were enforced for generations through extra-legal violence and harassment by white

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[130] Darden 1995

communities and law enforcement agencies led by unabashed racists like longtime LAPD Chief

William H. Parker, for whom the LAPD's current headquarters is named. These "off the books"

policies certainly contributed to the perpetual demarcation of these areas of the city as the

permanent enclaves of the black and Latino underclass.[131]

In addition to deliberate government policies and practices that enforced racial

segregation, it is also worthwhile to consider how law enforcement efforts to undermine civil

rights movements in the black and Chicano communities contributed to racial animosity

between black and Latino communities and racial conflict between black and Latino gangs in

Los Angeles. In his analysis of the Chicano rights movement in Los Angeles in the late 1960's

and early 1970's, Haney-Lopez argues that formal arrest and prosecution, and extra-legal

violence and intimidation by law enforcement – what he collectively calls "legal violence" – led

to the radicalization of the Chicano rights movement and the crystallization of an insular,

oppositional and radical racial identity among Mexican American youth involved in the

movement.[132] As he and other scholars recount, the Chicano rights movement started as a

protest by young Mexican Americans to substandard school conditions and harassment by law

enforcement, but later morphed into a radical and oppositional subculture of resistance

epitomized by the infamous Brown Berets organization.[133]

Haney-Lopez argues that legal violence perpetrated against Chicano rights activists by

law enforcement, and the infiltration of the Brown Berets by provocateurs who were later

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[131] Davis 1990; Alonso 2004, 2010
[132] Haney-Lopez 2003
[133] Vigil 1996; Haney-Lopez 2003; Acuna 2007

revealed to be agents of federal law enforcement agencies like the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco

Firearms and Explosives (BATFE or ATF for short), not only radicalized the movement, but

moreover, pushed Chicano youth from a movement denouncing the race concept as a vehicle

for disparate treatment, to a movement embracing the race concept as a master identity,

exclusive to Mexican Americans and in opposition to all other races – *La Raza*. Haney-Lopez

suggests that this paradigmatic shift effectively undermined solidarity between the black and

Chicano communities by dividing them according to differentially perceived racial identities.[134]

Whereas in the early days of the movement, Chicano rights activists had emulated and

participated in the black civil rights movement of the 1960's, the formation of an exclusively

Chicano racial identity took on an increasingly significant role as a conceptual boundary

between the black and Chicano activists and their respective communities at large.

Of course this exclusive and oppositional Chicano racial identity complements the

historical racism in Mexican and Mexican American society as discussed above. Furthermore,

this insular conception of Chicano racial identity is a cruel irony, considering the conveniently

forgotten Afro-Mexican descent of much of the modern day Mexican and Mexican American

population.

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[134] Haney-Lopez 2003

Figure 3-1: Brown Beret with Black Panther Party members in Oakland circa 1968

Although Haney-Lopez applies this argument to the Chicano rights movement, I would

argue that the connection between legal violence and the emergence of a militant insular

oppositional racial identity is equally applicable to the black civil rights movement and its later

manifestation, the Black Power movement, as suggested by both Alonso and Cornell and

Hartmann.[135] Of course we are all too familiar with the images of blatantly racist local law

enforcement agencies, like the infamous Bull Connor, unleashing vicious legal violence against

black civil rights activists in the South. However, what receives less attention in popular

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[135] Alonso 2004; Cornell and Hartmann 2007

depictions of the civil rights movement are the egregiously deliberate government policies

designed to undermine civil rights activism in minority communities, particularly the notorious

COINTELPRO operation undertaken by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI hereafter) in the

1960's and early 1970's.[136] It is well established that these operations were carried out against

black civil rights leaders and black political organizations, deemed "Black Nationalist-Hate

Groups" by the FBI, including those who were avowedly non-violent like the Student Nonviolent

Coordinating Committee.[137] Indeed, the stated purpose of the COINTELPRO operation with

regard to African American civil rights organizations was, as stated in the FBI's own internal

documents, "to expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize the activities of

black nationalist, hate-type organizations and groupings, their leadership, spokesmen,

membership, and supporters…"[138]

 As Bloom and Martin recount in their social history of the Black Panther Party, the

efforts of the FBI and other law enforcement agencies were dreadfully effective in eviscerating

the black civil rights leadership across the US, with some black political leaders assassinated,

some killed by law enforcement, and the remainders either imprisoned, exiled or co-opted.[139]

With positive politically conscious leadership in the black and Chicano communities effectively

decimated by deliberate policies and practices of law enforcement agencies across the US, and

especially in Los Angeles, I argue that insular oppositional racial identities that developed in the

wake of legal violence found their most enduring manifestation in the coalescence and

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[136] Blackstock 1975; Alonso 2010; Bloom and Martin 2013
[137] Ibid
[138] Blackstock 1975 p. 14
[139] Bloom and Martin 2013

expansion of racialized street and prison gangs, a ramification that Haney-Lopez and others

failed to recognize.

Unlike Chicago, where the participation of street gangs in the Black Power movement

was inconsistent[140], the older black street gangs in Los Angeles from the pre-civil rights era had

largely been absorbed into the movement, joining black political organizations like the Black

Panther Party. Indeed, the involvement of black street youth in the civil rights movement

resulted in a sharp decline in gang activity during the civil rights era in Los Angeles.[141] However,

in the aftermath of the collapse of the civil rights and Black Power movements, the Crip and the

Blood conglomerates, and their array of neighborhood sets, were what evolved in the black

community in Los Angeles in the vacuum created by an absence of black leadership and political

consciousness among urban black youth in subsequent generations.[142] As former Slausons

member and activist Kumasi recounted of the collapse of the civil rights movement: "They ran

them down, they chased them down, they hunted them down, they murdered everybody that

they could, and made everybody else either go into exile or they locked them up in the

penitentiary; and when all that was over, a new element rose up… called the Crips!"[143]

Likewise, while the existence of Chicano gangs predates the crystallization of an insular

oppositional Chicano racial identity, this insular oppositional racial identity born out of the

brutal suppression of the Chicano rights movements contributed significantly to the

racialization of gang identities in Los Angeles in the subsequent decades. Thus, one may never

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[140] Moore and Williams 2011
[141] Alonso 2004
[142] Hagedorn 2008; Peralta 2008; Alonso 2004, 2010
[143] Peralta 2008

find "smoking gun" evidence that the establishment and expansion of racially opposed street gangs in the ghettos and barrios of certain urban areas in the US was a deliberate government policy intended to undermine class solidarity between similarly marginalized minority communities. However, the fact that law enforcement agencies at all levels of government have deliberately undermined attempts by marginalized minority populations to politicize their class interests and collectively resist their subordinated position in American society, certainly lends credence to the argument that the ultimate result of those policies, in cities like Los Angeles, was that racialized street gangs filled that void by providing a sense of identity and raison d'etre for the disaffected, marginalized ghetto and barrio youth of America, turning their rage against the system on one another instead.[144]

One of the central tenets of Critical Race Theory scholarship is to look not at the stated intention of public policies, but to analyze them according to the results of their practice, valuing substantive empirical outcomes above facially neutral stated intentions.[145] Research across a wide range of social and economic indicators demonstrates that ghetto communities and their residents are as bad or worse off in modernity, than they were prior to the civil rights movement.[146] From this revisionist perspective we must evaluate the effects of racist government policies that have been documented, and assume those that cannot, for only a fool waits for the guilty to admit their crimes in order to acknowledge what is obviously apparent. We must recognize that the narcissistic, gratuitous and fratricidal urban warfare of the post-

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[144] Hagedorn 1988, 2008; Vigil 1988, 2002a, 2002b, 2007; Alonso 2004, 2010
[145] Bell 1984, 1988, 1991, 1992a, 1992b; Crenshaw 1988; Peller 1990; Alexander 2012; etc.
[146] While too copious a list of citations to recite, see Brown et al 2003 for a succinct summary of research demonstrating the substantive presence of racial disparity in American society.

civil rights movement era is due in large part to the historical circumstances poor and working

class urban blacks and Latinos found themselves in after the collapse of the civil rights

movement, which was perpetrated by intentional government suppression. With all politically

positive pursuits annihilated by State oppression, the preponderance of black and brown youth

in America's ghettos and barrios were left with but one feasible outlet for their rage,

narcissistic, gratuitous, fratricidal gang warfare.

In a generation, urban black and brown youth transformed from the vanguard of class

resistance, into the instruments of their own class oppression. With the hyper-racialization of

black and brown communities and corresponding gang identities, modern gang members in Los

Angeles have come to perceive a racially exclusive connection to the marginalized black and

Latino communities they hail from. Thus rather than perceiving themselves in opposition to

community interests, as naïve theories of social disorganization might suggest[147], gang

members perceive themselves as the vanguard protectors of their disparate racially defined

communities, thus turning their fury on one another, rather than those responsible for the

economic and social degradation they suffer collectively at the bottom of America's racial class

stratification hierarchy.

Furthermore, while governmental agents and their proxies have consciously and

purposefully undermined solidarity in the black and Latino communities in Los Angeles and

elsewhere, solidarity between the black and Latino communities does not require

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[147] Park 1925; Shaw and McKay 1942; Faris 1948

governmental manipulation to be undermined, because the race concept itself undermines inter-minority class solidarity of its own accord.

3.4 Looking Backward, Moving Forward

The historical background discussed in this chapter lays the foundation for the following chapters, where we will see the result of these historical circumstances that structured current social relations and established the context for inter-racial gang conflict in Los Angeles. The history of anti-black racial bias in Mexican culture is a social fact that must be acknowledged and considered when examining the anti-black perceptions and biases of modern Latino gang members. While we will see in coming chapters that there are many more factors that contribute to anti-black racial bias among Latino gang members, we must acknowledge that this history of racial bias is the lens through which gang members perceive the society they inhabit. In some cases it manifests itself blatantly and unabashedly, while in others, it is the unspoken and unacknowledged context that structures how members of Sureno affiliated gangs in Los Angeles and their Crip and Blood counterparts perceive one another.

Likewise, the historical bifurcation of minority communities in Los Angeles between East Los Angeles and South Central, structured the development of differential racial and cultural gang identities in the black and Latino communities. The differences, biases and conflicts discussed through the remainder of the book did not manifest out of thin air, they are the result of very deliberate and very racist policies and practices perpetrated against marginalized

minority communities in Los Angeles by the apparatus of the Anglo American State, its agents and proxies over the last century and a half. Therefore it is impossible to fully understand and appreciate the current climate of conflict and hostility, without considering the historical background that structured current social relations in the Los Angeles context.

We must also consider the enduring effects of the collapse of the civil rights movement in the black and Latino communities in the early 1970s, and how that collapse influenced subsequent generations of marginalized minority youth, as they turned from political activism to nihilistic gang warfare. From racial identity, to cultural conflict, to racial bias, to prison gang politics, to street beefs between black and Latino gangs; all are built on the foundation built by this historical background, a history that structures social relations between black and Latino gang members and the larger black and Latino communities in Los Angeles to the present day and the foreseeable future.

Chapter 4 Cultural Differences

An Invisible Wall

"There's a lot of things that, there's an invisible wall there."

WS Easy Riders 13, 40's

As a direct result of the geographical and conceptual boundaries between African American and Mexican American communities in Los Angeles discussed in the previous chapter, markedly disparate subcultures emerged in the barrios of East Los Angeles and the ghettos of South Los Angeles. While racial and ethnic identities alone fail to provide a consistent coherent identity for gang members, cultural identities provide the bridge connecting racial and gang identities. *Culture is the nexus that links gang membership and ethno-racial identities*. Some have scoffed at the consideration of culture as a causal factor in social analysis. Richard Rosenfeld's famous rebuke of cultural analysis is a fine example: "If the Church is the last refuge of scoundrels, 'culture' is the final recourse of social scientists in search of explanations when existing economic, social and political theories have been exhausted."[148] Indeed the concept of culture must seem a dangerous idea to those who attempt to mask their lack of experience with and understanding of cultures other than their own with brazen employment of abstracted empiricism that would make C. Wright Mills rise from the grave and "peel a donut"

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[148] Rosenfeld 2000, p. 157 cited from Young 2010

on the steps of Columbia University's campus.[149] Prominent among proponents of cultural

analysis in the social sciences is the loose association of scholars collectively known as Cultural

Criminologists. Cultural Criminologists, tracing their roots either to the Birmingham Center for

Contemporary Cultural Studies in the early 1970's or to Ferrell and Sanders' edited volume,

Cultural Criminology in 1995, have vehemently argued for the role of culture in analyzing crime.

Cultural Criminological analyses characteristically focus on the role of culture as a

symbolic resistance to the hegemonic marginalization imposed by dominant society and the

economic, social and political conditions of postmodern society.[150] Thus, criminal subcultures

are cast in opposition to the dominant power structure. This markedly Marxist, Gramscian

critical analysis, which celebrates subcultural development and resistance, is a potent force in

constructing causal narratives of criminal activity, and has yielded a great deal of valuable

scholarly work on crime and criminal subcultures too copious to list.

However, what cultural criminologists neglect to consider is the role that culture can

play in enabling and perpetuating nihilistic conflicts, casting distinct subcultural groups in

society against one another.[151] As the body of ethnographic work on street gangs has shown,

there is a great degree of variance in gang culture across time, space, race and social

grouping.[152] While acknowledging cultural difference between different ethnic gangs in Los

Angeles, Vigil's cross-cultural analysis sought to establish what these different gangs have in

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[149] Mills 1959; Young 2010
[150] Hebdige 1979, 1993a, 1993b; Ferrell 1993, 1995, 2004; Jefferson 1993; Clarke 1993a, 1993b; Willis 1993; Ferrell and Sanders 1995a, 1995b; Hamm 1995; Miller 1995; Brotherton and Barrios 2004; among others.
[151] West 1993
[152] Thrasher 1936; Whyte 1943; Cohen 1955; Suttles 1968; Moore 1978; Vigil 1988; Hagedorn 1988, 2008; Sanchez-Jankowski 1991; Venkatesh 2000; Brotherton and Barrios 2004; Hagedorn 2008

common.[153] Likewise, recent work collected in volumes on black and Latino relations, one

edited by Eddie Telles, Mark Sawyer and Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, and another edited by Josh

Kun and Luara Pulido, also downplay cultural, social and economic differences and competition

between blacks and Latinos in Los Angeles, and instead emphasize connections between the

larger black and Latino communities, particularly in Los Angeles.[154] In contrast, I argue that

cultural differences in fact play a significant role in framing conflicts between racialized gang

factions and the communities they represent, and that what are commonly conceived of as

racial conflicts are better understood as cultural conflicts. When engaged in conflicts across

racial boundaries, gang members draw on this repertoire of cultural differences and

intolerances to demonize their rivals in a way that does not occur during gang feuds between

gangs from the same racial gang faction.

Indeed scholars mentioned in the opening chapter of this work have found that cultural

factors play a significant role in conflict between the black and Korean communities in Los

Angeles, New York, and Chicago.[155] They found that black and Korean residents come from

different cultures with different cultural norms, values and mores on appropriate behavior and

ways of interacting with people. Misinterpretation and misunderstanding between the two

groups contributes to racial animosity between them, as what is normative behavior within one

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[153] Vigil 2002b

[154] Telles, Eddie with Mark Sawyer and Gaspar Rivera-Salgado 2011; Bean et al. 2011; Jones-Correa 2011; Morin, Sanchez and Barreto 2011; Freer and Lopez 2011; Zamora 2011; Vigil 2011; Martinez and Rios 2011; Kun and Pulido 2014; Pastor 2014; Frasure-Yokley and Greene 2014; Sandoval 2014; Barreto, Gonzalez and Sanchez 2014; Cuevas 2014; Johnson 2014; Leiva 2014

[155] Chang and Diaz 1999; Chang 1999; Park 1999; Lee 1999a; Lee 1999b; Choi 1999

group is interpreted as disrespectful by the other.[156] It would seem to reason that cultural differentiation also plays a role in conflicts between the black and Latino communities in Los Angeles, and by extension, conflict between black and Latino gangs.

There are two principal points of evidence this research presents that support the argument that cultural identities frame racialized gang conflicts. First, my interviews, my fieldwork and moreover, my life experience, demonstrate that cultural differences are the primary axis of division between black and Latino gang members in Los Angeles. This social fact is painfully apparent in the qualitative data this chapter presents, just as it was for me growing up on the streets of Los Angeles. The second is the presence of cross-racial gang members, black members of predominantly Latino Sureno affiliated gangs, and Latino members of predominantly black Crip and Blood affiliated gangs. In the social world gang members inhabit, "what you are" in a primordial sense is trumped by gang membership and correspondingly, how you identify yourself culturally. Thus an African American youth who grows up in a Mexican neighborhood can become a member of the Mexican gang in whose territory he/she is raised in, and the same can be true for a Mexican youth who is raised in a neighborhood dominated by a Crip or Blood gang. What determines one's social grouping is not racial identity in any primordial sense, but rather the correct display of the appropriate repertoire of cultural indicators that signify a particular racialized gang affiliation.

While it may seem tempting to imagine all gangs as having a universal "delinquent" or "gang culture"[157], it is undeniably apparent that black and Latino gangs, just like the larger black

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[156] Ibid

and Latino communities they are embedded in, have markedly distinct subcultures, even within the same city or neighborhood. Some aspects of these cultural differences are specific to gang members, however others are shared with the wider black and Latino communities gang members come from. The cultural chasm between predominantly Latino Sureno affiliated gangs and predominantly black Crip and Blood gangs in Los Angeles is easily identifiable from individual to individual, if one possesses the *street literacy*[158] necessary to know what to look for. From language, to religion, to preferences in music and cuisine, to the aesthetic styles that cultural criminologists remind us not to overlook, to the way that people relate to one another in their everyday lives; black and Latino gangs are not just racially distinct but in fact have distinct and disparate subcultures. Just as subcultural practices, styles and ways of relating to people are a source of misinterpretation, misunderstanding and conflict between blacks and Koreans, similar dynamics apply to black and Latino conflict, particularly inter-racial gang conflict. Therefore it is worth considering and investigating how culture plays a role in inter-minority animosity in general, and inter-minority gang conflict in particular, because in the social world inhabited by Los Angeles' gangs, racial identity and gang conflict are culturally defined. While one's phenotypic appearance is beyond one's control, one can choose whether to "act black" or "act like a Mexican".

It is also important to consider how the historical and structural circumstances discussed in chapter 3 have shaped the development of disparate racially defined and distinct gang subcultures in the black and Latino communities of Los Angeles. Racially distinct settlement

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[157] Cohen 1955; Miller 1958
[158] Conquergood 1997

patterns, which resulted in majority black neighborhoods in South Los Angeles and majority

Mexican neighborhoods in East Los Angeles established the structural context for the

development of disparate gang subcultures in the black and Latino communities in Los Angeles.

Indeed, the development of racially defined and distinct subcultures could not have happened

in the absence of racially segregated residential settlement. It was racial segregation that

engendered the cultures of resistance that developed in marginalized minority communities

over the course of the 20th century, but it was the black and Latino communities' ostracism

from one another that enabled the development of racially defined, distinct subcultures in the

black and Latino communities of Los Angeles.

The formation of insular oppositional racial identities in the wake of the collapse of the

civil rights movement also contributed to the development of disparate gang subcultures in the

black and Latino communities.[159] From tastes in clothing and music, to the tattoos that adorn

their bodies, gangster style is distinctly different in the black and Latino communities of Los

Angeles. These subtle differences, often imperceptible to those who are not themselves

immersed in the subcultures, are the crux upon which meaning is created and social groupings

are determined in the lived experience of gang members' everyday lives. All the accoutrements

of gang subculture, serve not only to communicate who and what an individual is, but also, and

just as important, who and what an individual is *not*. Indeed, as Ferrell reminds us, *style*

matters.[160] In this way, cultural style, cultural behavior and cultural practices serve to delineate

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[159] Haney-Lopez 2003; Alonso 2004
[160] Ferrell 1995, 2004

the boundaries of racialized gang identities that provide a basis for division beyond mere gang rivalries in and of themselves.

Sureno cholo culture and Crip and Blood black gangster culture, as well as the larger communities they exist in, have markedly different cultural values and corresponding cultural behavior and practices. The perception of this difference is surprisingly consistent across both black and Latino respondents. Both Sureno and Crip and Blood respondents tend to agree on what exactly defines the boundaries of their respective cultures, as well as where those boundaries overlap. The most fundamental difference between black and Latino gang culture in Los Angeles is that in black gang culture, drawing attention to oneself through ostentatious displays of style, behavior and speech is the norm; whereas in Sureno gang culture, drawing attention to oneself is considered unbecoming.

Crip and Blood gang members tend to want to stand out, both from Sureno gang members, but moreover from one another. In Crip and Blood gang culture, everyone wants to be the most stylish and the smoothest talking of their peers. The person with the most "swag", as the current lexicon calls it. The celebrity rap star is the archetype image of Crip and Blood culture, and much of urban youth culture across the country for that matter. While not everyone can be a celebrity rap star, they can try to the best of their ability to display the image of one. As the saying goes, "Fake it till you make it!"

In contrast, Sureno culture favors a more unassuming image of the "silent but deadly" prison gang affiliated ex-convict. Individual innovations in cultural-expression are highly regulated, and anyone who dares cross the boundaries of cultural style, behavior or practice,

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risks social ostracism at the least and violent confrontation at the worst. The cultural regime is tightly regulated both formally and informally by both peer cohorts and *veteranos*, the elder statesmen of Sureno gang politics.

Another theme that stands out in this chapter is the fluidity of cultural change. Deviant subcultures are not static, but are highly dynamic fluid identity systems, changing within and between generations. However, while quantitative analyses often use longitudinal data in their analysis, qualitative analyses of street gangs and other deviant subcultures rarely examine cultural change from a longitudinal perspective. From early gang research like Thrasher and Whyte, to more recent classics like Horowitz, Hagedorn, Sanchez-Jankowski and Venkatesh, to contemporary research like Garot and Lauger, qualitative research on gangs and gang culture is typically limited to a specific temporal window.[161]

There are two principal reasons for this. First, with few exceptions, even qualitative gang researchers generally have had little if any personal experience with gang members prior to their fieldwork. They weren't gang members themselves, nor did they grow up in a gang neighborhood, much less the area where their fieldwork was conducted.[162] They thus lack the personal experience to possess an adequate historical perspective on how things were before their entry into the field. Therefore they can only analyze what they see during the specific temporal window during which their fieldwork was conducted. Second, the subjects of these research projects are mostly junior gang members in their teens and early twenties, who themselves lack the historical perspective to report how things were before they became active

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[161] Thrasher 1936; Whyte 1943; Horowitz 1983; Hagedorn 1988; Sanchez-Jankowski 1991; Garot 2010; Lauger 2012
[162] There are of course notable exceptions including Victor Rios and Robert Duran

gang members. With minimal knowledge as to the historical context of their subject matter

prior to entering the field, and sources who themselves lack historical perspective by virtue of

their young age, these researchers have no choice but to focus on gangs and gang culture

specific to the temporal window granted by the duration of their fieldwork. They thus lack the

ability to describe and analyze the cultural change that occurs within and between various gang

subcultures prior to, and of course, after the duration of their fieldwork expires.

In contrast, this project reflects not only my own historical perspective as a formerly

gang-affiliated youth in Los Angeles (I am 36 years old at the time of this writing), but also

draws on a pool of 92 respondents whose ages range from 18 to 59, encompassing multiple

generations of first-hand experience with gangs and incarceration stretching back to the 1970's.

Therefore cultural change is not only something I am acutely aware of from my own life history

observing urban gang subcultures evolve from generation to generation, but is something that

stands out in both my ethnographic fieldwork, as well as my formal and informal interviews

with gang members.

There are two sources of such change, cultural innovation and cultural diffusion. When

cultural innovation occurs, a new subcultural style or practice is created by members of the

subculture through their own imagination, often modifying or expanding on existing styles

and/or practices. It could be a new haircut or article of clothing, a new way of wearing that

clothing, or a new figure of speech. Whatever it may be, it is something entirely novel and

unique, conceived and disseminated within that specific subculture.

When cultural diffusion occurs, a new style or practice is adopted from another source, most often either another subculture, media depictions, or a combination thereof. A style and/or practice that has already been associated with another subculture becomes appealing to members of a different subculture and the style and/or practice is adopted and incorporated into their subculture over time. This cultural diffusion can potentially lead to the blending of different distinct subcultures into an amalgamated subculture that blurs the boundaries between what were previously distinct subcultural groups. As this chapter illustrates, policing the boundary between Sureno and Crip and Blood subcultures is of paramount importance to some gang members, while others enjoy living on the edge, testing the limits of what are culturally acceptable styles, practices and behavior among their peers.

4.1 Clothing

The first area of cultural divergence between Sureno cholo culture and Crip and Blood black gangster culture in Los Angeles is clothing styles. It is perhaps the first and most apparent cultural indicator of gang identity, because it is readily visible for all to see. Clothing and aesthetic style is the first cultural indicator that people are judged by, and thus sets the frame for identifying and organizing individuals into different subcultural gang factions. Following one of the major themes of this chapter, traditional Sureno cholo clothing styles are very uniform, with little variation in content between individuals; while Crip and Blood clothing styles are much more varied and ostentatious.

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> As South Siders, we try to, appearance is everything to us, you know. Just kinda like a, like a status
>
> symbol, you know. Gotta make sure you're nice and pressed, don't sag your pants, keep your shoes clean,
>
> you know.
>
> ES Evergreen 13, 30's

Traditional cholo clothing styles have been described by Vigil[163], but I will provide a thick

description here as well. The early prototypical cholo clothing style was the Zoot Suit of the

1930's and 40's.[164] The pachuco style zoot suit was the popular clothing style in the Chicano

community in Los Angeles when the cholo subculture first came to the general public's

attention with the "Sleepy Lagoon murder" in 1942 and the following "Zoot Suit Riots" in 1943.

For those who aren't familiar, zoot suits were suits made with excess material and a specific cut

so as to be especially baggy in a particularly stylish way.

> I believe, we still have the same style of dressing, like the Zoot Suit days back in the 20's and all that, the
>
> 40's, whatever. We were the last of the Pachucos. We were Cholos.
>
> ES White Fence 13, 50's

However, as the practice of wearing a full suit every day waned in American culture

generally, the zoot suit style began to be replaced with more casual clothing styles in the 1960's

and 70's. Dress slacks began to be replaced with less expensive khaki work pants and corduroy

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[163] Vigil 1988
[164] Alvarez 2008

pants, while shoe styles also relaxed from formal dress shoes to Imperials, a pointy leather

shoe, and Hush Puppies, a comfortable and casual rough leather shoe with high seams around

the front crest. It was in the 1970's that wearing sneakers became commonplace, as the

ubiquitous Converse Chuck Taylor All Star canvas shoe with a flat rubber sole became common

in both the barrio and the ghetto, due in large part to its affordable price tag at the time. It was

also in the 1970's that white t-shirts and Pendleton button-up shirts became popular daily wear

in the barrio, replacing the button up dress shirt and jacket one would wear with a full zoot suit.

The following quote from a black member of a Mexican gang in East Los Angeles, describes the

styles at the time he came of age in the 1970's and how the styles popular in his neighborhood

were received by his cousins who lived in Watts, a historically black ghetto in South Los

Angeles.

> My cousins were raised in South Central in Watts. They used to wear Levis and things like that. In East LA
>
> gang members wore khakis, and Pendleton's, and white t-shirts. The white t-shirts didn't get popular in
>
> Watts and South Central until later on. When I was incarcerated we used to talk about those things. I was
>
> wearing white t-shirts in the 70s, and only certain companies used to only manufacture them. Sears and
>
> JC Penny's, Towncraft and Staffords.
>
> Q: What about shoes? What kinda shoes were popular with gang members when you were growing up?
>
> A: Both sides wore Chuck Taylors, or over here we used to wear Imperials or Hush Puppies. They didn't
>
> wear Imperials in black areas, cause when I wore them to visit my cousins they'd be like, "You must grow
>
> up with Mexicans to be wearing those pointy shoes right?" Ha ha ha!
>
> ES Varrio Nueva Estrada, 50's

The modern cholo uniform, established in the 1980's and 90's consists of oversized work pants or Levi's 501 blue jeans, typically 10-20 inches larger than the wearer's true waist size. Popular brands of work pants are Ben Davis and Frisco Ben's, which are of a heavy duty canvas material work pants like those commonly worn by industrial and trade workers. The pants and jeans are folded, ironed and pleated in a particular way to accommodate the extra material around the waist, and to achieve a uniform clean military-pressed aesthetic. Acceptable colors are khaki, brown, grey, black and blue. Levi's 501 jeans are also very common, but if one chooses to wear jeans, in order to comply with the cholo cultural canton they must be 501's. The pants are traditionally worn high at the navel, rather than the hips, and are typically held up by military style pull and catch belts, commonly found in any surplus store, and often with a letter on the buckle to indicate gang affiliation. The design of the buckle enables multiple buckles to be attached to the same belt, so that each buckle with a different letter can spell out an acronym that more precisely identifies which gang the wearer owes allegiance to. Or they can simply wear buckles with two numbers, 1 and 3 for 13, the number identifying the wearer as a Sureno affiliated gang member.

White T-Shirts are ubiquitous in Sureno culture, available both in prison and on the street. The most popular brand is the Stafford brand, sold exclusively at JC Penney department stores. It is a thick white t-shirt, sold in tall sizes, so as to be either easily tucked in, or worn draped lower below the belt than a normal cut t-shirt would extend.

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T-shirts in other colors are acceptable as well, however logos and designs on them are

less acceptable, depending on the content. The only colors considered acceptable for a t-shirt

other than white are blue, brown, black and grey. Pro-Club is a popular brand for plain colored

shirts. Other popular shirts are the Ben Davis brand work shirts, made of a thick canvas material

like the pants, and with a stiff collar, often in a two color vertical striped pattern. Also popular

are button-up polo-cut shirts commonly sold in swap meets throughout the city made either of

cotton or a polyester-cotton blend, often with a thick horizontal stripe pattern. Another

traditional shirt still worn by cholos is the Pendleton brand, a heavy button up plaid shirt, also

found in swap meets and department stores. Finally, sports jerseys of LA area sports teams are

not uncommon, particularly the Raiders and the Dodgers. All shirts are worn oversized, in at

least a 2XL for an average sized person and even bigger sizes for bigger individuals, where they

can be found.

As far as footwear, since the 1980's, the prototypical cholo sneaker has been the Nike

Cortez. This icon of cholo culture has adorned the feet of generations of cholos in Los Angeles

and is a common accoutrement in music videos, TV shows and movies as an exemplar of cholo

identity. Also very popular and universally acceptable are Nike cross-trainers and particularly

Nike Air Force 1's, both in white on white. Every effort is made to keep white shoes white, with

constant cleaning and white shoe dye being applied to refurbish the leather in order to keep

the shoes looking clean and new, so as to maintain the sharp clean aesthetic favored by Sureno

gang members. White shoes are topped by tall white socks, pulled up to the knees.

> Basically what I would wear everyday would be 501 Levi's, creased up, ironed, you know? Some Nike's,
>
> you know Nike Cortez, the canvas ones, the blue ones, the blacks ones, and white t-shirts, you know.
>
> Maybe a Raider shirt or Dodger shirt, shit like and that prolly be it.
>
> SC Clanton 14 Street, 40's

While we have rather respectable ethnographies of cholo gangs in Los Angeles[165], there

is a shameful lack of ethnographic description of Crip and Blood gangs in Los Angeles in the

academic literature. There are respectable historical accounts of the emergence of Crip and

Blood gangs in Los Angeles[166], but no real descriptive work on what Crip and Blood culture

consists of. Therefore it is even more worthwhile to present a thick description of Crip and

Blood clothing styles, as a contribution in itself, but also to show the distinctness when

compared to cholo clothing styles.

As Alonso recounts, the Crip and Blood culture arose from the ashes of the Black Power

Movement.[167] As a result early Crip and Blood gang members imitated the aesthetic styles of

their predecessors, who had transformed from gang members to political activists in the Black

Panther Party. The black leather jacket, adopted from the dress of BPP members in the late

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[165] Vigil 1988, 2007; Sanchez-Jankowski 1991; Ward 2013
[166] Davis 1990; Vigil 2002; Alonso 2010
[167] Alonso 2004, 2010

1960's, was one article of clothing that defined the early Crip and Blood style.[168] Alonso

describes in detail how the desire for these jackets led to one of the first murders attributed to

the Crips and which launched their notoriety, after Crip gang members beat a boy from a

middle class black family to death in the process of robbing him for his leather jacket.[169]

However the Panther style of the early 1970's soon gave way to the Super Fly style of

the Blaxploitation film era. Loud and elaborate "Pimp Suits" became common in the black

community as media transmission made the pimping subculture more popular among black

youth in the ghettos of Los Angeles. Suits were topped off with elaborate jewelry and fancy

shoes made of leather or game animals like the notorious "gators", designer Italian shoes made

from alligator hide. Of course some remnant of that subculture still exists, but in the 1970's the

Super Fly pimp style was the dominant subculture among gang members in Los Angeles's black

ghettos.

> We used to wear slacks, believe it or not, suits kinda like the Blaxploitation films, like I don't know if
>
> you've seen "Super Fly", it would be kinda like along those lines. It's funny, silk shirts and shit.
>
> Q: They were popular back then?
>
> A: That was popular dress
>
> Q: With the fly shoes and all that?
>
> A: Yes, leather jackets, you know, hat occasionally, whatever, and that changed throughout the years.
>
> WS Rolling 20's Neighborhood Bloods, 50's

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[168] Alonso 2010
[169] Ibid

In the 1980's Crips and Bloods gravitated towards a harder gangster aesthetic, borrowed but also modified from their Chicano peers. Khaki work pants became more popular, though Crips and Bloods tended to prefer the Dickies brand and wore them less baggy than cholos. The one particularly pertinent difference is that black gang members typically wear their pants with an exaggerated sag, so that their underpants and even much of their buttocks in some cases, shows above their beltline. This area is typically draped over with a long shirt so that it appears that one's legs are shorter than they really are. It was in the late 1970's and into the 1980's that white t-shirts, Pendleton's, sports jerseys and Dickies suits became popular with Crips and Bloods. Matching Dickies suits in blue, red, burgundy, black and khaki became a popular outfit, often signaling one's Crip or Blood gang identity depending on a blue or red themed color combination.

Wearing tennis shoes also became standard as Chuck Taylor's, Puma's, K-Swiss, Reebok and other brands became common in the black community, often with thick laces, a style taken from the emerging hip hop subculture on the East Coast. Multiple accessories also became pervasive in Crip and Blood clothing styles, including thick gold chains, blacked-out square frame Loc's sunglasses and a common handkerchief, the notorious blue or red rag indicating Crip or Blood gang allegiance. These styles were reinforced by the explosion of the gangster rap subculture from media outlets beginning in the late 1980's and early 1990's.

However, following one of the themes for this chapter, clothing styles among Crip and Blood gang members have tended to mirror popular hip hop clothing styles as they have evolved from generation to generation. As the gangster rap era waned, the "bling bling" rap era

emerged in the 2000's. That too later evolved into a sort of urban hipster culture of the 2000-teens, as each generation of Crip and Blood gang members keeping pace with the current popular styles of their generation. Sylistic innovation is one of the hallmarks of black ghetto culture, and it is certainly prominent among Crip and Blood gang members. Whatever the newest styles that media outlets and urban celebrities portray, Crip and Blood gang members are quick to incorporate and innovate on them. Stylistic innovation is not only tolerated but is indeed celebrated in the ghetto. Those who are able to display the newest stylistic innovations in their personal appearance are rewarded with high intra-peer status in the black community. As a result of this constant innovation and evolution in clothing styles among Crip and Blood gang members there is a wide range of variation in aesthetic styles among them.

Khaki pants gave way to designer jeans, worn fitted, even tight in some cases. Wearing fitted jeans is now so commonplace among Crip and Blood gang members that in many cases they don't "look like gang members" at all.

> Well me I can tell because blacks are more, we try to keep up with fashion more you know, and versus the Hispanic gangs they still dress old school, you know like, like gangsters. We kinda dress more casual now, you know what I'm saying it's not Dickies no more, we wear jeans, like designer jeans now, you know what I'm saying, but they don't care for that you know.
> WS Rolling 30's Harlem Crips, 20's

Designer jeans are held up with expensive logo print belts from high end European designers like Louis Vuitton and Gucci. Polo shirts from designer clothing companies are

common, as are t-shirts with prominent logos from urban street wear companies, which ever

ones happen to be in vogue from year to year, often bedazzled with rhinestones, faux gold leaf

or other embellishments, with gold chains draped on top and cubic zirconium in the ears. A

kaleidoscope of different colors and designs on baseball caps and shoes top off and bottom out

the modern urban streetwear style that is popular with Crip and Blood gang members, as the

availability of various designs, patterns and colors of shoes and hats has exponentially exploded

as corporations like Nike and New Era respond to the increasing demand for stylistic innovation

in the urban streetwear market. Popular shoe lines like Nike Air Jordon, Air Force 1, Air Max,

and Dunk release the same shoe design in a plethora of different color and material

combinations multiple times each year to provide the depth of variation that the modern urban

streetwear consumer demands.

Go to any gang function in the ghettos of Los Angeles and you will find Crip and Blood

gang members dressed down and "turned up" in outfits with designer jeans and matching

shoes, shirts, hats and accessories. It might be a Black P Stone Blood in some red on black Air

Jordons, black Roca Wear jeans, a red Diamonds t-shirt, Gucci sunglasses and a St. Louis

Cardinals New Era baseball cap; or it might be a Rolling 40's Crip with a pair of bright blue 2013

Air Max's, slim cut stone washed Guess jeans, a grey on white Louis Vuitton belt, a white

Hundreds t-shirt, a baby blue LRG hoodie and a blue Milwaukee Brewer's New Era baseball cap,

with the stickers still on it. These are the outfits of the modern gang member in the black

community, and the styles are constantly changing as gang members borrow from media

promoted styles and modify them with their own unique innovations. Those on the cutting

edge of stylistic innovation in the black community enjoy a significant boost to their status among their peers.

> In Watts everybody's kinda dressed like hip you know? Like hip hop ways or very urban, that's how we dress. Current styles you know, we're like trendsetters. We also follow trends but you have some people who are um, who are stuck in the ways of the 90's, and 80's and there's nothing wrong with that, they stick to their heritage and their culture. Umm those cholos wear their pants to their navel, or higher you know and most black gang members we probably let our pants sag a little bit.
> #39 Watts Bounty Hunter Bloods, 30's

However, the story is quite different in the Sureno cholo culture, where innovations in clothing styles are often a source of great angst and occasional conflict across a generational divide. Many of the younger Sureno gang members are adopting more and more of black urban streetwear culture in their clothing styles, particularly those who grow up in the mixed neighborhoods of South and West Los Angeles. Media transmission must also be a source of popular trends, as young people are bombarded daily with hip hop oriented marketing, reality shows, urban celebrities, and rap music, all of which communicate that what is in style and what is cool. Crip and Blood gang members are all too happy to follow the styles, wherever they go, but Sureno gang members' forays across stylistic boundaries are often met with strict social control from their peers and elders.

Some youngsters conform and display the traditional cholo aesthetic by choice. Others resist peer pressure and test the limits of stylistic expression by adopting aspects of the urban

streewear that is commonly associated with black ghetto culture. Some of the more common items to infiltrate cholo culture are accessories like Nike sneakers and New Era hats. Nike Air Jordan's and Air Force 1's are popular with some Sureno gang members. Urban streetwear brands like Diamonds, The Hundreds and Echo, while common among Crip and Blood gang members, are occasionally worn by Sureno gang members, as are urban streetwear brands marketed specifically to the cholo consumer like Joker Brand. In some cases Sureno gang members even break established cultural conventions like sagging their pants or wearing a hat cocked sideways.

Responses to these stylistic transgressions are often met with disapprobation, threats and/or violence. However, in each case the enforcer makes a decision about whether it's worth enforcing stylistic boundaries and to what extent. Some veteranos, particularly those who have spent extensive time incarcerated on Level 3, Level 4 and SHU[170] yards where they literally went to war with black gang members, are adamantly opposed to any blurring of the boundaries between Sureno and Crip and Blood gang members. They are entirely contemptuous of clothing styles popular with black gang members.

> Wow they dress way out man. They like to be the center of attention. How can I say it, they're entertainers aye. With their big mouths, with their loud ass clothes. They need to always have attention. They have some kind of malfunction in their genes or something.
>
> #16 ES Clover Street 13, 50's

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[170] Security Housing Unit, these are administrative segregation facilities in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, discussed at length in chapter 6

The most basic and innocuous method of enforcing these boundaries is by "clowning"[171] someone or "talking shit" behind their back, in order to undermine their status on account of their aesthetic style. However, confronting transgressors of these boundaries can be much more direct, as youngsters are often "checked" by veteranos on account of their excessive use of styles associated with blacks. One day I was hanging out at a car show with some homeboys and we were involved in our own conversation, but I was watching other homeboys around us and there's this one youngster from a gang in South Central Los Angeles dressed a little too "black" for his own good. He's slight of build, maybe 5'5" and 130 pounds soaking wet. He has a look of uncertainty on his face around some of the higher status gang members in our party, like a pitiful dog whose owner beats it and never knows when the next beating is coming, cowering at all who approach. Unfortunately for this kid he's got brightly colored Nike Air Jordan's on, with a matching baseball hat containing a few too many colors, turned slightly to the side and worst of all, he's sagging his pants very low for a respectable cholo. An old *veterano* from a major gang in East LA, who is somewhat of a legend in the Sureno gang community from his extensive criminal history and over three decades of time served for multiple murders and other serious crimes, walks over to the kid and stops right in front of him blocking his forward movement, his imposing hulk of a frame marked with decades of prison tattoos and scars towering above this poor yelp. The kid instinctively slouches in his own shirt as he knows he is about to be on the receiving end of something unpleasant. "Pull your fucking pants up homes! What the fuck is this? You might be from over there but you ain't no fucking

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[171] Making fun of someone

nigger ese!" The kid immediately jerks his pants up around his waist and yanks his belt tight to keep them there. He simultaneously takes the blame while blaming the stylistic transgression on a wardrobe malfunction, attempting to draw the focus on his sagging pants alone while avoiding the issue of his multiple other stylistic transgressions, "My bad big homey, they keep falling down. My belt is fucked up." The vet looks him up and down with disgust, his face contorted into a look of utter disdain, knowing that the kid is bullshitting and he had been wearing his pants with a sag on purpose, but having made his point of enforcing that stylistic boundary, the vet decides to leave it at an implied standing threat not to get caught doing it again. The kid nods in acknowledgement and scampers off into the crowd. Needless to say, he doesn't come back around again that day.

These boundaries are vigorously enforced because culture is the crux upon which social groupings are determined. Regardless of whether someone is "really" black or Latino in a primordial sense, the way one chooses to display themselves aesthetically is what determines what their identity is, Sureno or Crip or Blood. Cultural diffusion is perceived as a threat because it dilutes distinct subcultural identities that divide Sureno and Crip and Blood gang factions. It is in their accounts of these differences that one can comprehend the importance of these cultural indicators in defining who is what.

> They mainly like to sag, like you see how they wear it, their clothes are like half way, you can see their whole fuckin ass you know. Like we don't get down like that. We don't do that. So when you see some one that's Mexican do that shit, we fuckin tell em "Pick up your fucking pants! You ain't black!" You know what I mean, cause that's what they're known for. They fuckin… how can I start? they wear like all these

way off colors, they fucking put those shits on their teeth, they do all that shit like wear those big ass

chains, and we don't do that shit.

ES White Fence 13, 20's

There is another reason for the move towards a more "casual" mainstream style, to

avoid attention from law enforcement and to surprise potential rivals. With the exponential

expansion of areas under gang injunctions in Los Angeles, many gang members can be arrested

merely for being seen on the streets of their own neighborhoods. Their defense mechanism has

been to try to pass under the radar by dressing in a way that would not be associated with a

gang member, be it a hipster, a skater or whatever.

Yeah back in the day you could tell, but nowadays you can't. Everybody just dress like, everybody trying to

just dress like normal now.

Q: So everyone tries to dress like more low-key like a civilian now?

A: Yeah more you see alotta more like low-key dressing now, like more people trying to be under the

table, like "I'm a gang member but I just don't want people to know", so they dress like skaters or they'll

dress like pretty boys. They don't dress like banged down no more.

SC 38 Street, 20's

Another advantage of dressing in the urban streetwear/ skater style is that not only do law

enforcement have trouble identifying who is a gang member, but so do potential rivals. A clever

gangster can avoid getting "caught slipping" themselves and be able to get the drop on

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potential rivals by approaching them without them being perceived as a potential threat, as the following vignette illustrates.

Q: You think it's harder now though like people tend to dress more casual now?

A: Yeah it's pretty tricky, there's no uniform anymore. Anybody could be a gang member. Two years ago, while I was still active, I had a kid on a fixie ride by me and I used to sell weed at the time, right, and he ride by me, "Wassup man?" And I was like, I thought it was one of the youngsters wanting weed, I'm going to go buy a blunt and I look, I was like, "What's crackin?" He's like, he jumps off the bike, he's got on skinny jeans and pulls out a Beretta with a 25 round, you know?! I'm a fuckin gun man, that's always been my thing, that's all I've ever been busted for is weapons. He pulls it out, he's like, "Where the fuck you from?" and I was like, "What the fuck? Like you serious?" And he was like, and he told me where he's from, and I'm like, "I'm from La Mirada Locos." Homey starts dissin the neighborhood, I'm like, "Oh man, it's easy to diss with a gun pointed at me. Come on put the gun down, wassup?" "Fuck you! Fuck you!" and I was like, "No fuck you," I turn around back to go grab my shit, I didn't catch up to him, you know?... But, I was like, "Wow! I got caught slippin by a dude in skinny jeans!" Ha ha ha! Well, I don't know where the fuck he pulled the gun out of, like where could it fit? Especially when it's a extended clip! Ha ha ha! You know, but, you know what, right now it's a time of pure caution and you have to be very tentative and if you're not, you're going down… Can't put it past nobody bro. Can't put it past nobody.

WS La Mirada Locos 13, 30's

Some of the older ex-convicts coming out of the prison system are perturbed to see how the generation gap when it comes to clothing styles and are torn about how to navigate the current style regime. They saw snippets of the new styles through TV and magazines, or from

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younger gang members entering the system, but when they get out and realize that everything they grew up with is becoming culturally obsolete, it can be a bit bewildering.

> Well now first of all cholos were easily identifiable. Now they're not identifiable. They wear skinny jeans, they wear long hair, they have short hair, they dress casual, they wear Vans, they're on skateboards, you know, this and that, you know what I mean? It's like what the heck? But so now the old school cholos are easily identifiable. They're like dinosaurs! They got their pants up to here (hand at chest level), it's like, "What are you kidding me? Where'd you even buy those at? I haven't seen those for sale since I went in!" You know, but yeah it's just changed. It's changed so drastically it's like wow!
> ES Varrio Nueva Estrada 13, 50's

4.2 Hairstyles

Hairstyles are also a source of cultural divergence between Sureno and Crip and Blood gang members. Following the pattern found in clothing styles, cholo hairstyles have changed little from generation to generation with only one major evolution in half a century; whereas popular hairstyles among Crip and Blood gang members have changed often over different eras, with each generation following current popular trends and innovating on them.

Up until the early 1990's, cholos typically wore their hair a few inches short, usually slicked back with the Tres Flores brand pomade and sometimes a thin hair net to keep it in place.

We all had hair, you know, slick straight back, you know we wore the three flowers, you know every day.

Not too many people shaved their head back then.

SC Clanton 14 Street, 40's

While the shaved head has become the standard hairstyle for contemporary Sureno gang members, prior to the early 1990's the only time cholos would shave their heads would be during the summer, on account of the heat.

The shaved head had been around, but they were not as known, back then we used to shave our head in the summer time, but it wasn't because we were banging, it wasn't to, you know, you were banging and this and that. It was just to have our heads shaved for the summer you know. Now people just bang now with their head shaved. They bang so now they think if you shave your head, you're active. Even a lot of older guys, they got their head shaved man.

ES White Fence 13, 50's

Cultural innovation is so circumscribed in Sureno gang culture that for some of those older gang members who were in prison when the transition from slicked back hair to shaved heads was made in the early 1990's, the new style presented somewhat of a conundrum as to what to make of the new style and whether they should adopt the new style and shave their heads themselves.

Q: Back when you were a kid what were the popular hair styles with your friends?

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A: Yeah people would just slick their hair back. People would wear hairnets, keep the three flowers in their hair. The difference now is everyone is bald now. Everyone shaves their head. When I was in prison people told me, cause I was having people send me some grooming supplies, and I would be like "Send me some grease for my hair!" And my nephew would be like, "No one wears that shit in their hair out here. Everyone is bald now. That's played out!" I said "I dunno I can't see myself doing it." Then one day I got tired of going through all of that and I just cut it, and I never went back. And then eventually when I wanted to go back, it wouldn't grow back so I'm stuck. Ha ha ha! I'm like "Ok, allright…"

Q: When was that when you first shaved your head? Was there a time when you were in the system that you noticed that everyone coming in had their head shaved?

A: Yeah you could see the trend. I know I started doing it in 1997 and the trend had started maybe 4 years before then. People would have their hair much shorter. And then now it's not even short, its bald. They want it bald so you can see the tattoos on their head if they have them. It's really changed dramatically.

ES Varrio Nueva Estrada 13, 50's

A popular account of the transition from slicked back hair to shaved heads is that many Sureno affiliated gang members in the prison system started shaving their heads to pay homage to one of the most respected members of the Mexican Mafia prison gang, Mr. Joe "Cocoliso" Morgan, who wore his hair bald and died of terminal liver cancer in prison on November 9th, 1993.

I heard a story that when Joe Morgan died that everybody, his crew, shaved their head out of respect for Joe, and then that just caught on, yeah, it spread from there.

SC Clanton 14th Street, 40's

However, the oldest respondents with the most prison time served, uniformly perceived the transmission of the new style from the outside into the prison system, rather than from within to the streets, which sheds doubt on the Joe Morgan theory. However, the timing of their accounts placing the change in 1993 coincides with the passing of Mr. Morgan. Furthermore, this cultural change lacked the kind of negative response to cultural innovation that such cultural evolutions typically evoke among Surenos. If this trend was initiated to pay homage to Mr. Morgan, that would certainly explain the lack of resistance to the new style. Of course another explanation could be that shaving one's head was a cultural innovation not adopted from the black community, and therefore was more acceptable to adapt to than innovations like hip hop clothing styles that are associated with blacks.

> Yeah cause back in the day braids like cornrows, braids was pretty much our identity, like living that life being black.
> SC Four Trey Gangster Crips, 30's

Hairstyle is also as important an aspect of cultural identity for black gang members as it is for their Sureno affiliated counterparts. In contrast to cholos, Crips and Bloods in Los Angeles have adopted just about every different hairstyle that has been popular in black communities across the nation with every passing era. As the trends change from generation to generation and new hairstyles come into common use, they do not necessarily replace older hairstyles, but rather add to the depth of variability in the repertoire of available hairstyles from which Crip and Blood gang members can use to express their own individual aesthetic. The afros of the

black power movement era gave way to the long straight " dead hair" pimp style of the Superfly era in the 1970's, followed in the 1980's by Jeri curls, French braids, and corn rows, into the 1990's where dred locks, flat tops, waves, tapers and fades, with or without designs, became popular, followed by mohawks and more in the new millennium. As innovation in aesthetic expression is venerable in black ghetto culture, it is not uncommon to see Crip or Blood gang members to exhibit current or vintage hairstyles, as each individual uses their hair as another facet in their repertoire of cultural display.

> Like blacks they get like braids and corn rows and, uh, French braids or haircuts with designs and uh mohawks or something. Hispanics is just more like simple like a bowl cut or fade or something bald. Bald heads really.
> Pasadena Denver Lane Bloods, 20's

Even more so than clothing, hairstyles are very distinct between Sureno and Crip and Blood gang members, almost to the point that hairstyle in and of itself can identify whether an individual identifies as a Sureno or a Crip or Blood gang member. For the most part, if someone is bald-headed, they're displaying a Sureno gang identity, and if they have any of the hairstyles popular in the black community, they're a Crip or a Blood. It's a pretty simple and safe assumption for most gang members, regardless of their affiliation.

> Q: Do you think hairstyles are a big difference between Mexican gang members and black gang members?
> A: Well, yeah, that's a big difference, hair style.
> Q: What were the popular hairstyles for your friends when you were growing up?

A: Well, you know, we had like braids, ponytail, two ponytail, you know, French braid to the back,

however, to the, down to the side, and really like Hispanics it's pretty much majority shave they heads

bald, yeah.

Hawthorne 11-8 Gangster Crips

However, there is some cultural diffusion between Sureno and Crip and Blood affiliated gang

members with regard to hairstyles. More and more black gang members are shaving their heads, though

in many cases this is out of necessity as older generations are aging into hair loss.

Well for me, I'm going bald. So that's why I choose to shave my head. Ha ha ha! Nowadays you find a lot

more black people, the majority of whom have the corn rows and the braids and all that, but every now

and again you find like some blacks that have bald shaved heads, but the majority of them have like braids

and corn rows and shit like that.

SC Four Trey Gangster Crips, 30's

The direction of cultural diffusion also goes the other way, as some Sureno gang members have their

hair cut with a fade or a taper, and occasionally you'll see one with his hair grown out long and pulled

back in a ponytail.

Yeah, well see like, like in our sense like, Mexicans always had their hair shaved; you know we always

were like bushy hair or braids, or afros, or curls or stuff like that. And now-a-days I see Hispanics wearing

ponytails, you know cause Blacks you know we used to have ponytails like that so now I see Hispanics not

shaving their heads anymore too much and they're wearing their hair like bushy, in curls, or in a ponytail

or something like that and more or less Blacks are shaving their heads and keeping their hair designed and

stuff like that. So it's like the fads, the fads that's coming along with the Hispanic and Black community now are more mixed, because it's like in this day and age you have the younger generations that semi-hang out together.

Compton Mob Piru Bloods, 30's

Like the adoption of black hip hop clothing styles, the adoption of black hairstyles by Sureno affiliated gang members has become more common with younger generations and is a source of considerable angst for the older and/or more traditional cholos. While fades have become more acceptable, any other deviation from the traditional cholo hairstyles of shaved heads or slicked back hair is often met with considerable peer disdain.

Well you know how they put like drawings and stripes and shit in their haircut. Where with us if we see a Mexican with that shit on their head we'll be like "What the fuck?! What you trying to be black for and shit?" For us it's you got a little bit of hair or you go bald you know.

Q: Is it still common for them to have like braids and cornrows and all that?

A: What black people? Yeah they still have it. I never liked that. I got mad one time. They did braids on my little girl. I was like "Naw what the fuck aye?! She ain't black!" you know. Well her mom's Puerto Rican but still, you know. "Hell no! Take them shits out!"

SC Florencia 13, 20's

Thus we see a similar pattern with hairstyles as with clothing styles, a marked distinction between Sureno and Crip and Blood gang members, with little innovation and variation for Surenos and a wide range of variation with constant innovation in hairstyles among Crip and Blood gang members. As with

clothing, those Surenos who do push the limits of innovation and adopt some hairstyles associated with

blacks invite peer censure for their cultural transgressions.

4.3 Language

Lingual differences are also a major aspect of cultural differentiation between Sureno

and Crip and Blood affiliated gang members, and the larger black and Latino communities they

are embedded in. Aside from the obvious difference that many Latino gang members are

bilingual and alternate between Spanish and English, the way that Sureno gang members speak

English and the way Crip and Blood gang members speak English are extremely different. They

employ different slang, speak in different tones, with different accents and at different

volumes. The fundamental way people relate to each other and communicate with each other

is very different in the black and Latino communities. These behavioral differences reflect

aesthetic differences in that in Crip and Blood culture one is expected to be more gregarious

and expressive linguistically, whereas in Sureno culture individuals are expected to be modestly

unassuming in their verbal interactions with others. As a result of these differences in cultural

mores, each group's manner of verbal communication is seen as offensive by the other. Crips

and Bloods are seen as boorish and uncouth by Sureno gang members, who complain that

blacks talk "too loud" and are too outgoing.

They're just a lot louder, and then, you know I mean, from all, it comes from all cultures though, but I just,
I see 'em as more just disrespectful and you know, than, like I live by that saying "Never miss the

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opportunity to be quiet" and to me that doesn't exist for them. There's only a few of 'em that I came

across in my life at a time that I really have respect for and you know they know how to, they know how

to conduct themselves.

ES El Sereno 13, 30's

On the other hand, Crips and Bloods see cholos' quiet avoidance of verbal exchange to be

unfriendly and discourteous, often asserting themselves when they feel snubbed with, "I'm

talking to you!"

Common practice is that when Surenos speak to one another, they do so in such a way

that others cannot hear what they are saying. Privacy is highly valued and it is considered

uncouth and impolite to speak loud enough for other people one does not know to hear what

one is talking about. Surenos will commonly walk away from others to have a conversation, and

speak in a low volume so only those involved in the conversation can know what is being

spoken of. If they are eating at a restaurant, they typically speak softly enough that patrons at

adjacent tables cannot hear what is being said.

> Oh well the differences in it in my opinion is that uh I guess backs tend to use a little more aggressive
>
> tones when they speak, depending on the situation. It could differ from the situation you know what I
>
> mean? Umm opposed to when a homey spoke to somebody he tried to make it more personal a little
>
> more quiet so it's not so loud and stuff. Let's handle our business in this manner.
>
> Q: You think black fools talk loud in general?
>
> A: Right off the bat! So it's right off the bat if the guy thinks he's threatened or something, he's gonna be
>
> as loud as he can so he can get enough attention and more people are focused in his business.

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Sureno slang is a combination of English with a little Spanish mixed in, in a modified

Mexican Spanish tone and accent, and with specific slang terms commonly employed, like "si

mon", "que onda", "ese", "loco", "homes", "fool", "orale", "vato", "dispensa", "trucha", "jura"

etc. etc. Some of these slang terms are shared with Mexican nationals, such as the common

affirmations "si mon" and "orale", and the common greeting "Que onda?" (What's up?). Words

like "ese", "homes", "fool" and "vato" are used to refer to individuals. While calling someone a

"fool" might be taken as an insult in mainstream American culture, for Surenos it is a common

term of endearment. "Dispensa" is commonly used for "excuse me" when someone

accidentally bumps into someone else, or when someone needs to pass by someone else who is

in their way. The word "trucha" (watch out) is commonly employed by Sureno gang members

as a warning when looking out for one another. Police are referred to by the common Mexican

slang term "jura".

> Cause the blacks they say the n-word and everything, you know? We'll say, we'll say "fool" or we'll say
> "ese" or "homey" or something you know?
> ES White Fence 13, 20's

Crip and Blood slang is pronounced with more of a southern drawl, inherited from the

generations of Southern transplants in the black community in Los Angeles. As in black

communities throughout the nation the most common term of endearment for black gang

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members is "nigga". This is not the same word as the racial epithet "nigger". It is of course

derived from that offensive term, but has been redefined by black youth across the country and

employed by them to refer to one another in common parlance. Some people who do not use

this term of endearment are unable to discern a difference between "nigga" and "nigger",[172]

some are unwilling to and choose to take offense at the use of either. However outsiders see it,

the use of "nigga" as a term of endearment in the black community is a social fact as true as the

sky is blue.

> We say like "Yo!" or "Ey yo!" or "Hey my nigga!", but now you even got Hispanics sayin it. But back then
> they wasn't allowed to say that. Black people'd be like it was like they being racist. But now anyone can
> say that.
> SC East Coast Crips, 20's

In addition to that controversial term, Crip and Blood affiliated gang members employ

terms of endearment, which identify them specifically as either a Crip or a Blood. Crips call each

other "Crip", "cuz" or "loco", whereas Bloods simply call each other "Blood".

> Like when we greet each other… like "What's happenin homeboy?" Or "What's happenin Cuz?" Or
> "What's happenin Blood?" Or "What's crackin Cuz?" Or "What's good?" that's more of a black approach.
> Where with Mexicans it's like "Aye what's up fool?" you know.
> SC Four Trey Gangster Crips, 30's

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[172] Venkatesh 2000, 2008; Garot 2010

Verbal exchange among Crip and Blood gang members can be very animated indeed. Discussants in a conversation jockey for position, elevating their volume and expression as necessary in order to control the tone, tempo and direction of the discussion. Discussants employ the use of clever phrases and figures of speech as the parties test the extent of one another's verbal prowess. Perhaps even more important than the content of what is said, is how it is said.

Surenos are often disgusted and offended by the way Crips and Bloods relate to one another. With a culture that values humility and discretion, they perceive blacks' increased volume and animation in personal communication to be disrespectful and inconsiderate.

Yeah, it's just, very loud and you know, almost like shameless style, to me, that's how I would perceive it, like that's how I perceived it when I was young, you know, I don't, you know, I just feel like they speak their mind, you know, they ain't shy. You know what I'm sayin? But, you know, they're so outspoken, I mean, that's how I see em, they're just very outspoken, you know. They don't, they don't have no reservations.

Q: Did that used to bother you when you were young?

A: It did bother me, when like, "Shut the fuck up man!" Like I would just think they would be sayin too much, you know, as opposed to how I was raised, like you have to be reserved, you have to be a mystery, you have to be a bit cryptic, you can't get yourself away like that, cause then you're done, you know? So, I guess I was more guarded, you know, walking around.

ES El Sereno 13, 30's

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With lingual differences playing a significant role in defining the boundaries between Sureno

and Crip and Blood affiliated gang members, crossing the boundaries of these distinct dialects is

often confounding and disconcerting for both Sureno and Crip and Blood affiliated gang

members.

One day I'm at a prisoner re-entry program and one of the newer employees at that

time is an African American member of Mara Salvatrucha 13. (He refused to be interviewed)

Although he is African American, he has entirely embraced all the aspects of Sureno culture.

Particularly noticeable is the way he speaks, just like any other cholo. In fact he speaks Spanish

better than most of the native Spanish speakers who are his peers. He and another Sureno

greet one another with a "Que onda wey?" and a "Wassup homes?" and engage in a

conversation. A young Crip gang member from the Crenshaw area, standing idly by with a

broom in his hands has a look of utter incredulity and deep cognitive dissonance at the sight of

an African American talking like a cholo. An older Crip, who is already acquainted with the black

guy from MS, smirks at me as I laugh under my breath and walks over to the kid. "It's a trip huh

cuz?" The kid is still trying to wrap his mind around what he just saw, part query, part

exclamation he replies, "Nigga talk like a Mexican?!" The older Crip breaks it down for him and

tells him that the black guy from MS is, "from a Mexican hood and he grew up over there, so he

like he Mexican." The kid purses his lower lip in an expression of acknowledgement, "I guess so,

still a trip though."

While Crip and Blood gang members are often perplexed to see a black member of a

Sureno affiliated gang display all of the cultural indicators of Sureno gang affiliation, Sureno

gang members often have a negative reaction to other Sureno gang members adopting aspects of black speech, particularly the use of the word "nigga". The increasing commonality of the use of the word "nigga" by Sureno gang members who are younger and/or grew up in mixed areas with blacks, is something older and more traditional Sureno gang members are having to come to terms with, as the following vignette illustrates.

I've observed (since I been out) you hear more Mexicans using the word "nigga" to refer to each other. I was like "What the heck?!"

Q: Was that new to you coming out? Or did you see that inside too?

A: Yeah because in prison, they would have to catch themselves, because they know that coming to prison, that's not socially acceptable by their own people. So they have to catch themselves. They're not used to saying "homes" like we did growing up, like "aye homey… what's up homes?" like that. Because that's the hip hop culture, they have to catch themselves.

Q: So that's one of the lines that the big homeys don't let people cross. If they come in and their hair is shaped up and whatever so what, but if they talk like blacks, they'll get checked?

A: Yeah it bothers certain people who will not like them because of it. Because they're old school and they're not comfortable with it. I mean this person could be the most down fool that they may come across, but it's just that how that person grew up, you know "This is how we talk." Know what I mean, and "If you're not gonna accept me just because of the way I talk, and not because of what I'm willing to do for la raza…" or whatever, then so some people are able to work with that, like "Hold on… just tighten that up, because you're gonna have problems down the road and you'll be fine". That's the way it seems to go. I've never heard that conversation, but I've been around friends of mine in the system that I grew up with, who are Mexican American Chicano and they're like "I don't like that fool!" and I'm like "What don't you like about him?" and they're like "He's just uh too… I dunno" and I'm like "It's because he

sounds like he's black huh?" Ha ha ha! "Naaaah!", "Yeah that's what it is homes. Trust me. That's what it

is. You just can't conceive that, you just can't grasp that that's what it is", "Wait a minute, nah there's just

something about his style", "Yeah his style is black. To you, his style is black. But if you came across him

and all his peers who are all Mexican, they all sound like that. So how could it be, 'it's black'? That's their

culture, that's the way they flow." I said "I get it. I don't necessarily agree with everything, but we're older

now. This is their time. This is the way they do things."

ES Varrio Nueva Estrada 13, 50's

In other cases, older more traditional Surenos are adamant in their rejection of the use of the

word "nigga" by other Surenos. They react with outright hostility and in some cases violence

when they come into contact with another Sureno who uses the word "nigga" as a term of

endearment in common parlance.

If you pay attention to the youngsters now, especially coming from the West Side and South Central, they

use that word a lot, the word "nigga".

Q: Not all of em!

A: A lot of em homes, the youngsters, and right here when some of them are addressing me I put a stop

to that real quick, "Don't you dare call me that! I'll break your fuckin teeth homes!!"

ES White Fence 13, 50's

When a raza speaks like a nigger, I got no words for him. I got nothing to say to him.

Q: Have you noticed that a lot though, being locked up and being out here?

A: Fuck yeah! A lot. A lot. A lot. Oh in there it's different. Like fools from Compton, South Central, all that, they'll speak all that, but it gets adjusted real quick in there. Ha ha ha! They come out with a whole different vocabulary. Ha ha ha!

ES Clover Street 13, 50's

Like clothing and hairstyles, language is another area of culture that is subject to diffusion between Sureno and Crip and Blood gang members. This cultural diffusion of black speech patterns and specific slang like the word "nigga" is most prominent in younger cohorts of Sureno gang members and those who live in mixed neighborhoods and grew up with blacks, though it is by no means ubiquitous among them. While it is not uncommon, it is perceived as an aberration, one that must be kept in check to some degree around those who are offended by its use, particularly in a carceral environment. Like clothing and hairstyles, older more traditional cholos will often harshly regulate the boundaries between how Surenos are expected to speak and how Crips and Bloods are expected to speak. However, like clothing and hairstyles, Crip and Blood gang members tend to be more tolerant of variations in language between different communities and between individuals within a community, responding to transgressions of the cultural boundary with playful banter rather than threats and violence.

4.4 Music

Preference in music is another area of cultural differentiation between Sureno and Crip and Blood gang communities. There is a great deal more overlap in music preference between

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Surenos and Crips and Bloods, both historically and contemporary, than there is in other cultural areas like clothing, hairstyles and language. However, even where preference in genres overlaps, there is often differentiation in preference for particular artists and groups. The direction of cultural diffusion in music is and has always been from black to brown. Cholos have borrowed some of their most common music genres, from oldies to rap music, from the black community, while black gang members have adopted no music genres from the barrio.

Prior to the 1980's, the principal music genre that gang members listened to, both black and Latino, was what is subsumed under the catch phrase "oldies". Cholos also listened to indigenous Mexican genres like mariachi, ranchera music, and corridos, while blacks also listened to jazz, soul music and rhythm and blues. A black member of a Sureno affiliated project gang from East LA explains the difference between what his African American family listened to and what his Mexican gang peers listened to in the 1970's.

Q: What about music? What music did you listen to growing up? Do you think that differed from what black people who grew up in black areas listened to?

A: No cause in my home my mother and my uncles and cousins we listened to all kinds of soul music back then and then it turned into R&B, something else. But anyways we listened to soul music in my house growing up, from Marvin Gaye, to Barry White to Al Green, to all that kinda stuff. And then in my neighborhood we were still listening to, it wasn't soul music, they called it oldies back then, you know the Intruders to the Delfonics to Mary Wells to Marvin Gaye, things like that.

Q: And do you think that blacks in black areas listened to the same things?

A: Some, there was some, but they didn't listen to those particular oldies. They would listen to oldies but not those oldies that in my neighborhood the oldies they listened to. It was different. You could hear like

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the Midnighters. You didn't hear the Midnighters in African American households. When I went to my cousins home or even in my home, we didn't have the Midnighters or nothing like that, but and they had like the righteous doo-wop and stuff like that. In Mexican American homes, friends that I was friends with in the neighborhood, it was more of mid-60s music, like I said the Midnighters, Ralfi Pagan, all that kinda stuff. And then in African American, if it was 60s music, it was, plus they listened to a lot of blues and jazz and stuff like that.

ES Varrio Nueva Estrada 13, 50's

The popularity of oldies was also due to the state of technology and the entertainment industry at that time. Of course there were no music videos, no MTV, no internet, no Napster, no I-pods or any of that. There were records and 8-tracks, and music was disseminated by popular radio shows, back when listening to the radio was the extent of media contact most barrio and ghetto residents had at the time.

Q: The next area is music, what kinda music did you grow up listening to?

A: Oldies, Smokey Robinson, uh, Diana Ross and the Supremes, Mary Wells you know, The Temptations, uh, any more, all the Motown music that we could hear, I mean, Midnighters, you know uh, the Moments, you know.

Q: Was that what was playing on the radio when you were growing up too?

A: Yeah, it was when Huggy Boy used to be around still, Art Lebeau, he's still around, but Huggy Boy, yeah, "Hi, this is the Huggy Boy show," you know, you used to call in, do dedications, your name would come out, you could even say your neighborhood back then, "I'm so-and-so from barrio so-and-so, I wanna dedicate to my ruca," and whoopdee whoop, "you cheated, you lied, you're no good!" Ha ha!

ES White Fence 13, 50's

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The division between preference for certain artists and groups between black and Mexican gang members was perceived on both sides of the color line, as Crip and Blood gang members associated certain oldies with a Mexican or cholo audience, even though the performers were by and large African Americans.

> The Mexican gangs they always listened to oldies, but even then, there was a kind of set of oldies. They listened to a lot of doo-wop type, and the term isn't really heard lately, but you'll hear it from a older person that say "Oh those are Mexican oldies, those are Mexican oldies."
> WS Rolling 20's Neighborhood Bloods, 40's

Of course even those oldies that cholos did listen to were by and large from black performers, an almost comical irony not lost on many of those who grew up listening to them.

> Alotta people were on the oldies shit and shit like that, but oldies is pretty much blacks singing so still… Ha ha ha! You might hate a motherfucker, but you listening to a black dude sing! Ha ha ha!
> NELA Toonerville 13, 40's

The first generations of Crip and Blood gang members in the 1970's also listened to the burgeoning funk genre, with the P-Funk subgenre gaining particular traction as the popularity of the self-proclaimed Godfather of Funk George Clinton and his bands Parliament and Funkadelic blew up in the ghettos of South Los Angeles. This eccentric music complimented the

eccentric aesthetic styles prevalent in the black community in Los Angeles in the 1970's, as a generation made their pledge to the funk nation, with loud clothes and loud parties lighting up the ghettos of South Los Angeles until the early morning hours on most weekends.

In the barrio in the late 1970's and early 1980's the emerging genres of punk rock and heavy metal were gaining traction in the barrio as a generation of cholos grew their hair out and went from gang banger to head banger. Local Southern California bands with a national audience like Slayer became icons for a generation of head banging gang bangers, as well as local bands with a more regional following like Suicidal Tendencies.

> Yeah I mean growing up, I grew up on the punk rock and hardcore and metal you know. That's what I grew up on. Mexican kids my age that's what we grew up on. I grew up before the hip hop era. Before there was hip hop it was metal and punk rock you know. The hip hop era came in in like the late 80's. I mean I know it was around since the 70s but no one knew about it, at least not us. I didn't discover hip hop till like 85, 86.
> ES State Street 13, 40's

The hip hop subculture, with its break dancing, graffiti art and rap music exploded in the ghettos and barrios of Los Angeles in the mid-1980's, nearly eclipsing all other music genres as the preferred music genre for gang members, both black and brown.

> Hip hop came around about the same time crack hit South Central, you know, and that changed everything, you know, all these, you know, it was good music back then though, you know it was different, it was something that you could move to, you know?

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As the hip hop culture enveloped the city, the black community in Los Angeles

innovated upon it and the subgenre of gangster rap emerged, which became virtually

ubiquitous in the late 1980's and early 1990's. Gangster rap not only became the primary music

genre for Crip and Blood gang members, but was also preferred by many Sureno affiliated gang

members as well. Violence in music was something all gang members could relate to and so

gangster rap became popular in both the ghetto and the barrio.

I think music is, if you can relate to it, and both gangs like violent music, you know what I'm saying so, I

don't think that's, we don't listen to no mariachi band or nothin like that, you know, but they listen to our

music.

WS Rolling 30's Harlem Crips, 20's

As with other sources of cultural diffusion, many of the older more traditional cholos

reacted negatively to the popularity of rap music among younger cohorts of Sureno gang

members. They had been raised prior to the inception of rap music and in many cases were

incarcerated during the time period in the 1980's when rap music became popular in LA. From

their perspective, it was just another case of youngsters selling out to black culture and blurring

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the lines between black and brown. Their rejection of rap music was as vehement then as it is

now.

> I cannot stand rap. I'm just do-wop, rhythm and blues, oldies, that's it. You know what I mean, a rap CD,
>
> I'll throw it like a Frisbee. Youngsters got it all fucked up.
>
> Q: Wannabe rappers and all this shit. Ha ha.
>
> A: Yeah what the fuck is that? I don't understand it, "Be your own self, be your own people! How are you
>
> gonna give a black money and support their industry and their record and their CD? How you gonna do
>
> that? How come you don't buy Spanish music and support your own people? You understand me? Does
>
> that make sense to you?!"
>
> ES Clover Street 13, 50's

Other elder gang members were simply befuddled by the younger cohort's affinity for gangster

rap's ballads of drug dealing, degrading women and gratuitous violence.

> Now the youngsters they listen to hip hop. They listen to rap. As long as they're cussing and talking crazy,
>
> they listen to it, all ethnicities.
>
> ES Varrio Nueva Estrada 13, 50's

Like with preferences for oldies, there are differences in preference between cholos and

black gang members for various artists, groups and subgenres within the rap genre as a whole.

Cholos tend to prefer the first generation of gangster rap from the early to mid-1990's, whereas

Crips and Bloods tend to prefer more contemporary artists and groups. Cholos have also

innovated on gangster rap to produce their own subgenre commonly called Chicano rap or cholo rap. This subgenre is more acceptable to the older cohorts as the artists are at least other cholos, and not black artists. Some Surenos will make a sharp distinction that the rap they listen to is cholo rap and not rap music from black artists.

Q: What are the differences? What kind of music do you guys listen to versus what they listen to?

A: Because, well, the black's music, they only write about, it's the same thing, you know, money, I got this, I got that and in reality they don't got shit, you know? And well the music I listen to is like about the mission they fools be doing and how they be getting the money like, you know, like delivering drugs and trucks and everything across the border and everything you know? It's things I could prolly relate to, you know in a way.

Q: Is that mostly like Chicano rap?

A: Yeah, it's like, maybe like, have you ever heard of Brownside? Yeah like Brownside or some fool named Conejo from Harpies, you know, and like that sorta music too, you know things I could relate to.

Q: So it's rap, but different kind of rap than what black fools listen to?

A: Yeah, yeah.

ES White Fence 13, Teens

Crip and Blood gang members are also often cognizant of this distinction. They too see the hip hop genre as a product of the black community, but they recognize that cholos have carved out their own subgenre within the larger rap genre, and that each of these respective music are a part of differential Sureno and Crip or Blood subcultures.

Yeah it's because like, it's a identity thing. Like Hispanics, they listen to rap music. But what they listen to, the way they talk and things like that, they pick up alotta their identities and the way that they speak and the music they listen to from us, because those are the neighborhoods that they grew up in. So the things they were exposed to early in they childhood, is like rap music, old school R&B, like alotta the black culture. It's just they have a way of taking some of that and then kinda making it of their own, putting a lil spin on it.

Q: Like Kid Frost right? Ha ha

A: Kid Frost and stuff like that, cause you have Mellow Man Ace, he's rapping but he put in like a Mexican, they got their own language and their own thing that their people understand.

SC Four Trey Gangster Crips, 30's

Despite these differences there is certainly a large body of mainstream "radio rap" that appeals to both black and brown gang members. Anyone who's spent some time hanging out in the ghettos and barrios of Los Angeles over the years will have heard cholos and Crips and Bloods alike bumping popular hip hop radio stations like Power 106, 92.3 The Beat and KDAY 93.5. Only the most adamantly traditional cholos will express displeasure at what's on the radio, as youngsters from generation to generation bob and boogie to multi-platinum rap artists and groups from NWA to Snoop Doggy Dogg to 50 Cent.

4.5 Cars

While Sandoval[173] has cast Low-rider culture as a cultural bridge between the black and

Latino communities, I would argue that preference in motor vehicles is also a point of cultural

divergence between Sureno and Crip and Blood affiliated gang members. The vehicle one drives

and the way one chooses to customize and embellish their vehicle is a distinct source of both

racial and gang identity for Crips, Bloods and Sureno gang members. The classic cholo car is the

"bomb", a distinctive body style with smooth curves and a slant back end commonly produced

by American automobile manufacturers from the 1930's through the 1950's. Low-rider car club

culture dates to at least the WWII era in the barrios of Los Angeles as generations of Chicanos

grew up with full size American sedans as the vehicle of choice. Scholars of Lowrider culture

have generally acknowledged that Low-rider culture originated in barrio communities[174], and

while many black gang members grew up with their peers and elders driving Lowriders in the

1960's and 70's, they too generally acknowledge that Chicanos were the originators of Lowrider

culture in Los Angeles.

> I think more the Mexican tradition was even older, the 56 Chevy, even the 55 or 46's. There were some
>
> cars that they would be driving that you wouldn't see black people driving. The slant backs, the bombs,
>
> that was more cholo than it was a black thing.
>
> WS Rolling 20's Neighborhood Bloods, 50's

In the black community preference was for American coupes, particularly the Cadillac.

Owning a Cadillac was, and in some areas still is, the ultimate status symbol in the black ghetto.

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[173] Sandoval 2014

[174] Plascenia 1983; Lipsitz 1990; Stone 1990; Bright 1995; Mendoza 2000; Penland 2003; Sandoval 2003, 2014

However, the 1960's ushered in new body styles and new models, with the Chevy Impala

quickly became the most popular vehicle in the barrios of Los Angeles. Chevy Impala models

from the early to mid-1960's with pinstripes, lowered on 13" wheels and wide whitewalls on

the tires became the ultimate status symbol in the barrios of Los Angeles. In the 1970's and

1980's, shortly after its inception in the barrio, the Crip and Blood community adopted the low-

rider aesthetic from cholo culture, where Chicanos lived alongside blacks in South Los Angeles.

> Back then you would catch more ese's in, in older cars, 50 something's, 58's, 57's, bombs, per say. You'd
>
> catch Blacks more in Chevy's and Cadillac's, you know, of preference, but more Chevys, the 60s, 61, 62,
>
> 63, 64's.
>
> Q: Do you think low-rider culture came more from the Black community? Like the Impala's and all that
>
> kinda thing?
>
> A: Nah, I think it was something that derived from probably blacks in Compton dealing with the ese's in
>
> Compton, because back out there, they were more closely knitted together, you know. They went to
>
> school together, they did everything together mostly, the Blacks and Hispanics in Compton, they were
>
> best of friends, cause my wife even lived in Compton. So but yeah, I think the low-rider epidemic derived
>
> from the Hispanic culture you know.
>
> WS Rolling 30's Harlem Crips, 40's

A black member of an East LA gang also recounts that the Lowrider culture originated in the

barrios of East Los Angeles.

You know low-riding, I don't want to say who started it, but I think it started over here in East LA by

Mexican Americans, I have no background to base that on except my experience, and they hooked their

cars up similarly. Yeah they would use different kind of cars. Cause everyone in East LA knows you had to

have a Chevy, 60's, 70's, even 80's. You had to have a Chevy Impala of some sort. And then on the other

side (in South Central), my cousin and all them they had Caddies, they had Cadillacs, they might have a

Chevy Caprice. They called it a glasshouse. I don't know why. They had a lot of Cadillacs.

ES Varrio Nueva Estrada 13, 50's

In the 1990's black gang members began gravitating towards a new cultural trend

innovated in the black community and popularized by the rap industry, putting oversized

wheels on cars. Whereas the old school style Lowriders had undersized 13" wheels, the new

style was to put the biggest wheels one could fit on a vehicle. This is often accomplished by

matching oversized wheels with undersized thin tires, and in some cases, by jacking up the

height of the vehicle or otherwise modifying the vehicle to accommodate even bigger and

bigger wheels. Oversized wheels are typically paired with candy color paint jobs to achieve the

most flamboyant aesthetic possible.

Major difference. The blacks they, for some reason they love bright colors on their cars. They like

humongous rims, the size of the rims on their cars, on a small car and yeah…you know what? Might take

that back cause some homeys, Hispanics, in South Central they like that style too. It's kinda like a South

Central thing too. Huge rims on their cars and their trucks.

ES Longos 13, 20's

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As with other aspects of the rap culture borrowed from the black community, some

Sureno affiliated gang members, particularly those from mixed areas, have adopted the

preference for big rims on vehicles from their Crip and Blood counterparts. This cultural

diffusion has been met with the same resistance from more traditional cholos as older cohorts

attempt to enforce the boundary between black and brown gang culture.

> Over the years you know they started to change it up and they started to get the cars with the big rims.
> You know, I think that's a black thing. But now you see a lot of Mexicans or Latinos or whatever you want
> to call them, like a lot of raza driving these fuckin cars with these huge ass rims you know. And I don't give
> a fuck, but that's a nigger thing. Real Lowriders got the small wheels, like 13" spokes. Know what I mean?
> ES State Street 13, 40's

Thus, in the case of car culture cultural diffusion is a two-way street, with black and

brown gang members borrowing cultural styles from one another over the generations, but

each putting their own spin on it, their own style to it, making it part of their own distinct

racialized gang identities. Despite a high degree of cultural diffusion in taste for motor vehicles,

there remains an undeniable differentiation between what is a "black" car and what is a

"Cholo" car.

4.6 Cuisine

Preference in cuisine is another area of cultural difference between Sureno and Crip or Blood affiliated gang members that is a reflection of differences in the wider black and Latino communities gang members are a part of. Most Sureno affiliated gang members grow up eating primarily Americanized Mexican cuisine, including tacos and burritos, nachos, quesadillas and fajitas, along with more traditional Mexican cuisine including *tortas, sopes, enchiladas, tamales, pozole, mole* and *menudo*, as well as cuisine from other Latin American countries like *pupusas* from Central America and empanadas from South America. Popular beverages include *horchata*, a sweet rice milk flavored with cinnamon, *tamarindo*, a tropical fruit juice, and of course the ubiquitous *Jarritos*, a sweet fruit flavored soda in various flavors, which can be found in most Mexican eateries throughout the city, or at least those that primarily serve a Latino clientele. The most popular libation in the barrio is of course tequila. At bars and night clubs the Patron brand is the best seller, but there are seemingly infinite smaller companies that produce high quality tequila which can be found at parties and family dinners throughout the barrios of Los Angeles. Whiskey is also quite common, as any night at a bar in the barrio will hear numerous calls for a Jack and Coke.

> I say if you're Hispanic, if you call yourself Hispanic, basically you're gonna eat what a Mexican eats. Tacos, burritos, Mexican food. That's it. Beans and rice. Stuff like that.
> ES Longos 13, 20's

In contrast to Sureno gang members, Crip and Blood gang members eat primarily soul food from the American South and other traditional American cuisine. This cuisine was brought with them and their forbearers when they immigrated to Los Angeles from the post-antebellum South over the course of the 20th century. Southern style BBQ is very popular, from beef and pork ribs, to beef brisket, to pulled pork, to BBQ chicken; as are fried chicken, hamburgers, steaks, pork chops, hot dogs, baked potatoes, chitterlings, collard greens, cornbread, and macaroni and cheese. Crips and Bloods also grow up eating a lot of breakfast food, even for dinner, as tight budgets make pancakes for dinner a viable option to fill hungry mouths on a budget.

> My mother was a breakfast person so we grew up sometimes for dinner we'd eat pancakes. For me it was normal to have pancakes, eggs and sausage for dinner. However she would also fix traditional dinners, Salisbury steak, peas, corn, things of that nature.
> WS Rolling 20's Bloods, 50's

Popular beverages tend to be on the sweeter side like kool-aid, grape juice, and grape or strawberry soda, or any soda for that matter. The most popular libations for Crip and Blood gang members are the ubiquitous malt liquor, often sold for less than bottled water in the ghetto, and cognac, particularly the Hennessey brand. Champagne is also popular, as are rum and juice flavored cocktails.

These differences not only divide the black and Latino communities in private settings, but also in their communities, as restaurants, bars, night clubs and even markets in the ghettos

and barrios tend to cater to one or the other clientele. There is considerable cultural diffusion when it comes to cuisine, but the direction of that transfer is entirely one way, as most blacks love Mexican food and eat it regularly, while most Surenos almost never eat soul food.

> Pssshh… what we eat that's, it really like, like we eat fried chicken and macaronis and greens and pork chops and kool-aid. They eat like, you feel me like, like carne asada with beans and rice and they got a different food like me and you than we prefer, but we black people eat their food too though it ain't no problem there though.
>
> Q: Do you think in your neighborhood there's different restaurants that blacks and Mexicans would rather eat at?
>
> A: Yeah, yeah that still going on right now but the majority its going on right now, but you'll see a lot of blacks in Mexican restaurants.
>
> Q: Do you see Mexicans in black restaurants?
>
> A: Nah not too much.
>
> Watts PJ Crips, 20's

Some Latinos have never even eaten soul food in their entire life.

> I had a Mexican told me he never had cornbread before, like "You never had cornbread!? What the fuck!?" Yeah so it was crazy.
>
> Watts Bounty Hunter Bloods, 20's

Latino restaurateurs are accustomed to black customers, as in some demographically mixed areas of South and West Los Angeles, blacks make up a considerable portion of a

Mexican restaurant's clientele. Anecdotally I would estimate that Latinos make up a far lower proportion of the customers who frequent black restaurants, even in demographically mixed neighborhoods that are majority Latino. It is also not hard to see that there are vastly more Mexican restaurants than there are black-owned traditional BBQ and soul food restaurants, far beyond the proportion of black to Latino residents, and even in neighborhoods with a relatively high proportion of black residents.

4.7 Religion

Like cuisine, religion is another area of culture difference inherited from the larger black and Latino communities. However, unlike the other facets of cultural difference previously discussed, there is little cultural diffusion of faith traditions between black and Latino populations, gang members and otherwise. Mexicans and other Latinos tend to identify as Catholic or Pentecostal, and the majority of blacks tend to identify as Baptist, Adventist or Muslim. All but one respondent who reported attending religious services growing up reported that their congregations were highly segregated.

> Q: How about with religion, did you grow up going to Church? Did your family go to Church?
> A: Yeah I went to Church, I went to the Mosque with my dad, is Muslim.
> Q: Do you think that religion was kind of split racially? Like when you went to Church or to Mosque that it would be mostly Blacks there?
> A: Yeah

Q: And that the Mexicans went to like, Catholic Church or whatever that it was kinda split?

A: Yeah, that's why its like you know now-a-days you know, I only see mostly Mexicans that go to, they go to Catholic Church, most Blacks in the area are Christian Baptist, or you know Muslim.

Q: And they go to Black congregations?

A: Yeah

Compton Mob Piru Bloods, 30's

The difference in the content and style of these services is also considerable as services in the black community tend to be quite loud with inspirational preaching and vibrant singing, while Catholic services tend to be much more subdued and routinized. These differences, while not a significant source of animosity, are often sources of comic relief for those not accustomed to how faith is practiced in places of worship attended by the other race. As the following quote demonstrates, the respondent caricatures his interpretation of how services are conducted at black churches.

Yeah I think black people got their own church and Mexicans got their own church. I never seen a black person at a Mexican church, cause you know at a Mexican church they speak Spanish and the blacks they be like, "Holy Jesus! Holy Jesus! " Ha ha ha! You know? Ha ha ha! "Save me Lord!" Ha ha ha! And you know, ha ha, and then they say "Amen!! Amen!!" and all that. Ha ha ha!

SS Florencia 13, 20's

For those who participate in religious worship, whether from their own faith or their parents, places of worship are an important part of their socialization. It is a poignant reflection

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of the deep cultural divide between them that these places of worship are for the most part highly segregated between the black and brown community even where those communities overlap demographically.

4.8 Racial Identities, Cultural Categories and Gang Membership

In this chapter we have explored the role of culture in defining racialized gang identities. Cultural differences between black and Latino communities in Los Angeles developed as a result of the geographical ostracism of the black and Latino communities in Los Angeles from one another, with the vast majority of African Americans settling in the South Central Avenue corridor, and the vast majority of Mexican Americans settling in the flatlands and low lying hills of East Los Angeles. As chapter 3 recounts, this geographical isolation was not chosen by the black and Latino communities of their own volition, but rather was imposed on them by the dominant Anglo society that forbade them from settling in most areas of the city, which were reserved exclusively for Anglos, and concentrated them instead in areas that placed them in close proximity to Anglo owned businesses so that their labor could be exploited at minimal cost to Anglo employers, with Mexican Americans living in East Los Angeles and working fruit orchards in the San Gabriel Valley just to the East, and African Americans concentrated along South Central Avenue where many of them were employed shoeing horses and cleaning stables at the Army depot that was once located on Central Avenue in South Los Angeles.

Boundaries separating these two communities were enforced for generations by blatantly racist policies like racially restrictive housing covenants, racially biased lending practices at local Anglo-owned banks and racially oppressive policing by local law enforcement agencies like the LAPD and LASD, whose unspoken mandate from their inception was enforcing a regime of racial exclusion and subjugation on black and Latino communities in Los Angeles. Only those who are utterly ignorant of the history of racial oppression and the role of municipal police forces in enforcing racial exclusion in American cities throughout the 20th century could make a fanciful statement like, "the police exist to help regulate behavior, not to maintain the racial or ethnic purity of a neighborhood."[175] In Los Angeles, municipal and county level law enforcement agencies have historically operated to exclude black and Latino residents from white neighborhoods, and thereby exclude black and Latino populations from one another in the process.

Unlike cities on the Eastern Seaboard like New York City, Boston and Philadelpia, where boundaries between historical African American and Latino communities are measured in blocks not miles, in Los Angeles the historically African American community in South Central Los Angeles and the historically Mexican American community in East Los Angeles were separated from one another by a distance of roughly five miles, multiple train lines, and the Los Angeles River. Isolated from one another, physically, geographically, culturally and spiritually, the core of the black and Latino communities in Los Angeles grew independently from one another. Each community developed their own cultural practices, values and identities

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[175] Wilson and Kelling 1982

complementing and reinforcing their imposed geographical isolation from one another. As gang

culture emerged in the black and Latino communities in the latter half of the 20th century, black

and Latino gangs developed their own disparate and distinct subcultures, culminating in the

modern Sureno, Crip and Blood identities gang members adhere to today.

As this chapter demonstrates, Sureno and Crip and Blood gang identities are determined

by both cultural practice and geographical location. Generally those who grow up with

members of a black or Latino gang, and adopt their cultural identity, will be accepted as

members of the gang, irrespective of their racial identity in any sort of primordial sense. African

American youth who grow up in Boyle Heights, a nearly universally homogeneous Mexican

neighborhood in East Los Angeles, will grow up with Mexican peers and friends, adopt their

cultural practices, perspectives and identity, and join predominantly Mexican Sureno affiliated

gangs. Whereas Mexican American youth who grow up in Leimert Park or Crenshaw,

predominantly African American neighborhoods just west of South Central, will grow up with

predominantly African American peers and friends, adopt their cultural practices, perspectives

and identity, and join predominantly African American Crip or Blood gangs in that area.

However, while African American Crip and Blood gangs are almost universally accepting

of Latino members, there is some degree of variation in the rules and practices of Sureno gangs

with regard to accepting African American members. As Table 7-1 shows there are a number of

Sureno affiliated gangs that do not have African American members. Sureno affiliated gangs

from mixed areas, mostly in South Central and the Harbor Area are generally accepting of

African American Members so long as they grew up with Latino members of the gang and

display all the appropriate cultural practices, perspectives and identity corresponding with a

Sureno gang identity.

Q: What do you think is different from black members in your neighborhood and other blacks?

A: Well, he's, the color of his skin is black but really he's Puerto Rican. But there's… there are blacks, full-

blooded African Americans in my neighborhood it's just the way, the setting where you grew up in and

how you grew up at like who… how can I put this? Let's say if I was to grow up in a black neighborhood

with nothing but blacks, all my life , obviously I'm a act like them, I'm a judge the, their way of living and

the way of being based on the way of you growing up. Just like there's whites, but they act like homeys.

Q: So you think where you grew up plays a role in how you act?

A: That definitely plays a major role. The way you grew up and the people you grew up with.

ES Longos 13, 20s

As Regression 4-1 demonstrates, there is a statistically significant difference at the $P<.05$

level of confidence, between Sureno gangs from East Los Angeles and Sureno gangs from South

Los Angeles with regards to the presence of African American members respondents reported

in their gangs. Sureno gang members from South Los Angeles were statistically more likely to

report having African American members in their gang than were Sureno gang members from

East Los Angeles.

Cross-Racial Members	Sureno	Crip and Blood

Yes	40	24
No	26	1

Table 4-1 Cross-Racial Gang Membership

Such cross-racial members are perceived and identified as full-fledged South Siders and are sharply differentiated from African Americans who are members of Crip or Blood gangs and who maintain a black cultural identity.

Q: You mentioned your neighborhood had a couple of guys that were half black, half Mexican, did you know of anybody that was full black?

A: Yeah. Also my homeboy _____ was full black, I believe. Never met his parents though so, but I think he was real dark, but he might've been the only one.

Q: But he didn't act like he was black?

A: No. He spoke better Spanish than me.

Q: Does it make it ok to have homeys that are black or half black in the neighborhood if they don't act black?

A: Yeah, pretty much.

Q: Do you think that's the boundary that determines if the guys is cool and can kick it or not?

A: It's more, yeah you know what I mean? Like I said earlier, there's a difference between blacks and niggers. You know this guy was pretty, he was, he was just black by skin, you know? He was a straight up Chicano, he was a straight up, you know, this dude dressed like us, walked like us, talked like us, if he wasn't black or it was a dark room, you would swear he was one of us. He had the accent, everything, you know.

SC Clanton 14 Street, 40s

The above respondent clearly makes a sharp conceptual identity distinction between an African American who happens to be "black by skin", but who displays all of the appropriate symbolic indicators of a Chicano/ Sureno cultural identity, and "niggers" who maintain an African American Crip or Blood cultural identity. While not making use of a racial epithet to differentiate between blacks who assimilate to Chicano culture and those who don't, another respondent from South Central also makes this distinction and connects it to which African Americans could be considered for membership and which could not.

Q: Is there, is there a rule against that, like if somebody wanted to, had a friend that was Black and wanted to get in, think homeys would be like "now way!"

A: Nah

Q: So it depends on the individual?

A: Yeah, it depends on them yeah.

Q: You think it would be more acceptable if it's a Black dude that grew up in the neighborhood, and you know like, we were saying, acts Mexican and talks…

A: I'd rather have somebody in there that, hanging around Mexicans all his life, than somebody that just comes in like, "Hey cuz, I wanna get jumped in cuz!"

Q: Do you think it's all good, like for like South Side, you know a lot of South Side neighborhoods have Black fools, but it's cool because they act like South Siders…

A: Like Mexicans, the way they carry themselves. Like for example, Mexicans, like you could see the difference if you look at the South Siders and the Crips and Blacks, like a difference in the way they dress, the way they act…

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Q: So even if you see a Black fool, dressed like a South Sider you realize, "OK this fool's not no Crip or

Blood"

A: Yeah exactly!

SC 46 Street, 20s

The practice of accepting African Americans, who grew up associating with Mexican

peers and who assume a Mexican cultural identity, into Mexican gangs goes back generations in

some of the older Sureno affiliated gangs in South Central Los Angeles, like Varrio South Central

38th Street Locos of Sleepy Lagoon fame.

Q: Was there ever rules against black fools being from the neighborhood?

A: Nah, cause I got homeboys from my neighborhood since like the 1930s and they're black, like black

black. Prolly back in the 40s when there was the zoot suit riots and stuff like that, prolly back then it was

like that. But I got homeys that's like 70, 80 years old, and they been from my neighborhood for like years

and years and years. I dunno it all depends on that black person.

Q: So if they grew up in the neighborhood…?

A: Yeah if they grew up in the neighborhood then they put them in.

SC 38 Street, 20s

Even Sureno affiliated gangs in South Central that have a reputation for animosity against

African Americans like South Side Florencia 13, accept African American members if they grew

up with Mexican members and self-identify with Mexican American and Sureno gang culture.

Q: Does your neighborhood have any black members?

A: Yeah, I think they're just black, but they were raised around Mexicans they're whole time you know. They act like a Mexican. It's funny though! Ha ha ha! Cause you know, you ever seen a black trying to talk Mexican? It's funny you know. Ha ha!

Q: But they're like that cause they grew up in the hood with all raza right?

A: Oh yeah because you know they're homeys. It can't just be a normal black person trying to get into the hood you know. It can only be someone that grew up and knows you real good you know.

SS Florencia 13, 20s

However in contrast, there are some older traditional Sureno affiliated gangs, particularly those from homogeneously Latino communities in East Los Angeles, that do not accept African American members into their gangs under any circumstances, and whose members look disparagingly upon African American members of Sureno affiliated gangs, as well as Sureno affiliated gangs who do accept African American members. They thus refuse to acknowledge cultural identities, and instead insist on primordial racial identities as absolute. Such perspectives are typically remnants of previous generations who did not grow up with the profuse cultural diffusion that exists in the modern era. A *veterano* from one of East Los Angeles's oldest Chicano gangs expresses this perspective in its most extreme form.

Q: Has your neighborhood ever had anyone who was black in it?

A: Not to my knowledge no.

Q: Is there a rule against that?

A: That's just the way it is. It's a unwritten rule.

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Q: So nobody would be stupid enough to suggest like "Aye I wanna jump in my homeboy Malik…"

A: Ha ha! Like, "Yeah this my homey T-Bone!" Ha ha ha! Or, " Yo this Mo-Docka!" Ha ha ha! Fuck no!

Q: What do you think the homeys would say if someone was like, "Aye I wanna get my homeboy in the neighborhood right here?"

A: Aye he got to go, and you gotta go with him!

Q: What do you think about like in South Central it's pretty common for South Side neighborhoods to have black members in them?

A: Aye that's on them. The East Side is different. You meet a person from the East Side, we have a whole different upbringing, morals, than other sections, South Central, the South Side, the West Side, Compton… all them other areas, it all began in the East Side and them other cats just fucked it off.

Q: Do you think that's like a sign of weakness that these other neighborhoods put blacks down?

A: Yeah because they uh... you know, when I meet a black homey from some other fuckin place like, "I'm fuckin whatever from whatever", I won't even shake his hand. To me he's still black, I don't acknowledge them. I never have, I never even tried to. For what? He's still a nigger!

Q: How does that work out when you're locked up? Cause there's fools who are South Siders but they're black?

A: I don't mess with them. Like I said, I won't shake their hand. I won't fuck with them. You can't be in my cell. You're black. That's it, fuck you.

Q: How much do you think that's a common point of view? Like do you know other south siders who won't fuck with a homey if he's black?

A: Oh yeah I know for a fact, I know for a fact, that a lot of homeys feel like me. Yup, stick with your own. ES Clover Street 13, 50s

As Table 4-2 shows, fewer Sureno respondents reported formal and/or informal rules against accepting African American members than reported actually having African American

members. Furthermore, as Regression 4-2 demonstrates, there was a statistically significant

difference found at the P<.10 level of confidence, in Sureno respondents from South Los

Angeles reporting formal and/or informal rules against accepting African American members

when compared with Sureno respondents from East Los Angeles. When compared to Sureno

respondents from East Los Angeles, Sureno respondents from South Los Angeles were found to

be statistically less likely to report the existence of any formal or informal rules against African

American members in their gangs. This lends support to the gentleman's perspective in the

previous quote, that Sureno affiliated gangs in East Los Angeles are less accepting of cross-racial

membership than are Sureno affiliated gangs in South Los Angeles.

Rules Against Cross-Racial Membership	Sureno	Crip and Blood
Yes	19	0
No	46	25

Table 4-2 Rules Against Cross Racial Membership

The refusal of leaders of one particular Chicano gang in East Los Angeles to accept an

African American member in the early 1990s, Barrio East Side State Street 13 (formerly known

as Barrio State Park), was a significant historical crossroads that eventually led to the rise of one

of the largest and most violent gangs in East Los Angeles, KAMsters 13. That fateful decision to

uphold rules against cross-racial membership, ultimately resulted in the eventual loss of over

half of State Street's traditional territory to KAM in the 1990s and 2000s. KAM, an acronym for

"Krazy Ass Mexicans", was started as a graffiti crew in the late 1980s by a group of Chicano

youth, and one African American youth, who grew up together in the area of Boyle Heights just

East of Soto Street, between the Interstate 10 Freeway and Cesar Chavez Avenue (formerly

known as Brooklyn Avenue). They were part of the widespread "tagbanger" subculture

prevalent in Los Angeles since the late 1980s, brought to popular consciousness by a series of

reports on local channel Fox 11 News in the early 1990s.

Tagbangers are essentially taggers who take on many of the behaviors associated with

gang membership, such as territorial control, drug dealing, gun violence and perpetual blood

feuds. Some of these groups, like the one I was member of in the early 1990s, eventually cease

to function as coherent entities and "die out" as members age out into more conformist

lifestyles of union workers, small business owners/operators, skilled laborers, corporate

administrators… and college professors. Other tagbanging crews eventually get absorbed into

the larger hegemonic gangs in their area, which is a common career trajectory for gang

members in Los Angeles, from tagger, to tagbanger, to gangbanger, as aspiring young gangsters

earn their way into the major gang in the area they grow up in. However, some tagbanging

crews eventually morph into a full-fledged gang in their own right, taking on all other

established gangs in their area and surviving to continue to exist as a coherent group. KAM is

perhaps the most successful example of such a tagbanging crew that turned into a genuine

gang in its own right. KAM took on virtually every major gang in East Los Angeles and not only

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survived, but arguably shot and killed more of their enemies than their enemies have shot and killed of them.

Indeed KAM is an enigma in the modern urban landscape of Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles, a bitter reminder to *veteranos* of older more traditional gangs of the gradual breakdown of the archetypal cholo identity in East Los Angeles, with KAM representing to them both the breakdown of the taboo against African Americans being members of Sureno gangs and the fact that they rose out of the graffiti subculture, which many older *veteranos* regard with contempt. Unfortunately and perhaps ironically for State Street, their insistence on enforcing a ban on black membership ultimately led to much worse ramifications, as KAM, led in large part by the African American boy State Street *veteranos* had denied membership to over two decades ago, grew into one of the largest and most violent gangs in all of East Los Angeles, eventually taking over half of State Street's traditional territory and taking on every major Sureno gang in East Los Angeles. A *veterano* from State Street recounts the story of how the rejection of an African American member eventually led to KAM becoming a bona fide gang in its own right.

Q: Can you be black and be from your neighborhood?

Q: Yeah actually I had a really good friend, a really tight friend of mine growing up that was kinda like my lil soldier, like my lil protégé growing up, and he was black. He lived actually on the other side of my neighborhood.

Q: Was he from your neighborhood?

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A: He wasn't from my neighborhood but he grew up with the other side, with the other neighborhood. He wasn't gang banging. When I was gang banging he was just kinda like fucking around trying to get down with us, for the simple fact he had a lot of heart. He was really down, and you know I schooled him, but just the fact that he was black, I would bring him around to my neighborhood and my homeboys would be like, "Oh why the fuck you bringing this fuckin *mayate* to our neighborhood?" And just kinda dissing him in front of me. And I would feel bad because lil homey wouldn't say anything because he had respect for all the older homeys, but he was like all butt hurt over that shit you know. The older homeys were like, "You know there's no *mayates* in the neighborhood. That's never gonna happen!" So he kinda just stopped kicking it with us and stood to the other side and I would still be like, "What's up?", and still go over there and be like, "You're part of us, why aint you kicking it no more?" And he'd be like "Oh, your homeboys are disrespecting me. They don't want no blacks in the neighborhood. So what's the point of me being over there? I'm just gonna stick to this side", and he ended up getting in the enemy neighborhood.

Q: He's from KAMsters?

A: Yeah he's from KAMsters. He's a soldier to this day. You know what, he's really solid. I hear good things about him. He's actually up there. He hit the system and he became a somebody because he had to prove himself you know. He was black and he was running with the homeys so he actually put in a lot of work where like to this day I hear he's really up there. He's a solid ass dude.

Q: Is he locked up right now?

A: Yeah I think he's locked up right now.

Q: So he's accepted in there as a South Sider?

A: Yeah he's a soldier. He's up there you know.

…

Q: What about that dude from KAMsters? When did he get jumped into KAMsters?

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A: I would say like 90, 91 maybe. Cause we were already like fully gang banging at like 88, 89, 90, and KAM

didn't start until around 92, 93 and he was like one of the first originators. So I would say about 91, 92. I'm

not necessarily gonna say he got jumped in, because he was already one of the ones that formed it, one

of the leaders. I don't think he got jumped in, I think he was just one of the ones that started it. He was

one of the leaders who helped start that crew, so when it became a neighborhood, he was already there.

He was one of the heads.

ES State Street 13, 40s

While I won't mention the name of the person who is described in this narrative, I really

don't need to. He is somewhat of a legend in the Sureno gang community, particularly in East

Los Angeles, and his reputation for both integrity and extreme violence is acknowledged and

respected (though perhaps begrudgingly in some cases) by virtually every gang member I have

ever spoken with. He is commonly referred to by both Sureno and Crip and Blood gang

members who know of his exploits as an example of a highly regarded African American

member of a Sureno affiliated gang. Reportedly he even has "Krazy Ass Mayates" tattooed

prominently on his stomach, symbolically declaring his dedication both to his barrio, but also

his allegiance with the South Side and rejection of his primordial African American identity, with

the use of the racial epithet "*mayate*", which is generally translated as synonymous with the

common racial epithet in English, "nigger". His propensity for violence against African

American Crip and Blood gang members in carceral facilities is notorious both among Sureno

and Crip and Blood gang members I have interviewed. His name has come up in literally dozens

of conversations, both in formal and informal interviews, with hundreds of gang members over

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the course of a number of years, both before and during the course of this research. He is also

well known to law enforcement officers I have interviewed, both formally and informally, as a

prime example of a particularly dangerous and notorious African American member of a Sureno

affiliated gang.

In East Los Angeles, project gangs like Primera Flats, Cuatro Flats, Big Hazard and Varrio

Nueva Estrada, commonly had a number of African American members who were/are accepted

as full-fledged members of their neighborhoods because they grew up with Chicano members

together in housing projects in East Los Angeles like Aliso Village, Pico Gardens, Ramona

Gardens and Estrada Courts. In contrast, older traditional gangs whose neighborhoods were

populated mostly by single family homes, and later private apartment complexes, like East Side

White Fence, State Street and Clover Street, tended to hold a strict line on not allowing African

American members in their gangs.

In South East Los Angeles, neighborhoods like Maywood, Vernon, Cudahy, and Bell that

once had modest populations of whites and African Americans, have become almost entirely

homogeneously Latino over the past few decades, as they have been a common destination for

first generation immigrants and their families from Mexico and other parts of Latin America. For

example, according to the 2010 US Census, Maywod zip code 90270, the area controlled by

Varrio South Side Kansas Street 13, was 97.5% Latino in the 2010 census with a black

population of 0.6%. However in previous generations, when the presence of African American

residents was not uncommon, their membership in local Mexican gangs was not unheard of.

However, as the demographics of these areas has moved towards a more homogenously Latino

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population, some of the older more traditional local gangs like Kansas Street assumed a more intolerant view of accepting black members. Earlier in our formal interview a *veterano* from Kansas Street told me that in the 1980s there had been two African American members of the gang, whereas now such cross-racial membership would not only be unacceptable, but in fact contemptible.

Q: Was there an exception for those two black guys because they grew up in your neighborhood?

A: I think because they grew up and and they were like part of us bro you know, you grew up like us you are like us so to speak right?

Q: What if now somebody brought some black guy around, for example from school?

A: There'd be problems, yeah there'd be problems. They would probably fuck him up. I think the homeys would have probably fucked him up and told em nah, you can't be from my neighborhood. We would have probably just fucked em up just to fuck em up.

Q: What do you think about other gangs that allow black guys to be from the neighborhood? Do you think it is a bad look? Do you think they do it because they are weak and recruit blacks? Why do you think people do that?

A: Honestly, yeah they don't care. Like 18 Street, yeah I think its weak bro. I think it's because some people are hurt, I mean yeah they're hurting so bad for numbers that they'll lower their standards.

SS Kansas Street 13, 30s

As Table 4-3 shows, the perception that having cross-racial members was a sign of weakness was found to be present in nearly half of the Sureno gang members who were formally interviewed, whereas not a single Crip or Blood respondent reported such a sentiment.

As the respondent from South East Los Angeles above reported, this sentiment is rather widespread among Sureno respondents, particularly those who were members of gangs that did not accept African American members. As Regression 4-3 demonstrates, there was also a statistically significant difference found at the P<.10 level of confidence, between the perceptions of Sureno respondents from East Los Angeles and Sureno respondents from South Los Angeles, with Sureno respondents from East Los Angeles statistically more likely to be contemptible of Sureno gangs that accept African American members, than Sureno respondents from South Los Angeles.

Perceptions of Cross-Racial Membership	Sureno	Crip and Blood
Negative	21	0
Acceptable	45	25

Table 4-3 Negative Perceptions of Cross-Racial Gang Membership

Predominantly African American Crip and Blood gangs are markedly more accepting of cross-racial Latino members than Sureno affiliated gangs are of accepting black members, and as Table 4-1 clearly shows, cross-racial gang membership is much more common in Crip and Blood gangs than in Sureno affiliated gangs. However, like Sureno gangs who accept cross-racial members, Latino members of Crip and Blood gangs must demonstrate and display the appropriate repertoire of symbolic indicators of a black Crip or Blood cultural identity. In other

words, cholos are not accepted as members in Crip and Blood gangs. However, if a Latino youth

grows up in a predominantly African American neighborhood and associates with primarily

African American peers as children, joining a predominantly African American gang is only a

natural progression in a delinquent career because they will already be inculcated in the

cultural regime that accompanies an African American Crip or Blood gang identity. Their African

American peers will look upon them as an "honorary black person", as one of our students at

Cal State Los Angeles put it during a recent colloquium, thought of in terms of their cultural

identity rather than their primordial identity. When reflecting on their relationships with Latino

members of their gang in formal and informal interviews, African American gang members

universally point to culture as the bond that binds them.

Q: Does your neighborhood have any Latino members?

A: Yes. I'd say it's a small percentage, I could think of about four to five people right now, so I would prolly

say 10%.

Q: And the reason they're from your hood and not from a Mexican gang is that they grew up with you

guys?

A: Yeah but you know the Mexicans we grew up with a Mexican gang in our neighborhood and we're not

at war with them, the Harpys. So there is a Mexican gang there but it's not a issue.

Q: What do you think caused those kids to choose to be from your hood and not from Harpys?

A: I think the friendships, who they chose as friends growing up.

Q: Do you think another part of that is that culturally they tend to act more black and carry themselves

more like blacks do?

A: Right I would say that, yes, but I think it's because of who they chose as their friends when they were in

school. Because two of them, they mothers are traditional Mexican women who speak just a slight

amount of English. It's primarily that they adopted the culture of the blacks.

WS Rolling 20s Neighborhood Bloods, 50s

As this chapter demonstrates, cultural identity is the master status that defines both

gang affiliation and individuals' own personal identities as South Sider or Crip or Blood.

However, unlike Sureno affiliated gangs, this is true for Crip and Blood gang members

throughout the city, both in mixed areas and the few areas left where there is a more

demographically homogenous African American population. As a member of the West Side

Rolling 40s Neighborhood Crips, a predominantly African American gang in Leimert Park, a

predominantly African American community, put it in reference to a Mexican American

member of their gang, "Aww that nigga? He ain't no Mexican. He a nigga just like the rest of us,

he just a Mexican nigga! Ha ha ha! He walk like a nigga, talk like a nigga, all that."

As the following respondent describes, the same thing goes in Watts, where

traditionally African American project gangs have taken on more and more Latino members. As

first generation immigrant populations from Mexico and other Latin American countries have

come to occupy many of the private housing and apartment stock in Watts adjacent to the

public housing projects, Latino membership in the traditional Crip and Blood project gangs has

become increasingly more common. Those Latino youth who befriend African American peers

in their formative years and adopt black culture, will typically join the existing Crip or Blood

project gang closest to their residence if they decide to join a street gang. And if they do, they

will be accepted by their African American peers as a full-fledged member of the gang.

> Q: Your neighborhood has Mexicans in it right?
>
> A: Yes it does.
>
> Q: Are they accepted the same as black members?
>
> A: Yes. Very much accepted.
>
> Q: Everybody's the same?
>
> A: Yes.
>
> Q: And that's cause you grew up together right? You've known them since you were little?
>
> A: Yes.
>
> Q: Do they have more of like a black style or they're not like cholos right?
>
> A: They're nothing like cholos, but they, they very much have a black style and a way of talking, but not,
>
> not all of them though some really, they're from the neighborhood and they let that be known and they
>
> still, you know how there are Mexican tradition about them, but they don't dress cholo or nothing.
>
> Q: You think they adopt more black culture than Mexican culture?
>
> A: Oh yeah fo sho!
>
> Watts Bounty Hunter Bloods, 20s

Even black Crip and Blood gangs that are particularly known for their animosity towards

Mexicans and other Latinos are known to accept Mexican members. East Coast Crips, the arch

nemesis of the aforementioned Florencia 13, also accepts Mexican members, just as Florencia

accepts African American members, so long as they demonstrate the appropriate symbolic

repertoire commensurate with their cultural identity and corresponding gang affiliation.

Q: Does your neighborhood have any Mexican members?

A: Yeah we do, about like 7.

Q: Out of how many?

A: Well I know a couple from 8-9, I know one from 7-8, yeah I know some.

Q: So it's not totally out of the ordinary?

A: No not at all.

Q: Are they accepted by everybody?

A: Yeah they are.

Q: You think they act more like they black than they Mexican?

A: Yeah most of em do. Most of em do.

Q: They're not all bald headed, size 50 pants pulled up to they chest and shit?

A: Oh naw, naw. Hell naw!

SC East Coast Crips, 30s

I have only ever heard of one instance of a member of an African American gang asserting that his gang does not accept Mexican members, and that was on a National Geographic documentary, wherein a Blood gang member stated that Mexican members are prohibited in his gang.[176] However, I have been unable to find any Crip or Blood gang member who would repeat that assertion during the three years of fieldwork I conducted for this research.

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[176] Jeremiah 2010

Easily one of the most conspicuous indicators of the adoption of a black cultural identity

is the common use of the word "nigga" as a term of endearment, which must clearly be

differentiated from the term "nigger", which of course is a racial epithet. Casual use of the term

"nigga" as a term of endearment in common conversation is a conspicuous indicator of both

the adoption of a black cultural identity, as well as a certain comfort level with black culture

and black people in general. Even members of Sureno affiliated gangs who grow up in

demographically mixed communities with African American peers, commonly use the word

"nigga" as a term of endearment in casual conversation. This is a practice that can get them in a

lot of trouble with other Sureno gang members in carceral environments, who are markedly

less comfortable with and accepting of symbolic indicators of a black cultural identity.

Q: What is it that separates the ones that choose to be from black gangs from those that choose to be

from Mexican gangs?

A: Prolly just hanging around more blacks and end up being a gang member.

Q: Just the friends they have?

A: And then they, Mexicans, most of the Mexicans that grew up in South Central, they act like blacks.

That's what we say, you know, everybody act like, they say "nigga", we don't look at em like, "Oh he racist

cause he say nigga!" They say "nigga" to each other you know, they could say it and don't nobody get

offended. I could tell em, I always tell Mexicans, "Ya'll can say it, it's white people that can't say it!" Ha ha

ha!

Q: If you grew up in the hood, you could say it right?

A: Pretty much yeah.

Q: So you think Mexicans that are from black gangs tend to act more black than Mexicans from Mexican gangs?

A: Yeah, people tell em that. Like the youngster I was telling you about from Playboys, when he got to prison cause he talk, now he talk black. Now if he was a South Sider you couldn't tell, and I would say that, that go back to the question you asked me earlier, most of em, there's Mexicans in South Central that if they speak in the one room then the other one, you prolly couldn't tell if they was Mexican or black right? And I remember he got into it with, he was trying to parole and he got into it with some Mexicans, I think they was from over there in East LA. Something like that, and because one of these South Siders over there was like, "Why don't you go with the blacks cause I mean you act black anyway!" So he had to step up to him (and fight) cause he was disrespectful.

Q: So he missed his parole day?

A: Ha ha ha! Yeah you could say that.

ES Blood Stone Villains, 40s

4.9 Side by Side and a World Apart

I don't know, I can just say that they and we are totally different. Just totally different.

Inglewood Neighborhood Piru Bloods, Teens

While identities are commonly expressed in racial terms of black and brown, Latino and African American, Mexican gangs and black gangs, this chapter demonstrates that these identities are in most cases defined in cultural terms. The boundaries between these two racialized groups are therefore primarily cultural, not racial in any kind of primordial sense. The boundary is only racial in the sense that it is expressed in racial terms. However in practice,

culture trumps race in determining whether one falls on one side or the other of the "color line". That is not to say that "black gangs" are not comprised of majority black members and "Mexican gangs" are not comprised of majority Mexican members, but that race alone does not determine one's ethno-racial gang identity, culture does.

Gang identities expressed in racial terms are better understood as regimes of cultural practice and performance, style and behavior, the boundaries of which are often vigorously enforced in order to preserve the distinction between racialized gang factions. Cultural indicators are what determine which racialized gang faction any individual aligns themselves with. As this chapter demonstrates, these cultural indicators are perceived by both sides as being identified with one faction or the other. Some facets of cultural identity are universally acknowledged as different, like clothing, hairstyles and language, all of which were perceived as fundamentally different by 100% of respondents across all races, regions and gang affiliations. In contrast, other facets of cultural identity are perceived by most but not all respondents as fundamentally different, for example, 57 of 92 respondents felt that preference in music was different and 63 of 92 respondents felt that preference in vehicles was different.

There are significant neighborhood differences in where the boundaries of cultural identity fall between different regions of Los Angeles. Generally for gang members in East Los Angeles, there is less acceptable overlap between Sureno and Crip and Blood culture, whereas in South Los Angeles and on the West Side, there is more cultural overlap between Surenos and Crips or Bloods. With regard to preference in music, of 25 respondents from the East Side, 18 felt that preference in music was a significant difference between black and brown culture. Of

27 respondents from the West Side, 19 felt that preference in music was a significant difference between black and brown culture. In South Los Angeles there was considerably less perception of differentiation in music preferences, as only half of the 40 respondents from South LA felt that preference in music was a significant difference between black and brown gang members.

Similarly with regard to preference in vehicles, of 25 respondents from the East Side, 19 felt that preference in vehicles was a significant difference between black and brown culture. Of 27 respondents from the West Side, 19 felt that preference in vehicles was a significant difference between black and brown culture. However, of 40 respondents from South Los Angeles, 25 felt that preference in vehicles was a significant difference between black and brown culture. Thus respondents from demographically mixed neighborhoods in South Los Angeles were less likely to perceive a difference in preferences for music and vehicles. This is an interesting finding in that where Latino and black populations overlap demographically, there is more cultural overlap between them. That is not to say that there is no boundary or that the boundary is not enforced between cholo and Crip and Blood culture in areas that are demographically heterogeneous, but that the boundaries are further overlapped than in East LA where there are almost no black residents, and even less who ascribe to a Crip or Blood cultural identity.

Some specific cultural indicators are universally recognized as associated with one side or the other. Wearing pants high at the navel is a hallmark facet of cholo culture, while sagging pants below the hips is a facet of Crip and Blood culture. Wearing a shaved head with a big moustache is symbolic of cholo culture, whereas wearing braids and corn rows are indicative of

Crip and Blood culture. Using words like "ese" or "homes" as a term of endearment signifies a

cholo cultural identity, and using words like "cuz" or "blood" as a term of endearment denotes

a Crip or Blood cultural identity. Other cultural indicators may have been borrowed from one or

the other culture, but have gained traction and become a facet of both cultures, like low-riders

and rap music.

Some of these cultural indicators apply to a wide swath of the black and Latino

communities in Los Angeles and beyond, while others are very specific to Sureno and/or Crip

and Blood affiliated gangs. For example only Crips commonly use the word ""cuz" as a term of

endearment, while much of the black community commonly uses the word "nigga" as a term of

endearment. Certain clothing styles are specifically indicative of gang membership, such as a

Dodger jersey with the number "13" on the back to specifically indicate allegiance to a Sureno

affiliated gang, while cuisine and religion for example are a cultural difference between the

black and Latino communities as a whole. This is important to consider as many of the cultural

differences that drive a wedge between gang identities, also drive a wedge between the wider

black and Latino communities gang members are a part of.

It doesn't matter whether every individual conforms to every aspect of the cultural

regime they identify with, what matters is that each aspect of that regime is perceived to be

associated with one side or the other, brown or black, Sureno or Crip or Blood. Those who test

the boundaries of their own cultural regime do so under the implicit understanding that they

are crossing that line, and that their gang peers and/or elders may react negatively to their

cultural transgressions. In contrast, those who adhere to the cultural regime they belong to and

display the full repertoire of appropriate cultural styles, practices and behaviors, enjoy the security granted by conformity to cultural expectations.

This is most apparent when one considers cross-race members, black members of Sureno gangs and non-black Latino members of Crip and Blood gangs. While their phenotypic appearance may appear to place them in a black or brown ethno-racial category, their cultural style, practice and behavior places them in the other. They are generally accepted by their peers so long as they maintain a cultural identity consistent with their gang affiliation, irrespective of their racial identity in a primordial sense. They are certainly more accepted than those whose race in a primordial sense aligns with their racial gang affiliation, but who willingly transgress the boundaries of cultural style, practice and behavior. It ain't about what you are, it's about where you from and how you roll.

Chapter 5 Racial Bias

Competition and Conflict

While research on racial bias has traditionally been focused around a black/white binary, the last decade or so has seen a burgeoning literature on inter-minority racial bias, including black/Korean bias[177] and of course black/Latino bias[178]. This chapter begins with an examination of the state of existing research on black/Latino bias, and then moves on to replicate some of the more common racial bias tests, such as willingness to engage in inter-racial relationships and perceptions of employment competition, with the addition of innovative questions concerning perceptions of housing competition that have not been considered in previous research to test inter-minority racial bias among black and Latino gang members in Los Angeles.

Before I proceed a few comments on terminology are in order. In chapter 3 I used the term "racism" to refer to anti-black racial bias in colonial and contemporary Mexico and Latin America. However, when referring to the US context I refuse to use the term racism to describe relations between black and Latino populations. Instead I favor the term "bias". This is not a matter of semantics. As sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva explains, racism is a systematic and structural system that excludes non-whites from full participation in society for the exclusive

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[177] Chang and Diaz 1999; Chang 1999; Park 1999; Lee 1999a; Lee 1999b; Choi 1999.

[178] Mindiola, Niemann and Rodriguez 2002; Vaca 2004; McClain, Carter, Soto, Lyle, Grynaviski, Nunnally, Scotto, Kendrick, Lackey and Cotton 2006; Hutchison 2007; Helen Marrow 2009; Bean, Bachmeier, Brown and Tafoya-Estrada 2011; Jones-Correa 2011; Morin, Sanchez and Barretto 2011; Rodriguez and Mindiola 2011; Sawyer 2011; McClain, Lackey, Perez, Carter, Carew, Walton, Smith, Lyle and Nunnally 2011; McDermott 2011; Freer and Lopez 2011; Zamora 2011; Vigil 2011; Martinez and Rios 2011; Pastor 2014; Frasure-Yokley and Green 2014; Sandoval 2014; Barretto, Gonzalez and Sanchez 2014; Cuevas 2014; Quinones 2014; Johnson 2014; Leiva 2014

benefit of white Europeans and their descendants.[179] Therefore racism is an appropriate term to use to describe the system of racial stratification, subjugation and oppression of African Americans in North America or Afro-Latinos in Latin America. Racism is about a power differential between whites and non-whites in society. However, as Bonilla-Silva put it in answering my question as to whether racism is a valid term to use to describe bias among and between marginalized minority populations in the US context at a lecture he gave at UCLA in 2014, "Let's be real meng, Latinos don't have no power over nothing in the US! Ha ha ha!"[180] Sadly the same goes for African Americans as well.

It is true that neither African Americans nor Latinos have the power to dominate and subjugate anyone in the US context. Indeed it is they who are the victims of the domination and subjugation that benefits whites in the US, which the term racism rightly applies to. Thus it is not anymore possible in the US context for African Americans to be racist against Latinos, nor Latinos racist against African Americans, than for there to be such a thing as "reverse racism". Suggesting as much betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of what the term racism really means. Therefore I use the term bias rather than racism in all instances of inter-minority prejudice, conflict and competition in US contexts, until such a time as currently marginalized minority populations achieve hegemonic domination over those of white European descent.

With regards to the study of black/Latino inter-racial bias, examining the extent of inter-racial bias among and between black and Latino gang members is a novel expansion on the existing research concerning inter-minority racial bias, not least of which because inter-racial

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[179] Bonilla Silva 1997; Bonilla Silva 2014a; Bonilla Silva 2014b
[180] Bonilla-Silva 2014b

bias among and between gang members can and does have deadly consequences, but also

because gang members are part of the communities they live in, particularly in core ghetto and

barrio neighborhoods where inter-generational gang families predominate. In some

marginalized communities gang members and their families are the community, and their

opinions and perceptions, to some extent at least, are a reflection of the larger urban black and

Latino communities they are a part of.

Much of the recent research on black/Latino relations has strived to downplay or refute

the extent of inter-minority racial bias, competition and conflict between black and Latino

populations.[181] While these efforts are well meaning attempts to highlight the potential for

cooperation between black and Latino populations, rather than emphasize the conflict between

them, some of these claims reflect conceptual problems that limit the effectiveness of their

arguments. In order to move towards inter-minority cooperation, we must first identify,

acknowledge and address the extent of bias and conflict between black and Latino populations.

Only then can we move forward in educating, politicizing and organizing a black/brown

coalition of the marginalized classes.

5.1 Existing Research on Black/Brown Relations

Recent research data on racial relations between blacks and Latinos provides significant

evidence of the historical transmission of anti-black bias to modern Latino populations in the US

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[181] Hipp, Tita and Boggess 2009; Bean et al 2011; Jones-Correa 2011; Morin et al 2011; Freer and Lopez 2011; Zamora 2011; Vigil 2011; Martinez and Rios 2011; Pastor 2014; Sandoval 2014; Barretto et al 2014; Cuevas 2014; Johnson 2014; Leiva 2014

discussed in chapter 3, as well as bias against Latinos among African American, which presumably can be attributed to group threat and defended neighborhood sentiments. This burgeoning body of research reflects data from different parts of the country, from North Carolina to Houston to Chicago to Los Angeles. What follows is a summary of existing findings that might relate to black/Latino bias. However, as much of this research has been conducted in other parts of the country, I must offer the caveat that one cannot expect that the findings from these varied contexts will necessarily be duplicated in the Los Angeles context.

Mindiola, Niemann and Rodriguez found a significant bias between Mexican Americans and African Americans in a group of black and Latino respondents surveyed in 1996 in Houston, Texas.[182] Although they found bias in both directions between blacks and Latinos, they found that Latinos were more biased against blacks than vice versa, a finding later supported by similar results in a study of three Southern cities.[183] They also found that immigrant Latinos were more biased against blacks than were US-born Latinos, and were more averse to having contact with blacks and less likely to actually have substantive contact with African Americans, a finding affirmed by subsequent research.[184]

Mindiola, Niemann and Rodriguez suggest that anti-black bias among Mexicans is due to negative depictions of blacks in the media in Mexico. This hypothesis has been supported by ethnographic data presented by Sylvia Zamora, whose subjects in Guadalahara reported that one of the sources of bias against African Americans was negative depictions of African Americans in American entertainment media.[185] However of course, this media transmission hypothesis cannot account for the historical bias examined in chapter 3, which predates the inception of the film and TV industry.

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[182] Mindiola et al 2002
[183] McClain et al 2011
[184] Mindiola et al. 2002; McClain et al. 2006; Marrow 2009
[185] Zamora 2011

A popular article from a prominent political science journal published by a team of scholars also found similar evidence of racial bias in a sample taken from a predominantly Mexican immigrant community in Durham, North Carolina in 2003.[186] They found that Latinos were actually quite a bit more biased against blacks than were whites in their sample, and rather than finding the type of widespread white racism assumed to be pervasive in the American South, Mexican immigrants reported experiencing a great deal more bias from African Americans than from whites. For example they found that 58% of Mexican immigrants believed that blacks are essentially lazy, 32.5% reported feeling that they cannot get along with blacks and roughly 57% felt that blacks could not be trusted; whereas with white respondents the corresponding results were 9.3%, 8.4% and 9.6% respectively.[187] Furthermore, these findings demonstrate that the anti-black bias recent Mexican immigrants demonstrate could not possibly be entirely due to cultural transmission from the existing white population, not to mention that these researchers also found that the longer immigrants had lived in the US, the less anti-black bias they exhibited.[188] These findings, from a predominantly Mexican community made up almost entirely of first generation immigrants and their families, are clear evidence of the presence of a strong anti-black bias among modern Mexican populations, as has been demonstrated in historical Mexico throughout the colonial period, thus providing support for the historical transmission hypothesis presented in chapter 3.

Marrow found qualitative evidence of anti-black bias in an interview sample of predominantly Mexican immigrants taken from rural counties in North Carolina in 2003-04.[189] Respondents in her research reported feeling that blacks had poor hygiene and were lazy. "The blacks are sometimes pretty dirty. They don't do things right, or they don't want to work. They don't want to be responsible for

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[186] McClain et al 2006
[187] Ibid
[188] Ibid
[189] Marrow 2009

work. They don't do what people tell them to. – Nadia".[190] In line with previous research, Marrow found that Mexicans saw themselves as closer to the privileges of whiteness than the disadvantage of being black in American society, thus exacerbating any existing anti-black bias; while simultaneously experiencing more bias from African Americans than from whites in the US.[191]

Telles and Ortiz[192] also found evidence of modern anti-black bias among Mexican Americans in their landmark longitudinal study continued from Grebler, Moore and Guzman[193] of Mexican Americans in Los Angeles and San Antonio. Respondents reported extremely limited contact with blacks, compared to whites and Latinos, with original respondents expressing a near unanimous (80%) aversion to marriage with blacks. Although this aversion among the modern subject population was reduced to about half of respondents, not one respondent, from the first or the second study, reported being married to an African American spouse. It is worth noting that the professed aversion to intermarriage with blacks finding was especially pronounced among respondents from Los Angeles.

Furthermore, Telles and Ortiz found that when asked if they objected to their children going to school with children of various races, the children of original respondents were actually *more* likely to object to sending their children to school with African Americans than their parents had been in the original study. Merely stating the obvious by suggesting that there are some negative attitudes among Mexican Americans towards blacks, Telles and Ortiz conveniently failed to fully consider any possible explanation for these findings. However, these findings are clearly very significant in considering the pervasiveness of a definite racial bias against blacks in modern Mexican American communities, particularly in Los Angeles.

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[190] Ibid p. 1045
[191] Marrow 2009
[192] Telles and Ortiz 2008
[193]Grebler, Moore and Guzman 1970

Villareal's research in Mexico also provides evidence of the transmission of the historical anti-black bias discussed in chapter 3 to modern Mexican populations, as his research found a definite bias in Mexican society against persons with darker skin complexion.[194] Although Villareal's research focused on gradations of skin complexion among the Mexican Mestizo population at large, while failing to question the historical veracity of the "Mestizo Myth" itself or consider the effect on his data of anti-Afro-Mexican bias, it might not be too great a conceptual stretch to assume that the bias demonstrated against Mexicans with darker skin complexion that Villareal found, certainly applies to Afro-Mexicans, and Afro-Americans for that matter, both in Mexico and among Mexican American populations in the US.

A number of recent articles in two edited volumes published in 2011 and 2014 have expanded upon, as well as conflicted with and critiqued the prior evidence of black/Latino bias.[195] Closely intertwined with bias is the perception of competition between black and Latino populations, which a number of the articles from the 2011 and 2014 volumes address. Contrary to earlier findings of a strong anti-black bias among recent Latino immigrants,[196] using data from the Latino National Survey (LNS), Jones-Correa found that more settled Latino populations perceived competition with blacks at a higher level than did more recently immigrated Latino populations.[197] He suggested that these results constitute evidence that increased social contact with blacks increase the perception of competition in Latino populations.

Morin, Sanchez and Barretto's findings that Latinos in the South who experience more social contact with blacks exhibit a higher perception of competition with blacks supports this

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[194] Villareal 2010
[195] Mindiola et al. 2002; McClain et al. 2006; Marrow 2009; Zamora 2011
[196] Ibid
[197] Jones-Correa 2011

line of inquiry.[198] Data on black perceptions of Latinos also shows the prevalence of the

perception that Latinos are an acute source of job displacement in the black community,

supporting split labor market and consolidated inequality theories. Rodriguez and Mindiola

found that over half (54%) of their black respondents from Houston believed that Latino

immigrants take jobs from blacks, while only 39% of blacks disagreed.[199] McDermott found

qualitative evidence of this bias as well, although she found that bias among blacks varied by

class, with working class blacks more biased than middle class blacks.[200] Frasure-Yokley and

Green found blacks to be more in favor of punitive policies like deportation than whites, Asians

or Latinos, although their findings seemingly conflict with earlier work in that lower class blacks,

those who presumably would most likely compete directly with Latino immigrants for

employment, in their sample were less likely to support punitive policies like deportation.[201]

5.2 Conceptual Problems with Existing Research

Some of the recent academic work on black/Latino relations suffers from serious

conceptual errors that undermine the validity of their findings. Prominent among these is

Morin, Sanchez and Barreto's critique of previous findings revealing the extent of anti-black

bias among Latino populations. Using a clever statistical control with the LNS data to compare

levels of bias against blacks to levels of bias against other Latinos, they suggest that Latinos are

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[198] Morin et al 2011
[199] Rodriguez and Mindiola 2011
[200] McDermott 2011
[201] Frasure-Yokely and Green 2014

in fact just as biased against fellow Latinos as they are against blacks, and therefore the relative

levels of bias against blacks are negligible when taking into account the intra-Latino bias.[202]

Barreto, Gonzalez and Sanchez support this argument with more findings from the LNS data in

their 2014 article as well.[203]

However, their assumption equating anti-black bias with anti-Latino bias is less than

convincing, as it demonstrates a fundamental qualitative disconnect from the populations their

quantitative data represents. As discussed in chapter 4, there is a great deal of intra-Latino bias

and differentiation, but that is not because Latinos are biased against themselves. It's because

in Los Angeles Mexicans are biased against Salvadorans, in Miami Cubans are biased against

Dominicans, and in New York Puerto Ricans are biased against Mexicans. Throughout the

nation, more settled and assimilated Latinos are biased against more recent immigrants, and

vice versa. Anyone who has spent any amount of time living among Latino populations in

various parts of the country knows this from personal experience.

Only those who are oblivious to the specificities of differentiation and bias among and

between various Latino communities in different parts of the US could make such an argument.

It makes little sense to suggest that because Latinos are biased against other Latinos, that their

bias against blacks is inconsequential when considering the specificities of particular contexts.

For example, in the Los Angeles context, Mexicans are commonly biased against Salvadorans,

but Mexicans are also commonly biased against blacks. It does not follow that they are

therefore not biased against blacks because they are biased against Salvadorans. There is no

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[202] Morin et al 2011
[203] Barreto et al 2014

relation between the two. Therefore it makes little sense to evaluate the strength of one bias

relative to the other when taking into account the specific inter-group dynamics of specific

populations in specific contexts.

This failure to consider the specificity of different contexts in their comparison is often

repeated in the existing literature on black/Latino relations. For example, Freer and Lopez

attempt to parallel quantitative data from Chicago with qualitative data from Los Angeles.[204]

They begin with the caveat that their "feeling thermometer" test is a highly suspect

methodology, but then continue to "skate on thin ice" as Jock Young termed it,[205] proceeding to

assert that their quantitative findings from Chicago disprove the theory that strong intra-group

identity is an obstacle to inter-group cohesion. They then struggle to square that finding with

their more nuanced qualitative findings from a group of black and Latino youth in Los Angeles,

selected for their inter-group involvement in a community group that encourages black and

Latino cooperation and cohesion.

To say nothing of selecting for a population that confirms one's argument, assuming

some inherent relation in the perspectives of groups in Chicago and Los Angeles makes little

sense. As the old saying goes, it's like comparing apples to oranges. Both are large cities with

large black and Latino populations, both have experienced continued Latino immigration in

recent decades, both are known for their prevalence of youth gang culture, but the similarities

end there. Chicago and Los Angeles have very different histories, different settlement patterns,

different demographics, different street cultures, different gang factions and different gang and

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[204] Freer and Lopez 2011
[205] Young 2011

prison politics. Assuming that findings in one city are inherently related to findings in another city willfully ignores the specificities of these very different contexts.

Martinez and Rios also fall into the same pitfall in their qualitative analysis of relations between black and Latino gang members in California.[206] They suggest that relations between black and Latino gang members are most commonly characterized by avoidance, and that cooperation is infrequent and conflict is minimal, based on ethnographic observation in the Oakland area and interviews with Law Enforcement Officers (LEO's) in South Los Angeles. However, equating gang relations in Northern California to those in Southern California makes little sense when one considers the specificities of these very different contexts.

Prison gang politics in California prisons place Sureno affiliated gang members from Southern California in opposition to both black Crip and Blood gang members as well as Norteno affiliated gang members from Northern California. Whereas black gang members and Norteno affiliated gang members are loosely allied in carceral environments in California. These Sureno/Norteno and Sureno/black dichotomies are at the core of gang identities in California, as racialized gang identities from prisons frame gang relations on the street. This difference is also reflected in the type of cultural indicators discussed in this dissertation. Many of the cultural styles, practices and behaviors accepted among Norteno gang members in the Bay Area, would be considered taboo or outright unacceptable by Sureno gang members in Southern California, such as sagging one's pants or braiding one's hair and/or beard – cultural indicators that are sharply proscribed among Sureno gang members in Los Angeles due to their

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[206] Martinez and Rios 2011

association with a black cultural identity. Thus, it makes little sense to assume that there is any relation between inter-minority gang relations in Los Angeles and the Bay Area, but that is exactly what Martinez and Rios do.

We cannot allow ourselves to fall into the pitfall of the nomothetic myth of generalizability. We cannot expect that findings in one context will necessarily apply to other contexts any more than we can assume that black and Latino populations in one part of the country are the same as in another, and we should not be surprised when these expectations are not met. The best we can do is to present both quantitative and qualitative data from the same context, to at least be able to speak authoritatively about relations in that particular context. This is what this chapter attempts to accomplish. While this chapter presents data on black/Latino relations in Los Angeles, I would not assume these results necessarily mirror black/Latino relations in other context. Only by repeating the depth of this work in other contexts could we then have a valid basis for comparison between them.

5.3 Measures of Inter-Racial Bias

I have chosen to report the findings from three types of inter-minority bias in this chapter, two that have been examined by multiple researchers on black/Latino relations, and one that has rarely been examined in existing academic literature. The first measure of bias concerns the willingness of respondents to engage in inter-racial amorous relationships with a partner of the other race. Bias against engaging in inter-racial relationships is one measure for

which we have the oldest data available, in that marriage records going back generations betray

a definite social distance between blacks and Latinos in Los Angeles.[207] The question of

willingness to engage in inter-racial relationships was included in both Grebler, Moore and

Guzman's original study of Mexican Americans in Los Angeles, and was repeated in Telles and

Ortiz's replication of the original research project, to which they found a great deal of bias.[208]

The extent of respondents' bias against engaging in various levels of inter-racial relationships is

a useful measure of social distance between black and Latino gang populations in Los Angeles,

as is exploring the effect of perceived opposition to those relationships from family, peers and

the community at large on gang members' willingness to engage in inter-racial relationships.

This chapter presents quantitative data that explores both the extent of this bias among

respondents, and the influence of familial, peer and community pressure on that bias.

Qualitative data lends a voice to that bias in order to better understand where it comes from

and how it is manifested.

The second measure of bias used is perception of competition for employment, and

work relations between black and Latino gang members more generally. Perceptions of

employment competition are at the core of much of the existing research on black/Latino

relations,[209] and while scholars have provided evidence that suggests these perceptions are

empirically unsupported,[210] perceptions of such competition are prevalent and are therefore

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[207] Sanchez 1993
[208] Grebler, Moore and Guzman 1970; Telles and Ortiz 2008
[209] Vaca 2004; McClain et al 2006; Hutchison 2007; Marrow 2009; Bean et al 2011; Jones-Correa 2011; Morin et al 2011; Rodriguez and Mindiola 2011; Sawyer 2011; McDermott 2011; Pastor 2014; Frasure-Yokely and Green 2014; Barreto et al 2014
[210] Bean et al 2011; Pastor 2014

relevant in gauging the level of bias between black and Latino populations. Quantitative data is used to gauge the extent of such perceptions and explore possible causes, and qualitative data reveals the experiences and interpretations these perceptions are based on.

The third measure of bias this chapter introduces has been examined by only one prior source,[211] and was actually added to the interview instrument at the suggestion of one of the first respondents, which is the extent of perceptions of housing competition and willingness to cohabitate in an inter-racial household or community. This is also a promising indicator of social distance between black and Latino gang members, as the willingness to live with members of the other race demonstrates how far the boundaries are that individuals set for themselves when it comes to inter-racial interaction. Again, quantitative data reveals the extent of the perception of housing competition among black and Latino gang members and their willingness to cohabitate, while qualitative data reveals the nuances in experience and motivations behind these perceptions that quantitative data alone cannot convey.

5.4 Inter-Racial Relationships

The willingness to engage in inter-racial amorous relationships is a useful measure of social distance and inter-group bias between black and Latino respondents. The findings from this research suggest that bias against inter-racial relationships is primarily a one-way street, as unwillingness to engage in inter-racial relationships was expressed by a majority of Sureno

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[211] Mindiola et al 1996

affiliated respondents, while few Crip and Blood respondents expressed an unwillingness to engage in inter-racial relationships. Respondents were asked both if they were willing to date inter-racially and whether they were willing to have inter-racial sex. This is an important distinction, as casual sexual relations are much easier to conceal from parents, peers and community, whereas inter-racial relationships beyond more than mere sex alone expose those who would engage in such relationships to the social reprobation of parents, gang peers and the wider community.

Respondents were also asked whether they were opposed to family members engaging in inter-racial relationships. The difference between Sureno and Crip and Blood gang members was most pronounced on this issue, as nearly two thirds of Sureno gang members were opposed to family members dating inter-racially, whereas only one Blood gang member expressed opposition to family members dating inter-racially.

As can be seen in Table 5-1 there is a statistically significant difference between Sureno and Crip and Blood gang members' willingness to engage in inter-racial relationships. As might be expected, there is also a significant difference between the number of Sureno respondents who were unwilling to date inter-racially and those who were unwilling to have sex alone, as slightly more than half of Sureno respondents were unwilling to have inter-racial sex, while almost three quarters were unwilling to engage in inter-racial relationships that involved more than mere sex alone. Just short of two thirds of Sureno respondents were opposed to family members dating inter-racially. This disparity suggests that while a number of Sureno respondents professed opposition to inter-racial dating and/or were opposed to members of

their family engaging in inter-racial dating, a number of those were in fact themselves not

opposed to engaging in inter-racial sex alone with no substantive relationship attached, so long

as such trysts could be concealed from parents, gang peers and other community members. In

contrast, only 5 of the 26 Crip and Blood respondents were unwilling to engage in inter-racial

relationships, while only one of those reported opposition to family members dating inter-

racially.

Inter-Racial Relationship Bias	Sureno	Crip and Blood
Not Willing to Have Sex	37/66 – 56%	5/26 – 19%
Not Willing to Date	48/66 – 73%	5/26 – 19%
Opposed to Family Dating	43/66 - 65%	1/26 - 4%

Table 5-1 Bias Against Inter-Racial Relationships (Rounded to nearest percent)

This research also questioned respondents as to their perceptions of the extent of bias

in their parents, gang peers and community. This is an important question because it can

provide data to corroborate the historical transmission hypothesis presented in chapter 3. The

question of whether their perceptions reflect the true level of such bias among parents, gang

peers and family cannot be known from this research, however respondents' perceptions of

such bias are telling in and of themselves when considering the potential effect those

perceptions have on respondents' own bias.

As Table 5-2 demonstrates, these results show a stark disparity between Sureno and

Crip and Blood gang members' perceptions of their families, friends and communities.

However, there are interesting differences in respondents' perceptions of bias in these

different groups. Sureno respondents reported the least bias from parents, with slightly more

than two thirds of Sureno respondents reporting their parents to be biased against

relationships with blacks, but they reported the most bias from their general communities, with

over 90% of Sureno respondents reporting that the Latino community at large was opposed to

inter-racial relationships between blacks and Latinos. This is strong evidence of the presence of

a historically rooted taboo against inter-racial relationships with blacks and lasting anti-black

bias among the modern Latino community in Los Angeles.

Opposition to Inter-Racial Relationships	Sureno	Crip and Blood
Parents Opposed	44/65 – 68%	5/25 – 20%
Gang Peers Opposed	50/66 – 76%	1/26 – 4%
Community Opposed	59/65 – 91%	11/25 – 44%

Table 5-2 Parental, Peer and Community Opposition to Inter-Racial Relationships

Perceptions of bias among gang peers was in the middle, but still demonstrated strong

opposition to inter-racial relationships, with about three quarters of respondents reporting that

their gang peers were opposed to members of their gang engaging in inter-racial relationships

with blacks. This is an especially strong finding when compared with Crip and Blood

respondents, of whom only one Crip gang member reporting that his gang peers were critical of

his penchant for inter-racial relationships with Mexican girls. Only one fifth of Crip and Blood

respondents reported that their parents were opposed to them dating Latino girls, while over

two fifths reported the perception that the black community in general is opposed to inter-

racial dating between blacks and Latinos. This is roughly the double the rate of parental bias

found by Mindiola, Niemann and Rodriguez in their Houston sample from the mid-1990s,

however the figures for community bias are commensurate with the rate of inter-racial

relationship bias found in their subject cohort.[212]

Rather than merely assuming that such perceptions of parental, peer and community

bias influence the bias of individual respondents, logistical regression analysis of this data

provides empirical evidence that suggests this assumption is indeed justified. When tested

individually, parental and peer opposition to inter-racial relationships have a statistically

significant effect on respondents' willingness to have sex with a partner of the other race at the

$P<.05$ level, and community opposition has a statistically significant effect at the $P<.10$ level.

However as can be seen in Logistical Regression 5-1, these relationships collapse when tested

together with a control for gang affiliation included in the model. The coefficients for parental

and peer opposition are in the predicted direction, having a negative effect on respondents'

willingness to engage in inter-racial sex, suggesting that perhaps with a bigger sample there

might be a statistically significant effect found. In any case we must also consider that casual

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[212] Mindiola et al 1996

sex is much easier to conceal from parents, peers and community, so an arrested effect on casual sexual relations ought not to be a surprising finding.

As might be expected, the effects of perceptions of parental, peer and community opposition to inter-racial relationships on respondents' willingness to date inter-racially is considerably more pronounced. When tested individually, parental, peer and community opposition all have a statistically significant effect on respondents' willingness to have sex with a partner of the other race at the P<.05 level. However as Logistic Regression 5-2 shows, when tested together along with a control for gang affiliation in the model, peer opposition maintains a statistically significant effect on respondents' willingness to engage in inter-racial dating, although at the P<.10 level. Again, while there was not a statistically significant effect found for parental and community opposition, the coefficients are in the predicted direction suggesting that they may have yielded a statistically significant relationship with a larger sample size. The strong finding of the effect of peer bias on respondents' bias, even with such a small sample size, is testimony to the strong influence of peer pressure on gang members' own inter-racial bias.

It is also worth examining neighborhood effects on respondents' willingness to engage in inter-racial relationships. When comparing respondents' willingness to have inter-racial sex from the West Side and South Side groups to respondents from the East Side group, as Logistical Regression 5-3 shows, controlling for gang affiliation and the proportion of black residents in the respondents' zip code, there was a statistically significant difference found between the East Side group and the West Side and South Side groups at the P<.10 level,

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although with such a small sample size it is not unreasonable to assume that the reduced effect would have been strengthened to the P<.05 level with a more robust sample population. This suggests a relatively strong neighborhood effect on the number of respondents who reported bias in different regions of the city, with respondents in the largely homogeneous Latino neighborhoods of the East Side reporting significantly more bias against inter-racial relationships than respondents from the more demographically heterogeneous West Side and South Side.

Not surprisingly, as Logistic Regression 5-4 shows, this effect is even more pronounced for the data regarding inter-racial dating, with the difference between the West Side and East Side groups at the P<.05 level. As referenced above, this enhanced effect should be expected as formal relationships are much more difficult to conceal from parents, peers and the community. Curiously the proportion of black residents in a respondent's zip code is significant for inter-racial sex, but not for inter-racial dating. I must admit I'm at a loss to explain this discrepancy. Such is the shortcoming of treating imperfect soft data with the rigor of hard scientific analysis.

Finally it is worth noting that neither age, generation, being a member of a gang that has inter-racial gang conflicts, having been incarcerated, length of time served, nor having been involved in a race riot while incarcerated, were found to be statistically significant factors in respondents' willingness to engage in inter-racial relationships, either individually or in combination. This demonstrates, as chapter 3 suggested, that the bias found against inter-racial

relationships is a historically constructed social bias, largely inherited from the larger

communities gang members are part of, independent of specific inter-racial gang feuds.

Qualitative data adds a more nuanced perspective to the quantitative data, giving a

voice to the bias where it does occur, and shedding light on why it exists where it does exist, as

well as revealing the perspectives and reservations of those who are not outright biased against

inter-racial relationships. Supporting my argument from chapter 4, these qualitative findings

suggest that cultural differences are often at the root of these biases where they do exist. Social

taboos against inter-racial relationships are also at play, as the following quotes reveal the

extent to which gang members are apprehensive of the response that engaging in an inter-

racial relationship would invite from parents, peers and their community at large.

Given the quantitative data presented above, it should be no surprise that some Sureno

gang members are outright and adamantly opposed to inter-racial relationships with blacks.

This bias is inter-generational and though common on the East Side, it is not unheard of among

Sureno affiliated gang members in South Los Angeles as well.

Q: Have you ever had a black girlfriend?

A: Hellllll noooo!

Q: Have you ever had sex with a black girl?

A: Hell no!

Q: So I take it you wouldn't consider marrying a black girl huh? What's your objection?

A: Psssshh… I don't play in the mud homes.

ES White Fence 13, 50's

Q: Have you ever dated a black girl?

A: No never black. I never liked them. Ha ha! I never liked them at all, not even kissing one. No way!

SS Florencia 13, 20's

While some gang members recount their incarceration experience as being central to the intensity of their feelings of bias towards blacks, at the same time, they admit that they held those biases before being incarcerated, suggesting that the bias was inherited from family, peer and community bias against blacks.

Q: Have you ever dated a black girl or had sex with a black girl?

A: Nope I'm highly prejudiced. Hell no.

Q: Why the opposition to that? Where do you think that comes from?

A: It comes from numerous things. I just don't like them. And then going to the joint, in the institution, that just sealed it up you know. I felt like that before I got locked up. My whole life I felt like that.

ES Clover Street 13, 50's

While being in a Sureno gang that was involved in inter-racial gang conflicts with Crip or Blood gangs was found to have no statistically significant relationship on whether respondents were opposed to engaging in inter-racial relationships, there are some gangs that are deeply engaged in inter-racial gang conflicts and whose members are almost universally biased against blacks. For example all three members of the East Side Longos 13 gang in Long Beach, a gang whose

conflicts are primarily with African American Crip gangs in Long Beach, uniformly professed

opposition to any amorous relationships with black women.

Other Sureno gang members have engaged in inter-racial relationships with black girls in

the past, but would not get involved in a serious relationship with a black woman now. The

following quote is an example of this sentiment, and also reflects that cultural differences are a

major factor in why they feel that way.

> Q: Have you ever dated a black girl?
>
> A: Yes definitely. Actually my first girlfriend was a black girl.
>
> Q: Lost your virginity to a black girl?
>
> A: Ha ha! Yes I did, yes I did.
>
> Q: Would you ever consider marrying a black girl?
>
> A: I never really thought about it. My thing has always been that I prefer Latin and white women. I don't
>
> know why. Their (blacks) culture's a lil more different.
>
> WS Rockwood Street 13, 40's

Consequently the only black respondent to report opposition to inter-racial relationships with

Mexican women also cited cultural differences as the reason such relationships would be

undesirable.

> Q: Have you ever dated a Mexican girl?
>
> A: Not, not, maybe a combination, maybe a mix maybe, not totally Mexican.

Q: Did you ever have anything against that? Do you ever feel like Black should be with Black and that type of thing?

A: Yes

Q: You prefer Black women?

A: Yes, I have that.

Q: Do you feel like that now still?

A: To an extent, to an extent, but not totally against it but I do believe that.

Q: You think you prefer?

A: Yup, I think, I think that in order to, I think in order to get, the wholeness out of the relationship that the two individuals should be of the same, not just Black but, but, those successful relationships do exist and can exist but, for me I think that, for a person to get the full wholesome of the relationship because they understand the cultural differences.

WS Rolling 20's Bloods, 40's

Of course some Surenos, particularly those on the West Side and in South LA, were not opposed to engaging in inter-racial relationships with black women, though they do seem to remain apprehensive about the prospect of engaging in a serious relationship that could result in marriage.

Q: Have you ever had a black girlfriend?

A: Yeah

Q: So you've had sex with a black girl I take it?

A: Yeah

Q: Would you ever consider marrying a black girl? Or is that a line you won't cross?

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A: Naw hell no I won't, but it all depends on the black girl I guess. It depends on the girl I guess. I mean I'm like "Fuck no I would never marry this girl!", but there's certain girls I would be like yeah she's a good girl. I guess it's more on like a individual person.

SC 38th Street, 20's

Even on the East Side some Sureno gang members have engaged in inter-racial relationships with black women, but supporting my argument about the importance of cultural identities, those black women had to have grown up with them in their predominantly Mexican neighborhood, and most importantly, "act Mexican" in a cultural sense, as the following exchange with a member of a notorious Sureno affiliated project gang from East LA illustrates.

Q: Have you ever dated a black girl?

A: Yes, I have a, I have kids by a black girl. Well she's mixed, half white, half black.

Q: Did she grow up in your neighborhood also?

A: Yes.

Q: That's how you knew her?

A: Yeah my child, you know, a childhood friend, you know, high school sweetheart.

Q: She was a sister of a friend of yours when you were growing up?

A: No, I grew up with her since we were little.

Q: So you knew her since you were kids?

A: Yeah, since we were kids, that's my, well that's my wife still.

Q: You're still married?

A: I'm still, but we're just separated.

Q: Was anybody in your family opposed to you being with her?

A: No, no cause we all grew up, you know, in the same neighborhood as blacks, and Mexicans and all.

Q: Nobody thought anything of it?

A: No. Well it, my neighborhood when blacks from a Mexican neighborhood, so whatever blacks, you know whatever races grow up there, they're, you know, considered, you know, part of us.

Q: Do blacks that grew up with you act different than other blacks?

A: Yeah. They grew up, they act like us Mexicans.

Q: They act, dress, and everything like you?

A: Yeah talk, you know, talk and…

Q: Your homeboys never had a problem with that type of thing?

A: No cause when you grow up, like the other races grew up with us, so they're childhood they, since they're in our neighborhood, they're considered Mexican. Yeah, they're not considered blacks anymore.

Q: Were there other people, older Mexicans, in the community that were opposed to that? That would give you funny looks?

A: No, no.

Q: You think the whole community was accepting of it?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah cause we have older you know like blacks too that are also from my neighborhood.

Q: They grew up in the neighborhood?

A: yeah they also, you know, talk like us, you know, Mexican.

Q: Have any of your homeboys dated black girls also?

A: A few.

Q: Is it a common thing?

A: Well, if they do, it's like, you know, they're in the neighborhood. No outsiders.

ES Cuatro Flats 13, 40's

On the other side, all but one Crip and Blood gang members interviewed were more than willing to date Mexican and Latina women. In fact a number of Crip and Blood gang members preferred to date Latinas. In any case, there was little opposition to inter-racial dating found among Crip and Blood respondents.

Q: Have you ever had a Latina girlfriend?

A: Yeah because the way I look, I pretty much had more Hispanic girls than black girls.

Q: Does race play a role at all in who you choose to be with? Like would you marry a Mexican girl?

A: Naw cause even though I grew up in the environment where the racial stuff existed, I've always basically tried to be my own man. If that's what I'm attracted to it has nothing to do with race. It's just an attraction I had for that type of woman.

ES Four Trey Gangster Crips, 30's

The little apprehension Crip and Blood gang members had about dating Latinas was that such relationships could cause problems with Sureno gangs and/or the girl's family, who might be opposed to her dating a black man.

I actually, I dated a Mexican girl and she took me to meet her family, but, you know, some of them liked me, but the brothers, no!

Hawthorne 11-8 Gangster Crips, 20's

These apprehensions are not entirely unfounded, as a number of Sureno affiliated gangs, particularly those in homogeneously Latino neighborhoods have a policy of direct confrontation

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with any African American who dares to show their face in their neighborhood, as the following vignette from a Sureno gang member on the East Side illustrates.

> There was this lil girl her name was Melinda. She wasn't all that, she was kinda fat and ugly but she was still Mexican. And one time the homeys called up and said "Aye there's a mayate over here!" So we went over and, "What you doing here homes?" "I'm here to pick up my old lady" "Who's your old lady", and she came out "That's my boyfriend!" So homeboys told dude to get out of the car and she started like, "Aye that's my old man! That's my old man!" So we pretty much told her this is the last time he comes here. We got his keys, threw them (in the bushes), we told him "By the time you find your keys in 10, 15 minutes, and we come back and you're still here, you're not gonna have a car. Don't ever come down here again homes!"
>
> Q: And he never came back?
>
> A: Pssshh... nope!
>
> ES White Fence 13, 50's

As with the other indicators of inter-racial relationship bias, there was a stark contrast between Sureno and Crip and Blood respondents in their reported opposition to family members, particularly female family members, engaging in inter-racial dating. Not surprisingly given the previous quotes, some Sureno gang members, like the above respondent, were particularly emphatic in their antagonism towards family members engaging in inter-racial relationships with blacks.

Q: Would you be opposed to a family member dating a black person? Like if your sisters had ever wanted to be with a black dude?

A: Pssshh… yup! (shaking head in a gesture of utter disdain)

Q: Has it ever happened? Have you ever had a family member who dated a black?

A: No hellll nooo!

Q: What would you say if it did happen?

A: Shit I can't tell no one who to love but if you wanna love em, stay with em. Fuck em!

Q: Would you say something though, or would you keep it to yourself?

A: No I would say something, believe that.

Q: How about your lil cousins and nephews and shit?

A: I would say something.

Q: Do they know how you feel about that?

A: They know very well how I feel about that!

ES White Fence 13, 50's

However, as old taboos begin to fade some Latinas rebel against their family's bias towards inter-racial relationships and date black men whether their siblings and parents approve or not. This is a source of considerable angst for those who are deeply disturbed by their female family members' blatant violation of the taboo against inter-racial relationships with blacks.

Q: Would you be opposed to your family members, like if your sister wanted to date a Black dude when you were growing up?

A: She is dating a fuckin black guy right now!

Q: I can tell it bothers you a little bit. Ha ha!

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A: Fuck yeah!

Q: Have you said anything to her about that?

A: Yeah

Q: What'd you say?

A: All kinds of shit, but I, you know, at the end of the day I love my sister regardless you know what I mean, she's all I got left, my other brother's in prison, my other brother's dead, and, you know so I gotta give her, you know, my principles don't apply to her, you know what I mean.

NELA Frog Town 13, 30's

While some Sureno gang members are adamantly opposed to their sisters dating African Americans, other Sureno gang members begrudgingly accept that their sisters might want to date black men, but even in their acquiescence an implicit stereotype of black men as abusive partners is apparent.

As mentioned above, some respondents professed opposition to family members dating blacks, but were willing to engage in inter-racial amorous relationships themselves. One respondent found a degree of comical irony in this discrepancy, as we both had a laugh when I challenged his hypocrisy on that issue in the interview.

Q: Would you be opposed to your family members dating or marrying a black person?

A: Yes. Yes I would. Definitely yeah. Yes.

Q: Why so? It's OK for you but not for them? Ha ha!

A: Ha ha ha! Oh man…

Q: Have any of your sisters ever dated a black guy?

A: No no! Oh god no! Omigod dude this is fuckin deep dude! Ha ha ha! This is fuckin deep shit dude, but I gotta be straight. Just say it (like it is).

WS White Fence 13, 40's

While the effect of peer opposition to inter-racial relationships on respondents' bias against engaging in them was most pronounced in the quantitative data, the role of parental and community opposition was also prominent in the qualitative data as a number of Sureno respondents attributed their bias to their parents and families.

Q: Do you think that your parents felt the same way?

A: Yeah.

Q: Were your parents opposed to racial mixing between Mexicans and blacks?

A: Yes, my mom and my dad, yup.

Q: Did they express that to you or did they bring you up to have those values?

A: Oh yeah. Yup.

Q: So you think that you trace your feeling originally to them?

A: Yeah my uncles, my mom, my dad.

Q: Most of your family members?

A: Yeah, yeah, they, they all felt the same way.

SC Clanton 14th Street, 40's

Some parents of Sureno gang members were particularly emphatic in their bias against inter-racial relationships with blacks, telling their children they would disown them if they ever engaged in an inter-racial relationship with a black woman.

Q: How about your mom? How does she feel about that type of thing?

A: Well back in the day before my mom changed her life she was like "If I ever see you with a black girl in my house aye, that's it!"

Q: She told you straight up?

A: "Don't cause she would be gone!" and I would trip, she'd be like, "and you won't be my son!"

ES Longos 13, 20's

One respondent even mentioned how literally from his deathbed, his father had reiterated his vehement opposition to inter-racial relationships with black women, insulting his brother for engaging in an inter-racial relationship with a black woman when his brother came to pay his last respects.

Q: Were your parents opposed to you guys dating blacks?

A: Well you know what, my dad bro, he was dying when my brother was with that (black) girl. He had just had a stroke and he told my brother, this is what my brother told me when I was in prison bro, that he was, "Better off marrying a Mexican prostitute!" Ha ha ha! That was my dad yeah, that was my dad's point of view bro. That was his philosophy. He didn't give a fuck.

SS Kansas Street 13, 30's

In some cases these historical community and familial biases are reinforced by negative experiences Sureno gang members' parents have had with African Americans. Some black gang members prey upon recent Latino immigrants by robbing them, seeing them as an easy target

for a quick "lick" (robbery) who tend to keep their money in cash and are less likely to go to police because of their immigration status. These experiences have had lasting effects on families who have personally experienced this predation at the hands of black gang members.

> A: She used to tell my sister that. "Don't ever bring a black dude over!" yeah. She had her reasons dude, she had her reasons.
>
> Q: What do you think her motivation was?
>
> A: Being robbed, maybe by them back then, you know? I witnessed it to when they robbed my mom so yeah, we were younger, so…
>
> Q: In your neighborhood?
>
> A: No in L.A, right here in downtown. We used to come out here a lot to do shopping and her purse got snatched a couple times, so I would hate them too (because of that).
>
> ES Stoners 13, 40's

One Crip respondent from South Central Los Angeles even imparted in an informal interview that he had regularly engaged in these kinds of robberies when he was younger as a source of easy money. As he reasoned "Everybody know the Mexican ain't got no bank account or nothing. They goin home on payday with straight cash, and they keepin all that cash up in they pad. So boom! You catch them Mexicans leavin the check cashing spot and bam! Jack they ass! Or follow them home and straight home invasion they ass. What they gonna do? Go to the police? Fuck no! Them Mexicans be illegal as a motherfucker! Ha ha ha!"

While far from a majority, some Crip and Blood gang members reported that their parents were also biased against inter-racial relationships. It is not uncommon for African

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American parents to discourage their children, either directly or indirectly, from engaging in a

serious relationship with a non-black spouse. The most common ostensible reason for this bias

is that some black parents prefer that their children sire grandchildren with an African

American spouse.

Q: Your mom?

A: My mom…

Q: Does she have feelings on the matter?

A: Yeah my mom kinda do, until she gets to know the person, at first.

Q: She feels like you should be with a black girl to have black kids?

A: Yeah.

Q: What's up with that?

A: Yeah I think she, cause my mom is, she won't admit it, but she's pretty racist, you know and..

Q: Against Mexicans?

A: Yeah, against, yeah.

WS Rolling 30's Harlem Crips, 20's

On the other hand other African American parents want their kids to engage in inter-racial

relationships for the novelty of grandchildren with mixed phenotypic features.

Q: Would you be opposed to your family members dating Latinos?

A: No, cause my mother always says, "I want me a mixed baby, can you get me a mixed grandchild?" Ha

ha ha!

Q: So it's a good thing?

A: Yeah, yeah it's something she's lookin forward to, she said, "I'm tired of all you nappy-headed kids runnin around here."

Pasadena Denver Lane Bloods, 20's

As the quantitative data presented above shows, more Sureno and Crip and Blood gang members reported community bias against inter-racial relationships than parental or peer bias against such relationships. The qualitative data demonstrates how extreme the community bias against inter-racial relationships between blacks and Latinos could be, especially from the Latino community, but also from certain segments of the black community as well. A Sureno gang member from the Rampart area recounts how harsh the social reprobation against such relationships could be.

Q: Were there other people in the neighborhood, just like regular raza that were like that (biased against blacks)?

A: There were some, well there's racism, there's racism in the hood, like I would hear people all the time like, "Fuckin stupid niggers!" Talking shit you know, but, yeah, that's always been noticeable.

Q: Like if there's a couple walking down the street people will be like…

A: Oh yeah I've notice that like, "Damn! What is she doing with that nigger?"

WS La Mirada 13, 30's

Even where blatant expressions of prejudice begin to wane, the taboo against inter-racial relationships with African Americans persists through social disapprobation.

Q: What about the residents in the community, do you think they are opposed to blacks and Latinos dating? Would they give funny looks if they saw it?

A: Yeah I would say yes. Oh yeah bro, yeah they don't like it. I think that now it's starting to be a little more common and you see it more, but people still have that like "Ewww!" you know what I mean. I even do that bro you know, and I catch myself and I'm like man, you know what that's their shit you know. Yeah I don't trip on that anymore. I would've probably done something before, but now it's like whatever man, you know what I mean, "Just don't shake my hand bitch, but yeah you wanna play in the mud go ahead." Ha ha ha!

SS Kansas Street 13, 30's

These type of euphemisms can be a source of comical relief, as being party to an inter-racial relationship is often referred to as "playing in the mud" or "dipping in motor oil". The use of such phrases often elicits a fit of laughter from everyone involved in the conversation, as I've observed on many occasions.

Yeah, one of the guys right there, he's not even a gang member. He grew up right there too you know, and I forgot how he said it but that was funny though man, "I don't dip in motor oil" or something like that. Like, "Wow, this guy's crazy!" Ha ha ha!

Dog Town 13, 30's

Some Surenos who had dated black women in the past also reported having problems with black men who were jealous that they were with a black woman. These confrontations often lead to fights, and in some cases can lead to larger conflicts between Sureno and Crip or

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Blood gangs. Avoiding problems and conflicts that might arise as a result of inter-racial

relationships is one of the reasons such relationships are frowned upon by many Sureno gang

members.

> Q: How about other people from your neighborhood? Are there any regular people that are opposed to
>
> that?
>
> A: I'm pretty sure there is.
>
> Q: Have you ever had an experience with anyone?
>
> A: Yeah, yeah I used to walk down the beach with my wife and she was mixed, but she looked like she
>
> wasn't, but she was cause her hair was straight and her name was Maria so she had some Hispanic and
>
> you know she was pretty and thick, and a lot of black guys used to look at me and look at her like "What is
>
> she doing with that Mexican?"
>
> Q: So you feel it more from blacks than Mexicans?
>
> A: Yeah.
>
> Q: Jealousy type thing?
>
> A: Yeah.
>
> WS Venice 13, 40's

With roughly half of the Crip and Blood respondents reporting community bias against

inter-racial relationships with Mexican or Latina women, while not at the same level as the

Latino community, such bias is clearly not uncommon either. However in the black community

bias against Mexicans is often a bit more subtle in its expression. Rather than making garish

remarks or confronting persons involved in inter-racial relationships with outright insults,

members of the black community who are opposed to inter-racial relationships more often

express their disapproval by giving judgmental looks and snide but subtle comments, either

directly to the subject of their disapproval or to others in the vicinity. This is a dynamic I have

witnessed on numerous occasions.

> Q: Do the (black) residents in the community feel that blacks should only be with blacks and give you a
>
> hard time (for dating Latinas)?
>
> A: It's like yeah, you feel me, they don't give me a hard time with it when they see it, they just be like…
>
> you can tell like, yeah that look yeah.
>
> Watts PJ Crips, 20's

While only one respondent reported that their gang peers were outright opposed to

blacks dating Latinas, most reported that their homeboys either don't care or are even

interested in dating Latinas themselves. There is also an apparent gender dichotomy in the

occurrence of this bias as many of the Crip and Blood respondents reported that few if any of

their male peers had anything against inter-racial dating, whereas their female peers were

often opposed to such relationships out of jealousy.

> Q: How about, how about your homeboys from your neighborhood? Are any of them like that that you
>
> know? Or they only date Black girls and that type of thing
>
> A: Yeah, I know a few guys like that. That just, well now, in this day and age they see that you know
>
> Hispanic women are dating Black men and more White women are dating Black men, so some of the guys
>
> that I hang out with now when we go out they're like "Aww man she's cute" you know because they
>
> probably seen me with a Hispanic women before so its like "Aww man I gotta get me a Hispanic woman

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then". I know I've seen it before when I've dated a Hispanic woman or a white woman and I take them around my old neighborhood and some of my old homegirls or just females that I had flings with or whatever be looking up at 'em like turning their nose up like going "What the hell is he doing with her?" You know what I mean?

Q: So it's from the girls, not the guys?

A: Yeah it's mostly from the girls not the guys you know what I mean. The girls be like "Oh he left me for her?" and this and that, you know, so it's like, it's kinda different.

Q: Shit you gonna fuckin get a Mexican girl beat up! Ha ha ha!

A: Yeah or I'll be sitting there trying to fight the (black) girl to stop it! Ha ha ha!

Compton Mob Piru Bloods, 30's

Whereas peer bias against black men dating Latinas was very rare among Crips and Bloods, peer bias against Latino men dating black women was reported by an overwhelming majority of Sureno respondents. In some cases this bias was very extreme, exposing the offender to harsh social repudiation and even a punitive beating or in some cases, outright excommunication from the gang.

Q: How about your homeboys from your neighborhood? How do they feel about dating black girls?

A: Naw my homeys won't do that. They'll just be like "I'll hit it if I'm drunk", they always bring that up, but naw…

Q: They won't bring a black girl around and be like "Aye this is my old lady over here, say whats up!"?

A: Ha ha ha! Helllllll noooo! We'll jump them out you know.

SS Florencia 13, 20's

In some cases the status of the offender could deflect the negative ramifications of violating that taboo, as older more respected gang members are in some cases beyond reproach, whereas younger lower status gang members face certain social barriers of exclusion if they wish to engage in inter-racial relationships.

> Q: Are your homeboys also from your neighborhood you think generally opposed to, like if a homeboy wanted to date a black girl homeys would have a problem with that? Like people would say something to him?
>
> A: If a homeboy, like a ordinary homeboy, it's not allowed pretty much. If you're a homeboy with status and you've earned the right to pretty much do what you want, then that's how it is you know what I mean.
>
> Q: But you think people would still have opinions about it? They'd just keep it to themselves?
>
> A: Yup
>
> Q: What about if a youngster tried to do that how would they get regulated?
>
> A: Nowadays homes, the color lines are being broken everyday homes. It's not too big of a deal, nowadays. I know that if one of the lil homeboys decides to, he won't be able to bring her around the neighborhood. That's a fact. He could go and do whatever where she is. He cannot bring her around our neighborhood, no.
>
> ES White Fence 13, 50's

In other gang peer bias against inter-racial relationships amounted to little more than playful banter and jokes about "playing in the mud" and "jungle fever" with minimal loss of status for the offender.

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Q: Did anyone from your neighborhood ever give you a hard time about being with a black girl?

A: Naw… well you get jokes and shit, this and that, but nothing that like no one straight turned on me or cut me off or anything like that.

NELA Toonerville 13, 40's

Although I would say it's safe to venture the assumption that most black gang members date within their own race, there is generally no taboo among Crips and Bloods against dating Latinas or any other race for that matter.

Q: Do you have other homeboys from your hood that dated Mexican chicks before?

A: Yeah I got a couple homeboys here and there, but the majority only date within the race.

Q: Are there some that date only within the race and they think it's a bad look to date outside the race?

A: Naw see when it comes to like us, black people, we don't really discriminate or have any racial tendencies. We're the kinda people if you treat us good and you like us, then we like you. All that other stuff comes from other races man, black people we don't play a factor like that. If you wanna be with a white girl, or a Mexican chick or a Asian or whatever, it's all the power to you. The only thing is the black chicks who be trippin.

ES Four Trey Gangster Crips, 30's

The few exceptions are again found among members of gangs who are engaged in vicious blood feuds with Sureno gangs, like East Coast Crips and their ongoing war with Florencia 13 in South Los Angeles. In gangs like East Coast, there is not only a bias against members or their families engaging in inter-racial relationships with Latinos/as, but an outright bias against any Latinos, particularly those who display the cultural indicators of Sureno gang membership.

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Q: Do you know of like biracial couples like that? Or is it kinda out of the ordinary to see that?

A: Naw pretty much where I stay its majority black. I mean you know, it's not like you even see Mexicans

walking up and down the street. If my homeboys see a Mexican walking up and down the street they

gonna press em. It ain't too many like shaved heads walkin around.

East Coast Crips, 30's

5.5 Employment and Housing Competition

Much of the existing research on black/Latino relations is centered on perceptions of

employment competition between blacks and Latinos.[213] Such resentment has been shown to

be a facet of both black and Latino communities in different parts of the country and therefore

it is an obvious measure to use in evaluating the levels of bias between black and Latino gang

members in Los Angeles.[214] To that I will add data on perceptions of housing competition, a

measure that has seen little attention since Mindiola, Niemann and Rodriguez's landmark work

in 2002.[215] Unlike bias against inter-racial relationships where bias was mostly a one way street,

as Table 5-3 shows, perceptions of employment and housing competition were rampant among

both Sureno and Crip and Blood gang members in my sample from Los Angeles. However, in

sharp contrast to bias against inter-racial relationships between blacks and Latinos, the rate of

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[213] Vaca 2004; McClain et al 2006; Hutchison 2007; Marrow 2009; Bean et al 2011; Jones-Correa 2011; Morin et al 2011; Rodriguez and Mindiola 2011; Sawyer 2011; McDermott 2011; Pastor 2014; Frasure-Yokely and Green 2014; Barreto et al 2014

[214] Jones-Correa 2011; Morin et al 2011; Rodriguez and Mindiola 2011; McDermott 2011; Frasure-Yokely and Green 2014

[215] Mindiola et al 2002

bias in Sureno and Crip and Blood respondents on these measures almost perfectly mirrored

one other, with nearly three quarters of both black and Latino respondents reporting that they

felt there was competition between blacks and Latinos for employment and housing.

Perceptions of	Sureno	Crip and Blood
Employment Competition	44/60 – 73%	19/26 – 73%
Housing Competition	44/62 – 71%	19/27 – 73%

Table 5-3 Perceptions of Employment and Housing Competition

While there was no relation found between the proportion of black residents in the zip

code respondents grew up in and their perceptions of employment competition, there was a

statistically significant effect at the P<.10 level found on perceptions of housing competition,

with a control for gang affiliation included, as Logistical Regression 5-5 shows. This finding is not

surprising in that persons regularly travel outside of their own neighborhood for employment,

thus black and Latino residents from areas with high and low black populations could be

commuting to compete for the same jobs. While for areas that are homogeneously Latino

where the black population is negligible, competition over housing is presumably a non-issue.

The one exception to this is black residents of public housing units in otherwise homogenously

Latino East Los Angeles, as qualitative data will demonstrate.

All but four Sureno and one Crip respondent(s) had been previously employed in an

inter-racial workplace environment. However, it would be pretty fair to say the data on

workplace bias is quite polarized, as Table 5-4 shows, with roughly a quarter of Sureno

respondents reporting that they were opposed to working with black co-workers, and not a

single Crip or Blood respondent reporting that they were opposed to working with Latino co-

workers, whereas similar proportions of Sureno (30%) and Crip and Blood (23%) respondents

reported having had a conflict with a co-worker of the other group. It should be obvious from

those figures, but it is worth noting that there was indeed no statistically significant relationship

found between opposition to working with blacks and having had a conflict with a black co-

worker for the Sureno respondents who were opposed to working with blacks.

One of the most prominent stereotypes examined by previous research is the extent of

the perception that blacks are lazy and/or that Latinos are harder workers than blacks.[216] This

perception was very prevalent in the Sureno respondents I interviewed, but surprisingly, was

also not uncommon among the Crip and Blood respondents I interviewed as well, with 79% of

Sureno respondents reporting the perception that Latinos are harder workers than blacks,

along with 40% of Crip and Blood respondents in agreement. The remainder of respondents

reported the perception that there is no difference between the work ethic of blacks and

Latinos, or that both are lazy workers. No respondent whatsoever reported the perception that

Blacks are harder workers.

	Sureno	Crip and Blood
Opposed to Work With	16/68 – 24%	0/26 – 0%

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[216] McClain et al 2006; Marrow 2009

I-R Workplace Conflict	18/61 – 30%	6/26 – 23%
Latinos Harder Workers	50/63 – 79%	10/25 – 40%
Oppose Live With	47/66 – 71%	7/26 – 27%

Table 5-4 Employment and Housing Related Bias

The results for measures of housing bias are even more striking, as can be seen in Table 5-4, with over two thirds of Sureno respondents reporting opposition to living with a black roommate or in a predominantly black neighborhood, and less than one third of Crip and Blood respondents reporting opposition to living with a Latino roommate or in a predominantly Latino neighborhood. However, as the qualitative data shows, these reservations were for very different reasons between Sureno and Crip and Blood gang members.

Qualitative data adds a level of depth to this quantitative data that previous research has generally been severely lacking in. [217] While previous research has made great strides in attempting to examine the presence of perceptions of employment competition in and between black and Latino communities, only two researchers have given voice to the lived experiences that inform their respondents' perceptions.[218] Talking about proportions of respondents who hold such perceptions is one thing, but being able to unpeel the layers of

[217] Jones-Correa 2011; Morin et al 2011; Rodriguez and Mindiola 2011; McDermott 2011; Frasure-Yokely and Green 2014
[218] Marrow 2009; McDermott 2011

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personal experiences that these perceptions are rooted in is undoubtedly a more thorough method of analysis.

As discussed above, perceptions of employment competition between Sureno and Crip and Blood gang members, statistically at least, are apparently a mirror image of one another. However, the sources of those perceptions in the lived experience of respondents' individual lives are indeed very different between Surenos and Crips and Bloods. Sureno respondents who perceived employment competition with blacks often felt that blacks had an unfair advantage in that they lacked honor and as a result were shameless in their willingness to prostrate themselves to gain favor with an employer.

> Q: Have you ever felt you had to compete with blacks for work that causes resentment?
> A: Yeah because a lot of times they're good at sucking up real good homes and I think us, we have a little more pride so we have to sometimes prove ourselves more, but more like through our work ethic. They don't have a problem with, you know what I mean, licking the bosses boots.
> SS Kansas Street 13, 30's

At the same time, Surenos who reported perceptions of employment competition with blacks also felt that blacks benefited from formal and informal affirmative action, in that they would make unwarranted claims of prejudice and/or be given special treatment to avoid such claims.

> Q: Have you ever felt like you had to compete with blacks for work?

A: Yes most definitely, cause you know there's always been that stigma and that stereotype that's been applied, "Oh poor them" you know.

SC Ninos Surenos 13, 20's

These perceptions seem to underlie the widely held stereotype that blacks are not hard workers and that they get by at work primarily by regular unwarranted complaints and the threat of claims of bias. These perceptions are coupled with the types of cultural biases discussed in chapter 4 and often give rise to resentment towards black coworkers and by extension, African Americans in general.

Many respondents reported negative personal experiences with black coworkers that only confirmed in their minds the stereotype that blacks are lazy and prone to unwarranted complaints. These experiences are also often coupled with resentment over black coworkers referencing the history of slavery and repression African Americans have suffered in the US, which many Sureno respondents see as firmly in the past and not connected in any way to the plight of modern African American populations.

Q: Do you think blacks are hard workers?

A: Whoa man… you know what? Honestly from what I know and over the years working from what I've seen, I say this not to disrespect the race, but a lot of them are lazy, they don't like to work. They're fucking lazy. And you know what with the Mexican culture, were hard workers you know where here and we struggle. We know what it's like not to have money so you know all the Mexicans I know like to work and we save our money. But a lot of these black fools I've worked with they like to just kick back. They like to take it easy, or they always bring the race card in and bring up fuckin slavery. But you know what,

slavery's been gone for like 500 years so get over it. They always complain about being slaves and shit.

You know what they like to complain a lot. It's like, do your fucking job and work. We're here to work so

work. From my experience they're lazy. I would always take a Mexican or Latino over a black any day to

do a job because they actually bust their ass.

Q: Do you think blacks have an attitude problem at work too?

A: Yeah of course. Like I said they're always complaining about something. Like they feel like slavery is still

existing here in America. Get over it nigga, that shit was over 500 years ago.

ES State Street 13, 40's

Even for those Surenos who do acknowledge the effects of structural racism in American

society, African Americans are seen as excessively characterized by a sort of pathology of the

perpetual victim.

For those who begrudgingly accept working with blacks, their acceptance is contingent

on maintaining rigid cultural, social and physical boundaries between themselves and black

coworkers. Thus while the quantitative data shows a seeming disconnect in the levels of

perception of employment competition with blacks and opposition to working with blacks,

willingness to work with blacks does not necessarily equate to a lack of bias.

Q: Are you opposed to working somewhere where you have to work with blacks?

A: I prefer not to but if I have to I will, you know what I mean? Just you stay on your side of the tracks and

I stay on mine. I ain't gonna eat lunch with you. Don't ask me for shit. I got nothing to say to you.

ES Clover Street 13, 50's

While not a single Crip or Blood respondent reported opposition to working with

Latinos, the vast majority of them reported perceptions of employment competition with

Latinos, at exactly the same rate as Sureno respondents. However, these perceptions were

rooted in very different perceptions and experiences than the perception of employment

competition reported by Sureno respondents. Crip and Blood respondents overwhelmingly felt

that Latinos had a distinct advantage in the workplace because of the common perception that

Latinos are harder workers than blacks.

> Q: Do you think, do you think there's competition between Blacks and Latinos for work, like that causes
> resentment? Like you think like Black people feel like Mexicans take all the good jobs and it's hard to get a
> job cause like employers wanna hire Mexicans before Blacks and that kinda thing?
> A: Yeah, yeah, oh for sure. That's because like, I respect that because they do, Mexicans do have the
> reputation of working hard, so like if somebody want to hire somebody they'll probably hire the Mexican
> before the Black guy.
> WS Rolling 60's Crips, Teens

Another common perception is that Latinos undercut black employment because Latinos are

too willing to work for less pay than blacks. This is a prototypical case of split labor market

theory as an explanation for racial animus between blacks and Latinos.[219]

> Q: Have you ever felt that there's competition with Mexicans for work? Like if you have to go find a job
> right now that some employers prefer to hire more Mexicans than blacks?

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[219] Bonacich 1972

A: I mean, yeah, well yeah. They have a big advantage because a lot of these companies know that

Mexicans will work for whatever just to put food on the table. It's just like us if we go apply it's, "Oh ya'll

making $5 a hour," we gone be like, "Oh hell naw! We could make that on the block." Like so, yeah I think

Mexicans got a better chance of getting what we ain't got.

WS Rolling 30's Harlem Crips, 20's

There is also the perception that Latinos will work beyond what can reasonably be

expected by employers, like working unpaid overtime. Employers will obviously favor workers

who are willing to work for free off the clock, so it is perceived as fundamentally unfair by black

workers for Latino coworkers to work off the clock because it makes them look like better

workers than black coworkers who show up on time, work their shift, but are not willing to be

exploited by working unpaid overtime off the clock.

What tends to happen is a lot of the Mexican workers are, what I don't like about working with them is

that, they, overcompensate and course an employer would like to get as much as they can out of an

employee, so, if work starts at 7, what bothers me is that they're there at 5:30, and they're working

Q: To make everybody else look bad?

A: Right, or make themselves look good, either way, and it's not fair because even though I'm not

penalized directly for that, starting at 7, but of course if you're the boss and you getting production out of

these guys keep 'em even later, get off at 3:30, they're still there at 4, 4:30, circumstances may need for

that if there's, you gotta clean up something, something went wrong, but just because you know, quit

time is quit time, pick it up tomorrow, you know not just because you want brownie points.

Q: Do they keep working even after they clock out?

A: Exactly, we don't actually have a clock, but it's clear you're not getting overtime, and you're still working.

WS Rolling 20's Bloods, 40's

The perception that employers favor hiring Latinos even if they're less qualified because they acquiesce to exploitation by employers is widespread in the black community, particularly among gang members in this sample. One point of particular contention that comes up on practically a daily basis is the perception that Latinos comprise the vast majority of the workforce in fast food franchises, where black residents commonly dine but are rarely employed. This is an almost daily insult and reminder to blacks whenever they frequent these establishments that employers prefer to hire Latinos over African Americans.

Q: Do you think there's competition between blacks and Latinos for work that causes resentments?
A: Oh most definitely. Go to any fast food restaurant in these South Central communities and look at the employees. You'll find 85-90% Latino. Go to a drive through restaurant, the person doesn't speak very good English, or gets the order wrong, or doesn't understand what you're saying, and it's like "Man, but we can't have nobody black working up in there right?" So it does create problems and I hear it a lot.

WS Rolling 20's Bloods, 50's

Some respondents suggested that some blacks, gang members in particular, are responsible for their own failure to secure employment, to some extent, because the attitude and demeanor they display makes them undesirable to employers. In fact some of what gang intervention and prisoner re-entry programs that serve the black community in Los Angeles do,

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is to teach their clients how to act appropriately – in other words, "act white" – in a workplace environment so that they are not rejected or fired from employment for their demeanor. That such cultural reconditioning is required for blacks from the ghetto to gain employment is evidence in itself of the sort of misunderstanding and intolerance of black ghetto culture discussed in chapter 4.

Q: Do you think that there's competition between Blacks and Mexicans for work, that like, do you think Blacks feel like…

A: Yeah, they feel like Mexicans get more opportunities than they do. Yeah, I know a lot of friends that speak with me they go like, "Aw man, you know I go in there I do this, this, and that but the Mexican dude he go in there," and I say, "It might be the way you talk, it might be the way you were sitting, you know it could of been the eye contact you gave the person that made the person feel like 'aw man I don't need to work around a person like this'," you know what I mean? I said you know, "Body language in communication is a lot, so you can have just like they say, you can be a college grad with a BA or whatever and here's this person right here he just got a high school diploma but he knows how to listen, he can take orders, he can follow instructions, whereas you, you probably not good at taking orders. You know you have an attitude, so who would I want around my work source area. You know he might not have the credentials but he can talk and he can listen, whereas you got all the answers right now, I'm not gonna deal with y'all, I don't care how established you is, or what type of credentials you have, you're not the person for me, I don't think you're fit for this job."

Q: The attitude has a lot to do with it?

A: Yes, a whole lot.

Compton Mob Piru Bloods, 30's

Thus, because of some of the cultural differences in modes of communication discussed in chapter 4, some black job seekers are perceived as disrespectful or unruly to employers who are not comfortable with black ghetto culture. While this may be due to the lack of multicultural awareness and acceptance on the part of employers, the cold fact is that those employers do the hiring and firing, so job seekers must pander to the cultural sensibilities of those who might potentially employ them. Of course since African Americans are disproportionally under-represented among potential employers, African American job seekers are at a marked disadvantage in the job market due to facets of their cultural identity being perceived as offensive or disrespectful by potential employers. As the quantitative data above shows, even many Crip and Blood respondents I interviewed held negative stereotypes about blacks not being hard workers and having a bad attitude for a workplace environment.

> Q: Do you think, in general, that Mexicans are harder workers than blacks? Or do you think that's a misconception?
>
> A: I think it's cause they're more willing to work than a lot of blacks, you know, some people just want a easy ride, you know, if it's not gonna be too easy
>
> Q: You think there's a lot of brothers that be like, "No! I'm not gonna work for that,"…
>
> A: Yeah, "I'm not gonna work for this" ….
>
> Q: Sweep your fuckin shit up?
>
> A: Right, yeah, and Mexicans be more willing to…
>
> Q: Clean your piss and all that.

A: Right, that's why I swallowed my pride, so "You know what? Shit if they can do it, I can do it! Let's put a dollar in my pocket," but the predicament I'm in right now, I have no choice. How can I say I want $12 an hour and I'm on parole and probation? So it's like, I mean some people just don't…

Q: You're more realistic about it…

A: Yeah.

Q: Where you think some people still have that pride that holds them back?

A: That pride is kicking a nigga's ass!

Pasadena Denver Lane Bloods, 20's

One particularly candid respondent even stated outright that he was a lazy worker compared to his Latino coworkers and that he would rather pursue alternative opportunity structures[220] like dealing narcotics if legitimate employment opportunities are not satisfactory.

Q: In general, do you think blacks or Mexicans are better workers? Do you think there's a difference?

A: I, honestly, I'm a be honest with you cause I don't lie about stuff like that cause such as myself, I'm a lazy worker and I see Mexicans work hard, I see them from the Uhaul places, you know, and…

Q: Standing on the corner and all that?

A: Yeah and they work for whatever, just to put something on they kids table, just like us we, we have different intentions like, "Oh I can't get no job, I'm finna go to the block and hustle," you know, and Mexicans, I feel they harder workers than us.

WS Rolling 30's Harlem Crips, 20's

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[220] Merton 1938; Cloward and Ohlin 1960

Whether Latinos are harder workers than blacks is an issue this research cannot resolve, and I would be highly suspect of any methodology that purports to confirm this stereotype. However, it is clear that the perception that blacks are lazy and Latinos are hard workers, as this data shows, is indeed prevalent in both the black and Latino communities, particularly among gang members.

While perceptions of housing competition are about even with perceptions of employment competition, bias against cohabitation is much more pronounced than bias against working in an inter-racial environment. Almost three times as many Sureno respondents were opposed to cohabitation as were opposed to working with blacks, and while no Crip or Blood respondents were opposed to working with Latinos, roughly a quarter of them were opposed to living with or among Latinos. The willingness to cohabitate with members of the other group is an important measure of bias for two reasons. First, willingness to interact in public spaces is one level of tolerance, but willingness to interact in private spaces is an even more suggestive indicator of inter-racial tolerance. The willingness to open up the most private space in one's life, one's own living space, gets to the core of how comfortable respondents are with inter-racial interaction. Second, bias against sharing private spaces is further evidence of the kind of cultural differences discussed in chapter 4, as these cultural differences are an important underlying factor in this bias, as the qualitative data demonstrates.

For many Sureno gang members who grew up in neighborhoods that are homogenously Latino, even the thought of living in an area with black neighbors seems abhorrent.

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Q: Would you ever live with a Black roommate or live in a black neighborhood?

A: I wouldn't live with a Black roommate. No fuck no! I mean what do you mean? No, no, no!

Q: Would you ever consider living in a Black neighborhood?

A: I mean, personally I wouldn't want, I wouldn't want to, but you know, sometimes you know what I mean, I…

Q: Worst comes to worst?

A: Yeah worst comes to worst you might have to, but I mean, I'll be damned, I'm a look everywhere before I do that you know what I'm saying! Ha ha ha!

NELA Frog Town 13, 30's

For those who grew up in areas that are demographically mixed, they draw the line at sharing private living space with blacks.

Q: Would you ever consider rooming with a black guy?

A: Oh hell no!

Q: Why's that?

A: Because they're dirty! Ha ha ha!

Q: Do you think that generally that blacks have poor hygiene and don't clean themselves all the time?

A: Naw not just that, I mean I seen Mexicans who are dirty too, but I been to a lot of black houses and there fuckin dirty! They'll like take their shit off and throw it wherever. Me, I'll come home from work and take my shit off and fold it and put it in the hamper. But if it's dirty these fools will just throw it on the floor and go about their business and leave it right there you know. I can't have that, I'm a clean freak. That shit gets on my nerves.

SC 38th Street, 20's

The perceptions that blacks are too loud and have poor hygiene were pervasive among

Sureno respondents, as Table 5-5 shows. These perceptions, along with cultural differences

between themselves and blacks were at the core of Surenos' overwhelming opposition to

cohabitating with African Americans. Indeed as discussed in chapter 4, the perception that

blacks are too loud is due to a cultural misunderstanding as a result of different communication

practices between blacks and Latinos.

Blacks Are Too Loud	64/66 – 97%
Blacks Have Poor Hygeine	61/66 – 92%

Table 5-5 Sureno Perceptions of African Americans

Q: OK, are there any other like cultural differences that you can think of between, Crips and Bloods and

South Siders, or just Blacks and Raza in general?

A: Really the way they do things was the way, their hygiene wasn't there, the way they talk, too loud, it

bothers me. They could be near each other you know, not even a couple inches apart, and they'll be

talking loud you know what I mean, like if they're deaf.

Q: You think that's just like a normal part of black culture?

A: I guess that's just normal, that's the way they are.

ES White Fence 13, 50's

Although logistical regression analysis found no statistical relationship between being incarcerated or time served and the perceptions that blacks are too loud and have poor hygiene, with nearly unanimous positive responses to these questions, the lack of a finding is not surprising, because this sentiment is near universal, regardless of carceral experience. However, many Sureno respondents associated their perceptions with experiences they had with African Americans while incarcerated, where they are forced to share living space to some extent.[221] Many of these quotes echo the sort of cultural distance expressed in the section on language in chapter 4.

> Q: Are there other things about blacks that bother you? Does the way they smell bother you? Do you think they have poor hygiene?
>
> A: Yeah I mean, I'm here to keep it real. With my experience being locked up in the system with them, the majority of them have bad hygiene you know. They smell, they don't like to shower. I don't know what it is with them. Them dudes are just dirty. It causes a lot of tension in jail cause off their fuckin hygiene you know. Shit will kick off just because of them being fuckin dirty you know. It's bad, it's like take a fuckin shower. There's something about them, they just don't like to shower for some reason.
>
> Q: Do you think they're too loud? Does that ever offend you?
>
> A: Yeah fuck yeah dog, they're always loud. Everywhere I go and I see black people, they're always loud. Like even if I'm just walking down the street and they're talking on their phone they're talking so loud it's like they want everyone to know their business. If I'm on the phone in the streets, I'm keeping that shit personal you know. I don't want you to hear my conversation. I could be on the fuckin train, the bus, the sidewalk, and they be on the phone and they're so loud they're just like putting their business out there. I

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[221] More on living space in carceral facilities in chapter 7

think it's just a black thing. No matter where they're at, at a club, in the street, wherever, they just like being loud.

East Side State Street 13, 40's

As the quantitative data shows, apprehension among Crip and Blood respondents about cohabitating with Latinos is also not uncommon, although it is for very different reasons and informed by very different experiences than for Sureno respondents. I can state confidently from both my ethnographic observation, and moreover my life experience having grown up in Los Angeles, that there is a fair amount of apprehension in the black community in South Los Angeles about living in areas that are homogeneously Latino. This trepidation is even more acute for gang members, who have to worry not only about being black in the wrong community, but being a Crip or Blood in a Sureno gang neighborhood. More often than not these misgivings are not merely subjective perceptions, but rather are the result of negative personal experiences Crip and Blood respondents have had in Sureno gang neighborhoods in homogenously Latino communities, and/or second hand reports of such experiences from peers and/or family who have had them.

Q: Would you ever move into a Latino neighborhood, would you feel comfortable?
A: Really like I never even thought about that. Yeah I will cause I lived in Montebello for a couple of months, so yeah I was staying with this Latino family, yeah it was cool, but they was like racist though cause Montebello, East LA all that, they like more racist.
Q: You experienced racism over there? What kind of things happened?

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A: Yeah man I was on the bus motherfuckers jumping on the bus staring at me, gang members, I got a gun put on my face before, like "Fool you know where you at!" I'm like, "Yeah I know where I'm at man." They like, "You not supposed to be over here!"

Q: Where you lived at that kind of thing would never happen?

A: Never we would never do that to no Hispanic.

Q: Have you ever lived in any other community where you felt like Hispanics were biased against you?

A: Nope that's it that's the only place everybody know about that place over there.

Q: Do you feel like that's just Latino gang members acting that way or members of the community are biased as well?

A: Yeah that's what it was it as them and yeah it was them and like parents and yeah like they're not used to seeing a black person. So when they see one they like, "What the hell are you doing over here?!" Yeah that type of thing.

Watts PJ Crips, 20's

The propensity of at least some Sureno affiliated gangs on the East Side to harass and intimidate blacks passing through has been cited above, but such ethnic/racial intolerance of outsiders was also reported by some Crip and Blood respondents in the West Century and Crenshaw areas on the West Side of South Central, where the few majority black neighborhoods in the city remain, particularly areas controlled by the Rolling 90's Crips, Rolling 40's Crips and Black P Stone Bloods. These communities and their respective gangs take pride in maintaining black demographic hegemony over these areas and are quick to confront any attempt by Sureno gangs and/or Latino youth to encroach on their territory.

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A member of the Rolling 90's Crips gang in the West Century area reported a general policy of immediate and unflinching confrontation with any Latinos who exhibit indicators of Sureno gang affiliation in their community.

> We don't let no bald heads in our hood, not even gardeners, you know, like not even gardeners!
>
> Q: You think there's competition for housing between Blacks and Mexicans? Like especially like, you know a lot of Mexicans moving into areas that used to be predominantly Black, you think there, that causes conflict, resentment and stuff?
>
> A: Yeah, you let them move in and you don't get ahead, you know, they're coming and they're coming like, I don't know, think in power in numbers you know, and that's how they, I don't know
>
> Q: Like you mentioned you guys and all that, you don't let them come to your neighborhood?
>
> A: No, not even gardeners, we nip it in the bud fast.
>
> WS Rolling 90's Crips, 20's

Lamentably this type of "ethnic cleansing" is not unheard of among both Sureno and Crip and Blood neighborhoods in different parts of Los Angeles, particularly where the population demographics are homogeneously black or Latino. There is indeed a great deal of resentment in the black community generally, and among black gang members particularly, over the demographic transition much of South Los Angeles has experienced since the 1980's, as Latino immigrants have moved in where black families have moved out. However, it is important to point out that this "ethnic cleansing" only applies to those who maintain a differential cultural and/or gang identity. As discussed in chapter 4, those Latinos in black areas who assimilate to black ghetto culture, and whose children join Crip and Blood gangs or date

black gangs and/or date black gang members, are accepted as full-fledged members of the

black community.

   With almost three quarters of Crip and Blood gang members reporting perceptions of

housing competition with Latinos, their perspectives reveal that resentment of Latino

demographic encroachment is prevalent throughout the black community in Los Angeles and is

a primary source of racial animosity towards Latinos. This resentment and animosity is a perfect

example of group threat[222] and defended neighborhood[223] theories, which suggest that such

encroachment by outside groups can often be a source of racial animus and hostility. The

perceptions reported by Crip and Blood respondents in this study overwhelmingly support

these theoretical perspectives.

   Q: Do you think there's competition between blacks and Mexicans for housing that causes conflict or

   resentment? Like with Mexicans moving into neighborhoods that used to be all black?

   A: Yeah, I mean, I mean, it's, it's, it's always the same, Mexicans takin over L.A., but at the same time it's

   like they got kids just like we got kids, you know, they might have little more, but they got kids.

   Q: More kids?

   A: Yeah, you know, and I don't, I mean they need it, they need, they need it, they need they space.

   Q: You think there's a lot of people in the community that resent that?

   A: Yeah its, yeah, yeah, yeah I believe, I believe a lot of, a lot of us blacks be mad, I don't be mad cause I

   don't maybe, well maybe it ain't hit me yet, but it's like I don't see nothin wrong with it, they need to give

   it to em.

   Q: But there's other people that do?

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[222] Blumer 1958; Quillian 1995, 1996
[223] Suttles 1972; Bergesen and Herman 1998; Green et al. 1998

A: Yeah the other people will be like, "I used to live in that house" or, you know, "They need to downsize," and stuff like that, but I mean, it's for a reason, it's a lotta laws changing so…

WS Rolling 30's Harlem Crips, 20's

Those resentments are even more acute when African Americans try to buy back the property their family sold to Latinos, only to find out the prices have skyrocketed since their family sold the property.

Q: Do you think that there's competition between Blacks and Latinos for housing, that causes resentment too? Especially since you know in the last 30 years or something so many more Hispanics have moved in to Black areas…

A: Yeah, most definitely, most definitely, I have a strong bias to the individuals who parents died and their parents left them their home in our community and sold it, sold the house they grew up in, like I said the Black community which I actually grew up on, the three families, its only three families on our block that's still there from when we were a kid.

Q: And it's all Mexicans moved into all of their houses?

A: Pretty much, you know, it's only three, the majority I say about 75%. I go look at my house and my house used to be, it's like a forest it's got gardens and trees and all kinds of stuff, they built a wall up you know what I mean. It was ironic, because I tried to buy the house back in 2005 or 06, they had gutted it right, and I went back to buy it, I mean the house is gutted, I never even knew that there was a basement under the house, that was big enough to live a whole house in like a bomb shelter type. They had gutted it all the way right, and so I went in and I asked the guy, I'm talking to the guy, it's a Hispanic dude done bought it, I'm like "How much can I buy it for just like this?" and he said $450,000! I was like man my mom sold this house and it was $117,000! There's nothing in here anyways, no walls, nothing!

WS Rolling 30's Harlem Crips, 40's

Latino immigrants encroaching on black neighborhoods also creates practical problems, as immigrant families often live with large extended families in a single residential space, increasing the population density of the whole neighborhood, which leads to other problems such as limited street parking, language barriers, increased trash, vagrancy and loud parties, not to mention the one unspoken discomfort, the perpetual gaze of the alien other in their midst.

Q: Do you think there's some resentment in, in certain Black communities that have been historically Black and…

A: Oh absolutely!

Q: And now there's a lot of Mexicans there?

A: Oh absolutely, absolutely!

Q: You think there are people that feel resentment?

A: Oh absolutely!

Q: The neighborhoods used to be, and now, now you have to speak Spanish to get along?

A: Absolutely, absolutely, absolutely! It's part of the issue, because you got 10 cars in one house where now they've taken all the parking spaces on the whole block.

WS Rolling 20's Bloods, 40's

A common analysis for the demographic change among African Americans in the black community is that national level politics decimated the black community in South Los Angeles by simultaneously flooding the streets of black Los Angeles with CIA-Contra supplied crack

cocaine, while leaving borders unprotected for cheap Latino labor to come take housing and

employment opportunities from existing urban African American populations.

> Q: How bout with housing, you think there's competition for housing that causes resentments too? Like
>
> with Mexicans moving into black areas?
>
> A: Yeah I mean fuckin Ronald Reagan destroyed, I mean left the border open for fuckin 8 years! This dude
>
> Noriega, he was working with, fuckin crack era was crazy in the 80's. It's just so many, so many of em
>
> man! It's like fuck!
>
> East Coast Crips, 30's

While African American residents suffer Latino demographic encroachment in historically

homogeneously black neighborhoods in South Los Angeles, their plight is perceived as even

more unfair because of the widespread perception that blacks are not welcome in many

homogeneously Latino areas of East Los Angeles.

> Q: Do you think that there's also competition over housing that causes conflict and resentment too?
>
> A: Yes they get resentful and then individuals end up getting hurt and there is loss of life over that issue.
>
> Up in the Watts area alone has probably risen to close to 80% Latino, but the 20% African American are
>
> part of the PTA at school, are part of the Watts Gang Taskforce, and they continue to run the projects.
>
> When you talk about the Jordan Downs Housing Project, the gang the Grape Street Watts dynamic, even
>
> though the majority of residents are Mexican or El Salvadorean or whatever, the black gang still continues
>
> to dominate that project. I think that's a issue, but also like Ramona Gardens where my mother grew up,
>
> there are like 2% African American and they are uncomfortable. In that project they like "Man we can't
>
> even go nowhere because they trippin!" They don't like us cause we're black, so that's it.

While this may have been true in prior years, a member of Big Hazard 13, the gang that

has historically controlled the Ramona Gardens Projects[224] reports that while black residents

used to face relentless harassment from Latino gang members intent on keeping them out of

the projects, the gang has decided to relent in the face of increased pressure from law

enforcement and a number of high profile prosecutions, and has come to accept and respect

the right of African American residents to live and co-exist in the housing projects Big Hazard

has long dominated.

> You know before in the projects there was never no black people. But there's alotta black people right
>
> there now. Even on Thursdays the Homeboys go right there in the hood and play basketball. They play
>
> against like blacks. Homeys don't trip no more. It ain't nothing no more.
>
> Q: That just changed in like the last 5 years though right? The housing authority decided to moved blacks
>
> into the projects on the east side?
>
> A: Yeah prolly in like 09 it started.
>
> Q: That's actually kinda more fucked up for you right cause alotta people like you that lost their pad, black
>
> people moved in huh?
>
> A: Yup yup! At first, but then like they were just bringing them in like too many. And then the homeys
>
> were like, "Pssshh!". And then they put the cameras up. They got cameras all over now so…
>
> Q: You think at first the fools from your neighborhood were tripping though?

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[224] Some of the most highly respected members of the Mexican Mafia were from Hazard and grew up in the Ramona Gardens Housing Projects, hence the name "Big" Hazard

A: Yeah cause I was part of it you know. We were robbing these fools, fucking up their cars. They didn't get the message you know, like get the fuck up outta here.

Q: Did any move out cause of that?

A: Yeah most of em, but they just kept coming in though.

Q: Oh so they'd move new ones in?

A: Yup. Yeah. And then plus like a couple older homeys got busted for hate crime you know. Older homeboys who had nothing to do with it you know. We said you know what forget it. They had nothing to do with it though.

Q: So at some point you guys just decided fuck it, it's not worth it?

A: Yeah…

Q: Do you still have homeboys from your neighborhood that are still like bitter about it?

A: Naw but you know don't get me wrong, you know, you put a lil alcohol in your system and you get like you know, but we'll be like "Aye fuck it relax," you know like, "There's nothing you could do about it so…"

ES Big Hazard 13, 20's

This apparent resignation to accept inter-racial demographic diversity, even in the heart of East Los Angeles where Sureno gang culture was born, in a place as notorious as the Big Hazard/ Ramona Gardens Housing Projects, could have been a significant historical development and an auspice of the dawn of a new future where the invisible wall begins to show some cracks. However, as chapter 7 recounts, this acceptance proved to be only momentary, as inter-racial gang violence reared its ugly head again in Ramona Gardens on Mother's Day of 2014.

5.6 Taking Stock

As I move to the final section of this dissertation I will briefly review the argument and evidence thus far presented. Chapter 3 presented evidence of historical racism against blacks in colonial Mexico and Latin America that was historically transmitted to modern Mexican and Latino populations in Los Angeles as anti-black bias. Chapter 3 went on to recount how both differential settlement patterns between African Americans and Chicanos, and a conceptual split that occurred in the wake of the collapse of the civil rights movements between them, laid the foundation for the development of independent black and Latino communities and corresponding identities in South and East Los Angeles respectively. Chapter 4 continues by arguing that cultural differences arose out of the ostracism of the black and Latino communities from one another, and that the cultural identities that differentiate and ostracize black and Latino gang members from each other, are also the glue that provides intra-group cohesion that binds them together. As such, the cultural boundaries between them are in some cases vigorously enforced in order to maintain consistent and coherent ethno-racial gang identities. Finally this chapter has explored the extent of inter-racial bias between contemporary Sureno and Crip and Blood gang members, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and related those biases to their various sources, be they historical bias, cultural differences, split labor market competition, or group threat and defended neighborhood perspectives.

Having provided that rich and detailed background, I move forward in chapters 6 and 7 to explain how these factors have contributed in combination to the specificities of past and

present inter-racial gang conflicts in California's prisons, LA County Jails and on the streets of Los Angeles. While Diego Vigil has correctly identified the various factors that play a role in inter-racial gang conflicts,[225] I examine how each of these factors contributes specifically to specific conflicts in specific contexts. In addition to the factors already examined in chapters 3 through 5, I also point to the effect of specific correctional and law enforcement policies that have contributed to the provocation and perpetuation of inter-racial gang conflict both in California's prisons and Los Angeles County Jails, but also on the streets of Los Angeles, where inter-racial gang violence is a common occurrence in much of the city. I also examine the role of muck raking media, politicians and law enforcement in propagating caustic narratives ascribing racial motives to what are actually gang conflicts. Furthermore, I engage in a detailed description and analysis of the history of gang politics in prisons and their relation to drug markets and gang conflicts on the streets, and provide multiple micro-analyses of specific conflicts between black and Latino gangs in different regions of Los Angeles as case studies on how all of these factors coalesce to produce the type of inter-racial bloodletting Los Angeles has seen in recent decades. For before we look at the here and now, we must always first look behind us as to how it was back when.

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[225] Vigil 2011

Chapter 6 Prison Politics

Golden Gladiator School

"When the prison gates fly open, the real dragons will emerge."

Ho Chi Minh[226]

In the previous chapters we examined background factors that have structured and framed the insular opposition racialized gang identities that position black and Latino gang members in opposition to one another. The following two chapters will explain how those factors and others to be explored combined to produce specific conflicts in specific contexts between black and Latino inmates in carceral facilities and black and Latino gangs on the streets of Los Angeles. I start with an analysis of prison politics because of the significant influence prison politics have on street gang politics in Los Angeles and throughout Southern California.

The term prison politics has very different meanings in different contexts and for different populations. There are essentially two types of prison politics, the policies and practices of those who administer and staff our prisons and jails, and the policies and practices of those who inhabit them. We can use more distinct terms to differentiate between these two very different realms of prison politics by referring to the former as carceral policies, and the latter as prison gang politics. Carceral policies are those that are conceived and implemented either formally or informally by carceral administrators and/or staff. Carceral policy is a

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[226] Quoted from Cummins 1994

preferable term to use because it applies to both state prison and county jail facilities, administrators and staff. State prison and county jail facilities are administered by different agencies at the state and local level. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR hereafter) is the agency that runs California's prisons, and the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD hereafter) runs the county jails in Los Angeles County. There are similarities and differences in how these agencies administer their facilities and inmate populations. Prison gang politics on the other hand, are remarkably consistent between state prison and county jail environments, and as the following chapter(s) will demonstrate, have a significant influence on conflicts between black and Latino gangs both in carceral environments and on the streets of Los Angeles.

Although Wacquant[227] and Hagedorn[228] have pointed to the connection, both conceptual and practical, between the prison and the ghetto, the history of these prison gangs, their conflicts and their connections to street gangs has yet to be examined by academics, with scarce accounts of their inner-workings in the popular press.[229] Given the glaring omission of the role of prison gang politics in existing analyses of street gangs in the US, it is worth considering the role these organizations have played in evolving inter-racial gang conflict both in carceral environments and on the streets.

However, sociological analysis requires a more nuanced consideration of the interplay between carceral policies, gang politics and inter-racial gang conflict in carceral facilities and on

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[227] Wacquant 2001
[228] Hagedorn 2008
[229] Rafael 2007; Blatchford 2008; Mendoza 2012; Morales 2013

the streets of Los Angeles than simply blaming gang leaders. We must consider how carceral

policies, demographic change and the historical structural circumstances discussed in chapter 3

have coalesced to produce the gang politics we see in California's prisons, Los Angeles County

Jails and on the streets of Los Angeles in the modern era. To that end, after some short

comments on the subject population of respondents who were interviewed for the content in

this chapter, the chapter begins with a historical analysis that continues the historical narrative

presented in chapter 3. After examining the history of how carceral policies engendered the rise

of modern prison gangs in California, I examine the boundaries inmates impose on themselves

and each other that divide prison populations into racially defined factions and examine the

causes of violence between those factions, both within the inmate population and inflicted

upon them by contemporary carceral policies and practices.

6.1 Subject Population

Of the 92 Sureno, Crip and Blood gang members formally interviewed for this project 87

had served time in carceral facilities. The least amount of time served was one year or less, the

most amount of time served was 36 years. The mean time served was 9.66 years while the

median time served was 6 years, as the sample was heavily weighted by a dozen older

respondents who each had served in excess of 20 years in prison. Ten respondents had served

time in the SHU program at Pelican Bay State Prison and/or Corcoran State Prison. The 87

respondents who had been incarcerated had a combined total of 857 years served in prison

between them. This formal sample has been supplemented with literally hundreds of informal interviews, each taking from a few minutes to a few hours, with other gang members and ex-convicts from throughout Los Angeles County. In addition to interviews with gang members I have conducted over a dozen formal interviews with law enforcement officers (LEO hereafter) and dozens of informal interviews with LEO's and correctional officers (CO hereafter). Unfortunately these issues were too sensitive to get any CO's on record in a formal interview, but my personal network of contacts in LASD and CDCR have enabled me to informally interview correctional staff during private conversation with employees of those agencies.

It should be apparent that this is both a unique and robust sample of ex-convicts and gang members, LEO's and CO's unmatched in modern criminological research on gangs to date. These respondents have provided a window into a world that has not yet been viewed through an academic lens, with this project being the first and only academic consideration of the relationship between prison politics and gang violence, a much needed contribution to the academic literature on gangs, incarceration and violence in California and the United States as a whole.

6.2 The History of the Mexican Mafia and Black Guerilla Family

I argue that the collapse of the civil rights movement discussed in chapter 3 structured the emergence of racialized gang identities, which organize and structure relations between gang members in California prisons, Los Angeles County Jails and on the streets of Los Angeles

into opposing racialized gang factions. When inmates enter the county jails or state prisons in California they are immediately compelled to affiliate with one of a limited number of racialized gang factions that operate in carceral environments throughout California. As the slang goes, whites run Peckerwood, Crips, Bloods and any other African Americans run Black, anyone from a Southern California barrio runs South Sider, anyone from a Northern California barrio runs Northerner, and anyone else is an Other. Generally, South Siders are opposed to Blacks and Northerners, and Blacks are opposed to South Siders and Peckerwoods. When and why did these racialized gang identities and corresponding conflicts emerge? That is the question the following section seeks to answer.

The Mexican Mafia aka *La Eme* was founded in 1957 by a group of teenage Chicano inmates from barrios throughout Southern California on a juvenile yard in the Deuel Vocational Institution (DVI hereafter) in Tracy, California, which is located in Northern California about halfway between Stockton and Modesto, and about two hours east of the Bay Area.[230] The idea of using the term "mafia" as a name was seeped in the folklore of the American gangster film genre of the 1930s – 1950s, which glorified prohibition era gangsters in such classics as *Little Caesar* (1931), *The Public Enemy* (1931), *Scarface* (1932), *The Roaring 20's* (1939), *White Heat* (1949) and *The Enforcer* (1951). These early media representations and the corresponding folklore of real life Mafioso active in Los Angeles during the mid-20th century like Benjamin "Bugsy" Segal and "Gangster" Mickey Cohen were understandably attractive role models for seemingly incorrigible juvenile delinquents intent on establishing a reputation for themselves

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[230] Rafael 2007; Blatchford 2008; Morales 2013

among their delinquent peers. If they were going to pick a name that inspired fear and respect in their peers, there was no better moniker at the time to have chosen than "mafia".

Although the Mexican Mafia has a horizontal organizational structure and has never had a supreme leader per se, the idea of members of Southern California street gangs banding together under the "Mexican Mafia" name is credited to one Mr. Luis "Huero Buff" Flores, who was all of 16 years of age at the time. His teenage cohort of founding members included a list of men whose fates, feats and reputations would later become the stuff of lore in Southern California barrio communities and carceral facilities throughout the state, including but not limited to Mike "Acha (Hatchet)" Ison, Alejandro "Hondo" Lechuga, Eddie "Potato Nose" Loera, Jesus "Liro" Pedroza, Gabriel "Little Sluggo" Castaneda, Benjamin "Topo" Peters, "Colorado" Joe Arias, James "Rube" Standard-Soto, Fernando "Fernie" AKA "Alfie" Bermudez, Richard "Richie" Ruiz and the infamous Rodolfo "Cheyenne" Cadena, whose murder and martyrdom kicked off the war that continues to this day between Sureno and Norteno affiliated gang members in California prisons and on the streets of the Bay Area, where enclaves of Sureno affiliated gangs have established themselves "behind enemy lines".[231]

As teenage delinquents often do, the boys had ambitious dreams of becoming an organized crime group on par with the Italian and Jewish Mafias active on the Eastern Seaboard and in the Midwest. The suggestion that a group of about a dozen juvenile delinquents from the barrios of Los Angeles would one day achieve hegemony over virtually the entire CDCR system was probably laughable to CDCR staff and administration at the time, easily dismissed as

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[231] Blatchford 2008; Morales 2013

the type of grandiose fantasies troublesome boys often have – but it was the boys who would

have the last laugh. Surely the idea of putting aside neighborhood rivalries to unite all Southern

California barrio gangs into a unified organization that would take over control of the prison

system was a seemingly impossible vision for what at the time were merely a group of

reputedly incorrigible juvenile delinquents with a penchant for violence in the face of adversity.

Particularly considering the boys largely hailed from a hodgepodge of impoverished barrios

throughout Los Angeles County like Hawaiian Gardens, Big Hazard, Clover Street, Maravilla,

Venice, Varrio Nueva Estrada, Dog Patch, Avenues and White Fence. However, as their

penchant for violence blossomed, in 1961 their keepers at DVI decided that they had had

enough with the boys and to teach them a lesson split them up into smaller groups and

transferred them out to "run with the big boys" on adult yards in notorious California prisons

like San Quentin and Old Folsom where it was assumed they would be victimized and kept in

check by older hardened adult convicts.[232] The administration couldn't have been more wrong,

and their naïve and malicious miscalculation ultimately facilitated the unbridled expansion of

the Mexican Mafia throughout the prison system in the 1960s and 1970s.

As Graph 6-1 shows, the combined population of CDCR facilities in the late 1950s and

early 1960s was about one tenth what it is today. However, more importantly, as Graph 6-2

shows, the racial demographics of CDCR populations were also radically different at that time

than they are today. In 1955 Hispanic inmates were the smallest racial group in the CDCR

system at around 16%, and considering that only perhaps roughly half of them were from

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[232] Ibid

Southern California, what would one day become the Sureno faction was then less than 10% of

the overall population in CDCR facilities. As best as we can tell from the recollections of those

old enough to have served time prior to 1980, there has always been a degree of self-

segregation by race among inmates in CDCR facilities, and although this divide was certainly not

as sharply delineated as it is now, there has always been some tension across racial lines in

carceral environments in California, as the kinds of cultural divisions discussed in chapter 4 have

always been present in black and Latino populations in California's prison system, just as they

have been in the ghettos and barrios of Los Angeles.

> It's always been racial. Especially in California, California has always been a very racial state.
>
> Q: Even before the blacks became Crips and Bloods and all that?
>
> A: Way before that homes, a lot of people call it the warrior gene, but it's just that you got beliefs that I
>
> don't approve of, and I got beliefs that you don't approve of. So people who are not willing to bend, or try
>
> something new, there's gonna be a war homes.
>
> ES White Fence 13, 50's

Not to mention that Southern California Hispanic gang members were far from united at

the time, with Chicanos from urban and rural regions of California clashing and street beefs

often spilling over onto prison yards with different groups forming various factions, "*clickas*" as

the above respondent called them, a form of organic localized organization lacking any over-

arching structure. "There was never none of this South Sider and Northerner stuff like it is now.

It was only the *clickas* homes, you know what I mean." As such, when those young men, the

founding *Carnals* of *La Eme*, walked onto those adult yards for the first time, they were

confronted with a hostile adult black and white population that deeply outnumbered them and

were not unaccustomed to victimizing "fresh fish," as younger inmates new to the adult system

are often called. Furthermore, they enjoyed no particular support from the Chicano prison

population at the time, as even Chicanos from Southern California were fractured and entirely

lacked the kind of solidarity one sees in contemporary Latino carceral populations in California.
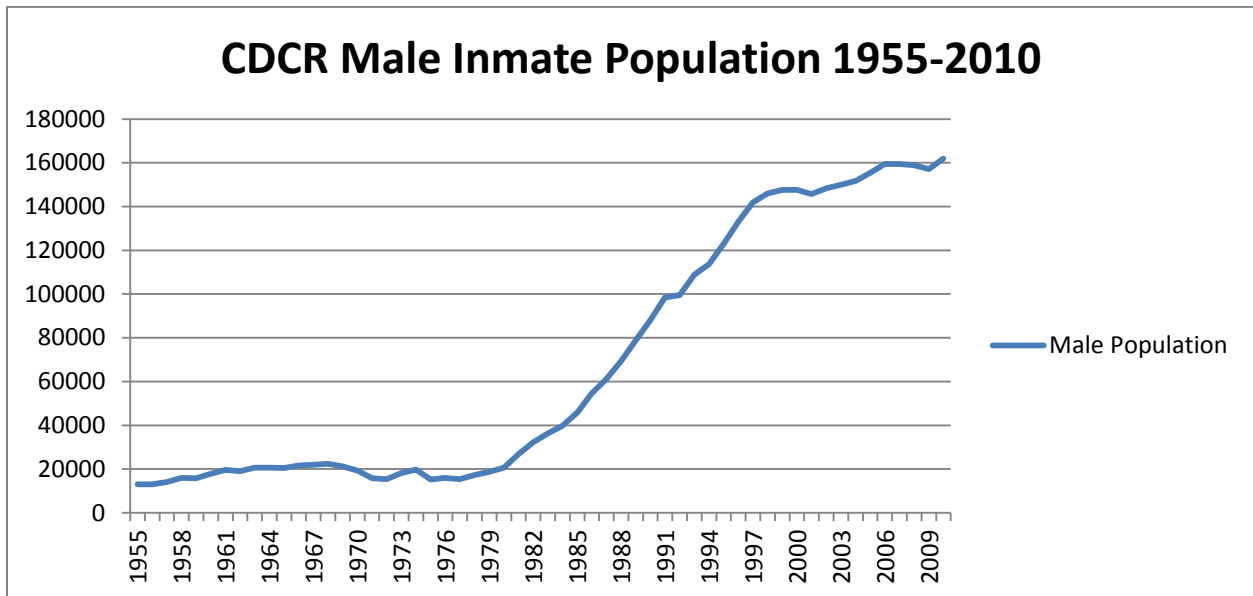
Graph 6-1 CDCR Male Inmate Population 1955-2010

CDCR Male Population by Race 1955-2010
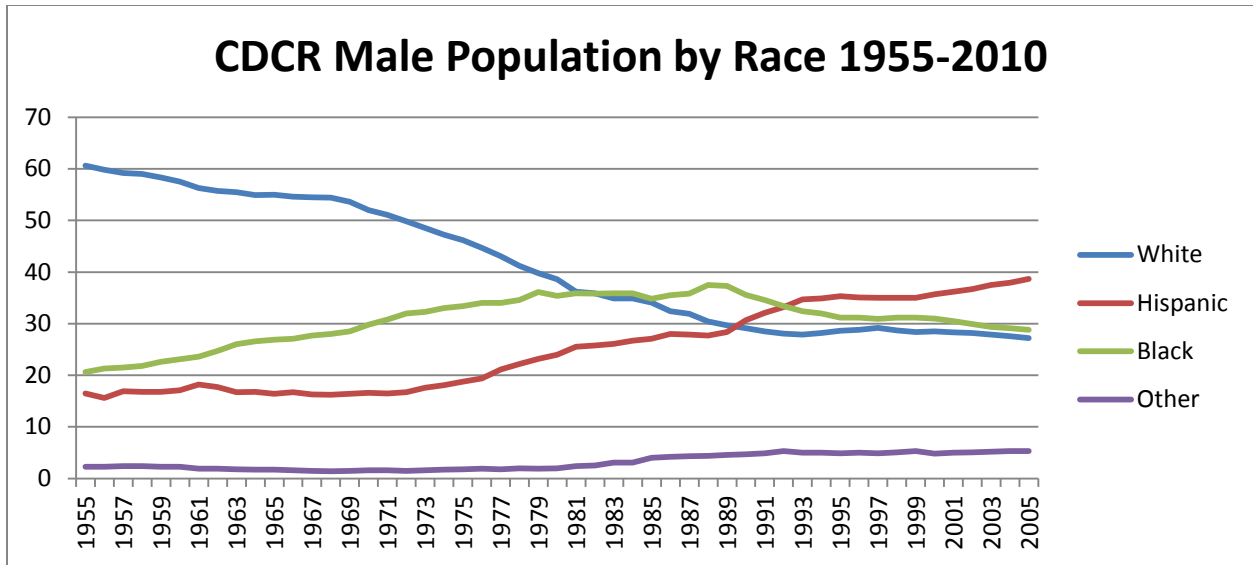
Graph 6-2 CDCR Male Population by Race 1955-2010

Thus the validity of the contention that the Mexican Mafia was formed for mutual protection is difficult to deny, as the demographics of the prison population at the time show, these teenagers found themselves on adult yards deeply outnumbered by full grown men whose only use for them was to prey upon them, precisely the reason malicious CDCR administrators had transferred the boys to those yards in the first place. However, rather than becoming victims, these young men lashed out with merciless violence against any who dared to victimize, disrespect or oppose them. Shortly after being transferred to adult facilities these young men embarked on a violent campaign, committing a string of bloody hits on other inmates who made the fatal mistake of attempting to victimize or insult a member of the Mexican Mafia. The results were a number of brutally gruesome murders and stabbings, the likes of which were not commonly known to occur between inmates in the California prison

system at that time.[233] Indeed, inmate on inmate assaults were so rare at the time that CDCR

didn't even include statistics on their occurrence in their annual reports on CDCR populations

until 1975, when even then, inmate on inmate assaults numbered less than three hundred in

the entire CDCR system in a whole year! Whereas in recent years there have been over five

thousand male inmate on inmate assaults per year in CDCR facilities.[234] Currently lacking data

on inmate on inmate assaults prior to 1975 we cannot know for sure, but I would hazard an

assumption that inmate on inmate assaults were even less common in the early 1960s, and

certainly not the kind of vicious stabbings that the first generation of *Emeros* carried out when

they hit the adult prison system in the 1960s. They murdered black and white inmates who

tried to victimize them, they murdered Hispanic prisoners who disrespected or opposed them,

and they established a reputation for unyielding retribution that stands unbroken to this day.

However, it is important to remember that these violent assaults on other inmates in

the early years of *La Eme* were relatively few in number compared to the explosion of inter-

inmate violence that occurred in the 1980s. During the early years in the 1960s *Emeros* and

their confederates were deeply outnumbered and literally fighting for their survival, both

individually and collectively, against much older and physically larger career convicts who in

many cases did not take the young Turks seriously, but probably should have. Assaults,

stabbings and murders slowly accumulated over the 1960s and 1970s, as young *Emeros* who

came of age in the system made examples out of those foolish enough to cross them. The

reputation of the Mexican Mafia as the vanguard organization for barrio gang members from

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[233] Morrill 2005; Blatchford 2008
[234] CDCR Reports 1955-2000

Southern California to join in prison also accumulated over those years, which kept the

organization on a consistent course of expansion, able to recruit the most dangerous and

respected gang members in the prison system from barrios throughout Southern California.

From the original cohort of around a dozen members, by the late 1970s they had accumulated

a small army of made members numbering a few hundred hard core *Emeros* ready to go to war

for control of prison yards where they had long faced long odds, surviving by their sheer

audacity, persistence and determination to meet any potential threat they faced with resolute

solidarity and extreme violence.

Figure 6-1: Early Members of the Mexican Mafia, Folsom Prison circa 1969: (Standing Left to Right) Luis "Huero Buff" Flores, "Big Mike" Mulhern, Abraham "Abie" Hernandez, Joe "Cocoliso" Morgan; (Kneeling Left to Right) Ramon "Tuffy" Hernandez, Jesse "Cheneno" Jordan, Benjamin "Topo" Peters, Rudolfo "Cheyenne" Cadena[235]

As described in chapter 3, rather than the color blind society Martin King Luther Jr. spoke of in his "I have a Dream" speech, the radicalization of the civil rights movement in the mid to late 1960s and early 1970's had the profound effect of undermining class solidarity by moving the civil rights movement from a movement denouncing the race concept, to a

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[235] Photograph provided by Long Beach Police Department Gang Intelligence Unit

movement embracing exclusive and oppositional racial identities, thereby socially constructing

and reifying a conceptual boundary between successive generations of marginalized racial

groups who might otherwise have coalesced under the banner of class solidarity.[236] This

conceptual boundary was easily absorbed by inmates in the California prison system because it

provided a conceptual framework they could relate to in interpreting the boundaries and

conflicts between racially/culturally oppositional inmate factions. Furthermore, many of the

early members of these groups were either directly or indirectly influenced by the radical

revolutionary rhetoric filtering into the prisons from the social movements on the streets, and

vice versa.[237] Members of these organizations like Rodolfo "Cheyenne" Cadena and George L.

Jackson assumed a radical leftist revolutionary philosophy, absorbing the lessons of their

respective radical civil rights organizations, the Brown Berets and Black Panther Party who

preached *Viva la Raza* and Black Power as their respective mantras. Indeed, the primary

racialized prison gang factions that exist today emerged in the prison system during the civil

rights movement era including the Mexican Mafia, Nuestra Familia (NF hereafter), Aryan

Brotherhood (AB hereafter) and Black Guerilla Family, eternally cementing the amalgamation of

racial identity with gang affiliation in the California context. This is another ramification of the

legal violence – insular oppositional racial identity connection that Haney-Lopez, Alonso and

Cornell and Hartmann failed to consider.[238] That is, the effect the collapse of the civil rights

movement and the emergence of exclusive oppositional racial identities had on subsequent

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[236] Haney Lopez 2003; Alonso 2004; Cornell and Hartmann 2007
[237] Cummins 1994
[238] Haney-Lopez 2003; Alonso 2004; Cornell and Hartmann 2007

generations, and how that effect influenced the amalgamation of racialized gang identities in California's prison population and in California's ghettos and barrios.

In or around 1968 black inmates at San Quentin State Prison, George L. Jackson and W.L. Nolen, who were heavily influenced by the radical civil rights movement going on outside prison walls, formed a radical leftist revolutionary study group among black inmates at San Quentin State Prison known as the Wolfpack, or the Black Family, which evolved into the vanguard organization to protect the interests of black inmates, the Black Guerilla Family (BGF hereafter).[239] Unlike the Mexican Mafia, the BGF was formed not only for the protection solidarity afforded black inmates, but as an ideologically radical leftist Marxist/Maoist revolutionary organization with the overthrow of the American capitalist system as one of their founding principles.[240] While the overthrow of a system that had the vast majority of their members indefinitely incarcerated may have always been an impossible goal, their radical revolutionary philosophy provided the ideological framework they needed to focus their rage against both racist white inmates and CO's who had abused and victimized them with impunity for generations.

As Graph 6-2 shows, white inmates held a large majority in the CDCR system all through the 1950s and 1960s, a numerical dominance that didn't end until the early 1980s. White inmates, particularly the avowedly white supremacist Aryan Brotherhood (formerly the Bluebirds), which emerged as the vanguard organization for white prisoners in the mid to late 1950s, made a habit of verbally insulting, robbing and physically assaulting black inmates, as the

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[239] Joy 2003
[240] Cummins 1994

kind of white supremacist racism that the general public was accustomed to seeing on the nightly news during the civil rights era was mirrored by racist white inmates victimizing black and Hispanic inmates in California's prisons. This dynamic resulted in an untenable situation for black inmates, reinforced by overwhelmingly white CO's who at the least condoned the racist behavior of white inmates, if not outright supported it.

BGF founders Jackson and Nolen had a reputation for insolence among mostly white CDCR staff, and their plethora of rule violations kept them locked down regularly in solitary confinement where they used the time to study radical theory and classics of radical leftist philosophy like Marx, Engels, Gramsci, Lenin, Trotsky, Mao and Ho Chi Minh.[241] Jackson also joined the Black Panther Party (BPP hereafter) after meeting Huey P. Newton in San Quentin during Huey's stay there on charges he murdered Oakland Police Officer John Frey in a gunfight that erupted during the course of a traffic stop on October 28, 1967.[242] Other early BGF members also had involvement in the BPP and/or other radical revolutionary leftist groups such as the Black Liberation Army (BLA hereafter), the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA hereafter) and the Weathermen Underground. The BGF and BPP also drew membership from the old school black street gangs like the Slausons in South Central Los Angeles that had their roots in defending black communities in South Los Angeles from racist white gangs like the infamous Spook Hunters. Street gang members played a significant role in the radical civil rights movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s including John "Hutch" Hutchison, Johnny

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[241] Joy 2003
[242] Bloom and Martin 2013

"Caeser" Spain and Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter, all of whom served time in San Quentin State Prison and were recognized as BGF and BPP members and leaders.

In January of 1970 Jackson and Nolen were precipitously moved under dubious circumstances by CDCR administration from San Quentin to Soledad Valley State Prison about two hours south of the Bay Area off the 101 highway. Within days of their transfer, on January 13, 1970 a fight broke out between Nolen and AB leader Billy "Buzzard" Harris and their confederates. During the fracas CO Opie G. Miller opened fire with a rifle from the catwalk and killed Nolen along with two other BGF brothers, Cleveland Edwards and Alvin "Sweet Black Jug" Miller.[243] One white inmate involved in the melee was hit by a stray bullet, though his injury was not life-threatening. CO Miller was cleared by a local grand jury of any wrongdoing and just three days later, Jackson and BGF comrades, John Clutchette and Fleeta Drumgo (who was murdered years late in an alleged gang-related shooting in Los Angeles), allegedly beat CO John V. Mills unconscious and threw him off the third floor tier to his death in retaliation for the killing of Nolen.[244]

The three accused were dubbed the "Soledad Brothers" by the liberal press and became the focal point of an intense prisoner rights movement among the white radical left in the Bay Area on the outside who identified with radical revolutionary black leftist inmates like BPP members Eldridge Cleaver and George Jackson on the inside.[245] Before Jackson could be tried for the murder of CO Mills, on August 21, 1971 Jackson himself was killed in a purported escape

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[243] Cummins 1994
[244] Ibid
[245] Ibid

attempt where he and other black inmates, with the assistance of two Mexican Mafia members

Louis "Bala" Talamantes (who went into protective custody years later) and Louie Lopez,

allegedly used a 9mm pistol to take hostage a number of guards and white inmates.[246] After

allegedly stabbing and shooting their hostages, leaving CO's Paul Krasenes, Frank Deleon and

Jere Graham dead, and CO's Kenneth McCray, Charles Breckenridge and Urbano Rubiaco

grievously injured, as well as two white inmates, John Lynn and Ronald Kane, shot dead and

stabbed multiple times with their throats slit, Jackson and his comrade in arms Johnny Spain

escaped the cell house onto the adjacent yard where CO's were ready and waiting. Jackson was

shot dead on the spot, while Spain was allowed to surrender.[247] Many questions remain about

the killing of Jackson to this day,[248] as an unambiguous account of what exactly transpired on

that fateful day remains elusive, with accusations from everyone up to the famous French

intellectual Michel Foucault alleging that his death was a political assassination achieved by

conspiracy between CDCR staff and white inmates opposed to the BGF and radical leftist

politics in general.[249]

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[246] Cummins 1994; Valdemar 2012
[247] Cummins 1994; Andrews 1999; Valdemar 2012
[248] Reiter 2014
[249] Foucault, von Bulow and Defert 2007

Figure 6-2: Black Guerilla Family founders George L. Jackson (Left) and W.L. Nolen (Right), circa mid to late 1960s

Law enforcement sources allege that after the death of the BGF's original leaders, Nolen

and Jackson, highly respected BGF General and former SLA leader Mr. James Harold "Doc"

Holiday took over control of the organization.[250] CDCR Special Services Unit (SSU hereafter)

officers I interviewed offered yet another demonstration of the historic connection between

the BPP and BGF. After James Harold "Doc" Holiday was sent to the Federal Bureau of Prisons

(BOP hereafter), the brother of Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter, Mr. Kenneth "Fati" Carter, who is

housed in the Pelican Bay SHU, assumed leadership of the BGF in the CDCR system. Very little is

known about the contemporary inner workings of the organization, as validated members of

the BGF in the CDCR system are currently confined to the Security Housing Units (SHU

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[250] Cummins 1994; Valdemar 2012

hereafter) at Pelican Bay State Prison and Corcoran State Prison. Members who are not in the

SHU prudently take every pain possible to keep their membership in the organization secret, in

order to avoid identification by law enforcement and/or CDCR staff. The BGF is known to exist

in the CDCR system, the Federal BOP system, and is suspected to still exist among select

members of various Crip and Blood sets in Los Angeles, as well as various historically black

neighborhoods in the Bay Area. CDCR SSU officers I interviewed put the current known

membership of the BGF at a mere 114 full-fledged members and 39 validated associates. How

many members there are who have not been identified, both in the system and on the streets,

is unknown to anyone but the leadership of the BGF.

As the late 1960s and early 1970s unfolded, animosities escalated into outright war

between the AB and the BGF as racialized prison gang factions turned their fury on one

another. Perhaps the earliest official salvo in the war between the AB and the BGF was the

murder of BGF associate Clarence "Dopey Dan" Causey, who was allegedly stabbed to death by

AB members in San Quentin on April 23, 1968.[251] As animosities between the BGF and AB

escalated in the early 1970s, retaliatory hits between members of the two organizations

occurred with increasing regularity. For example, on May 25, 1975 BGF member Garland Berry

stabbed AB member Richard "Ricky T" Terflinger in the face, head and neck on an upper tier in

San Quentin. Terflinger survived. Garland Berry did not, almost two years later on April 22,

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[251] Ibid

1977 when he was stabbed to death on a rec yard at San Quentin allegedly by AB members, obviously in retaliation for the attack on Terflinger two years prior.[252]

However, despite the overwhelmingly white CDCR staff clearly favoring the Aryan Brotherhood, according to my sources who had served time in the Pelican Bay and Corcoran SHU programs in the 1990s with prison gang members who were active during the 1970s and knew those men personally, by the late 1970s the BGF had apparently gained the upper hand, threatening the continued functional existence of the AB as an organization. However at the time, collusion between corrupt CDCR staff and AB members meant that AB members were the primary distribution level source of narcotics for white and Hispanic inmates. Aryan Brotherhood member Michael Patrick "Blue" McElhiney (who went into protective custody years later) would regularly receive packages of dope from corrupt CO's who would smuggle the drugs into the prison, and as such was a particularly valuable asset for those whose drug retail operations on the yard were being supplied by him, including members of the Mexican Mafia. If the BGF took out AB at the time, the consistent source of income that Mr. McElhiney's CO drug smuggling source provided would be threatened. So in order to protect their interests in the dope trade, the Mexican Mafia decided to back the Aryan Brotherhood and declared war on the BGF.[253] It was a natural alliance that had been in effect informally for years, nudged ever closer by the BGF/NF alliance in the early 1970s that had allegedly wrested control of drug distribution in the Bay Area from the AB and the Mexican Mafia.[254]

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[252] XXPANTHAXX 2013
[253] Personal Interview, Confidential Source
[254] Cummins 1994

It is important to consider that for men who have grown up in the system and have no sympathetic friends or family on the outside to support them, the trade in narcotics and contraband is the best and only source of income for them to provide for the meager sustenance they required to function in a carceral environment. Something as simple as the ability to buy a bar of soap or a soup from the prison canteen is worth fighting to the death for in carceral environments. This was especially true for inmates from Southern California in the 1970s because all of the main prison facilities at the time were located in Northern California, far from any friends or family who would have been able to provide some modest modicum of support even if they could. It is therefore understandable that losing the source of income that a valued drug connection represented was a serious threat to the little comfort that sole source of income provided for men who had no other means of providing for their everyday needs. Thus it is inaccurate to simplistically suggest that this war was one fought for control over drug markets,[255] for it wasn't the market for drugs that was in contention, but rather it was protecting the source of the narcotics needed to supply those markets at the time that was threatened by the possibility of the BGF taking out the Aryan Brotherhood and cutting off the CO/AB dope connection.

In the wake of the killings of politically conscious leaders in the Mexican Mafia and BGF like Rodolfo "Cheyenne" Cadena and George L. Jackson under suspicious circumstances, the war between the Mexican Mafia and the BGF started in the late 1970's and peaked in the mid-1980's tapering off towards the end of the decade as black demographic dominance was

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[255] Cummins 1994; Quinones 2014

eclipsed by the influx of Hispanic prisoners that corresponded with the extensive Latino immigration California and the Southwest experienced in the 1980s and 1990s (see Graph 6-2). The overall number of inmate on inmate assaults took off in the early 1980's as Graph 6-3 shows, from a couple hundred incidents per year in 1975 to over five thousand in 2006, the last year data is available for at the time of this writing. However the rate of these assaults per 100 average daily population in CDCR, shown in Graph 6-4, reveals that when controlling for growth in the prisoner population the rate of inmate on inmate assaults peaked in the mid-1980s and from the late 1990's to the present. While it would be ideal to have data on the race and gang affiliation of the victims and attackers in these assaults to be able to trace the rate of assault specifically between black and Hispanic inmates, until and if such data is gathered, it seems a reasonable assumption to suggest that the peaks in the rate of inmate on inmate assault in the 1980s is a reflection of the Mexican Mafia/BGF war that was raging on high level prison yards in the CDCR system during those years.

CDCR Inmate on Inmate Assaults 1975-2006
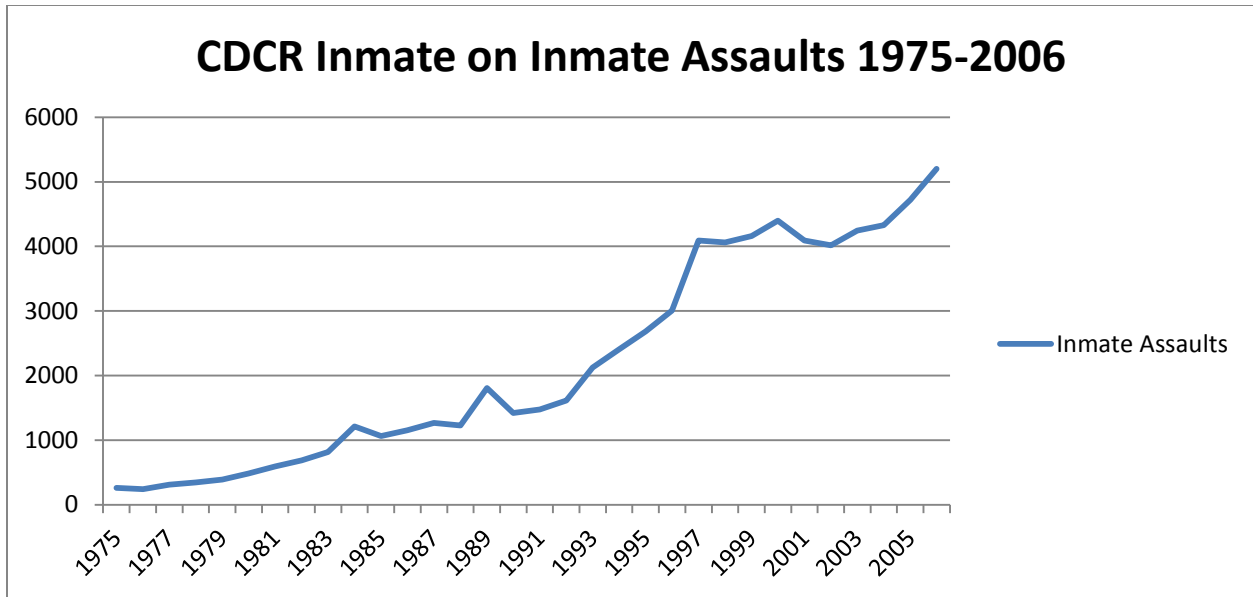
Graph 6-3 CDCR Inmate on Inmate Assaults 1975-2006

CDCR Inmate on Inmate Assault Rate per 100 ADP 1975-2006
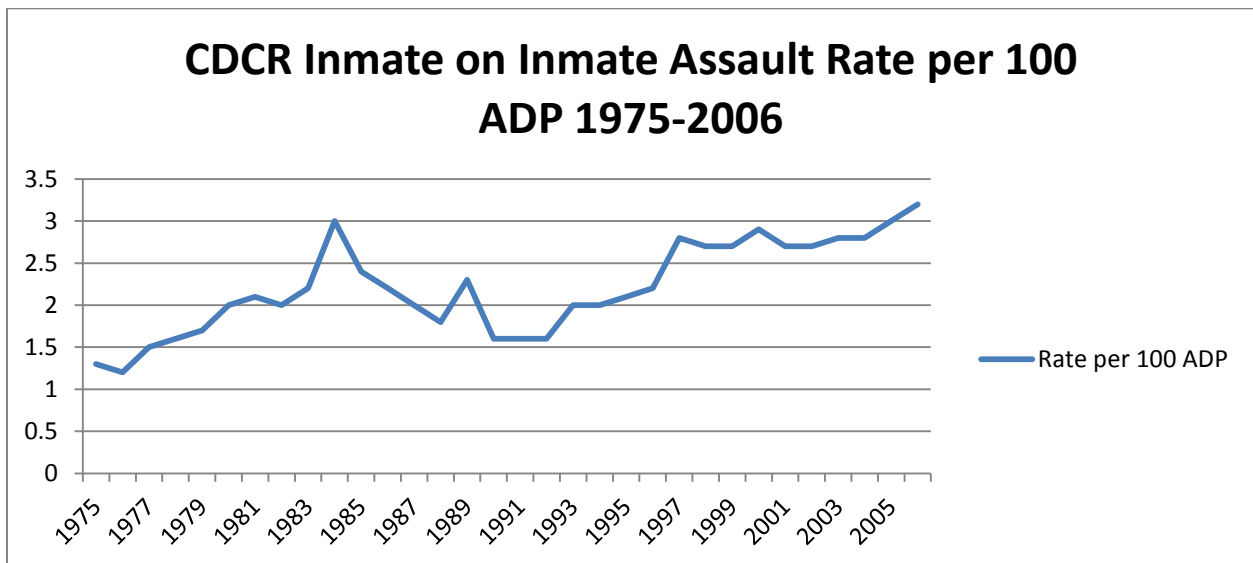
Graph 6-4 CDCR Inmate on Inmate Assault Rate per 100 Average Daily Population

An examination of CDCR data that breaks down inmate on inmate assaults by whether a

weapon was used or not provides an even clearer reflection of the Mexican Mafia/BGF war that

occurred in the 1980s. When looking at the raw numbers of assaults with and without a

weapon in Graph 6-5, we see that there is a period in the 1980's where assaults with a weapon

eclipse assaults without a weapon, perfectly correlating with the years the Mexican Mafia/BGF

war was at its peak. The reflection of this period of extreme violence in the prison system is

even more pronounced when looking at the rate of assaults with and without a weapon per 100

average daily population (ADP hereafter) in CDCR, in Graph 6-6. The sharp peak of assaults with

a weapon in 1984 and 1985 reflects the most violent years of the Mexican Mafia/BGF war for

control over CDCR facilities that raged during that time. CDCR SSU officers I interviewed

informed me that in 1984 CDCR officials allowed BGF and *Eme* members to meet with one

another to negotiate a truce between the two factions, but at the meeting a fight broke out and

one of the Mexican Mafia representatives stabbed to death one of the BGF representatives

during the meeting. (I do not use the *Emero's* name as he remains active in gang politics and is

currently on the run from a murder case) As LA Times reporter Sam Quinones points out, it was

during these years that a new generation of *Emeros* "made their bones" and earned their

reputations among their cohort of allies and enemies.[256]

A respondent from an East Los Angeles housing project gang in his 50s who went to

prison for the first time with a life sentence in the late 1970s described the environment he

found himself in when he first arrived in prison for the first time:

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[256] Quinones 2014

There was a war going on when I went in between blacks and Mexicans, in the early 80s, but it was

BGF/Mexican Mafia, things like that.

Q: Being your age you knew people even older than you right?

A: Yeah of course

Q: Do you know if before all these prison gangs existed that there was still racial conflict between black

and brown even back then before all the politics?

A: I believe it was escalated because of the politics. It was there, but not on the scale as it is now.

ES _____ 13, 50s

The statistical data gleaned from CDCR's Annual Prisoner Reports in Graphs 6-5 and 6-6

confirms his recollection, as the first decade or more of his incarceration was served during an

era of unprecedented violence in the CDCR system. It couldn't have been a better time for

ambitious gang members entering the prison system to "earn their stripes" as the saying goes,

carrying out hits on rival black or brown Mexican Mafia and BGF associates throughout the

system at the behest of their leaders.
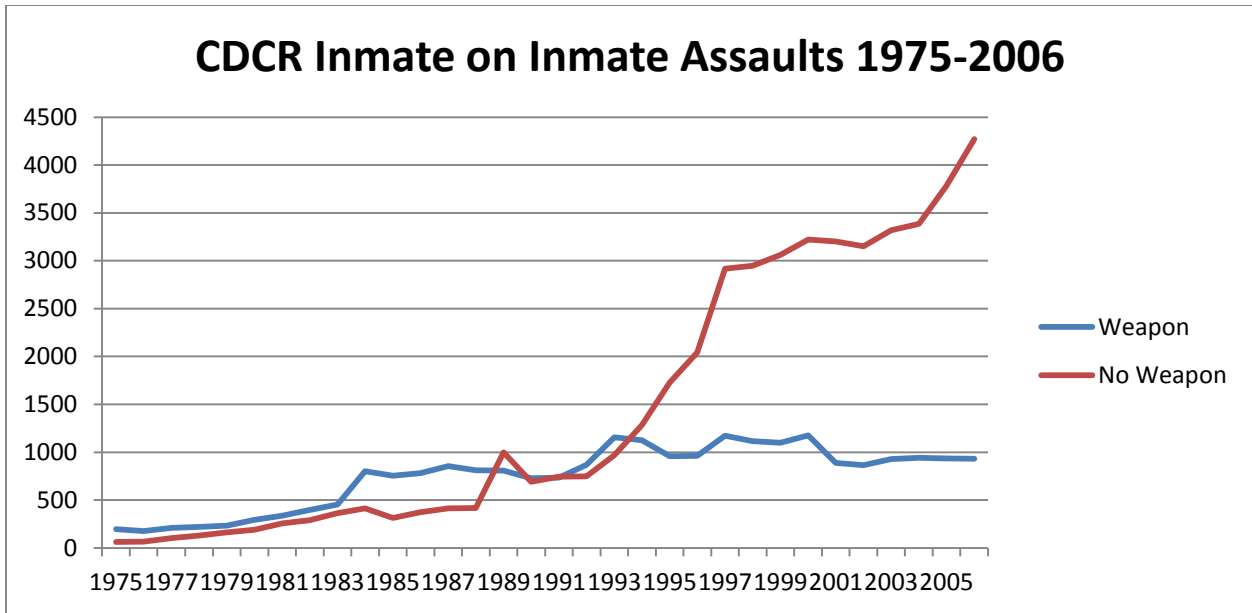
Graph 6-5 CDCR Inmate on Inmate Assaults 1975-2006
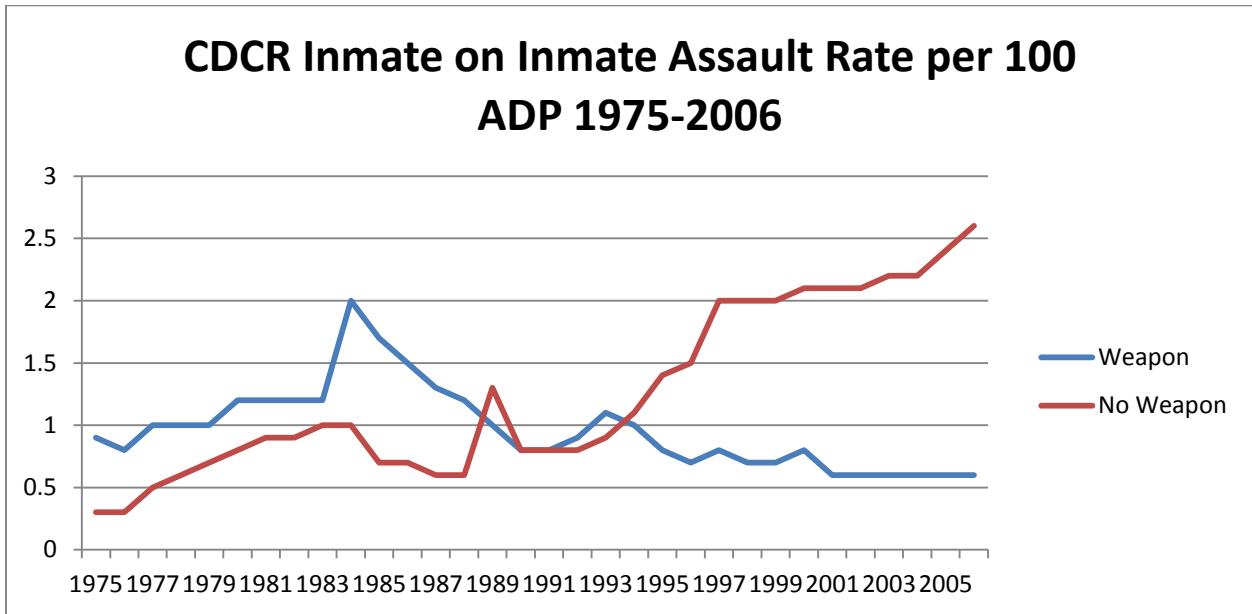
Graph 6-6 CDCR Inmate on Inmate Assault Rate per 100 Average Daily Population

To add fuel to the fire, CDCR was in a period of unprecedented expansion as the State's prison facilities went from five facilities in the early 1980s to over two dozen by the mid-1990s.[257] As each new prison facility opened and inmates walked onto each new yard for the first time, a pitched battle was fought on each of those yards determining which racialized gang faction would take which telephones, which day room, which benches, which workout area, which handball courts, which basketball courts and which fields on the yard. South Siders won virtually all of these battles and remain firmly in control of the preferred facilities in CDCR units throughout the state to this day. Convicts who "earned their stripes" in those battles refer to them as "opening up" a prison.

> I've been from Susanville to Jamestown to High Desert to Tehachapi to Corcoran to Folsom to I mean I been all over up and down. I just don't go down South, I always go up North. Ha ha ha! They always send me to war! The administration says, "You wanna be a tough guy huh?", so I'm like, "OK where you gonna send me now?" I opened up High Desert, and when you open up a prison man its fuckin crazy man. It's crazy... I mean you're killing people because this is my handball court or this is my bench. You're fighting for what area you're gonna get. And that's what I'm saying, we established High Desert, and still to this day it's still like that. You know, there was alot of blood shed for that.
>
> ES Clover Street 13, 50s

In 1989 CDCR opened a new "supermax" prison facility at the northern edge of the California coast for the express purpose of housing validated members of prison gangs like the Mexican Mafia, BGF, AB, NF and their close associates in virtually indefinite solitary

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[257] Gilmore 2007

confinement, segregated from the general CDCR population and the rest of the world for that

matter. Similar facilities were opened at the newly built Corcoran State Prison and California

Correctional Institution Tehachapi, with beds to house over one thousand prison gang members

and validated associates. These Security Housing Units (SHU hereafter) were part of an

expanding experiment in American penal policy that called for segregating certain inmates from

the general population in administrative segregation (Ad Seg hereafter) units, where they

would do their time in practically indefinite solitary confinement, physically segregated from

the mainline inmate population.[258] It was the fulfillment of a vision begun under the fledgling

Governorship of that icon of the American Right, Ronald Reagan, when in 1970 Moe Camacho,

then President of the California Correctional Officers Association (now the California

Correctional Peace Officers Association) called for the creation of maximum security prisons

separate from the rest of the prison system to house politically radical inmates in isolation from

both other inmates and from the general public, while testifying before the US Congress House

of Representative Committee of the Judiciary, a call Reagan himself echoed again in 1972.[259]

Fulfilling Camacho and Reagan's dream, the nightmare of indefinite segregated isolation

is widespread in prisons throughout the United States today. The ostensible rationales for

taking inmates out of the general population and putting them in Ad Seg units varies wildly

from state to state and institution to institution, as correctional staff and administrators enjoy

wide latitude in their discretionary authority to manage inmate populations. Research

presented by the Vera Institute of Justice in 2012 found that in the four states that were willing

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[258] Brown, Cambier and Agha 2011; Jacobson 2012
[259] Cummins 1994

to provide data (CDCR refused) less than 5% of Ad Seg prisoners were moved to Ad Seg units for actually having committed an act of violence.[260] Most Ad Seg inmates were moved to those units ostensibly as punishment for minor rule violations, insolence, alleged prison gang membership, etc.

While CDCR has refused to provide data on the administration of the SHU program, any claim that the SHU program has reduced serious violence in CDCR facilities as a whole is rather specious when considering CDCR's own data. As Graph 6-6 clearly shows, the peak year for the rate of assaults with a weapon in CDCR facilities was 1984. The rate of assaults with a weapon then plummeted until 1990 to less than half of what it had been in 1984. As the rate of assaults with a weapon had already been halved in 1989 when Pelican Bay opened from where they had been in 1984, it makes little empirical sense to assert that the SHU program could take any of the credit for the reduction in the rate of serious violence in CDCR facilities, when the bulk of the reduction in the rate of serious violence occurred prior to the opening of Pelican Bay in 1989. In fact the rate of assaults with a weapon bottomed out from 1990-91 and then crept back up in 1992 and 1993, so empirically speaking, the opening of the SHU program actually escalated the rate of assaults with a weapon in the ensuing years after it opened rather than reduced them, if anything. As Graph 7-6 clearly shows, another sharp decline in the rate of weapon assaults would begin in 1993, the year the Mexican Mafia formalized its control over the prison system and South Side affiliated barrio gangs in Southern California.

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[260] Agha 2012

In the wake of the war lost to the Mexican Mafia and with most if not all of their members either killed, in protective custody, or housed permanently in solitary confinement in the SHU program, the BGF was apparently never able to achieve hegemony over a black inmate population that had been declining in its proportion of the overall inmate population since the late 1980s (see Graph 6-2). If there are significant BGF members active outside of CDCR facilities and serving as leaders of the various Crip and Blood gangs in Los Angeles, it is the best kept secret in the history of American crime, because there has not been a single successful BGF targeted prosecution outside of carceral facilities in over twenty years and every Crip or Blood gang member and/or ex-convict I've interviewed, formally and informally, denies to the man that there is anything like the over-arching structure that governs Sureno affiliated gang members in carceral environments in California. Crip, Blood and Bay Area blacks have continued to make up the majority of black inmates in the CDCR system, but black inmates are ever the minority in the overall CDCR population since the early 1990s, and all indications are that they lack the kind of systemic organizational structure that Mexican Mafia affiliated South Sider inmates enjoy. In contrast, the Mexican Mafia emerged from the war with the BGF with virtually unchallenged and universally recognized supremacy over an ever expanding Latino inmate population, most of whom identify as South Siders, a numerical majority that continues to expand through the present day (see Graph 6-2).

Before continuing it is worth making a point concerning Graph 6-2. While the data for this graph is by race, we must keep in mind that this is according to the primordial definition of racial identity, not the culturally determined racial gang identities discussed in chapter 4. Some

proportion of each primordial racial group identifies with a different culturally racialized gang

faction. While it would behoove CDCR to keep statistics on which racialized gang faction each

inmate is aligned with, without that data we cannot know what proportion of each group

identifies with a faction that does not align with their primordial racial identity. However, I

would suggest that by far the most common is white inmates who grew up in Southern

California barrio communities and identify as South Siders when they go to prison.

Correspondingly without that data we cannot know what proportion of the overall Hispanic

population identifies as South Sider versus Norteno. What is apparent from my interviews is

that every respondent I interviewed formally and/or informally, whether Sureno, Crip or Blood

affiliated, report that South Siders outnumber all other factions by at least two to one in both

CDCR and Los Angeles County Jail facilities, with very few exceptions.

> In the LA County jail and the pen it's improportionate numbers. The Mexican race, and when I say the
> Mexican race it includes the Guatemalans, it includes the El Salvadoreans, it includes everyone South
> Sider, and it also includes the whites (who identify as South Sider). So in jail you have the numbers are
> very unproportionate. Sort of like maybe 70 to 30. So when they feel like doing what they want to do,
> they'll do it.
> WS Rolling 20's Neighborhood Bloods, 50's

Some black respondents even claim they have been outnumbered by South Siders by ratios of

ten to one or more in some CDCR and County Jail facilities. This is a numerical advantage that

must have been increasing since the mid-1990s, just as the overall Hispanic population has

been growing both in CDCR facilities and in California as a whole. As such it is important to keep in mind that this is a demographics of culturally defined racialized gang affiliation, not just a demographics of primordial racial categories alone.

In the waning months of 1993, and in the wake of the passing (of natural causes) of one of the organization's most influential and respected members, Mr. Joe "Cocoliso" Morgan, the Mexican Mafia embarked on a new chapter in its history, pursuing Mr. Morgan's grand vision of formalizing *Eme* control over Southern California barrio gangs, both in carceral environments and in their communities. This program of formalized Sureno solidarity was not necessarily imposed on an unwilling population. Many if not most gang members in Southern California barrios saw that South Sider solidarity in carceral environments would assure their dominance over and protection from rival racialized gang factions while incarcerated, and since all gang members could expect to be incarcerated at some point in their lives, that was a benefit which they could all enjoy, whether or not they ever achieved the status required to be officially inducted into *La Eme*. It is also important to recognize that members of the Mexican Mafia were the most highly respected and influential members of their respective street gangs, and as such their leadership and decisions were largely deferred to by rank and file street gang members and inmates who idolized these men. *Emeros* had fought a war for control of prison yards, during the course of which many of them had been killed or seriously wounded, sacrifices that were not left unappreciated by those who enjoyed the fruits of their struggle. Those who were inspired by these men's courage and conviction in the war they had fought

with the BGF were more than happy to be granted formal affiliation with *La Eme*, even if they couldn't become inducted members themselves. Those who were not so happy to accept *Eme* leadership and chose to resist could be easily dealt with because there is one thing that is assured for every gang member, and that is being incarcerated. Any who dare to openly oppose the Mexican Mafia are virtually guaranteed to pay for it with their lives on the mainline in county jail and state prison facilities in California. The only outlet to avoid that fate is to go into protective custody while incarcerated, a fate thought worse than death for many hard core gang members who have nothing left to live for but their honor.

Public policy makers are as much to blame for these circumstances as anyone is. As American policy makers on both sides of the political spectrum engaged in what criminologists Natasha Frost and Todd Clear have called a "grand social experiment in incarceration",[261] incarceration rates in the US rose sharply from the early 1980s to the present and have stayed at very high levels since then with little fluctuation (see Graph 6-7), a policy both of the major political parties in the US have supported for over three decades. As shown in Graph 6-1, this exponential increase in the prison population was mirrored in California as well. The United States, the supposed leader of the free world, now has the dubious distinction of incarcerating its citizens at a higher rate than any country on the planet.[262]

While we are still in the midst of this grand social experiment in incarceration, it is possible to recognize that when becoming incarcerated is an expected outcome for residents of barrio and ghetto communities, whatever inmate group dominates carceral environments will

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[261] Frost and Clear 2009
[262] Walmsley 2011

have an unparalleled ability to project its authority both in carceral environments as well as on

the streets, because if there's one thing that is certain in most every gang member's criminal

career, it is that they will be incarcerated at some point in their lives. America's grand social

experiment in incarceration has reinforced and magnified that social fact. While changing

demographics and a cross-racial war in the prisons led to the rise of the Mexican Mafia as the

dominant group in California's carceral facilities, America's grand social experiment in

incarceration enabled them to project that power onto the streets of Los Angeles and other

cities throughout Southern California and beyond.
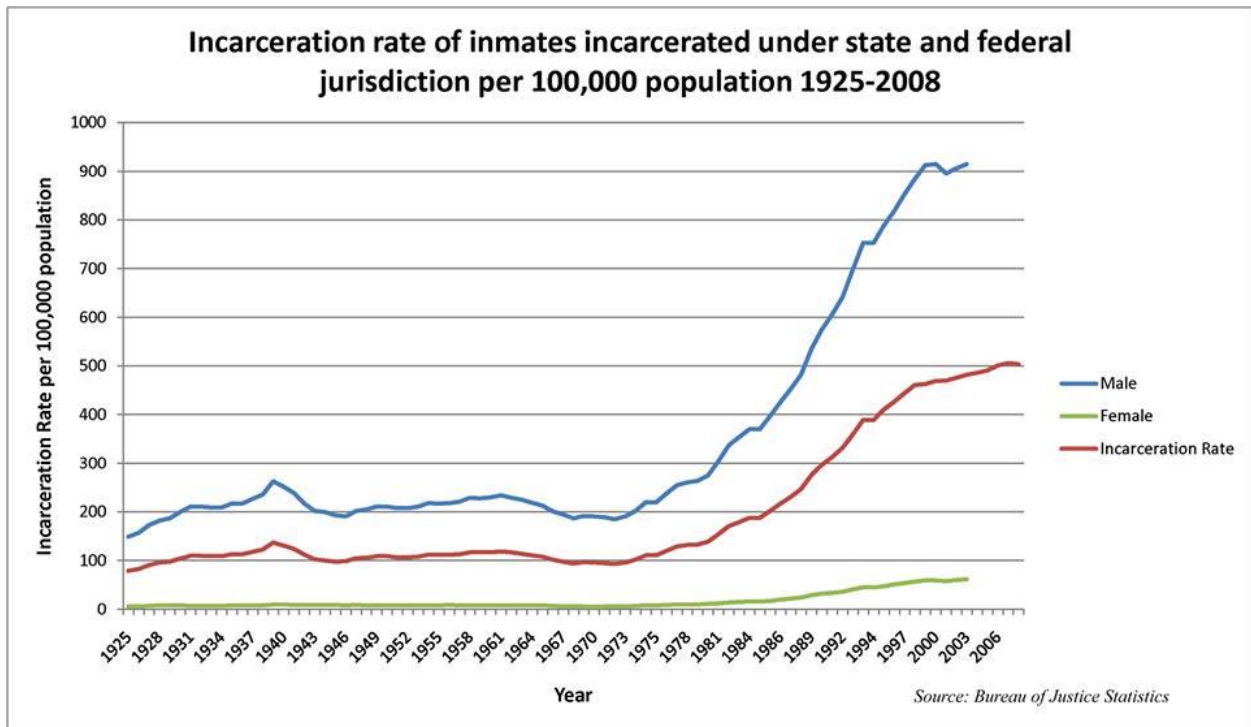
Graph 6-7 United States Incarceration Rate per 100,000 Population 1925-2008, BJS

In 1993 *La Eme* held meetings in parks throughout Southern California, which were attended by ranking members of nearly every major barrio gang in Southern California.[263] The informal South Sider/Sureno identity that had developed organically in CDCR facilities since the 1970s was formalized at these meetings as barrio gang members from throughout Southern California were informed that they would be compelled to set aside their inter-gang neighborhood beefs while incarcerated and form one unified faction, writing a number 13, for the 13th letter of the alphabet "M", after the name of their gang from that day forward (if they were not already) as a sign of allegiance with the Mexican Mafia.[264] Gang members were informed of a number of policies, known as *reglas*, which would be enforced in jails, prisons and on the streets. These policies were also disseminated throughout carceral facilities in California. Violators could expect to be "green-lighted" and members of their gang who were incarcerated would be subject to various levels of assault from a simple beating to outright murder. It is worth defining what it means to have a "green-light" in the world of prison gang politics. There are in fact different levels of "green-light" that can be imposed, from a simple beating, to a "hard candy", which requires the subject to be murdered on sight. However, the most common forms of discipline are the assignment of "burpees", an exercise that can be quite painful if repeated a thousand times, or a simple "court check" (a physical beating without weapons) administered by fellow inmates for minor to medium inmate rule violations.

For the purpose of this analysis, policies implemented concerning African-Americans in carceral environments are particularly relevant. One of the *reglas* instituted in 1993 was to

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[263] Blatchford 2008
[264] Morales 2013

forbid social contact and trade with blacks in carceral environments. They were forbidden from exchanging food, shop items, and dealing drugs or other contraband with black inmates. South Siders were also forbidden from engaging in any substantive social interactions with blacks in carceral environments. In the SHU program, black inmates were "green-lighted" such that Sureno affiliated gang members are under standing orders to assault black SHU inmates with a weapon whenever they get the chance to do so. Mexican members of black gangs were also given the "hard candy" as targets to be engaged with a weapon at the first chance possible. On all other yards South Siders were given standing orders to never allow another South Sider to engage in a fair one on one fight with someone from another faction, be it Black, White or Northerner. From 1993 onwards, any physical conflict that would occur between opposing racialized gang factions would require that all members of both factions be involved in the violence. Particularly when involved in a fight with Blacks or Northerners, South Siders are required to attack their rivals with a weapon, if weapons are available. Simple beatings are reserved for intra-group discipline, whereas the use of weapons is the norm in inter-group fights.

This dynamic is plainly apparent in Graphs 6-5 and 6-6, where one can clearly see that from 1993 onwards, assaults without a weapon increased dramatically both in rate and sheer number, reflecting the rise in disciplinary beatings administered to those who were guilty of violating the new formalized rule structure imposed on inmates by one another. In contrast, the rate of assaults with a weapon collapsed after the Mexican Mafia's war with the BGF was effectively won and inter-racial violence presumably became less common in CDCR facilities.

While data has of yet not been available to determine the affiliations of suspects and victims in incidents of inter-inmate violence, I would think it a safe bet that a significant proportion of the weapon assaults that have occurred since 1993 have been within and not between racialized prison gang factions, representing either severe violations of inmate rules that were punished by the offender being "whacked" (assaulted with an edged weapon), or intra-group conflicts as members of prison gang factions politic against one another for dominance within their respective organizations.

While inmates in CDCR facilities had self-segregated themselves by racial faction for generations, that segregation was formalized in 1993 with the rise to power of *La Eme*. This is what I would argue effectively constitutes what sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant have termed, a *racial formation project*.[265] While Omi and Winant conceived of racial formation projects on a more macro level, I would suggest that the model can also be applied on a more micro level such as the effects of policies enforced by prison gangs, which effectively operate as parallel governments in the society inmates in carceral environments inhabit. By defining culturally differential gang factions in racial terms, and creating formal structural boundaries between differential racialized gang identities, prison gangs like the Mexican Mafia and Black Guerilla Family have socially constructed an amalgamation of racial and gang identities in carceral settings. These amalgamated identities in turn frame racialized gang identities on the streets of Los Angeles and beyond. I argue that this fits the definition of a racial formation project presented by Omi and Winant as, "(a) process of historically situated *projects* in which

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[265] Omi and Winant 1994

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human bodies and social structure are represented and organized."[266] The ramifications of these new policies was an unprecedented division between Black and South Side affiliated inmates in carceral facilities, and between Sureno and Crip and Blood gang communities on the streets of Los Angeles and beyond.

6.3 La Coda de la Pinta/ The Code of the Prison

Prior to 1993 inmates in CDCR facilities had always self-segregated themselves by race to some degree, and while the kind of inter-racial inter-inmate violence that occurred in the 1980s was not commonly known in prior decades, there had always been an air of tension and occasional assaults, stabbings and murders among and between different racialized inmate factions. However, it is also important to remember that these conflicts were localized to specific yards in specific facilities at specific times. Inmates in other units could interact and cohabitate across racial boundaries if they chose to, without any fear of retribution or loss of status. Some respondents who were old enough to have done time in the 1970s and early 1980s, but who did their time on lower level yards and county facilities recounted that there were none of the rules governing racial divisions in carceral environments that started in 1993 and they uniformly attribute the emergence of those rules to that time period.

> Q: With the time you've done between different cases, I mean you done a lot of time over the course of
> 25 years here and there, what are the rules for interacting with Latino inmates? How have the politics

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[266] Omi and Winant 1993 p. 55-56 (Authors' emphasis)

changed over that time? Back in the day was there the split there is today between the South Side and the

Blacks?

A: No I didn't experience the split until 1993 or 94. I went to jail for warrants less than 30 days, but that's

when I first started experiencing the split and the politics and all that.

Q: So in the 70's and 80's Mexicans were allowed to be around blacks?

A: Yeah eat together all that, share whatever, "Here you want my chicken, here gimme that," it was never

a problem. Use the same facilities, all that. Might have a Mexican in the cell with you, everybody was all

together.

Q: Since 93 what are the rules now?

A: The rules now are there are phones that are designated for Mexicans and showers, and blacks have

their own. And you can't even acknowledge individuals that you might have known growing up, can't even

acknowledge them. Give em a nod and a smile and just keep walking. But definitely can't share, can't eat

together, can't be using the phone and be talking to somebody (on the phone) and be like "Aye man he

wanna talk to you too man."

Q: Is that only on the Mexican side? Or do blacks enforce those rules too?

A: Well blacks enforce it only as reactionary to the rules that the Mexicans have to avoid a riot. So we

don't wanna walk through bunks, interact, we want to stay by the rules that have been set up already so

that we don't get into it with other races.

WS Rolling 20's Neighborhood Bloods, 50's

Other respondents who did their time on higher level yards where the Mexican Mafia/BGF war

was raging in the 1980s had a very different experience, as racial hostilities on Level IV yards

were commonplace and as such, the different racial factions enforced a rigid discipline of racial

division on their members.

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Q: Are those rules pervasive throughout the system that you can't interact across racial lines?

A: Right, you can't, "Hi and bye" and that's it.

Q: That's it, there's no exception?

A: No exceptions. If you do, that's the death sentence.

Q: You were serving time before those rules came into effect? Like how was it when you first went to prison?

A: I was…it was like that when I first went to prison.

Q: Oh it was?

A: You couldn't, you couldn't smoke with another race, that was the death sentence, eat with another race that was the death sentence. You can talk, you can hold a conversation and walk the track all day long, no problem with that, know what I'm sayin? Even now, like that's as far as it goes.

…

Q: You know how there's that rule that if somebody in your race gets into it everybody has to get involved?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did that rule exist when you first went to prison?

A: Yes it did, still do.

Q: So there was no such thing as a fair one between people of two different races even back then?

A: Naw.

ES Avalon Gangster Crips, 50's

The point of course is that prior to 1993 there were no system-wide rules governing the boundaries between black and Southern California Hispanic inmates, whereas after that time a strictly delineated boundary was universally established between racialized gang factions in prisons and county jails. Unlike the informal "code of the streets" suggested by Elijah Anderson

in his classic ethnographic piece of the same name, I would argue the establishment of this "*coda de la pinta*" or "code of the prison" constitutes a racial formation project enforced by the inmates on one another both within and between factions, hence the rise in assaults without weapons from 1993 onwards shown in Graphs 7-5 and 7-6, as inmates regulate one another's behavior with punitive beatings for violations of the rules they are compelled to abide by.

Q: What are the rules for interacting with black fools when you were locked up?

A: You sleep in different areas, different showering, no sharing food.

Q: Are you allowed to go and talk to black people?

A: Uh no… pretty much, well there's no sharing of food I know that. I'll never forget when in the county one time, giving someone some fuckin I don't remember what it was, some candy and getting into shit because of that. Just learning right away that you don't do that.

Q: Did you get court checked for it?

A: I didn't get checked, but they talked to me about it. If it happened again…

Q: How are the rules enforced?

A: Yeah you can't even share food, even if you have leftover food you have to throw it away. You rather throw it away than give it to them.

Q: Were you allowed to hustle with black fools when you were locked up?

A: No, no business.

Q: So basically you weren't allowed to have any contact with them at all?

A: No not at all.

Q: So what happens if you break the rules and you do have contact with them?

A: You're gonna get checked. You're gonna get a beat down you know. That's bad man.

WS White Fence 13, 40's

The structure (or lack thereof) of the different racialized gang factions are in fact very different from one another. Each faction has a "rep" in every housing unit in the CDCR and county jail systems who operates as a leader for the members of his faction in that particular unit. The rep is typically the inmate with the most prison time served on the highest level CDCR facilities, but can also be someone whose personal reputation or rank within their respective faction makes them the obvious choice to be rep. When each rep leaves a unit, he "hands the keys" over to the next rep and thereby the structure of inmate factions is maintained indefinitely regardless of who is in charge of any specific unit at any given time.

The major difference between South Siders and Blacks is that for South Siders, the rep represents an authority beyond himself. Like an officer in the military, those who would ignore his orders risk not only his retribution, but the wrath of the entire organization, as they could be "green-lighted" for their refusal to carry out the orders of their leaders further up the chain of command. Whereas in contrast, the Black rep is more pirate ship captain than military officer, his authority is contingent on the acceptance of those under his authority and not necessarily enforced by any authority above him. The Black rep has much less authority than his South Side counterpart to tell anyone under his purview what to do, because in accordance with African American cultural mores, every black inmate is respected as "his own man". The Black rep cannot give orders by fiat, but rather must garner the consensus of the black inmates under his command in order to effect any substantive course of action. If they disagree with him and he is unwilling to bend to their consensus, mutiny may very well be the result. If he is

deposed, there are no consequences for the usurpers beyond his own personal ability to retaliate.

Another factor that affects the ability and willingness of Black reps to discipline black inmates under their purview is the fact that black inmates are deeply outnumbered by South Siders in virtually all carceral environments both in the CDCR and LA County Jail system. With less members in their faction to begin with, and under constant threat of attack from other factions, Black reps are understandably extremely reluctant to discipline their members for anything but the most dire transgressions. In contrast, with a super majority in most facilities, South Side reps can easily afford to punish their members for rule violations, even if that means the recipient of the punishment "rolls it up" or "PC's up" and decides to go into protective custody in order to avoid being the victim of a violent attack by his comrades for having violated the *reglas*. As such, South Siders commonly check the paperwork of incoming South Sider inmates to make sure they do not have a history of snitching or have any convictions for rape or child molestation, all of which are "hard candy" offenses according to South Side *reglas*. Whereas black inmates rarely if ever check one another's paperwork, first because every black inmate is respected as "his own man", but also because if a black inmate does have a past that would require he be assaulted and made to "roll it up", other blacks don't want to know because they need every man they can get to supplement their numbers vis-à-vis South Siders.

However, while there are definite rules that govern the behavior of South Sider inmates, and black inmates to a lesser degree, it should not be assumed that every rep in any faction uniformly enforces all of the rules consistently. There could be a wide degree of discretionary

latitude in what kind of contact between blacks and South Siders is allowed as "hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil" is the de-facto program in some units at some times, depending on who the reps are.

Q: When you're locked up what are the rules for interacting with black inmates?

A: Respect. That's the main rule, respect. You could talk to them, but I can't eat with them. I can't eat after them, but I go talk to them, if they ask for something I could give it to them. No sharing no water, no sharing no coffee, none of that shit.

Q: How about hustling? Are you allowed to hustle with them?

A: Naw I can't hustle with them. I can't serve them. Well, like I said it varies on people. In some places you could do it, some places you can't.

Q: Is that based on who the rep is?

A: Yeah. Some fools will be like "no", but then some other fools will be like "no", but then under the table you could do it. And then some fools be like, "Fuck it, money's money. Go for it!"

Q: So it's just a crap shoot of who the rep happens to be and what his take is on it?

A: Yeah. It all depends on the person.

SC 38th Street, 20's

Due to the system-wide structure of the South Side, a South Sider who breaks the rules or a rep who allows the rules to be broken, could pay for it further down the road if someone higher up on the totem pole finds out about it and decides to "green-light" the offending party for their transgression. That punishment could be very serious indeed.

Q: When you are locked up what are the rules for interacting with black inmates? Is it stricter than on the streets? What are the lines that can't be crossed?

A: It's strict bro its strict. Well I know in Pelican Bay bro, we couldn't even, we couldn't play sports with em, we couldn't gamble with em, and we couldn't do drug transactions with em. But a lot of homeys were getting stabbed because they would still do it. They would try to be low key about it, but you know everything comes out in the wash bro! Yeah they would get whacked homes (assaulted with an edged weapon), cause in the Bay, it's like you don't really get checked, like they don't do that in Pelican Bay. They just fuckin stab you bro! There's no warning.

SS Kansas Street 13, 30's

While black inmates may lack the systemic structure that South Siders enjoy, similar rules are generally applied among black inmates as well, although the enforcement mechanism is more informal social consensus than formal organizational structure.

Q: When you're in prison what are the rules for interacting with Latinos? Are there rules?

A: Yeah there are rules, there's always politics. We can't like play cards with em, can't play basketball with em, can't do anything with em really. Basically all you can do is talk to em. You can't deal with em, you can't deal drugs, well you can deal drugs to them, but they can't owe you and you can't owe them. No fronting, no credit. Um were not allowed to go their handball court, they not allowed to go on ours, they basketball court and ours you know.

Q: Do you think that's mutual on both sides?

A: Yeah it's the same on both sides. That's been the rules since before, you know, forever. Before I even…

Q: So if someone is breaking one of the rules, like if a black is fronting or getting fronted from a Mexican, the blacks are gonna regulate him, and the Mexicans are gonna regulate their guy?

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A: Yeah that's how it go. The white (staff) get em both off the yard. In prison it's some cold politics. Ha ha!

SC East Coast Crips, 20's

The desire to keep contact between members on both sides to a minimum is generally acknowledged on all sides to be for the purpose of avoiding conflicts between them that might arise out of excessive contact, particularly gambling or trade in store items, contraband and narcotics. With standing rules for all sides such that any conflict must involve all members of all factions involved, it is understandable that inmates enforce a strict regime of self-segregation in order to avoid the kind of blood shed that can result from something as simple as a petty drug or gambling debt. That is a sentiment shared across racial lines.

Q: You think those rules exist primarily to avoid conflicts?

A: That's basically what it is, I mean those rules are there to avoid conflict. I mean just based on money, I mean, most of the people that get injured in prison, open up a career in crime is because, you know the Blacks it's just so different, it's, they're so unorganized where, where if our people owe a debt to another person they'll get dealt with. You don't pay that money they're gonna get dealt with, the Blacks don't work like that, if a person owes you money, well fuck he owes you money, fuck you, and then that's where the riots kick off!

NELA Frog Town 13, 30's

Q: What about hustling is hustling accepted?

A: Yes. Yeah you could do that you could buy, certain times and certain places they eliminate that if there was some history of bad business we go, "Aye man we ain't doing that here." They do that just to keep the bullshit down, they not doing it because it's a, we don't want you to make money with them…

Q: They're just doing it because if something goes wrong there'll be a huge riot or something?

A: Yes exactly.

Watts Bounty Hunter Bloods, 20's

6.4 Race Riots

One of the new rules established by the Mexican Mafia in 1993 forbade fair fights between combatants across racial lines. Any fight between combatants across racial lines would automatically involve all members of both sides from that time onwards. The reason for this was that supposedly fair fights between sole combatants were often anything but, as physically larger black inmates could disrespect smaller Hispanic inmates with the impunity of knowing that the only consequence would be that they would have to fight the Hispanic inmate they had disrespected, a fight they often knew they were likely to win. One of the founding members of one of the major gangs in the Rampart area, now in his early 50s, described such an experience to me in an informal interview at a barbecue at Angel's point in Elysian Park, overlooking Dodger Stadium and the Downtown skyline on one of those glorious days Los Angeles is known for, drinking micheladas with a mariachi band playing corridos for us at $5 a song in the background, and the sweet savory scent of asada and peppers on the grill drifting through the cool autumn air – a long way from the prison life he once knew.

Fuck dog, when I first went to the pen, when I first got locked up on my case when I was like 18 years old

in the mid-80s, I got into it with this tinto right? And the homeys talked to their side and they told me I

gotta fight this mayate one on one, but this motherfucker is like 6 foot 6, 250 pounds and I'm barely 150

pounds soaking wet. It was fucked up! But what could I say? I had to fight that fool you know? They made

us go into the broom closet and we got down homes! But I'll say it homes, that big ol' tinto knocked me

out. I was straight unconscious homes, on the ground knocked out cold. That wasn't right perito. That

always stuck in my mind since then.

WS _____ 13, 50s

If the Mexican Mafia and the South Side were going to protect their members and

dominate carceral facilities, they had to use the advantage of their solidarity and numerical

superiority to prevent individual members of their faction from succumbing to individualized

attacks by members of other factions. Thus was born the rule that if one South Sider fights with

someone of another racial gang faction, everyone fights. Other factions quickly learned the

hard way that they could no longer single out individual South Siders for attack without being

counter-attacked by all the other South Siders right there on the spot. In response the other

factions generally assumed the same policy. Thus it is almost infallible that any time members

of rival racialized gang factions get into a physical altercation in a carceral environment, a full

blown riot will result in a savage battle between all the members of both factions using

whatever weapons they have at their disposal.

This isn't the informal "code of the streets" that sociologist Elijah Anderson discovered

in his study of marginalized African American neighborhoods in Philadelphia in the 1990s.[267]

This is "*la coda de la pinta*", "the code of the prison", a formal regime of universal rules, which

require that any affront, real or perceived, be responded to with violence, and that any violence

across racial gang lines involve all members of both factions. It is a rule born of necessity, in an

environment where any inmate who does not respond to personal or group slights with

immediate violence or does not follow the rules imposed on him by other inmates,

automatically becomes a target for violence themselves. Thus, in a perverse confluence of

circumstances, inmates are required to respond with violence any time they are in a situation

where the rules require a violent response, in order to preserve their own safety so that they

are the perpetrator and not the victim of whatever violence occurs. Individuals are compelled

to respond to personal affronts with violence, and all members of any factions involved are

compelled to join in pitched battle, thus making any individualized conflict across racial gang

lines merely a prelude to a full blown race riot between opposing racialized gang factions. Thus

any disrespect directed from one inmate to another, is not merely a petty verbal insult that

might be easily ignored if not for the ego of the offended party, but rather is a genuine physical

threat and willful provocation to violence. This is a social fact that anyone who has ever worked

or served time in a carceral facility in California knows well.

Of the 87 respondents who had been previously incarcerated, the vast majority, 72 of

them, had participated in at least one race riot during their incarceration. A Sureno and a Crip

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[267] Anderson 1999

respondent who had spent most of their time on Level 4 yards during the Mexican Mafia/BGF

war in the 1980s reported participating in somewhere around 40 or 50 race riots while

incarcerated. I don't disbelieve them given the history of inter-racial prison gang violence in

CDCR facilities during that era, as discussed above. However, the mean number of riots

respondents reported being involved in was 6.75 and the median was 5. Logistic regression

analysis 6-1 reveals that not unexpectedly, the amount of time respondents had served had a

positive effect on the number of race riots they had participated in at the $P<.05$ level.

Respondents with the most time served had been involved in the most race riots, and those

who had not been involved in race riots were among the respondents with the least time

served.

There are number of reasons a race riot can break out. In addition to drug transactions

and drug debts discussed in the previous section, one of the most common causes is poor

hygiene. Another of the *reglas* South Siders enforce on one another is a strict regime of

personal hygiene. South Siders are required to be bathed and groomed at all times, with fresh

shaves, showers and clean clothes on. If they exercise they are expected to shower and change

clothes before returning to their bunk, if possible. However, hygiene is something that is rarely

if ever enforced among black inmates, as the kind of cultural mores examined in chapter 4

differ and each individual is respected by his peers "as his own man". As such, some black

inmates have a high degree of personal hygiene and others have a very low degree of personal

hygiene. The unbearable stench of another man's body odor in close quarters can easily lead to

a confrontation that erupts in a full blown race riot, especially where inmates are housed in dorm style living spaces.

Q: Have you ever been involved in a race riot in county?

A: Oh yeah, numerous ones.

Q: What caused them to go off?

A: Just numerous things you know. Like I said fuckin hygiene, hygiene is one of the biggest causes of riots popping off cause you know, one of your bunkies, if he's black, he fuckin stinks right? You know you're sleeping right next to him, or he's above or below you and the motherfucker smells you know. Motherfucker won't shower for weeks and it's like you gotta be there and smell that shit. So you go to their people and tell them, "Oh you gotta check this fool, you gotta make him take a shower", and alotta times they don't wanna do it so that would just pop shit off right there you know. That's one of the main reasons shit pops off in there.

ES State Street 13, 40's

Race riots also happen over competition for communal resources like a television set in LA County Jail, where different racial gang factions don't have separate day rooms. All it takes is for someone to change the channel while other inmates are watching the TV for a fight to break out, which leads to a full blown race riot in the unit if the combatants are from rival racialized gang factions.

Q: How many race riots have you been in while you were locked up?

A: Like 5 or 6.

Q: What sets it off?

A: Yeah something like changing the TV… I've seen more riots over changing the TV channel when other people are watching a different channel, and it just cracks off!

NELA Toonerville 13, 40's

Another common cause of race riots is inmates inconsiderately making noise when other inmates are trying to sleep. With different cultural mores between black and Latino gang members as to socially acceptable volume levels as discussed in chapter 4, black inmates disturbing *Sureno* inmates with noise, loud talking or loud music is occasionally a proximate cause of race riots. Even other black inmates are often incensed by their comrade's lack of respect for their neighbors and the problems that disrespect can provoke with other factions.

Q: How many different race riots do you think you've been in?

A: Man…

Q: If you had to put a number to it?

A: At least 30, 40 of em. Shit I been involved in a lot of em…

Q: What do you think usually causes them?

A: Stupidity, every single time it was stupidity, it was never behind…

Q: Somebody disrespecting somebody for no reason?

A: Yeah, no reason, somebody that had their music real loud, early in the morning, I mean, don't nobody wanna hear your damn music at 4 o'clock in the morning! I don't give a damn if it's Tupac or whoever, I don't wanna hear Tupac at 2 in the morning! I got a radio in my cell, so if I wanna hear Tupac or whatever, I'll put it on my cell, but I know a lot of em, at least about 5, 6 people playing their music loud. People

hollering over too. There's people trying to sleep, you know and it's like damn, and I never started one in

my life, but I don't know how many times I been in em behind that shit…

ES Avalon Gangster Crips, 50's

Other forms of disrespect are also common causes of race riots, such as intentionally or

unintentionally bumping into someone or stepping on someone's shoe and refusing to

apologize, either out of pride or because they purposefully intended to provoke a violent

confrontation.

Q: What do you think are the most common causes of race riots in the pen?

A: Ignorance, a lot of the ignorance comes from the blacks. They don't know how to say sorry if they

fucked up. Instead of apologizing, they'll just sock you up. They'll take flight on you before they actually sit

down and say, "You know what I fucked up." They're just trouble makers, they're very prideful.

Q: You think in most cases its blacks that start it, more often than South Siders?

A: Oh yeah for sure it was always them that started it.

WS Rockwood Street 13, 40's

Other South Siders acknowledge that with greater numbers, in some cases South Siders will

provoke conflicts with black inmates, knowing that if a riot breaks out the blacks will end up on

the short side of the stick, as they are deeply outnumbered by South Siders.

Q: How many race riots you think you been in?

A: A lot of em, more than a dozen

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Q: What causes them?

A: Just, just disrespectful, disrespect over, over anything. It could be just a real quick fight that leads to a riot, because the homeys you know once one fights, they all go out. So it could be that, or it could be the homeys just starting shit too, cause I seen that. One time we were in the dorm and they just wanted to start shit, and just get it on the dorm and "boom, boom, boom, boom", but I think sometimes the riots are started by the homeys.

Q: You think so?

A: Yep, I would think so, my incarceration, my time doing time, I think the homeboys have, homeys were more of the ones that pushed the issue. They push the race issue more.

Q: They'll just disrespect Blacks just to provoke something, to get it started?

A: Or just don't get along with them at all you know what I mean. Just kinda be mean towards them, you know what I mean for no apparent reason. I mean I wasn't like that you know, they didn't bother me. I won't say nothing you know what I mean, they're not bothering me. I wouldn't go up there trying to look for trouble, cause those dudes end up getting messed up anyway. It comes back to you no matter what.

ES Big Hazard 13, 40's

Those who needlessly provoke petty conflicts that lead to a race riot are often singled out later for retribution by their own faction for having unnecessarily provoked a race riot in which other homeboys were killed or seriously injured, and narcotic and contraband retail operations were disrupted. The truth is that few inmates on either side appreciate malicious trouble makers. Older more experienced convicts typically look at youngsters who needlessly provoke conflicts with disdain and contempt. In some cases parties on both sides are guilty of provoking one another into an altercation that they know every other member of both factions has to take part in.

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The one started by I would say the immaturity of both sides really. It was about 20 blacks and about 60 Mexicans, and the two reps kept talking the entire day but one immature black and one immature Mexican kept looking at each other like, "What?! What?!" you know, and eventually that led to the one Mexican dude said, "You know what we been playing with this all day," so he yells out "La Raza!!" and they came through and that was it. The youngsters just kept fucking with each other and the Mexican was like, "You can't control your boy man" and the black dude was like, "Naw it's your boy that's trippin". He said, "You know what we been going back and forth blaming each other all day so fuck it, let's just do this."

WS Rolling 20's Neighborhood Bloods, 50's

In some cases, the vagaries of mere chance alone create circumstances that lead to a race riot. With inmate prison rules requiring an immediate violent response to any slight, real or perceived, intentional or not, even an accidental disrespect can result in a full blown race riot.

Q: How many race riots have you been in?

A: I'd say, in total, I wanna say five racial riots against Blacks.

Q: Do you know exactly what had started each of them?

A: I just remember one of em was this black guy spit, and the way the wind was blowing it just up and boom! It landed on somebody else. Mother Nature kicked that mother fucker off! Ha ha ha!

NELA Frog Town 13, 30's

However in some cases, the eruption of hostilities along racial lines is not at all due to chance. With an organizational structure that permeates the entire CDCR and LA County Jail

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systems, South Side leaders are capable of declaring a "green-light" on blacks throughout the system if they so choose, whereas black inmates lack the systemic organizational structure to carry out anything more than a localized attack on South Side affiliated inmates in a specific facility. While it is rare, having only happened roughly half a dozen times since the war with the BGF ended, the Mexican Mafia does retain the ability to "green-light" black inmates as a group, setting off race riots in units throughout the CDCR and LA County Jail systems as South Siders carry out the orders of their superiors and attack black inmates wherever and whenever they get the opportunity while the "green-light" stands in effect. In the rare case that this does occur, it is a unique opportunity for young gang members eager to "earn their stripes" to carry out hits on rival inmates in order to increase their standing in the prison gang status hierarchy. As such, some South Siders welcome the news of a "green-light" on Blacks as an opportunity to "put in work" without trepidation at any potential political repercussions.

A recent spate of race riots that rocked the LA County Jails and some CDCR facilities in 2005 and 2006 was due to the extension of a street gang conflict into the county jail and prison systems over a drug deal gone bad when a "green-light" was put on Crip gang members as punishment for members of the East Coast Crips having absconded with a large quantity of narcotics stolen from members of South Side Florencia 13 in a wholesale level drug deal gone bad that occurred on the streets. With the standing rule that any fight across racial lines involve all members of either racialized gang faction, the result was a series of race riots between black and South Sider inmates in the County Jails and various CDCR facilities.

Q: Were you ever there when a race riot went down? When you were a kid, in the pen?

A: Alotta times.

Q: How many different race riots you think you've been through?

A: Seven of em.

Q: Did you see them when you were in camp?

A: Camp, prison, juvenile, everywhere.

Q: What do you think sets off race riots? Like a disrespect?

A: Naw, like I mean…to be honest I mean most of the time in the county you know, they started because us and the East Coast (Crips) or they started because 18 and the black piss stains (Black P Stones) you know? They got started because one of them Bloods and Crips, you know or 18, 38, anybody you know? Like it started because things like that you know?

Q: So you think in the county it's an extensions of what's going on in the streets?

A: I mean yeah, sometimes you know? Cause something happened in the street you know so in the county you know in the…they send a little wila (kite) to everybody and that shit's gonna crack. That means it's gonna crack you know? It's mandatory you know what I mean? Everybody's just following orders.

SS Florencia 13, 30's

As some degree of dissention in the ranks is ever present, some South Siders who were obligated to get involved in those race riots resent having to go through that level of violence over what they perceived as a street beef that was none of their concern, particularly those who are rivals to Florencia on the streets. As far as they're concerned the gangs involved should have "handled their own shit" instead imposing on other South Siders to carry out hits for their street beef throughout the carceral system.

Q: Have you ever been in a race riot?

A: A couple of em. Yes.

Q: What usually starts them?

A: Pfff man the last one I was in wow! Yeah the last one I was in was in 2005. I don't know if you heard about it when it kicked off in all the counties, prisons and all that. That was because some stupid motherfuckers out here wanted to be gang banging and they take it up in there. So all that shit kicked off and that shit was crazy it was too much.

SC Ghetto Style Criminals 13, 30s

For some of those who are not privy to the gang politics behind these spates of inter-racial violence throughout the prison and jail systems, they hardly seem worth the trouble.

6.5 Correctional Staff Malfeasance

Perhaps the most unfortunate proximate cause of race riots breaking out in many cases is staff provocation. The sad truth is that correctional staff are often the proximate cause of inter-racial violence between inmates in prison and jail facilities throughout the state in the present, just as they have been historically.

Q: Have you ever seen deputies or CO's set up situations?

A: Oh yeah! That shit happens all the time! That shit happens….that shit happens all the time. In county and in prison.

Q: You think it's pervasive throughout the system?

A: Yeah. That's one thing that goes on and is gonna be going on forever. I would say.

Q: Why do you think they do that? For entertainment?

A: Yeah, more likely for that. To see us how the black race and the Hispanic race just destroy ourselves.

ES Longos 13, 20's

Of course the mainstream press and public are familiar with the so-called "Gladiator Fights" staged by CO's in the Corcoran SHU program in the early 1990s, and a number of my respondents were actually personally involved in those incidents, having been put in situations with members of rival inmate factions by CO's who knew full well that prison gang rules require that they attack one another at the first opportunity.

I was in Corcoran when they were betting on us to see who would win, us or the Northerners. I was in Corcoran when they used to let the blacks out with us. They knew that our orders are to whack any black any chance you get. They know that those are our orders and they know that we're gonna follow them.

Q: For that thing that went down in Corcoran, was that only in the SHU that you had to go at the blacks when you could get to them? Cause on yards there's blacks and South Siders on the same yards and…

A: Yeah naw it was only in the SHU homes. It was only in the SHU. Even in the SHU, it was only one black and one Hispanic, or only one Northerner and one Hispanic. They're not supposed to let us out at the same time, but they know that when they do, we're gonna go at it any chance that we get. I used to swallow razor blades, two razor blades, and I used to bring em up homes. The first dude I seen homes and I don't recognize him, I start to slice. You know everyone in your car, so if you don't know him homes, he's an enemy.

ES White Fence 13, 50s

However, the kinds of staged fights the public became aware of when that story broke in the mainstream media are in fact pervasive throughout the CDCR system, and to a lesser extent in LA County Jail facilities, stretching as far back as any of my respondents could recall.

> Q: Did you ever see correctional officers set up fights between blacks and Latinos, like throw fools together where they know it's gonna pop off?
>
> A: Oh yeah when I was at Corcoran State Prison when they were doing that a lot. Like not even just there, but it happens all over.
>
> Q: Do you think that still goes on? Like they still do that kind of thing now?
>
> A: Yeah for sure, whenever. They do it whenever possible for sure.
>
> WS Rockwood Street 13, 40's

Proof of the pervasiveness of the role of staff in provoking race riots between inmates in state prison and county jail facilities lies in the fact that a vast majority of the respondents I formally interviewed who had been previously incarcerated, 75 of 87 respondents, had personally witnessed staff set up fights between inmates. Like participation in race riots, Logistic Regression 6-2 shows that those who had not witnessed staff set up fights between inmates were among the respondents with the least time served in carceral environments, suggesting that staff provocation is a near universal experience for inmates who have served any substantial amount of time in carceral environments in California.

One of the most common ways CO's and deputies can provoke violence between inmates is to "accidentally" open the doors that allow rival inmates access to one another.

When that happens, inmates who could only yell obscenities, threats and insults to one another through the bars that separate them are immediately granted the opportunity to act on those threats, an opportunity they are virtually guaranteed to capitalize on. Therefore, staff who "pop doors" on inmates know very well that by doing so they are provoking a violent incident between members of rival racial gang factions.

> Q: What other things have you seen as far as CO's setting up beef between blacks and Latinos?
> A: Well I would see like when some homeys would be arguing like, "Aye homes you know you're not the only one that lives here you know. You're fucking farting and we're trying to eat homey that's disrespectful," or "We're trying to talk homes and you're yelling we can't even hear each other," and next thing you know the black dude will be like, "Well fuck you then!" and whatever right, and next thing you know, just like magic… both of their doors would pop open bro! Ha ha ha! That shit's not a coincidence. Ha ha ha! They would do that shit a lot bro.
> SS Kansas Street 13, 30's

Another strategy staff can use to arrange for an inmate to be assaulted by other inmates is to "accidentally" put an inmate in a holding tank where his rivals are being held, the modern equivalent of throwing him to the lions. CO's and deputies are well aware that members of rival factions will attack one another at the first opportunity in these circumstances and thus putting an inmate in a cell with his rivals cannot be understood as anything less than an intentional conspiracy to have that inmate assaulted.

Q: Have you ever seen CO's or deputies set up situations where they know shits gonna go down? Like antagonize black and brown to go at it?

A: Yeah

Q: How common would you say that is?

A: Yeah you see it a lot of times. They'll put you in front, or they'll throw you in a black cell. You already know you can't be there. The blacks will be like, "What the fuck's he doing?" as soon as they walk away then you start fighting and then you get maced and they put you to another cell and it's like that.

SC 38th Street, 20's

Still another common tactic employed by malicious staff is to first prime the combatants by spreading rumors, telling each side that the other has it out for them and/or has insulted them, so when the doors do "get popped" any hesitation to attack will be long since evaporated.

Q: Have you ever seen situations where CO's or deputies try and instigate, or like they pop doors on dudes to get them to go at it?

A: Oh yeah! All the time! I was in the county jail and they know us and the Hispanics is going at it, I was at level 9 at the time cause I uh ex-felon with a firearm so they put me up there in the twin towers, and we got the popped doors to let like 2 cells out at a time. So they'll like pop one black cell and he'll come out, and then they accidentally pop two Hispanic doors out…

Q: "Accidentally"? Ha ha ha! (making quotations with fingers)

A: Ha ha! Yeah well at least that's what they say, and you know we fight. Or the guards will come over and tell us, "Hey you know the Hispanics are over there saying this…", the deputies, and then they'll go over there and tell them, "Hey the blacks are over there saying this…"

Q: To get people to go at it?

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A: Yeah

Q: Did you see the same type of thing in prison? Do you think that kind of thing is pervasive throughout the system, or is it just isolated incidents?

A: Yeah I would say throughout the system cause everybody human, it pretty much happen everywhere. You always got a couple CO's who do janky shit.

SC East Coast Crips, 20's

One respondent, a high status *camarada* (validated Mexican Mafia associate) and career convict recently released from prison, emphasized that such staff provocations and staged fights are still occurring to this day, even in the SHU program at Corcoran State Prison, where CDCR officials swore up and down that the "Gladiator Fights" of the early 1990s were an isolated incident and that such malfeasance on the part of CO's was a thing of the past.

Q: What experiences have you had as far as seeing CO's setting up for shit to happen?

A: Ha ha ha! I got you on that one! Check this out, remember that shit up at Corcoran State Prison? They were fuckin unlocking the doors and all that. Well they're still doing it! I was in this last time and I know for a fact they're still doing it. They opened the door two times on me! We were slammed and they opened the door in the hole too. So they're still playing that shit.

Q: Cause you know CDCR wants to say that "Oh that was just an isolated incident at that prison at that time"…

A: It's not isolated! Believe me man, it's still happening. I just got out two months ago and they're still doing it!

ES Clover Street 13, 50's

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Of course CDCR wants the public to believe that such staff malfeasance is a thing of the past, but with respondent after respondent swearing to the continuation of such provocations on the part of CO's throughout the CDCR system, frankly the narrative CDCR would have us believe is hard to swallow. More likely the truth is that staff provocation of inter-racial fights between inmates is both pervasive and systematic throughout the CDCR system to the present day.

LASD employees who staff the Los Angeles County Jails are only slightly better, as they have become increasingly thrust into the public eye by hostile reporting from the Los Angeles Times and other local media outlets in recent years.[268] However, historically the kind of staff provocation that pervades the CDCR system was all too common in LASD facilities in prior generations as well, as numerous respondents who had done time in the County Jails in years past reported in both formal and informal interviews.

> The thing about jail is man the deputies love the racism. It keeps us fighting. So they love it.
>
> Q: How do they encourage it?
>
> A: Oh they definitely encourage it. You know they put people in situations. Just by putting people in cells when they know it's gonna start a problem. You know they know what cell to put someone in. They'll put a black and a Hispanic or a black and a white in a cell together and they know it's gonna cause problems, but it keeps us fighting each other so it's better for them for us to be fighting each other than fighting with them.
>
> WS White Fence 13, 40's

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[268] Kim 2010; Quinones 2010; Quinones, Winston and Mozingo 2013; Beccarra and Winston 2014

In fact there was a time when deputies would regularly assault LA County Jail inmates themselves, a practice known as being "closeted" because deputies would take an inmate into a broom closet or other such discrete space in order to beat them with their fists and/or a two foot long ten pound Maglite flashlight.

> You know I've seen them beat a guy down, like maybe ten cops running to a (cell) block and they had this guy like, like I was in the hole one time right? And like they house us there, I wasn't even in there actually a whole long time for anything bad, it was just that they were housing us there and I happened to see out the gate that the cops were coming in and I didn't know what it was at that time I thought that it was gonna be maybe like a raid or something, like they wanna get all the *fieros*[269] or the drugs or whatever I don't know little pieces of, you know what I mean knives or whatever. But the thing is that they actually came in for one guy and pulled him outta the hole, take him to the shower, put cuffs on him, right, and then beat him down with their flashlights, right, and then I actually, I didn't get to see em beating him down, but I could hear him. You know what I'm saying? And all I could hear him saying, "What are you gonna do with the flashlights?" and… Boom! Boom! Boom! "Aaaahh!!" Just screaming loud, screaming right, and then I would just hear "click, click," like they're taking off the cuffs, and then all I hear is… Boom! Boom! Boom! And there's one cop that I can plainly see, already in view, grabbing this guy by the boot, and yanking him all the way out, and dropping him in the middle of a concrete slab there, and the guy's just throwing up blood, just leaking blood everywhere, it looks like he has a puddle a blood. When they grab him supposedly to take him to the infirmary, they're just dragging him. They won't even get nobody to assist you know.
>
> ES Lil Valley 13, 30's

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[269] Shanks/knives

This is a practice that was confirmed for me by numerous LEO contacts in informal interviews. A number of Sheriff's Deputies spoke casually of the beatings that used to be administered by deputies to inmates in the county jails in numerous personal conversations I've had with a number of deputies whom I have befriended over the years. In fact one California Highway Patrol Officer with over 25 years of service, confided to me that "back in the old days" there was an open secret that if a recently arrested suspect was being disrespectful to arresting officers, when they dropped the suspect off at the county jail, all they had to do was mention to the booking deputy that the suspect had been disrespectful and the suspect would be summarily beaten by deputies for his insolence shortly after being booked into the county jail.

Another common practice was to actually stage one on one fights between deputies and inmates. Insolent inmates who were personally disrespectful to a deputy might find that deputy standing in front of his cell with his badge off and the door magically "popped" open, an open invitation for a "fair one". In some cases, inmates welcome the rare opportunity to fight a deputy they have personal misgivings about, in other cases their threats ring hollow when they "rank out" (dishonor themselves) by turning down the challenge. Such a display of cowardice is a serious threat to an inmate's status, but in some cases perhaps as not a serious threat as fighting a deputy, many of whom are every bit as physically tough as some of the hardest inmates under their control. If there is one thing that can be said about the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, it's that they don't tend to hire those faint of heart or of frail constitution.

It is incumbent upon me to mention that every respondent I interviewed, gang members and LEO's alike, formally and informally, stated emphatically that such beatings by

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deputies in the county jails no longer occur and ceased to occur somewhere in the mid-2000s

during the tenure of Sheriff Leroy Baca. A deputy who is a personal friend of mine and who has

worked in the county jails for years informed me that the LASD has become so strict with the

use of force in its County Jail facilities since about 2010 that deputies are actually being

disciplined for excessive use of force, even in cases where the inmate "victim" was clearly

violently resisting. That is quite a major shift in the policies and practices concerning use of

force by deputies in Los Angeles County Sheriff's County Jail facilities indeed, and has had a

significant effect on deputies willingness to restrain themselves from assaulting inmates.

Thus it is a cruel irony that a recent politically motivated investigation of the LASD by the

FBI and prosecution of over a dozen deputies forced the retirement of Sheriff Baca, when it was

under his tenure that the odious practice of deputies beating county jail inmates ceased to be a

common occurrence. At the time of this writing the vast majority of the deputies who have

been charged under the federal indictment have been arrested for charges related to

obstruction of the investigation, rather than charges related to actually beating inmates

themselves or setting up fights between inmates – the supposed focus of the FBI

investigation.[270] The absence of charges related to deputies actually beating inmates

themselves or setting up fights between inmates, and the fact that the FBI has not made any

similar credible effort to investigate CDCR facilities, where such staff malfeasance still occurs as

a matter of common practice to this day, suggests that there are inter-agency political motives

behind the FBI's investigation and prosecution of deputies in the LASD rather than any altruistic

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[270] Faturechi and Leonard 2013

desire to bring justice for inmate populations in California. This betrays the fact that the Federal

Department of Justice's professed aspirations to end widespread malfeasance by carceral staff

is less than sincere.

My sources in the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department have reported to me that the

probable cause for the FBI's treatment of the LASD is that a number of years ago a consulate

official from an allied nation was arrested by deputies without the proper consular

identification. He became disrespectful and combative at the prospect of arrest, and force was

used to effect his arrest. When his identification was confirmed and he was released, he

reported to his consul that he had been beaten by deputies during his arrest and his nation

petitioned President Obama's administration for retribution against the LASD. Attorney General

Holder obliged and commanded the FBI's Los Angeles field office to build a case against the

LASD to punish the agency for their transgression. While with such limited details I have been

unable to verify this narrative, if true, it would certainly explain why the FBI has suddenly

decided to single out the LASD for investigation, *after* changes were already underway in the

LASD under the direction of Sheriff Baca.

Likewise, there has been a considerable amount of media attention to the proliferation

of membership of Sheriff's Deputies in so-called "cop gangs" such as the Vikings, of which

Undersheriff and candidate for LA County Sheriff Paul Tanaka is alleged to be a member.[271]

However, there has been scant media and no Federal law enforcement attention to the

existence of prison gangs whose membership are comprised of CDCR employees. Over a decade

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[271] Faturechi 2014

ago former CDCR CO Donald "DJ" Vodicka accused CDCR of fostering a hostile work

environment by knowingly allowing the proliferation of an active gang, known as The Green

Wall,[272] among its employees at Salinas Valley State Prison including not only mainline CO's, but

even CDCR's own internal affairs unit, the Investigative Services Unit.[273] While Mr. Vodicka filed

legal suit against CDCR over the illegal activities of gang affiliated CDCR employees, the Federal

Department of Justice did not, nor has it subsequently in the over ten years since, shedding

doubt on the sincerity of their investigation into the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department. The

existence of these prison guard gangs in the CDCR system was been confirmed to me by

numerous respondents who served time in CDCR facilities, including separate CO gangs at

different prisons throughout the CDCR system.

> Put it like this, they have the Green Wall. They have the Bulldogs, and I'm talking about the Bulldogs as far
>
> as the CO's go (not the Fresno Bulldogs). The CO's have their own gangs. And they claim they run our
>
> yards, because the CO's are the ones that either bring the drugs in or not. Their CO's are the ones who
>
> either run for the *Carnales*[274] or not. The CO's are the ones that do the South Siders favors or not. And like
>
> in Corcoran, they had the Green Wall, that's what they called the CO's there. They had a Varrio (gang),
>
> and in like down South, they had what they called The Dogs. I knew some of them *juras* (CO's), they used
>
> to tattoo paw prints on them. They were part of that CO neighborhood (gang) homes.
>
> ES White Fence 13, 50's

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[272] CDCR staff commonly wear a uniform consisting of olive drab green fatigues
[273] Laidman 2004
[274] Mexican Mafia members

There are a number of reasons carceral staff provoke fights between inmates. Probably the most banal is pure entertainment. The day to day workplace of the average CO or Deputy in a carceral environment is monotonously boring and the occasional fracas between inmates can provide some sadistic source of entertainment for those able to unleash such violence on other human beings without remorse and without fear of accountability.

> I think it's for entertainment purposes. I think they bored at work, its entertainment. Remember these are inmates, they are suspects, so they detach from the human element of what's going on.
>
> WS Rolling 20's Neighborhood Bloods, 50's

It is not uncommon for CO's to be so brazen that all the staff on duty come down with their smart phones and digital cameras to record the staged fight as it occurs so that they can review the videos later and show their friends and family back home. It would be hard to believe that there is any CDCR employee in the entire system who is not aware of these practices.

> Q: Have you ever seen CO's set up fights?
>
> A: Yes I was set up a lotta times. I was set up a lotta times.
>
> Q: Were those fights with other South Siders or with Nortenos?
>
> A: Blacks.
>
> Q: So they'd throw you in with blacks or pop doors on you or stuff like that?
>
> A: Uh huh.
>
> Q: How many times do you think that's happened to you?
>
> A: Uhh like 5, 6, 7 times.

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Q: Would that happen in general population or in solitary confinement, both?

A: No in the hole, in the SHU.

Q: You think that happens throughout the system? That it's common for COs to do it at different prisons?

A: Yes.

Q: Or do you think its isolated incidents where it's only one bad officer? Or do lots of staff do that?

A: Lots. Yeah lots of staff.

Q: Why do you think they do that? Do they do it for their own entertainment?

A: Yeah entertainment.

Q: They're bored and they want to see a fight?

A: Yeah they used to come out with their little cameras, laughing.

Q: To watch the fights?

A: While I was getting my ass beat by older men man! I'm talkin about older men you know, I'm 18 years old. We're talking about 45 year old men you know? Yeah it's like wow! You know?

SC Barrio Mojados 13, 30's

Another common practice is for staff members to bet on fights they have staged between different inmates. Thousands of dollars regularly change hands among CO's throughout the CDCR system as CO's make bets with one another on fights that they stage between members of rival prison gang factions. This is why prisons in California and wherever such practices proliferate among carceral officers are commonly referred to by the unfortunate euphemism "Gladiator Schools".

I don't know if you're familiar, they set up those gladiator fights.

Q: Do you think that just happened there at Corcoran, or do you think that's a common thing throughout the system?

A: No it's been going on for years, they just got caught on film doing it you know. But that stuff has been going on. It comes down to, we know how to fight. Blacks, we're pretty good with our hands. Hispanics they're not as skilled to where you know they have to use knives and numbers to deal with us. So in the SHU it's you and your cellmate against these two so it's fair game. You have no knife, you gotta fight. So it was basically like UFC thing, they were betting to see who would win the fights. CO's bet $500 or $1000 (on a fight).

SC Four Trey Gangster Crips, 30's

The boldness of staff members during these incidents indicates either the complete lack of discipline and accountability CDCR administrators enforce over their staff, or their outright complicity in the violent incidents their staff members provoke between inmates, or both. No CDCR staff member to date has ever been held criminally accountable for setting up fights between inmates in carceral facilities in California.

Q: What kind of things have you seen? Have you seen them popping doors on people? Taking a South Sider and dropping him with a bunch of blacks?

A: They've done it to me. They've, they've done it to me.

Q: What did they do to you?

A: I was in the cell and um, there was already, there was already tension between us and the blacks, and they, and they were looking for somebody to pop out, and they popped me out. I went out, I went out and like 8 cells down they popped out another cell and it was a black guy, and we were the only two there and everybody else was yelling and…

Q: And you just went at it with each other?

A: So we just yeah.

Q: It was an even fight though?

A: Well yeah you could say that, you could say that.

Q: It was only one black dude they let out?

A: Yeah and it was just one, just me and him, one toe to toe.

Q: At what level do you think that usually happens?

A: All levels.

Q: Is it like Sergeants and Lieutenants? Or Captains, Wardens?

A: No the Wardens, I don't think the Wardens are aware of it. But the Sergeants, they got a lot to do with it.

Q: So it's usually at that level that they make the decision?

A: Yeah cause it's up to them, it's their house.

WS Venice 13, 40's

Another reason staff set up inmates to be assaulted by other inmates is to take vengeance on inmates who have disrespected or assaulted staff members. Sometimes staff members use inmates as proxies to assault inmates they want to punish or extract vengeance on for one reason or another without "getting their hands dirty" themselves. Inmate on inmate assaults also give staff members in CDCR facilities the excuse they need to shoot and kill inmates whom they want to see dead for assaulting other staff members or for other reasons, with the impunity of ostensibly justifiable circumstances shielding them from prosecution. Indeed many have suggested that this was the strategy employed to accomplish the assassinations of BGF founders W.L. Nolen and George L. Jackson.

Say for instance there's blacks that arrived at the SHU, alotta times if you go to the SHU you did something serious, sticking or assaulting a CO, and you have alotta blacks in the SHU a majority are either in there for either assaulting a CO or stabbing one. Alotta those guys were marked men for what they did to other CO's. So when they're out there fighting it gave CO's an excuse to shoot them Mini 14's and blow they brains out.

Q: You think that's why, other brothers I've interviewed have talked about how like they'll see CO's pop doors on Mexicans just to get a motherfucker fucked up because they know he assaulted a CO?

A: Yeah because he assaulted a CO. All through your history you're a marked man, no matter where you go. If a CO was like a asshole and other CO's didn't like him, they don't give a fuck. But if they know you're one of those dudes like, "I don't give a fuck, I got life, I'm a die anyway. You fuck with me, you do something, I'm gonna try to kill you," CO's will target that, cause now they got alotta lawsuits and things like that, CO's can't just start willingly firing those weapons like they used to cause of the lawsuits black people getting shot. So what they'll do is they'll politic and manipulate you know, "We'll give you dope, let you handle your business, hustle, let you guys do your thing, criminal activity, but hey we want that guy killed. We want you to hit that dude." And they already know the racial tension, the Hispanics don't give a fuck. And so they'll supply them with you know, dude you seen some of the knives they confiscated on the yard? They not no fucking shanks man! They some real like buck knives and knives brought in from the street. Who else can bring them in? They use that since they can't shoot us or do anything because of the lawsuits they'll use them (the South Siders).

Q: Another brother I interviewed was saying how he feels like the Mexicans are more better armed cause a lot of the CO's…

A: Yeah man because they're more uh… See when it comes to our people. You got a lot of our people who are white washed, who are like police. Police ain't gonna cut you any slack, and then you got the chosen few who will. But then the white CO's the Hispanic CO's will try to get them out of the prison, try to fire

them. If they see em trying to you know (help black inmates). On the Mexican side you know, they got

alotta their people who are CO's that are working for that structure. White CO's who work for the whites.

So it's easier for them to get weapons man. Shit this correctional counselor broad, these people are

supposed to I guess protect you, this broad was supposed to prepare your case for committee, prepare

your case for parole, she was in a high position. This broad was bringing in knives, kitchen knives, Rambo

type military knives man. She got caught, but she was pssshh… just imagine. That was just one thing man.

SC Four Trey Gangster Crips, 30's

Of course South Sider inmates can also recall incidents where black CO's favored black inmates

and set up South Sider inmates to be attacked by black inmates as well.

Q: Have you ever seen situations where CO's set up situations between blacks and Hispanics in county or

in the penitentiary?

A: Yeah they'll take us in a cell, they'll divide us and then they'll see that we're coming from different riots

right, especially in the 2006 to 2007 when the riots were cracking in the county. Like three homeys, they

shot em in some cells with blacks. The homeys were getting beat the fuck up, like I would hear them (yell

out) like "Aaagh!!" Yeah little ass youngsters too, like 18, 19 year olds, like little ass kids.

Q: Why did they do that? Do you think the CO was taking the blacks' side? Were they getting even?

A: Why, probably cause we were getting the best of them and yeah the CO was black.

 SC 42nd Street, 20's

Another major reason CO's provoke violence by setting up fights between inmates is

because they stand to gain financially from that violence. They stand to gain financially in a

number of ways. First, they stand to gain collectively in that every act of violence that results in

a criminal prosecution keeps another inmate in CDCR custody that much longer, which in the aggregate keeps more people in prison, thereby providing infallible job security for CDCR employees.

> Q: Do you think they also do it as a way to manipulate the inmate population to keep inmates at each other's necks?
>
> A: No just to keep people longer in prison. Cause you're gonna catch a case. It's a business, it's a big business. The system's a business.
>
> Q: So they do it so people catch cases and they'll have to stay longer?
>
> A: Yeah. It's a big business, the prison system is a big business.
>
> Q: Do you think that's a strategy they use throughout the prison system? Putting people in situations where they're gonna catch new cases so they, so it keeps going?
>
> A: I strongly believe so.
>
> SC Barrio Mojados 13, 30's

The sentiment is widely shared and was repeated by dozens of my respondents in formal interviews.

> Q: Do you think that's part of the strategy staff use to control the inmate population, to keep people at each other so they don't turn against them?
>
> A: They, they do it because... Lemme tell you why they do it, I know why they do it, because they want us to get more time. They don't want us to leave. And they know they can easily hit one of us and of course we hit em back. Then we're done you know? We're catching ten more years and they're just gonna go home happy.

Thus while a Federal consent decree has been imposed on CDCR to reduce its inmate population, CDCR staff are artificially inflating the inmate population by provoking violence between inmates, who catch additional cases and add additional time to their existing sentences as a result. Informal practices that provoke violence between inmates, and the policies or lack thereof that enable these practices, are effectively an unassailable end run around the Federal consent decree imposing a reduction in CDCR's inmate population.

Another way CO's benefit financially from provoking violence between rival racialized gang faction is that CDCR actually pays CO's a bonus known as "hazard pay" when serious violence erupts in their facilities, as if staff should be rewarded for running a facility where serious violence occurs. This increased wage scale kicks in as soon as the ominous sound of the "gong" goes off throughout the facility, indicating that a major disturbance (riot) is occurring.

> Q: Have you ever seen deputies in county or CO's in the pen set up situations? Do you think it's a common thing?
>
> A: Yeah, a lot of em do it.
>
> Q: What kind of different things have you seen?
>
> A: Cause they get paid off of it, it's like hazard pay.
>
> Q: They get hazard pay when there's a riot going on?
>
> A: Yeah.
>
> Lynwood Palm N' Oak Gangster Crips, 30's

By provoking riots between inmates, CDCR staff can significantly increase the amount of their paychecks by collecting hazard pay and overtime hours with no cap on their earnings. The amount of money CO's can add to their paychecks is considerable, with many CO's making double what your average LEO on the street makes in a year. Not bad for a career that requires little more than a high school diploma and a (somewhat) clean record.

Q: Why do you think they do that? Do they do that for their own entertainment?

A: Because they have to keep, me I believe, they have to keep the prisons like corrupted, like they have to keep it going. Like they have to keep the prisons like, with conflicts with…

Q: Everybody at each other's necks…

A: At each other's necks because, it goes back to money with them, cause each time they go on lock-down, they pay doubles. Every CO, every Captain, Lieutenant they benefit because if something happens at this prison that they was at from a conflict they mediated and started, the first thing they do is put you on lock down, and how many days and hours that that C.O. is on the clock and inside that prison and is on lockdown? They get double the pay so, so if they already getting $20 an hour, they get a extra $40, they get…

Q: They get more money if people are fighting…

A: Because they look at it as ok hazard pay and you risking your life, you around all these guys…

Q: When they're the ones that started it…

A: Exactly, so I done been in prisons where it was C.O.s there that, you know, salary was over $150,000 dollars for that year, from just from that prison being on lock-down so much and from working over-time. So, you know, it's always a money thing.

WS Inglewood Families Bloods, 20's

CDCR has actually designed their pay structure to incentivize staff to provoke violence between inmates. That is quite astonishing when you think about it. However, what CO's make on the books is dwarfed by what they can make off the books, if they are willing to cross that line.

The other major malfeasance that at least some proportion of correctional staff are guilty of is smuggling messages, contraband, weapons, cell phones and narcotics into and between carceral facilities. While CDCR officers regularly suggest that messages are passed between facilities and contraband is brought into prisons by visitors, the truth is that the vast majority of messages, contraband, weapons, cell phones and narcotics are distributed in carceral facilities by the staff themselves. The practice is so normalized among CDCR staff that, as one CO I am personally acquainted with put it, "Oh what guys bringing shit in their lunch pail? Psssh… big deal!"

CDCR employees often make the claim that messages, contraband, weapons, cell phones and narcotics are smuggled into and between prisons by visitors who secrete such contraband in bodily cavities in order to smuggle it into carceral facilities, a practice known as "keistering" something.[275] While it is possible for visitors to pass a message or secrete a small amount of narcotics in their bodily cavities to be smuggled to an inmate during a visit, it is not possible for a modern smartphone with charger or a 6" by 6" can of Bugler's tobacco to be secreted in someone's rectum or vagina to be passed to an inmate during a visit. For anyone who wants to buy that story, I suggest you purchase a can of Bugler tobacco and try it.

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[275] Morales 2013

Q: That whole thing about peoples' ladies' keistering shit in is…?

A: That's a thing that could happen but then again, still CO's are on it cause they know who's bringing in and they're not searching them.

Q: Yeah ain't nobody keistering in a fucking cell phone right?

A: Yeah, keister this shit! (Holds up his cell phone) Keister a phone for the yard, and the charger while you're at it! Come on bro, you're fucking kidding me. Bring me a Big Mac and fries(too). Ha ha ha! Bring that out here.

Q: Better spend a week stretching your *culo (ass)* out to get that in. Ha ha ha!

A: Fuck! Ha ha ha!

NELA Frog Town 13, 30's

Rather, these large items of contraband, as well as smaller packages of narcotics and the occasional weapon, are supplied to inmates by sympathetic and/or corrupt staff who simply carry them to work with them in their personal belongings. Shockingly CDCR staff are not subjected to any sort of rigorous search of their persons or belongings when they enter a CDCR facility, a privilege the California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA hereafter) has fought hard to preserve. If a CO can walk into a CDCR facility and pass off a can of Bugler tobacco to inmates, something as small as a *wila*[276], or kite, a small handwritten note from inmate leaders to other inmates, is easily passed from inmates to staff to inmates in another unit or facility.

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[276] "Wila" is common spelling among inmates for the word "huila"

A lot of what CDC does is create conflict! So if they're really serious about reducing conflict on any yard homes, start with the administration. That's where you're gonna reduce it. Cause they're the ones who created it. They're the ones who carry messages to other places. It is the CDC officers that are mules homes. Check this out homes. I had so much money in there homes, I was sending money out instead of having people send money in to me. I had a *jura* bring me two cans of Bugler (tobacco) every week. Two cans! That's $1000 a can homes. So I was making money left and right. I had the same *jura* bring me three cellphones a month. That's $3000 for him. Imagine how much money I was making on it… Pssshh!

ES White Fence 13, 50's

During the course of my ethnographic observations in Los Angeles I have witnessed the passing of cell phones and narcotics to CO's on the streets who then brought that contraband into a CDCR facility. One of the locations I would regularly hang out, as ethnographers do, is a small tattoo shop in the San Fernando Valley. A friend of mine who was recently released from prison at the time is the owner and the tattoo shop is a common hangout for gang members and other shady denizens of the underworld in that area – mostly tweekers (methamphetamine addicts). One summer day, sitting around the stand-alone air conditioner that gave us some relief from one of those unbearably wretched heat waves the Valley is known for in the summer months, a new full size American pickup truck, lifted with custom wheels and off road tires, pulls up in front of the shop and honks his horn, giving a heads up to my homeboy who owns the shop. My homeboy gives him a nod and a wave, and then turns to me and opens up in a devious grin with a wink, "Watch this!"

He gets up and walks over to the control panel for the security cameras and shuts all the shop's security cameras off and waves the occupant of the pickup truck into the shop, as he

pulls a brown paper lunch bag with something other than a lunch in it and casually places it on the counter. The truck's occupant is a barrel chested white man in his mid-30s with reflective mono-lens sunglasses, the type only LEO's and servicemen wear, a flat top haircut (who has those anymore anyways?) and a military bearing. He is woefully out of place in that setting. They give each other a "bump" (a common hand shake among gang members where one person bumps their fist on the top and bottom of the other person's fist), and make small talk.

"What's up bro?"

"Not much just chillin"

"That's cool, how's the wifey?"

"Oh she's good bro just hating this heat wave, how's the baby?"

"Oh she's cool, she just popped her first tooth out so she cries a lot…"

So on and so forth. After a couple more minutes of talking and saying nothing, all the while perfectly ignoring my presence as if I'm a shadow on the wall, the visitor asks to use the "head" (military/LEO jargon for restroom). While he's in the restroom my buddy shoots me another devious grin almost erupting in jubilation, and then puts one finger in front of his lips with a sly and silent "Shhh!" After doing his business in the bathroom, the visitor shakes my buddy's hand and says his goodbye's, and he happens to grab the paper lunch bag off the counter on his way out.

After he gets in his truck and drives off, my buddy reaches up and turns the security cameras back on and breaks out laughing. I have to ask,

"Who the fuck was that fool?"

"Ha ha! That motherfucker's a CO homes! He comes over once a week to pick up a package from me to give the homeys up in the pen. He works at _____ prison."

"Get the fuck outta here!"

"Naw *serio* fool. That fool just picked up a half dozen cell phones and a ball of dope like this…"

He makes an "O" with is thumb and fingers big enough to hold a golf ball. Thinking out loud I respond, "Wow that's crazy big dog! That fool did look like a *jura*. I was wondering what the fuck he was doing over here anyways." My buddy gives me a big toothy smile through the dozens of tattoos on his head, neck and face and sums it up in one word, "Yup!"

A couple days later I'm back at the same shop hanging out and my buddy is on the phone with someone, "You got that shit big dog?... OK cool just checking... Yeah I got you… Talk to you next week… Alright cool, be safe." He turns around to me with that same wily grin I saw a couple days before, "Remember that *jura* that picked up that package the other day?" "Yeah why?" "It got delivered where it was supposed to." We both have a laugh as he settles into the couch with a look of supreme satisfaction at his own cunning, a tall can of Bud Light *chelada* in one hand and the DVR remote in the other, trying to decide which episode of "Gangland" on the History Channel he wants to watch next.

One of my respondents had a similar experience with a CO on the other side of the market for illicit contraband and narcotics in a CDCR facility.

But on another level you have these younger CO's that grew up in the same neighborhoods as us. They'll even tell you, "yeah I'm just that lucky that I didn't end up in the same predicament that you're in, but there's opportunities to make money. There's opportunities to make anywhere from $4000, $5000, $6000 a month, under the table. I don't get searched, and if I do we get warned that were gonna get searched prior to getting searched." So it's like wow, really, you guys got it good. This is what staff members talked to me about personally. The reason they talk to me is because of how I carry myself, they're trying to figure out if I was willing to do it. "Yeah because you carry yourself well and I know this and that, and your name hasn't come up so I know you're not doing any telling. So you know…" I was like "Nah man I'm trying to go home. Just trying to go home." I mean these are things that are spoken not like I'm speaking to you, but kind of like on the fringes of like, it's said but it's not said. Like, "Yeah yeah… you wouldn't be willing to…", "Nah man I'm good", "OK man good for you I don't blame you," wink wink. You know what I mean, and I'm like "yeah yeah…" this and that, but after I'm like "What just happened here? Did he just…?" Ha ha ha! And I'll go talk to one of my peers like, "Yeah you handled that the right way bro cause you never know," yeah, I go, "Well not even that but we're trying to go home, they see us every day going to this program going to that program, were trying to get out of here," but it's like they don't know who to trust, so they have to screen and find the right people. So I'm like "OK".
ES Varrio Nueva Estrada 13, 50's

Pure unadulterated greed is a major motivator in most of these cases, as CO's can easily double or triple their pay on the books, which is often already in the low six figures before taxes, by bringing contraband, cell phones and narcotics into the prisons and selling them to inmates. This is a lucrative source of off the books cash that not every CDCR employee can bring themselves to pass up.

With CO's there's a lot of money to be made. I've seen it be made. I've seen drugs or now tobacco and cell phones and things like that come into prison. And these things were brand spanking new, and in bulk. And no outsiders, it's impossible for a civilian to get that into the prison, in the box, with the labels on it that says "Target" or whatever on it. So this stuff is coming in through CO's and cause it's a black market so there's a lot of money. A simple cell phone like mine, just a Metro phone, goes for $700-$800 bucks, but the phone costs $120 bucks. So look at the profits. It's just way too much, and the flow of them is they were getting caught with them when I left prison a year ago daily. There was one kid who in two and a half months, he had three different phones.

Q: Do you think they actually roll people up for contraband so they have to pay to get more?

A: No yeah, cause people were getting caught with a phone, and then other inmates would end up with the same phone. So it's like, "Man are you kidding me?!"

Q: Do you think that's just plain greed?

A: It's human nature man, it's just money.

ES Varrio Nueva Estrada 13. 50's

In other cases CO's collude with inmates due to personal relationships that develop between them, or relationships that involve CO's inmates grew up with back home. Many CO's come from the same neighborhoods that inmates grew up in and it is not uncommon for an inmate to know a CO from the streets. These relationships can often be exploited by enterprising inmates intent on developing new sources for contraband and narcotics to supply their retail operations on the yard.

I used to have a bitch, bitch CO's, bringing me in dope you know? I used to fuck a deputy in Wayside, you know, in the kitchen and the old ER. I had another one when I was 22 years old, you know, and then when

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I go back to that same yard four years later, the one that I went to high school with was like, "Aye what

the fuck did you do to what's her name? She lost it when you were gone," I'm like, "I don't know what

you're talking about?" But I had it, I had it, I did it you know? It's all part of the game.

WS La Mirada 13, 30's

A common ruse corrupt CO's practice is what is known among LEO's and CO's as

"double dipping" – selling something to one inmate, then busting them for what you sold them

so you can seize it and sell it again to someone else. Of course this can be repeated numerous

times almost indefinitely, as contraband and cell phones are passed from yard to yard to yard.

The same respondent quoted above was among those wise to this infuriating practice as well.

Motherfuckers (CO's) bringing in cell phones, charging up the ass and then raiding your fucking cell a

month later, taking the cell phone and selling it back to somebody else!

Q: On another yard right?

A: It's all, it's all hustle, you know? It's all a hustle.

WS La Mirada 13, 30's

Astute inmates are cognizant of this practice and often apply small markings to a cell phone in

order to be able to identify the phone when it is seized by staff and later resold back onto the

yard. The selling of cell phones to inmates by corrupt staff is so cavalier that CDCR gang

intelligence officers, the Special Services Unit, actually use corrupt CO's to sell phones that have

been seized, identified and wire tapped, back onto yards to gang members so that SSU

investigators can record the content of their conversations with persons on the outside in the

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hope of gaining some prosecutable intelligence on the activities of prison gangs. Think about

that for a minute. The selling of illegal cell phones is so normalized in CDCR facilities, that CDCR

SSU investigators actually use CO's they know to be selling illegal contraband to inmates, to sell

tapped phones to their inmate contacts in order to collect intelligence on their activities.

> Q: One of the policies that's come up in debate is that CO's don't get searched coming in to work. Know
> what I mean?
> A: And who you think is bringing everything in? I was in Solano on the 3 yard homes and in Solano the
> Level III is yard 1 and 2. The Level II yard is 3 and 4. So the higher levels is actually the 1 and 2 yard. So I
> was in the 1 yard, and I was in a riot with the blacks, when I was in the cage I seen all the cell phones they
> confiscated. One of the cell phones was one of the homeys that I knew very well, and I knew how he had
> his phone marked and everything. So when they confiscated all those cell phones and took them to the
> office, I went to the hole six months later, when I came out the hole they sent me to the 2 yard. When I
> went to yard 2, I seen the same fucking cell phone that they had confiscated! So who do you think put it
> there? So I tell these homeys, "Don't say nothing fucking stupid on these phones. Why do you think that
> they distribute them out on another yard? Cause now they have them hooked up to where they know
> everything you're saying. Are they gonna move on it? No, because they want to get every little bit of
> information that you got, because everything that you say on the phone is juicy. So I say, "They're not
> gonna come snatch your phone. And if they do they're gonna make it seem like they did it on a sweep.
> But don't think that every phone that's on this yard, unless it comes to you first from the street, and you
> personally got it from one of your people, don't think that this shit ain't wired homes. If you're gonna use
> it, us it for, 'Aye mi hija, play with yourself on the phone for me.' Do shit like that, but don't conduct no
> business on it. That's how they find out everything homes."
> ES White Fence 13, 50s

While CDCR officials commonly point to prison gangs like the Mexican Mafia as controlling the drug trade in prisons and extracting "taxes" from the illegal trade in narcotics and contraband in prison facilities in California, in fact it is corrupt CO's who bring those narcotics and contraband into the prisons and who functionally control their distribution among the inmate population, and it is those corrupt CO's who are the first to take their cut out of the profits generated by this illicit trade. That is not to deny the fact that members of prison gangs do typically extract a percentage of the profits made by narcotic and contraband retail operations on prison yards throughout the state as tribute, just as criminals the world over have extorted one another since the dawn of time, but rather to emphasize the point that the narcotics and contraband that supply those retail operations are typically smuggled into prisons by correctional staff who are not thoroughly searched when they come to work. CDCR has always had a policy of not subjecting its employees to the kind of thorough search visitors and inmates entering their facilities are subjected to.

The fact that the smuggling of contraband, weapons, cell phones and narcotics into California's prisons is condoned by CDCR administration at the highest levels is clearly apparent by CDCR's unwillingness to submit CDCR employees to the same type of thorough search that inmates and visitors are subjected to when they enter a CDCR facility. Furthermore, by subjecting inmates and visitors to meticulous searches, but failing to do so for CDCR staff, CDCR effectively gives corrupt staff a virtual monopoly over the market for illegal contraband, cell phones and narcotics in CDCR facilities. It is not the Mexican Mafia that controls the market for

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illegal contraband and narcotics in CDCR facilities, it is corrupt CO's who supply those markets

who have the real power to decide who gets what and for how much. The fact that the

California Correctional Peace Officer's Association (CCPOA hereafter) has fought to maintain

the privilege CO's enjoy in not being effectively searched when they enter a CDCR facility, gives

the impression that CDCR employees in the aggregate fervently cherish the privilege of being

able to smuggle illegal contraband, weapons, cell phones and narcotics into CDCR facilities with

impunity. Just as the fact that CDCR has not gone to bat with the CCPOA over this issue, gives

the impression that CDCR condones the privilege of their employees to maintain a monopoly

over the smuggling of illegal contraband, weapons, cell phones and narcotics into CDCR

facilities.

There is a glimmer of hope for peace in the fact that, as CDCR staff are responsible for

the vast majority of contraband, weapons, cell phones and narcotics that supply the market for

these illicit goods on prison yards, in cases where the staff have a lot of "money out on the

yard" they are incentivized to prevent any riotous violence from occurring that might interrupt

the profitability of the illicit trade they control.

> A lot of those CO's are making money, you know what I mean, they're making money as far as bringing
>
> shit in and all that other good stuff, so it's kinda like they aint trying to fuck their shit up
>
> Q: So if everybody goes on lockdown they're not gonna be getting that *feria* (money)?
>
> A: Yeah exactly
>
> Q: You think a lot of the shit that gets in comes in through CO's?
>
> A: Yeah

Q: Most of it does?

A: Most of it, 95% of it does.

NELA Frog Town 13, 30's

6.6 Prison Gang Politics and the Carceral Regime of Control

While policy makers and carceral administrators profess a desire to reduce violence between inmates in carceral environments, the true objective of carceral authorities is control over inmate populations. While the control that carceral authorities exert over inmates is often conceived of in terms of formal control mechanisms, the informal controls that carceral staff employ to undermine inmate solidarity and opposition to staff are, I would suggest, much more formidable than any formal discipline regime carceral staff can impose on inmates. Furthermore, these informal control mechanisms have played a hegemonic role in framing, provoking and perpetuating conflict between racialized gang factions in carceral environments in California. "Playing politics" by manipulating inmates into conflict with one another is historically one of the primary strategies employed by carceral staff and administration to control inmate populations. While these subversive strategies taken right out of the COINTELPRO playbook are "off the books", it makes sense to describe these informal practices under the rubric of carceral policies because the employment of these strategies by carceral staff and administrators is common practice throughout carceral environments in California, whether they are acknowledged in official communique or not.

Looking to the historical background discussed in the beginning of this chapter, manipulation and provocation by CDCR staff and administrators traces back to the origins of the modern racialized prison gang factions. It was CDCR administration who, in 1961, thought they were rather clever in splitting up the teenagers who founded the Mexican Mafia on the juvie yard at DVI to transfer them onto yards in notorious prisons like San Quentin and Old Folsom with the assumption that the boys would fall prey to the violence of older more experienced career convicts. It was their sadistic dearth of prescience that put what were merely teenage delinquents at the time in that position, where their only choice was to be perpetrators or victims. Of course as history would have it, those boys quickly became the predators and not the prey, as they rose to the challenge of their young lives, fearlessly slaughtering any inmate(s) who posed a threat to them. The administration's dire miscalculation misfired without their even realizing it until a decade later, when in the early 1970s the first generation of prison gang task force investigators took a serious look at prison gangs and came upon the epiphany that the organization those boys had created for their own mutual protection and survival, had blossomed into a formidable power to be reckoned with on the yards of CDCR facilities throughout the state, as well as in cities and neighborhoods throughout California.[277] However even then, over forty years ago now, it was far too late to subdue the juggernaut that the Mexican Mafia had become.

Likewise, it was CDCR staff who sustained the rise of the Aryan Brotherhood, by favoring AB members as their chosen proxies to distribute illegal narcotics and contraband on CDCR

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[277] Morales 2013

yards throughout the system at that time. It was CDCR staff who set up black inmates to be assaulted by AB members and other white inmates and/or took part in assaults themselves, which provided the impetus for black inmates to form their own racialized prison gang for mutual protection, the Black Guerilla Family. Looking at the early history of these racialized gang factions in the 1960s and 1970s from a critical perspective, it ought to be plainly apparent that the emergence of these organization in the CDCR system and the clashes between them, were deeply rooted in inmate responses to circumstances created in large part by CDCR staff and administration manipulation and provocation. Collusion between CDCR staff and inmates to the detriment of other inmates is an integral part of the carceral experience of many if not most inmates in the CDCR system.

Q: You mentioned about how administration sets shit up and gets shit started. Have you seen CO's set up shit between blacks and the Mexicans? Could you talk a little bit more about that?

A: I seen like back there in the hole. I seen cause, say for instance there's alotta tension between us and the police. That goes back a long way, with us and the police. So you got back in like the 70s and 80s man you know the cops they usually work with the inmates to stab other blacks cause you got alotta racist white cops who dog blacks, like they use the N word and all that, and you got alotta blacks who don't tolerate that shit you know. We'll assault and we'll stab you know the CO that's responsible for setting up that situation. And that sets up alotta things with the cops, whereas the whites and the Hispanics are favored by the cops, because they're organized and they got their people, they can get the cops. They got their own people who are cops.

SC Four Trey Gangster Crips, 30's

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The type of manipulation and provocations that occurred decades ago during the 1960s and 1970s, remain common informal practice among carceral staff into the present and administrators as a "divide and conquer" strategy intended to keep inmate populations concentrated on conflicts with one another, rather than plotting any kind of unified resistance to the CDCR system as a whole.

> Q: Do you think that's like a lot of the racial conflicts in prison are set up like that, that the cops are like use that as a strategy to keep everybody against each other, you know? Or just…
>
> A: Yeah, that's why I said it's divide and conquer cause they look at it like this "If all three races are getting along, they'll take over this mothafucka! We don't have enough officers here to apprehend each one of these inmates if they all were thinking the same way." If all of the mothafuckas woke up one morning and said, "Man look, when they open the yards today man, we just gonna take over everything! We just gonna start snatching up CO's like fuck it," they couldn't do nothing! They'd have to call the National Guard, the Army, shit they'll go hide somewhere and say, "Hey you need to get here now, because these mothafuckas done tripped out!" But as long as they keep playing each other against each other…
>
> Q: That's their strategy?
>
> A: That's their strategy yup.
>
> Compton Mob Piru Bloods, 30's

The Attica Prison riot of September 9, 1971, allegedly carried out by inmates in solidarity with California inmates, in retaliation for the killing of George Jackson in the CDCR system, was perhaps the turning point in American carceral policy, as pretenses of rehabilitation in carceral facilities died an ignominious death and carceral policies across the county took a sharp turn to

the Right, particularly in California.[278] Since that time both formal and informal carceral policies have operated to undermine the possibility of solidarity developing among inmates across racial gang lines, so as to prevent inmates from being able to resist the carceral State in solidarity. Indeed solidarity among inmates across racial gang lines is the single greatest threat to the security of CDCR facilities and staff, not to mention the State. Thus undermining any hint of solidarity among inmate factions is of the utmost priority for CDCR administrators and staff. They employ formal policies that physically separate any inmates who have the potential to lead and organize their fellow inmates into SHU units, where their contact with the mainline population is sharply curtailed, and since the early 1970s have imposed a strict censorship regime to prevent inmates from having access to any content that might have the potential to politicize and radicalize them, while simultaneously allowing the proliferation of personal TV's in CDCR facilities in order to pacify any inclination they might have to take up studying radical revolutionary philosophy, as their fore bearers had in the 1960s.[279]

It should be obviously apparent that the SHU units at Pelican Bay and Corcoran were certainly not created to protect the public, as inmates are obviously already incarcerated. The idea that the SHU was created to protect inmates from other inmates is also rather preposterous when considering the history of widespread provocation by staff in the CDCR system, who have regularly provoked violence among inmates with impunity for generations. It must be evident from the history and empirical evidence discussed in this chapter that the primary reason CDCR created the SHU program was to subdue the potential for radical

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[278] Cummins 1994
[279] Ibid

revolutionary resistance that organized inmate factions represent for the administration and

staff in CDCR facilities. In fact, with their rigid discipline, systemic organizational structure and

pervasive influence both on the streets and in carceral facilities, prison gangs like the Mexican

Mafia represent the greatest possible threat to carceral facilities and the capitalist State, not

because of their criminal activity, but because of their political potential for radical resistance,

coordinated both on the streets and in carceral facilities throughout the state. Inmates are far

more organized, ten times as numerous, much more experienced in violence and have far

closer connections to and control over the streets than did those inmates who rose up against

the system in the social movement era of the late 1960s and early 1970s. As such they

represent a vastly greater potential political threat to the State and the administration and

maintenance of its carceral facilities that have appropriately been christened "The Golden

Gulag" by Ruth Wilson Gilmore.[280]

Hints of resistance by inmates are beginning to show cracks in this hegemonic regime,

whereby inmates have focused their aggression on one anther instead of their keepers for a

generation. While at least some black inmates have persisted in attacking staff members who

victimize them, South Siders were for years discouraged from doing so by highly respected

Emero Joe Morgan, who felt that such attacks on sworn law enforcement officers would bring

unwanted attention on the retail operations they depended on to support themselves and their

families.[281] Correspondingly, as the CDCR data shows in Graphs 6-8 and 6-9, the sharpest rise in

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[280] Gilmore 2004
[281] Morales 2013

both the number and rate of assaults on staff occurred after Mr. Morgan's passing in the early

1990s.

CDCR Inmate Assault on Staff Incidents 1970-2006
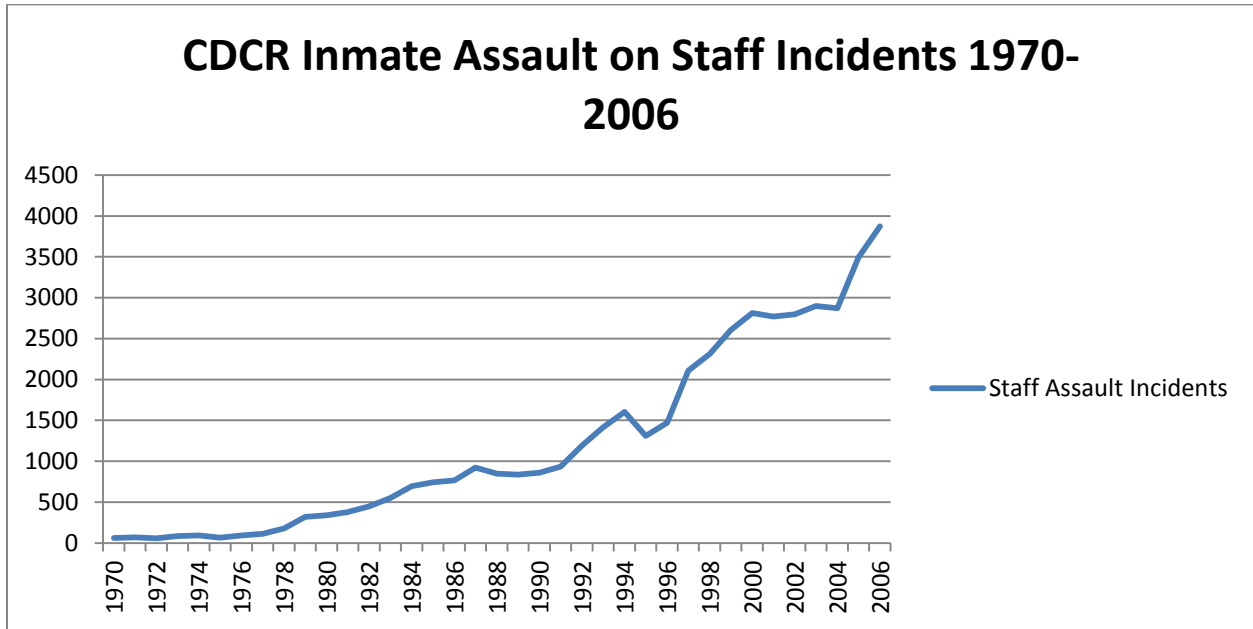
Graph 6-8 CDCR Inmate Assault on Staff Incidents 1970-2006

Rate of CDCR Inmate on Staff Assaults Per 100 ADP 1970-2006
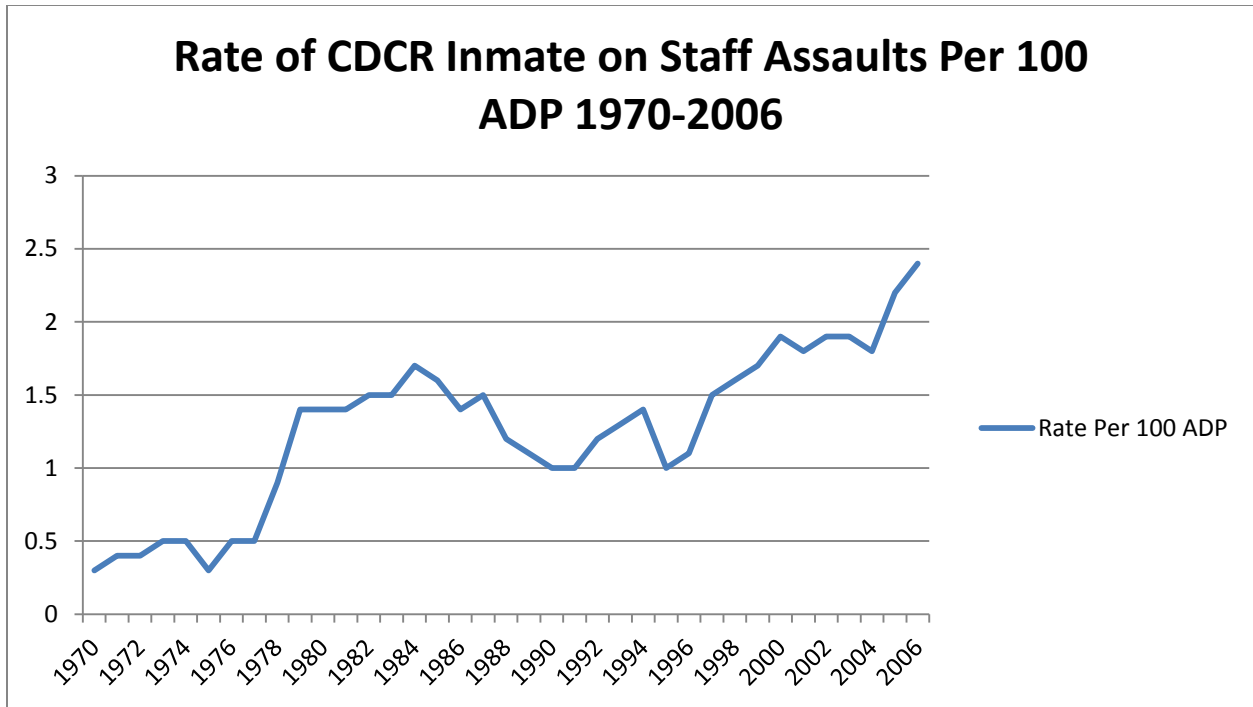
Graph 6-9 Rate of CDCR Inmate on Staff Assaults per 100 Average Daily Population 1970-2006

However when one overlays the rate of inmate assaults on staff with the rate of inmate assaults on inmates with a weapon, as seen in Graph 6-10, it is starkly apparent that the two have diverged since the early 1990s, a result I can only assume is attributable to the formalization of inmate faction organizational structures by the Mexican Mafia during those years. The rate has spiked again in the late 2000s to twice what it was in the early 1990s, reflecting an apparent recent change in inmate attitudes toward assaulting carceral staff.

Comparison of Inmate on Staff Assaults and Inmate on Inmate Weapon Assaults 1975-2006
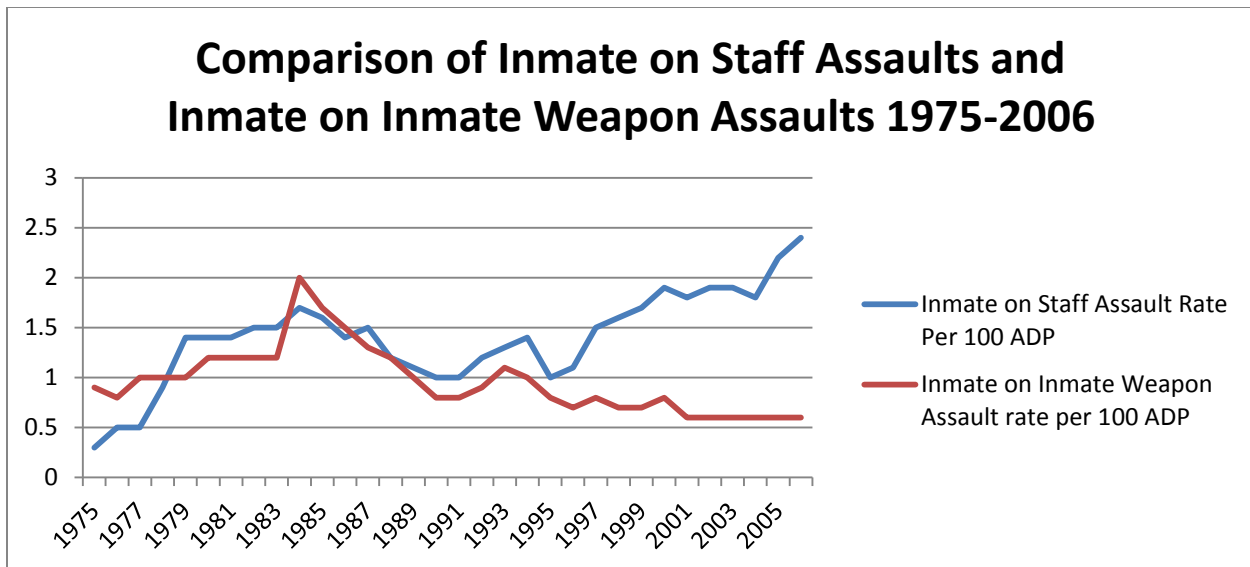
Graph 6-10 Comparison of Inmate on Staff Assaults and Inmate on Inmate Weapon Assaults 1975-2006

In addition to the increase in inmate assaults on staff, other signs of radical resistance and systemic solidarity suggest optimism as to the capacity of rival racialized inmate factions to put aside their conflicts and coordinate their efforts to collectively resist the conditions of their captivity. On July 1, 2011 approximately 400 prisoners in the Pelican Bay State Prison SHU program, representing all of the major racialized gang factions in the CDCR system, went on a sustained hunger strike to protest and resist the inhumane conditions of their indefinite solitary confinement, and the pretenses that placed them there.[282] Within a month over six thousand prisoners from throughout the CDCR system had joined them in the hunger strike.[283] Analogous to the prisoner rights movement of the civil rights era, the impetus for the hungers strike was a

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[282] Reiter 2014
[283] Ibid

book detailing a hunger strike against harsh prison conditions carried out by members of the

Irish Republican Army in the United Kingdom inmate leaders had received from Professor of

Sociology Denis O'Hearn at Binghamton University in Upstate New York.[284] With knowledge of

another recent successful hunger strike in Ohio, inmates in the SHU at Pelican Bay convinced

one another that the strategy could be an effective mode of resistance to challenge the

conditions of their confinement as well. The strike ended two weeks later on July 22, 2011.

While SHU inmates were unable to secure any substantive relief from their condition, they

were able to garner the attention of the national media and sympathies of at least some

proportion of the general public.

Then on August 12, 2012 a group of over a dozen SHU inmates, including members of

rival racialized inmate gang factions the Mexican Mafia and Black Guerilla Family in the CDCR

system, released a document entitled *Agreement to End Hostilities*, wherein these prison gang

leaders called for a universal cessation of hostilities between all inmates throughout the CDCR

and county jail facilities:

1. If we really want to bring about substantive meaningful changes to the CDCR system in a manner

   beneficial to all solid individuals, who have never been broken by CDCR's torture tactics intended to

   coerce one to become a state informant via debriefing, that now is the time for us to collectively seize this

   moment in time, and put an end to more than 20-30 years of hostilities between our racial groups.

2. Therefore, beginning on October 10, 2012, all hostilities between our racial groups… in SHU, Ad-Seg,

   General Population, and County Jails, will officially cease. This means that from this date on, all racial

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[284] Ibid

group hostilities need to be at an end… and if personal issues arise between individuals, people need to do all they can to exhaust all diplomatic means to settle such disputes; do not allow personal, individual issues to escalate into racial group issues!!

3. We also want to warn those in the General Population that IGI will continue to plant undercover Sensitive Needs Yard (SNY) debriefer "inmates" amongst the solid GP prisoners with orders from IGI to be informers, snitches, rats and obstructionists, in order to attempt to disrupt and undermine our collective groups' mutual understanding on issues intended for our mutual causes [i.e., forcing CDCR to open up all GP main lines, and return to a rehabilitative-type system of meaningful programs. privileges, including lifer conjugal visits, etc. via peaceful protest activity/noncooperation e.g., hunger strike, no labor, etc. etc.]. People need to be aware and vigilant to such tactics, and refuse to allow such IGI inmate snitches to create chaos and reignite hostilities amongst our racial groups. We can no longer play into IGI, ISU, OCS, and SSU's old manipulative divide and conquer tactics!!

This is clearly an unequivocal statement of solidarity across racial gang lines in collective resistance to carceral oppression and captivity. While many of my respondents on the outside were skeptical of the sincerity of this document, I have yet to interview a recently released SHU inmate who can confirm or disconfirm the authenticity and sincerity of this document. However, I and my respondents recognize the names of signers to this declaration as leaders of racialized prison gang factions like the Aryan Brotherhood, Mexican Mafia, Black Guerilla Family and Northern Structure/Nuestra Familia, suggesting that the document is indeed authentic. It will not be clear for a number of years, until data like that presented in this chapter can be analyzed to determine the effect of this declaration of truce and solidarity across racial gang lines in the CDCR system.

On July 8, 2013 over 30,000 inmates throughout the CDCR system went on a prolonged

hunger strike that lasted two months rather than two weeks, resulting in the martyrdom of one

of the strikers while on hunger strike.[285] This second much larger act of collective resistance

again garnered the attention of the national media and the sympathy of a significant portion of

the general public and was called off with the promise of legislative hearings on the conditions

endured by SHU inmates serving indeterminate sentences in the SHU program.[286] On February

11, 2014 those hearings took place in the California Legislature, where hundreds of prisoner

rights supporters packed the Assembly to offer their support for the abolition of the SHU

program in CDCR facilities, during which Assembly member Tom Ammiano (D – San Francisco)

lambasted CDCR officials for their insistence on maintaining the SHU program in its current

form.[287]

These recent developments are a possible indication that racialized inmate gang

factions may be returning to the political consciousness, solidarity and activism of their fore

bearers. Historical transformations are perhaps unfolding before us, and all those who value

prisoner rights and a just and equitable society should be attentive to where these new

developments might lead.

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[285] www.prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com
[286] St. John 2013
[287] www.prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com; Ammiano 2014

Chapter 7 Race War or Gang War?

Inter-Racial Gang Conflict in Los Angeles County

A: Well you know a lot of homeys will say they're racist, but I'm not gonna say I'm racist, cause I don't

hate them cause they're black you know?

Q: You hate them cause of the politics?

A: Yeah exactly.

WS Inglewood 13, 20s

In the prior chapters we examined a number of factors that contribute to the

perpetuation of inter-racial conflict between Latino and African American gang members in Los

Angeles, including a history of anti-black racial bias in Mexico and Latin America; racially divisive

settlement patterns in Los Angeles during the late 19th and early 20th centuries; the suppression

of social movements in black and Chicano communities in the 1960s and 1970s, which led to

the radicalization of racial identities; the role of culture in defining racial gang affiliations;

contemporary inter-minority bias in relationships, employment and housing; and the effect of

carceral policies on racialized prison gang politics. This chapter ties all of these elements

together, showing how specific factors contribute to specific conflicts in specific contexts. In

congruence with one of the principal methodological principles of this work, rather than

pursuing a nomothetic quest for generalizability, this chapter focuses on the specificity of social

phenomena, using specific examples to show how specific factors contributed to specific inter-

racial conflicts in specific contexts between specific black and Latino gangs in specific cases.

There are also contributing factors that have not yet been discussed such as competition for drug retail and distribution markets and conflicts arising out of the drug trade, and the misrepresentation of gang conflicts as racial conflicts by local media, politicians and law enforcement. Competition and/or conflict over the drug trade were the primary catalysts in the majority of specific inter-racial gang conflicts that were examined during the course of this research. The role of the drug trade in inter-racial gang conflicts has been suggested by my mentor James Diego Vigil in 2011.[288] However, this research takes that prescient intuition to its logical conclusion, examining the specific circumstances of the role of competition and conflict in the drug trade in the initiation of specific hostilities between specific Sureno and Crip and Blood gangs in specific contexts. This advanced level of micro analysis has been entirely lacking in existing research on both gang conflict and racial conflict, with precious few exceptions like the groundbreaking work of Karen Umemoto.[289] This work draws heavily on Umemoto's demonstration of the necessity of considering all of the specific factors that contribute to specific conflicts in specific contexts. As the age-old maxim goes, "the devil is in the details". Without specific knowledge of specific circumstances in specific contexts, existing academic analyses of gang conflict and racial conflict remain lacking. Speaking in generalizations as scholars of social phenomena too often do, is not indicative of the strength of the literature, but rather the limitations of its ability to explain specific cases in specific contexts. This is a deficiency in the literature the following chapter intends to mitigate.

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[288] Vigil 2011
[289] Umemoto 2006

The first part of the chapter examines the rules and mores governing levels of inter-racial contact between members of different racialized gang factions. The second part of the chapter examines the specific circumstances of specific inter-racial conflicts between specific Sureno and Crip and Blood affiliated street gangs in different areas of Los Angeles County, relating their particular neighborhood contexts and histories to the specific circumstances that served as catalysts and perpetuators of inter-racial conflicts between specific gangs in those particular areas. The analysis goes on to examine both the general and specific rules of engagement that operate among and between Sureno and Crip and Blood affiliated gangs in different neighborhood contexts, and how these formal rules and informal mores influence how members of rival racially distinct street gangs go about selecting targets for engagement during the course of their ongoing inter-racial gang conflicts, many if not most of which continue unabated through the present day.

7.1 The Code of the Hood

Not unlike rules governing inter-racial conflict in carceral environments discussed in chapter 6, there were significant differences between Sureno and Crip and Blood respondents in the formal and informal rules governing interaction between them. As can be seen in Tables 7-1 and 7-2, generally Crip and Blood respondents reported much more tolerance for interacting with Sureno gang members than Sureno gang members did for interacting with Crip and Blood gang members. When asked if they felt it was acceptable in their neighborhood to

interact socially or to hustle with Crips and Bloods, a majority (36-29 on both questions) of

Sureno respondents reported that it would not be acceptable to hang out or hustle with black

gang members in their neighborhoods. In contrast, Crip and Blood respondents overwhelmingly

reporting that it would be perfectly acceptable to hang out and hustle with Mexican gang

members, with only four out of twenty-five respondents responding in the negative. However,

all of the Crip and Blood respondents and all but three of the Sureno respondents reported that

there was no taboo against working in a multi-racial environment.

OK to Socialize	Sureno	Crip and Blood
Yes	29	21
No	36	4

Table 7-1 Tolerance for Inter-Racial Socializing

OK to Hustle	Sureno	Crip and Blood
Yes	29	21
No	36	4

Table 7-2 Tolerance for Inter-Racial Black Market Cooperation

OK to Work With	Sureno	Crip and Blood
Yes	62	24
No	3	0

Table 7-3 Tolerance for Working in a Multi-Racial Workplace

However, unlike carceral environments, where Sureno *reglas* apply to all South Siders regardless of their region of origin, on the streets each individual gang institutes and enforces their own rules and mores governing the level of acceptable inter-racial interaction. As Regression 7-1 demonstrates, there was a statistically significant difference at the $P<.05$ level of confidence, in the levels of tolerance for inter-racial social interaction on the streets between Sureno respondents from East Los Angeles and South Los Angeles, with significantly more Sureno respondents from South Los Angeles expressing tolerance for hanging out with African Americans, than Sureno respondents from East Los Angeles. Also as Regression 7-2 demonstrates, there was a statistically significant difference at the $P<.05$ level of confidence, in the levels of tolerance for inter-racial interaction in the black market between Sureno respondents from East Los Angeles and South Los Angeles, with significantly more Sureno respondents from South Los Angeles expressing tolerance for hustling with African Americans, than Sureno respondents from East Los Angeles. It is also worth mentioning that there was a statistically significant difference found on the same question between Sureno respondents from South Los Angeles and those from the West Side, though at the slightly less robust $P<.10$ level of confidence.

While working in an inter-racial environment was almost universally viewed as acceptable by gang members across the spectrum, Sureno respondents from East Los Angeles, particularly those from some of the older more traditional gangs like White Fence, State Street and Clover Street expressed the most intense misgivings about interacting with African Americans outside of a workplace environment. For one highly respected *veterano* from White Fence 13 on the East Side, enforcing taboos on social and black market interaction between South Siders and blacks is just as important out of prison as it is in prison, and in his barrio there was absolutely no tolerance of any such contact across racial lines. Maintaining such boundaries is particularly important for the elders and leaders of these gangs because they see it as a continuance of traditional values, the observation of which has enabled the gang to successfully reproduce itself generation after generation for nearly a century now. This "code of the hood" is zealously enforced by older leaders of traditional cholo gangs as a bulwark against any changing social forces that might threaten the continuation of the gang structure in its traditional form. Such values are passed down from generation to generation within both the gang, and in overlapping family units of multiple generation gang involved families that form the historical core of the gang and root it firmly in the barrio community it exists in.

> Q: So what are the rules for interacting with blacks in the streets?
>
> A: My neighborhood it's not allowed, period. Other neighborhoods especially like in South Central, it's allowed. The West Side, it's allowed.
>
> Q: Do you think that's because your neighborhood is more traditional and sticks to the old rules?

A: Well my neighborhood is an old neighborhood. Our neighborhood has lasted so long because of the

structure we have homes. So the rules, we don't break. The rules we keep. And we're deeply rooted.

There's already been generations upon generations of family members in the barrio.

ES White Fence 13, 50s

Other particularly malevolent South Siders from East Los Angeles might deal with black

gang members, if only to take advantage of and/or rob them outright after a false trust has

been established. As traditional enemies in carceral environments, blacks are "green-lighted" in

the sense that they can be victimized at will without any fear of repercussions from other

Sureno affiliated gang members. Whether or not such opportunistic victimizations involve some

sort of racial animus, they are perceived as a safe endeavor with regard to internal Sureno gang

politics in carceral environments.

Q: What about on the streets are there any circumstances under which it's acceptable to interact with

blacks?

A: No. there's no reason to.

Q: How about hustling, would you ever serve them or anything like that?

A: Nope. I'll rob them. Ha ha! That's about it.

ES Clover Street 13, 50s

Even the respondent from East Side State Street 13 whose moving narrative above

described his failed attempt to get his childhood friend inducted into his gang made a sharp

distinction when it came to the prospect of interacting with African Americans who were not

assimilated to Chicano barrio gang culture. He considered such contact unquestionably taboo.

Q: Under what circumstances do you consider it acceptable to interact with blacks on the streets?

A: I would say the only circumstance that's acceptable to me is the work area. If you work with them, then

aye fuck it.

Q: Would you hustle with them or serve them?

A: No I would still keep that separate, because of my upbringing and where I've been I would still keep

that separate. Like you don't interact with them at all, period. Like at work, that's the only place that it's

accepted. It's different cause it's work, it's your job. It's a work environment. You gotta be cool with that

and accept it cause whatever. But other than that, to me, it's not acceptable to go anywhere else or to

interact with them at all, or to trade or hustle or anything with them, period. It's just not a good look.

ES State Street 13, 40s

For many Sureno gang members, there is a lack of trust with African Americans who are

seen as lacking the integrity required to engage in black market transactions successfully.

Among many if not most Sureno gang members, African Americans are seen as greedy,

shameless and unpredictable, and therefore prone to rip off anyone who engages in narcotics

transactions with them. As a result of these perceptions, many if not most Sureno gang

members will avoid engaging in any kind of black market transactions with African Americans,

particularly Crip or Blood gang members.

Q: How about hustling with them? Is that acceptable?

A: Slangin dope to them, you know, I wouldn't, I wouldn't trust the mothafucker!

Q: No getting from them?

A: Fuck that! No major deals or nothing like that, I always stay away from it, you know, because they're unpredictable, you know what I mean? They're grimy.

ES Evergreen 13, 30s

As the quantitative analysis suggested, this sentiment was also not uncommon among Sureno respondents from the West Side, particularly those with connections to more tradition gangs in East Los Angeles, like West Side White Fence 13. Such connections serve as a conduit for the remission of more traditional values from the East Side, where such gangs were founded and are deeply rooted, to other areas where they expand to. However, left to enforce such boundaries to themselves in neighborhoods that are more racially mixed than the East Side, there can be some negotiation of the boundaries where the potential to make money is involved, while at the same time enforcing a strict boundary on purely social relations between South Siders and African Americans.

Q: So let's talk about under what circumstances it would be acceptable to hang out with blacks on the street. Would it be all right to hang out with blacks on the street?

A: You know there's sometimes, there's drug deals that happen.

Q: So it's all right to hustle with them?

A: If it's just a money thing, then that's all right.

Q: So you wouldn't invite them to a BBQ in the neighborhood huh?

A: Ha ha hell no! "Chicken and watermelon anyone?" Ha ha ha! Fuck no!

Other Sureno gangs on the West Side, with no such connections to traditional Sureno

gang structures, particularly those with a past history of being "green-lighted" for violating

Sureno informal taboos and formal *reglas*, like West Side La Mirada Locos 13 in the East

Hollywood area, have no compunctions about setting their own standards as to what level of

inter-racial interaction and endeavors is and isn't appropriate, and under what circumstances.

The opinions of other nearby Sureno affiliated gangs is not a deterrent to interacting with

African Americans, because they are already engaged in intractable blood feuds with every

other Sureno affiliated gang in their vicinity. When you and your hated enemies are trying to kill

each other day in and day out, being called "nigger lovers" by your mortal enemies isn't exactly

going to make you turn your back on friends of yours or business partners who are African

Americans, simply because your enemies don't approve of such relations. The following

respondent from La Mirada certainly makes it clear that he sets his own boundaries and anyone

who would seek to question his behavior and politic against him, will be responded to with

unmitigated violence. The willingness to engage potential moral entrepreneurs with violence,

can in some cases, carve out exceptions to the rules and *reglas* that South Siders are otherwise

expected to conform to. If potential moral entrepreneurs who would seek to marginalize

another South Sider to engage in narcotics transactions with African Americans are unwilling or

unable to engage in a full blown gang war to enforce compliance, then there is effectively no

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check on what individual South Siders or individual Sureno affiliated gangs can do in their own

neighborhood.

Q: On the streets, is it acceptable to hang out with fools from black neighborhoods? Like if you had a

homeboy that was a Crip or a Blood?

A: Well, like I said, cause in ours it's kinda hard as like these question are like a little different cause like I

said, we got our, our homeys from the Hustlers and their family members and I know, I know a lotta Crips,

I know a lotta Crips, when I used to live in South Central in the 40s, them fools started recognizing who I

was, I was making big money moves out there with them and them fools would be at the pad with me,

you know, like, "Aye wassup my nigga? We consider you 40s!" I'm like, "Hell naw, don't ever say that to

me homey, I'm from La Mirada," you know? "Aw, but you know what I mean, like we, we firme, we cool

my boy," and I'd be like, "Yeah I know," and I've always known like a lotta black dudes from black gangs,

but I've never let it, I don't think anybody's ever questioned that like, if I brought one around, it wasn't a

big issue, but I've never posted with them to where like it'd annoy my homeys, n'ah mean?

Q: How about hustling with black fools? Does anybody trip on that?

A: I've always hustled with black fools…from Hollywood, you know, I used to, I used to fuck with pimps

and…well, I offered them a service, but I guess it would be technically extortion, they were getting

jammed up by the dudes from White Fence so I would offer them a service like, "Aye, they come around, I

take care of that," you know? "But you gonna break bread every fuckin day," and then little by little I

started gathering my own little hoes and started working. At 19 I had 4 bitches working for me and I was

doing my thing, but only a black man can be a pimp right? But I had 4 bitches and I was pimping them, I

wasn't fucking them. I was going by the pimp code of what the fuck, what they fuckin go by, you know.

Q: Did anybody not like that?

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A: A couple of fools, but if they questioned me I'll fuckin put a bullet in their ass, you know? I wouldn't care, but it was fun, it was fun, I mean, I'm from Hollywood and Hollywood comes with, it comes with the territory, that's our environment, it's our environment.

Q: You think that that area is more loose and…

A: Yeah.

Q: Whereas like on the East Side a lot of fools are more like…

A: Exactly, you know, like over here, we don't, I don't sell black (tar heroin), but on the East Side I could find it like that. Out here I can't find it as easy, I know where it's at, but I can't take the time. It's just different, different environments demand different things.

WS La Mirada 13, 30s

In South Los Angeles there are a variety of different levels of acceptable boundaries for members of different Sureno affiliated gangs when it comes to hanging out and hustling with Crip and Blood gang members on the streets, and African Americans more generally. For some gangs, interacting socially is considered taboo, as is engaging in large-scale narcotic transactions, whereas small drug sales to individual African American addicts are considered an acceptable source of income for retailers in the market for illegal narcotics. A sale is a sale, and money is money, so long as no trust is required beyond a simple cash-for-dope retail transaction with an individual customer.

Q: Under what circumstances do you think it's alright for blacks and south siders to interact on the street? Is it cool to work together?

A: I mean if you have to, you know you gotta pay your bills, you know, that's, that's like a total different subject.

Q: You think it's acceptable to hustle together, to serve black fools, as users or to serve them weight?

A: I would draw the line, I would draw the line on, well you know what? I mean I would draw the line on serving them a lot of weight, but if it's just a crack head coming to buy, you know 20 or 30 as long as you're a smart drug dealer and you're not doing it from your home, you know? Slang it to them, you know, make your money.

Q: What do you think the boundary is with giving weight to blacks?

A: It's just not a smart idea, you know. It's just not something they should be doing, you know. They got their own people, you know, they should do their own thing.

Q: How about do you think it's acceptable to hang out with blacks on the streets?

A: To a certain point, I mean like if you're, I don't like eating with them, you know. I wouldn't wanna go out somewhere where it's gonna be crowded and I gotta be all up close to them.

Q: Like at the table?

A: Yeah, yeah, you know, I just, I don't wanna do that stuff, you know. I don't… I don't like that close of contact with black people.

Q: What about if you are in a club and there are black people there, are you gonna try…

A: I'll keep to my own, you know. I'll stay in like my own little area you know. It's not that I'm looking for beef, but I just don't want them around me, you know. "Stay to your own side, stay, kick it with your people, you know, do your own thing."

SC Clanton 14th Street, 40s

Many if not most Sureno gang members, and probably a large swath of the Latino community in general in Los Angeles, are fundamentally mistrusting of African Americans, particularly those who are Crip or Blood affiliated. Blacks are seen as poor business partners in

black market endeavors because they are perceived to be prone to ripping off anyone they do business with, and if caught dealing narcotics, they are seen as more likely to snitch than South Siders are because of their lack of over-arching organization. There is a common maxim that is often repeated when the issue of engaging in narcotics transactions with black gang members comes up in conversation, "They'd rather burn you for a thousand dollars in a day, than make a million dollars hustling with you in a year." For that reason, even those South Siders who will engage in narcotics transactions at the wholesale or distribution level, will rarely if ever give product on credit, a practice known as "fronting".

Q: Under what circumstances is it okay to interact with blacks on the streets?

A: I think if you're doing business bro like you know.

Q: Do you think it is okay to hustle with them?

A: You know what you know like out here it's different of course than out there but I would say to a certain extent because we already know they're scandalous bro so yeah exactly bro yeah no fronting.

SS Kansas Street 13, 30s

Lacking a proper analysis on the rate at which various races or gang members rip each other off or serve as police informants and/or testify in open court to aid the prosecution of gang members, I would not venture an anecdotal opinion as to the veracity of the perception that Crip and Blood gang members are more likely to burn someone in a drug deal or snitch on someone than South Siders are. However, it is worth noting that there is a structural reason for such a disparity, if it does indeed exist, in that Crip and Blood gangs lack an overarching

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structural organization. So if any individual Crip or Blood member burns someone or snitches

on someone, he has only those involved and his own homeboys to contend with for even such a

serious transgression. Even in carceral facilities, other black inmates may be rather unmotivated

to punish a known snitch for reasons discussed in chapter 6. Other Crips and Bloods might know

of, or have heard of his lack of integrity, but few will take it upon themselves to actually punish

him in any substantive way. Furthermore, his peers from his own gang may either support him,

despite his violation of the "G-code", particularly if the party he burned or snitched on was not

a member of their gang. If they are motivated to punish him, he may simply abscond to another

area and continue on as if nothing happened with little fear of retribution across even modest

geographical distances. Therefore, particularly if the victim of a narcotics transaction gone bad

or the prosecuted party imprisoned on the testimony of a snitch is a Sureno affiliated gang

member, the offending party's Crip and/or Blood peers will have little motivation to punish

their own homeboy for burning or snitching on someone they have animosity for anyways. In

many cases, the general animosity black and Latino gang members have for one another, as

demonstrated in chapter 5, is reason enough for most Crips and Bloods, and the black

community in general, to hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil, particularly if the victim of the

snitch is a South Sider.

In contrast, South Siders are subject to a strict regime of formalized *reglas* that

permeates every barrio and neighborhood in Southern California, and anywhere Sureno

affiliated gangs have emerged across the nation. As this entire Sureno gang nation is subjected

to the authority of the Mexican Mafia prison gang, those who are "green-lighted" for violating

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reglas against burning other South Siders in high level narcotics transactions or snitching on anyone for any reason, cannot simply abscond and set up shop in another neighborhood. Anywhere they go, any solid South Sider who knows who they are and what they have done will take it upon themselves to attack the "green-lighter" at the first opportunity. Furthermore, as discussed in chapter 6, if the offending party is arrested and enters a carceral facility with other South Siders, his assault is virtually guaranteed. Thus South Siders may be less likely to violate the "G-code" because they cannot easily avoid the consequences of getting "green-lighted".

However, while snitching on anyone, African Americans included, is considered a serious violation of the *reglas*, ripping off or robbing Crip or Blood gang members is most certainly not against the rules. It would not be unfair to say that it is even condoned or outright encouraged in some cases, as gang leaders reason it is better to rip off a Crip or Blood gang member than a Sureno affiliated gang member, because the South Sider could complain up the totem pole and there could be politics behind that transgression, whereas the black gang member is an open "green-light" to be ripped off or robbed at will, with no chance of repercussions beyond the victims own ability and willingness to retaliate.

Regardless of whether one side or the other has more or less integrity, it is undeniable that Crip and Blood gang members, and the African American community in general is much more amenable to inter-racial interaction with Sureno affiliated gang members and Latinos in general than South Siders are to inter-acting with them. When observing Crip and Blood gang members interact with Sureno affiliated gang members they are not intimately acquainted with, there is certainly a palatable degree of circumspection, a pang of anxiety over the

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possibility of a violent encounter, but once the air has been broken and both parties come to

realize that the intentions of the other are not confrontational, Crip and Blood gang members

generally do not look negatively upon interacting with South Siders. As such, there is no general

taboo against interacting with or being seen interacting with South Siders, or Latinos in general.

Q: In the streets under what circumstances is it acceptable to interact with cholos?

A: For me, there's no circumstances,

Q: So there's no barriers at all? Hustling is cool?

A: No barriers at all. Yes all that. It's all good.

Watts Bounty Hunter Bloods, 20s

This was certainly apparent on an amorous level from the data presented in chapter 5,

but it is also true on a peer level of male Sureno, Crip and Blood gang members. As one of my

respondents who is an OG from West Side Rolling 20s Neighborhood Bloods put it in a formal

interview, "Blacks are very receiving… not just in gangs, but in general." Both Crip and Blood

gang members, and the black community in general, is generally rather receptive to accepting

Latinos and Latino gang members with whom they are on good terms with, without any of the

kind of social stigma that tars those South Siders who dare to violate taboos against interacting

with blacks. With social mores that emphasize the autonomy of individuals, Crip and Blood

gangs members who choose to interact with South Siders and Latinos do not suffer any sort of

social reprobation, either from their gang peers or the black community in general.

Q: Not counting prison politics, on the street what circumstances is it acceptable to interact with Mexican

gang members on the streets? Like its ok to work with them right?

A: Yup

Q: Is it ok to hang out with them otherwise? Like do your homeboys ever kick it with the Harpy's?

A: As far as the black there is no boundary. Whatever an individual chooses he chooses. There are no

consequences in the black community for having Latino friends or dating Latinos or whatever.

Q: How bout hustling with them?

A: There's no consequence for that either.

WS Rolling 20s Neighborhood Bloods, 50s

The only veritable limit to interacting with South Siders from most Crips' and Bloods'

perspective is whether or not there is an ongoing gang conflict with the specific gangs they are

members of. If not, then interaction across racial lines is considered perfectly acceptable,

though may still warrant trepidation until the intentions of the unfamiliar party are

satisfactorily determined as non-threatening.

Q: On the streets what are like the boundaries as far as hanging out with Mexicans? Assuming they're not

from Florence of course…

A: Man, it kinda all depends on where they from. Like if I seen somebody from up inside of here and he

was from South Los[290], you know I'll be cool with him.

Q: So it just kinda depends on where they from? If they ain't a enemy then it's all good?

A: Yeah, but you still gotta like watch them too though.

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[290] South Los 13 is a Sureno affiliated gang that has amicable relations with East Coast Crips in the Carson/ South
Bay area of Los Angeles County

Figure 7-1: South Central 18 Street Lagos and Eight Trey Hoover Criminals gang graffiti proclaiming in no uncertain

terms that the area where this photograph was taken is their shared territory (Photograph by Author)

In fact in many cases, alliances and friendships are made between Sureno and Crip or

Blood gangs across racial lines by virtue of a shared conflict with other Sureno, Crip or Blood

affiliated gangs. For example there is a long running loose alliance between West Side 18 Street

and Crip and formerly Crip affiliated gangs like Rolling 30s Harlem Crips, Rolling 60s

Neighborhood Crips and Hoover Criminals (formerly Hoover Crips) on the West Side of South

Central in the jurisdiction patrolled by LAPD's 77th and Southwest Precincts, as the above

photograph and the following quote demonstrate. This alliance is due to their common

enemies, as 18 Street has a long running conflict since the early 1990s with the Black P Stone

Bloods and their allies the West Side Rolling 20s Neighborhood Bloods in the West Adams/

Crenshaw area, both of which are traditional enemies of Rolling 30s, Rolling 60s and Hoover,

with blood feuds between the gangs stretching back roughly four decades.

> Q: What about, what about hanging out with Mexican gang members, is that acceptable in your hood,
> like, is there any Mexican gangs you guys get along with?
> A: Yeah like 18s, we cool with 18s Street just cause… they got everybody like they have everybody mostly
> is they enemy, and plus all Blood gangs, they beef with Blood, so they cool with us mostly because we
> beef with like all the same gangs.
> SC Rolling 60s Neighborhood Crips, Teens

Even Sureno affiliated gangs with a reputation for racial animus like Florencia 13

associate with black gangs in their area that they do not directly have conflicts with and whom

share common enemies, like the Five Deuce (52nd Street) Pueblo Bishop Bloods. The Pueblo Del

Rio Housing Project, located on the East Side of South Central Los Angeles, east of the 110

freeway around 53rd Street off of South Alameda Street, is the traditional territory of the Pueblo

Bishops, an African American gang that predates the inception of the Crip and Blood identities

in Los Angeles. With both Florencia and the Pueblos sharing a common enemy in the East Coast

Crips, and Crips on the East Side of South Central in general, a de-facto agreement to

cohabitate has developed between the Pueblos and Florencia, which has an active clique in the

projects called 54th Street Locos. They cooperate in drug retail and distribution efforts, socialize,

interact and coexist with one another amicably, contrary to what moral panic provoking media

sources suggest, such as the ignominious History Channel docu-drama *Gangland*, which painted

a heavily biased portrait of Florencia 13 as the worst thing to happen to African Americans since

the Ku Klux Klan.[291] This is exactly the type of moral panic Howard Becker warned us against

over half a century ago,[292] yet neo-liberal modernity never passes up an opportunity to label

and lambast a potential source of unabashed racism in a cynical attempt to distract the public

from the very real substantive racial disparities that persist in American society, even if the

truth is ever more complicated than the simplistic notion that Florencia 13 hates black people

and Florencia gang members are a bunch of brazen unapologetic racial bigots.

Q: With other blacks, is it cool in your neighborhood to hang out with them, like you said with Bloods or

whatever? Do homeys trip on that?

A: My neighborhood got a projects and they share the projects with the black people, the Bloods, the Five

Deuce Pueblos.

Q: Oh you guys are in the Pueblo Projects also?

A: Yeah, so pretty much they know it as a Pueblo Projects, but it's us there too you know. They get along,

because pretty much their hood and our hood, we beef with pretty much all the same hoods you know?

So if we see one or they see one going into the hood then we'll let them know you know.

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[291] Gangland 2010
[292] Becker 1963

Q: Do you guys hustle with them too?

A: Yeah yeah. Well sometimes the homeys don't have shit, they'll go hit those fools up, like "What you fools working with?"

Q: What about for them to sell to the blacks, like when the homeys re-up they break off the Bloods some weight to get them over?

A: Yeah we'll do that, but mostly we sell to our own on the street.

SS Florencia 13, 20s

Of course the above quote flies in the face of the mythical moral panic narrative that Sureno gangs and their members like Florencia 13 are vicious racists who would shoot African Ammericans on sight for as little as being black and wearing a white t-shirt (more on that below) and who must be confronted with the full force of State and Federal hate crime law because they are the racists, and the whole African American community in South Los Angeles are the victims. This type of rank victimology is not helpful in either understanding or addressing the very real inter-racial conflicts that do exist between black and Latino gangs in Los Angeles. There are victims and perpetrators on all sides of these conflicts, yet accusations of blatant racism are always one sided, with Sureno gang members painted as the sole perpetrators, fed in part by a small number of individual gang members who use racial epithets as a symbolic demonization of their gang rivals, and are reckless enough to proclaim such unmitigated racially bigoted views on national television, thereby providing fodder for the media moral entrepreneurs who promulgate such a simplistic narrative. As the counter-narrative presented later in this chapter recounts, the conflict between Florencia 13 and East

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Coast Crips is more about territory and the narcotics trade than it is a "race war", as the mainstream media would have us believe.

However, due in no small part to the historical anti-black bias in Mexican society as discussed in chapter 3 and empirically evidenced in Sureno respondents in chapter 5, Sureno gang members tend to be patently less comfortable with Crip and Blood gang members than vice versa. However, when it comes to the narcotics trade, hustling and making money, everyone on all sides are very much comfortable. As the old proverb goes, "Money talks and bullshit walks." The ability and willingness to cooperate in the narcotics trade is the oil that greases the wheels of black/Latino gang relations in Los Angeles County, particularly in South Los Angeles, where demographically mixed neighborhoods virtually necessitate cooperation between Sureno and Crip and Blood gang members in the narcotics trade if conflict is to be avoided, at least at the distribution level, if not the retail level. However, conversely the inability to cooperate in the narcotics trade and the willingness to rip off or rob one another can be the catalyst for a brutal, protracted and practically perpetual gang war between Sureno and Crip or Blood affiliated gangs.

For Crip and Blood gang members, working with at least some Sureno affiliated gang members is a virtual necessity if one is employed in the narcotics trade. Since the arrest and conviction – some would call it a scape goating – of the notorious African American narcotics distributor "Freeway" Ricky Ross, African Americans have not been involved in the importation and distribution of any significant proportion of the narcotics that cross the border from Mexico, and thus lack the contacts to the Mexican Nationals who run the narcotics smuggling

trade over the border. There has never been shown to be any sort of overarching structural or

organizational link between the Mexican Mafia and the Mexican narcotrafico cartels, beyond

Sureno gang members merely serving as hired guns.[293] However, some Sureno gang members

who have family ties to regions of Mexico where the major narcotrafico cartels are based, like

Michoacan and Sinaloa, do have the connections needed to acquire wholesale quantities of

narcotics, in order to distribute them to retail locations throughout Los Angeles.

Therefore African American Crip and Blood gang members have to go through Sureno

affiliated gang members to get the narcotics they require to supply their own retail operations.

This is a reality that Crip and Blood gang members who are employed in the narcotics trade

have to accept. In fact finding a good connection in a Sureno affiliated gang member who is

willing to supply them with the quantities of narcotics they need to supply their retail

operations, without ripping them off or robbing them, is a very valuable ally and cherished

friend indeed. Whereas in the past, black gang members may have seen Latino narcotics

distributors as an easy target for robbery, many have learned the folly of, as the adage goes,

"biting the hand that feeds you." In any case, it is to all sides' benefit to cooperate in the

narcotics trade if possible, which is often the only employment opportunity gang members in

the ghettos and barrios of Los Angeles have.

> Q: Are there any boundaries for interacting with people from Mexican gangs?
>
> A: No, no most everybody does cause, you know, Mexicans get the dope now. Back in the days the blacks
>
> used to get the dope, but we started jacking and robbing Columbians and people who coming from

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[293] Blatchford 2008

Mexico, so they started letting the Mexicans, young Mexicans, gang bangers get it, so you dealing with

them if you wanna get weed or cocaine.

Q: Nobody thinks anything of that right?

A: Naw, no, nobody think nothing bout it when you getting some money! Ha ha ha!

ES Blood Stone Villains, 40s

These kind of relationships, rooted in both the narcotics trade and a shared

neighborhood history growing up together in mixed communities, often result in very close

friendships between Sureno and Crip or Blood affiliated gang members in some communities,

where Sureno and Crip or Blood gangs share not only their territory, their rivals and their

narcotic retail and distribution operations, but moreover they share their very lives together,

coming of age facing the same struggles and triumphs together without the kind of racial and

social boundaries that exist in other regions of Los Angeles County. As the above respondent

recounts, these lifelong friendships can indeed be so close that they endure each other's

conflicts as well, even where their rivals accuse them of being "race traitors" on account of

their willingness to maintain relationships with one another across racial lines.

Below one of my subjects from the Blood Stone Villains gang on the East Side of South

Central recounts a particularly noteworthy episode where his Mexican American childhood

friends from Playboys 13 got into it with a rival Sureno gang, Tortilla Flats 13, who then spray

painted "Fuck Niggers" on his new house after he had just moved to the South Bay area from

South Central. However, this seemingly blatant hate crime was not due to an ideology of racial

bigotry or because they had beef with Blood Stone Villains, but because they had beef with his

Sureno childhood friends who had helped him move into the new residence, South Side

Playboys 13.

A: Aiight, I bought a house in Torrance, they went and wrote "Fuck Niggers" on the wall.

Q: What because you moved in the house?

A: Yeah Tortilla Flats.

Q: Wow what part of Torrance is that?

A: That is unincorporated Torrance.

Q: Like Sheriffs area?

A: Yeah like where the Sheriffs be at.

Q: Did they ever do anything beyond that?

A: They was hot about it, well yeah it was a big ol' thing, the news came out there and everything. What

was ironic about it, they were saying "Fuck Niggers," but how this all started was over some Mexicans. I

took some young Mexican homeboys that stay on my block (in South Central), cause the block I grew up

on had a Mexican gang too and they claim the same street I claimed 56th street, but I'm their big homeboy

because when their part of the hood started, they didn't have no homeboys my age, I was the oldest.

They kinda learned from me, how to fight from me. So when they became Playboys, from that street 5-6

Playboys. So anyway, they, I got them to help me move my girl over there and, and so while they were

standing around some of the dudes from Tortilla Flats, you know how Mexicans do, they bold like,

"Where you from homey?" They told them where they from, but they had a strap.

Q: So they got into it themselves?

A: Yeah, so when they did that, they was like, "Why he over there with these black dudes?" So naturally,

instead they couldn't get with them…

Q: So they got at you instead? Ha ha!

A: Yeah! Ha ha ha! Alotta people don't even know that story, they just know, "Oh you black, there's Mexicans over there tripping on him," but it's ironic…

Q: Because it was actually between them, not you…

A: Yeah but being they was young dudes and they older dudes now and it's crazy because they in and out of the penitentiary and still, even though they Mexicans, they some gang banging ass Mexicans with tattoos and all that, they still don't like Tortilla Flats cause about what happened with me, you know, and they Surenos and everything.

Q: Yeah a lot of them don't like the Flats huh? Ha ha!

A: But they don't like them cause of that, they like "Fuck these motherfuckers!" right?... I mean, them dudes (Playboys), I go eat at their house, we almost like family. They come over my house, my mama know they name, they mama know mine, you know.

ES Blood Stone Villains, 40s

Unfortunately in some cases, childhood friendships can grow frayed as gang members mature into middle and high school and assume the racial gang identities of South Sider, Crip or Blood. When inter-racial gang feuds erupt between the gangs that childhood friends are members of, those friendships become much more difficult to maintain, particularly when people on both sides start getting killed.

A: No it wasn't really weird cause where we grew up in Watts. It was a lot of blacks and Hispanics all right there together. Before we started beefing, when I was a kid back then we all got along. Then everybody started beefing and breaking off, but our older brothers and sisters had babies together. It's crazy…

SC East Coast Crips, 20s

Having one of your gang peers killed by a childhood friend or their gang peers can lead to mistrust and consternation between individuals who may have been very close friends in the past, before they matured into active gang members. Even where personal trust and friendship is maintained, a certain social distance must be enforced, if for no other reason than that one's gang peers will most certainly attack a rival gang member on sight, even if he is friends with one of their homeboys. Therefore, even if members of rival black and Latino gangs choose to maintain personal relationships with one another irrespective of the larger conflict between their wider gang communities, they must generally do so outside of the conflict area, in order to protect themselves and one another from becoming victims by virtue of their maintaining ties to one another in the context of an ongoing inter-racial gang war. Whereas on the other hand, friendships and relationships that exist across racial lines that do not cross the lines of partisan gang conflicts might be perfectly acceptable.

> Q: What about with like blacks that aren't South Siders, like Crips and Bloods and all that, on the street is it acceptable to interact with them? Is it cool to hang out with them in the hood?
>
> A: Yeah
>
> Q: Or like how you mentioned you had a friend that was black but he's a Blood and you told him he couldn't kick it in your neighborhood?
>
> A: Well not because of my beliefs, cause of my homeys don't like him. So why am I gonna bring him over when they're just gonna beat him up? It's like bringing a piñata out to a Mexican party! They're gonna fuck that shit up!
>
> Q: So it's more a neighborhood thing that he can't come around?
>
> A: Yeah it's a neighborhood thing. Not a racial thing.

Q: So if a black fool from a different black neighborhood that you don't have beef with, he'd be good to come and kick it if he wants?

A: Yeah I mean I got a lot of friends that are black and come to my neighborhood. But people know them, I mean there black, but people don't trip on them so it's cool.

Q: So the only reason homeys would trip on those other fools is cause there from a rival neighborhood?

A: Yeah because they got beef with the Bloods.

SC 38 Street, 20s

Where inter-racial gang wars have been especially costly to gang communities on both sides of the conflict, the ability of individual members to maintain some vestige of previous friendships and relationships with members of the rival gang with whom they grew up, can perhaps be interpreted as fulfilling an unconscious need to preserve their sanity by recognizing the humanity in one another they once knew. Such relationships are both a cherished memory of a time growing up together sharing one another's lives before the conflict and carnage they have since waged on each other's families and communities, and a painful reminder of the devastation those conflicts have inflicted on both of their communities and all of their families. Finally coming to terms with the pain and devastation that both they have suffered and they have inflicted on others, can bring a tear to the eye of even the most hardened gangsters on both sides of the inter-racial gang conflict color line.

Q: When you were a kid did you have any friends that were black?

A: Oh yes I did, I had alotta friends.

Q: Did you play with them, stuff like that?

A: Yeah

Q: Would they go over to your house and you go over to their house?

A: Yes, exactly, they would play around the neighborhood, we'd go to the house and…

Q: Would your mom ever treat them funny cause they were black?

A: Just almost, just a little bit, but not too much because they were neighbors, so she had to see them every other day.

Q: So she knew them since they were kids?

A: She knew them as kids as well.

Q: How about when you would go to their houses? Would their parents treat you differently?

A: Nope, they would treat me with real respect you know, they'll prolly be like, "Oh they know," cause his name was, what was his name, my black friend? I think his name was Shontez, yeah that was his name so, his mom used to be like, "Aye Shontez, you got your lil Mexican friend come looking for you, when's your Mexican friend coming over?" But sometimes she'll say like, "Oh well son we can't have no company now," can't have no company? Hmmm… can't have no company.

Q: But his mom was cool with you?

A: Yeah his mom was real cool.

Q: What happened to that friendship when you got older? Did you stay friends?

A: We had to become enemies because he joined my, my rival gang, he joined, he became East Coast Crip. So now I'm from Florence, so that doesn't go, but I ran into him, I ran into him twice already in the last four or five years and we said, we talked a little bit, "Aye wassup?" Cause we've known since we were kids, so his mind was like, "Sorry it had to be this way," we chopped it up a little bit, "Wassup man? How you doing? How's your mom? Oh, alright man, you should be careful, you know you told me to be careful, I tell you to be careful." You know, whatever happens, happens, it's going on, but we try not, not to let that affect my relationship and his, I mean, whatever we had since we was teenage, I mean kids, yeah kids. So we know each other since we was kids so, we, so I felt the amount of weight like, cause I know

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he's with the business and I'm from Florence like, you know. It is hard for me to accept it, but the other way around, you know, we were childhood friends so, but he's black, so it's like OK…

Q: So, you guys aren't gonna bang on each other?

A: So, we're not gonna bang cause I know where he's from and I'm from Florencia.

Q: He gave you a pass.

A: Yes, he gave me a pass and I gave him a pass a couple of times so that kind of works both ways, you know, likewise.

SC Florencia 13, 30s

Indeed maintaining such relationships across lines of inter-racial gang conflict can potentially save one's life at times, when one finds themselves on the end of the barrel of a gun, with a childhood friend on the other end. If it had been a rival gang member who this respondent did not have a personal relationship with on the other end of that gun, he would most certainly have been dead long before I ever got the opportunity to interview him. Truly, these kind of cross-racial childhood friendships can save peoples' lives.

7.2 Inter-Racial Street Gang Conflicts

Almost the entirety of this dissertation up to this point has been exploring and examining the myriad factors that play a role in framing, initiating and perpetuating inter-racial conflict between primarily African American Crip and Blood gangs, and primarily Latino Sureno affiliated gangs. While a number of these factors have previously been pointed to by my

mentor Diego Vigil,[294] this research has fulfilled his prescient premonition by exploring and

examining them in great detail both from a macro historical perspective and with a qualitative

micro analysis. The pertinent factors that we have examined thus far are, in roughly the order

they have been discussed:

1. The historical anti-black racial bias in colonial and modern Mexican and Mexican

    American populations in Los Angeles and throughout Mexico and Latin America.

    (Chapter 3)

2. The geographic isolation and corresponding settlement patterns in the historical African

    American community in South Central Los Angeles and Mexican American community in

    East Los Angeles. (Chapter 3)

3. The emergence of exclusive and oppositional racial identities in the wake of the collapse

    of the radical civil rights movement, which undermined any potential for inter-racial

    class solidarity among black and Latino ghetto and barrio youth populations. (Chapter 3)

4. The amalgamation of racial and gang identities. (Chapter 4)

5. Cultural differences that define the boundaries between opposing racialized gang

    identities. (Chapter 4)

6. Increased Latino immigration starting in the early 1980s from Mexico and various

    Central American countries, which tipped the demographic balance from majority

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[294] Vigil 2011

African American to majority Latino in many historically African American communities in South and West Los Angeles County. (Chapter 3)

7. Corresponding group threat, realistic threat and defended neighborhood sentiments among African American and Latino gang populations as a result of demographic encroachment. (Chapter 1, 5 and 8)

8. Provocative racial narratives promoted by local media, politicians and law enforcement. (Chapter 1 and 8)

9. Bias in interpersonal relationships. (Chapter 5)

10. Split Labor Market bias due to competition for employment and/or housing. (Chapter 1 and 6)

11. Racialized prison gang politics. (Chapter 6)

12. Competition and conflict arising out of disputes in the narcotics trade. (Chapter 7)

In this section I explore how specific factors play a role in specific conflicts between specific Sureno and Crip or Blood affiliated gangs in specific communities in specific contexts. While each specific conflict that exists between specific black and Latino gangs does not necessarily involve all of these factors in every case, these factors provide a repertoire with which to explain each and every conflict that the remainder of this chapter examines, and the numerous other inter-racial gang conflicts this chapter does not examine, and there are many more than those discussed here. The following section reviews how each of these factors have

played a role in framing, initiating and/or perpetuating specific conflicts, both individually and in combination.

The multitude of micro analyses that follow demonstrate that, contrary to well-meaning pieces that seek to downplay or deny the extent of inter-racial conflict between black and Latino gangs in Los Angeles and elsewhere,[295] inter-racial gang conflict is indeed endemic in Los Angeles, just as the vast majority of respondents from mixed areas of Los Angeles reported that their gangs had been and/or are currently embroiled in inter-racial gang conflicts, as Table 7-4 demonstrates. The only areas where this is not true are areas like East Los Angeles, where there is a homogeneous Latino population and therefore virtually no black gangs for Latino gangs to conflict with. However, even in homogenously East Los Angeles, still roughly half of respondents reported having had inter-racial conflict either with Crip or Blood gangs that once existed in East Los Angeles, or those that have tried to move to East Los Angeles and establish a presence there.

Inter-Racial Gang Conflict	Sureno	Crip and Blood
Yes	26	18
No	15	7

Table 7-4 Respondents from South and West Los Angeles Reporting Inter-Racial Gang Conflict

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[295] Hipp, Tita and Boggess 2009; Bean et al 2011; Jones-Correa 2011; Morin et al 2011; Freer and Lopez 2011; Zamora 2011; Vigil 2011; Martinez and Rios 2011; Pastor 2014; Sandoval 2014; Barretto et al 2014; Cuevas 2014; Johnson 2014; Leiva 2014

Inter-Racial Gang Conflict	Sureno
Yes	8
No	17

Table 7-5 Respondents from East Los Angeles Reporting Inter-Racial Gang Conflict

In South Los Angeles County and on the West Side of Los Angeles, inter-racial conflicts between black and Latino gangs are common and in many cases, have been carrying on continuously for generations. Many of these conflicts trace back to the early 1990s, or even the early 1980s, when Latino immigration, primarily from Mexico and Central America, triggered demographic transitions that ultimately tipped the demographic balance in many formerly majority African American neighborhoods in South and West Los Angeles County. Group threat[296] and defended neighborhood[297] perspectives provide lucid theoretical explanations for hostile sentiments in the black community towards Latinos, as a result of the demographic encroachment and displacement black communities in Los Angeles have experienced in the face of massive immigration from Latin America from the 1980s onwards. The animosity and bias that these sentiments represent, demonstrated in the second part of chapter 5, provides an easily exploitable resource for Crip and Blood gang members intent on fomenting inter-racial conflict with Latino gangs, and a corresponding conceptual framework for demonizing rival Sureno affiliated gang members. Likewise, the history of anti-black bias in Mexican and Mexican American populations discussed in chapter 3 and demonstrated in chapter 5, provides an easily

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[296] Blumer 1958; Quillian 1995, 1996
[297] Suttles 1972; Bergesen and Herman 1998; Green et al. 1998

exploitable resource for Sureno affiliated gang members intent on fomenting inter-racial conflict with Crip and/or Blood gangs, and a corresponding conceptual framework for demonizing rival Crip and/or Blood gangs.

Of course the historical division imposed on the black and Latino communities in Los Angeles, from housing covenants and forced segregation, to the collapse of the civil rights movement and the crystallization of insular oppositional racial identities, to the amalgamation of racial and gang identities, provides the conceptual foundation upon which these frameworks of inter-minority bias and hostility are situated. Thus, when any provocateur on either side of the racial gang color line desires to provoke and/or perpetuate inter-racial gang conflicts, this repertoire of cultural and racial hostilities provides fertile ground upon which to cultivate such hostilities, as rivals are easily demonized and the provocation and/or perpetuation of such conflicts are justified in the minds of combatants on both sides of the conflict. Therefore, this tinderbox of fuel for inter-racial gang conflict is easily ignited by the spark of a narcotics transaction gone wrong, a territorial dispute, a prison beef brought to the streets, or the type of minor provocations that everyday micro-aggressions inevitably produce. The micro-analyses that follow demonstrate the roles different aspects of this conglomeration of historical structural factors play in the provocation and perpetuation of inter-racial gang conflicts throughout Los Angeles County.

In Long Beach, an incorporated seaside community in South Los Angeles County of stratified middle and upper middle class communities on one side, and low income

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marginalized communities on the other, conflict between African American and Latino gangs has long plagued the city. The three largest Sureno affiliated gangs in Long Beach, the East Side Longos, the West Side Longos, and the North Side Longos, have engaged in a brutal blood feud with the two largest African American gangs in Long Beach, the Insane Crips and the Rolling 20s Crips, of which the popular rap artist Snoop Doggy Dogg was a member. While these gangs have also engaged in intra-racial conflicts with each other between their own racial gang factions, the conflicts that cross racial lines are seen as the most significant and clearly prioritized by the members of these gangs. As the following interview quote demonstrates, the history of inter-racial gang conflict in Long Beach between black and Latino gang communities occupies a preeminent space in the consciousness and perceptions of gang members in Long Beach. It is worth noting that in Long Beach, Samoan and Asian gangs generally take on Crip gang identities as well as the cultural identities of black gangs, and therefore are aligned with black gangs in the minds of Sureno affiliated gang members.

Q: Has your neighborhood ever gone at it with black neighborhoods?

A: That's who we go at with, all blacks. 90% of my enemies in my neighborhood are blacks, and Samoans and Asians.

Q: What neighborhoods do you go at it with?

A: We go at it with 20s, (Rolling) 20 Crip, Insane Crip, Tiny Rascal Gang, Asian Boyz (Crips), Sex Money Murder (Crips), West Coast Crips, Sons of Samoa (Crips), West Side SOS (Crips), North Side Mac Mafia (Crips). All 90% are black or Samoan.

Q: How did beef start with these black and Samoan gangs?

A: Well this was back before my day. So I figure… I don't know, honestly I couldn't say, I couldn't call it. It's been going on for generations, but I'm thinking just because of shootings, you know, that's what I'm guessing. Back in the days with my neighborhood, back in I'll say what, the 80s? We ain't beefing so much with black neighborhoods back in the days, it wasn't no beef like that. It just blew out of proportion.

Q: You think it started in the late 80s, early 90s?

A: Early 80s.

ES Longos 13, 20s

Gang enforcement officers in the Long Beach Police Department also share the view that inter-racial conflicts are predominant in Long Beach, and while intra-racial gang conflicts do exist as well, they are eclipsed by the larger inter-racial conflicts between the largest Sureno and Crip affiliated gangs in Long Beach, East Side Longos, West Side Longos, North Side Longos, Insane Crips and Rolling 20s Crips.

Q: What specific inter-racial conflicts between Black and Latino gangs are you aware of in your jurisdiction? What are the different gang rivalries?

A: As far as the gang rivalries, it's almost a standing order, blacks versus Hispanics, and vice versa. If they see one in their territory they will shoot it out on the spot.

Long Beach Police Department Gang Intelligence Officer

The predominance of inter-racial conflicts has also recently been reified by a relatively recent pact between the major Sureno affiliated gangs, East Side Longos, West Side Longos and North

Side Longos, to end their conflicts with each other, and instead turn their aggressions on their

common enemies, the Crips.

> Q: What's the major Latino gangs?
>
> A: Our biggest Hispanic gang is East Side Longo, followed by West Side and North Side Longo. Currently
>
> they are all getting along, they have a pact or a truce now which hasn't always been the case.
>
> Q: Are they separate gangs?
>
> A: Separate gangs, separate geographical locations. Longo is just for Long Beach.
>
> Q: But they're all the same gang?
>
> A: Yeah, well now they kind of are since they're getting along, in a sense.
>
> Long Beach Police Department Gang Intelligence Officer

In contrast, the various Crip gangs in Long Beach conflict with each other as much as they

conflict with the various Longos neighborhoods. Living in close proximity to each other in

adjacent neighborhoods, shootings and murders between the Insane Crips and Rolling 20s Crips

in Long Beach are about as common as shootings and murders between either of them and

Longo gangs in Long Beach. Perhaps not coincidentally, the conflict between the bifurcation of

the Crip community in Long Beach dates back to the same time period in the post-Civil Rights

era as the emergence of hostilities between Crip and Longo affiliated gangs in Long Beach, the

1980s.

> Q: What are some of the names of the Black gangs?
>
> A: As far as the Black gangs go, Insane and Rolling 20 Crips are the biggest…

Q: Do they have a confederation?

A: No they are bitter enemies. Because… well most of the youngsters don't know, but they use to be one gang back in the day, back in the 80s. One group wanted to be dope dealers and one wanted to be professional gangsters, and they split off that way and they've been warring ever since. The Rolling 20s were in it for the money and Insanes were out for the violence. None of the kids out here now know that history.

Long Beach Police Department Gang Intelligence Officer

Unfortunately, the specific catalyst that initiated the conflict between Crips and Longos in Long Beach is also not known to any of the gang members I interviewed. Perhaps it has been lost to history, taken to the grave with those who have lost their lives during the course of these inter-racial conflicts, which have carried on now for over three decades. However, it is known that the conflict between the various Longo factions was started over a narcotics transaction gone wrong, and given that the conflict with the Crips also started during the crack era, when tons of cocaine were being imported into South Los Angeles to fund an illegal war in Nicaragua, it is not an unwarranted speculation to suggest that perhaps the narcotics market played a role in the commencement of hostilities between Crip and Longo factions in Long Beach in the 1980s. While no gang member I interviewed, formally or informally, could recall a specific incident that served as a catalyst for the conflicts that exist today, one respondent suggested that the narcotics market may have played a role in the initial commencement of hostilities.

Q: Do you know how those beefs started with the black gangs? Have they always had beef with your neighborhood?

A: Hmmm when it started off, when both gangs started off no, they didn't have beef. It all started over girls, like always. Girls and dope.

Q: People fighting over girls or burning each other over drug deals?

A: That's how all these neighborhood beefs happened.

ES Longos 13, 20s

However, whether narcotics played a role or not is impossible to corroborate because I almost got a different answer from every gang member I interviewed, even those who were close friends like the above respondent, and the below respondent.

Q: Do you know what started the beef with them in the streets?

A: I heard, uh we were just talking about this the other day. Created a little documentary, but…I think it was uh.. What was it? I have no idea, to be honest, streetwise, I have no idea.

Q: Was it over dope or…

A: I think it was over them killing a Hispanic, and it just went on.

Q: It just went off from there?

A: Something to do with a black killing Hispanic.

ES Longos 13, 20s

Regardless of what the catalyst was to provoke the initiation of hostilities between black and Latino gangs in Long Beach, the war between Crips and Longos carries on to the present day, as gang identities and gang conflicts in Long Beach are perceived as delineated along racial

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lines. However, as the quote that opened this chapter suggested, these conflicts are not over racial identity per se. The race concept, and the cultural symbols that define racialized gang identities discussed in chapter 4, provide the conceptual framework that opposing gangs and their members use to demonize their rivals. It is important to remember that the underlying reasons for the conflicts are not rooted in racial bigotry in the sense that they hate one another for racial reasons. They don't hate each other because they're black or Mexican, they hate each other because of gang rivalries rooted in interpersonal conflicts and/or competition for drug markets. Racial animosity is merely the currency with which hostility towards gang rivals is expressed.

With regard to other inter-racial gang conflicts between black and Latino gangs in Los Angeles, in many cases, narcotics transactions gone wrong are explicitly recognized as the catalyst for ongoing gang wars between black and Latino gangs. For example in the core of South Central Los Angeles, a feud between one of the oldest Latino gangs in Los Angeles, South Side 38th Street Locos, and one of the newer Blood gangs in South Central Los Angeles, the All For Crime (AFC hereafter) Bloods, has carried on for almost two decades at the time of this writing. The original catalyst for this conflict is firmly recalled as a murder arising out of narcotics transaction gone wrong, where an AFC member robbed and murdered a 38th Street member who had been selling him wholesale quantities of narcotics.

Q: What are your neighborhoods primary enemies?

A: Of black?

Q: Of anything?

A: Anything? Florence, Barrio Mojados, well all the neighborhoods in South Central.

Q: But what would you say are the main ones you went at it with?

A: The Pueblos, AFC's…

Q: Is AFC a black gang?

A: Yeah All For Crime Bloods. It's like some new shit, like 2000.

Q: How about the Blood beef? How did that start?

A: Uh they killed my homey in 96. It's been going on ever since.

Q: Any idea what that was over?

A: Over money, they tried to burn my homey over some pounds and they shot him and we found out it

was them and we killed the fool that killed him, and it's been back and forth ever since.

SC 38 Street, 20s

While the conflict with AFC is over a narcotics transaction gone wrong, the conflict 38th

Street has with the 54th Street Pueblo Bishop Bloods, aligns with the principal intra-racial rival,

Florencia 13. While conflicts between black and Latino gangs are often cast in racial terms, such

simplistic narratives overlook the fact that black and Latino gangs in South Los Angeles in fact

form confederations with one another against their common rivals, as Florencia and the

Pueblos share common enemies in both 38th Street, a predominantly Mexican Sureno affiliated

gang on one side, and East Coast Crips, a predominantly black Crip affiliated gang on the other.

A similar dynamic exists on the West Side of South Central Los Angeles, with the Rolling

30s Harlem Crips and West Side 18th Street on one side, and the Rolling 20s Neighborhood

Bloods and Harpys 13 on the other. 18th Street and Harpys are traditional rivals, as are Rolling

30s and Rolling 20s. As such, alliances between black and Latino gangs, are often

complemented by conflicts between their rivals. For example in the mid-2000's when a

member of Harpys who lived in Rolling 30s territory was murdered under unknown

circumstances, Harpys gang members attributed the murder to the Rolling 30s and retaliated

accordingly, initiating an inter-racial gang conflict that continues to the present day.

Q: Do you know how the beef started with the Harpys? Do you know when it started?

A: I don't know why it started, but I believe it was because one of they, one of the Harpies homeys was

hanging, well actually living in our neighborhood and somehow he came, somehow he came up dead, but

they think we did it, but we didn't do it.

Q: Ok so it started like that?

A: Yeah.

Q: When was that?

A: And this is about what? I was eighteen, this was about five years ago.

Q: So the beef with the Harpys isn't even that old?

A: Yeah, I mean, and it came about because, you know, he actually had grew up, not with us, but like with

my family of generation ahead of me, which is, they about 25, 30 now and. Yeah, so he actually grew up

with us, but never turned our neighborhood, you know he turned Harpys, but same time, you know, it

was a issue behind that, but at the same time he had, certain people that was like, "Aw man, he grew up

with us. We ain't finna do nothing to him!" That's how it always was so he was always free to walk around

there and nothing ever happened to him, you know.

Q: Do you have any idea what he got killed over?

A: Naw, I don't know.

Q: Since he was a Harpy and it happened in your neighborhood, the Harpys blamed you for it?

A: Yeah, exactly.

This dynamic also is at play in a long running conflict between West Side 18th Street and West Side Blood sets, the Black P Stones (BPS hereafter) and their allies the Rolling 20s Neighborhood Bloods. The origin of the conflict lies in competition over a narcotic retail location, a particular apartment building on the edge of Baldwin Village, otherwise known as "The Jungles", a dense complex of low-income low rise apartment buildings just west of the historically African American Crenshaw Boulevard corridor, dominated by the Black P Stones since their transfer there from Chicago in the early 1970s. In the 1970s and 1980s, all three gangs, 18, BPS and 20s, shared a common overlapping territory, regularly interacting and functioning together both socially and in the narcotics trade. During that time 18th Street gang members were deeply outnumbered by BPS and Rolling 20s, as the Baldwin Village/ West Adams area they coexisted in had long been a historically African American community. However, as the demographic balance shifted with increased Latino immigration during the Reagan era, West Side 18th Street expanded its membership base with older cliques like Smiley Drive Gangsters growing and the establishment of new 18th Street cliques during the 1980s and early 1990s like the Tiny Locos, Rimpau Locos, and Alsace Locos.

Q: Was there, when you were growing up, was there like racial tension in the high schools, like you know how in the 90s there was all that tension at Dorsey, with Mexicans and Blacks and stuff, was there anything like that when you were growing up?

A: Nah, cause I went through there, I would have been class of 85, so, there were no issues at all.

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Q: When do you think that tension started up?

A: Maybe, mid 90s, maybe mid-90s.

Q: Do you know what the beefs were over? What caused the…

A: Probably the influx of, Hispanics, the influx and then as, as, Mexicans began to adapt the Black culture, that brought about a, that brought about a sort of a clash if you will, also, the drug, the drug trade also contributed a lot to it.

Q: Competition?

A: Right, because, before, the Hispanic gangs were sort of submissive, and if you were Mexican and you weren't in a gang you were really submissive to Blacks or particular Black gangs, and Blacks saw them as non-threat, non-threatening, some individuals even were predatorial, predatorial to Hispanics, yeah.

Q: Robbing them and stuff?

A: Robbing them, kinda like bully tactics.

Q: That was a racial thing or you think it was just an easy lick?

A: A combination of the two, combination of the two, I want to be careful when I say racial because, it wasn't that they hated, it wasn't a hatred thing it was more or less of a sense of social, imbalance.

Q: that they were a different group?

A: They were a different group, and, a lot of them are humble because maybe they didn't live here long, they were finding their way, or they didn't want any trouble, and individuals may have taken that as a sign of weakness of some sort.

Q: You think that was like around the time that the population shift happened and a lot of Mexicans moved into the area?

A: Yeah, it was gradual.

Q: You think from like the mid-80s to the mid-90s?

A: It's always increasing from early on.

Q: Even to today?

A: Yeah, it's still increasing.

WS Rolling 20s Neighborhood Bloods, 40s

With increasing numbers, 18th Street gang members, who Blood gang members had long functioned with in prior generations, suddenly began to represent a threat to BPS and Rolling 20s, as group threat[298] and defended neighborhood[299] perspectives suggest. This was both a demographic threat, as the influx of Latinos to historically African American communities like West Adams presented the type of housing and employment competition suggested by split labor market[300] and consolidated inequality[301] theories and examined in chapter 5, but also a territorial threat as increased numbers of 18th Street gang members gradually encroached on existing narcotic retail operations of historically rooted black gangs around the Crenshaw corridor on the West Side of South Central Los Angeles. As 18th Street began to overwhelm smaller black gangs in the area, the larger black gangs like BPS and Rolling 20s began to see them more as a potential threat, rather than a harmless cohabitant.

Q: How did the beef with the 18 Street start, is that because of the BPS thing, or because they're close with…

A: You know what, that escalated because they have a problem with Gear, I don't know if you know the history with that, they shared a neighborhood with the Gear Gang Crips, and they kinda like overpowered them and took over, which didn't set well with a few (black) people but pretty much everybody goes, "Oh

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[298] Blumer 1958; Quillian 1995, 1996
[299] Suttles 1972; Bergesen and Herman 1998; Green et al. 1998
[300] Bonancich 1972; Banton 1983; Olzak and Nagel 1986; Olzak 1993
[301] Blau 1977, 1987; Blau and Blau 1982

that's their problem." But when it started to spill over, it got bigger, it's kinda like the thing of "give a inch,

take a mile". So they were allowed to exist there but then, they got to where there was a altercation and

it didn't go, it didn't go away easily, it escalates and you know, that's when it just boiled over, and boiled

over, and boiled over.

WS Rolling 20s Neighborhood Bloods, 40s

The specific catalyst for the initiation of hostilities was competition over a specific

narcotic retail location, an apartment complex in a particularly high traffic location within the

Jungles where narcotic users had long frequented. In 1993 competition for a gradually

diminishing customer population came to a head and a series of shootings and murders

followed that continue to the present day, devastating the surrounding communities for

generations now, with lives being lost on all sides. Due to the close alliance between BPS and

the Rolling 20s, the conflict between 18th Street and BPS quickly began to involve Rolling 20s as

well.

Q: Has your neighborhood ever gone at it with any Mexican gang?

A: Yeah we been at war with the 18 Streets since 1993.

Q: How did that start?

A: It started because the 18 Streets were selling dope in the Jungles and they had an altercation about

sales and the 18's and the Black P Stones in the Jungles went to war. And there is an affiliation of the

Stones that is not in the Jungles that are part of the Rolling 20's hood called the City Stones and the 18

Streets started attacking the City Stones and they started accidentally killing Rolling 20's and other blood

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gang members to the point where they said they don't give a fuck. If you over there wearing red, the 18

Streets are Blood Killers so if you over there wearing red you getting hit.

Q: Did the 20's and BPS always have a close relationship before all that? Have there always been a lot of

crossovers and what not?

A: Yes there are some families where a older brother might be Black Stone and a younger brother be

Rolling 20's and they live in the same home, or vice versa.

Q: Like when you were growing up did you kick it in the Jungles and party with the Stones and all that?

A: Yes my father lived there so I grew up over there too. Off of Adams Blvd there's a area that's also

shared with the Avenues, but it's also considered Black P Stones, actually it's where they started, they

moved into the Jungles later. But yeah we share a neighborhood Black P Stones and Rolling 20's.

Q: So even though its two different hoods with two different names and all that, it's really one big group

of extended friend and family kinship between the Stones and the West Side 20's?

A: Yeah we all one big group of friends. We walk to school together, we eat together, do everything

together.

Q: Do you know what the dispute was with the 18's? Was it about location or was it someone had burned

someone?

A: Well it was about location, there was an apartment building on Gibraltar and that's where it started. I

get two sides of the story, I get the story from the 18 Streets and the story from the Black P Stones. The

18 Streets was saying that the Stones were telling people not to buy from them and taking their

customers and things like that, and then they confronted them and they were arrogant and saying, "This

is our neighborhood", and the 18 Streets were just like "Naw we just want to work together" and the

Black Stones wouldn't have it and it led to a fight and then it went from there. From the Black P Stone

side, they saying just the opposite that the 18 Streets were saying this is their neighborhood and they

gonna sell wherever and they don't give a damn so that's what the Black Stones say about it. Basically it

started over both of them wanting to sell drugs at the same location on Gibraltar where there wasn't a lot

of money to be made, so they started fighting over customers. And it led to a fight and the Black P Stones shot at the 18 Streets and told them to get up outta there, and the 18 Streets came back shooting and it turned into a war and it's never stopped.

WS Rolling 20s Neighborhood Bloods, 50s

Group threat and defended neighborhood perspectives can also provide an explanation for inter-racial conflicts that arise from encroachment by Crip or Blood gangs on the territory of Sureno affiliated gangs, particularly where competition in the market for narcotics is involved. Sureno affiliated gangs are also protective of their territories and are in most cases equally unwelcome to the presence of Crip or Blood gang members in neighborhoods that have been historically been their exclusive territory. An inter-racial gang conflict between the Rolling 30s Harlem Crips and West Side White Fence 13 in the Hollywood area in the late 1980s is as good example of this dynamic as any is. When Rolling 30s members decided to start selling narcotics at a lucrative narcotic retail location in White Fence's territory on Hollywood Boulevard and Western Boulevard, White Fence members reacted by demanding that the 30s cease their narcotic retail operations there. When the Rolling 30s members refused, a series of shootings and murders ensued, until the Rolling 30s members gave up on selling drugs at that particular location in Hollywood.

Q: Were there blacks that grew up in your neighborhood where you grew up?

A: No they didn't but they came to sell drugs. That's what started the problems.

Q: Do you feel like they were biased against you? Was there racial tension there?

A: Yeah actually what happened is Rolling 30s, blacks came to sell drugs up by western and Hollywood, Rolling 30s Harlem Crips. And they started oh man a lot of shit man. And they fucking, the shit they did the scandalous shit. I mean dude they did shit to like chicks you know.

Q: Do you know how it started?

A: Because they wanted to sell. What happened was where we would sell drugs, they would come up to sell drugs right there, by Western and Hollywood. We told them they couldn't sell there, and they were like, "Fuck that we're gonna sell," and what happened is people ended up dying man. It's fucking deep.

Q: Do you remember which side let off first?

A: Well we told them they couldn't sell there, and they said fuck that, and we said they couldn't sell here and fucking it was bad dude. There as a few years it was really bad dude. There was sick shit that was really bad. This is deep shit for me dude. That's why I'm telling you.

Q: Did any off your homeboys get hit by the 30s?

A: Yeah yeah yeah.

Q: Was there retaliation?

A: Definitely. They killed one of my homegirls.

Q: Was that the only person that got killed on your side?

A: No they prolly got two… two dudes… yeah they killed a couple people. It's crazy man. Crazy violence.

Q: Do you know how many of them got killed?

A: I know for a fact at least three of them.

WS White Fence 13, 40s

In many cases the hatred gang members harbor for their rivals is expressed in starkly racial terms, with the use of racial epithets on all sides. I have heard South Siders utter hateful racial epithets like "nigger" and "*mayate*" in reference to their rivals, and I have heard Crips and Bloods use racially hateful terms in reference to their enemies like "wetbacks", "beaners" or

just "Mexicans", which when used in certain contexts is meant with just as much hate as "niggers" is in another context. Rather than perceive the complexity of inter-racial gang conflicts along simplistic racial lines, the use of racial epithets and the expression of gang rivalries in racial terms is better understood as a reflection of the kind of historical and cultural biases that exist between Sureno and Crip and Blood affiliated gang members, as discussed in chapters 3 and 5, and employed by gang members to demonize their rivals. These historical biases and cultural intolerances provide a repertoire of sorts, to be employed in demonizing rival gang members across racial lines. The bravado of demonizing one's rivals with racial epithets and intolerant cultural interpretations should not be mistaken for representing truly ideologically bigoted motivations for inter-racial gang conflicts in and of themselves. Provocative racial epithets and culturally intolerant characterizations directed at gang rivals, are in fact a symptom of complex inter-racial gang conflicts, they do not define them as racial conflicts.

Q: What started the beef with the Blood gangs in your neighborhood? Do you know?

A: As far as…

Q: Have they always been going on as far as you know?

A: Yeah, as far as I know we never got along with them.

Q: As far back as you can remember?

A: Basically because they were just niggers. You know, just, they're niggers, you kill them.

Q: Was it ongoing beef like you had with other South Side neighborhoods? Or was it something that flared up here and there and that was the end of it?

A: It was more like, if we seen one of them, shoot you know. If they didn't, if you never see them, you

don't see them, whatever.

Q: If they ever shot a homey, then go look for them?

A: Yeah, they had, yeah exactly, we didn't go looking for them like we did the other neighborhoods.

Q: But if you caught one slipping in the neighborhood?

A: Yeah, right, yeah then he would die, yeah.

Q: How often would that happen, seeing that you would overlap with them?

A: I would say prolly once a month, prolly once a month we'd end up shooting at them, you know this is

the 80s, I'm talking about the 80s when drive-by's were like every night common event, you know? And

when we went to go drive by, we went to go do our enemies, Harpys, 18 Street, you know.

Q: Only if you happened to be driving through the neighborhood?

A: And on the way back we better go ride through the Outlaws, yeah, you know, the Rolling 20s and

Outlaws you know.

Q: If there were an opportunity?

A: If they were out there yeah, you know what I mean? Like, "Pull over fool! Let me reload, I got some

niggers right here," you know? Get some Harpys and some niggers all at the same time! Ha ha ha! Let's do

this!

Q: Would they hit you guys back? Did you ever have homeboys that were killed by them?

A: Yes, yes, my homeboy _____ was killed by some black dudes.

Q: So it went both ways?

A: Yeah, it went both ways, yeah.

SC Clanton 14th Street, 40s

While the above respondent makes liberal use of racial epithets in his recount, this

demonstrates the extent of his disdain for his rivals, not that the conflicts he and his gang

engaged in with them were rooted in racial bigotry. The conflicts were only racial in the sense that they were inter-racial conflicts, not in the sense that conflict represented a purely racial motivation and animosity. The use of these terms is a reflection of the demonization of those particular rivals, and does not extend to other African Americans, as his ambivalence towards Crip gangs in his area demonstrates. I am intimately acquainted with this respondent, having known him for a number of years both before and during the course of the fieldwork conducted for this research, and I know him to have a number of African American friends and acquaintances. While he and they regularly engage in the kind of hazing and joking common to locker rooms and bars across the nation, busting black and Mexican jokes on one another to the sound of howling laughter, the kind of vitriol contained in the above quote is reserved exclusively for members of rival Blood affiliated gangs. Thus he is not racist in the sense that he feels that way towards all African Americans, rather he only feels that level of hate for those with whom he has engaged in deadly gang feuds. When gang members are at open war in the streets, calling a rival gang member a "dirty nigger" or a "burrito eating motherfucker" is the least injurious transgression that occurs when, during the course of inter-racial gang conflicts, people on all sides are shot, maimed and murdered.

Nonetheless, voicing a racial epithet during the course of a violent crime can often lead to prosecution on hate crime charges, even if the motivation for the attack is gang related rather than racially motivated. As a Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Operation Safe Streets (OSS hereafter) gang detective from LASD's Compton Station put it to me in a formal interview, "As far as what constitutes a hate crime, just because a Hispanic gangster shoots at a Black

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gangster doesn't mean it's a hate crime. I can attribute that to a turf war, but the moment they yell out 'nigger' or they start writing on the walls, that becomes a hate crime." Thus the underlying reason behind an incidence of gang violence is irrelevant to law enforcement, because what constitutes a hate crime in the eyes of the law is the use of a racial epithet, regardless of whether the motivation for the attack was ideological bigotry or not. However, there are no cases known either to me or anyone I spoke with in law enforcement, of a Crip or Blood gang member being charged with a hate crime against a Sureno affiliated gang member, despite the fact that perpetrators and victims are to be found on all sides of inter-racial gang conflicts. Casting Sureno affiliated gang members as solely or even disproportionately responsible for inter-racial gang violence is neither accurate nor constructive, as such biased enforcement and the false narratives that drive such policy and practices only act to further inflame rather than assuage inter-racial animosity among gang members.

A recent case from the city of Compton on New Year's Eve of 2013 is a pertinent example. Around Christmas of 2012 an African American family moved into a predominantly Latino area of Compton near the intersection of Central Avenue and Compton Boulevard, an area claimed by one of Compton's larger and more active Sureno affiliated gangs, Compton Varrio 155th Street (CV 155 hereafter). Apparently unbeknownst to the new residents, CV 155 had engaged in decades of inter-racial gang warfare with neighboring Crip and Blood affiliated gangs. As a result, CV 155 members generally consider the presence of any black youth in their territory a potential threat. They therefore have an informal policy and practice of confronting any male African American youth they see in their neighborhood in order to determine whether

or not they are gang affiliated, and if they are to attack them. Thus when the new African American family moved into their neighborhood, CV 155 members harbored suspicions that the new neighbors were either affiliated with a rival Crip or Blood gang, or that they were somehow associated with rival gang members and thus would provide information to them that would put CV 155 members' safety in jeopardy.

While the three teenagers in the newly arrived family were not gang members, one of the young ladies had a boyfriend who was. On New Year's Eve when the young lady's boyfriend came to the house who, as the OSS Detective quoted above informed me in an informal interview was affiliated with a local Crip gang, the suspicions that CV 155 members had about the occupants of the house being associated with a rival gang were validated. They then did what any active gang member would do, they attacked the rival gang member when they saw him in front of the house, proceeding to beat him about the head and body with a length of steel pipe. When he escaped the initial attack and ran into his girlfriend's house, the CV 155 members returned with more of their homeboys and proceeded to yell racial epithets at the house with the teenagers inside, brandished a firearm, and threw a bottle through the front window. If not for the proliferous use of racial epithets, a simple assault of a rival gang member with a blunt object and the breaking of a window would not have garnered much attention from the mainstream media or law enforcement. Such assaults occur daily in Compton and throughout Los Angeles County. Indeed, there were over 30 gang-related murders in Compton in 2013, yet none of them received the level of media and law enforcement attention that this incident did.

The fact that racial epithets were used during the incident provided the local muck

raking media with fodder to fan the flame of racial antagonism with reckless reporting that

suggested a connection between an isolated incident of gang violence, and a larger policy and

practice of racially motivated anti-black ethnic cleansing on the part of Sureno affiliated gangs

in Los Angeles County. This is exactly the kind of sensationalist yellow journalism Karen

Umemoto denounced in her discerning analysis of the role of media in propagating perceptions

of gang conflicts as racial conflicts.[302] As Umemoto explained, such reporting manipulates

perceptions of gang conflicts by framing them in a narrative of racial conflict, suggesting that

the basis of the conflict is due to racial bigotry rather than gang rivalry. Such inflammatory

narratives color the perceptions the community has of such incidents, inducing a moral panic

over the concern that racial bigotry is the underlying reason behind such attacks and therefore

that any African-American resident could be similarly targeted for attack on the basis of race

alone. Such false narratives can also act as self-fulfilling prophecies, convincing gang members

involved in a conflict to view the conflict along racial lines, rather than as the gang conflict it is.

A story in the *Los Angeles Times* from January 25th, 2013 entitled, "Attack on family in

Compton latest incident in wave of anti-black violence", clearly pushes the idea propagated by

law enforcement that such attacks are part of a wider campaign of racial bigotry and aggression

against African Americans perpetrated by members of Sureno affiliated gangs, as the following

excerpts from the article demonstrate.

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[302] Umemoto 2006

> The attacks on the family are the latest in a series of violent incidents in which Latino gangs targeted blacks in parts of greater Los Angeles over the last decade… Federal authorities have alleged in several indictments in the last decade that the Mexican Mafia prison gang has ordered street gangs under its control to attack African Americans.[303]

This blatant effort to advance a narrative that connects unrelated isolated incidents of inter-racial gang violence to a wider campaign of ethnic cleansing purportedly orchestrated by the Mexican Mafia is both divorced from reality and devoid of any substantive understanding or analysis as to why such incidents have occurred on an individual basis. Such provocative propaganda is the result both of excessively intimate and uncritical relationships between local law enforcement and journalists, as well as the career aspirations of individual journalists like Sam Quinones and Richard Winton who have engaged in a long pattern of advancing a narrative of racial conflict, regardless of the specificities of individual cases, not to mention lack of proof of such a coherent and coordinated policy on the part of the Mexican Mafia.

The two principal assailants in this case plead guilty to Federal hate crime charges as part of a plea deal to avoid the decade plus of incarceration they would have faced had they gone to trial and lost. However, members of CV 155 I have spoken with informally feel overwhelmingly that their prosecution for hate crime charges was unfair, in that the impetus for the assault was the gang affiliation of the victim and not his racial identity in and of itself. Such blatantly biased prosecutions of Sureno affiliated gang members, without corresponding prosecutions of Crip and Blood gang members, who engage in the same types of inter-racial

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[303] Quinones, Winton and Mozingo 2013

violence, only served to further inflame the animosity of CV 155 members and other Sureno

affiliated gang members towards rival black gang members, rather than abate their hostility. As

one CV 155 member put it to me in an informal interview, "The fucking *jura* never charge those

fools (rival Crips and Bloods) for hate crimes when they blast on us, but our homeys smacked

some fool with a pipe and they threw the book at them!"

Even a member of a rival Sureno affiliated gang that has long feuded with CV 155, South

Side Kansas Street 13, sympathized with the perception that the CV 155 members who were

prosecuted for hate crimes were victims of biased prosecution by pointing out, "Look bro, I'm

gonna put it to you like this, even the President and the Attorney General are black homes. Of

course they're gonna fuck over the *raza*. Meanwhile the *tintos* (blacks) get away with

anything!" He was apparently unaware that the Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the gang

bureau at the FBI's field office in Los Angeles, Robert Clark, is also African American.

While Umemoto found perceptions among residents of institutional favoritism towards

Latinos,[304] in all other cases I have examined, institutional favoritism clearly favored African

American gangs, with primarily Latino Sureno affiliated gangs and the Mexican Mafia as the

perpetual boogey man of inter-racial gang conflict in Los Angeles. Federal enforcement

agencies headed by African Americans, which use their discretionary authority to pursue cases

exclusively against Latino gang members, give the impression that biased motives lie behind the

biased application of federal hate crime statutes exclusively to Latino gang members. The

appearance of such bias only inflames racial hostility that Sureno affiliated gang members feel

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[304] Umemoto 2006

toward their African American rivals, providing yet another source of antagonism that inflames rather than abates inter-racial gang violence. Such biased reporting and enforcement thus becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, as racial motives are ascribed to gang conflicts, which in turn causes gang members to reconceive their conflicts as revolving around racial identities rather than gang identities, thereby exacerbating these conflicts rather than abating them.

A more recent case of biased reporting and law enforcement provocation occurred in May of 2014 in the aftermath of the firebombing of four apartments in the Ramona Gardens Housing Project in the Boyle Heights section of East Los Angeles, in the shadow of Los Angeles County USC Medical Center. On the evening of Mother's Day the apartments of three African American and one mixed black/Latina couple had Molotov cocktails broken on the exterior of the units, causing some minor exterior damage to a window and some exterior walls. One elderly African American resident informed me that she actually found an unignited Molotov cocktail in her backyard. With the majority of the victims being African American in a housing project that had long been the territory of a local Sureno affiliated gang, Big Hazard 13, and a prior case of fire bombings that occurred in the early 1990s, law enforcement and the local media set about promoting a narrative that ascribed racial bigotry as the motive for the attacks and conjectured a nefarious conspiracy connecting the Mexican Mafia to the attacks in the immediate aftermath of the attacks. However, as is always the case, the specific circumstances that led to these attacks are considerably more complicated than a simplistic narrative of racial bigotry.

In the past decade or so, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA hereafter) began a concentrated effort to remove the Hazard gang members and their families from the housing project they had traditionally occupied for generations. Families that harbored Hazard gang members (as in let their children sleep in their apartment) were evicted from the projects, and families from outside the community were brought in to replace them. In some cases African American residents from other housing projects were transferred to Ramona Gardens to replace Latino residents who had long called Ramona Gardens home. Many of the new residents were hostile to Hazard affiliated families and have worked openly with local law enforcement, calling the police any time they see Hazard gang members on the premises and having regular meetings with local law enforcement in the gymnasium on the grounds of the housing project.

I dunno, those projects are so weird right now, I even seen a *jura* (cop) bring a birthday cake to this lady's pad you know. Like what is this all about? These cops come around like in their lil unit and they start coming around and like knocking on doors and talking to the ladies you know, getting information. Like on Saturday mornings, we have a spot called *La Rachon*. Like a lot of people come, post up and start selling like food and clothes and electronics and stuff, and the cops will just come and start talking to the ladies. Pretty much just like passing info and stuff.

Q: Like they're talking to homeys moms?

A: Yeah but naw, to the other ones that don't even got family from the hood. They prolly moved in like five, ten years ago. The newbies you know. Yeah and they wanna like, get rid of us. And man, once a month they have a meeting in the gym, the *juras* come and they tell them everything, plus the cameras.

ES Big Hazard 13, 40s

Furthermore, while HACLA has made a concentrated effort to evict Hazard gang members and their families, some of the new African American residents who were brought into Ramona Gardens by HACLA, included active gang members from other housing projects like the Bounty Hunter Bloods from the Nickerson Gardens Housing Project in Watts. In addition to the mass eviction of longtime community members and their families, and the influx of new residents from outside the community, HACLA installed security cameras throughout Ramona Gardens and increased law enforcement presence was implemented as housing police began regular patrols in the projects, focusing their attention primarily on harassing and intimidating Hazard gang members and their families into withdrawing from the public space. Gang members who had been evicted and/or who were named in a local gang injunction were regularly arrested for trespassing or being in violation of the injunction whenever they would attempt to visit friends or family who still live in Ramona Gardens. One Hazard gang member I interviewed had been to jail five times for being in violation of the injunction in as many years.

Q: Are you named in the injunction?

A: Yeah. Since like 07, there's this one *jura* (cop) that just would keep harassing me. I used to come out of my pad just to take out the trash and he would get me. Like "Come over here!" I'm like, "What? I'm just taking out the trash", "You ain't supposed to be here!", "What? I live here. I'm not with the homeys what the fuck?", "It don't matter, the gang injunction, you're not supposed to be here." So that's what he took me in for, gang injunction. He took me in twice, by myself. Don't even have to be with nobody. He just

take me in by myself, cause I couldn't be in the neighborhood, but I lived in the neighborhood! I fought

those cases but I lost them both. I did like two months, then like 45 to 60 days. For nothing though!

Q: How many times you get hit with that?

A: Five times! Five times!

Q: Damn you got five convictions for gang injunction violation? Wow that's crazy!

A: Yeah and I ain't even did nothing! Five times fool. Serio!

ES Big Hazard 13, 20s

Such aggressive and selective enforcement engenders a perception of institutional

favoritism and feeling of resentment among Hazard gang members, as they are being kicked

out of their own community and known gang members from another community are moved

into their community to replace them. When HACLA first started moving African American

residents from outside the community into Ramona Gardens, Hazard gang members engaged in

a campaign of harassment in an effort to persuade residents from outside the community to

leave. However, when law enforcement attempted to connect older members who had grown

up in Ramona Gardens to the campaign by younger members against African American

residents, the older members instructed the younger members to leave African American

residents alone, so long as they were respectful and did not engage in any gang activity in the

projects.

You know before in the projects there was never no black people. But there's alotta black people right

there now. even on Thursdays the homeboys go right there in the hood and play basketball. They play

against like blacks. Homeys don't trip no more. It ain't nothing no more.

Q: That just changed in like the last 5 years though right? The housing authority decided to moved blacks into the projects on the east side?

A: Yeah prolly in like 09 it started.

Q: that's actually kinda more fucked up for you right cause alotta people like you that lost their pad, black people moved in huh?

A: Yup yup! At first, but then like they were just bringing them in like too many. And then the homeys were like, phssshh. And then they put the cameras up. they got cameras all over now so…

Q: You think at first the fools from your neighborhood were tripping though?

A: Yeah cause I was part of it you know. We were robbing these fools, fucking up their cars. They didn't get the message you know, like get the fuck up outta here.

Q: Did any move out cause of that?

A: Yeah most of them, but they just kept coming in though.

Q: So they'd move new ones in?

A: Yup. Yeah. And then plus like a couple older homeys got busted for hate crime you know. Older homeboys who had nothing to do with it you know. We said you know what forget it. They had nothing to do with it though.

Q: So at some point you guys just decided fuck it it's not worth it?

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you think they're doing that to all the other projects on the east side?

A: I dunno.

Q: Any of those black families that are moving in are there any black fools from neighborhoods too?

A: Yeah there's even a fool from Bounty Hunters right there right now.

Q: Are they trying to like set up shop right there or…?

A: Naw they just like keep to themself.

Q: If they tried to set up shop it would be a different story huh?

A: Ha ha yeah…

ES Big Hazard 13, 20s

That détente lasted until just recently when gang affiliated African American residents openly disrespected Hazard members and their families on Mother's Day of 2014. Members of the Bounty Hunters, some of whom live in Ramona Gardens, were engaging in a bit of revelry in the parking lot on the evening of Mother's Day and a young lady in their group had exposed herself in public, offending the families of Hazard gang members. When Hazard gang members objected to the indecent display and requested that the young lady clothe herself and the Bounty Hunters tone their party down or take it inside, the Bounty Hunters told them to go fuck themselves and claimed their gang affiliation, throwing up a "BH" and yelling out "Bounty Hunters!" This provocative bravado was a blatant provocation to an outright gang conflict and was the culmination of years of hostility that had been brewing between members of the two gangs in Ramona Gardens.

Indeed HACLA's campaign to evict Hazard gang members and their families, while allowing Bounty Hunter gang members to live and move freely in Ramona Gardens, gives the impression that by moving Bounty Hunter gang members into Ramona Gardens, HACLA intended to provoke conflict between the two gangs. It seems a rather unlikely coincidence that the African American gang that was moved into Ramona Gardens, shares the same exact acronym as the existing Latino gang in the projects, "BH" for Bounty Hunters or Big Hazard. Whether that is someone in HACLA's idea of a sick joke, or a miraculous coincidence, that fact certainly lends itself to the perception that HACLA is intentionally provoking inter-racial conflict

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between black and Latino gangs in its housing projects in order to justify the removal of gang affiliated families from the housing project, which the city ultimately wants to sell to USC to be connected to the adjacent County-USC Medical Center.

To further fan the flames of racial conflict, after the firebombings that followed the confrontation between Hazard and Bounty Hunter gang members on Mother's Day, Los Angeles Police Department officers allegedly went to the Bounty Hunters' projects, Nickerson Gardens, and told residents there that the attack had likely been ordered by the Mexican Mafia, encouraging Bounty Hunter gang members to adopt the narrative that the attack was part of wider racial antagonisms between black and Latino gang members in prison and throughout Los Angeles. Such a narrative is preposterous for the simple reason that the Mexican Mafia member who is responsible for the Ramona Gardens Housing Project is housed in the Security Housing Unit at Pelican Bay State Prison, the most secure segregated housing unit in the California prison system. It seems quite impossible for the confrontation between the Bounty Hunters and the Hazard gang members to have occurred that evening, and for the fire bombings to have occurred only a few hours later, with the Mexican Mafia member responsible for Ramona Gardens, who is in a maximum security unit, to have been informed of what happened and given instructions to carry out the firebombing, all on a Sunday that happened to be Mother's Day. That is quite a stretch of the imagination for a timeline that transpired in the range of about six hours.

However, it is incumbent upon me to acknowledge that at a community meeting held by the prominent gang intervention group the Southern California Cease Fire Committee at Bethel

AME Church in South Central a couple of months later on July 9th, 2014, the Chief of the Los

Angeles Police Department Chief Charlie Beck denied that officers had made such statements at

Nickerson Gardens in the aftermath of the fire-bombing. However, the allegation was made at

a previous meeting of the Southern California Cease Fire Committee that occurred the

Wednesday after the fire bombings by a member of the Bounty Hunter Bloods who lives in

Nickerson Gardens, and two officers from LAPD South Bureau Criminal Gang/Homicide Division

where were present at that meeting did not object to those allegations at that time. Of course

it is certainly possible that someone from the LAPD did make those statements to Nickerson

Gardens residents in the emotionally heated aftermath of the fire bombings at Ramona

Gardens, and that whoever that was did not want to own up to it months later. Of course it is

entirely possible that Chief Beck honestly is unaware that such a statement was made. The

LAPD is a massive agency and Chief Beck, as capable a Chief of police as he is, can't be expected

to be omniscient He can't be everywhere at once and know what every officer said to anyone

anywhere in the city.

Thanks in large part to the dedicated work of gang interventionists like Gang Reduction

& Youth Development (GRYD) in Ramona Gardens and the Southern California Cease Fire

Committee in South Central Los Angeles, who are active in both the Ramona Gardens and

Nickerson Gardens communities, this narrative suggesting a larger racial conflict was rejected at

the meeting and the attacks were rightly interpreted as a result of gang rivalry rather than

racial bigotry. Notably, there are twenty other African American residences in Ramona Gardens

who were not targeted in the attacks. Clearly the targets for the attacks were chosen either

because they were affiliated with the Bounty Hunter gang members who had provoked Hazard

gang members earlier that evening, or were known to work openly with law enforcement.

These facts came out during a gang intervention meeting held by the Southern

California Cease Fire Committee the Wednesday after Mother's Day, where intervention

workers from both Ramona Gardens and Nickerson Gardens explained and acknowledged that

the conflict was rooted in gang rivalry and not racial bigotry. However, despite the fact that

there was a Los Angeles Times reporter in the room during the meeting, the LA Times ran an

incendiary story a few days later blatantly promoting a narrative of racial conflict rooted in

racial bigotry.[305]

> Once controlled by a Latino gang, the Boyle Heights housing project had seen crime drop dramatically.
>
> Moreover, black families were beginning to move back into the rows of garden apartments — more than
>
> 20 years after the firebombing of two black families prompted most African Americans to flee.
>
> Then on Monday night, someone threw flaming Molotov cocktails at four apartments in Ramona Gardens.
>
> It had all the hallmarks of the racial attack from the area's darker years.
>
> Three of the four apartments targeted just after midnight were occupied by black families. The other
>
> housed a Latino family. No one was injured in the attack. Police have no suspects and have been careful
>
> to say the motive remains unclear.
>
> But several law enforcement sources familiar with the investigation said officials believe the attack was
>
> racially motivated.
>
> Los Angeles Times, Saturday May 17, 2014

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[305] Becerra and Winton 2014

Who these unnamed "law enforcement sources" are exactly remains unclear, but the story the Times chose to run is absolutely devoid of any mention of the confrontation that occurred between Hazard and Bounty Hunter gang members over the young lady's indecent exposure that prompted the fire bombings, and of course makes no attempt to understand any role law enforcement or HACLA may have played in framing and exacerbating the circumstances that precipitated the attack. However, anyone who depends on the Los Angeles Times for their news would be left with the impression that racist Latino gangs are engaging in a campaign of ethnic cleansing against innocent African American residents who did nothing to provoke such racial bigotry. It's a narrative fit for the front pages of a newspaper, the only problem is that it is a patently dishonest interpretation of events.

Such media induced moral panics have also surrounded one of the more prominent conflicts between Latino and African American gangs in South Los Angeles, the long running feud between Florencia 13 and the East Coast Crips. The roots of this conflict are also not to be found in racial bigotry and animosity, but rather in a narcotics transaction gone wrong. As discussed above, Florencia has and continues to have amicable cooperative relationships with African American gangs like the Pueblo Bishops. Unbeknownst to many, particularly in the media, prior to the inception of the conflict between Florencia and East Coast, a cooperative relationship also existed between Florencia and East Coast in the distribution and retail of narcotics.

Q: Before all that beef happened, did you guys get along with them?

A: Yeah, everything was really cool, I mean it was more like they had the money, we had the drugs. They had all the money, we had all the drugs so, it's gonna benefit both of us, it'll make alotta money. We gonna make alotta money and they gonna get alotta drugs, that's how it was and we call this, everybody called this "the pipeline".

SC Florencia 13, 30s

This relationship soured when around the turn of the millennium two East Coast members reportedly absconded with a load of cocaine, allegedly worth over a million dollars in wholesale value. With a wholesale value of around ten to fifteen thousand dollars per kilo of cocaine, it would have been somewhere in the range of 75 to 100 kilos that were stolen. Whatever the exact amount stolen, members on both sides of the conflict universally acknowledge that this narcotics transaction gone wrong was the original catalyst for the conflict.

Q: How did the beef with the Florence's start?

A: Man drugs. Some of my homeboys had robbed them for like over a hundred keys. The 6-9 East Coasts. This was in like 98, 99. It was just on from there. Like you said about dealing with them, my homeboys had robbed them, I mean they took a truck load of drugs from them.

Q: Did they rob them or were they just dealing together and they burned them for the shipment?

A: They was dealing together. Yeah, and it's been on ever since. They put a green light on us and it's been going on since then.

Q: A hundred ki's?

A: Man yeah whatever it was it was a lot, like truckloads of it.

SC East Coast Crips, 30s

This fundamental violation of the trust that had existed between these two gangs forever shattered the relationship they once had, as the two East Coast members who had absconded with the load of cocaine miraculously vanished from the Los Angeles area entirely. Even their own homeboys from East Coast purportedly had no idea where they could be found. When members on both sides who had grown up together and had close personal relationships reached out to one other in an attempt to negotiate terms to avoid a full blown gang war, the inability of East Coast members to locate the two perpetrators who had absconded with the load of cocaine led to a breakdown in the negotiations and a gang war erupted between the two gangs that has continued to the present day.

I sit down I talk to some of the OG homeboys and they told me, "Sorry man, I'm from East Coast," I go, "I know where you from, I'm from Florence," so he told me like this, "You know what? Look, the people that did it, they're gone man, they left us with the problem," so the guy that did the thing, both of them, they got all the money, they split, so who stayed with the problem?

Q: They left it to everybody else?

A: Yeah so all, so the rest of them, they didn't wanted nothing, but…

Q: But what was done was done right?

A: What was done was done, the raza's gonna be like, "Fuck that, we gonna do what we gotta do," you feel me? So just because, because two individuals that left and now they're like, now, now they're mad at the two individuals like, "You guys took off with all the money and then you guys left us with all these, with all these problems."

Q: Those two fools, they just vanished?

A: They're gone, they're gone, they don't even, they don't even know where they're at, I mean even they're looking for them.

Q: Probably moved out of state.

A: Yeah, come on, you got all the money, I'm gone. I mean, so, so they're like, "Man, how can you fix it?" Well, you can't, "Well you bring the guys over here," I'm like, "Bring them." Even if you do, they can't, they can't find them, we can't find them, nobody can. So we're just stuck with the problems.

SC Florencia 13, 30s

In the aftermath of this notorious narcotic transaction gone wrong, Florencia 13 and East Coast Crip gang members have engaged in a bloody gang feud that has claimed dozens of lives since the turn of the millennium. However, this conflict is clearly delineated along the lines of gang identities, not racial identities. That is not to say that racial epithets and cultural intolerances aren't used by gang members on both sides of the conflict to demonize their rivals, but that such instances of racial animosity arise out of the gang rivalry between them, rather than the gang rivalry arising out of racial animosity. This is a point that is totally lost on muck raking local media, nurtured by inflammatory statements made by local law enforcement officials and politicians, who consistently push a narrative of racial violence rooted in racial bigotry, allegedly orchestrated by the go-to boogey man, the Mexican Mafia. This potent narrative, accepted unquestionably by the courts as well, led to the conviction of around one hundred Florencia gang members who were targeted for prosecution by local and federal law enforcement, six of whom were given life sentences in federal prison.[306] The vast majority of

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[306] Quinones 2010

the remaining members who were arrested in the sweep were convicted of minor crimes and served less than one year in jail. No such equivalent mass investigation and hate ccrime prosecution has been carried out against members of the East Coast Crips. The Los Angeles Times quoted the sentencing judge as having stated in open court during the sentencing of one defendant to life in prison, that the defendant "preyed on victims because they were black and for no other reason."[307] Such blatant misrepresentations ascribing racial motives to gang conflicts have engendered a moral panic among African American residents of South Los Angeles, who have come to believe that Florencia gang members are malicious racists bent on attacking any African Americans they can at every opportunity.

This perception is further fueled by sensationalist accounts of the conflict in popular docu-dramas on cable television like the History Channel's popular series, *Gangland*, which cast Florencia as a rabidly racist Latino gang out to kill African Americans at every opportunity, regardless of whether or not they are affiliated with the East Coast Crips.[308] Perhaps the most notable and absurd rumor proliferated by the *Gangland* show was that Florencia gang members had put a "green-light" on any African American wearing a white t-shirt. This is a common rumor I have heard repeated regularly among members of the African American community in South Central Los Angeles, even among those who are from Crip or Blood gangs that have nothing to do with the East Coast Crips. Even one of the members of Florencia I interviewed was disturbed that his own family was convinced that he and his homeboys are virulent racists after having watched the episode of *Gangland* that suggested as much.

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[307] Ibid
[308] Gangland 2010

Q: Do you think that your parents know what's going on with East Coast?

A: Well my parents they think what's going on is just racist, because my mom saw that Gangland thing too, so my mom thinks were just racist. Ha ha ha! You know? My mom thinks we're racist and shit, and my brother in law doesn't want to come over to my house and shit cause he thinks I'm racist against him too. Ha ha! He seen that thing too, pretty much everyone did. Ha ha ha! You know, so now everybody thinks were racist. We're not, it's not like that!

Q: It's a neighborhood thing right? Cause if you were racist why would you be getting along with the Pueblos right?

A: Yeah pretty much in Gangland they shoulda said that part too right? They left that part out right? They thinking that we beef with all Crips and they say were all CK (Crip Killer). I mean we are CK, but it's pretty much we're all on them you know. That's it.

Q: How about like when people write on the wall, like "nigger killer" and "Mexican killer" right? You think that's just like flossing? They're not really gonna shoot every black or Mexican person they see right?

A: Yeah that's ridiculous!

SS Florencia 13, 20s

Likewise, he was equally incredulous at the rumor that Florencia gang members would shoot anyone for merely wearing a white t-shirt. In fact, having caught hints of it before, he was clearly unaware of the rumor until I voiced it to him in our formal interview. It's clear in the following exchange in our interview that he was not consciously aware that there is a pervasive rumor in the black community in South Central that Florencia gang members will target any African American youth for wearing a white t-shirt.

You know what, alotta people will say that because of the *Gangland* documentary that my hood came out. It was so stupid, because it made it seem like if were racists you know. Like fuck we just want black people for no reason, we don't even know what it's for, but it's not like that. Why we gonna want to hurt someone that's not even involved with it and shit you know?

Q: What about that lil *chisme* (rumor) that your neighborhood put out a green-light that any black person wearing a white t-shirt in South Central would be shot on sight?

A: Naw! Well alright, that's where he got it from then… So one day I was walking and some black guy told me, "Didn't you hear about it? If a black person wears a white t-shirt you gonna kill us!" and I'm like, "For reals?" and I dunno he just kept on walking and shit, but he made it seem like everybody that's wearing a white t-shirt around here is gonna die and shit. So I'm like, "What the fuck?! I'm wearing a white t-shirt too and shit!" Ha ha ha! So what the fuck aye? But in my hood, we never heard of that you know. I think that was just a rumor you know, because I don't think like just the Cheese Toasts wear white shirts and shit you know. Everybody does.

SS Florencia 13, 20s

Such rumors do little to abate feelings of racial animus that inevitably surface as a result of inter-racial gang conflicts, and provoke a moral panic causing residents to feel a greater degree of fear and insecurity than is warranted by actual events. While gang members engaged in inter-racial gang conflicts commonly draw on the repertoire of racial and cultural biases discussed in chapters 3, 5 and 6, these biases are not the cause of the conflicts, but rather are but one facet of their manifestation. While racial insults and epithets might scare innocent residents with no gang affiliation, they are best understood as audacious bravado, rather than sincere ideologically rooted racial bigotry.

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As the following section illustrates, during the course of inter-racial gang conflicts gang members typically target exclusively rival gang members. When innocent persons become victims of inter-racial gang violence, it is almost always due to a case of poor marksmanship, mistaken identity and/or mistakenly attributed gang affiliation. Indeed it makes little sense for gang members to intentionally target innocent residents who are not gang affiliated, because innocent residents who are not gang-affiliated do not present the substantive threat to gang members as bona fide rivals do. Unfortunately this obvious point is lost on law enforcement officials, politicians and journalists, who would rather propagate a narrative of racially motivated violence, inducing the sort of moral panics that can only serve to exacerbate these conflicts rather than abate them.

7.3 Rules of Engagement

While gang members typically target rival gang members exclusively when engaging in gang feuds, when such feuds cross racial lines between Sureno and Crip or Blood affiliated gangs, there is always the potential for gang conflicts to be redefined as racial conflicts and for non-gang affiliated residents to be targeted intentionally. Karen Umemoto conceived of such a transition as occurring along a continuum, whereby personal conflicts morph into familial conflicts, which morph into gang conflicts and then morph into racial conflicts, as conflicts expand in both scope and intensity, as gang members go from targeting rival gang members, to

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intentionally targeting non-gang affiliated residents on a racial basis.[309] While I am rather

favorable towards her work, I would argue that the development of Umemoto's conception of a

continuum is largely influenced by the limited scope of her fieldwork, dealing with a single

specific conflict that came to an abrupt end shortly after it started. I would argue that when

examining a single case, the escalation of gang conflicts to wider racial conflicts might seem to

occur as some sort of progression, however when examining multiple cases in different parts of

Los Angeles it becomes apparent that the targeting of non-gang affiliated residents on a racial

basis is not so much a progression in the escalation of conflicts, as it is an aberration of the

rules of engagement that occurs in specific cases for specific reasons. The targeting, either

accidentally or intentionally, of innocent residents on a racial basis, where it does occur,

doesn't permanently redefine gang conflicts as racial conflicts. It merely represents an episodic

rupture in the continuum of the informal and formal rules of engagement that gang members

observe while engaging in conflicts with one another.

When we examine how gang members go about targeting their rivals, it becomes

apparent how cases of mistaken identity and affiliation occur that lead the accidental targeting

of residents with no gang affiliation. In some cases, such incidents of violence on the basis of

mistaken identity and/or affiliation can then act as a catalyst for retaliatory attacks that involve

the intentional targeting of non-gang affiliated residents on a racial basis. However, it is equally

worthwhile to consider that in other cases they do not, and gang members respond to the

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[309] Umemoto 2006

targeting of innocent residents in their community, not by targeting innocent residents in their rival's community, but by targeting their rivals specifically as the rules of engagement dictate.

The rules of engagement that operate to limit the acceptable range of targets to be engaged in a gang conflict operate on both a formal and informal level, within and between Sureno and Crip or Blood affiliated gangs. For Sureno gang members, there are a formal set of *reglas* that dictate the rules of engagement that must be followed when engaging in gang conflicts. These rules apply universally to conflicts both with other Sureno affiliated gangs, but also to conflicts with Crip and Blood affiliated gangs.

One of these rules proscribes the practice of drive-by shootings by Sureno affiliated gang members. In order to limit the number of innocent residents hit by gunfire due to gang conflicts, in the early 1990s the Mexican Mafia put a ban on drive-by shootings and have enforced that ban since that time by "green-lighting" any Sureno gang members who engage in drive-by shootings when they inevitably end up in jail and/or prison. As a result, South Siders' *modus operandi* is to approach their victims on foot and to shoot them from as close a range as is possible, in order to make sure they are targeting the correct individual. If they do fire from a vehicle, they will actually bring the vehicle to a complete stop and open a door so that they can put a foot on the ground, and then fire their weapon, so as not to be in violation of the rule against drive-by shootings. Certainly firing a weapon from a moving vehicle is not conducive to accurate marksmanship, so forbidding Sureno affiliated gang members from engaging in drive-by shootings inevitably reduces the number of innocent victims accidentally hit by gunfire as a result of gang shootings.

Another formal rule forbids Sureno affiliated gang members from engaging rival gang members if they are with their families, particularly if children are present, in order to reduce the possibility of innocent family members and/or children being hit unintentionally. Sureno affiliated gang members are also forbidden from shooting into an occupied structure, such as a family home, for the same reason. All of these *reglas* were implemented by the Mexican Mafia and continue to be enforced in order to reduce the effect gang violence has on unaffiliated family, children and residents in the community. While law enforcement and media narratives habitually demonize the Mexican Mafia as one of the primary forces driving gang violence in Los Angeles, these formal rules of engagement enforced by the Mexican Mafia have undeniably saved countless innocent lives over the last two decades by reducing the number of innocent victims hit by stray bullets in gang shootings over the past two decades or so.

However, with no overarching structure and no controlling organization to enforce a formal set of rules universally, Crip and Blood gang members observe no such formal limitations. Crip and Blood gang members have no repercussions to fear in terms of gang politics, and therefore have few compunctions about engaging rivals in the presence of their family and/or children, shooting randomly into rivals' residences, and engaging in drive-by shootings, which inevitably results in more accidental unintentional shootings of unintended victims.

> Like us, we can't do drive-by's. If you were my enemy and I seen you at your front porch, I can't get off and fucking blast at you cause if I miss you and I hit a little kid, then that's my ass or my neighborhoods ass. Black fools, they don't give a fuck. You could be with your mom, your grandma, your son, they gonna

get off and they're gonna get off and blast you. Yeah cause they can't get green lighted. They can't, we could though. Yeah cause they could blast you from the car, boom, hit all kinds of people and nothing will happen to them or their hood if they do it, but if we do it then that's our ass. So we know better, we have like rules and regulations to follow out here too.

ES Indiana Dukes 13, 20s

The lack of organizational structure that allows these types of attacks among Crip and Blood gang members, provides but another reason for Sureno affiliated gang members to demonize their Crip and Blood rivals as exhibiting a moral deficiency, much as they are demonized similarly for the kinds of cultural differences discussed in chapter 4. The willingness of Crip and Blood gang members to engage in drive-by shootings, to target rivals in front of their families, and to recklessly shoot into the residences of rivals without regard for innocent family members and neighbors, is perceived by Sureno affiliated gang members as yet one more example of the lack of moral values among Crip and Blood gang members. When such shootings do occur at the hands of rival black gang members, they are thus interpreted as another example of the depravity of their Crip or Blood rivals.

Like you know, if you're on the street with your lady, with your mom, with your little girl, we're not even gonna look at you. We're just gonna keep on going man you know. I mean it's a waste of time. I mean you're with your mom you know, we're not gonna disrespect you like that. And them (blacks) you know they don't care, they don't give a fuck you know. They put a gun in front of your face and you're with your kid, or they just pass by and they doing a drive by. They start shooting anybody you know. Most of the blacks right now, like they don't get along with Mexican gangs. They don't get along with the Mexicans

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you know, then they go and try to do a little *jale* (shooting) and they go look for you at your hood, and

they see any Mexican, they gonna kill them you know. It's like that. Only because you a Mexican and you

walking around at the wrong neighborhood you know.

Q: Do they pull that kind of thing on purpose? Do you think they do it more often than you that they make

sure the person is a gang member and not a little kid?

A: Yeah you know we don't get down like that you know.

Q: Even if they do dirty shit? Are there some homeys that want to retaliate and do dirty shit too?

A: Yeah cause you know, I mean the other people they don't got nothing to do with it, so how you gonna

go kill anybody and they don't got nothing to do with that?

Q: Why do you think they do that? Do you think they intentionally target people they know aren't gang

members?

A: I mean it is what it is my boy, like that's how they handle business. Like they can't handle things you

know, so like for them, they go and kill any Mexican and they're cool with that you know. That's their

estilo (style).

SS Florencia 13, 20s

However, perhaps not surprisingly, Sureno affiliated gang members weren't the only

ones to report the perception that their rivals intentionally target residents with no gang

affiliation on a racial basis. Many Crip and Blood gang members perceive their Sureno affiliated

rivals as being more willing to target innocent residents who are not gang affiliated than they

are. Crip and Blood gang members were actually just as likely to report that Sureno affiliated

rivals had intentionally targeted innocent African American residents of their community as

Sureno gang members were to report that their Crip or Blood rivals had intentionally targeted

innocent Latino residents of their community. Where Crip and Blood gang members do admit

to intentionally targeting innocent Latino residents, it is in retaliation for what they perceive as

Sureno rivals intentionally targeting innocent African American residents.

Q: Is it a thing where like everyone just trying to get gang members on both sides or do innocent people get hit too?

A: I mean with them, they don't care. They fin to come through shooting anything, you know, like man… From the way I see it, that's the way it go down.

Q: Do you think they do it intentionally or do you think it's by accident where they don't know who is and isn't actually a member of East Coast?

A: Intentionally I think. They fin to come through and just shoot up anything black. Anybody they see it's kinda like vice versa from retaliation, if y'all come through just trying to shoot up anybody, then we fin to do the same thing.

Q: Have innocent people on your side get hit?

A: Oh yeah I know some innocent people that got shot before.

Q: So if it happens that's when your homeboys will retaliate in kind?

A: Yup!

Q: Other than that is it usually only try and get gang members? Or is it open season all the time?

A: Naw yeah it's only get gang members. We want to get the big fish, triple OG. I mean not even the young one that's like 15, I'm talking like the one that's like 37.

Q: Trying to get the main shot callers huh? Don't make a lot of sense to hit someone that ain't gonna hit you right?

A: Yeah exactly!

SC East Coast Crips, 30s

When innocent residents are hit by inadvertent gunfire it is almost always a case of either poor marksmanship, mistaken identity or mistakenly attributed gang affiliation. Few gang members report that they would be willing to intentionally shoot innocent residents with no gang affiliation on the basis of racial identity alone, but most acknowledged that such mistakes had happened during the course of their inter-racial gang conflicts. In some cases, these incidents are due to the propensity of Crip and Blood gang members to engage in drive-by shootings, which result in unintended victims being inadvertently hit by stray bullets, as firing from a moving vehicle is not conducive to good marksmanship. Sureno affiliated gang members generally view these incidents with contempt, as South Side *reglas* forbid Sureno affiliated gang members from engaging in drive-by shootings for the express reason of avoiding innocent victims being hit accidentally. That Crip and Blood gangs are willing to engage in drive-by shootings without regard for innocent victims is but another facet in the repertoire Sureno affiliated gang members draw on to demonize their African American rivals.

Q: When your homeys are going at it with black gangs do you think they try to target only gang members?

A: Yeah.

Q: Or does it ever cross over where they'll hit whatever black fool they see?

A: Naw, it's not like that, they homeys, they make sure it's a enemy.

Q: They make sure that he's actually from that neighborhood?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Do you think black fools respect that too?

A: Well…not really like the homeys told us that now you can't just go and shoot anybody, like a drive-by like back in the days. Now we gotta get off the car and do all the extra, go up to them and ask them.

Q: Make sure he's actually from the neighborhood?

A: Yeah make sure, yeah.

Q: Do you think black fools follow the same rules?

A: Well, black fools, they drive-by, like every time they go dump on us, it's drive-bys.

Q: So they don't really care who they hit?

A: Yeah.

Q: Have they ever hit anybody that wasn't from your neighborhood?

A: Yeah.

Q: Like someone's brother or sister?

A: Yeah, my homey's little brother, they killed him.

Q: Do you think they did that on purpose or do you think it was an accident?

A: It was a accident cause we were, we're all kicking it and they drived by shooting, they shot him in the

head.

Q: He's the one that got hit?

A: Yeah.

Q: Have they ever hit anybody that wasn't from the neighborhood just for the fuck of it?

A: Naw, not that I know of.

Q: Do you think that they try and hit somebody that's actually a gang member?

A: Yeah.

Q: But they're just not as thorough as…

A: Yeah, they just don't make sure.

WS Drifters 13, Teens

Aside from just poor marksmanship, another common reason innocent unaffiliated

residents get targeted during inter-racial gang conflicts is simply mistaken identity. As discussed

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in chapter 4, Sureno and Crip and Blood gang cultures are so different from each other, that members of rival Sureno and Crip or Blood gangs often have a genuinely difficult time identifying who is and isn't a gang member by aesthetic appearance alone. Many of the cultural symbols that might denote gang affiliation within each gang culture, are not recognized or are misinterpreted by members of the opposing gang culture, and vice versa. Couple that with the proliferation of gang injunctions in Los Angeles, and the corresponding trend among gang members on all sides to dress more "casual" and not display their gang affiliation conspicuously by their style of dress, as discussed in chapter 4, and one can start to appreciate how difficult it is for gang members looking for a suitable target in a rival's territory to discern who is and who isn't actually a bona fide gang member. In the minds of some overzealous gang members, anyone and everyone in a rival's territory could potentially be a member of the rival gang. Without prior knowledge of who specific rival gang members are by face, such confusion often leads to the shooting of innocent unaffiliated residents in cases of flat out mistaken identity. However, it is worth noting, that even in the following case when that did happen, the Blood gang who's neighborhood the innocent person was killed in decided to retaliate by targeting rival gang members, rather than intentionally targeting an innocent resident in their rival's territory in retaliation.

Q: Has there ever been any innocent people like in your community, Black people that got hit that weren't actually gang members?

A: Yeah actually, just recently.

Q: That wasn't a gang member but they got hit anyways?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you think that was something that they, that the other side did on purpose or you think it could have been a case of mistaken identity?

A: Mistaken identity.

Q: You think they just saw someone and cause he was black and was the right age and everything they thought he was a gang member but he wasn't?

A: They think everybody from our hood!

Q: And how did people in your neighborhood take that? When an innocent person got hit? Did they feel like they need to go back and hit an innocent person to make even?

A: Yes, well, we didn't feel like we should go get an innocent person, we just felt like "that's unacceptable".

Q: You should still retaliate?

A: Yeah, retaliate, but try to get them, not any innocent people.

Q: Cause you know how Mexicans say "Blacks only shoot innocent people", that's bullshit right?

A: Yes, I wouldn't shoot an innocent person cause I think, I'm a bang on him and see where he from, but I ain't gonna shoot the burner until I see where he from, and then if he tell me some other hood that I beef with, then yeah you know.

Q: But if he's just some dude that's fucking coming home from work, just some regular guy?

A: Nah, I ain't gonna do nothing to him.

WS Scottsdale Piru Bloods 235th Street, Teens

Unfortunately such restraint is not generally universal among Crip and Blood gangs as it is among Sureno affiliated gangs, as some Crip and Blood gang members emphasize that they will intentionally target innocent unaffiliated residents in their rival's community in retaliation

without any compunctions if any innocent residents are shot or killed in their community by

their rivals.

> Q: Do they, do you think when that was going on that there was like boundaries that certain people
> wouldn't cross you know, like shooting up houses, or shooting up people's brothers and sisters and shit
> like that...
> A: When they came, to our hood and shot a 15 year old boy, we went back to they hood and found a 15
> year old boy and shot his ass. When the 18's go to the BPS's and killed that innocent Black girl by accident,
> the BPS's went to the 18th Streets found a innocent girl and smoke her.
> WS Rolling 90s Neighborhood Crips, 20s

Such unapologetic willingness to intentionally target innocent victims was not reported

by any Sureno affiliated gang members I interviewed, but of course such incidents have

occurred. Perhaps the most notorious such incident was the murder of 14 year old Cheryl

Green by a Varrio 204th Street gang member in the Harbor Gateway area of South Los Angeles

in December of 2006. Cheryl was playing with her friends in a driveway that separated her

residence from a neighboring residence when 204th Street gang members looking to retaliate

for an earlier shooting decided to shoot at her and her friends playing in the driveway because

they could not find a member of the rival African American gang they were looking for. The

gang member who committed the shooting and his accomplices were all convicted of first

degree murder and the shooter is currently on death row in California. While law enforcement,

local politicians and the local media propagated a narrative of the murder as being racially

motivated, arising out of a traffic dispute between the shooter and an African American

motorist earlier in the day,[310] in an informal interview with a 204th Street gang member (he

refused to submit to a formal recorded interview), I was informed that the shooting was

actually in retaliation for the shooting of a 204th Street gang member's family member that had

occurred days prior to the murder of Cheryl Green. The individual I spoke with expressed anger

and resentment that the shooting of the 204th Street gang member's family member had gone

unsolved, while the murder of Cheryl Green became a media spectacle. Without the exact

details of the prior shooting it is impossible for me to verify the veracity of this previously

unreported narrative, but it certainly wouldn't be the first time that law enforcement and the

local media partnered in promulgating a narrative of racial bigotry when the impetus for the

shooting was in fact rooted in a gang conflict.

When innocent unaffiliated family members and friends get shot and killed by rival gang

members, emotions can run high and gang members can and do cross lines they otherwise

wouldn't. As one insightful respondent pointed out, the level of maturity of individual gang

members can determine how they respond to such incidents when they do occur. More mature

and seasoned gang members will typically respond with cool calculated targeted violence

against those specific individual rivals they hold accountable, while less mature and overzealous

gang members may react with emotion and intentionally target innocent residents in their

rivals' community in retaliation. While gang members, law enforcement and the public may

perceive certain gangs as being more prone to intentionally targeting innocent victims, it is

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[310] Kim 2010

important to recognize that different individuals interpret and respond to events in different ways, even within the same gang. Furthermore, those who do intentionally target innocent victims are often held in contempt by those who do not.

> Q: As the beef unfolded over the years of course people have been hit on both sides, on the Blood side, how do people identify who's an acceptable target? Is it only 18's that are targeted? Is it considered acceptable for someone to go to 18's hood and anyone with a bald head they see just hit them?
>
> A: I think it matters, but it depends on the individual who's doing it. There are individuals who are older who are sneaky who know how to get who they want. In other words they know how to dress up like a bum or how to wait around a liquor store and catch the individual they're looking for. However there are some that are young and they'll just go out and shoot anything that looks like, so that's how a lot of like skateboarders and other people in that community that have that look get shot. But some of the older guys in the community knew how to do what it is they wanted to do. There was also a guy from 18 Street who for about 7 years prolly killed 15 people, between the Jungles (BPS) and the Rolling 20's and he never shot a innocent child either. He knew what he was doing too.
>
> Q: So you think it varies on an individual level, where some people are very focused on only getting gang members and some people are just loose and will hit whoever?
>
> A: Right. I hate to say it but it's the maturity level. The mature individual who knows who he wants is gonna wait on the opportunity to get the right person. As opposed to someone that is immature and wants to make a name for theyselves or wants to play like he big and bad will go and shoot something and say it was the toughest guy from 18 Street, it really might have been a standup father of two or something.
>
> WS Rolling 20s Neighborhood Bloods, 50s

The long running conflict between West Side 18th Street and the Black P Stones and Rolling 20s has unfortunately had numerous incidents where unaffiliated family and community members were shot and killed, although without talking to the shooter in every case, it's hard to know if the victims were intentionally targeted, or perhaps more likely, their suspected affiliation was mistaken. It is certainly conceivable in most of the incidents that I am aware of that the shooter in each case could have honestly mistaken the victim for a bona fide gang member, when in their own community the victim was known not to have any formal affiliation with 18 or BPS/20s. One of the early murders that polarized the two communities occurred on February 5th, 1996 across the street from Dorsey High School, where members of 18th Street, Black P Stones and the Rolling 20s and their friends and families had coexisted for generations prior. On that fateful day Eduardo "Eddie" Gamez and two of his friends, Aldo Dominguez and Alberto Ruiz, were walking to school along Rodeo Road, which runs alongside Dorsey High, catching tags (writing graffiti) on the walls across the street from the school so that their friends would see them from the PE field during the school day. Suddenly and unexpectedly a vehicle pulled up and a gunman emerged from the vehicle. He yelled out "Fuck Faketeen!" and fired a series of shots at Eddie which incapacitated him and then fired a number of shots at Aldo and Alberto, both of whom were hit but survived their wounds. Eddie was not so fortunate. He took rounds to the groin that incapacitated him on the ground. The shooter then walked up to him as he lay seriously wounded on the trash strewn concrete and fired directly into his chest and head. He died later that week in the intensive care unit of a local hospital. Eddie was 14 years old at the time of his murder. The shooter reportedly sped off in the direction of Baldwin

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Village. A 26 year old African American man was arrested for Eddie's murder the following week and later convicted of the murder.

I know this because Eddie Gamez and his friends who were shot that day along with him, were childhood friends of mine when his murder occurred. We were all members of a local tagging crew that many of the boys we grew up with in our community were members of. While we were early in our criminal careers at the time of his murder, other members had already graduated on to formal membership in one of the two principal Sureno affiliated gangs in our community, West Side 18th Street and Culver City 13. Eddie's older brother was a role model for us at the time, having been one of the first of our generation to make the transition to full-fledged gang membership, and had quickly become a well-known and respected member of one of the local 18th Street cliques, the Alsace Locos. While Eddie had not yet been jumped in to 18th Street at the time of his murder, his affiliation with 18th Street through his brother may have led to his being targeted by BPS/20s gang members, despite the fact that Eddie was not himself a bona fide member of 18th Street at the time. That Eddie was not a formal member of 18th Street, was a distinction that colored our interpretation of his murder as a provocative violation of the rules of engagement between 18th Street and BPS/ Rolling 20s, whether or not the man who murdered Eddie intended his murder to be interpreted that way. However, certainly from our perspective, a 26 year old man shooting to death a 14 year old boy was beyond the pale as far as we were concerned.

Likewise, there have also been murders of young men with no formal gang affiliation in the Black P Stone and Rolling 20s community that were committed by 18th Street gang

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members, which were also interpreted as provocative violations of the rules of engagement by

Black P Stone and Rolling 20s gang members in the war between 18 and BPS/ 20s.

Q: Do you think people ever get to the point where they intentionally hit innocent people? Or you think if innocent people get hit it's probably an accidental misidentification?

A: Yeah I would never say that because I never heard that or experienced it. I know a lot of people say that. That a young child a 13 year old in Baldwin Village got killed, a basketball player who didn't gang bang at all, and it really raised a lot of eyebrows because they were saying a 18 Street came and shot him in cold blood. But I knew the youngster and even though he didn't gangbang, he would play basketball in red shorts all the time, and he was getting tall, he was about 5'8", 5' 10", at 13 years old. So it could very well appear that they thought he was from Black Stone even though he was loved by so many people and it was a tragedy that he was killed. Or in the case of Jamiel Shaw, the young kid who went to LA high was a football player, and he had a Spider Man backpack and it was red and they say the guy who been found guilty of his murder, they say he shot him cause he was from Rolling 20s, but of course he wasn't from Rolling 20s, but he coulda gave that impression by living in the community and adapting to the color of red. That's just a community color, but that does not mean that an individual is a member of a gang.

Q: When things like that happen do you think there are those who will intentionally go out and hit innocent people to retaliate, just to make a statement, like if you hit someone on our side, we gonna hit someone innocent on your side just to make a statement? On either side, Blood or 18 Street?

A: Yeah with emotions so high it's possible. I don't personally know of it, but is it possible? Of course it is. I'm gonna agree that it could be possible. I mean some of these young kids with emotions so high are like "Shit I don't care who it is, I'm gonna hit something!"

WS Rolling 20s Neighborhood Bloods, 50s

Disparate interpretations of the same events are at the core of Karen Umemoto's analysis of the inter-racial gang war that occurred in the Venice area of Los Angeles around the same time,[311] and it is clear from my own recollections of both conflicts, which I was intimately acquainted with because of my neighborhood connections to both 18th Street and Culver City 13, that disparate interpretations played a prominent role in the trajectory of both those conflicts. I watched and witnessed as innocent victims were hit on all sides, and as each incident resulted in retaliation after retaliation, gang members interpreted each incident as a further provocation that required escalating levels of violence in retaliation. Unfortunately I grew up going to more funerals than I can remember to count, and I know for every funeral I went to, there were others on the other side of the conflicts that occurred as well.

However, even when such incidents did occur, followed by a spate of retaliatory violence, both sides would eventually return to exclusively targeting gang members when the aftermath of each incident had played itself out. While the conflict between the Venice Shore Line Crips and Venice 13 ended with a truce shortly after it started, the conflict between 18th Street and Black P Stone and Rolling 20s has continued unabated for over two decades to the present day. While shootings of innocent unaffiliated residents still occur from time to time, these incidents are almost always due to a combination of the immaturity of the shooter, along with poor marksmanship, mistaken identity and/or mistaken affiliation. When they do transpire they are perceived as isolated episodes that inevitably occur during the course of a gang war,

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[311] Umemoto 2006

rather than a permanent transition to the normalization of the intentional targeting of innocent

residents on an ostensibly racial basis.

There are a number of different strategies that gang members employ in targeting their

rivals in order to accurately determine the affiliation of potential targets to be engaged. Easily

the most common method is by "hitting up" a potential target to see if they claim affiliation

with a rival gang or not by asking a potential target, usually in an aggressive manner, "Where

you from?" Law enforcement officers will commonly suggest that the words "Where you

from?" signal that gang members are about to open fire, and their advice would be that if one

hears those words from a stranger, immediate flight and retreat is the most prudent course of

action. Of course most every time those words are spoken and a shooting results, by the nature

of their occupation, law enforcement officers are made aware of the incident. However, there

are innumerable other instances in which gang members challenge a potential target with a,

"Where you from?" and decide not to engage the subject with gunfire. Of course where no

shots are fired, law enforcement does not hear about those incidents.

Certainly during the course of this fieldwork, and the course of my life growing up as an

gang affiliated youth in marginalized communities in Los Angeles, I have been met with a

challenge of "Where you from?" more times than I could possibly remember to count, yet a

relatively small percentage of those occasions have actually resulted in a shooting. Of course

there were times when I was active and my answer to that question garnered an exchange of

gunfire because the shooter was specifically looking for me and my friends to shoot at, but in so

many other cases my answer was not the affiliation the potential shooter was looking for and

they left me unmolested without firing a shot. As a researcher I have also been confronted with this challenge on numerous occasions during the course of this fieldwork, and my answer of "Sorry my boy I don't bang, but they call me _____" has been good enough to avoid being shot thus far. There were even a few times where my notoriety in the hip hop graffiti subculture led the aggressor to suddenly change his tune from, "Where you from *ese*?" to, "Oh shit that's you? I used to see you up all the time in my hood bro! Can you sign this book/hat/t-shirt/sticker for my little brother/son/daughter? He/she is a big fan of yours!" Of course most kids in the ghettos and barrios of Los Angeles aren't nationally recognized icons in the urban hip hop subculture like I am, but the fact of the matter is that when gang members challenge a potential target with the ominous question, "Where you from?", the challenge is in most cases a genuine attempt to discern if the subject is indeed a member of a rival gang and therefore a suitable target to be engaged.

This is exactly why the "Florencia White T-shirt" moral panic is so ludicrous. Florencia gang members, or any gang members for that matter, have no interest in shooting someone who is not actively trying to shoot them, so it makes little sense to suggest that they or anyone else would be targeting innocent unaffiliated residents for merely wearing a white t-shirt. Rather, when on a "mission" to do a *jale* (a job, slang for "putting in work") Florencia gang members common practice is to either hit up a potential target first, or yell out a "diss" for their rival gang, in order to see what the potential target's reaction to the insult is. For example, the most common "diss" for East Coast Crips is to refer to them as "Cheese Toast", a clever play on the gang's name to create a less flattering moniker for the gang with words that rhyme with its

real name. Such "disses" are common among and between gang members in Los Angeles. So when a Florencia member is out on a "mission" trying to find a member of East Coast to shoot at, he will confront African American youth in East Coast's territory with a call of, "Fuck cheese toast!" in order to gauge their reaction to the insult. If they react defensively in anger at the insult, they are most likely from East Coast Crips and are thus a legitimate target to be engaged. If they react indifferently in return, with a response like, "So what? Fuck cheese toast!", then the shooter will hold their fire, content that the potential target is not in fact affiliated with East Coast Crips.

Q: So if a black fool's wearing a white t shirt your homeys aren't gonna necessarily think he's from East Coast?

A: Naw pretty much what all of the homeys do is when they see a black person, they always tell them "Fuck toast! Fuck toast!" even if it's not in their hood, just to make sure. I guess our hoods don't like them at all. Even if we're in Orange County and we see a black person we'll be like "Fuck toast!" cause you know I guess they just don't like them.

Q: But black fools somewhere else won't know what they're talking about right?

A: Ha ha yeah they'll be like, "What he talking bout?" Ha ha ha!

Q: So you think that's the strategy homeys use to see if it's a enemy or not? They'll just tell them "Fuck toast" just to see how they react?

A: Yeah either "Fuck toast!" or tattoos, but you can't really see their tattoos cause they're so black! Ha ha ha!

Q: Do you think that when they try to bang on your hood that they make sure they're getting gang members only or do you think they get a lil more loose with it?

A: No them they're like that too. If it's in their neighborhood and they see any Mexican passing by, they diss my hood and shit, just to see what they do.

Q: But if there not from your hood they'll just leave them alone?

A: Naw you know what they'll prolly jack them or something.

Q: But they're not out like trying to shoot Mexicans left and right just to get off right?

A: Nah but they'll bang on every Mexican passing by, and if you look gang related they'll be like "Whoopty woop!", but they ain't gonna shoot you just for being Mexican. Neither are we.

SS Florencia 13, 20s

There have been unfortunate exceptions to this common practice, where an innocent resident was shot despite not being gang affiliated, but these incidents are an episodic exception during the course of a conflict, they do not define the terms of the conflict beyond the individual episode. As this section has demonstrated, when they do occur they are due either to a lack of maturity on the part of the shooter and/or poor marksmanship, mistaken identity and/or mistaken affiliation. Such deplorable incidents are the unfortunate progeny of gang violence generally, common to ghetto and barrio communities the world over. However, as Umemoto suggests, when incidents of unaffiliated residents being targeted occurs across racial lines, racial motives are often ascribed to the perpetrator by law enforcement and the local media, and ultimately the community at large.[312] Rather I would argue that where these regrettable incidents have occurred, more often than not, they are generally not shots fired intentionally as part of a race war, they are shots fired unintentionally during the course of a gang war.

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[312] Umemoto 2006

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As with all other aspects of gang violence, victims and perpetrators are to be found on all sides of the inter-racial gang conflicts that continue to plague the Los Angeles region in the present, and probably well into the future. Focusing blame and prosecutions on either one side or the other, as the local media, opportunistic politicians and law enforcement have done in Los Angeles, continually laying the blame for "racial violence" on Sureno affiliated gang members, with no corresponding attention or coordinated prosecutions of rival Crip and Blood affiliated gang members, is neither an accurate nor constructive strategy for addressing inter-racial gang conflict in California. Such institutional favoritism only operates to exacerbate the resentments and hostility gang members feel for one another across racial lines, rather than abate that hostility. As the age-old adage goes, "It takes two to tango."

Chapter 8 Critical Analysis

The Hegemony of Mutual Destruction

"Part of the mechanics of oppressing people is to pervert them to the extent that they become the instruments of their own oppression."

Kumansi, former Slausons member, longtime South Central resident and civil rights activist[313]

Imagine a world where people who had been subjugated, oppressed and enslaved throughout their history rose up together in solidarity to challenge their masters and the terms of their oppression, only to have their movement divided, co-opted and dismantled by those who acquiesced to procedural reforms instead of demanding substantive results. Imagine a world where those lost souls then took the rage they felt for their masters, and turned it onto one another instead. Imagine a world where brother kills brother, *y carnal mata carnal*. Imagine a world where mothers bury their children instead of children burying their mothers. Imagine a world where masters enrich themselves as they never have before, unopposed and with absolute impunity, as those who suffer the consequences of such unmitigated greed destroy themselves and each other in response. You don't need an imagination to see that world because that is the world we live in. A world where we have become our own worst enemy, while the wealthiest in our society profit from the rest of us as they never have before.

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[313] Peralta 2008

Critical perspectives on race and crime have courageously confronted mainstream

perceptions about the world we live in today. Tireless advocates of Critical Race Theory

perspectives have repeatedly urged us to value substantive outcomes over racially neutral

stated intentions, offering a radical revisionist perspective generally known as *racial realism*.[314]

Racial realism consists of assessing reforms by the content of their outcomes, rather than their

ostensive intentions, and is one of the central tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT hereafter) as

it exists today. Kimberle Crenshaw provides a succinct synopsis of the racial realism distinction

between mainstream and critical race perspectives and the inherent contradiction between the

law as equality of process and the law as equality of result:

> This basic conflict has given rise to two distinct rhetorical visions in the body of
>
> antidiscrimination law: I term these the expansive view and the restrictive view. The
>
> expansive view stresses equality as a result, and it looks to real consequences for African
>
> Americans… The restrictive vision, which exists side by side with this expansive view,
>
> treats equality as a process, downplaying the significance of actual outcomes.[315]

Perhaps foremost among the eminent proponents of racial realist CRT perspectives was

the late Derrick Bell, whose prodigious career challenged mainstream conceptions of racial

justice at every opportunity. Easily one of Bell's most significant preoccupations was the failure

of legal reforms to provide any substantive relief from the effects of persistent racism and racial

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[314] Bell 1972, 1984, 1988, 1991, 1992a, 1992b; Crenshaw 1988; Peller 1990; Alexander 2012; etc.
[315] Crenshaw 1988 P. 1341-1342

disparity in American society, due in large part to the significant disparity in wealth inherent in capitalist society.[316] From the Emancipation Proclamation, to the Post-Civil War Amendments, to *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Civil Rights Acts of the 1960s, all had failed to deliver the salvation for African Americans that they had promised.[317] Bell provides the critical analysis that despite the perception among mainstream Americans and academics that such reforms had made significant progress for African Americans, the reality was that each was left unenforced or unenforceable for generations, as the reality of extreme racial disparities persists across every social indicator through the present and into the foreseeable future. Bell attributes this perpetual racial oppression and subjugation to the capitalist system itself, which maintains rampant racial inequality even after the passing of such supposed reforms, "Today, as throughout our history, while the idea of equality causes our hopes to soar, the economic reality of our capitalist system keeps our chances low."[318]

This provocative analysis provides a powerful counter-narrative to the post-racial view of American society propagated by American conservatives and assumed uncritically by American liberals, which continues to undermine significant substantive progress for minorities in the United States, as it celebrates the hollow victories of the civil rights era. My colleague Robert Duran has made an important adaptation of CRT perspectives to sociological methodology in pointing to the importance of the involvement of marginalized populations like gang members in research on their own communities.[319] I couldn't agree more with his adroit

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[316] Bell 1972, 1984, 1988, 1991, 1992a, 1992b
[317] Bell 1972, 1984, 1992b
[318] Bell 1984 P. 337
[319] Duran 2013

adaptation of CRT perspectives to sociological gang research methodology. However, *I would like to make the additional contribution of applying CRT perspectives on racial realism to sociological analysis of inter-racial conflict.* While Duran has laid the foundation for a bridge between CRT and sociological analysis of gangs, I hope that I might build some structure on that foundation, so that future critical gang scholars may build upon my analysis and eventually lay the tracks that connect CRT perspectives in legal scholarship to critical perspectives in sociological and criminological analysis of gangs, race and crime.

In chapter 3 I recounted how racist State policies and practices like housing covenants and harassment from law enforcement resulted in the differential settlement patterns between African Americans and Chicanos in Los Angeles, beginning with the initial development of what is now Downtown Los Angeles in the late 19th century. By the early 20th century Chicano Californios had been effectively relocated to the barren hills and low lying flats of East Los Angeles, adjacent to the fruit orchards in San Gabriel Valley where their labor was required to work land misappropriated by Anglo land owners. Likewise, the African American Angeleno population had been pushed south along the Central Avenue corridor, as the primary source of employment available to the African American community at the time was shoveling manure and shoeing horses at the US Army base that once existed in what has henceforth been known as South Central Los Angeles. The bifurcation of black and Latino communities resulted in a geographical, cultural, conceptual and spiritual division between these two communities in Los Angeles that laid the foundation for the inter-racial gang conflicts that plague the city to this day and perhaps well into the future.

As differential identities developed in the black and Latino communities, they eventually crystallized as insular oppositional racial identities in the wake of the collapse of the civil rights movement facilitated by State policies like COINTELPRO, as legal violence unleashed by both local and federal government agencies caused the civil rights movement to make a paradigmatic shift, from a movement denouncing the race concept to a movement embracing the race concept as a master identity, exclusive and in opposition to all other racial identities. The ostracism of these communities from one another was therefore a direct result of government suppression, as the opportunity for pan-minority class solidarity collapsed with the civil rights movement. That is the context from which the modern oppositional gang identities of Sureno, Crip and Blood emerged. The founders and early members of these factions absorbed the mantras of Black Power and Viva La Raza that the radical civil rights movements promulgated and assumed those exclusive insular oppositional identities as the foundation for racialized gang affiliations aligned in opposition to one another.

While there is no evidence that there was any kind of secret conspiracy to undermine inter-minority solidarity by geographically dividing black and Latino populations in Los Angeles and by suppressing the civil rights movement in order to provoke inter-racial gang conflict between marginalized minority populations, that was ultimately the outcome of the very deliberate State policies and practices that created the circumstances, which engendered the emergence of oppositional racialized gang identities in California's prisons and on the streets of Los Angeles. Critical Race Theory scholars have admonished us to look not at the ostensible intentions of State policies and practices, but to look to their results instead. We must focus our

attention on the outcomes of State policies and practices, rather than allow ourselves to be blinded by stated intentions. We must focus on latent functions rather than on manifest functions.

That the current state of conflict between black and Latino gang factions is the direct result of State policies and practices is undeniable. Whether or not its outcome was engineered and executed against marginalized minority communities, or was merely the unintended outcome of a racist regime of class suppression, is irrelevant at this point. The reality is that in the wake of the State suppression and ultimate collapse of the civil rights movement, racialized gang identities were consolidated in California's carceral institutions and on the streets of Los Angeles, and these oppositional racial gang identities became the axis across which generations of inter-racial gang conflict has occurred between Sureno and Crip and Blood affiliated gang members, both in California's carceral environments, and on the streets of Los Angeles and beyond.

To this Critical Race Theory analysis, I add a classical Marxist Criminology perspective on the role of crime in occupying surplus populations. Marxist criminologists have long suggested that crime is employed by capitalist society in order to control the surplus labor population that a free market economy needs in order to function.[320] One of the central tenets of Marxist analysis is the concept of the surplus labor population. The surplus labor population is that segment of the population, which is chronically or permanently unemployed, under employed or marginally employed. The capitalist system needs to maintain a surplus labor population, so

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[320] Chambliss 1975; Spitzer 1975; Quinney 1977

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that when employed workers demand better wages and working conditions, they can always be

replaced with workers who are held in reserve, the surplus labor population. However, this

creates a conundrum for capitalist societies in that the surplus labor population is a potential

threat to the system.[321] In order to keep the surplus labor population from revolting against the

system, the capitalist State must employ some strategy to pacify the surplus labor population.

In other capitalist systems, particularly in much of Western Europe, social programs are

used to pacify the surplus labor population, as universal healthcare, education and sufficient

public housing prevent the surplus labor population from becoming so destitute that they

might revolt against the system. However in the United States, crime eventually became the

primary strategy to control the surplus labor population.[322] Classical Marxist perspectives on

crime have suggested two ways in which crime operates to occupy the surplus labor

population. First, crime operates to occupy one significant segment of the surplus labor

population in illegitimate black market endeavors, which employ them where they cannot be

employed in the legitimate mainstream economy.[323] By engaging in crimes of profit, members

of the surplus labor population can financially support themselves in the absence of any

substantive social support from the State, and in the process they become too occupied in

whatever illicit endeavors they engage in to become politically conscious and revolt against the

State.

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[321] Spitzer 1975
[322] Chambliss 1975; Spitzer 1975; Quinney 1977
[323] Chambliss 1975; Quinney

However, according to classical Marxist perspectives on crime, crime operates to serve an additional function in occupying the surplus labor population. While part of the surplus labor are employed in the commission of crime, another part of the surplus labor population are employed in the criminal justice system as law enforcement officers, correctional officers, administrators, attorneys, judges, and criminology professors.[324] Thus crime creates the conditions for a surplus labor problem that essentially solves itself, with working class criminals and working class law enforcement agents engaged with each other, rather than joining together in solidarity to revolt against the system that reduces them to such a state that being a drug dealer or a law enforcement officer are the best career paths available to marginalized surplus labor populations.

While he neglects to engage with classical Marxist perspectives on crime, or to cite Gramsci directly, Robert Duran's superb de-colonial analysis of barrio gangs in Utah and Colorado offers a significant neo-Gramscian analysis of the hegemonic role of gang delinquency. According to Duran, gang members induce their own marginalization and oppressions at the hands of law enforcement by engaging in criminal behavior, which the State and its agents can use to justify the hyper-policing of marginalized barrio communities.[325] Thus according to Duran's analysis, barrio gang members suffer from a sort of hegemonic mindset that compels them to engage in delinquent behavior, which is ultimately used to justify the continued oppression and marginalization of their communities. While this analysis may have been theoretically underdeveloped, I would argue that it is an extremely important theoretical

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[324] Ibid
[325] Duran 2013

adaptation of Gramsci's concept of hegemony that should not be overlooked or under-

estimated.

Antonio Gramsci grappled with the question of why the working class resistance and

revolt against the capitalist system that Marx predicted, had failed to occur in Europe, with the

exception of the Russian Revolution of 1917. Gramsci uses his concept of *cultural hegemony* to

answer this question. According to Gramsci, the bourgeoisie maintain their control over the

working classes not only through the violence of political and economic coercion, but moreover

by infusing a capitalist culture and ideology into society, which manipulates the working classes

into believing that the current capitalist order is in their own interests, even as it pushes them

towards the precipice of perpetual poverty, thereby coopting them to support the capitalist

system rather than revolt against it.[326] Gramsci's proposed solution to this conundrum was to

advocate the development of a working class culture, which would unite what Marx called the

lumpen proletariat in opposition to the capitalist system.[327]

Such a culture of resistance did manifest itself decades later, as social activists

embarked on a civil rights movement in the United States in the 1960s and early 1970s that

demanded not only racial justice and equality, but moreover, economic justice and genuine

equality of opportunity. However, Gramsci did not anticipate the extent to which the capitalist

State would use violence, manipulation and coercion to attack and crush that culture of

resistance, as discussed in chapter 3. In the wake of the collapse of the civil rights movement

brought about by State violence, manipulation and coercion, an alternative working class

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[326] Gramsci 1929-1933(1992)
[327] Marx 1852 (1978); Gramsci 1929-1933(1992)

culture rose to prominence from the ashes of the civil rights movement in urban America, the

culture of gang banging, augmented by the emergence of oppositional racial identities as the

civil rights movement radicalized under extreme pressure from the State. As insular

oppositional racialized gang identities emerged in California's prisons and on the streets of Los

Angeles a cruel irony unfolded, African American and Mexican American gangs that had

originated as the vanguard defenders of their respective communities from the racial violence

and bigotry of white supremacists, instead turned on one another becoming, as former

Slausons member Kumansi prophetically described them, "the instruments of their own

oppression."[328]

This is certainly a more ominous view than Gramsci could have imagined during his time.

He could not possibly have foreseen how the *lumpen proletariat* could be distracted from

opposing the capitalist system, not just by merely acquiescing to the system, but by literally

going to war with themselves. By prioritizing insular oppositional racialized gang identities

above pan-racial class identities, any chance for class solidarity across lines of racialized gang

identities is undermined by the conflicts that rage between the various racialized gang factions

in California's prisons and on the streets of Los Angeles. This is an analysis that not only applies

to inter-racial conflict between gang members in Los Angeles, but also to gang conflict

anywhere in the United States. For that matter this is an analysis that extends anywhere in the

world where sectarian conflicts have been unleashed in the wake of European colonialism.

Whether engineered intentionally by colonial conspiracy, or whether they are the ostensibly

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[328] Peralta 2008

unintended result of purportedly disavowed past government policies and practices, such

conflicts ultimately serve to oblige the interests of the capitalist system by distracting those

who are most marginalized by it in perpetual conflict with themselves, rather than opposing the

capitalist system that produces their continued marginalization.

This dynamic has created a surplus population problem that essentially solves itself in an

even more sinister way than conceived of by classical Marxist perspectives on crime, by

occupying the surplus labor population in perpetual conflict with itself, with racialized gang

identities trumping the possibility of community wide class solidarity among ghetto and barrio

residents in Los Angeles. By granting primacy to racialized gang identities, insular oppositional

racial identities, combined with modern gang identities, effectively operate to distract the

lumpen proletariat from their common class interests, and prevent opportunities for inter-

minority class solidarity and political action for those who are caught up in the nightmare of

nihilistic gang warfare.

The emergence and emphasis of racial/ethnic identities in the post-civil rights era, as

suggested by Haney-Lopez, Alonso and Cornell and Hartmann,[329] plays a significant role in the

hegemony of self-destruction that gangs in Los Angeles are engaged in. However, it is important

to remember that it is not only gang members who are divided according to differentially

perceived insular oppositional racial/ethnic identities, such divisions permeate post-modern

society the world over, as do the sectarian conflicts that result from such divisions. Indeed, the

division between black and brown communities in Los Angeles and the nation is reflected

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[329] Haney-Lopez 2003; Alonso 2004; Cornell and Hartmann 2007

across every aspect of our society. Latinos and African Americans in the United States subscribe

to competing political factions, as they vie for what little control they can exert over their

communities at the local and national level.[330] As discussed in chapter 4, black and brown

communities subscribe to different cultural traditions, which provide the basis for conceptual

divisions between them. Even our colleges and universities, where we might think that every

effort would be taken to break down such divisions in our society, are divided into Black/African

American Studies departments and Latino/Chicano Studies departments that rarely collaborate

and often conflict with one another, and whose students often patronize one or the other

exclusively as a result of lax general education requirements. Every aspect of our society

supports the division between black and Latino gang members that is expressed through inter-

racial gang violence in California's carceral environments and on the streets of Los Angeles and

beyond.

　　While this analysis may create some cognitive dissonance among those who have staked

their careers and personal identities on racial/ethnic categories, there is no choice but to

confront the inconvenient truth that reifying the race concept by emphasizing racial and ethnic

identities may effectively operate to undermine efforts to alleviate racial conflict among the

working classes, particularly the marginalized minority urban underclass. While we embrace

diversity, we must recognize that affirming the primacy of racial identities effectively operates

to undermine more inclusive class identities and solidarity. Thus the conundrum confronts us,

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[330] Vaca 2004; Cruz 2005; Hutchinson 2007

that by celebrating and embracing racial/ethnic identity, we are effectively reifying the insidious

implications of the race concept, to which we are so vehemently opposed.

Therefore when we look for solutions to the problem of inter-racial gang conflict in Los

Angeles specifically, and gang conflict in the United States and sectarian conflict across the

world more generally, we must first look to how mainstream society and the capitalist State

structures the fields of such conflicts, and how such conflicts ultimately serve to reproduce the

existing system rather than undermine it. The analysis I have presented suggests solutions that

are undeniably more radical than liberal notions of reform. However, there are also more

innocuous solutions that American progressives might be willing to accept. There are also other

solutions that unfold of their own volition as a result of demographic and cultural changes

occurring in Los Angeles. I will address this range of potential solutions in reverse order.

First, we must recognize that while a wide range of sociological theories and research

from group threat[331] to split labor market theories[332], and research on Latino immigration and

black/Latino relations from North Carolina[333] to California[334] have suggested that immigration

and resulting demographic encroachment can be a source of conflict between black and Latino

populations, we must also recognize that demographic change from homogeneous to

heterogeneous communities also undermines perceptions of bias and cultural difference

between black and Latino youth who grow up in mixed race communities. Chapter 4 and 5 of

this work have shown that racial bias and cultural difference are most pronounced in areas of

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[331] Blumer 1958; Quillian 1995, 1996
[332] Bonancich 1972; Olzak and Nagel 1986; Olzak 1992
[333] McClain et al. 2006; Marrow 2009; McClain et al. 2011
[334] Mindiola et al. 2002; Telles and Ortiz 2008; Pastor 2014; Frasure-Yokley and Greene 2014

Los Angeles that are the least heterogeneous, suggesting that as larger proportions of young

people in contemporary and future generations grow up in demographically heterogeneous

communities, the cultural boundaries that divide them will be gradually broken down.

Cultural diffusion is a source of great angst for older generations who zealously guard

the boundaries between racialized gang identities, precisely because cultural diffusion between

black and Latino youth is a threat to the perpetuation of divergent identities. The result of this

undeniable trend towards cultural diffusion has been the kind of shared cultural styles and

practices examined in Denise Sandoval's work on the low-rider car culture,[335] and the sort of

organic community organizing examined in Sylvia Zamora's work on black/Latino relations in

Los Angeles.[336] While of course differences do still exist, divergent identities remain intact, and

inter-racial gang conflict proliferates in many communities throughout Los Angeles, there is

some potential for cultural diffusion over future generations to begin to undermine the cultural

basis of divisions between racialized gang identities.

Encouraging cultural diffusion and multiethnic coalitions is certainly a policy that

mainstream Americans can and should embrace, as we should all encourage young people to

live by the dream that Martin Luther King spoke of, judging their neighbors by the content of

their character rather than the color of their skin. Substantive social programs that encourage

inter-racial multicultural interaction and understanding among young people in Los Angeles are

an obvious remedy to the malady of inter-racial division and animosity. However, rather than

invest in building multicultural community bonds, Los Angeles and much of the nation have

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[335] Sandoval 2014
[336] Zamora 2011

embarked on an unprecedented campaign to gut funding for the kind of school, art and sports

programs that encourage the kind of inter-racial multicultural interaction and understanding

that young people in marginalized communities desperately need in order to break down the

divisions between them. That investment has instead been made on a dramatic expansion of

the Carceral State, what criminologists Natasha Frost and Todd Clear have called a grand social

experiment in incarceration,[337] as generations of ghetto and barrio youth have been sent to jails

and prisons in California, what Ruth Wilson Gilmore has collectively labeled the *Golden*

Gulag,[338] where they are inculcated with racialized gang identities, rather than provided with

substantive programs that break down such divisions in their own communities.

Robert Duran has suggested that the ultimate solution to nihilistic gang conflict is to

engage with, educate and politicize the black and Latino communities in the ghettos and barrios

of America, especially gang members and other marginalized youth, as to their shared history

of racial, social, political and economic subordination.[339] However, this is an endeavor the

capitalist State is not willing to sincerely engage in, precisely because the education and

politicization of marginalized communities, and knowledge of the history of oppression and

repression that has been perpetrated against them, will inevitably lead to their organizing

resistance to the capitalist State as they did generations ago in barrio and ghetto communities,

as well as in carceral environments. History has shown that the capitalist State will zealously

assail any attempt to educate, organize and mobilize marginalized minority populations to

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[337] Frost and Clear 2009
[338] Gilmore 2007
[339] Duran 2013

resist their continued oppression. Indeed the history of repression, infiltration and decimation

of African American and Chicano political activism during the civil rights era should leave no

question as to the price that must be paid by those audacious enough to resist the racist,

classist, capitalist paradigm upon which our society is predicated. While this may seem a cynical

perspective to some, critical analysis of the historical background to these conflicts and

consideration of the interests they serve, leads one to the ultimate conclusion that so long as

inter-minority gang conflict serves the interests of capitalist production and the maintenance of

Anglo hegemony, credible efforts to ameliorate those conflicts and encourage pan-racial/ethnic

class solidarity will be undermined by capitalist interests and their political proxies, as they

were across the nation during the civil rights era.

Rather than enact policies to ameliorate inter-racial gang conflict, everything the

capitalist State has done and continues to do operates to provoke and exacerbate inter-racial

gang conflict in Los Angeles. Although such racist policies and practices such as housing

covenants, COINTELPRO and blatantly racist harassment by law enforcement have been

ostensibly disavowed by the State, the State laid the foundation for inter-racial conflict in Los

Angeles by oppressing black and Latino communities and by suppressing their efforts to

collectively resist their oppression, a policy that ultimately resulted in the emergence of insular

oppositional racial and gang identities and the disparate cultures that define them. The State's

policy of narcotic prohibition produces the rampant black market for narcotics that engenders

the disputes that provoke many inter-racial gang conflicts on the streets of Los Angeles, and it is

the State's agents, CDCR employees, who supply the black market in narcotics and contraband

that racialized gang factions fight over in California's carceral environments. The State's agents

continue practices that provoke conflicts between racialized gang factions in California's prisons

and on the streets of Los Angeles. The State's propaganda machine, the mainstream media,

uncritically disseminates State promulgated false narratives that define inter-racial gang

conflicts as racial conflicts rooted in racial bigotry. The State strips funding for education and

social programs, while increasing funding for law enforcement and carceral institutions.

Everything the State and its agents and proxies have done and continue to do serves to

exacerbate inter-racial gang conflict in Los Angeles rather than abate it, precisely because such

conflict serves the fundamental interests of the capitalist State by occupying the surplus labor

population in a perpetual war with itself.

The solution to inter-racial gang conflict in Los Angeles and California's prisons will not

come from the State. It will not come from privileged communities. It must be found in the

marginalized communities and the populations that participate in and suffer the effects of

inter-racial gang conflict. Gang members, and more importantly gang leaders, must themselves

arrive at the epiphany that they have been the instruments of their own oppression, and to use

the power that they have to resist their oppression instead of enabling it. Only they can

organize, coordinate and execute substantive resistance to the capitalist State. Genuine reform

is concomitant with resistance. It must be compelled from the ground up, rather than the top

down. The State will do everything in its power to prevent that epiphany from occurring, and

where it does occur, to isolate those who possess that understanding so that they cannot

organize resistance to the system that oppresses them. Education and political consciousness in

marginalized communities is like the plague to the capitalist system, something that must be

contained and quarantined. That is why the State executed a campaign of legal violence against

the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s.[340] That is why CDCR implemented a reading

list ban and began censoring the dissemination of inmates' writings, at the same time that

CDCR gave inmates Televisions to replace their personal libraries of radical revolutionary

literature.[341] That is why CDCR and prisons throughout the country established supermax

facilities like the Pelican Bay SHU program in California that put prisoners who present a

potential threat in virtually indefinite solitary confinement.[342] Not because of the physical

threat that gang leaders represent, but because of the political threat they represent. The State

will do everything in its powers to prevent them from evolving into the vanguard of a resistance

movement, just as it has always done.

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[340] Blackstock 1975; Churchill and Vander Wall 1988, 1990; Haney-Lopez 2003; Alonso 2004, 2010; Acuna 2007; Bloom and Martin 2013
[341] Cummins 1994
[342] Brown, Cambier and Agha 2011; Jacobson 2012

Logistic Regression Analyses

```
Logistic Regression 4-1                     Number of obs   =        66
                                            LR chi2(2)      =      4.44
                                            Prob > chi2     =    0.1086
Log likelihood = -42.031752                 Pseudo R2       =    0.0502
```

IR Members	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
East Side	-1.303818	.6473638	-2.01	**0.044****	-2.572628	-.0350083
West Side	-.9053217	.6890084	-1.31	0.189	-2.255753	.44511
South Side	0	(omitted)				
_cons	1.223775	.508747	2.41	0.016	.2266496	2.220901

```
Logistic regression 4-2                     Number of obs   =        65
                                            LR chi2(2)      =      4.26
                                            Prob > chi2     =    0.1190
Log likelihood = -37.144364                 Pseudo R2       =    0.0542
```

Rules Against	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
East Side	1.335001	.750828	1.78	**0.075***	-.1365948	2.806597
West Side	1.30683	.7824036	1.67	**0.095***	-.2266527	2.840313
South Side	0	(omitted)				
_cons	-1.845827	.6212607	-2.97	0.003	-3.063475	-.628178

```
Logistic Regression 4-3                     Number of obs   =        66
                                            LR chi2(2)      =      3.71
                                            Prob > chi2     =    0.1567
Log likelihood = -39.428752                 Pseudo R2       =    0.0449
```

Neg Percept	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
East Side	1.262915	.6840272	1.85	0.065	-.0777533	2.603584
West Side	.7308875	.7410434	0.99	0.324	-.7215308	2.183306
South Side	0	(omitted)				
_cons	-1.504077	.5527708	-2.72	0.007	-2.587488	-.4206665

```
Logistic Regression 5-1                    Number of obs   =        88
                                           LR chi2(4)      =     10.71
                                           Prob > chi2     =    0.0301
Log likelihood = -55.439572                Pseudo R2       =    0.0880


     I-R Sex |     Coef.   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
Parent Oppose| -.5557944   .5848923   -0.95   0.342    -1.702162    .5905734
Peers Oppose | -.2081138   .6369304   -0.33   0.744    -1.456475    1.040247
Community Opp|  .2698115   .7460678    0.36   0.718    -1.192454    1.732077
    Gang Aff |  1.319401   .7314213    1.80   0.071*    -.1141578   2.752961
        _cons| -1.276914   1.316627   -0.97   0.332    -3.857455    1.303628



Logistic Regression 5-2                    Number of obs   =        88
                                           LR chi2(4)      =     26.18
                                           Prob > chi2     =    0.0000
Log likelihood = -46.441895                Pseudo R2       =    0.2199


    I-R Date |     Coef.   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
Parent Oppose| -.2671439   .6460585   -0.41   0.679    -1.533395    .9991074
Peers Oppose | -1.280167   .6701115   -1.91   0.056*   -2.593562    .0332272
Community Opp| -.0613008    .768181   -0.08   0.936    -1.566908    1.444306
    Gang Aff |  1.369648   .7229547    1.89   0.058*    -.0473175   2.786613
        _cons| -1.243322    1.30652   -0.95   0.341    -3.804053     1.31741



Logistic regression 5-3                    Number of obs   =        92
                                           LR chi2(4)      =     16.61
                                           Prob > chi2     =    0.0023
Log likelihood =  -55.11448                Pseudo R2       =    0.1310


     I-R Sex |     Coef.   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
   West Side |  1.042738   .6256717    1.67   0.096*    -.1835565   2.269032
  South Side |  1.136675   .6161735    1.84   0.065*    -.0710028   2.344353
     % Black | -.0378085   .0210938   -1.79   0.073*    -.0791516    .0035345
    Gang Aff |  2.402685   .8902216    2.70   0.007**    .6578828   4.147487
       _cons | -3.107711   .9707325   -3.20   0.001    -5.010312    -1.20511



Logistic regression 5-4                    Number of obs   =        92
                                           LR chi2(4)      =     28.52
                                           Prob > chi2     =    0.0000
Log likelihood = -48.442546                Pseudo R2       =    0.2274


    I-R Date |     Coef.   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
   West Side |  1.662587   .7696817    2.16   0.031**    .1540387   3.171135
  South Side |  1.490405    .762525    1.95   0.051*    -.0041164   2.984927
     % Black | -.0170279   .0207914   -0.82   0.413    -.0577783    .0237225
    Gang Aff |  2.446523   .8307537    2.94   0.003**    .8182756    4.07477
       _cons | -4.416997   1.019483   -4.33   0.000    -6.415146   -2.418848
```

```
Logistic Regression 5-5                          Number of obs    =        88
                                                 LR chi2(2)       =      4.72
                                                 Prob > chi2      =    0.0945
Log likelihood = -50.156679                      Pseudo R2        =    0.0449

Housing Comp |    Coef.    Std. Err.      z    P>|z|    [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
    % Black  | .0556631    .0306156     1.82   0.069*  -.0043423    .1156685
   Gang Aff  | -1.175688   .8313781    -1.41   0.157   -2.805159    .453783
     _cons   | 1.775019    .8804595     2.02   0.044    .0493503   3.500688


Logistic Regression 6-1                          Number of obs    =        88
                                                 LR chi2(1)       =      7.59
                                                 Prob > chi2      =    0.0059
Log likelihood = -36.386244                      Pseudo R2        =    0.0944

 Race Riots  |    Coef.    Std. Err.      z    P>|z|    [95%Conf. Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
Time Served  | .1335018    .0608193     2.20   0.028**  .0142981    .2527056
     _cons   | .6162456    .4438637     1.39   0.165   -.2537113   1.486203


Logistic Regression 6-2                          Number of obs    =        84
                                                 LR chi2(1)       =      7.12
                                                 Prob > chi2      =    0.0076
Log likelihood = -25.042925                      Pseudo R2        =    0.1244

Staff Provoke|    Coef.    Std. Err.      z    P>|z|    [95% Conf.Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
Time Served  | .1885222    .0955453     1.97   0.048**  .0012568    .3757875
     _cons   | .863866     .5747108     1.50   0.133   -.2625465   1.990278


Logistic Regression 7-1                          Number of obs    =        65
                                                 LR chi2(2)       =      4.33
                                                 Prob > chi2      =    0.1150
Log likelihood = -42.514334                      Pseudo R2        =    0.0484

 OK Hang Out  |    Coef.    Std. Err.      z    P>|z|    [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
  East Side   | -1.255028   .6242715    -2.01   0.044** -2.478578   -.0314784
  West Side   | -.4730853   .6317795    -0.75   0.454   -1.71135    .7651797
 South Side   |        0    (omitted)
     _cons    | .3677248    .4336291     0.85   0.396   -.4821726   1.217622
```

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Logistic regression 7-2                              Number of obs   =          65
                                                     LR chi2(2)      =        4.95
                                                     Prob > chi2     =      0.0841
Log likelihood = -42.201029                          Pseudo R2       =      0.0554
```

OKHustleWith	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
East Side	-1.252763	.6196197	-2.02	**0.043****	-2.467195	-.0383307
West Side	-1.098612	.6500916	-1.69	**0.091***	-2.372768	.1755438
South Side	0	(omitted)				
_cons	.5596158	.4432026	1.26	0.207	-.3090454	1.428277

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