

**Antecedents to Gang Membership:
Attachments, Beliefs, and Street Encounters with the Police**

by

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Abstract

In a large sample of public high school students in Chicago, this study explored gang members' attitudes toward school and the police, prosocial beliefs, and experiences with the police. It also investigated the relationship between fear of police and fear of gangs and youth's membership in gangs. Gang members were compared with nongang members (who lived in the same communities) on these variables in order to identify differences between the two groups. In particular, we were interested in whether self-reported experiences with the police were related to gang membership after controlling for overall attitudes toward school and prosocial beliefs. Our findings indicated that gang membership was related to being stopped by the police, disrespected by the police, and fearful of gangs but unrelated to school commitment or prosocial beliefs. We discuss the implications of these results for improving police-youth relationships, especially between youth and officers who work in specialized gang units.

A wealth of research indicates that gangs are harmful to communities. Gang members are five times more likely than nongang members to commit crimes (Shelden, Tracy, & Brown, 2004). Compared with their nongang peers of the same socioeconomic background, gang-affiliated juveniles become involved in crime at a younger age, commit more serious crimes, and continue to engage in higher rates of criminal behavior into early adulthood (Lemmer & Johnston, 2004). Gang membership also significantly increases the likelihood that a juvenile will own and carry a firearm (Bjerregaard & Lizotte, 1995). From 2000 to 2004, while serious crime was generally decreasing, gang murders nationwide rose 25%. In response, the FBI made street gangs its top criminal priority in 2004 and reclassified the nation's "youth gangs" as "criminal organizations and enterprises," comparable to traditional organized crime (Butterfield, 2005).

Gangs and Schools

Dire warnings about the threat of gangs in public schools have frequently appeared in government and media reports (Beres & Griffin, 2005). According to these sources, gang members are bringing into the “safe haven” of schools, guns, drugs, and gang recruitment activities. Schools have now become “gathering places” for gang members (Starbuck, Howell, & Lindquist, 2001, p. 1). In a national survey, Howell and Lynch (2000) found that the percentage of students who reported a gang presence in their schools had doubled between 1989 and 1995 and that the presence of more gangs in school was related to higher levels of drug sales and criminal victimization. Specifically, in schools with gang members, drugs and guns were more readily available and students were more likely to be victims of crime. In addition, Howell and Lynch (2000) found that the presence of gangs and gang-related problems were more common in public schools than in private schools.

Boyle (1992) reported that gang members view school in unfavorable terms. Although gang members acknowledge the importance of education, school appears to them to have value only as a place to socialize with fellow gang members and to engage in criminal activities (Burnett & Walz, 2006). Boyle (1992) also found that gang members who had been suspended or had dropped out of school were still consorting on campus with their associates; they were using the school environment as a gang hangout rather than as an educational institution.

Schools can be a breeding ground for gang membership and influence (Egley, 2000). Nonetheless, critics of research on gangs and schools, such as Beres and Griffith (2005), have argued that the threat of gangs in schools has been exaggerated and that anti-gang initiatives have unfairly targeted youth of color. In one of the few studies of gang members who are actually in school, we compare students who report being in a gang with those who do not, on prosocial attitudes, beliefs, and experiences with the police.

Relationship between Gang Members and the Police

National surveys have shown that gang membership is concentrated in large, poor, urban environments that are populated by people of color and plagued by crime (OJJPD, 2000). Residents of such neighborhoods have difficulty trusting and respecting the police. Stoutland (2001) found that residents in Boston’s high-crime communities believed that the police focused too heavily on crime and not enough on quality-of-life issues. Most germane to the present study, residents placed great weight on whether or not the police respected them and their families. “Respect was such an important

expectation for community members that it often seemed to be the largest factor in determining whether they granted credibility to the police department.... As one youth put it, 'You are the law. But if you want respect, you got to show respect' ” (Stoutland, 2001, p. 250).

Given their adversarial posture toward the police and their criminal orientation, gang members can be expected to be more distrustful and disrespectful of the police than other residents living in the same high-crime communities. Moreover, most gang members are young men, who historically have had poor relationships with police officers. Taylor, Turner, Esbensen, & Winfree (2001) found that youths generally are ambivalent toward the police (see also Nihart, Lersch, Sellers & Mieczkowski, 2005). In their study, juveniles believed that officers were hardworking and friendly but also could be discriminatory and dishonest. In addition, Taylor et al. (2001) reported that Latino and African American youths were more critical of the police than were white youths.

Anderson's (1990) study of inner city youths portrayed the tense relationship between the police and young African American men. In his study, African Americans were cognizant of police power and were more inclined to defer to officers than to defy them. However, as Anderson reported, this deference emanated from fear of the police rather than respect for the officers' position and authority. In another study that compared race and police-youth relations, Browning, Cullen, Cao, Kopache, and Stevenson (1994) found that African American youths were more likely than white youths to believe that officers were harassing them (see also Hurst & Frank, 2000). The present study explored gang members and nongang members' contacts with the police and their perceptions about how the police treated them during those contacts.

Gang Membership

Risk factors for gang membership have focused on family, school, community, and individual variables (Thornberry, 2001). Researchers have identified several factors that place juveniles at higher risk for gang membership, such as low commitment and attachment to school and community (Thornberry, 2001; Hill, Howell, Hawkins & Battin-Pearson, 1999); a lack of self-esteem and social integration (Dukes, Martinez & Stein, 1997); and a desire for money, status, and peer respect (Decker & Curry, 2003; Winfree, Bernat & Esbensen, 2001; Cohen, 1955). According to Sanders (1994):

“The gang offers a wide variety of identities to be claimed or established. A youth can be respected and feared by nongang youth. He can

claim or show he has courage, gameness, integrity, loyalty, and coolness in gang situations. In other words, the gang provides resources in the form of identity-generating situations so that the youth can be *somebody*" (p. 35).

Hill et al. (1999) reported that youths who reside in single parent households were significantly more likely to join gangs than those living in homes with both parents (see also Vigil, 1988). Cohen (1955) argued that boys who were raised only by their mothers (who are symbols of femininity and goodness) feel threatened and need to assert their masculinity through aggressive and antisocial behavior. He proposed that lower class boys experience status frustration as they fail to measure up to middle class standards, particularly at school. Thus, they turn to one another to form street gangs and achieve respect and status (Burfeind & Bartusch, 2006). Similarly, Yablonsky (1997) stated "... the violent gang provides youths with low self-esteem and a sense of hopelessness about achieving any meaningful role in the larger society with a degree of status in their community" (p.70). In short, Yablonsky (1997) argued that the gang and its members *are* the community.

Decker and Curry's (2000) research in three St. Louis middle schools found that young men joined gangs in order to meet and impress girls, combat boredom, and respond to the coercive pressures of joining a gang in their neighborhoods. In two other cities (Las Cruces, New Mexico and Phoenix, Arizona), researchers found no connection between gang involvement and where the young men resided or their race/ethnicity (Winfrey et al., 2001).

A study of 18 public schools in Seattle, Washington, tracked 808 fifth graders until they reached 18 years of age (Hill, Lui & Hawkins, 2004). Nearly 15% of these youths claimed that they joined a gang before the age of 18. Approximately 9% of the girls in the study joined a gang, compared with 22% of the boys. According to Hill et al. (2004:195) "...no single overriding factor explains gang membership." The most powerful predictors of gang membership were the availability of marijuana in one's neighborhood, low academic achievement, single-parent household, and the presence of learning disabilities (Hill et al. 2004). With respect to gender, other researchers have found that girls are less likely than boys to join a gang, and the lack of parental involvement is more important for girls than it is for boys (Thornberry, 2001). Whereas the prevalence of delinquent behavior is higher among girl gang members than among boy nongang members, boys are significantly more likely to be involved in the most serious forms of delinquency (Miller, 2001).

Curry, Decker and Egley's (2002) study of gang members in St. Louis middle schools identified an "interstitial status," falling somewhere between nonmembers and full gang members. These marginal or secondary members

have historically been called gang associates or gang “wannabes.” Curry et al. (2002) suggested the use of longitudinal studies to ascertain if self-identified associates are transitioning into full-fledged membership or on their way out of the gang. Longitudinal studies also have been recommended to elucidate the sequential order of gang membership and criminal behavior (McCorkle & Miethe, 2002). For example, are chronic offenders more likely to be recruited into gangs than less serious and persistent delinquents? We investigated the independent effects of attitudes and experiences on gang membership in order to illuminate further the correlates of joining a gang.

Street Gangs in Chicago

Chicago’s gang history is long and well documented (Landesco, 1929). Thrasher (1927) estimated that, during the 1920s, 25,000 gang members were active in Chicago. Although accurate gang-membership estimates are always somewhat elusive, Bensinger (1984) estimated that during the 1980s, Chicago had a gang population of 20,000. By the 1990s, estimates of the number of active gang members in Chicago ranged from 33,000 in 1995 (OJJDP, 1997) to between 100,000 and 130,000 in 1998 (Risley, 1998). During 2004, the Chicago Police Department (CPD) reported that it was tracking 68 gangs in Chicago, which were subdivided into more than 500 factions; combined, these gangs had an estimated 60,000 active members. Moreover, for many years, CPD officials have asserted that the often-used term “youth gang” is a misnomer when applied to Chicago’s gangs, which they have described as highly organized groups, operated by adults with lengthy criminal histories (Dart, 1992).

In general, gangs in the Midwest (of which Chicago’s are largest and most dangerous) are more organizationally sophisticated than their counterparts elsewhere in the country (Chandler, 2004). Chicago’s street-corner drug sales are inseparable from the city’s larger gang problem (Fitzgerald, 2003). Simply put, the city’s open-air drug markets are gang-controlled enterprises, as evinced by the steady stream of high-profile narcotics-dealing conspiracy cases. Drug dealing accounts for the high levels of organizational sophistication and profit potential that Chicago’s major gangs have reached (Chandler, 2004; Decker et al. 1998).

Extensive gang control over the street-level sale and distribution of narcotics is concentrated in a relatively small number of jurisdictions (Howell & Gleason, 1999) — Chicago is one of them. In this respect, the gang problem in Chicago is more complicated than it is in other cities, especially in light of the significant correlation between gang control of street-level drug dealing and other criminal activities, such as robbery,

extortion, weapons violations and violent confrontations with other gangs (Howell & Gleason 1999; Reiner, 1992). Hence, we conducted our research in a city with a storied history of gang activity and a substantial gang population, giving us the confidence that we would be able to survey enough gang members in the public school system for reliable conclusions to be drawn from our data set.

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Part of a more extensive investigation of the relationship between police and youth (Friedman, Lurigio, Greenleaf, & Albertson, 2004), we explored gang members' attitudes toward school and the police, their prosocial beliefs, and their experiences with the police in a large sample of public high school students. We also investigated the relationship between fear of police and fear of gangs and youths' membership in gangs. We compared gang members and nongang members (who lived in the same communities) on these variables in order to identify differences between the two groups. In particular, we were interested in whether self-reported experiences with the police were related to self-identified gang membership after controlling for overall attitudes toward school the prosocial beliefs.

Method

Data Collection and Sample

Survey data for this study were obtained from Chicago Public School students who were enrolled in May 2000. The data were collected during regular school hours in accordance with each high school principal's directions. The questionnaire consisted of 131 items in open- and closed-end response formats. The survey employed a number of rating scales and explored several content domains: demographic characteristics, students' perceptions of the police, personal experiences with the police, and attitudes toward other social institutions. A description of the study's variables is presented in Table 1. School officials reviewed the survey and were assured that the questionnaires were anonymous. (See Friedman et al., 2004, for a more detailed description of the survey.)

A total of 943 students were asked to complete the questionnaire. The average completion time was 25 minutes. The completion rate for the survey was 94% ($n = 891$). A total of 47 surveys were incomplete or unusable, and five students refused to participate in the study. Nearly half of the students were freshmen and 41% were juniors. The mean and median age of the students was 16 years. Approximately 55% of the respondents were African American, 28% were Latino, 7% were white, and 3% were Asian. The study

sample slightly over-represented Asian students compared with the student population of the city's public schools. The sample consisted of more young women (55%) than young men (46%).

Variables and Hypotheses

Commitment to school. The first variable we used in the analysis was designed to measure the commitment and attachment dimensions of traditional social bonding theory (Hirschi, 1969). According to Hirschi, (1969, p. 110), “between the conventional family and the conventional world of work and marriage lies the school, an eminently conventional institution. Insofar as this institution is able to command his attachment, involvement and commitment, the adolescent is presumably able to move from childhood to adulthood with a minimum of delinquent acts.”

The “commitment to school” variable consisted of two questions that were scored on a Likert Scale that ranged from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” The first question asked about youths’ affinity for school and the second question asked youths if they cared what their teachers think of them. The survey questions were highly correlated ($p < .000$, two-tailed) and combined into an additive index. Higher values of this measure indicated stronger social bonds whereas lower values of this measure indicated weaker social bonds. We hypothesized that gang members would be less committed to school than nongang members.

Prosocial beliefs. As suggested by Hirschi (1969), a second variable was constructed to measure youths’ prosocial values. According to Hirschi (1969, p. 203), one of the items in his research most closely related to delinquency was the question, “It is alright to get around the law if you can get away with it?” Our “belief” variable was similar. Like the “commitment to school” variable, it consisted of two questions that were combined into an additive index. The first question asked students whether they believed it is acceptable to take things that do not belong to them and the other asked them whether truancy is acceptable behavior.

The questions employed to measure this variable were scored on a Likert Scale that ranged from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” The survey items were highly correlated ($p < .000$, two-tailed). The measure was coded to make prosocial beliefs align with commitment to school. Higher values on this variable indicated that a student is inclined toward prosocial behavior. Lower values on this variable indicated that a student is inclined toward delinquent behavior. We hypothesized that gang members would be less likely than nongang members to express prosocial beliefs.

Experience with the police. Friedman et al. (2004) found that treatment by the police (respectful versus disrespectful) was an important determinant of juveniles’ attitudes toward the police. However, Friedman et al. (2004) did not analyze the effect of social bonding variables. Assessing the impact of social bonding and prosocial values on attitudes toward the police might

strengthen or weaken the effects of youths' experiences of being respected or disrespected by the police and be related to gang membership.

We used a set of dummy variables to measure youths' experiences with the police. The dummy variables differentiated students stopped by the police, students stopped and treated with respect by the police, and students stopped by the police and treated disrespectfully. The variables we used to measure not being stopped, being stopped and respected, or being stopped and disrespected were created from questions that followed a skip pattern in the survey instrument. Students were asked if the police had ever stopped them. Students were then asked whether they had been respected or disrespected during the stop.

Ignoring the skip pattern in the survey would have introduced incidental selection bias into the model. Students who had not been stopped would have been excluded from the analysis through incidental selection. These students might be qualitatively different from students who had never been stopped and would be missed in the analysis unless they were captured by recoding the data. As a remedy, we created dummy variables to prevent potential selection bias and ensure that the entire sample of students (stopped and not stopped by the police) was included in the analyses.

The data were reviewed for inconsistencies in students' responses and coding errors that resulted from the survey's skip pattern. For example, some youths responded that they had not been stopped by the police but then indicated that they had been either respected or disrespected by the police. Other variations in responses also created inconsistencies. A review of the data identified 37 cases (4%) with inconsistent responses, which were dropped from the analyses. We hypothesized that gang members would be more likely than nongang members to be stopped by the police and more likely to be disrespected by the police after being stopped.

Attitudes toward the police. We created the variable "attitudes toward the police" as an additive index that combined four survey questions, which were scored on a Likert Scale that ranged from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." The first question asked if students thought police are mostly interested in arresting people and locking them up. The second question asked whether students thought that the police always believe young people are doing something wrong even when they weren't. The next two questions asked whether students believed that the police have one set of rules for adults and another set of rules for teenagers, and whether police hassle teenagers because they think they can get away with it. All survey questions we used to create the index were highly correlated ($p < .000$, two-tailed). Higher values on this variable indicated a positive attitude toward the

police whereas lower values indicated a negative attitude toward the police. We hypothesized that gang members would be more likely than nongang members to harbor negative attitudes toward the police.

Fear of gangs and police. The variables, fear of gangs and fear of police, were entered into the analysis as potential correlates of gang membership. Students were asked how afraid they were of gangs and then asked how afraid they were of the police. Both questions used the same answer scheme on the questionnaire, ranging from “very afraid” to “not afraid.” Higher values on these variables indicated that students were more fearful; lower values suggested that students were less fearful. We hypothesized that gang members would be likely than nongang members to fear the police but less likely to fear gangs.

The dependent variable, gang membership, was a dichotomous measure of gang affiliation among the youth in the survey. For this variable, students were simply asked if they had ever been members of a gang. For the purposes of this research, students responding “yes” were treated as gang members. Students answering “no” were treated as nongang members.

Analyses

We used chi-square analyses to compare gang members and nongang members on the study’s variables and logistic regression analysis to estimate two equations to test the independent relationships between gang membership and the study’s variables. (SPSS 12.0 for Windows). The first regression model included all the proposed variables for the analysis. The second regression model excluded the commitment to school and prosocial beliefs variables to ascertain if the variables fit the data better in a reduced rather than in a full model. Initially, we entered a set of race dummy variables into the equation as a control, but no racial or ethnic category produced significant results. Furthermore, the analysis changed very little whether we entered the racial dummies into the equation or not. There was no difference between gang and nongang members on race; approximately 10% of the students in each racial category reported gang membership. Based on these results, we excluded race from the multivariate analyses.

Results

Gang Members and Nongang Members

School commitment and prosocial beliefs. Approximately 10% of the sample indicated that they had been or are presently gang members. As shown in Table 2, we found significant differences between gang members

and nongang members on several of the study's variables. Specifically, more than twice as many boys (13%) than girls (6%) reported being a member of a gang ($p < .003$). Gang members were less likely to care about their teachers' opinions of them ($p < .04$) and more likely to believe that it was "Okay to cut school" ($p < .001$). With respect to the former, 65% of the nongang members strongly agreed or agreed the statement that they cared about their teachers' opinions of them whereas only half (51%) of the gang members strongly agreed or agreed with that statement.

Twice as many gang members (39%) as nongang members (19%) strongly agreed or agreed that it was acceptable to cut school ($p < .001$). In contrast, gang members were no different from nongang members on the questions of whether they "liked school" and whether it was "wrong to take things that do not belong to you." More than 70% of the respondents in both groups indicated that they liked school and that it is wrong to steal.

Experiences with and attitudes toward police. The largest and most consistent differences between gang members and nongang members involved the questions on youths' experiences with and attitudes toward the police. The vast majority of gang members (90%) reported that they had been stopped by the police, in contrast to a little more than half (53%) of the nongang members ($p < .0001$). In addition, among those who had been stopped by the police, gang members (75%) were more likely than nongang members (58%) to report that the police had disrespected them ($p < .007$).

Significantly greater proportions of gang members than nongang members indicated that the "police are interested in arresting people and locking them up" ($p < .005$). More than 80% of the gang members strongly agreed or agreed with that statement, compared with 65% of the nongang members. No differences were found between gang members and nongang members on the other items that measured youths' attitudes toward the police: "the police hassle teens," "the police have one set of rules for teens and another for adults," and the "police always believe that young people are doing something wrong."

Fear of gangs and police. Not surprisingly, significantly higher percentages of the nongang members (32%) than gang members (11%) indicated that they were very afraid or afraid of gangs. However, no difference was found between gang members and nongang members with respect to fear of the police. Roughly one-fourth of the students in both groups reported that they were very afraid or afraid of the police ($p < .0001$).

Multivariate Analyses

We generated two logistic regression models in order to test the relationships between the study's variables and gang membership. The first model contained all the study's variables. The second model was reduced by removing the prosocial beliefs and attachment to school indices. As presented in Table 3, the theoretically based measures, which refer to juveniles' commitment to school and other institutions, were unrelated to gang membership. Nonetheless, gang membership was predicted by whether a youth was stopped by the police and whether the youth was fearful of the police. Specifically, youths who reported being stopped by the police and who indicated that they had little fear of gangs were more likely to report gang membership.

The second model was slightly more powerful than the first in accounting for variance in gang membership. It also contained the "stopped by the police" variable and the "fear of gangs" variable, both of which were significantly related to gang membership in the same directions as they were in the first model. Again, students who were stopped by the police and less fearful of gangs were more likely to report gang membership than those who were not stopped by the police and were more fearful of gangs. In the second model, the "respect" variable was significant. That is, among the youth stopped by the police, gang members were more than twice as likely as nongang members to report that the police disrespected them during the encounter.

Discussion

This study investigated the relationship between gang membership and youths' prosocial attitudes and experiences with the police. Self-reported gang membership was not prevalent (only 10% of the students in the survey indicated that they belonged to a gang) and was reported equally among white, African American, and Latino students.

Our findings were mixed with respect to the relationship between gang membership and attitudes. As expected, gang members cared less than nongang members about their teachers' opinions of them, and they were more likely than their nongang counterparts to think that cutting school was acceptable. Contrary to expectations and Boyle's (1992) findings, gang members and nongang members were similar with respect to their opinions about schools and whether or not it was wrong to steal. Also as expected, a higher percentage of gang members than nongang members thought the police were interested in locking people up. However, gang members and nongang members were no different from each other in their beliefs about how the police regard young people. In addition, gang members were significantly more likely than nongang members to be stopped by the police and when stopped, to be disrespected by the police. The former were significantly less likely than the latter to be afraid of gangs, but both groups were equally likely to be afraid of the police.

We performed multivariate analyses to isolate the relationships between each of the study's variables and gang membership. In our first regression model, we found no relationships between gang membership and commitment to school and prosocial beliefs. In the second regression model, which removed the effects of these variables, we found that gang membership was related to being stopped by the police, disrespected by the police, and fear of gangs. Thus, our findings appear to be consistent with those of Stoutland (2001), who found that "... residents' perceptions of whether officers showed respect to all community members seemed to significantly affect their inclination to cooperate with police on efforts to reduce crime." (p. 250) In other words, officer disrespect might alienate youth from the police and strengthen a young person's ties or attraction to gangs.

This study is limited in two important respects. First, the study was correlational. No definitive conclusions can be drawn about the directionality or temporal ordering of the investigation's variables. For example, juveniles who are less afraid of gangs might join them because they are attracted to the lifestyle, or they might become less afraid of gangs *after* joining them. Police often target gang members for stops; hence, we expected them to report more

contact with the police. Nevertheless, youth in gangs might have been delinquent and involved with the police before they joined gangs. Therefore, they might be stopped by the police, not because of their gang membership, but because of their history of ongoing delinquent or criminal behavior. In addition, we know nothing about the interactions between the police and gang members because we have only one side of the story. The police might be more disrespectful toward gang members than nongang members because the former behave more disrespectfully toward them than the latter do.

Second, our respondents were self-reported gang members who attended school. These youth might be very different from gang members who are not in school. We would expect that the most hard-core, criminal gang members have already dropped out of or been expelled from school. Thus, the study's findings are applicable to only gang members who are students.

Despite these shortcomings, the current research contributes to the literature on gang membership. Little is known about the prosocial attitudes and beliefs of gang members or their views about the police and their perceived treatment during police encounters. In the bivariate analyses, we found that their views of the police are similar to those of nongang gang members. Both groups harbor negative perceptions of the police, a finding that is consistent with the literature on adolescents' views of police officers and other symbols of authority (e.g., Hurst & Frank, 2000). In addition, both groups claimed that they liked school. In the multivariate analyses, beliefs failed to differentiate between gang members and nongang members. The factors that distinguished gang members from nongang members were the respectfulness of police and fear of gangs. These variables have implications for interventions to combat gang membership.

In extensive interviews with gang members in Chicago, Lurigio (1996) found that gang members on probation had frequent encounters with police officers in which they perceived police officers—especially those assigned to the gang tactical units—as abusive and disrespectful. In general, gang members had no objections to being stopped or arrested by the police. They characterized such behaviors as police officers simply “doing their jobs.” However, they objected strenuously to being “disrespected” and harassed by the police. They expected the police to “treat [them] like a man, not like a chump.” Several of the gang members referred to the Chicago Police Department as the city's largest “gang.”

Such encounters seemed to strengthen gang members' attachments to the gang in a process that is akin to the one described by Decker and Van Winkle (1997) in which fear of outsiders solidified the bonds among gang

members. In this model, the police are an antagonistic group trying to undermine the autonomy, safety, and authority of the gang. In response, gang members close ranks to thwart the threat. By being excessively aggressive with gang members, police officers might be unwittingly strengthening gang affiliation, moving members on the fringe, closer to the core.

Police officers in specialized gang units could benefit from the knowledge of how their behaviors can powerfully affect gang members' perceptions of themselves and the police. Respectful treatment on street can affect gang members' affiliation and identity. Police officers can be trained to employ tactics that minimize conflicts and defuse volatile situations with gang members. Such tactics would allow officers to enforce the law without further alienating juveniles who are already on a criminal trajectory.

Finally, our results regarding fear of gangs suggest that anti-gang initiatives in middle school should make gang membership less attractive and alluring. "Gangsta rap" and other musical sub genres of hip-hop music, with a lyrical focus on the lifestyles of the inner city or "da hood," present an attractive image of gang members. Anti-gang initiatives should continue to counter these messages with the realities of gang membership: risk of serious injury or even paralysis from stabbings and drive-by shootings, long prison sentences, felony convictions that preclude future employment and professional opportunities, estrangement from families, and premature death. The only credible presenters of these messages are former gang bangers who know first-hand the downsides of membership.

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Lurigio, Flexon and Greenleaf: Antecedents to Gang Membership

Table 2. Variable distribution for the sample: Gang members and nongang members

| Variables | | | Whole sample | Gang | Nongang | X ² | Sig |
|--|----|----|--------------|-------|---------|----------------|-----|
| Sex: | | | | | | | |
| Boys | 44 | 13 | 87 | 11.7 | .003 | | |
| Girls | 56 | 6 | 93 | | | | |
| Race: | | | | | | | |
| African American | 53 | 10 | 90 | 1.9 | .930 | (ns) | |
| Latino | 28 | 8 | 92 | | | | |
| White | 7 | 12 | 88 | | | | |
| Other | 8 | 11 | 89 | | | | |
| School: | | | | | | | |
| Care what teachers think | | | | | | | |
| SA/A | 64 | 51 | 65 | 4.2 | .040 | | |
| D/SD | 36 | 49 | 35 | | | | |
| In general I like school | | | | | | | |
| SA/A | 74 | 71 | 75 | .33 | .560 | (ns) | |
| D/SD | 26 | 29 | 25 | | | | |
| Beliefs: | | | | | | | |
| Not wrong to take things | | | | | | | |
| SA/A | 28 | 21 | 29 | 1.6 | .210 | (ns) | |
| D/SD | 72 | 79 | 71 | | | | |
| OK cut school | | | | | | | |
| SA/A | 20 | 39 | 19 | 11.7 | .001 | | |
| D/SD | 80 | 61 | 81 | | | | |
| Experience: | | | | | | | |
| Stopped by police | | | | | | | |
| | 56 | 90 | 53 | 38.7 | .000 | | |
| Stopped & respected | | | | | | | |
| | 39 | 25 | 42 | 7.2 | .007 | | |
| Stopped & Disrespected | | | | | | | |
| | 61 | 75 | 58 | 7.2 | .007 | | |
| Attitude toward Police: | | | | | | | |
| Police interested in locking up... | | | | | | | |
| SA/A | 66 | 82 | 65 | 7.8 | .005 | | |
| D/SD | 34 | 18 | 35 | | | | |
| Police hassle teens... | | | | | | | |
| SA/A | 76 | 76 | 76 | .001 | .970 | (ns) | |
| D/SD | 24 | 24 | 24 | | | | |
| Police.. one set rules for teens... | | | | | | | |
| SA/A | 67 | 70 | 66 | .264 | .607 | (ns) | |
| D/SD | 33 | 30 | 34 | | | | |
| Police always believe young people ... doing wrong | | | | | | | |
| SA/A | 82 | 88 | 81 | 1.98 | .159 | (ns) | |
| D/SD | 18 | 12 | 19 | | | | |
| Afraid gangs | | | | | | | |
| Not afraid/some afraid | | | | | | | |
| | 69 | 89 | 68 | 12.43 | .000 | | |
| Very afraid/afraid | | | | | | | |
| | 31 | 11 | 32 | | | | |
| Afraid Police | | | | | | | |
| Not afraid/ some afraid | | | | | | | |
| | 76 | 75 | 77 | .082 | .775 | (ns) | |
| Very afraid/ afraid | | | | | | | |
| | 24 | 25 | 23 | | | | |

Note: Percentages are rounded.

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