

RECENT PATTERNS IN GANG PREVALENCE: A TWO STATE COMPARISON

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Abstract

Recent data from the National Youth Gang Survey indicate that an increasing number of jurisdictions report the presence of gangs. Historically, increasing presence of gangs has been understood as gang expansion from an urban center into surrounding cities and towns. It has been postulated that gang migrants—existing gang members who move to new territories free of gang issues—have been responsible for this expansion. The present data draw on surveys from law enforcement agencies in two states, Illinois and South Carolina. The data support the NYGS finding that gang presence is again expanding, and suggest that gang presence is expanding into smaller cities, not only close to, but also far from an urban center. Moreover, the data suggest that the notion of gang migration is insufficient to explain the patterns of gang presence. The findings are discussed in terms of their theoretical and policy implications.

The existence of gangs and the related problem of gang violence have long been associated with large cities in the United States. However, beginning in the early 1990s, law enforcement officials and researchers reported a growing prevalence of gangs in suburban counties, medium size cities, small cities and rural counties. This expansion in gang activity was further documented with the advent of the National Youth Gang Survey (NYGS) in 1995, which reported a continued increase in the number of law enforcement jurisdictions reporting the existence of gangs until the late 1990s (Egley and O'Donnell, 1998). The 1998 NYGS responses, however, captured the beginning of a downward trend in the number of agencies reporting the presence of gangs, with the most notable declines reported in suburban counties, small cities, and rural counties.

The recent iterations of the NYGS suggest this downward trend has reversed with an increasing prevalence of gangs again being reported across law enforcement jurisdictions. This present study attempts to provide more detail to the general findings of the NYGS by examining where this growing prevalence is occurring. The primary focus of the analysis is to determine whether this proliferation is occurring in communities surrounding areas that have traditionally had gang problems or if it is unfolding in areas with little history of gang activity. Data for this analysis were gained through a survey administered to all law enforcement agencies in two states with different histories of gang activity, Illinois and South Carolina. Illinois contains communities with a long history of gang activity, particularly in and around the Chicago area, whereas South Carolina has a very limited history of gangs in its communities. Examining whether gang activity is emerging in areas previously unaffected by these groups has practical policy implications given the consistent body of empirical literature linking involvement in gangs with increased levels of criminal activity, particularly violence (e.g. Klein & Maxson 1989; Thornberry and Burch 1997; Decker 1996; Tita & Abrahamse 2004; Harrell 2005).

GROWTH IN GANG PREVALENCE: 1970 – 1995

Early analysis of gang prevalence trends across cities, counties and states largely developed in an ad hoc fashion through surveys of law enforcement personnel conducted on an inconsistent basis. Miller's (1975) interview of officials from twelve law enforcement agencies in the 1970s represents the first of such efforts; he found that six of these twelve cities had problems with gangs. Later analysis by Miller (2001) utilized multiple data sources and found there were 201 cities in 1970 with some presence of gangs. Subsequent national surveys were conducted over the next 20 years that used increasingly larger sample sizes (Miller 1982; Needle and Stapleton 1983; Spergel and Curry 1993; Curry, Ball, and Decker 1996). The cumulative findings from these surveys and others sources indicate a large increase in the number of cities reporting the presence of gangs by 1995. Miller (2001) reports that by 1995 there were 1,487 cities reporting the presence of gangs, and the number of counties reporting the presence of gangs went from 73 in 1970 to 706 in 1995.

Klein and Maxson (2006) note that within this increasing presence of gangs are two separate stories of gang proliferation. The first story reflects the reported increase of gangs in large and midsize cities (populations of 100,000 or more, and 50,000-99,999, respectively) between 1986 and 1990. The number of large cities reporting the presence of gangs increased from approximately 30% in 1986 to 70% in 1990. The reported presence of gangs in midsize cities increased from approximately 20% in 1985 to 40% in 1990. Klein and Maxson note the number of large and midsize cities reporting the presence of gangs continued to increase after 1990, but the greatest rate of increase was within this five year period.

The second proliferation story represents the growth of small cities and towns with less than 50,000 in population reporting the presence of gangs between 1991 and 1995. Approximately 20% of cities and towns with populations between 25,000 and 50,000 reported the presence of gangs in 1991, which subsequently increased to 40% by 1995. Cities and towns with populations between 2,500 and 24,999 reflect a smaller and less notable increase in reporting the presence of gangs, from approximately 10% in 1991 to 15% in 1995. In sum, Klein and Maxson highlight that the number of cities impacted by gangs rapidly increased between 1986 and 1995, first spreading to the majority of large cities and later increasingly impacting smaller

cities and towns.

Knox et al. (1996) have suggested there was also a geographic pattern to this spread in gang prevalence. They assert there is a greater likelihood of reported gang presence in jurisdictions surrounding large urban areas and this reported presence diminishes with distance from these areas, which they refer to as a ripple effect. The argument is supported by Miller's (2001) data on cities reporting the presence of gangs in Illinois in 1995, where 79 percent (N=184) of these cities were located in the four counties that form the Chicago metropolitan area. Presumably, there is also a temporal pattern to this ripple effect consistent with Klein and Maxson's two pattern of prevalence, whereby gangs first emerge in large metropolitan areas and then diffuse outward over time to smaller communities.

A popular explanation provided by law enforcement, public officials, and media outlets has been to attribute this spread of gangs, whether concentrated around large urban areas or otherwise, to the intentional expansion efforts of large gangs from traditional gang cities such as Los Angeles and Chicago (Klein and Maxson, 2006). This is called "gang migration," and the specific individuals who actually move are referred to as "gang migrants." The assertion underlying this argument is that gangs from these traditional gang cities were attempting to expand their territory and influence, particularly as it related to their interests in the street level drug trade. Casual observation of gangs reported in new communities at this time suggested there was some validity to this line of logic on proliferation. Law enforcement officials and others across the country were starting to report the presence of gangs using the names of well-known Los Angeles and Chicago gang affiliations, such as the Crips or Gangster Disciples, as well as observing individuals dressing in the style and colors of gangs from these traditional cities (Hagedron 1988; Skolnick 1990; Bonfonte 1995).

A 1992 survey of approximately 1,000 law enforcement agencies found that over 70% of these respective jurisdictions reported the presence of gang migrants in their community (Maxson 1998), suggesting support for the popular migration explanation of proliferation. However, more than half of the jurisdictions reporting the presence of gang migrants (54.2%) reported the presence of indigenous gangs in their community prior to the observation of gang migrants. Further comparison of chronic gang jurisdictions (communities that had gangs before 1985) and emergent gang jurisdiction (communities reporting the existence of gangs after 1985) revealed that officials from the latter were less likely to report the presence of indigenous gangs in their community before the appearance of gang migrants. In addition, law enforcement personnel in more than fifty percent of chronic and emergent gang jurisdictions reported that the reason gang migrants moved to their community was not gang-related. It was often related to other social factors, such as moving with family for job related reasons. Thus, the reasons for these gang migrants moving to new communities in many cases were not the direct result of large gangs in Los Angeles and Chicago intentionally expanding their activity. In sum, the evidence to date suggests the migration of gang members to new communities for the purpose of gang expansion represents only one explanation for the growing prevalence of gangs though the 1980s and early 1990s. Nonetheless, the empirical findings cited above suggest that the growth of jurisdictions reporting the presence of gangs, whether product of migrant or indigenous influences, was considerable between the late 1980s and early 1990s.

FINDINGS FROM THE NATIONAL YOUTH GANG SURVEY: 1995 – 2006

The creation of the National Youth Gang Survey in 1995 has provided further documentation of gang prevalence trends based on law enforcement observations. The successive annual waves of the NYGS reveal the rate of large, midsize and small cities reporting the presence of gangs continued to increase through 1997, but there was a notable decline in the number of cities reporting the presence of gangs in the 1998 survey and this pattern continued through the 2001 survey (Egley, Howell, and Major, 2006). This decline primarily occurred in midsize and small cities. The percent of midsize cities (population 50,000 to 99,999) reporting the presence of gangs declined from 82% in 1997 to 65% in 2001, and small cities (population 2,500 – 49,999) from 37% to 22%. A decline in the reported presence of gangs was also found in suburban and rural counties over this period. Alternatively, large cities reported little decline with 100% of cities with 250,000 or more in population reporting the presence of gangs over this same period. There was only a seven percentage point decline (92% to 85%) over this period for cities with populations between 100,000 and 249,999.

The recent waves of the NYGS, however, have shown a reversal in this downward trend of communities reporting the presence of gangs. The 2006 survey findings revealed that 86% of agencies serving communities with 50,000 or more residents reported the presence of gangs in their community, as compared to approximately 75% in 2001 (Egley and O'Donnell 2008; 2008a). A similar increase was found in smaller jurisdictions with populations between 2,500 and 49,999, where 32% of agencies serving these communities reported the presence of gangs as compared to 22% in 2001. Increased reporting of gang prevalence was also observed in agencies serving suburban and rural counties. What is missing in the reported findings of the 2006 NYGS, however, are geographic patterns of this recent increase. Are the jurisdictions reporting this new growth in gang emergence concentrated around large urban areas as was found in the early 1990s, or are these jurisdictions in areas away from major urban cities and in areas with little gang history?

The present study partially fills this empirical gap through a comparison of gang prevalence in two states with different gang histories, Illinois and South Carolina. Illinois has a long standing history of gang activity, which is largely the result of gangs in Chicago. As noted above, however, most of the jurisdictions reporting the presence of gangs in Illinois did not emerge until the early 1990s and they are largely concentrated around the Chicago area. Alternatively, South Carolina does not have a notable history of gang activity. There are no large urban cities in the state like Chicago that have a long history of gang activity. Additionally, Miller (2001) found that only 17 cities in South Carolina had reported the presence of gangs by 1995, although a survey of South Carolina criminal justice officials conducted in 2000 suggests that existence of gangs has continued to grow since 1995 (Small, Limber, and Kimbrough-Melton 2000). Thus, the analysis of these states provides the ability to make comparisons in trends between metropolitan Chicago and the rest of Illinois, and between Illinois and South Carolina, a state with little gang history, to identify where the growth in gangs is occurring.

The analysis primarily focuses on the reported rate of gang prevalence by law enforcement agencies across both states, with particular attention given to the period of reported emergence. Is there a recent increase in the number of jurisdictions across both states reporting the presence of gangs consistent with the national trend reported in the NYGS? Is there a difference between Illinois and South Carolina in the rate of

agencies recently reporting the presence of gangs? Is any recent growth in Illinois concentrated around the Chicago metropolitan area or has it occurred in other portions of the state? Analysis is also provided on the reported presence of gang migrants across jurisdictions to the extent this informs any patterns in reported prevalence, with particular attention given to the reported period general gang emergence in the jurisdiction and the reported appearance of gang migrants.

DATA AND METHODS

The data for the present study were gained through mail surveys administered to law enforcement agencies in the states of South Carolina and Illinois. The initial survey was conducted in South Carolina in early 2006 in response to growing public concern over an increase in gang presence in the state. The survey questionnaire was based on the National Youth Gang Survey and was intended to capture information on the prevalence of gangs, their characteristics, and law enforcement response efforts. However, rather than gathering data from a sample of agencies in the state is done with the NYGS, the survey was administered to all 239 county and municipal law enforcement agencies in the state. The number of law enforcement agencies in the state to be included in the survey was based on data collected for the 2000 national census of law enforcement agencies conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. A total of 174 agencies responded to the survey, which represents a 73% response rate. Table 1 provides more detail on the response rates by agency type and size.

In general, the findings from this South Carolina survey were informative for the state's law enforcement, political and community stakeholders. However, they did not provide a comparative context to understand how South Carolina's gang patterns and trends corresponded with other parts of the county. As a result, the authors of this study sought to conduct a survey of law enforcement agencies in Illinois for such a comparison because it represented a state with a long standing history of gang activity as noted above. The same questionnaire was mailed to all 831 county and municipal law enforcement agencies in the state of Illinois as identified by the 2000 national census of law enforcement agencies. The response rate was lower among Illinois agencies with 415 agencies returning the survey, a 50% response rate. Nonetheless, this rate is robust enough to provide tentative comparisons to the data collected from South Carolina. Table 1 similarly provides detail on the response rates in Illinois by agency type and size.

Table 1 also illustrates some key differences in the population distribution between Illinois and South Carolina. The most notable difference is the lack of cities in South Carolina with populations of 50,000 or more, with 26 such cities in Illinois and only 4 in South Carolina. This limits the utility of relying on the dichotomous classification of cities with 50,000 or more and cities with populations between 49,999 and 2,500, which is found in the annual reporting of National Youth Gang Survey results. As a result, the present study divided the cities with less than 50,000 in population into the groups shown in Table 1 to provide more detail in the jurisdictional patterns of gang presence in each state.

Although the survey of law enforcement agencies represents the most common approach to gain insight into gang prevalence, it is important to acknowledge some limitations to this technique. For example, agencies differ on the degree of expertise among their personnel to accurately identify gang activity, whether based on levels of training provided or experience in dealing with these groups (Katz and Webb, 2004). Moreover, agency knowledge on gang activity in

their jurisdiction only comes from gang situations that come to their attention (Klein and Maxson 2006). As a result, agencies may inaccurately identify groups as gangs or fail to notice the presence of gangs in their community. In addition, there is the potential that agencies have different definitions on what constitutes a gang and gang activity leading to inconsistencies in what is reported across jurisdictions (Egley, Howell, and Major, 2006). Despite these limitations, there is no other entity across communities that would consistently have more expertise, contact with gang members, or a common set of definitions. As a result, law enforcement agencies represent the best single entity to survey in order to gain insight into the patterns and trends in gang prevalence.

table 1 here

The surveys utilized in the present study, however, did attempt to address the issue of inconsistent definition across agencies by providing respondents a definition for two concepts of interest: gang and gang migrant. The definition of a gang provided to the survey respondent was drawn from the California Penal Code, section 186.22:

any ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, having a common name, or common identifying signs or symbols, and whose members individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal activity.

The definition for a gang migrant provided in the survey was drawn from the National Youth Gang Survey:

“Migration” includes temporary visits for social or criminal purposes as well as longer stays, including permanent moves for any reason. By definition, gang member migrants have already joined gangs in their former jurisdiction prior to their arrival in a new jurisdiction.

The Prevalence of Gangs

Of the 415 responding law enforcement agencies in Illinois, 187 (45.1%) reported the current presence of gangs in their jurisdiction. Comparatively, the rate for agencies in South Carolina was slightly higher, with 90 (51.7%) of the 174 responding agencies reporting the presence of gangs. Table 2 provides further detail on the reported prevalence of gangs by type of jurisdiction served by the agencies and jurisdiction size for municipal agencies. Both states reveal a similar pattern with nearly all city jurisdictions with 25,000 or more in population reporting the presence of gangs. Moreover, a majority of agencies serving populations between 10,000 and 24,999 reported the presence of gangs in both states, with 81.4% in Illinois and 68.8% in South Carolina. There is also a notable drop off in the reported presence of gangs in both states for agencies serving communities of 9,999 or less in population, with 25.7% of these agencies in Illinois and 37.3% in South Carolina reporting gangs present. A review of the county jurisdictions reveal that a higher rate of suburban and rural counties in South Carolina reported the presence of gangs, with a considerable gap between 66.7% of rural South Carolina counties reporting the presence of gangs and only 16.7% of rural Illinois counties reporting this presence.

table 2 here

Table 3 presents the reported presence of gangs comparing cities in the Chicago metropolitan area to cities in the remaining portion of Illinois. The classification for cities into the Chicago metropolitan area and the remainder of Illinois model Miller's (2001) discussed above. The cities within Cook, Lake, Du Page, and Will counties were identified as being in the metropolitan area, and all other cities represent the "Rest of Illinois" category. Overall, Table 3 reveals a considerable difference in the reported prevalence of gangs between the two groups with 75.6% of metropolitan cities reporting the presence of gangs as compared to 32.5% for the rest of the cities in the state. Further examination of the table, however, illustrates this difference is largely attributable to the pattern found among cities with less than 10,000 in population. The reported prevalence of gangs is essentially the same for cities with a population of 10,000 or more across both areas, but only 18.8% of cities outside the Chicago metropolitan area with less than 10,000 citizens reported the presence of gangs as compared to 54.3% of similar size cities within the metropolitan area. Thus, a pattern consistent with the ripple effect is only observed in these small cities.

table 4 here

In general, these findings on the current prevalence of gangs reveal a pattern found in prior research, in which gangs are reported at a higher rate in larger cities. However, there are also some interesting patterns discovered within these data. First, despite South Carolina not having a notable history of gang activity, the rate of South Carolina agencies reporting the presence of gangs was higher than in Illinois. This higher rate is particularly observable when comparing the smallest cities and rural counties between the two states. Second, the rate of agencies reporting the presence of gangs was similar across the Chicago metropolitan area and the rest of the state with the exception of communities with populations of 10,000 or less, where it was considerable higher in the metropolitan area. Third, a population size of 10,000 or more appears to be an important break point in the current reporting of gang presence across agencies. The majority of agencies serving communities with more than 10,000 citizens in both states reported the presence of gangs, whereas the rate of reported prevalence was less than 40% in cities under 10,000 in population with the exception of the Chicago metropolitan area.

Emergence of Gang Presence

The above findings on current gang prevalence identify an interesting potential

pattern with regard to where the recent reported growth in the NYGS is occurring. Prior research indicates that few South Carolina jurisdictions have reported the presence of gangs in the past, but the above findings reveal that this reported prevalence is now equal or greater in many community types relative to Illinois. This would suggest the growth of gang presence in South Carolina is recent. In addition, it may indicate the recent nationwide growth in reported gang presence observed in the NYGS is largely attributable to non-traditional gang states as opposed to a traditional state like Illinois. The survey question on the reported emergence of gangs in each community provides an opportunity to make this comparison. Each agency was asked when they first observed gangs in their jurisdiction. Given the potential for error in asking respondents to identify a specific year, the time periods for when gangs developed in a jurisdiction were grouped into four categories: prior to 1990, 1990-1995, 1996-2000, and 2001 to the present. Table 4 provides the percentage distribution of reported emergence of gangs for the agencies that reported a current gang presence.

table 5 here

The pattern of gang emergence across both states reveals a distinct difference between Illinois and South Carolina. Almost 80% of the Illinois agencies that reported the current presence of gangs in their jurisdiction first saw this presence before 1996. On the other hand, approximately 75% of South Carolina agencies reporting the current presence

of gangs did not begin to notice these groups until after 1996 or later. In fact, 50% of the responding South Carolina agencies did not observe the presence of gangs until after 2000. Table 4 reveals that this pattern holds across different jurisdiction types and size in both states with a few exceptions. Additional analysis separated the pattern of gang emergence between the Chicago metropolitan area and the rest of the Illinois to make sure the overall state findings were not largely shaped by the metropolitan area. Table 5 shows that the rates of reporting the emergence of gangs since 1996 is higher in cities outside the Chicago area, with 17.2% of cities in the metropolitan area reporting this emergence period compared to 26.9% in the rest of the state. This growth is largely attributable to cities with less than 10,000 in population across both regions. Alternatively, the majority of cities with populations of 10,000 or more across these two areas had seen gangs emerge in their communities by 1995.

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These temporal patterns provide more insight into the ripple effect perspective of Knox et al. and others. Table 5 reveals that in Illinois the highest rates of reported gang presence before 1990 was observed in cities of 10,000 in the Chicago Metropolitan area. The highest rates of gang onset between 1990 and 1995 were subsequently in cities of 10,000 or more outside the Chicago metropolitan area. Growth thereafter is largely observed in communities with populations less than 10,000. When considered in light of the findings from Table 3, these onset patterns suggest a ripple effect. Growth was first most prominent in larger cities in the Chicago metropolitan area and then in similar size cities outside the metropolitan area. The large majority of these cities in Illinois, however, reported the presence of gangs by 1995, leaving cities with 10,000 or less in population as the primary areas to observe any potential geographic spread of

gangs. Consistent with the ripple perspective, while these smaller cities across the Chicago metropolitan area and the rest of Illinois have reported the emergence of gangs since 1996, the actual presence of gangs is three times higher in these small cities within the metropolitan area.

Alternatively, the responses from agencies in South Carolina did not provide evidence of a ripple effect within the state. As noted, South Carolina does not have a large metropolitan area with a long history of gang activity as found in Chicago from where gangs could diffuse from. Table 4 reveals that agencies serving cities with less than 25,000 in population, along with suburban and rural counties, were the first to notice the presence of gangs in their communities. In fact, all of the largest cities (50,000 or more in population) reported that they did not observe the presence of gangs in their jurisdictions until 2001 or later. However, South Carolina as a whole may be reflective a national ripple effect where growth first occurred in states that had metropolitan areas with large and longstanding gang problems, and where more recent growth patterns largely reflect the diffusion of gangs into states with no such metropolitan areas and little gang history. Given the present analysis only examines two states, future research is needed that compares additional states falling within this traditional/non-traditional gang classification in order to determine if the present findings reflect a national trend.

Impact of Gang Migration

The survey also asked if agencies have observed individuals they would classify as gang migrants in their jurisdiction. As noted above, a gang migrant was defined in the survey as an individual that was already in a gang member in another jurisdiction and has come to the current jurisdiction for a visit or permanent move. The underlying purpose of this question is to consider whether any increase in the prevalence of gangs can be attributed to these gang members coming into the community, either to intentionally expand a gang's geographical presence or simply acting as a conduit for diffusing gang culture that is emulated in the new community. Table 6 provides the percentage of agencies that report the current presence of gang migrants in their jurisdiction for both states, along with the rate across jurisdiction types and sizes. The analysis is based only on agencies that reported any gang presence above. Overall, the reported presence of gang migrants is higher in Illinois at 74.9% of agencies than South Carolina at 46.7%. A review of this distribution across jurisdiction type and size reveals that this difference is largely attributed to different reported levels in small cities (population less than 10,000) and counties. The rate of agencies reporting the presence of gang migrants is 60% or better in agencies serving cities of 10,000 or more population in both states. For cities with less than 10,000 in population and both county types, the rate was 65% or better in Illinois, and less than 40% across these groups in South Carolina.

While Table 6 reveals the presence of gang migrants is high across Illinois jurisdictions and South Carolina cities with 10,000 or more in population, it does not provide the ability to establish a temporal relationship that would suggest the emergence of gangs in a jurisdiction is connected to the presence of these gang migrants. The surveyed agencies, however, were asked to identify when they first noticed the presence of gang migrants in their communities using the same time periods for reporting the general emergence of gangs above. Table 7 combines the data from the questions on the current presence of gang migrants and when these individuals were first noticed to approximate the temporal relationship between the emergence of gangs and the presence

of gang migrants. Table 7 provides the percentage distribution of Illinois and South Carolina jurisdictions across three categories: no reported presence of gang migrants, first reported appearance of gang migrants during same time period the reported emergence of gangs in the jurisdiction, and first reported appearance of gang migrants after the reported emergence of gangs in the jurisdiction. No reported presence of gang migrants or the reported appearance of these individuals after the reported emergence of gangs in the jurisdiction would suggest that gang prevalence in these communities was not related the spread of gangs from other communities. In contrast, reported appearance of gang migrants during the same time period and the reported emergence of gangs in the jurisdiction provides support for this link.

table 6

see tables at end of manuscript

In general, the findings presented in Table 7 suggest that the migration of gang members to new communities is not the sole, or even primary explanation, for why gangs have spread across these two states. In Illinois, only 38% of agencies reported the first observation of gang migrants during the same time period as the emergence of gangs in their jurisdiction. The remaining agencies either reported no presence of gang migrants or they did not begin to observe such individuals until some time after the emergence of gangs in their community. The pattern was similar across jurisdiction types and size, except for cities between 25,000 and 49,999 in population where 51.5% of agencies serving these communities observed first gang migrants in their communities around the same time gangs began to emerge in their jurisdiction. In South Carolina, the rate of agencies reporting they first observed gang migrants during the same period gang emerged in their jurisdiction was lower at 32.2%. This rate was similar across jurisdiction type and size, except for communities with populations of 50,000 or more where 100% of agencies reported the observation of gang migrants and emergence of gangs during the same time period.

table7here

CONCLUSION AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The states of Illinois and South Carolina were used in the present study to compare the recent trends in the reported prevalence of gangs between a state that has a long history of gang activity and one with little history of gangs. The underlying premise was to examine whether recent increase of reported prevalence of gangs observed in the NYGS is occurring as the result of activity in areas with a history of gang activity or little of such activity. Overall, the findings from the present study support the conclusion that these recent trends are the result of growing prevalence of gangs in areas with little history of gang presence. Despite South Carolina having a limited pattern of gang activity in the past, the findings revealed the percentage of South Carolina agencies currently reporting the presence of gangs in their jurisdiction was slightly higher than for Illinois agencies. Moreover, the large majority of Illinois agencies reported the emergence of gangs in their communities before 1996, whereas over 50% of South Carolina agencies reported that they did not see gangs emerge in their respective jurisdictions until after 2001, which coincides with the recent upswing reported in the NYGS.

The analysis additionally revealed that this growing prevalence in South Carolina does not appear to be attributed to gangs from traditional gang areas expanding their activity into the state. Over 50% of the South Carolina agencies reported that they had no individuals in their communities that they would classify as migrants. Only 32.2% of the South Carolina agencies reported the first appearance of gang migrants during the same time period that gangs emerged in their community. As noted above, there is some caution in these cases with a possible migrant appearance and gang emergence link because correlations were only made to categories of five year periods for these two issues as opposed to specific years. It is also interesting to note that despite the presence of well-known and long standing gangs in Chicago that have reportedly expanded beyond their place of origin, only 38% of Illinois agencies reported they began to observe

gang migrants in their communities during the same time period as gangs were emerging. Thus, it would appear in South Carolina and Illinois the initial emergence of gangs in communities is the product of indigenous groups as opposed to gangs moving in from other areas. This does not suggest, however, that the appearance of gang migrants after the emergence of indigenous gangs does not alter the nature, relations, and activities of the latter. This impact of gang migrants on indigenous gangs is in fact an area in need of research in the gang literature.

It is important to acknowledge there are some limitations to the study that urge caution with regard to the conclusions drawn. Although the intent of the present study was to examine gang prevalence trends in states with a long gang history compared to those with little history, the findings and related conclusions are limited to the two states intended to represent these categories. Future analysis that compares traditional and non-traditional gang states, regions, and other geographically groupings is needed to determine if the present findings reflect a national trend. The study is also limited by an imperfect survey response rate. Data from these non-responding agencies could alter the pattern of findings across the two states, particularly in Illinois. Last, as noted above in the data and methods discussion, there are potential limitations in the accuracy of agencies identifying the presence of gangs, whether because this activity has yet to come to their attention or because they do not have the expertise among department personnel to properly identify gangs and gang members.

Despite these limitations, the findings from the present study provide at least the ability to provide tentative policy considerations to agencies in Illinois and South Carolina, particularly for law enforcement agencies. First, training is needed for law enforcement personnel in jurisdictions with little history of gang activity and thereby little experience and expertise. This training should not only include insight on how to identify and monitor activity, but also knowledge on response initiatives and tactics for gangs that have been effective in other communities. Second, both states need consistent policies across agencies on defining gangs, gang members, and gang activity at least across their respective state to ensure the individuals and incidents meet some reasonable criteria to be classified as such. The survey utilized for the present study also included questions that asked if agencies had formal policies for classifying if individuals are gang members or if an incident represents a gang crime, and across both states less than 20% of agencies had either of these policies.

Third, statewide or regional initiatives may be needed in both states to help the response efforts of small cities and rural counties. Small agencies and counties do not have the personnel or material resources to support efforts such as gang databases or specialized gangs units. For example, survey responses indicated the majority of agencies serving populations of more than 10,000 in population had gang databases, but such technology was uncommon among cities with less than 10,000 in population and rural counties. South Carolina has recently made strides in this area by establishing a statewide gang database that provides a valuable resource for connecting all state agencies on this issue, and also provides a resource that would otherwise be unavailable to most cities and counties in the state given high costs. Similar efforts may be needed for the development of specialized units when needed. The reported rates of agencies having specialized gang units was low among small cities and rural counties in Illinois, and in South Carolina such units were reportedly rare across all jurisdiction sizes and types. Although some of these agencies may not have a degree of gang presence that warrants this type of response, others may have such a need but simply do not have the

resources to support it. Other states have addressed this issue by creating regional gang units based on a task force model that provides services to a wide area and requires less resource commitment than a stand alone agency unit.

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Table 1
Distribution of Responding Agencies by Community Type

	Illinois		
	Number of Respondents		%
<i>All Agencies</i>	831	415	49.9%
<i>City Population</i>			
More than 50,000	26	20	76.9%
25,000 to 49,999	53	36	67.9%
10,000 to 24,999	121	70	57.9%
9,999 or Less	528	237	44.9%
<i>County Type</i>			
Suburban	28	15	53.6%
Rural	74	36	48.6%
	South Carolina		
	Number of Respondents		%
<i>All Agencies</i>	239	174	72.8%
<i>City Population</i>			
More than 50,000	4	3	75.0%
25,000 to 49,999	9	8	88.9%
10,000 to 24,999	19	16	84.2%
9,999 or Less	161	110	68.3%
<i>County Type</i>			
Suburban	16	16	100.0%
Rural	30	21	70.0%

Table 2**Number and Percent of Agencies Reporting the Presence of Gangs**

	Illinois		South Carolina		
	Number of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Number Reporting Gangs	Number Reporting Gangs	%
<i>Reporting Gangs</i>					%
<u>All Agencies</u>	415	187	45.1%	174	90
					51.7%
<u>City Population</u>					
More than 50,000	20	20	100.0%	3	3
					100.0%
25,000 to 49,999	36	33	91.7%	8	8
					100.0%
10,000 to 24,999	70	57	81.4%	16	11
					68.8%
9,999 or Less	237	61	25.7%	110	41
					37.3%
<u>County Type</u>					
Suburban	15	10	66.7%	16	13
					81.2%
Rural	36	6	16.7%	21	14
					66.7%

Table 3**Percentage Reporting Presence of Gangs (Chicago Metro vs. Rest of Illinois)**

<i>% Reporting Gangs</i> <i>Reporting Gangs</i>	Chicago Metro			Rest of Illinois	
	Number of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Number Reporting Gangs	Number Reporting Gangs	%
<u><i>All Agencies</i></u>	123	93	75.6%	240	78
<i>32.5%</i>					
<u><i>City Population</i></u>					
More than 50,000	13	13	100.0%	7	7
<i>100.0%</i>					
25,000 to 49,999	24	22	91.7%	12	11
<i>91.7%</i>					
10,000 to 24,999	40	33	82.5%	30	24
<i>80.0%</i>					
9,999 or Less	46	25	54.3%	191	36
<i>18.8%</i>					

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Table 4

Reported Period of Gang Emergence for Agencies Reporting Gang Presence

	Illinois				
	Before 1990	1990-1995	1996-2000	2001-	
Present					
<i>All Agencies</i>	49.2%	29.9%	10.2%	10.7%	
<i>City Population</i>					
More than 50,000	75.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
25,000 to 49,999	57.6%	33.3%	0.0%	9.1%	
10,000 to 24,999	54.4%	29.8%	7.0%	8.8%	
9,999 or Less	27.9%	31.1%	23.0%	18.0%	
<i>County Type</i>					
Suburban	80.0%	10.0%	10.0%	0.0%	
Rural	33.3%	50.0%	0.0%	16.7%	
South Carolina					
	2000	2001-Present	Before 1990	1990-1995	1996-
<i>All Agencies</i>		6.7%	18.0%	24.7%	50.6%
<i>City Population</i>					
More than 50,000		0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
25,000 to 49,999		0.0%	50.0%	25.0%	25.0%
10,000 to 24,999		18.2%	9.1%	45.5%	27.3%
9,999 or Less		2.5%	12.5%	20.0%	65.0%
<i>County Type</i>					
Suburban		15.4%	30.8%	23.1%	30.8%
Rural		7.1%	14.3%	28.6%	50.0%

Table 5

Onset of Gangs (Chicago Metro vs. Rest of Illinois)

	Chicago Metro			
	Before 1990	1990-1995	1996-2000	2001-Present
<i>All Agencies</i>	57.0%	25.8%	7.5%	9.7%
<i>City Population</i>				
More than 50,000	84.6%	15.4%	0.0%	0.0%
25,000 to 49,999	63.6%	27.3%	0.0%	9.1%
10,000 to 24,999	63.6%	27.3%	3.0%	6.1%
9,999 or Less	28.0%	28.0%	24.0%	20.0%
Rest of Illinois				
	2001-Present	Before 1990	1990-1995	1996-2000
<i>All Agencies</i>	37.2%	35.9%	14.1%	12.8%
<i>City Population</i>				
More than 50,000	57.1%	42.9%	0.0%	0.0%
25,000 to 49,999	45.5%	45.5%	0.0%	9.1%
10,000 to 24,999	41.7%	33.3%	12.5%	12.5%
9,999 or Less	27.8%	33.3%	22.2%	16.7%

Table 6

Number and Percent of Agencies Reporting the Presence of Gang Migrants (percentage includes only agencies reporting presence of gang)

	Illinois		South Carolina	
Reporting Gang Migrants	Number Reporting Gang Migrants	% Reporting Gangs	Number Reporting Gang Migrants	% Reporting Gangs
<i>All Agencies</i>	140	74.9%	42	46.7%
<i>City Population</i>				
More than 50,000	19	95.0%	3	100.0%
25,000 to 49,999	27	81.8%	6	75.0%
10,000 to 24,999	37	64.9%	7	63.6%
9,999 or Less	45	73.8%	19	39.0%
<i>County Type</i>				
Suburban	8	80.0%	5	38.5%
Rural	4	66.7%	5	35.7%

Table 7

Report presence of gang Migrants Relative to Reported Emergence of Gangs in General (includes only agencies reporting presence of gang)

Period	Illinois		South Carolina		
	No Reported Gang Migrants Appear Same Time	Gang Migrants Appear After	Gang Migrants Appear Same Time	No Reported Gang Migrants Appear After	Gang Migrants Appear After
<i>All Agencies</i>	25.1%	38.0%	36.9%	53.3%	32.2%
<i>14.4%</i>					
<i>City Population</i>					
More than 50,000	5.0%	30.0%	65.0%	0.0%	100.0%
<i>0.0%</i>					
25,000 to 49,999	18.2%	51.5%	30.3%	25.0%	25.0%
<i>50.0%</i>					
10,000 to 24,999	35.1%	36.8%	28.1%	36.4%	27.3%
<i>36.4%</i>					
9,999 or Less	26.2%	37.7%	36.1%	61.1%	34.1%
<i>4.9%</i>					
<i>County Type</i>					
Suburban	20.0%	20.0%	60.0%	61.5%	23.1%
<i>15.4%</i>					
Rural	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	64.3%	28.6%
<i>7.1%</i>					