Barriers to effective gang-member reentry: An examination of street gang-affiliated probationer revocation in a southwestern state

by

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Abstract

While several studies have found gang membership to exacerbate criminogenic behavior and increase the rate and immediacy of recidivism, few explain what factors, in association with street gang membership, prove to have the most influence. The goal of this study is to understand factors associated with the revocation of street gang-affiliated offenders under probation supervision. Using data collected from a southwestern state, the authors examined characteristics of 106, young adult, street gang involved probationers. Examining the differences between groups (i.e., successes vs. failures), level of offense, risk score, needs score, juvenile misdemeanor arrests, employment, financial stability, family relationships, peer associations, emotional stability, alcohol use, drug use, probation officers' impression of need, and demographic variables were regressed on the dependent variable, probation revocation, to identify significant relationships. Bivariate analyses revealed a significant, but weak, relationship with three independent variables; risk score, number of prior juvenile misdemeanor arrests, and unemployment.

Introduction

National trends have shown an increase in gangs in the last decade. The National Youth Gang Survey indicated there were 28,100 active gangs in the United States in 2009 (Egley & Howell, 2011). Cities with a population over 100,000 had an increase in gang-related homicides in 2001. The National Gang Intelligence Center (NGIC) reports over 1.4 million active gang members (street, prison and outlaw motorcycle gangs) in the U.S. The 2011 National Gang Threat Assessment conducted by NGIC indicates gangs are responsible for an average of 48 percent of violent crime in most jurisdictions, and up to 90% in several others.

These gang members pose a serious problem for the criminal justice system. Many gang offenders' demographic and background characteristics are similar to characteristics shown in the research to be highly correlated with recidivism and revocation. For example, youthfulness (Prendergast et al., 2004) , low education

level, long criminal history (Farabee et al., 2004;Prendergast et al., 2004), and unstable employment patterns are variables highly associated with reoffending. This study examines characteristics of street gang affiliated probationers within a Texas jurisdiction that completed or had their supervision revoked for a new offense or technical violation in relation to a variety of predictor variables obtained from the jurisdiction's Wisconsin-based risk/needs assessment instrument; supplemented with additional criminal history and demographic information.

Literature Review

The prevalence of street gangs in the community has had an oscillating pattern, increasing from a low of 50 gangs across cities in the 1960s to a high of 3,850 in 1996 and declining to 2,300 gangs in 2002 (Klein & Maxson, 2006). The prevalence of gangs, as reported across numerous self-report studies, have generally demonstrated a wide variety of ranges from a low of 2% (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999) in a nationally representative sample to a high of 30.9% in Rochester, New York (Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith, & Tobin, 2003). Some self-report studies on arrested youth have shown a proportion of gang involvement as high as 22.9% in Maricopa and Pima counties of Arizona (Katz, Webb, & Decker, 2005), but as low as 7% across 11 U.S. cities (Decker, 2000).

Though some research has examined the context of gangs in, or leaving, a prison setting (Fong, Vogel, & Buentello, 1995; Huebner, Varano, & Bynum, 2007), few have examined gang members under community supervision (i.e., pretrial, probation, or parole). Previous research has shown over 80 percent of the more than 700,000 adult inmates annually released from correctional institutions will be placed on community supervision: probation or parole (Glaze & Palla, 2005; Sabol, Minton, & Harrison, 2007). In addition, about 200,000 juveniles and young adults (i.e., 24 and younger) will return home annually from institutionalization at a juvenile facility, state, or federal prison (Mears & Travis, 2004). Generally, two-thirds of adult prisoners will reoffend within three years for a new crime (Langan & Levin, 2002). Though no estimate is known of the national level percentage of these returns that are gang-involved, it is believed 13% of adult jail populations are gang-affiliated (Ruddell, Decker, & Egley, 2006) and the FBI/NGIC estimate there are 230,000 gang members in state and federal prisons. One could surmise the percentages may be similarly transferrable to offenders under supervision. Although it is quite possible some additions are made through the violent subculture of the institution, whereas some, if political rhetoric were to hold true, may desist all together.

In terms of demographics, the literature has established males are more prevalent within gangs than females (Klein & Maxson, 2006). For example, Snyder and Sickmund's (1999) national study found females comprised only 3% compared to 6% for males of the U.S. population. In terms of race, the number of African

American youth involved in gangs is double that of white youth. Some studies have demonstrated the number of Hispanic youth may rival that of African American gang prevalence (Klein & Maxson, 2006). Note gang prevalence and proliferation across race can also be geographically bound, with African American gangs predominantly in the northeast and predominantly Hispanic gangs in the southwest (Howell & Moore, 2010). In terms of age, 'youth' is a phrase coined for adolescents ranging from the ages of 15 to 24 (Blumstein, 1995; Blumstein, Rivara, & Rosenfeld, 2000). Klein and Maxson (2006) describe the peak age of gang participation around the ages of 14 and 15, with the greatest vulnerability being for those between 13 and 15, and decreasing steadily from there. Simply stated, African American and Hispanic males between the ages of 15 and 24 represent the most prevalent gang population; however, Chinese, Vietnamese, female, and other gang typologies also exist (Campbell, 1990; Chin, 1990; Vigil & Yun, 1990).

Were it not for the street gangs' propensity for violence and crime, their proliferation and sustained group solidarity would be of little value to criminology or pose little threat to public safety. Unfortunately, gang members are prone to violence and in many cities over half of all homicides involve gang-affiliated youth (Blumstein & Wallman, 2006; Braga, 2008; Kennedy, Piehl, & Braga, 1996). In a study of Boston's Operation Ceasefire, for example, researchers found that less than 1% of youth, gang affiliated, were responsible for more than 60% of all youth homicides (Braga, 2008; Braga & Pierce, 2005; Braga, Kennedy, Waring, & Piehl, 2001). Commonly these offenses occur while gang members and/or their victims are under probation or parole supervision (Bowman, 2005; DeMichele & Matz, 2010).

Interestingly, gang members often have long criminal records and are well known to the justice community (Kennedy, 1997). For example, in a study of homicide in Lowell, Massachusetts, Braga and colleagues (2008) found 44% of homicide offenders (74% of which were gang-affiliated) and 18% of homicide victims were under probation supervision at the time the crime was committed. Ninety-four percent of these offenders had previously served time in an adult or juvenile correctional facility and 89% had previously served time on community supervision. A study in Stockton, California, similarly found that 45% of homicide offenders (61% of whom were identified as gang-affiliated) had served a probation term prior to the crime and 40% were actively on probation at the time (Braga, 2008). Up to 41% of homicide victims (53% of whom were identified as gang-affiliated) had served a probation term prior to their death and 24% were on probation or parole at the time of the crime. As these percentages imply, many gang offenders and victims are under some form of community supervision at the time of these acts of violence.

Reentry represents a newly emerging ideology, a reemphasis on the successful reintegration of offenders back into society (Wilkinson, 2001). It espouses many of the concepts of a former era, when the focus of rehabilitation took precedence over punishment and lacked the political backlash of the last half-

century. In many ways reentry represents a renewed interest in community supervision. Whereas the recent trend was to near-permanently incapacitate, even exile, offenders through incarceration, reentry represents a new goal of criminal desistance and successful reintegration. However, all offenders, whether juvenile or adult, face problems with reintegrating into the community. A variety of research exist examining barriers to successful re-entry (Altschuler & Armstrong, 2002; Mears & Travis, 2004; Petersilia, 2001; Sung & Richter, 2006; Taxman, 2008; Visher & Travis, 2003; Warr, 1998). Common barriers espoused in the literature include lack of employment, education, and housing, as well as substance abuse issues and negative peer associations (Bushway & Apel, 2012; Kirk, 2012; Maruna & LeBel, 2003; Western, 2008).

Despite the central role and relevance of community supervision in reducing gang-related criminality there is much less research on what constitutes gang-affiliated probationer or parolee success/failure (i.e., desistance/recidivism) than on those studies examining the populations most vulnerable to adopting the gang lifestyle in the community (i.e., prevention and intervention vs. reentry). Even though some descriptive examinations of gang-affiliated arrestees have been conducted from a more law enforcement perspective (Decker, 2000; Katz et al., 2005) much less has been done, or at least been made readily available, from a community corrections perspective. A report by Olson, Dooley, and Kane (2004) remains one of a handful of attempts to study recidivism of gang-affiliated members under community supervision (Huebner et al., 2007).

Using a sample of adult parolees in Chicago, Olson and colleagues (2004) found gang members were more likely to recidivate and recidivate sooner, than non-gang members. In one year 60% of gang members were rearrested--compared to about 49 percent of non-gang members. In two years, 75% of gang members were rearrested for a new offense compared to 63% for non-gang members. On average gang members were rearrested 229 days from release as compared to 249 days for non-gang members. Further, gang members were more likely to be involved in drug and violent crimes (e.g., homicide). Finally, gang affiliated parolees were found to possess more of the risk factors associated with higher recidivism rates (e.g., age, gender, race, substance abuse, antisocial behavior, negative peer influences, extensive criminal histories, and low social achievement). From an ecological perspective, gang affiliated parolees often lived in urban inner-city areas characterized by high unemployment, limited social services, dilapidated housing, few educational opportunities, and high crime rates (Braga, Piehl, & Hureau, 2009). Similar results can be found in a few other studies concerning gang-affiliated adults (Adams, 2003; Adams & Olson, 2002) and juveniles on probation (Benda & Tollett, 1999; Dooley, 2003; Lattimore, Visher, & Linster, 1995; Visher, Lattimore, & Linster, 1991). Due to the high risks and needs of gang offenders, specialized supervision strategies have been utilized by many community corrections agencies in an attempt to address such concerns.

Evidence-based practices in the community corrections field have continued to find and

support positive results for programs relying on three principles: (1) classify offenders according to relative risks of recidivism, (2) target criminogenic needs, and (3) individualize treatment and learning plans (Andrews, Bonta, & Hoge, 1990; Looman, Dickie, & Abracen, 2005). These three principles—risk, need, and responsivity—remain the central elements of effective community supervision. Two of the most basic of needs, work and a place to live, are often cited by returning prisoners (Maruna, 2001; Maruna & LeBel, 2003; Maruna & Toch, 2005). Three out of four offenders suffer from substance abuse, 55 percent have children, two out of three lacks a high school diploma, many earned less than $600 a month prior to imprisonment, and one out of three suffer from mental or physical disabilities (The Re-Entry Policy Council, n.d.). Such needs are common and often exacerbated in cases of gang affiliation (Braga et al., 2009).

Various caseload organizational models have been devised to address offense or offender types (e.g., domestic violence offenders, substance abusers, sex offenders, mentally ill offenders, gang offenders, and the chronically unemployed). Team supervision models or specialized field and surveillance models are generally used with these specialized caseloads (Clark-Miller & Stevens, 2011). In many instances, specialized caseloads have caps because of statutory requirements or grant stipulations for increased contacts, surveillance, and unscheduled home or field visits. The common theme across the various probation populations is an emphasis on providing streamlined integration of treatment services and community supervision. Specialized caseload programs have generally received favorable empirical support (Klein & Crowe, 2008; Klein, Wilson, Crowe, and DeMichele, 2008; Seiter, 2002; Torres, 1997). For example, in 2008, a research study conducted on Rhode Island's special domestic violence probation supervision for misdemeanor offenders charged with family or intimate partner violence revealed significantly lower rates of recidivism compared to those under traditional supervision strategies (Klein and Crowe, 2008).

Specialized supervision strategies for gang offenders have been employed in a variety of jurisdictions, and have met with some support. For example, in Wisconsin the PROGRESS program (Proactive Gang Resistance Enforcement, Suppression, and Supervision) utilized a team supervision approach for paroled gang offenders by combining the efforts of the Wausau, Wisconsin Police Department and the Wisconsin Department of Corrections Division of Community Corrections to increase parolees' compliance with parole conditions. PROGRESS team members conducted random, unannounced home visits at times least expected by offenders. These allowed officers to reliably identify risk factors and adjust their supervision strategy accordingly, allegedly yielding a 43% reduction in violations.

The Current Study

In this study the authors analyze a secondary dataset of a specialized gang unit in a Texas jurisdiction. The agency employs two specialized officers that supervise gang/high risk youthful offenders. Officers who work in this unit are required to have at least one year

of experience supervising a general caseload or be an active and participating member of the Texas Violent Gang Task Force. Additionally, officers must attend a minimum of 40 hours of training bi-annually related to gang and/or high risk youthful offenders. Officers are required to conduct a minimum of two face-to-face meetings (one at the office and the other at the probationer's home or job), one contact with a family member or significant other, and at least one collateral contact (e.g., treatment provider) per month.

For placement on the specialized caseloads, which are not to exceed 60 offenders, individuals must meet certain criteria as stipulated in grant requirements and departmental policy. These criteria include: felony offenders assessed as high risk/high needs on the Wisconsin Risk/Needs Assessment Tool between the ages of 17-25; must not be a transfer case from another jurisdiction; high risk misdemeanor offenders are eligible only if space is available, but cannot comprise more than 20% of the caseload; confirmed membership in a recognized gang in one of the following categories: street gang, prison gang, outlaw motorcycle gang, or a neighborhood clique considered to be an offshoot of a more traditional gang.

At intake, the probation officer conducts an assessment/evaluation on the probationer to establish appropriateness to the unit and within seven days of placement a supervision plan addressing criminogenic needs is developed. This plan may include substance abuse treatment referrals and cognitive behavioral programming. Probationers can remain on the caseload between six to eighteen months. Probationers are re-evaluated by the court if discharge criteria are not met within twelve months.

To be successfully discharged the probationer must meet certain criteria as outlined by their supervision plan. Though individual supervision plans vary, each probationer must complete high school or obtain a General Equivalency Diploma (GED), be employed, have at least 10% of his/her community service restitution completed, be drug-free for a minimum of 90 days, and have completed the Cognitive Behavioral Program for Gang/High Risk Youthful offenders conducted by the community supervision and corrections department. For those offenders referred to an outside agency, the department ensures treatment providers and/or programs incorporate a cognitive behavioral component.

Data and Methods

The data analyzed within this study consisted of records obtained from a community corrections agency located in a large metropolitan county in Texas (Clark-Miller & Stevens, 2012). Though 225 cases were originally provided, many of these were still active, had "unknown" gang affiliations, contained missing data, or were otherwise not applicable. As a result, analyses were limited to officially recognized criminal street gang members (as indicated by the agency) who received a deferred adjudication and completed their probation or had it revoked (i.e., no longer active). The final N was 106. The dataset included gang affiliated probationers within a Texas jurisdiction from 1995 to

2011. No suitable comparison group was provided or could be located. The data was originally provided as an excel sheet with corresponding code sheets. The authors transferred the data to an SPSS file for cleanup, coding, re-coding, and analysis.

Dependent Variable

Data was provided by the agency to ascertain those gang-affiliated probationers who were revoked due to a new offense or technical violation from those who successfully completed their supervision. For analysis, we utilized a single dichotomous variable on *probation revocation* and coded "0" for successful completion and "1" for revocation. Individuals had various reasons for revocation including a new offense (e.g., misdemeanor and/or felony crime), technical violation, or a subsequent offense alleged on MTA/MTR (motion to adjudicate/motion to revoke).

Independent Variables

The community corrections agency provided risk/needs assessment information for the majority of these cases. Our analysis was exploratory in nature and sought to understand which variables prove to be most predictive of supervision failure. However, the variables included in analysis depended on the availability of data (i.e., some variables contained extensive missing data or lacked variability within variables). Based on the provided data; offense level, risk score, needs score, prior juvenile misdemeanor arrests, employment, financial stability, family relationships, peer association, emotional stability, alcohol use, other drug use, and the probation officer's view of the probationer's needs were included for descriptive, bivariate, and multivariate analyses. In addition to variables from the risk assessment, information was also provided on probationers personal demographics. These variables included age, race, and ethnicity.

Variables such as sexual behavior, personal health, and mental ability were excluded due to lack of variability. In excess of 90% were rated as satisfactory by the probation officer. Some variables contained missing data for about half the dataset and were excluded (e.g., attitude towards change, other criminal history questions, percentage of time employed, number of address changes). Marital status was excluded due to low variability. In addition, completion of high school or GED was excluded due to inadequate variability.

Analysis

The analysis examined, in addition to the descriptive statistics, bivariate and multivariate correlations between the dependent variable, probation revocation, and the independent (offense level, risk score, needs score, prior juvenile misdemeanor arrests, employment, financial stability, family relationships, peer associations, emotional stability, alcohol use, other drug use, probation officer perception of need)

and control variables (age, race, ethnicity). To conduct bivariate analyses, a Pearson's *r* correlations matrix was computed containing all variables. Using SPSS 19, a single logistic regression model was also computed with probation revocation as the dependent variable to examine the impact of all related variables on failure simultaneously.

Findings

Table 1 displays descriptive statistics for the 16 variables examined within this study. For the dependent variable, about 79% of the gang affiliated probationers had their probation revoked. The other 21% either completed supervision or received an early dismissal. The original offense under which the offender was charged varied with a majority consisting of state jail felonies (35%), followed by 2nd degree felonies (34%), 3rd degree felonies (15%), 1st degree felonies (9%), Class A misdemeanors (7%), and Class B Misdemeanors (1%).

The average risk score was 21.8 with a standard deviation of 7.3. When looking by the agencies classification cutoffs it was found the majority were categorized as high risk (81%). In terms of needs score the average was 26.6 with a standard deviation of 8.7. Despite the majority possessing a high risk classification, the majority of offenders were classified as having moderate needs (53%). About 37% were considered of high need with the remaining 10% considered to be of minimum need.

Data were provided for several of the need items including employment, financial stability, family relationships, peer associations, emotional stability, alcohol use, drug use, and P.O.'s impression of need. The majority of probationers had unsatisfactory employment (40%) or was unemployed (36%) and needed training. The majority were experiencing minor (43%) or severe (43%) financial difficulties. Similarly, family relationships were, for the most part, either somewhat strained (38%) or severely strained (39%). Not surprising, the large majority of probationers possessed severely negative peer associations (76%). Most did not exhibit signs of emotional instability (64%) with very few having limited symptoms (28%) and about a handful with symptoms (e.g., loneliness, hopelessness, isolation/ withdrawal, worthlessness) that prohibited normal functioning (8%). In terms of alcohol and drug abuse results varied. About two-thirds of probationers were known to either occasionally (49%) or frequently (17%) abuse alcohol. Similarly, about two-thirds were known to either occasionally (35%) or frequently (41%) abuse, or

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	*Attributes*	*N*	*%*
Probation Revocation	Yes (Failed)	84	79.2
	No (Succeeded)	22	20.8
Level of Offense	Class B Misdemeanor	1	0.9
	Class A Misdemeanor	7	6.6

	State Jail Felony	37	34.9
	Felony 3rd Degree	16	15.1
	Felony 2nd Degree	36	34.0
	Felony 1st Degree	9	8.5
Risk Score		$M = 21.8$	$s = 7.3$
	High (15+)	86	81.1
	Medium (8-14)	18	17.0
	Low (0-7)	2	1.9
Needs Score		$M = 26.6$	$s = 8.7$
	High (30+)	39	36.8
	Medium (15-29)	56	52.8
	Low (14 & Below)	11	10.4
Juvenile Misdemeanor Arrests		$M = 1.6$	$s = 1.7$
Employment	One Year or Longer	1	0.9
	Secure Employment	22	20.8
	Unsatisfactory But has Job Skills	42	39.6
	Unemployed and Needs Training	38	35.8
Financial Stability	No Difficulties	15	14.2
	Minor Difficulties	46	43.4
	Severe Difficulties	45	42.5
Family Relationships	Stable	25	23.5
	Some Disorganization or Stress	40	37.7
	Major Disorganization or Stress	41	38.7
Peer Associations	No Adverse Relationships	8	7.5
	Association with Occasional Negative Results	17	16.0
	Associations Completely Negative	81	76.4
Emotional Stability	No Symptoms	68	64.2
	Symptoms Limited	30	28.3
	Symptoms Prohibit Functioning	8	7.5
Alcohol Use	No Abuse	36	34.0
	Occasional Abuse	52	49.1
	Frequent Abuse	18	17.0
Other Drug Use	No Disruption of Function	26	24.5
	Occasional Abuse	37	34.9
	Frequent Abuse	43	40.6
P.O.'s Impression of Need	No Needs	1	0.9
	Moderate Needs	20	18.9
	High Needs	85	80.2
Age		$M = 19.4$	$s = 1.7$
Race	White	74	69.8
	Non-White	32	30.2
Ethnicity	Hispanic	63	59.4
	Non-Hispanic	43	40.6

have an association with someone who abuses, other drugs. Finally, a variable concerning the probation officers impression of need was included. The majority, consistent moreso with the risk scores than the needs scores, indicated probationers had high needs (80%).

The data set was supplemented by additional variables including the raw number of prior juvenile misdemeanor arrests and probationer demographics. On average probationers had about two prior juvenile misdemeanor arrests (not including the original offense in which they received probation) with a standard deviation of 1.7. The average age

table 2

of the probationers was 19.4 with a standard deviation of 1.7. In terms of race, the majority was white (70%) and, in terms of ethnicity, Hispanic (59%).

Table 2 displays the bivariate correlations. Less than a handful of variables were found to share a significant association with revocation. Of the three significant variables in the bivariate analyses, all three were weak. Risk score ($r=.20$, $p<.05$), number of prior juvenile misdemeanor arrests ($r=.20$, $p<.05$), and employment ($r=.21$, $p<.05$), shared a direct relationship with probation revocation. In other words, those with higher risk scores were more likely to have their probation revoked. Similarly, those with more prior juvenile misdemeanor arrests were more likely to be revoked. Finally, those probationers who received higher ratings of unsatisfactory employment (or were unemployed) from their probation officer were also more likely to have their probation revoked.

Table 3: Logistic Regression Results with Probation Revocation

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	p	Odds
Level of Offense	.313	.261	1.439	.230	1.368
Risk Score	.077	.053	2.125	.145	1.080
Needs Score	.166	.181	.845	.358	1.181
Juvenile Misdemeanor Arrests	.183	.223	.672	.412	1.200
Employment	.005	.244	.000	.984	1.005
Financial Stability	-.127	.291	.192	.662	.880
Family Relationships	-.327	.284	1.325	.250	.721
Peer Associations	-.204	.381	.286	.593	.816
Emotional Stability	-.377	.219	2.966	.085	.686
Alcohol Use	-.038	.248	.023	.879	.963
Other Drug Use	.038	.263	.021	.884	1.039
P.O.'s Impression of Need	-.432	.455	.904	.342	.649
Age	.099	.205	.233	.629	1.104
Race	.933	1.244	.562	.453	2.542
Ethnicity	.191	.976	.038	.844	.021

χ^2 = 19.370, df = 15, p = .197. (Nagelkerke R^2 = .261; Cox & Snell R^2 = .167)

Table 3 displays the binary logistic regression results. No cases were eliminated as the result of listwise deletion; therefore all 106 selected cases were entered into the model. Using the enter method, the logistic regression model was found to be non-significant (χ^2 = 19.370, df = 15, p = .197), with no significant predictors. This suggests the model does not significantly improve prediction of the outcome variable, probation revocation. That said, the combination of variables accounted for between 17 to 26% of the variation in the dependent variable. The model did poorly at predicting those who completed their supervision, correctly classifying less than 14% of gang-affiliated probationers. On the other hand, the model correctly classified 94% of those who failed (i.e., had there probation revoked).

Note it is clear that the N in this study lacks sufficient statistical power to discern significant relationships, given the large number of independent variables as well as moderately low variability in the dependent variable (Cohen, 1992). Two variables nearly reach statistical significance; risk score and emotional stability. When limiting the logistic regression (results not shown) to only those variables found significant in the bivariate analyses (risk score, juvenile misdemeanor arrests, employment) a significant model was obtained ($\chi^2 = 8.741$, df $= 3$, $p = .033$) that explained 8 to 12% of the variation in probation revocations. The model perfectly predicted those who failed, but failed to predict any of those who succeeded. Finally, none of the variables were statistically significant. Including the emotional stability variable increased the model's ability to predict those who succeeded (9%) but had a minimal impact otherwise. While other combinations of variables were also attempted, the results remained negligible.

Discussion

Much of the attention of gang membership has focused on prevention and intervention at the earliest age possible. Prevention is best demonstrated by the well-funded G.R.E.A.T. (Gang Resistance Education and Training) project which places police officers in schools to teach youth about the dangers of gang membership and introduce them to pro-social behaviors and activities (Esbensen & Osgood, 1999; Esbensen, Osgood, Taylor, Peterson, & Freng, 2001). There has also been a great deal of effort put into detection and intervention of gang members as demonstrated by the many multi-agency collaborations of the past two decades; Project Exile, Operation Ceasefire, Project Safe Neighborhoods, and Weed & Seed. Violence interrupters (a.k.a., street workers) also represent a unique twist on the intervention of violence through former, allegedly denounced, gang members.

However, it is surprising the lack of literature that can be located specific to gang member reentry and desistance. The gang member recidivism studies conducted in Chicago remain some of the few reports readily available to the field (Huebner et al., 2007; Olson et al., 2004). The results of their study primarily tell us that gang members are more disadvantaged and of higher risk than other offenders. It does not tell us where to focus our resources for optimum re-integrative success. Unfortunately, this study falls short of providing concrete guidance as well. However, the results of the bivariate analyses do provide further support for the use of risk scores as a viable metric for predicting outcomes with street gang members (incidentally providing guidance for supervision level). This is consistent with the risk/need/responsivity principles that have guided many community corrections agencies' practice (and generally regarded as an evidence-based practice).

Analyses also, somewhat expectantly, confirm that individual history is often a predictor of future behavior. In other words, those possessing a lengthy criminal history are more likely to fail. It is well known that prior criminal history is one of the strongest predictors of failure for probationers and parolees in general (Bushway &

Apel, 2012). Many agencies or courts, prior to adopting risk assessment instruments, relied almost exclusively on background checks to determine supervision level. As such, it is no surprise that our bivariate analyses discovered the number of prior juvenile misdemeanor arrests to be significantly associated with revocation. In other words, street gang-affiliated probationers possessing more juvenile misdemeanor arrests on record were more likely to be revoked for a new offense or technical violation.

Finally, the impact of employment has received mixed assessments with general population probationers/parolees in the literature (Bushway & Apel, 2012). Employment is often regarded as the center-piece of reentry and desistance. From a routine-activities perspective (Cohen & Felson, 2006), it connects individuals to pro-social peers and, along with strong family bonds, reduces opportunities to associate with negative peers. Along with employment comes a legitimate source of income; necessary for essentials such as housing, food, and family support. Despite this strongly proposed connection, studies have typically found null results when attempting to associate employment training programs with employment and recidivism (Visher, Winterfield, & Coggeshall, 2005). Further, many probationers/parolees who obtain jobs through training programs have difficulty keeping them (Bushway & Apel, 2012). One issue probationers and parolees face when possessing a criminal history is discrimination in the hiring process. Employers often require background checks and commonly screen out individuals who possess a criminal history. Further exacerbating the issue, former-offenders often lack a GED or high school degree. This clearly puts former-offenders at a disadvantage and further disconnects them from the community that probation/parole officers hope to reconnect them to. Within the bivariate analyses of this study, employment was the third significant predictor of revocation. Probationers who lack a job and were unskilled were more likely to fail than those who possessed a job.

This study and its results should be taken with caution. Its generalizability is limited in scope as it focused solely on a Texas jurisdiction and a two-officer specialized gang unit. Further, though some significance was found in relation to the bivariate analyses, the strength of those associations was weak. In addition, multivariate analyses produced null results. These analytical difficulties were due, in large part, to the small sample size and a lack of statistical power to adequately detect significance. It should be stressed this is a very small, specific, population of offenders in relation to the general population of probationers and parolees. Finally, the inclusion of variables was limited to available data. As a result, not all of the risk/need items could be included for analysis. It is possible, if not likely, that other risk items may have had a substantial contribution. That said, the results of the study appear to be consistent with prior literature on recidivism, revocation, and barriers to reentry. It is our hope that this paper will further promote the discussion of street gangs and encourage others to discuss and examine street gang-affiliated probationers and parolees in terms of reentry, recidivism, and desistance at a level that is more akin to its prevention and intervention cousins. While there is a plethora of literate on reentry and related programs, as well as literature on gangs, little is focused on street gang-affiliated

probationer/parolee reentry. As Knox (2009) notes, general population strategies need to be examined in the context of gangs.

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