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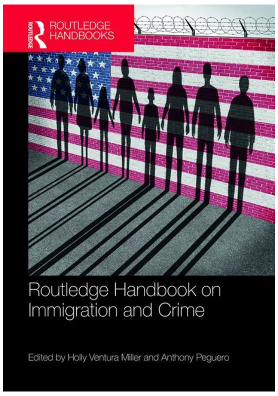

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Immigration and Gangs

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7

IMMIGRATION AND GANGS

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Introduction

U.S. immigration and gangs are seldom covered in either historical or contemporaneous accounts independently. From Irish and Italian mobsters in northern United States' cities during the 1800s to present-day narco-market-oriented gangs, immigrant gangs have long captured enforcement and research attention (Daniels, 2002; Miller & Cohen, 1996; Vigil, 2002). While the oft-referenced immigration and crime correlation is phenomenally more general than gangs, the latter, as readily identifiable and contentious collectives, have fueled social constructions and thus over-representative stereotypes of various immigrant groups. Historically, resentment and fear of immigrant gangs has bred xenophobia and has been extended to gang-labeled minorities through repressive justice system practices and policies (Fetzer, 2000; San Miguel, Miller, Kwak, & Lee-Gonyea, 2011; Whyte, 1943). While on the campaign trail, presidential candidate Donald Trump renewed the immigration and crime meme through implied reference to gangs: "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best . . . They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists" (Donald Trump, June 16, 2015).

Pundits and social scientists quickly counter-attacked by re-characterizing Trump's comments as unfounded race-baiting (Adelman, Reid, Markle, Weiss, & Jaret, 2016), a view echoed through outraged rebuttals and nationwide demonstrations against intensifying immigration enforcement and the construction of a wall to keep illegal immigrants, especially narco gang members, out of the country. The bulk of the extant knowledge base, however, suggests that there is little empirically demonstrable evidence supportive of a general immigration and crime correlation, and that much of the criminality committed by immigrants is attributable to second and third generations that have adopted U.S. values (Messner & Rosenfeld, 2007) shaped by acquisition-driven culture, and, subsequently, crime (Miller & Gibson, 2011). Still, immigration as a driver of crime rates remains popular public opinion reflecting a fused collective outlook regarding immigration, terrorism, and domestic crime. Though several ethnic groups previously indicted for gang threats (Irish, Italians, Jews) are now blurred into the U.S. majority and self-label as Caucasian, there remains a clear and strong direct association between race/ethnicity and gang involvement. Criminologists have long observed that to be a gang member in the United States is to be, typically, non-white (Esbensen & Winfree, 1998). This is almost categorically true for U.S. street gangs, both nationally organized syndicates (e.g., Crips, Bloods, Latin Kings) and uncounted localized territorial gangs mostly populated by African American and Hispanic American youth (Alonso, 2004). While domestic gangs incited social panic and the redirection of criminal justice resources during the crack epidemic of the 1980s and 1990s, the confluence of declined drug abuse and the rise of terrorism has shifted attention backward to illegal immigration and, in turn, immigrant gangs. In her insightful book, *Gangs in the Garden City*, investigative journalist Sarah Garland observes that much of the hostility toward illegal immigrants following the infamous 9/11 attack on New York has shifted from faceless Middle Eastern terrorists to much more common Central American immigrants primarily concentrated in metropolitan areas (Garland, 2009).

While academe has largely rejected the new administration's agenda regarding illegal immigration, particularly deportation and the construction of a wall along the southern United States shared border with Mexico, in favor of more rational, tolerant, and less adversarial policy alternatives, non-enforcement in sanctuary cities and beyond has solidified considerable public sentiment against immigrants regardless of whether they are gang-affiliated or not. On the other hand, gang members are categorically involved in crime and the extent of immigrant gang crime is argued to be both considerable and serious as conservative news sources and right-leaning think tanks have loudly noted. Fox News, for example, reported in 2015 that illegals are far more inclined to commit crimes than the rest of the population and former Department of Justice Attorney, J. Christian Adams, told the station that some states either do not track illegal immigration crime or withhold data from the public out of fear of political backlash. Though only 3.5% of the population, illegal immigrants represent 13.6% of all sentenced criminals in the country and 12% of murder sentences according to Fox. Related, Judicial Watch, in a report prepared for the U.S. Department of Justice, noted that of 61,529 criminal cases initiated by federal prosecutors in 2015, over 40% (24,746) were filed in court districts on the Mexican border in Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, or California. According to the United States Sentencing Commission, illegal immigrants accounted for nearly 75% of federal drug sentences in 2014, and cities with sanctuary policies have seen crime increases. The *Washington Times* reported that tens of thousands of criminal illegals had been released by Immigration and Crime Enforcement and are at large in the country, which, coupled with the *Daily Reporter*'s allegation that a rise in illegals crossing the border is responsible for increased violence, has contributed to heightening panic beyond warranting empirical evidence.

Now dated explanations of ganging as short-lived necessity for newly arrived immigrants assumes that as assimilation transpires and legitimate opportunities emerge, the utility of gang behavior wanes and gangs naturally diffuse. Such explanations are based on racial and ethnic groups whose immigration experience was motivated by political struggle, war, and limited economic opportunity with gang formation as a reactionary after-thought to new circumstances—a sharp contrast with immigrant gangs today whose primary purpose is criminal enterprise. After briefly reviewing the history of immigrant gangs in the United States, the balance of this chapter identifies emblematic contemporary immigrant gangs and leading policy responses.

Immigrant Gangs in the United States

Scholars note that there have been four primary waves of immigration to the United States, after which, except for the original wave mostly from England, newly arrived immigrants embraced gang affiliation and were defined as social threats. After the first wave of mostly northern Europeans who arrived shortly before the American Revolution, a second wave of immigration, mostly Irish and Germans, continued until the mid-nineteenth century and were followed by a third wave of southern and eastern Europeans as well as Asians. The immigrants of these waves have largely assimilated into mainstream U.S. society, but their experience has been instrumental to the development of criminology, particularly theoretical criminology, since the 1940s and the rise of the Chicago School and related work (Thrasher, 1927). The classical social ecological literature is marked by references to immigration influences on gang formation, expansion, membership, and activities. Research focusing on these periods has generated theories of gang development, behavior, and transition that have informed and frame gang research, generally (Barnes, Beaver, & Miller, 2010; Gibson, Miller, Jennings, Swatt, & Gover, 2009; Gibson, Swatt, Miller, Jennings, & Gover, 2012; Miller, Maxson, & Klein, 2001; Miller & Rush, 1996).

Immigrant gangs, clustered in overcrowded urban housing around similar others in reaction to cultural differences and subsequent conflict, shaped if not determined multiple urban processes such as city housing, employment, and ethnic succession patterns in New York, Chicago, and Boston (Downey, 2009). Scholars have almost categorically observed that the immigrant experience in these processes and with social institutions is marked by marginalization and disadvantage. Cultural contrast prompts reactions that place immigrants in socioeconomic environments characterized by mistrust and fear of ever-present crime that easily blurs with fear of the unknown and thus newcomers. For sociological criminologists, social disorganization (Shaw & McKay, 1942) and anomic strain (Merton, 1938; Messner & Rosenfeld, 2007) are the outcomes of social dynamics and structural realities that coalesce in favor of a gang presence.

Ethnic succession and revolving door models suggest that gangs serve otherwise absent or inadequate social and economic functions for, especially newer, immigrants that history has shown to wane over a few decades with assimilation. Gang migration theory directly links the geographic spread of gangs with familial connection more so than criminal activity. In short, the theory purports that gang dispersion is not so much a function of enterprising drug dealing ventures and market competition akin to licit business franchising, as initially purported by law enforcement, and more a result of familial good intent in the form of troubled gang youth being sent to live with relatives where gangs are not present. Too often, the result is that newly encountered youth in perceived safer, often rural settings are impressed with the style and street knowledge of transplanted gang members who organically become leaders of new sets in additional locales. That poorer immigrants, legal and illegal, tend to live in multiple generational contexts only further frames a generic optic of gang migration via familial entrée and advocacy.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 "paved the way for an influx of immigrants originating from non-European countries" that marks the beginning of the fourth and still ongoing wave (Alvarez-Rivera, 2016; Alvarez-Rivera, Nobles, & Lersch, 2014; Decker, Gemert, & Pyrooz, 2009). The new system originally permitted 120,000 immigrants per year from the Western Hemisphere and 170,000 from the Eastern Hemisphere, which was raised to 700,000 in the early 1990s before being reduced to 675,000 in 1995. At the start of the twenty-first century, the United States was experiencing the largest wave of immigration in its history with over a million immigrants a year, the majority coming from Mexico, Central America, and, to a much lesser extent, the Caribbean (Franco, 2008; Miller, Barnes, & Hartley, 2011). Accordingly, attention to immigrant gangs today is focused primarily on Hispanic and Latino gangs, especially narco-related, and then Asian organized crime affiliated gangs along the West coast (Lopez & Miller, 2011; Tapia, Sparks, & Miller, 2014).

Prominent Contemporary Immigrant Gangs

Latin Kings

The origins of the Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation (ALKQN), also referred to as the Latin Kings, is debated by scholars. The Latin Kings are thought to be traceable to the Illinois prison system in the late 1940s when Latin prisoners united to help one another (Kontos & Brotherton, 2008). Conversely, Jacobs (1977) argues that the Chicago Latin Kings did not enter the prison system until the 1960s and 1970s and instead originated as a street gang. Chicago community leaders suggest the Latin Kings originated in the 1950s as a street group in Chicago called Latin Angels and later became the Latin Kings during the 1960s (Brotherton & Barrios, 2004). There is also evidence that the organization can be traced back to a Chicago gang named Noble Lords in the 1930s and their name was later changed to Latin Kings in the 1940s (Kontos & Brotherton, 2008). An early member named "King Cookie" is believed to have given the gang the name "Latin Kings" and is considered the first godfather of the gang's nation (Kontos & Brotherton, 2008).

Still other accounts of the Latin King's origins suggest the gang was "born by the realization of one man," whom they only referred to as "Supremo," who selected "five other Latin brothers whom possessed the awareness of their Latin brother whom possessed the awareness of the people's predicament" (Kontos & Brotherton, 2008, p. 154). The Latin Kings' philosophy is based on increasing Latino solidarity and overcoming racial injustice through political movements, community outreach, and religious practices (Knox, 2000). Over time, Latin Kings evolved into a "territorial oriented organization" and influenced the formation of Chicago prison gangs during the 1980s (Block & Block, 1993).

Latin King members are predominantly Latino men including Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban ethnicities (Block & Block, 1993). Over time, the gang has integrated a variety of race and ethnic backgrounds such as white, black, and members whose families migrated from a wide range of nations, including Iraq, Palestine, Poland, and Asian countries (Knox, 2000). The gang is comprised of over 160 chapters, operating in 158 cities spread throughout the United States in 34 states, and has expanded influence in Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, and regions in Brazil (Kontos & Brotherton, 2008; U.S. Department of Justice, 2008a). The U.S. Department of Justice (2008a) estimated membership to be between 20,000 and 35,000 scattered across the United States and overseas.

Becoming a full member entails completing multiple stages of initiation that proves a potential member's trust and commitment to the gang under all circumstances (Kontos & Brotherton, 2008). Latin King members demonstrate their alliance by representing black and gold colors, and their symbols include a three-point or five-pointed crown, lions, Inca or Aztec inspired artwork, or a teardrop (Knox, 2000; U.S. Department of Justice, 2009a). Each point on the crown symbolizes five principal lessons that reflect the group's moral code. The core principles of the Latin Kings can vary between gang chapters; for example, Chicago chapters emphasize respect, loyalty, love, wisdom, and obedience, whereas a chapter in New York highlights principles such as respect, honesty, unity, knowledge, and love (Kontos & Brotherton, 2008).

The Latin Kings have an organized and hierarchical command structure comprised of the Inca (President), Cacique (Vice-President), Treasurer, Enforcer (Peacemaker), and Spiritual Adviser (Kontos & Brotherton, 2008). Local groups are organized into tribes, which represent specific neighborhoods, and have ranked leaders within each tribe such as the Supreme Crown or Suprema who are considered the leader. Latin Kings enforce a constitution, by-laws, codes of behavior and rituals, and religion (U.S. Department of Justice, 2011). They have built a strong foundation on a code of secrecy and their Latin King Bible that emphasizes principles such as honesty, loyalty, and discipline and entails lessons, rules, and prayers (Kontos, 2012). Members greet one another by gesturing a three-point crown with the right hand and a hard bang against the heart area of the upper body to demonstrate total commitment and sacrifice, followed by a verbal exchange of "ADR" or "Amore de Rey" which means "King's Love" in Spanish (Kontos, 2012; U.S. Department of Justice, 2009a).

Latin Kings are active in street-level distribution of cocaine, heroin, and marijuana, and engage in criminal activity such as assault, burglary, homicide, identity theft, and money laundering (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008a). Between 1987 and 1990, 17,085 street gang-motivated offenses were recorded with the Latin Kings accounting for 2,868 of the offenses, making them among the four largest street gangs (Block & Block, 1993). The National Gang Crime Research Center reports the Latin Kings as one of America's top five and largest street gangs in prison (Knox, 2000). The Latin

Kings are also known for expressive violence, and members have been indicted on attempted murders, robberies, witness tampering, racketeering, and arson (Block & Block, 1993; U.S. Department of Justice, 2009a).

In 2011, in what was considered a victory in the war against violent crime, a Latin King leader in Maryland was sentenced to 23 years in prison for racketeering conspiracy and attempted murder (U.S. Department of Justice, 2011). Latin Kings are also linked to wholesale drug distribution in affiliation with drug cartels such as the Sinaloa, Gulf Juarez, and Tijuana cartels (National Drug Intelligence Center, 2008). Considered one of the most powerful and violent gangs in western Massachusetts, the Latin Kings were of concern to the State's FBI Gang Task Force. The extensive investigation resulted in 12 Latin King members being indicted on firearm offenses and charges of distribution of heroin and cocaine (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015a). Because of drug-related violence, the Latin Kings remain at the forefront of gang investigations by law enforcement agencies involved in large gang takedowns (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010a).

La Nuestra Familia

La Nuestra Familia is a violent Hispanic prison gang rooted in the California and federal prison systems that has evolved into a widespread street gang operation (U.S. Department of Justice, 2013). During the late 1960s the La Nuestra Familia gang was formed to enforce protection from constant intimidation by the Mexican Mafia, a major rival (Hunt, Riegel, Morales, & Waldorf, 1993). Within six years of their constitution being established, the U.S. Department of Justice (1977) reported membership to be between 400 and 500 members in California prisons and streets, and is now considered among the most highly structured prison gangs in the United States (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015c).

The racial makeup of La Nuestra Familia is Mexican American/Hispanic and they generally recruit young inmates. Members identify one another by wearing red rags or having large tattoos, usually covering their entire back. The initials "NF," "LNF," "ENE," and "F" are common La Nuestra Familia symbols (Jones, n.d.). In addition, members claim the number 14 to represent the 14th letter in the alphabet, as well as the dagger and sombrero symbols (Koehler, 2000).

The militaristic and hierarchical structure of La Nuestra Familia is comprised of a general, captains, lieutenants, and soldiers (U.S. Department of Justice, 1977). Rank and promotion are determined by commitment to the gang and accomplishing a specific number of "hits" on "hermits," or similarly, murdering a certain number of enemies (U.S. Department of Justice, 1977). A "blood in, blood out" oath is enforced, and allegiance to the gang is for a lifetime; the only way a member can relinquish their membership is by death (Jones, n.d.).

La Nuestra Familia members are known for drug trafficking and violent crime, and engage in various criminal activities to fund gang operations such as prostitution, contraband smuggling, robbery, and extortion (U.S. Department of Justice, 1977). They have gained the attention of Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) and various other organizations that investigate major drug trafficking and money laundering (U.S. Department of Justice, 2013). For example, collaborated efforts of the FBI's Stockton Violent Crime Task Force and multiple other law enforcements resulted in a La Nuestra Familia member being sentenced to 21 years and 10 months in prison after pleading guilty for conspiring to traffic methamphetamine, cocaine, and marijuana, as well as four other drug trafficking felonies (U.S. Department of Justice, 2013). A high-ranking member in the La Nuestra Familia gang and his associates were also charged with federal racketeering and multiple counts of attempted murder, conspiracy to possess and distribute, assault, and robbery (U.S. Department of Justice, 2014a). Major drug trafficking remains a central enterprise for the La Nuestra Familia and keeps them at the focus of joint investigations by agencies determined to dismantle their criminal activities (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010b).

Mexican Mafia

Originating in the California prison system during the late 1950s, the Mexican Mafia, commonly known as "La Eme" (Spanish letter for the letter M), is a prison gang notorious for the use of violence and force to control territory and gang operations (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008a). The emergence of this gang in Deuel Vocational Institution state prison united Southern California Latino prisoners at a time when they rivaled each other in Los Angeles' streets (Joyce, 2016). By organizing together, Latinos achieved influence in prisons and protection from enemy gang inmates. Their philosophy continues to center around ethnic solidarity and has evolved to include controlling drug trafficking (Jones, n.d.).

The gang recruits are majority Mexican American/Hispanic male inmates, and initially sought out Latino inmates in the Southern California area (Joyce, 2016). While Mexican Mafia's foundation and strength stems out of California, the gang is recognized to operate in at least 13 other states including Texas (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008a). Originally, the gang was formed based on a non-hierarchical structure with all members positioned at equal rank and referring to each other as "Carnal" or "brother" (Joyce, 2016). Over time, the Mexican Mafia transitioned into a hierarchical and sophisticated organization that entails multiple positions such as a "president" as the highest authority and a "prospect" at the lowest ranked position (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009b). A member's status within the gang is determined by their length of membership and the number of killings they have committed (U.S. Department of Justice, 1973). Geographically organized, each prison has a separate set of leadership to operate the branch in that particular territory (Jones, n.d.).

Mexican Mafia gang affiliation is represented by identifiers that include the initials "EME," "MM," or "M," the EME symbol of eternal war, a single hand print (usually in the color of black), and the Mexican flag symbols that include the eagle with a snake (Joyce, 2016). To become a member, the gang enforces a "blood in, blood out" policy, where prospective members must commit at least one killing or stabbing, and once initiated into the gang, membership can only be renounced by death (U.S. Department of Justice, 1973). The gang recognizes the value of member's wives, girlfriends, and relatives due to their contribution to the organization's criminal activities and mail-forwarding operations (Jones, n.d.).

Considered the Federal Bureau of Prisons' most active gang, the U.S. Department of Justice (2009b) describes the Mexican Mafia as "violent, ruthless, and determined drug trafficking criminals." For example, in 1972, the Mexican Mafia committed 30 out of 36 murders in the California prison system (Gaes, Wallace, Gilman, Klein-Saffran, & Suppa, 2002). The gang's main source of income is derived from extorting drug distributors outside prison, and distributing methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin, and marijuana within the penal system and on the streets (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008a). In addition, they oversee gambling and homosexual prostitution in prison and are also involved in extortion, pressure rackets, aggressive intimidation, and murder (Jones, n.d.; U.S. Department of Justice, 2008a).

Considered a victory in the war on drugs, six members and associates of the Mexican Mafia were recently arrested and charged on a 15-count federal indictment of conspiracy to distribute, and possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009b). More recently, a 74-year-old Mexican Mafia member was described by a U.S. District Judge as a "danger to the community" and sentenced to 15 years in federal prison for federal racketeering offenses (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016). The Mexican Mafia's influence and control is not limited to prison, and they continue to maintain powerful and violent ties to the larger community (Joyce, 2016).

Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13)

The Mara Salvatrucha gang, also referred to as MS-13, is a notorious violent gang out of Central America with significant ties to the United States (Adams & Pizarro, 2009). The origins of MS-13 trace back to the 1980s when the gang was established in Los Angeles by Salvadorans who escaped the civil war in their country (Ribando, 2007). In response to constant victimization by other Latino gangs, the migrated Salvadoran youth united together for protection, formed the gang, and claimed the name Mara Salvatrucha (National Geographic, 2006). Their name evolved from the term "Mara" representing slang for gang or posse, and "Salvatrucha" is a slang term for street tough Salvadoran (Adams & Pizarro, 2009). It was not until the early 1990s that the number 13 was added to their name after they were officially marked as Sureños, meaning an established Southern California gang (NAGIA, 2005). The number 13 was selected to represent the thirteenth letter of the alphabet, which is letter "M" (National Geographic, 2006). As of 2006, an estimated 10,000 MS-13 gang members were in the United States and more than five times that many in other countries such as Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006). Two years later, MS-13 was reported to be operating in at least 42 states including the District of Columbia and maintaining a heightened threat in the Western and Northeastern parts of the country (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008b; Wolf, 2012).

While MS-13 began as primarily comprised of Salvadorans, the gang continued to grow as alliances with other gangs were established (Adams & Pizarro, 2009). This contributed to membership evolving and being extended to other race and ethnicities such as Ecuadorians, Guatemalans, Mexicans, Hondurans, Peruvians, and other Central and South American immigrants (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005, 2008b). By glorifying the gang lifestyle, individuals are often recruited as youth and members vary in ages between 8 and 40 (National Geographic, 2006). The recruitment process includes carefully screening prospective members and undergoing a tough initiation that may include killing a rival gang member (Wolf, 2012). Only death releases one from membership (Adams & Pizarro, 2009).

Initially, the MS-13 gang was described as a loosely structured gang, but over time has evolved and become multidimensional (Ribando, 2007). Among the gang are subgroups called cliques that possess their own name and are responsible for a designated amount of territory (Adams & Pizarro, 2009). Within each clique are leaders called "palabreros," or shot callers, and new internal ranks referred to as "misioneros" and "soldados"; however, hierarchical structure does vary between cliques (Castro, 2005; Wolf, 2012). Codes of conduct are disseminated by the gang's constitutions, and rules have evolved to include restrictions on drug consumption, possessing tattoos in discreet body areas, maintaining conventional dress code and hairstyle, and stopping public display of hand gang signs (Aguilar & Carranza, 2008; Cruz, 2007). Many rules are related to MS-13's gang rival the Eighteenth Street Gang, such as members not being allowed to tie their shoe in the shape of an eight or requiring that a member of the Eighteenth Street Gang be killed on the 13th day of each month (Adams & Pizarro, 2009). As a gang with a violent culture, their rules are strictly enforced and it is not uncommon for brutal punishments or death to be carried out for rule violations (National Geographic, 2006).

Signifying the colors of the El Salvadoran flag, MS-13's colors are blue and white (Grascia, 2004). An important part of how members demonstrate allegiance is with extensive body tattooing and graffiti of words, letters, and symbols. Some of these include the phrase Salvadorian Pride, Sureños/Sur/Sur13, MS-13 or spelled in Spanish, the number 13, and a machete (Adams & Pizarro, 2009). Adopted by the founding members who bonded over similar interests in rock music, the devil horns are also a symbol and are incorporated into their hand sign (Castro, 2005).

A major foundation of the MS-13 is violence that permeates their culture and operations. Their aggressive tactics have been attributed to militaristic roots dating back to some of the original founding members who were soldiers in the El Salvador's civil war and passed the military training to future members (Grascia, 2004). By embracing these practices, MS-13 members have engaged in extremely violent criminal activities such as stabbing snitches to death, rape, witness tampering, or decapitating members of rival gangs (National Geographic, 2006). It was in 1993 that MS-13 leaders partnered with the Mexican Mafia to expand their illegal activities and establish their gang presence in Southern California (NAGIA, 2005). MS-13 is also involved in regional drug trafficking and has aligned with Mexican drug cartels and is therefore very active in southern Mexico as well (Ribando, 2007). The gang is also known to participate in extorting business owners, prostitution, kidnapping, robbery, home invasions, immigration offenses, carjacking/auto thefts, vandalism, weapon smuggling, illegal firearm sales, stealing over the counter medication, and human smuggling (National Geographic, 2006; U.S. Department of Justice, 2008b).

MS-13 is responsible for a large percentage of violent crimes committed in multiple countries and has continued as a major contributor in U.S. gang-related violence. Their activities drew a proactive response in 2004 when the FBI enacted the MS-13 National Gang Task Force to combat the gang's operations (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006). In 2007, 1,374 MS-13 members were arrested in cities across the United States (Ribando, 2007). Recently, 37 MS-13 members were indicted on racketeering conspiracy charges and some were also charged with murder, attempted murder, assault, and firearms violations (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015b). Local, state, national, and international law enforcement continue to remain committed to controlling the violent MS-13 gang because it has acquired a reputation for extreme brutality and become a transnational organized crime network with suspected ties to international terrorists (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008b; Wolf, 2012).

La Asociación (Ñetas)

Begun as the Association for Inmate Rights or La Asociación, the gang commonly known as Ñetas was founded in 1979 at The Rio Piedras State Penitentiary in Puerto Rico (Poitevin, 2000; U.S. Department of Justice, 2010c). The founding member named Carlos Torres Irriarte, also known as "Carlos La Sombra," was an inmate at the facility and established the group to unite inmates, demand more humane conditions, protect against abuse by facility officials, and to defend against victimization by other inmate gang members (Brotherton, 2007). The name "Ñetas" is thought to have evolved from either a native Tainos' ritual that signified victory, unity, and the future, or spawned from the term "puñeta," which is thought to have been shouted by "Carlos La Sombra" as he was being murdered by his assailants (Kontos & Brotherton, 2008).

Originally, the gang's main purpose was to advocate prisoners' rights and uphold Puerto Rican culture and independence, and by doing so, the Ñetas have become one of the most influential civic organizations in Puerto Rico (Poitevin, 2000). By enforcing severe penalties for violations of Ñetas' codes, the accomplishments of "Carlos La Sombra" and Ñetas include establishing a set of commandments that ended inmate violence against one another and increased inmate solidarity (Poitevin, 2000). Over time, the gang expanded to the United States and established a heavy presence in New York, New Jersey, and other Northeastern prisons and urban community areas by the early 1990s (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010c). It was during the mid-1990s that Ñetas evolved into a street gang and began to engage in criminal activity such as drug sales, murder, and other conspiracy-related charges (Kontos & Brotherton, 2008). The gang eventually migrated beyond the United States and Puerto Rico and membership has spread throughout Ecuador and various Latin American countries (Brotherton, 2007). The U.S. Department of Justice (2008a) estimated membership to be about 7,000 members in Puerto Rico and 5,000 in the United States.

Ñetas possesses a democratic organization style by hosting monthly open meetings to hear and address concerns against individuals or institutions, and these practices are argued to have assisted in minimizing riot occurrences (Poitevin, 2000). A council, also termed junta, oversees the gang and their ranked structure, which includes a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, disciplinarian, and a coordinator (Brotherton, 2007; U.S. Department of Justice, 2010c). The majority of members are male and range in age from mid-teens to about 40 or 50-year-olds (Kontos & Brotherton, 2008). One key difference between Ñetas and other prison gangs is they do accept gay members into the organization (Kontos & Brotherton, 2008). Ñetas uses the colors red, white, and black to represent their gang with beads or clothing they wear (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010c). Prospective members are only allowed to wear white beads while they undergo a probationary period and once they are considered loyal, thereafter, they can wear white, black, and red beads (Kontos & Brotherton, 2008).

A universal meeting of chapters is held every year on March 30 for prospective members to be "blessed in" and become a fully accepted and committed Ñetas member (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010c). The most common symbol they use is a heart pierced by two crossing Puerto Rican flags with a shackled right hand with the middle and index fingers crossed (Kontos & Brotherton, 2008). Affiliation with Ñetas is also recognized by members possessing tattoos that read, among other things, "N.D.C.," for "Ñeta de Corazon," also meaning "Neta from the heart" (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010c).

A significant difference between Puerto Rican Ñetas and U.S. Ñetas members is that membership in Puerto Rico is exclusively in prison and is surrendered once released (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008a). However, over time in the United States, as Ñetas' membership grew and inmates were released, local chapters formed outside prison and criminal activity expanded. Ñetas engages in criminal behaviors such as narcotics distribution, violent assaults, auto theft, burglary, drive-by shooting, extortion, home invasions, money laundering, robbery, weapons and explosives trafficking, witness intimidation, and murders (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008a). For example, two Ñetas gang members were recently sentenced to life imprisonment after being convicted of racketeering, murder, conspiracy, assault, and illegal use of firearms (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010c). While they are a recognized violent prison gang, Ñetas continue to pose a significant drug trafficking threat to communities as their main source of income is the retail-level distribution of powder and crack cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008a).

Mexican Narcotics Cartels

Mexican drug cartels are "more sophisticated and dangerous than any other organized criminal enterprise" and represent most influential traffickers of narcotics in the United States (McCaul, 2006, p. 4). With operations along the Southwestern U.S. border with Mexico, these groups are able to illegally smuggle drugs, including cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine, and heroin from Mexico into the United States in massive quantities to transport around the country. In order to distribute the drugs, the cartels often have working relationships with street and prison gangs, including the Bloods, the Crips, the Latin Kings, and MS-13 (Woody, 2016). As a result of the control they possess over the U.S.-Mexican border, these groups are also highly involved in both the human trafficking and the illegal arms smuggling markets.

One of the most well-known and highly publicized Mexican drug cartels is the Sinaloa cartel, which made national news in 2016 for the capture of its escaped leader, Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán (Botelho & Martínez, 2016). Despite its origins decades earlier, the Sinaloa cartel took center stage in the drug trafficking market in the 1990s and early 2000s when it began to challenge other Mexican cartels for control over the highly coveted corridor in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico (McCaul, 2006). This led to a massive turf war in the area. The cartel prospered because, in lieu of a completely hierarchical structure that is often found in cartels, the Sinaloa instead gives much more autonomy and independence to its various affiliates (Bagley, 2012). The Sinaloa cartel also began to employ enforcer gangs, known as "Los Negros" and "Los Pelones" to oppose any enemy cartels, which has proven to be a successful strategy in defending their controlled border territory (McCaul, 2006). As a result of their ruthless and violent operations, the Sinaloa cartel became one of the most dangerous and powerful cartels, and their leader, "El Chapo," became one of the wealthiest men in the world (Bagley, 2012).

The founding location of the Sinaloa cartel is in Sinaloa, Mexico, but the cartel maintains a presence in at least 17 of the 31 Mexican states in order to transport their narcotics (Cook, 2007). The Sinaloa also has factions in states all over the United States and in international markets in European and Asian countries (Leicht, 2014). Due to the vast size of the Sinaloa cartel and its expansive organizational structure, accurate estimates on the background of members and the overall size of membership are difficult to uncover. Additionally, there are no official "gang colors" or markers that are used to signify who is and is not a member. As a result of geography and a tendency to recruit those related by blood or marriage, the majority of the group is of Mexican descent (McCaul, 2006). Of note, in 2013, the DEA asserted that the Sinaloa cartel possesses the most significant cartel presence in the United States and is responsible for a multi-billion dollar criminal operation (Drug Enforcement Agency, 2015).

As a result of their extensive criminal enterprises and propensity for violence, members of the Sinaloa cartel have a lengthy history of being pursued by the U.S. criminal justice system and other justice systems around the world. For example, news reports detailing incidents of Sinaloa cartel members being arrested in numerous raids and law enforcement operations are frequent (e.g., Berlinger & Sutton, 2016; Tucker, 2016). A NPR report in 2010, however, detailed that of the 2,600 arrests of drug cartel members made by Mexico in the three preceding years, only 12% (about 300) were Sinaloa members (Burnett, Penaloza, & Benincasa, 2010). This led to speculation that corrupt top government officials may be receiving bribes and offering favoritism toward Sinaloa members (Leicht, 2014). As a result of this bribery, Sinaloa leadership may have kept their arrest and incarceration rates much lower despite their extensive involvement in criminal activity and violence.

This high level of criminal involvement among recent Mexican immigrants is uncommon when compared to the empirical research. At the aggregate level, studies have found that a higher level of immigration in an area is not associated with an increase in crime and actually may be associated with lower crime rates (Ousey & Kubrin, 2009; Reid, Weiss, Adelman, & Jaret, 2005). Furthermore, research has found that, when controlling for important demographic factors, first-generation immigrants are less likely to be incarcerated than later-generation immigrants as well as native-born citizens (Butcher & Piehl, 1998). One notable exception to these findings is found in first-generation immigrant *gang members*. For example, MacDonald (2004) suggested that Latino gangs regularly recruit recently arrived immigrants (especially illegal immigrants) to participate in drug trafficking and distribution as a repayment for facilitating their travel from Mexico to America. This highlights the impact these cartel groups can have on the immigrants coming into the United States.

Trinitarios

The largest Dominican gang and one of the most rapidly growing Caribbean gangs in the United States is the Trinitarios (National Gang Intelligence Center, 2011). The Trinitarios gang was formed in the early 1990s to offer protection for Dominican inmates inside New York's prison system at Rikers Island (Howell & Moore, 2010). The gang's presence in prisons provided safety for members from attacks by other gangs, including members of other Dominican gangs (Schmiedeler & Tyson, 2009). The Trinitarios' name refers to "the Trinity" or "Special One" and was inspired by three leaders of the Dominican independence movement in the mid-1800s: Juan Pablo Duarte, Francisco del Rosario Sánchez, and Matías Ramón Mella (Schmiedeler & Tyson, 2009). Since its inception at Rikers Island, the gang has spread out onto the streets and become involved in a number of violent and criminal operations, opposing many rival gangs in the area.

The membership of the gang is predominantly comprised of second-generation Dominican youth living in America (Messing, 2008; National Gang Intelligence Center, 2011). In fact, a large portion of the gang's recruitment is conducted in schools, especially in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Queens (Hamilton, 2007). Since the gang was founded in the U.S. prison system, it did not actually originate in the Dominican Republic, but, as a result of economic and civil hardships, an influx of Dominican immigrants in New York has impacted the gang's growth (Schmiedeler & Tyson, 2009). As a result of the increase in the Dominican population in America (and other countries), the Trinitarios membership has grown to approximately 30,000 members around the world, mostly residing in the United States (Olmstead, 2012). Although the Trinitarios began in New York, they have since spread to a variety of states along the East Coast, including New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Rhode Island and other countries around the world (Howell & Moore, 2010; National Gang Intelligence Center, 2011). This expansion is also tied to the increase in the Dominican populations in each of these communities.

The Trinitarios' motto is "Dios, patria, y libertad," or "DPL," which translates to "God, country, and liberty" (Gang Identification Task Force, 2014). Members take great pride in their Dominican roots and many feature the Dominican flag in their tattoos (Schmiedeler & Tyson, 2009). They also have a very strict organizational structure, centering on the number three (e.g., three heads, three chapters, etc.), which coincides with the concept of the Trinitarios. In order to be initiated as a member, the gang often engages in "beat-ins" by existing members. Once made a member, Trinitarios members signify their alliance to the gang by wearing bandanas or beads with the colors of red, blue, and white (to match the Dominican Republic's flag), and most predominantly lime green bandanas (Hamilton, 2007; National Gang Intelligence Center, 2011).

Criminal activity by Trinitarios is quite frequent in a number of areas in the northeast, with members specifically involved in drug trafficking and distribution, robbery, home invasions, grand theft auto, and homicide (Howell & Moore, 2010; National Gang Intelligence Center, 2011). Trinitarios are known for their involvement in extreme violence with one of their most characteristic forms of violence being the use of a machete to murder their rivals. Between the years of 2009 and 2014, over 100 members of the Trinitarios gang were arrested and charged with a variety of offenses ranging from narcotics to murder (New York Police Department, 2012). As a result of targeted efforts to arrest Trinitarios, a strong presence of members has continued in prisons, evidenced by the report that one of the founders and national leaders of the gang, Leonides Siera, was sentenced to an additional 19 years in New York State prison for a racketeering conspiracy in 2014 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2014b).

Wah Ching

The Wah Ching is a Chinese triad society and street gang that was founded in the 1960s in San Francisco, California's Chinatown district (Pih & Mao, 2005; Valdez, 1997). For nearly two decades, the Wah Ching was the dominant Asian gang in San Francisco (U.S. Department of Justice, 1991). They first gained notoriety following the Golden Dragon massacre in September of 1977, which at the time was the worst mass-shooting in San Francisco history (Toy, 1992). This gang shooting was the culmination of a violent struggle between Wah Ching members and the "Joe Boys," a rival Chinatown gang, and resulted in the deaths of five innocent bystanders. This massacre garnered a lot of public attention and is largely responsible for the creation of the San Francisco Police Department's Asian Gang Task Force (United Gangs, 2013).

Following many years of power in San Francisco, Danny Wong, then leader of the Wah Ching, was assassinated by members of the Wo Hop To, another triad society, in 1991 (U.S. Department of Justice, 1991). This led to an ongoing power struggle between the two gangs that resulted in a number of violent incidents. This gang war contributed to the deaths and incarcerations of many members and caused a dramatic decrease in Wah Ching membership in the San Francisco area in the 1980s and early 1990s, where they had been headquartered (U.S. Department of Justice, 1991). Since this decrease, however, Wah Ching did experience a revival of membership and activity in the Bay Area in the late 1990s (Wallace, 1998).

Given that "Wah Ching" translates to "Chinese Youth," the gang's membership is primarily made up of young teenage Chinese American men (UnitedGangs, 2013). The majority of the early members were born in Hong Kong, but now members of other ethnic backgrounds have surfaced (City of Glendale Police Department, n.d.). For example, the restriction on Hong Kong immigrants was changed, leading to an influx of Vietnamese and Chinese-Vietnamese members in the 1990s (Toy, 1992). Originally, all Wah Ching members were Chinese immigrants, many who came to America for financial reasons, experiencing many obstacles to assimilation (Luo, 2005). As such, Wah Ching was founded to help recent immigrants overcome language barriers and difficulties adapting to U.S. culture.

Despite its origins in San Francisco, Wah Ching members have since been found in many other areas, including large factions in Los Angeles, Seattle, Portland, Vancouver, and other West Coast cities (Rosenzweig, 2002). In addition to their West Coast involvement, Wah Ching also has affiliations with certain East Coast groups including those found in New York City (U.S. Department of Justice, 1991). The expansion to other cities also increased the Wah Ching membership, with reports estimating their membership to be well over 1,000 members (State of California Department of Justice, 1996). Many Wah Ching members do not wear specific clothing to identify their membership, instead often wearing casual or even business attire, which can make their identification by law enforcement more difficult (City of Glendale Police Department, n.d.).

Since Wah Ching's inception, members have been arrested and convicted of various crimes, including loan sharking, robberies, counterfeiting, fraud, drug trafficking, and violence (Rosenzweig, 2002; U.S. Department of Justice, 1991). In addition to their criminal enterprises, the Wah Ching also became active in semi-legitimate businesses in the entertainment industry (U.S. Department of Justice, 1991). As a result of their gang activity, the State of California Department of Justice specifically identified approximately 70 members as responsible for a number of criminal offenses in 1996. In more recent years, the activities of Wah Ching (and many other Chinese triad gangs) have largely gone underground with criminal operations confined to extortion, gambling, and prostitution (Kamiya, 2016). As a result, high-profile Wah Ching incidents have become rarer and less publicized since the days of the Golden Dragon Massacre.

Looking Forward

In an April 2017 speech delivered in Nogales, Arizona, United States Attorney General Jeff Sessions signaled that the new administration intends to make good on Trump campaign promises regarding illegal immigrants, particularly gangs:

> It is here along this border that transnational gangs like MS-13 and international cartels flood our country with drugs and leave death and violence in their wake. And it is here that criminal aliens and the coyotes and the document-forgers seek to overthrow our system of lawful immigration. When we talk about MS-13 and the cartels, what do we mean? We mean criminal organizations that turn cities and suburbs into warzones, that rape and kill innocent citizens and who profit by smuggling poison and other human beings across our borders. Depravity and violence are their calling cards, including brutal machete attacks and beheadings. It is here, on this sliver of land, where we first take our stand against this filth.

While this get tough approach seemingly represents the outlook and interests of criminal justice functionaries, the interrelated issues of illegal immigration, a border wall, and crime effects are proving more complicated in practice than campaign rhetoric solutions. Sanctuary cities and the local politics of non-enforcement therein metaphorically and ironically handcuff law enforcement from engaging immigrant gang members unless directly observing crime, as the protection of immigrants has superseded traditional gang enforcement operations to the effect of providing some immigrant gangs a degree of amnesty. On the other hand, police simultaneously claim that a "get tough" on immigration approach bolsters the non-reporting of crimes, particularly domestic violence and sexual assault, as doing so brings unwanted attention into immigrant communities thus jeopardizing all resident illegals whether they are criminal or not. It remains to be seen whether a federal enforce and deport or, even more ironic in this context, states' rights immigrant protective policy will prevail; as this book goes to press, the Trump administration is embattled with federal judges who have blocked executive orders regarding travel bans and federal grant ineligibility for sanctuary cities.

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