

UNDERSTANDING GANG LEADERS: CHARACTERISTICS AND DRIVING FORCES OF STREET GANG LEADERS IN SWEDEN

Amir Rostami, Ph.D.
Fredrik Leinfelt
David C. Brotherton, Ph.D.

Stockholm University
Stockholm County Police, Sweden
John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Abstract

In this criminological study we have combined ethnographic fieldwork observations with twelve in-depth interviews with Swedish street gang leaders and twelve associate gang members to understand the driving forces behind street gang leadership and gang membership by delineating the multiple themes of the subjects' narratives. A descriptive and interpretive analysis of the data suggested four ideal-types, each with specific goals, aspirations, and motives. These were in accord with a limited, though diverse literature on gang leadership that has primarily emerged in the United States. The analysis, however, does not necessarily support the claim that U.S.-style intergenerational, institutionalized gangs exist in Sweden; simply that there are similar gang leadership styles and motivations in these different contexts. In terms of policy, the analysis contains important lessons for agencies involved in social control efforts against street gangs and similar subcultures by focusing on the heterogeneous roles and influences of gang hierarchies. Further, the analysis reiterates the need for a more nuanced understanding of street gangs and the structured agency of members within their own narrative accounts. In terms of research, these findings suggest a need for further in-depth, holistic studies to create a more empirically grounded gang leader typology.

INTRODUCTION

The gang research tradition is based on a range of approaches from ethnographic fieldwork (Brotherton and Barrios 2004; Hagedorn and Macon 1988; Jankowski 1991; Moore and García 1978; Thrasher 1927; Venkatesh 1997; Vigil 1988 *inter alia.*) to quantitative survey research with supplementary data collection (Bursik, Jr. and Grasmick 2006) primarily conducted in the United States. One of the strengths of the ethnographic and ecological research traditions is their flexibility (Bryman and Nilsson 2011; Kontos and Brotherton 2007), useful for subject populations where unexpected obstacles to research are common and new areas of investigation are always emerging. The case study design allows for a descriptive research approach where researchers can describe and analyze behaviors of interest and test universally accepted or perceived assumptions (Christensen 1997; Gerson and Horowitz

2002; O'Reilly 2002). In this study, we have combined a variation of the ethnographic fieldwork approach with a case study design consisting of indepth interviews with 24 gang members and leaders in Sweden. Our goal was to construct a gang leader typology based on behavioral and character traits described in members' accounts to further our understanding of Swedish gangs and their organizational dynamics. As Spergel (1995:86) notes an analysis of gang leadership is critical for policy and theoretical considerations. Although the public perception of gang leaders is largely stereotypical, dominated by media and popular cultural images of demonic and pathologically violent Black or Latino lower class males, (Cohen 1972; Gilbert 1986; Jankowski 1991; Kontos and Brotherton 2007; McCorkle and Miethe 2001) or rebellious outsiders (Höjer 2009; Webster 2008). These largely inflammatory and sensationalized descriptions, often prompted by the newsworthiness of territorial feuding,

reports of “urban terrorism”, and cycles of inter-group “violence” (McCorkle and Miethe 2001), add little to our knowledge of the continuing and changing nature of these subcultures. In contrast, the sociological and criminological literature point to a much more complex universe of gangs that has great variety both in terms of structure, meaning and leadership styles, especially as the gang takes on a more global significance (Hagedorn 2008). Hence in our qualitative study of Swedish gang leaders, one of the first in the literature, we seek to go beyond the presumptions of most journalistic accounts and collected data in which gang leaders revealed much about their varied style of governance, their range of aspirations and their ascendancy to their present ranks. The project was conducted by police-researchers in collaboration with a social scientist in the first such social scientific investigation of gang leaders in Sweden.

LITERATURE

The literature on gang leadership is diverse and does not necessarily accord with Klein’s finding that gang leadership is ephemeral, situational and relatively weak due to the gang’s weak organizational structures (Klein 1995). Many researchers have observed gangs with both weak and strong leaderships (Spergel 1995) and some (e.g. Jankowski 1991) have reported on both types. Nearly all the criminological literature in this area comes from the United States but there is an increasingly important more global literature emerging from Europe (Decker and Weerman 2005; Feixa, Porzio, and Recio 2006; Palmas 2010), Latin America and other developing geographic areas (Cerbino and Barrios 2008; Dowdney 2005) which also divide along the same lines regarding both weak and strong gang leadership patterns.

Strong Gang Leadership

In one of the first social scientific treatments of street gangs, Thrasher (1927) notes that leaders often emerge because of their willingness to try things before other

members of the group. In this context, the act of participation, especially being the first to act, also elevates one’s status, particularly within juvenile gangs in which courage and boldness are esteemed qualities. Thrasher also wrote that this “gameness” –the idea where the leader goes where no one else dares and is brave in face of danger–sometimes is developed to the point of exaggeration and “daredevil type of personality traits” (Thrasher 1927). However, the strong gang leader (e.g., Thrasher’s natural leader) is often able to support his daring with physical prowess (p. 241), which makes his followers feel secure and protected in his presence. Jankowski (1991) also emphasizes the role of leadership in gangs, suggesting there are three cohesive structural typologies that govern the codes and the rules of gang leadership and behaviour: (1) the vertical/hierarchical, (2) the horizontal/commission, and (3) the influential. Regarding the first type, Jankowski argues that some gangs have powerful hierarchies – what he calls “vertical gangs”– in such gangs the characteristics of leaders are similar to those noted by Machiavelli, namely that the leader is only concerned with the maintenance of power, rather than with any ethical consideration. In this perspective, a successful gang leader must: attend to the needs and desires of the rank and file, maintain a court of loyalists, recruit and train staff to carry out routine duties, be flexible in handling a range of personal and membership problems without appearing “weak”, and be fair in distributing justice (or at least be prudent and not reckless). For Jankowski, the gang is often entrepreneurial and thus leadership is part of a rational business model in response to a deindustrialized political economic landscape. A similar argument can be seen in the work on street drug gangs in the work of Padilla (1992) and Taylor (1990).

Staying with the gang as an economic organization of the lower classes, Venkatesh (2008) describes the local Chicago gang captain “J.T.” as a highly charismatic and ruthless leader and shows how gang leaders can be violent, paranoid and manipulative in

imposing their personal agendas. Venkatesh states that the principal trait among gang leaders is the willingness to use violence at a moment's notice, arguing that successful gang leaders have to be calculating and possess the organizational skills to maintain cohesion within the ranks, a challenge since many gang members are frequently involved in illegal activities (Ross 2008). Burns, a former practitioner, argued that gang leaders maintain dominance over members by a "mixture of rewards and violence, with an emphasis on the latter." He argues that a gang leader "manipulates gang members by testing loyalties, determining status, and keeping members off guard and subservient to his or her will— perfecting a totalitarian form of control" (Burns 2003). Meanwhile, Spergel cautions that too much emphasis on the asocial psychological qualities of the gang leader is not borne out in the research. In some studies, leaders or core gang members are deemed pathological (Yablonsky 1962) and prone to be more "loco" and violent (see Vigil and Long 1990) than peripheral members whereas in other literature they are often "normal" (Short and Strodtbeck 1965), possessing a wide range of talents valued by mainstream society (Brotherton and Barrios 2004).

Looking further afield, Dowdney (2005) argues that gangs have developed sophisticated command structures and have come to resemble inner-city young male armies or groups of organized armed violence as they struggle to defend space against other armed groups, including the state, while holding sway over the informal economy, principally around the drugs trade. Hagedorn (2008) concurs and sees these new hierarchical gangs as a permanent characteristic of many urban areas as the majority of the world adapts to living in conditions distorted by neo-liberal political economies and their attendant punitive cultures of social control (Garland 2001; Young 1999). Meanwhile Brotherton and Barrios (2004) describe various leaders of large "institutionalized" U.S. gangs as charismatic, disciplined organizers of the urban poor who are committed to higher

ideals and principles than those normally associated with gangs. In their work, leadership varied across the organization with some leaders ready to use violence when necessary to keep discipline and maintain the gang's reputation whereas others were given to more pacific forms of social control, preferring to rely on moral rather than physical authority. Further, such leaders were strongly embedded in the community, and reflected its myriad ethnic, social and cultural traditions.

Weak Gang Leadership

As stated, Klein concludes that gangs do not require strong leaderships because gangs have weak structures and are rarely tied to the drugs trade or other economic engines of the ghetto and barrio. Vigil (1988) similarly did not see strong leadership traits in his Chicano gangs of Los Angeles, and this concurs with Jankowski's other two models of gangs which he calls horizontal and influential. In the former, the gang is run by a council of equal members, and though rare, this comes about in times of crisis in the group's organization. The latter model is more common and fits the gang culture of the West Coast and the ethnic gangs of Chicano and Irish heritage. In such gangs, the importance of family and friendship ties is paramount and leadership is achieved through one's real and symbolic relationship to the community rather than through strict rules of succession and election processes. In this model the charisma of individuals in leadership positions is critical but the organization must still provide for its members. Finally, Jankowski argues that this latter form of "weak" leadership (in the structural sense) is accepted by the members as it appears to give them more freedom, and since most gang members are "defiant individualists", the experience is critical to their continued affiliation and to maintaining the leader's legitimacy. Thus the literature points to a range of findings on gang leadership. While such research has generated a plethora of knowledge, however, there is little information available on the motives and values of these individuals in

Sweden where data and analyses are virtually non-existent (Rostami, Leinfelt, and Holgersson 2012). Recently there has been a call for more “practitioner-researcher” to help fill these gaps in the literature, by including those in the field, especially who possess a wealth of “insider” knowledge and unanalyzed data that might be off-limits to purely academic researchers. This study therefore is an effort to carry out such research combining the strengths of the practitioner and the academic researcher in a collaboration rarely seen in gang sociology/criminology.

Gangs in Sweden and Europe

With its 450,000-km² area, Sweden is the third largest country in Western Europe, but with only nine million residents, it ranks only 14th in terms of population. Along with its size, Sweden is noted for its adherence to the welfare state model of governance (Sundell, Soydan, Tengvald, and Anttila 2010). Despite its history of cradle-to-grave state paternalism, in contrast to the United States, Sweden in recent years has developed a gang problem (Leinfelt and Rostami 2012; Rostami and Leinfelt 2012). The majority of gang studies have been conducted in the U.S. using American data. During the past few years, however, there has been a growing interest among researchers to study gang-involved youth in Europe (Decker and Pyrooz 2010; Esbensen and Maxson 2012; Esbensen and Weerman 2005; Haymoz and Gatti 2010; Klein, Weerman, and Thornberry 2006; van Gemert, Peterson, and Lien 2008). These studies suggest that European street gangs and gang-involved youth may be similar to their American counterparts.

Despite recent attempts at developing an “international scope” to the gang problem, Swedish gangs have not yet caught the interest of Swedish researcher. Criminological explorations in Sweden have mainly been limited to “juvenile networks” (Sarnecki 2001; Sarnecki and Pettersson 2001). In fact, there has been a widely held research belief among leading Swedish criminologists that street gangs, like those

found in the U.S., do not exist in Sweden (Fondén and Sarnecki 1996; Sarnecki 1990; Sarnecki 2001; Sarnecki and Pettersson 2001).

These Swedish studies posit that these groups are simply various forms of juvenile delinquent networks. As Klein (1995) points out, however, juvenile offending should not be equated or confused with street gang criminality; that is, not all gang members are juveniles. Klein would argue that some street gang members can be in their 20’s or older. Our recent study and our experience working with gangs at the Stockholm County Police shows that street gang criminality in Sweden is more organized than loosely-tied networks of delinquent youth (Leinfelt and Rostami 2012; Rostami, Leinfelt, and Holgersson 2012). In fact, we have seen some development in our case files that suggests that gang members are older than juvenile delinquents and that they engage in various types of crime, including serious, violent crimes. This phenomenon has also been documented elsewhere (Lindmark 2005; Rikskriminalpolisen 2009) and would seem to be in concert with American and European trends. For example, the upper age limit of gang membership in the U.S. has risen over time, expanding the issue beyond a juvenile matter (e.g., Klein 1995; Maxson, Curry, and Howell 2002). This reiterates the need to look beyond the existing Swedish literature on “juvenile networks” and juvenile delinquency and adopt a broader research agenda.

During the 1990s and onward, the focus among Swedish scholars has been to argue that gangs are not a widespread phenomenon, and if gangs existed, they do not have the same characteristics and structure as their American counterparts. Some have even implied that the concept of organized crime groups is a police construction, a strategy for gaining more resources, new policies, and expanded criminal laws (Flyghed 2007). Nonetheless, the Swedish government has made it clear that criminal networks and gangs, in addition to organized crime, are becoming a serious problem (SOU 2010:15). Our recent work is in line with the standpoint of the Swedish

government (Leinfelt and Rostami 2012; Rostami, Leinfelt, and Holgersson 2012). In contrast to what previous researchers have argued, our findings suggest that the Swedish welfare society has street gangs, and consequently a gang problem. Our findings about the comparison of the Swedish street gangs with their European and American counterparts are in concert with other European studies (Rostami, Leinfelt, and Holgersson 2012). For example, like our European counterparts, territoriality is absent in Swedish street gangs. Swedish gangs, however, have a similar pattern with their European counterpart regarding durability, size, age, crime patterns and gender compositions, meaning that many Swedish gangs have 50 or fewer members, consist of primarily adolescents or early adults and last for 10-15 years with versatile criminal behaviour patterns. We also cannot find any race-ethnic homogeneous gangs in Sweden or a dominating ethnic group with the exception of white ethnic Swedes who account for the majority of the gang population (Rostami, Leinfelt, and Holgersson 2012).

METHODS

Based on our reading of the literature, it is clear that a greater understanding of the motives, drives and world views of individuals who become gang leaders will advance our knowledge of gang formation and development. This knowledge is especially invaluable in the Swedish context where such data and analyses are so lacking for practitioners and researchers alike. To accomplish these goals, we chose a qualitative approach to take advantage of our proximity to gang subjects and thereby come closer to an understanding of the meanings and the “vocabularies of motive”¹ (Mills 1940) behind both individual and collective actions and behavior.²

Data Collection

Leaders of prominent street gangs had been identified in a previous study (see Rostami, Leinfelt, and Holgersson 2012) and

were approached by the field researchers to participate in this inquiry. Such leaders were defined as individuals who had an elevated hierarchical status in these groups and who were seen to possess some “operational responsibility.” Their positions in the group’s hierarchy were also identified by their peers through such as “General”, “President”, “Father”, or “Clan Leader”. Some gang members and virtually all gang leaders were also self-identified. As shown in the diagram below, we used three different sources in identifying gang members and gang leaders: police records, peers, and self-identification.

In total, twelve individuals fit the “leader definition” and agreed to face-to-face interviews with field researchers using a semi-structured questionnaire. Twelve other associated gang members also consented to participate. They did not fit the definition of a gang leader, but through both police records and self-identification were members of a gang. The subjects came from a total of seven established street gangs operational in Sweden. All interviews, which lasted between one and two hours, were conducted outside of the regular line-work of the police.

The role of police as social investigators is not a common one and, of course, this dual role can be problematic for this kind of research. Nonetheless, there are numerous studies where police have successfully navigated the terrain and emerged with data of considerable integrity (e.g., Holgersson 2005; Librett 2008; Moskos 2008). We found that as long as our motives as researchers were clearly explained and that none of the subjects were part of any ongoing investigation, which would have muddied our identities, a mutually trusting relationship with the subjects could be established. All gang members knew that they were talking to the police officers doing research, but did so voluntarily despite not being offered any incentives. In most cases, gang leaders were enthusiastic about telling their stories with at least one gang leader contacting one of the authors to offer his services stating: “...I’d like to open this world for you, so that you can change it.” (Respondent A72).

The interviews were conducted over a four-year period, between 2007 and 2011, at various locations, including prison. However, the data is cross-sectional rather than longitudinal. All participants gave their written consent to participate and were informed the researchers were not seeking detailed information about crimes or specific events, but about their experiences in general, which types of crime they had committed, and for which they had been adjudicated. The aim of the interviews was to gauge and assess their attitudes, values and motivations towards crime and gangs, as well as appraising other emotional components related to criminal conduct. We found that interviewees answered the questions truthfully, although in a few cases they may have lied to protect themselves and at times embellished in attempts to impress. These types of data have been used before (e.g., Wright and Decker 1997) without compromising the overall validity of the findings and since we did not concern ourselves with the participants' own criminality, there is no reason to believe that our data is any less dependable. Supplementary data were also gleaned from informal conversations and small talk with numerous gang leaders, fringe, or associated gang members during the course of our daily work as police officers in Stockholm County. These conversations, however, were not subject to an active data collection process. Consequently, we used these supplementary data to develop a framework in preparing for the scheduled, in-depth interviews. None of these

Illustration 1: The Gang Membership Identification Triangle



conversations have been included in this paper since participants had not given us their consent. Letters were also used as a source of data and gave us further information on subjects' relations with other members, their social networks and their feelings on range of group and non-related matters (e.g., Brotherton and Barrios, 2004). These were either given to us by subjects during the interviews or taken from publically available sources such as criminal investigation protocols.

FINDINGS

Characteristics of the Sample

Data confidentiality was important for us and the participants and a crucial component of this study. Even though the participants seemingly could make a distinction between our roles as police officers and researchers, they were still concerned that other inmates or gang members would find out they were talking to us (outsiders) and risked being labeled as "snitches". Consequently, we cannot reveal any information on which gangs the participants are affiliated with, or any other identifying information about the sample and/or the participants. Regardless, some demographic characteristics are listed in Table 1. The street gangs in this sample are all prominent Swedish street gangs with membership numbers reaching in some cases to 50 members. All the gangs appear to fit the "compressed" or "neo-traditional" gang typology (Klein and Maxson 2006). In a previous study, we demonstrated that this "American typology" can also be used with Swedish gang samples (Rostami, Leinfelt, and Holgersson 2012).³

Gang Leader Typologies

Based on our data, we found four different leadership types, some of whose characteristics overlap: the entrepreneur, the prophet, the realist, and society's victim. These types are drawn from other findings and empirical analyses in U.S. sociology and criminology (see Brotherton and Barrios 2004; Jankowski 1991; Matza 1964; Merton 1938). However, this does not mean that we

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the sample.

	N Associate Members	N Gang Leaders
Sex		
Male	12	12
Female	0	0
Total	12	12
Age		
18-29	9	7
30-39	2	5
40 and over	1	0
Total	12	12
Ethnicity		
Africa	1	2
Scandinavia	3	3
Middle east	6	7
Latin America	2	0
Total	12	12

also see the same U.S.-type gangs rooted in the most marginalized and often segregated urban and suburban spaces of the United States. There are no such Swedish gangs that might be characterized as institutionalized and intergenerational. The interview quotes have been translated from Swedish to English, maintaining where possible the nuances, tones, and subtleties of the language.

The Entrepreneur

The entrepreneur is a pragmatic leader driven by the spirit of business and profit, and according to Jankowski is found in all gangs (1991).⁴ He is concerned with money and status, but does not necessarily need to engage in criminal behaviour to get there, although crime is usually seen as a suitable solution. For the entrepreneurial type, it is important to build an empire to reap the material rewards. Essentially he is an innovative actor (Merton 1938) who lacks the legitimate means to achieve societal goals and has found alternative ways of reaching them. A major character trait is that he is selfish and ego-centered with little use for

political ideals. Three participants from different street gangs (respondents 912, 1511, and 54) fit this leadership type.

Respondent 912: "You know, I'm a businessman. What I do is making money from criminals. You think that is immoral? Hey, I use criminals, not ordinary people. I'm not like those other niggers sitting here [in jail] who do drugs and get caught for shitty offenses. I am innocent, I'm not really a criminal at all [...]. You know how many celey chicks I have banged? Come to my cell and I'll show you their letters. [...]. I feel like a king when I'm out and people respect me. I wouldn't make all this money and have this life if I'd stayed at home [...]. I don't give a shit about this life, I just want to make money and live a good life, get respect. You should see how all the celebs cling to me since I am the one who provides them with cocaine. They all like to hang with me since they think I'm a bad boy, they read about me in the papers and shit. Come with me one night, I'll show

you. Hook you up with some babes too! [laugh]. If I would have made as much doing something else, I would have done it. You think I enjoy watching my back all the time? To commit crimes is not my thing.”⁵

Nonetheless, this kind of gang leader is not primarily driven by the criminal lifestyle. Instead, he is more interested in becoming a successful and influential person, obsessed with the notion of power and prestige within frames of reference that come directly and indirectly from a global culture of conspicuous consumption and celebration of the entrepreneur’s societal role. To him, it is not fame per se that is a motivating force, but rather the rewards that accompany it. He is therefore often seen analyzing and calculating every possibility to maximize his gains in pursuit of his desire to become financially independent, live a comfortable life, be seen at all the trendy nightclubs, mix with various celebrities, and network with the powerbrokers.

Respondent 1511: “Why haven’t you come to me sooner? You should have contacted and interviewed me sooner? You all know where to get me. That guy Wierup⁶ usually finds people, you should too [...]. We could make a deal, you help me start my own business and I will help you.”

Thus the entrepreneurial personality is more greedy than self-occupied and feels little for the gang he leads or is a member of, for it is merely a means to an end. As such, the entrepreneur jumps between gangs as he sees fit, depending upon his calculations of profitability. Hence a characteristic for the entrepreneur might be a long list of previous gang memberships— although there are exceptions. The entrepreneur may be loyal to a single gang, if it is something he created himself and as long as it generates revenue. For example, respondent 54 views himself as having his own business and regards this business as his baby.

“This is my creation. I started this, and it works!”

Regardless, his primary motivation is still money— financial independence and the fame that comes with it. This preoccupation with personal financial gain takes precedence over sharing this wealth with others:

Respondent 54: “Sure, I make money for myself, but the guys [other gang members] get the brotherhood by being members, we become their family. I didn’t have a family growing up.”

Respondent 1511: “I’m going to get a patent and start my own business. I’ll get a job to get experience, but the dream is to start my own company and live well from running it. You know, you should never trust anyone, only your own flesh and blood. You should be egoistic and only think about yourself and your family.”

One common finding regarding the entrepreneurs is the negative view of them by other gang members with virtually all rank-and-file gang members in our sample making disparaging comments about such leaders. It is, therefore, not a surprise that the entrepreneur has the highest turnover in membership among all the gangs we examined (Rostami 2010). The following respondents provide examples of this rank-and-file disquiet of their leadership:

Respondent 9T1: “He [respondent 912] only thinks about himself and money, he’s only interested in that. He doesn’t give a shit about us or the brotherhood. It’s all a fake, a sham, a fuckin’ pyramid scheme for him to make money, he fuckin’ uses kids. He is a fucking pathological liar, he’s a fuckin’ idiot, that what he is [...]. Everything goes to him; everything [money] that was collected had to be kicked up to him [...]. He just talks, but it’s all bullshit, everyone hates him and most have quit. Either they go with someone else or start their own thing, we don’t know yet, but he can go to fuckin’ hell!”

Respondent XH111: “The leader sits at home and scratches his balls while he lets everyone else do his dirty work...”

Respondent OL2: “I want to quit because when X took over, it was all about money, no brotherhood anymore.”

The entrepreneur blends with his environment and has an amazing ability to adapt to “the client”. These skills are developed by careful observation and research. He is like a chameleon, changing his attitude, dialect and approach depending on whom he meets. For example, the entrepreneur can extort someone by making his voice and non-verbal communication appear threatening, and in the next breath, speak rhetorically with a business owner about a legal cooperation. Respondent 1511 elaborated on this ability:

“I am an able actor, you have to be in order to be a successful businessman, otherwise you go nowhere.”

To summarize, the entrepreneur is an innovative social actor who appreciates the set goals in society, but who lacks the legitimate means to achieve them. As such, the entrepreneur finds alternative means of attaining them. Criminality per se and the sense of brotherhood are not a primary motivator for him, but are merely tools for success. His traditional leadership styles range from authoritarian to charismatic and democratic. However, it is not his leadership style, background, childhood or even type of gang that are the sources of his motivation, but rather the sheer determination to overcome his blocked pathway to societal success.

The Prophet

The prophet can easily be confused with the entrepreneur due to their great rhetorical ability, charisma, determination and leadership abilities. Both see themselves as visionaries, are verbally skilled and

grandiose, but the prophet is more genuine and well-liked by his peers. Granted, the entrepreneur can mimic some of the prophet’s characteristics to achieve their goals, but the difference is the enduring nature of these traits. The Prophet is concerned with a higher calling— he is devoted and true to the gang notion and holds personal goals that are above those set by mainstream society, such as building an army of devoted followers in the cause of personal and collective empowerment (Brotherton and Barrios 2004). The Prophet sees his group’s and his action as the hallmark of strong, male leadership, and a salutary reminder to other members of their mission. Contrary to the Machiavellian style of leadership, which is often in evidence with the entrepreneur, he sees the salvation of the members as his obligation, rejecting the social-Darwinistic approach of attaining collective purity by the purging of weak individuals. The Prophet sees himself, and wishes that others see him, as the righteous leader, whose leadership emerges as much from a moral calling as from any materialistic calculating strategies of gang leadership. In a way, he is a romantic— holding on to the belief of leading a selected few outside of mainstream society and mainstream goals.

Respondent 21PAK: “Discipline is everything, we are warriors and outlaws. Sure, in the beginning, there were those who were misanthropes, but now we are holy warriors, and thus there has to be discipline in all we do. There’s no room for mistake. Now, we’re a brotherhood, I can’t just kick someone out, just like that, but if you can’t follow the rules you can fuck off. You always back your brother, help one and another, do whatever so that they can make it. You know, you don’t, I mean, you don’t kick a brother out; if you’re a family, you’re a family. You don’t want to lose a brother. But if you rat someone out, your family, you have to take the consequence.”

Some of the entrepreneur’s members surely regard the entrepreneur as a prophet,

but unlike the entrepreneur –who markets the “brotherhood” for personal gain– the prophet has dissimilar motives; his goals and aspirations are more than just the material and individualistic. In other words, he is not just trying to achieve societal goals like status, economic prosperity and security, although he accepts these goals, but is driven by a yearning for something more social and even spiritual, for example, maintaining a mutual “brotherhood love” with his closest peers. As such, his quest for power is not to gain control over a group of individuals as a pathway to material success, but rather to reap more psycho-social rewards, such as being held in high esteem and loved, or deemed irreplaceable and unique by the membership.

Respondent 126 to respondent 11X:
“My beloved brother [...]. As God is my witness, you know how much I love you. I love you like no other. I kiss your eyes. You are loved by me like no one else, my love to you is like a mother’s love.”

Respondent 127 to respondent 11X:
“You make us proud, I’m proud to be your brother. You have my full support until I die. You have warriors ready to do as you say, General, [...]. Don’t forget who you are, brother, and the power you have [...]. Love, brother. Love you with all my heart, your brother for life.”

The prophet thus believes in his mission and that the brotherhood must do everything possible to create, build and maintain the group. He gets an emotional, intrinsic reward in commandeering his “people”, like a feeling of transcendence with the gang representing his creation, a dream come true, an extraordinary achievement worthy of praise and recognition. Unlike the entrepreneur, the prophet values the quality of members over the quantity and would rather take a few devotees than a mass of recruits who do not believe in his message. The prophet regards his members as apprentices who should look up to their master, similar to a spiritual

leader. It is all about being faithful to your creation and not to lose it to anyone, even if that might lead to personal gain. Consequently, he views his gang as his family unconditionally and wants his followers to stand by his side until death because that is what he would do.

Respondent 11X: “The most important thing is to keep the name [the gang] respected, then all is good. It doesn’t matter if it leads to a long trip [long prison sentence]. Once in, death out.”

Respondent 46: “He (the prophet) is treated like a God, everyone calls him big brother, older members too.”

Respondent 124: “You should always secure the family interest [gang], the family goes above all else [...]. An enemy of the family is everybody’s enemy.”

“I know that you have been given a great deal of responsibility, but we trust you 100% and know that you can do this. Like I said to brother, you make the family proud.”

Respondent 11X: “A member should always obey a direct order and obey his superior, discipline is a must. The one who do not obey will be punished as a traitor. If anyone fails his brother or leave, he will be punished hard or pay with his life. Every legionnaire is their own brothers-in-arms, regardless of nationality or religion, and you should give him the same respects and loyalty that unites the members into a family. They are my legionnaires, my soldiers.”

In summary, the prophet is distinct from the entrepreneur in having goals which are not simply material in nature, but emerge from deeper desires and aspirations that are both personal and rooted in the community’s history and experience. He is as much motivated by the satisfaction that comes from

creating something new and the unity that is achieved by feelings of brotherhood than mainstream goals of the dominant culture. As such, his aspirations emerge from the power he gains intrinsically from his leadership position rather than extrinsically and this seems to be his strongest motivator.

Respondent 11X: “Brother, I know we had conflicts, I know we have not agreed, but the most important thing is the family, we can lead this together, we are brothers for life.”

“I take care of my brothers, they can count on me, they know I am there for them, when they need, know that I am their family. [...]. He is a fucking idiot, but we can solve this work it out.”

The Realist

Jankowski (1991) conceptualized what he called “defiant individualism” as a series of core personality traits in all gang members. These traits are the results of growing up in a Hobbesian world, which does not lend itself well to the Swedish context. What we see from our data, however, is that the realist has characteristics is similar to Jankowski’s notion of the “survivor instinct”— that is, gang members who find a way to make it by doing what needs to be done, whether that is committing a crime or by way of legitimate work.

In this context, the realist is a leader with a distinct plasticity and flexibility depending on the situation at hand. He is pragmatic in the sense that he identifies what is feasible and what is not. As such, he is not overly optimistic, utopian or dogmatic in his leadership role. In fact, he does not have direct ambitions to lead a gang unless it is a part of his personal strategy to achieve his individual goals. The realist is therefore a leader who continually adapts to his environment and situation.

Respondent 111b: “I didn’t think about anything, not society, the police, politics, all that stuff is crap, that thing with unity and brotherhood is full of shit. I didn’t want it, I just

smoked weed and will always do it. I just wanted to find some people to hang with, do drugs, party. Eighty percent was about doing drugs, the rest... criminality was just an image. Crime was spontaneous, just happened; it was not the most important. But I never felt like I belonged, it just created headaches and problems, so I left. I realized it’s better to be alone with few friends than to be many with lots of enemies. Everyone who becomes members bring with them all their crap, all their enemies. Their enemies suddenly become everyone’s enemies. I didn’t gain anything by that, it just gave me a bunch of enemies that I had nothing to do with. Wasn’t my problem. So I left that shit. Now I keep to myself, look after myself.”

Respondent 13XP: “People have nothing to do, there ain’t no jobs available, and this means gangs. You see? I’m sitting here and I want to make money [...]. They say, sell this and you get some money, you do it and you want more. There’s nothing else, you see... And you get respect too. People know how you are, they know you [...]. The thing is, you see... the only reason you start a gang is so that people can work...”

The realist will therefore be malleable depending on the available means and on what he wants to accomplish, and while driven by higher societal goals, he will always take shortcuts to achieve them. Crime is not a purpose, but usually represents the shortest path to accomplishing his desires, which are primarily materialistic in nature. One of the differences from the entrepreneur is that the realist is satisfied when he achieves his goals, and if he can find a legal way, then he will utilize it. Further, the realist is not driven by ideology and does not care about brotherhood and loyalty to a particular cause. Criminality and gangs become the

means to an end, but gang membership does not represent a motivation in itself.

Interviewer: "Can you tell us why you joined a gang?"

Respondent 12X: "It's very simple. I am a criminal, and I have decided to keep doing this for a long time, it is my profession, you know. I don't know anything else but this. It's my livelihood, so I thought, am I stronger alone or with others? How can I survive and prosper the best? So I decided to join a gang. I wasn't interested in Bandidos or Hells Angels, so I joined... Because I knew someone who was with them. It was a simple and logical choice."

This pragmatic attitude for joining a gang is also the rationale for leaving. For the realist has no problems departing from a gang that does not live up to his perceived hopes or opportunities, even if it means terminating newly acquired friendships or long-term relationships with childhood friends. The realist will never favor the road less travelled, but will always decide to do what is most convenient at the time.

"I really want to leave this shit, but I have no way back, I have punched a lot of people in the face, you know what I mean, so if I leave, I'll have 1000 enemies waiting to kick my ass. If I leave, I'll stand there with my dick in my hand. I have no way back. No."

While the realist tries to find logical, innovative answers to obstacles and problems, he is often guarded and sees a potential enemy in everyone; he does not share or open up much to his members for he believes that many wish him harm. He expects attention and privileges without the need to reciprocate.

Respondent 13: "I have one motto: you are with me, you are against me. Black, white, yellow, doesn't matter. You could be me fellow countryman, you can be my brother, but you're either with me or against me, it is that

simple. I'll give you a chance, and then it's up to you. I'll meet with you, and then you decide if you are going to fuck me over, or stand by my side. Nothing more than that. Doesn't matter what our history is, how much we have backed each other in the past, but if you fuck me over, what do I need you for? I'm not scared of dying. I believe in God. It has to be within me, if I die today, you think I'll go to heaven? Hell no."

Thus the realist is characterized by a lack of empathy and cares little about the feelings of others. During our observations, we noticed that if the realist does not get what he wants, he often throws what appear to be contrived tantrums that could be physical. Consequently, he is prone to using violence to achieve short term goals and can be quite manipulative as he evaluates whether his violence capital is strong enough to leave him victorious. In this scenario, he will often mobilize others to do the fighting for him. As such, his outbursts do not seem to be triggered in the heat of the moment, but rather are more strategic, deliberate and thoughtful, as he carefully weighs the pros and cons before taking action.

Respondent 12: "I did what I gained the most out of. If it was shooting someone, then I shot someone. If it meant beating someone up, then I did. I still do, if I need to. But I am not stupid, I know what I am doing before I do it."

To summarize, if the realist believes that his actions can accomplish a goal, he will go ahead with it. If not, then he does not. Things for him are black or white, with his actions often dissected and analyzed. His motivation is not to become exceptional in the eyes of his members, but always to focus on what is best for him given his situation, even if it means that his close friends can face the negative consequences of his actions. The realist therefore does not care about ideals, conviction or gang norms, but prefers to view of daily life strategically, adapting himself to

each situation after judging exactly what he can and cannot accomplish given his perceived strengths and contextual limitations.

Society's Victim

It is hard to characterize this type of leader, since he is a combination of someone whose motivation lies with changing society, because of a realization that he cannot control his own destiny, while at the same time showing no apparent interest in ideology or higher societal goals. This leadership type accepts societal goals, but realizes that he cannot achieve them, believing that society will not accept his kind, and will actively prevent him from achieving them. This type of leader accords with some of the characteristics and rationalizations contained in Sykes and Matza's (1957) notion of techniques of neutralizations. In particular, the notion of "denial of responsibility" prominently describes this leadership type as he constantly claims that his circumstances and actions are due to some unfortunate set of circumstances beyond his control. As such, we describe him as "a victim of society" in which everything that happens to him is someone else's fault. Moreover, "society's victim" is convinced that he is justified because what right does society have to criticize him when they have treated him so unfairly? Such world views are also well suited to the notion of "condemnation of the condemners" (Sykes and Matza 1957) as this leadership type is quick to transfer the responsibility for his situation onto the shoulders of another person or agency and thus he is an expert at "passing" or "disbursing" the blame.

Consequently, society's victim is the angry rebel who conceives criminality as a way to oppose societal norms and values. As a person, he is frequently vexed and likes to see himself outside of society looking in. His motivation for crime is based on his contempt for society, and his latent anger stems from society's inability to guide him and socialize him adequately. As a result, he accuses society for forcing him to become what he has become. At the same time, he sees

himself as a survivor and even as society's savior, as he is compelled to take on every role from a humble leader to an authoritative leader. Society's victim has dual standards. While he spends much of his time either thinking about or acting out his revolt against the current system, he also hopes to achieve a measure of wealth, status and economic independence. Ironically, he thinks about change, but does not have the motivation to work for it for he is too pessimistic, and perhaps cynical, only seeing the negative aspects of life and of his own situation.

Respondent 13X: "Fuck the world. Fuck everybody. You see? It is us against you, against the society."

Hence, society's victim does not feel happiness or contentment in his everyday existence and seems to find few things to be pleased about. When life does go well, he does not have the ability to feel joy and true appreciation for his good fortune. Instead he is constantly worried and sees risks everywhere. For him, the world is a scary and unsafe place, full of hazards and a place he is constantly trying to control. Society's victim is anxious and has an overwhelming fear of the unknown. Yet he will present himself as a secure and safe person, often overestimating his own abilities and capacities.

Respondent 146X: "You get caught when you do crimes, sooner or later. But I don't think it's too hard, I don't give a shit. I don't care that I am locked up. I don't even care when they let me out; I don't long for being released. Fuck that. [...] I still have the same thoughts and questions as I did when I was with a gang, the only thing now is that I have turned on them. From wanting to bring terror and chaos to society, for that is what it was all about, to helping others. I have lots of experience, and it feels like that, if I throw it all away, I have done all this shit for nothing. So it's like my duty to do it, to give something back. I'll be the person that people will listen to, learn from."

As stated, society's victim is both discontented with and angry at society and its authority figures since they represent a social order that has victimized him. One respondent (above) recounted that he was leaving the gang to give back to the kids, only to attempt to start a new gang a few months later because he felt like society did not want to help him. This leader was constantly concerned about getting into trouble with other gang members and exaggerated the threat level against him to both police and family members. Still, he insisted that people wanted to do him harm, and that society was against him since they did not put him in protective custody and issue him a new life.

Finally, society's victims are quick to blame others for their errors and for their criminality, and often assert that although "they" never wanted to commit crimes, they had no choice.

Respondent 13X:

"It's the media's fault, they are to blame for this development and they ruin many innocent lives. I never understood the severity of my crimes [...] it was narcotics that made me join my gang, that's why I joined in the first place, but I will work to change what media destroys. Media forms Sweden's view on everything from fashion to gang crime."

"I don't know anything about how the system works...I would have told them to fuck off. I have nothing to do with you. I get my own money, my own way. I don't know, I never applied for a job in my life, still today; I have yet to write a resume. I don't know how. What am I going to put on it? I am not alone in not knowing how. Many are with me. How many do you see in the suburbs that are white-collar criminals? Not very many, it's fucking few actually. Something to think about, why and how that is? Look where they live, where they grew up; they learn from their group, that's why. We learned something else, we'll keep learning it and that is

that. It will go in a vicious circle, round and round. All the time, round and round. Until someone shows us something else. When there are no jobs, then there are crimes, you see? It's how it is. I am sitting here and I want to make money; what do I do? Okay, you go sell this, bring me back this, make a cut. Then you do it more often. Get respect for doing it. People will know who you are; you go to clubs. You get it all, you get to go straight inside, don't have to stand in line."

Society's victim is convinced that being subservient to society is equal to being defeated. An order, or even simple demands, created in him a feeling of revolt and frustration, but he does not express his feelings since he believes that saying what you actually feel carries too many risks. Instead he commits destructive acts and attempts to go his own way, acting out against the symbols of the mainstream when he can. One respondent, who refused to speak to us when he thought we were disrespectful toward him, finally allowed us to engage him and provided an excellent example of the mistrust this type of leader has for the world at large:

Respondent 13X:

"Everything was fake. He made the whole shit up. I got convicted anyways. But the whole thing was a lie. I am innocent [...]. It was the first sentence I got and I got more aggressive since it was bullshit. So, I was like fuck you, you son of a bitch, what the fuck is this? But no one believe me, not society, not anyone, so fuck it all. What difference does it make? I might as well just do what I do. Things like that makes you go: fuck the world."

In summary, during our observations and conversations with "society's victim", we found him to be capable of intensive rage coupled with problems controlling his aggressive impulses. Certainly there were

some police records of assaults that seemed to bear out this conclusion. In such extreme cases, we interpreted such behavior as a reflection of significant levels of insecurity and instability in the society's victim self-image and sense of self; it might be linked to his lack of remorse for crimes he committed and an absence of empathy for his victims. Lastly, we found society's victim to be motivated by his contempt for a society that has failed to show him the right path and has essentially "let him down." Therefore he uses his involvement in crime and other transgressions as a way to manifest a rejection of laws and rules that do not apply to him. Rebellion for society's victim does not, however, spring from his class-consciousness or racial solidarity (Cloward and Ohlin 1960), but from a deeply cynical view of society now channelled through his leadership role in the gang.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that not only are there different types of gangs (DiChiara and Chabot 2003; Klein 1995; Kontos and Brotherton 2007; Kontos, Brotherton, and Barrios 2003), but there are also different components or building blocks to gang structure, which include various kinds of gang leaders. It is clear to us that since the social, economic, political and cultural situation in which gangs emerge is so complex, it is necessary for both researchers and those agencies involved in socially controlling gangs to adopt a more holistic approach to the gang to achieve a fuller understanding of the phenomenon and its social actors. The law enforcement agencies, as a part of their mandate, should work to improve the conditions for strengthening social capital in society and strengthening society's democratic institutions. Their focus will need to shift to prevention (see Manning 2010). In Sweden, we have been fortunate to have been able to engage gang members and leaders at multiple levels through our holistic methodology. This approach has given us much greater flexibility that is atypical of most police work and has enabled us to collect

primary data for an in-depth criminological analysis as well as to aid our efforts at social control of a growing social problem in Scandinavia. We found in contrast to some of the literature in the United States that leadership was an important part of the gang, both as an organizational and cultural phenomenon. The types of gang leadership frequently influenced the character of the gang, and this finding underscores the importance of approaching gangs through the recognition of their heterogeneity and not through a uniform generalized concept of the gang that can be imposed on the data. This research has contributed new knowledge of gangs in the Swedish context and demonstrates the utility of applying gang theory across different domains and sociocultural fields. We hope that this study will serve as a rudimentary platform for further studies in gang leadership and as an example of the possibilities of research collaborations between the worlds of the academy and the practitioner.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ By vocabularies of motive, we are referring to the ways in which people account for their actions and conduct in specific social contexts and situations. This method of analysis was expertly used by Sykes and Matza to describe the various rationalizations of "the delinquent" as part of their subjects' delegitimation of the dominant social and cultural order.
- ² The only way to utilize data similar to that used in this study is to examine them from the broader context of the participants' life experiences and to realize that they make choices based on their emotions, reflections and internalized cultural forces.
- ³ Gangs are defined by Eurogang as any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of their group identity. "*Durability*" means several months or more, and refers to the group, which continues despite turnover of members. "*Street-oriented*" means spending a lot of group time outside home, work and school— often on streets, in

malls, in parks, in cars, and so on. "Youth" refers to average ages in adolescence to early 20's or so. "Illegal activity" generally means delinquent or criminal behavior, not just bothersome activity. "Identity" refers to the group, not individual self-image; at minimum it includes acceptance of participation in illegal activities by group members.

- ⁴ Jankowski (1991) said the entrepreneur has five key attributes: ability to plan, competitive, status-seeking, desire to accumulate capital and willing to take risks. Similarly, Padilla presents the notion of an "entrepreneurial gang" that is organized around the drug trade and the prospect of making money, fuelled by the lack of economic opportunities and socio-cultural isolation. Padilla concluded that young people come together, collectively due to the realization that they are weak individually, in an effort to make money.
- ⁵ Respondent 912 is the only participant who actively and persistently contacted the researchers with a view to being interviewed. Our interpretation of this behaviour is that he was using this research to launch a new "career" as indicated by the following exchange with this subject: "I would like to go out to the schools and talk about this. Can you help me get this book published? [...]. I will be able to live well by doing this. I could sell this, by doing this..."
- ⁶ Lasse Wierup is a Swedish journalist who has written several books on Swedish gangs and organized crime.

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Moving Beyond Borders

Julian Samora and the Establishment of Latino Studies

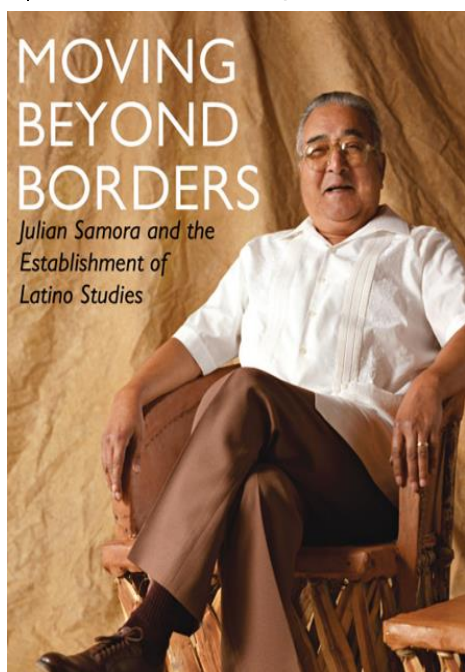
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The lifework of a pioneering scholar and leader in Latino studies.

Moving Beyond Borders examines the life and accomplishments of Julian Samora, the first Mexican American sociologist in the United States and the founding father of the discipline of Latino studies. Detailing his distinguished career at the University of Notre Dame from 1959 to 1984, the book documents the history of the Mexican American Graduate Studies program that Samora established at Notre Dame and traces his influence on the evolution of border studies, Chicano studies, and Mexican American studies.

Samora's groundbreaking ideas opened the way for Latinos to understand and study themselves intellectually and politically, to analyze the complex relationships between Mexicans and Mexican Americans, to study Mexican immigration, and to ready the United States for the reality of Latinos as the fastest growing minority in the nation. In addition to his scholarly and pedagogical impact, his leadership in the struggle for civil rights was a testament to the power of community action and perseverance. Focusing on Samora's

teaching, mentoring, research, and institution-building strategies, *Moving Beyond Borders* explores the legacies, challenges, and future of ethnic studies in United States higher education.



Contributors are Teresita E. Aguilar, Jorge A. Bustamante, Gilberto Cárdenas, Miguel A. Carranza, Frank M. Castillo, Anthony J. Cortese, Lydia Espinosa Crafton, Barbara Driscoll de Alvarado, Herman Gallegos, Phillip Benitez Gallegos Jr., José R. Hinojosa, Delfina Landeros, Paul López, Sergio X. Madrigal, Ken Martínez, Vilma Martínez, Alberto Mata, Amelia M. Muñoz, Richard A. Navarro, Jesus "Chuy" Negrete, Alberto López Pulido, Julie Leininger Pycior, Olga Villa Parra, Ricardo Parra, Victor Rios Jr., Marcos Ronquillo, Rene Rosenbaum, Carmen Samora, Rudy Sandoval, Alfredo Rodriguez Santos, and Ciro Sepulveda.