



about gangs is important because some of the characteristics we thought were anomalies in industrial era gangs have proven to be enduring. I then explore similarities between contemporary gangs and other groups of armed young men in their search for identity, types of organization, and the use of the informal economy. Then, refocusing the discussion to the particular nature of *gangs* internationally, I compare "street organizations" in Chicago and Soweto, South Africa. In conclusion, this argument makes it possible to more clearly define "what is a gang" and create a typology describing variation between gangs in late modernity.

### Modernity, Social Theory, and Gangs

The concept of "modernity" is not much used in academic discourse on gangs. The study of gangs has been sheltered from the stormy debates on postmodernism in other disciplines. Advances in urban political economy, critical theory, and the organizational literature have thus had negligible impact on gang scholars who work in the dominant "social disorganization" tradition. On the other hand, globalization studies have made general analyses of crime and violence with scant fieldwork among the very poor or their organizations.

Anthony Giddens has opposed the concept of "late modernity" to the post-modern notion that we are living in a wholly new era. Rather than situate social life in a poststructuralist world of signs, symbols, and texts, Giddens argues that globalization means "no one can opt out of the transformations brought about by modernity" (1991, 22). Giddens, like Jürgen Habermas (1984), places social theory in the service of the completion of the modern project.

Alain Touraine (1995) describes the modern project as a balance between rationalization and the freedom of the Subject. In his most recent work, Touraine (2000) discusses the differences between early, mid-, and late modernity. He argues that early modernity, or the Age of Enlightenment, was dominated by the principle of man-made order replacing traditional hierarchy; mid-modernity by the tensions between progress on the one hand and class struggle and national liberation on the other; and late modernity by the conflict between the Scylla of unfettered markets and the Charybdis of communal identity.

The Chicago School approach to gangs is a good example of mid-modernist thinking. Ruth Kornhauser, whose work codified the social disorganization perspective, saw social theory as explaining the transition between the dying traditions of the old world and social institutions of the new. "Culture in the

modern world," she said, "is everywhere at bay" (1978, 1). The central problem was to assimilate the immigrant carriers of traditional cultures into a new, industrial society (for example, Thomas and Znaniecki 1918–1920/1996). Modernization was a solution to social disorganization and class struggle.

For Kornhauser, as for Park and Thrasher, social disorganization was "interstitial" and temporary, as urbanization and ethnic succession assimilated immigrant groups into an "American" identity. The Chicagoans were historically "progressive" in that they believed rational methods by the state and what is now called the "collective efficacy" of communities would accompany modernization, combat discrimination, and vastly reduce poverty.

Gang researchers in this tradition, notably James F. Short Jr. (1964), Irving Spergel (1964), and Malcolm Klein (1971), focused their studies on the social disorganization of poor neighborhoods and the corresponding "group process" of adolescents. My own initial study of gangs, *People and Folks* (1988), was also a successor to these studies. I found that 1980s Milwaukee gangs began as corner groups. However, I argued, deindustrialization was altering the "maturing out" process and the postindustrial era was creating new forms.

### Late Modernity and Social Thought

Social thought in late modernity questions many of the assumptions and conclusions of mid-modernist thinking. Today we can no longer assume, as did Kornhauser, that culture is in decline. Rather, we are studying its resurgence as traditional religious and communal identities rage against a homogenizing globalization (for example, Castells 1997). Neither can we assume that non-racial, universalist identities are inevitable. The Chicago School's ecological paradigm deracialized the study of gangs. However, even the briefest look at the ghetto and their gangs today questions that assumption (for example, Wacquant 2001, this volume).

Rather than gangs being a transitional form, what has been transitory has been the industrial economy. The mid-modernist notion that the informal economic sector would come under the control of strong national industrial economies proved inaccurate (for example, Portes, Castells, and Benton 1989). A close relationship of gangs to various informal economies had been seen as an exception, while in fact it may be the rule.

Some conditions are new. For example, in the global era the power of markets has weakened the nation-state, which has privatized or cut back many central functions. Castells (1998) has looked at the emergence of a powerful

global criminal network as one aspect of the incapacity of nation states to control all aspects of the economy and society. The monopoly on the use of violence, which Weber (1946) saw as an essential characteristic of the state, has thus been eroded and an era of the "informalization of violence" (Keohane 2002) is upon us. The proliferation of groups and networks of armed young men thus may be a normal feature of late modernity.

### Identity, Organizations, and Economics

How are gangs similar to other kinds of groups of armed young men? And are some kinds of gangs today a new, "postindustrial" form, or are they more familiar?

#### GANGS, RACE, AND IDENTITY

One major similarity between gangs and other groups of armed young men is a racialized identity. Normal science gang research, under the sway of the nonracial Chicago School, has not spent much time on this issue, since "territoriality trumps ethnicity" (Adamson 1998). However, as we have seen, matters are not quite so simple.

There has been an enormous scholarship on the centrality of race that questions Wilson's (1978) Chicago School-based concept of its "declining significance" (for example, Massey and Denton 1993). History has lent ample support to Du Bois's claim that the color line has been the central problem of the twentieth century. The economist notions that "race" will decline as an identity with modernization, as the Chicagoans believed, are far from uncontested. On the other hand, the idea that "race" is a product of modernity, of the racial division of the world between colonizers and colonized, has gained credibility (for example, Winant 2001).

The obvious fact that most gangs today are non-white reflects racial divisions that contrast to the assimilationist conclusions of the Chicago School. Little time needs to be spent documenting the predominance of non-white gangs in the United States. Walter Miller, as far back as his 1975 surveys of law enforcement, made that claim. What needs to be emphasized is that while in the United States white ethnic gangs largely disappeared in the "race relations cycle," non-white gangs did not.

Segregation and racial oppression have reinforced a racialized identity of oppressed people. Anyone familiar with black and Latino gangs cannot fail to note their strong sense of identity with their racial groups. But a *racialized* identity is not the only one held by gang members. In order to understand the

"power of identity" today, a brief discussion of the work of Manual Castells is necessary.

Castells (1997, 8–10) points out that in the network society, there are three forms of identity: *legitimizing identities*, which reinforce the authority of dominant institutions; *resistance identities*, which are defensively adopted by devalued actors who generate communal values; and *project identities*, which challenge the existing order by positing a new Subject. In a shrinking and insecure world of flows of capital and information, millions retreat into essentialism. Castells sees resistance identities as the basis of social movements of all types, as well as a refuge for the oppressed. For example, he points out that Islamic fundamentalisms "proceed as a reaction against unreachable modernization, the evil consequences of globalization, and the collapse of the post-colonial nationalist project" (1997, 19).

This retreat into identity is exemplified by "gangsta rap" music videos as an expression of what Castells calls an "end of millennium" ghetto culture "made out of affliction, rage, and individual reaction against collective exclusion." Castells goes on to observe that this new culture incorporates the ever-present reality of prison and drug sales as the "shop-floor" of the criminal economy and "gang-based social organization" (1997, 57).

U.S. gang culture is also a celebration of violent masculinity, the use of force to settle disputes, and the toleration of nihilistic rage by the outcast and alienated (see West 1993). Internationally, as well as in the United States, and despite understudied female gang involvement (Chesney-Lind and Hagedorn 1999), gangs mostly represent a culture of armed young men. Los Angeles gang member General Robert Lee concisely makes this point: "I felt I was a soldier for the hood" (Jah and Shah Keyah 1995, 121).

But gang identity is more complex than rage and retreat into masculinist economics of survival and communalism (see Kelley 1997). Gang members are male and female, fathers and mothers; they hold conventional jobs and go to college. Like all of us, gang members inhabit multiple social worlds and identities. "It is not just that collective identities and ways of life are created," Calhoun says, "but that they are internally contested, that their boundaries are porous and overlapping, and that people live in more than one at the same time" (1995, 47). For example, immigrant gangs, like Jamaican poses in the United States, simultaneously hold both gangster and Jamaican nationalist identities. In this era, Giroux adds, "Identities merge and shift rather than becoming more uniform and stable" (1996, 32). One can be a gang member, a father, a student, a breadwinner, American, Mexican, and a Catholic all at once.

A variety of cultural identities, particularly religious ones, also appeal to gang members, just as they do to the "Arab Street" or the Catholic and Protestant militias in Northern Ireland. Gangs in Chicago and New York have religious principles embedded in their constitutions and documents. A strong Islamic current runs through all Chicago African American gangs, particularly the Conservative Vice Lord Nation, and Louis Farrakhan has been deeply involved with outreach to gangs in LA and Chicago. The Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation promotes a spiritual doctrine of "Kingism," and the "Nation" itself is seen by many of its members as a religion (Barrios this volume). Crips cofounder Jemel Barnes exemplifies this outlook: "I'm a very spiritual and personal individual" (Jah and Shah Keyah 1995, 151).

Now it is easy to dismiss such claims as hypocrisy, opportunism, or conversion in the face of prison. But among the oppressed worldwide, religiosity is especially influential. Castells narrowly defines African American ghetto culture as one of "rage" and omits discussion of the lure of Islam to gang members and other outcast members of urban ghettos. Our Milwaukee and Chicago fieldwork has also found that "Promise Seekers" and street-corner Pentecostal churches recruit heavily from current and former gang members, particularly Latinos. Many of these religious groupings are influenced by traditional concepts of male dominance, easing the transition of males from hypermasculine gangs.

The coexistence of "gangster," political, and religious identities are all examples of shrinking a global world into a more controllable essentialist "defensive identity" (Castells 1997). Where else but the ghetto has the promise of modernity been more sorely broken and is the need for certainty greater (Bauman 1995)? Religion and spirituality are part of the U.S. gang experience, and, like in the Middle East, India, and Northern Ireland, often closely tied to violence.

Indeed, in an earlier time, Malcolm X represented both sides of the hustler and religious world and used his religion to unite the African American struggle with the third world. More recently, Monster Kody, famed Crip leader, explained his metamorphosis into Sanyika Shakur (1993). What attracted Kody to Islam in prison was that, unlike Christianity, which believed "that religion was synonymous with passivity" (1993, 214), Islam was a religion of fighters against racial oppression. "Islam," Kody said, "is a way of life, just like banging" (1993, 220). His autobiography documents his personal struggle over identity in a way that reveals the close connections between nationalist religious, and gang identities. In a soliloquy, he asks, "Who is Monster Kody? . . . I am Monster Kody . . . a person, a young man, a black man . . . Anything

else? . . . No, not that I know of . . . What is Monster Kody? A Crip, an Eight Tray, a Rollin' Sixty killer . . . a black man . . . Black man, black man, BLACK MAN" (1993, 225-26).

In late modernity, racialized "resistance identities" are a key locus of power for the oppressed, including gangs.

#### GANGS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Gangs have classically (Klein 1971; Moore 1998; Short 1996; Thrasher 1927) been defined by referring to urbanization and related group processes. In mid-modernist thought, gangs are fundamentally interstitial, adolescent groupings in the process of going out of existence, residues of the irrationalities of modernization. International studies (for example, Hazlehurst and Hazlehurst 1998; Klein et al. 2001; several chapters in this volume) confirm the proliferation of this kind of grouping of wild youth or gangs in every corner of the globe.

However, it is important to note that big city gangs in the United States define themselves as "organizations," not gangs. This can be dismissed as rhetoric, but we should be mindful of Castells's (1997) advice to accept the self-definition of groups (see also Klein 1971; Moore 1998). Gangs in Chicago, for example, have written constitutions and formalized structures, as do the Latin Kings in New York City. The Crips and Bloods of Los Angeles developed a far-reaching political and economic agenda after the Rodney King riots (Jah and Shah Keyah 1995) and were part of a national "gang truce" movement. Such gangs are mainly products of the ghettos and provide their members and communities a wide range of social, economic, and symbolic functions.

But is this a "new development" of deindustrialization, as many—including the author—have claimed? Chicago's major gangs have persisted now for over fifty years, East LA's barrio gangs for even longer. The Crips and the Bloods have been around since the 1960s, and many gangs in smaller cities are now going on their third decade. In China, Triads have been around for centuries (Booth 1999) and the Mafia had its origins in the secret societies of nineteenth-century Sicily, Naples, and Calabria (Ianni 1972). In the United States, the Mafia has persisted now for a hundred years with New York City divided into "families" (for example, Mass 1968) and Chicago's Outfit (Russo 2001) has maintained social and political influence.

Clearly there are now and always have been what Taylor (1989) calls "scavenger" gangs, and such peer groups certainly predominate in terms of sheer numbers. But alongside these "interstitial" gangs, there have always been powerful institutionalized gangs.

In the United States, the Irish made up the first major urban gangs, beginning in New York City. What Monktonen (2001) calls "voting gangs" were Irish young adults used by politicians to advance their electoral interests with intimidation and violence (see Haskins 1974). These "voting gangs" were embraced by the machine in Chicago but with one twist: in the form of "social athletic clubs" they were also crucial to the stabilization of Irish neighborhoods like Bridgeport, which were adjacent to the overcrowded Black Belt. Irish gangs were the key actors in Chicago's 1919 race riot (Chicago Commission on Race Relations 1922) and continued for decades to resist integration (Hirsch 1983).

In both New York City and Chicago, the pay-off for gang support for politicians was patronage, often a job on the police force. For members of gangs of the dominant ethnicity, "maturing out" of the youth gang meant being taken care of by the state and often careers as policemen that could be little more than a continuation of their gang background.

This pattern of gang involvement with politics is internationally familiar. In India, the nationalist parties, particularly BJP and Shiv Sena, mobilize gangs and *mitra mandals*, or male "friends' clubs" both for electoral purposes and to incite anti-Moslem violence (Heuze 1995; Varshney 2002). Gang violence has prompted observers to compare Mumbai (Bombay) and Chicago (Sharma 1995). Chinese Triads had corrupt ties with the Kuomintang (Booth 1999) and Berlin skinheads are tied to neo-Nazi parties and promote a nationalist politics of racism (Kersten, this volume). Jamaican posses began as armed groups attached to political parties (Gunst 1995) and have continued to link drugs, violence, and politics (Gray 1997). Other politicians have used irregular thugs along with official police and military forces. Haiti's Duvaliers used their Tontons Macoutes to terrorize their enemies and maintain themselves in power, and "chime" or gang violence has continued even after Aristide's return to power (Human Rights Watch 2002; James 2002).

Milosevic's Serbian gangs were used as a surrogate for his army to carry out ethnic cleansing (Zimmermann 1999) and paramilitary violence surged in "failed states" like Yugoslavia (Held 2002). In Northern Ireland, British army general Sir Frank Kitson called the Ulster Defense Forces "counter-gangs" and deployed them against the IRA (McKeown 2001). This kind of institutionalized gang often holds what Castells calls a "legitimizing identity" and supports existing authority against the oppressed. "Decommissioning" or disarming official and unofficial groups of armed young men has proved to be essential to the peace process in Lebanon, Northern Ireland, and South Africa (Schulze 2001).

In the last decades, institutionalized gangs composed of oppressed ethnic and religious groups have become more numerous. New York City's Latin Kings and Nétas proclaim a politics of liberation (Brotherton this volume) and Chicago gangs continue to play ward politics ("Rey" 2002). Maori gangs participated in nationalist protest in New Zealand (Hazlehurst this volume). Some gangs control vast areas of cities and become alternative governments, like those in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro (Jones 2002). Repression and incarceration link gangs in ghetto streets with gangs behind prison bars and stabilize both (see Venkatesh 2000; Wacquant 2001).

To conclude, institutionalized U.S. gangs consider themselves organizations and resemble other kinds of organizations of the very poor across the globe. As Castells argues, ghettos in U.S. cities are part of a new "fourth world" and share essential characteristics with socially excluded areas like sub-Saharan Africa, vast sectors of the Middle East and South Asia, and Latin America. While in earlier times, gangs institutionalized mainly within dominant or rising ethnic groups, in late modernity gangs of oppressed groups have institutionalized as well.

U.S. gangs share one other characteristic of organizations of the socially excluded: reliance on the underground economy.

#### GANGS AND THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

For the past two decades, members of many U.S. gangs have been financially supported by the sale of drugs. The organization of the drug trade has become a central organizing principle for institutionalized gangs (for example, Fagan 1996; Hagedorn 1998; Taylor 1989).

As noted above, a principle characteristic of the current era is the persistence of the informal economy and its functional role globally. Rather than modernization bringing the hope of prosperity to the fourth world, millions are excluded from the mainstream and have looked for alternative ways of survival. Gangs now provide not only brotherhood for young men but also an entry-level job and a fleeting, but alluring, promise of fabulous wealth.

This has long been one of the prime functions of organized gangs. Prohibition saw the unification of Italian neighborhood gangs into Capone's mob and later the stabilization of what is known as the "Outfit" (Landesco 1968 [1929]; Russo 2001). The rackets were ready to provide entry-level employment for men, particularly those who did not have an aversion to violence. The Triads have controlled drug dealing, trafficking in women and children, and gambling all over South Asia for decades. In the last two decades, gangs across the globe have found drugs to be their most profitable business.

Many studies have documented the extent of the underground economy in urban ghettos. My Milwaukee "small business surveys" (Hagedorn 2001), for example, found in two poor neighborhoods one in ten young black and Latino men employed in drug sales, numbers that are consistent with other studies (for example, Venkatesh and Leavitt 2000). Carl Taylor (1989) described "corporate" gangs in Detroit that dominated the heroin markets. The control of drug markets by Chicago's Vice Lords, Black Gangster Disciples, and Latin Kings, and LA's Crips and Bloods is well known. The drug economy in the United States, the U.S. Office on Drug Control estimates, brings in more than \$60 billion annually, much by gangs.

The role of the underground economy in the persistence of organizations of the socially excluded is not restricted to U.S. gangs. The cartels in Colombia provide both jobs for workers and cash for farmers in the absence of licit alternatives. Sendero Luminoso in Peru and FARC in Colombia began as Maoist revolutionary groups, but as Maoism collapsed worldwide, these and other guerrillas adapted and found financial support in the production of drugs (de Soto 1990). Immigrant gangs use cross-border connections to facilitate the flows of illegal goods (Castells 1998). The informal economy is estimated in many Latin American countries at about half of GNP, and that figure usually excludes the production and export of cocaine (Jimenez 1989). Studies of gangs in Jamaica (Gunst 1995), Sao Paulo (Caldiera 2000), and along the Mexican border (personal communication with Avelardo Valdez 1997) demonstrate the central role of drugs in maintaining gang organization.

The breakup of the Soviet Union has pushed young men into informal economic enterprises and the Russian mafia. The World Bank has found that one quarter of all young men in Albania now work in the drug economy (La Cava and Nanetti 2001). Some nationalist groups, like the IRA, have responded to desperate economic conditions by controlling the informal economy (Jamieson and Grounds 2002). Shiv Sena in Mumbai (Bombay) combined *hindutva* or appeals to Hindu nationalism with its base among *dadā*, youthful subproletarian thugs in the underground economy (Heuze 1995; Lele 1995).

It is alleged by many sources (for example, Laqueur 1999) that Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups used the export of opium poppies and other drugs to finance their operations. "Al Qaeda," Jack Goldstone remarks in his National Research Council essay on September 11, "is like gangs in U.S. central cities or social protest movements throughout the world" (2002, 157). Lack of opportunity everywhere creates conditions, he adds, where "a career as an international terrorist"—or, a gang member—becomes "more attractive

than menial labor or poverty." The line demarcating criminal enterprises, some nationalist, fundamentalist, and political groups, terrorists, and gangs has become increasingly permeable.

To conclude, what is new in the global era is not the racialization or institutionalization of gangs. Contrary to mid-modernist assumptions, these have always been gang characteristics. In late modernity, however, gangs resemble other organizations of the socially excluded through a shared racial or religious identity, institutionalization within oppressed groups, and reliance on an underground economy that has arisen from the charred promises of modernity.

### Defining Gangs: A Comparison of Chicago and Soweto

So far the analysis has focused on how U.S. gangs resemble other organizations of the socially excluded. However, if race and identity, violence and organization, and the underground economy are central to defining organizations of armed young men, can we distinguish *gangs* from this broader grouping? In this light, it is instructive to compare the history of black gangs in Chicago and Soweto.

#### THE ORIGINS OF SOWETO AND CHICAGO GANGS

While immigrant gangs were the focus of Frederic Thrasher, the most salient factor influencing Chicago and Soweto gangs turned out to be segregation of black people. Thrasher and Park's assimilationist perspective worked fine for Irish, Polish, and Italians and their gangs but had little relevance for African Americans. In both Chicago and Soweto, gangs were shaped by racist regimes and persisted for decades.

In Chicago, early black gangs were "defensive" formations, organized against the onslaught of Irish and other white ethnic gangs (Hirsch 1983; Perkins 2002). In Johannesburg townships that would later be called "Soweto," the "isotsi" of the early decades of the twentieth century modeled themselves after American gangs of the cinema (Glaser 2000; Mandela 1995). They battled with other territorial gangs (Mathabane 1986), and many were seen as "protectors" of their communities, committing crimes only against whites (see also Paton 1948; Pinnock 1984; "Earlier Manifestation" 1998). "It was scarcely acknowledged," Glaser says, "that a powerful, largely apolitical, gang culture dominated the world of township youth from the 1930s to the early 1970s" (2000, 2).

In the early decades of the twentieth century, Soweto and Chicago black

gangs were both segregated in all-black densely packed neighborhoods. As in all poor communities, youth hung out on streets just as Thrasher described the play group to delinquent group process. Criminal opportunity structures existed in the absence of legitimate opportunities, but the gangs in both cities failed to institutionalize and came and went as wild delinquent groups (Perkins 2002; Shaw 1999).

Soweto gangs raged at the pass laws that restricted their movement, and Chicago's gangs fought against the Irish and other white ethnic gangs that blocked their "invasion" into white areas. Both sets of black gangs held special antipathy for the police, and white legal authority was seen as illegitimate. The ferocity of segregation and oppression, however, depoliticized both black communities. During decades of accommodation, black gangs were mainly street socialized and apolitical warnings of juvenile rebellion and discontent.

#### SEGREGATION AND APARTHEID: RELOCATION AND GENTRIFICATION

If race characterizes both Chicago and Soweto gangs, so does space. Rather than invasion and succession,<sup>1</sup> or modernization integrating a black community into mainstream society, segregation and apartheid kept black people in both cities at the bottom of the ladder. Spatial segregation created the conditions for the institutionalization of black gangs.

In both Soweto and Chicago, the conscious segregation of black people within small, cramped, urban areas was a defining characteristic of their experience, not a self-segregation into "natural areas" (Burgess 1925/1961; Zorbaugh 1926/1961). Black people were allowed into the workforce only when wartime industrial economies in both cities had labor shortages. But in their communities, unlike any for other ethnic group, residential mobility was barred by violence and legal means. In Chicago, restrictive covenants and other legal ploys maintained segregation, while in South Africa, by the end of the 1940s apartheid was the law of the land.

Both urban systems required the periodic redivision of space and a resulting relocation of black residents. In Chicago, the bombings and mob action of white gangs were gradually superseded by the erection of walls made of highways, housing projects, and universities. Hirsch's *Making of the Second Ghetto* (1983) details the rationale behind the placement of the Dan Ryan Expressway between Mayor Daley's Irish Bridgeport and the Black Belt and its subsequent reinforcement by the eighteen towers of the Robert Taylor Homes.

Soweto was an African township by law, force, and custom in much the same way as Chicago's Bronzeville was. But as Johannesburg and Chicago

grew, black populations eventually got in the way of whites' mobility. The politics of relocation and gentrification have dominated the experience of both black communities and their gangs for decades.

By the 1960s, industrial expansion brought waves of Africans into the southwestern townships around Johannesburg, which took the shorthand name "Soweto." These new urban settlements soon became the heartland of gang culture (Glaser 2000). Control of criminality and gangs by white authorities seldom went beyond periodic police raids.

Sophiatown, an African township outside of Johannesburg, was the home of both nationalist political leaders and notorious tsotsi, gangs named "Americans" and "Berliners," influenced by the U.S. movies (Glaser 2000; Mandela 1995). In the 1950s, the Western Areas Removal Acts forcefully resettled Africans from areas desired by whites. These actions mobilized political opposition from the African National Congress and tsotsi alike. Don Pinnock (1994) graphically describes a similar relocation in the Cape Flats. The postapartheid government has continued evictions and relocations and has met much resistance (Desai 2002).

South Africa's initial relocation policies began in the 1950s and 1960s, at the same time as Chicago's first urban renewal projects. In the last two decades, however, Chicago would pursue an even more aggressive policy of black relocation through the tearing down of housing projects and gentrification. These policies maintained segregation but displaced African Americans from land desired by white "homesteaders" (J. Smith 1998). Gangs were displaced from their housing projects and neighborhoods and their relocation spurred conflict. In both Chicago and Soweto, the result of relocation was continued segregation, not social or economic integration, and violence.

#### POLITICS AND IDENTITY

The 1960s saw gangs in both Soweto and Chicago adopt a racialized identity and become attracted to black liberation movements. In Chicago, some African American gangs became politicized (Williams 2002) and some were drawn into mass demonstrations and militant action. In both cities, authorities feared unity between the grassroots gangs and the more middle-class black formal organizations—it is alleged that the killing of Black Panther leader Fred Hampton was inspired by that fear (Perkins 2002). Both Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela saw the gangs as "raw material" (Cohen and Taylor 2000; Mandela 1995, 222) to be recruited and won over. The gangs, for their part, resented the recruitment efforts of the liberation organizations and saw themselves, in a way, as rivals. In both cities, as the movement raged,

the gangs eagerly joined street protests. But as the struggle progressed, gangs in both cities retreated into a more apolitical prioritizing of economics.

The violent repression of black people in Chicago in the late 1960s and Soweto in 1976 moved the gangs away from the liberation organizations and mainstream politics. In Chicago, the civil rights movement resulted in gains for the black middle class, but conditions for the "underclass" deteriorated (Wilson 1978). Mayor Richard J. Daley's "war on gangs" succeeded in moving the leadership of all the gangs into the prisons, where they implicitly concluded that participation in the civil rights movement had gained them nothing.

Upon release, the gang leadership quickly consolidated around the creation of illicit economic enterprises and a "new concept" of organization based on the most alienated of Chicago's very poor black and Latino communities. Politically, opportunism held sway as the El Rukns even worked for Mayor Jane Byrne, the opponent of black mayoral candidate Harold Washington while the Black Gangster Disciples organized in support of various other local candidates (Spergel 1995).

In Soweto, the upsurge in the liberation struggle attracted the gangs to mass action and the politics of the more militant Pan Africanist Congress rather than Mandela's more gradualist ANC. The Soweto uprising was based in the raised consciousness of school kids (Glaser 2000), but the protests were enthusiastically joined by the out-of-school tsotisis and youth gangs. At the same time, there were reports of South African police using tsotisis as armed thugs against the liberation struggle (Shaw 1999; "Earlier Manifestation" 1998). Prison gangs also have a long tradition in South Africa, with the entrance of street gangs in the 1970s and 1980s upsetting established inmate organization similar to Jacobs's (1977) description of Chicago gangs in Stateville (Schurink 1986).

In the final struggle for liberation, groups of militant youth, the "comrades," played a central role in the mass uprisings. Glaser (2000, 188) points out the similarities between the masculine, political, and violent "comrade" and gang culture. But as the "comrades" gained in influence, Glaser argues, the gangs subsided, similar to youth reactions to the rivalry between the Black Panther Party and the gangs in Chicago (Black 2000). Some gangs, like the Hard Livings Gang in Cape Town, continue to combine criminality and politics (Sullivan 2001).

However, after liberation, like in postindustrial Chicago, "material conditions had not improved" (Glaser 2000, 189) for those on the street, and may have worsened. Gang activity surged, both in "jackrolling"—a familiar Chi-

ago School term that in South Africa meant "murder and rape"—and gang drug sales. Following the U.S. model, South Africa has adopted neoliberal policies and stepped up evictions, shut off water and electricity to the "poors," and privatized many basic services (Desai 2002). Glaser concludes his book with a description of Soweto that also captures Chicago today: "The pull of gang life is more forceful than ever in the ghettos, offering young men a tangible route to material wealth, excitement, and local prestige" (2000, 190).

Gangs in Soweto and Chicago thus are both the same and different than other organizations of the socially excluded. On the one hand, like other networks of armed young men, the gangs developed racialized identities through the struggle against oppression, they are armed and have persisted in areas of social exclusion for decades, and they are deeply tied to the underground economy. On the other hand, both Chicago and Soweto gangs began as unsupervised territorial peer groups. In both cities, some gangs then institutionalized within segregated ghettos or townships and adapted to changing environmental conditions.

### A Formal Definition and Typology of Gangs

A gang is not a political party, a religion, a terrorist cell, nor a revolutionary organization, though in some conditions, as we have seen, gangs can be any of these. So how can we define gangs today? From the analysis above, I conclude that

Gangs are organizations of the socially excluded. While gangs begin as unsupervised adolescent peer groups and most remain so, some institutionalize in barrios, favelas, ghettos, and prisons. Often these institutionalized gangs become business enterprises within the informal economy and a few are linked to international criminal cartels. Most gangs share a racialized or ethnic identity and a media-diffused oppositional culture. Gangs have variable ties to conventional institutions and, in given conditions, assume social, economic, political, cultural, religious, or military roles.

We can supplement this definition with a diagram that categorizes gangs across dimensions of organization and ethnicity.

What are the advantages of this typology over Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) subcultures, Klein's (1995) organizational categories, or Taylor's (1989) evolutionary types? The key difference is the stress on ethnicity and institutionalization rather than ecological or race-neutral organizational characteristics. The typology differentiates those gangs that persist from those who do not,

Table 12.1.

Type	Dominant Group or Ethnicity	Ethnicity
Interstitial	Industrial-era U.S. ethnic gangs; most European male & female gangs and all unsupervised peer groups of dominant ethnicities	Oppressed Group or Ethnicity Most black, Latino, & Asian male & female U.S. gangs; German Turkish, British Bangladeshi, & New Zealand Maori gangs; most Third World gangs
Institutional	U.S. "Voting Gangs"; Triads in Asia; Hindu mandals in India; U.S. mafia and Russian mafia; Japanese Yakuza; Colombian & Nigerian cartels	Chicago and LA "super-gangs"; NYC Latin Kings; U.S. Tongs; some South African Black, Colored, and Indian gangs; many prison gangs

and those gangs that are members of oppressed groups ("resistance identities") or were shaped by racial oppression, as in South Africa, from those who are used by elites to oppress others ("legitimizing identities"). Like all ideal typologies, specific gangs may fit into more than one category and there will be change over time. These categories, however, have salience for gangs globally in late modernity but also are a useful way to make sense of gangs in earlier times.

This typology also extends an old argument (Hagedorn 1988) of the need to reframe the gang problem outside the criminal justice matrix. To see most gangs as interstitial is to say that most gang members still are unsupervised groups of juveniles. But to say that other gangs are institutional means that they must have at least a degree of legitimacy to survive.

To say institutional gangs are similar to other organizations of the socially excluded demands a political and social treatment of these institutions as well as a criminal justice response where warranted. It sees gangs in the context of the third world response to the insecurities of globalization. To define some gangs as institutionalized is to understand them not simplistically as organized crime but as social constructions that cognitively organize reality for their members and environment (see Jenness and Grattet 2001). "Banging," as Monster Kody said, "is a way of life." Such institutions, Selznick explained long ago, are not an "expendable tool" (1957, 5) that can easily be smashed or jailed away. Law enforcement has discovered this reality in their unsuccessful decades-long wars to eradicate gangs.

Gangs, both institutionalized and interstitial, have perhaps a million members in the United States, are well armed, have oppositional identities, and

possess wealth from various informal ventures. These are powerful forces within our cities and they have variable links to similar forces worldwide. While public policy can continue to wage war by stereotyping gangs as no more than groups of criminal drug dealers or terrorists, such one-sided policies have not met much success.

Gangs, in short, are social actors, and we might be well-advised to revisit Robert Park's view of the city as the "medium for the emergence of free men" (Sennett 1969, 16). A review of Park's writings would point social theory back to the city and its organizations, including gangs. Park studied social organization from the standpoint of the social ecology of the city, not from the interests of institutions of social control. While the viewpoint expressed here is institutional and ethnic, not ecological, it shares Park's sociological concern with the spaces of the city, where, as Zygmunt Bauman laments, "not togetherness but avoidance and separation have become the major survival strategies in the contemporary megalopolis" (1998, 48).

I will conclude with the risky argument that the recognition of gangs as social actors is a necessary condition for democracy in the United States. This places gangs and the socially excluded within the modern project, rather than being seen as merely the dregs of the earth. It insists we hold gangs to the norms of democracy and advocates disarmament while opposing racism and underdevelopment. At the same time, in the absence of formal opportunities, we must be prepared to avert our eyes to certain informal economic activities.

The devastating conditions in our central cities and policies of repression not only assure the persistence of institutionalized gangs but increase the likelihood that more gangs will institutionalize and adopt more hostile and violent identities. Europe, too, has to choose whether to follow neoliberal U.S. policies or seek an alternative to the "tyranny of the market" (Bourdieu 1998). Gangs are fundamentally products of social exclusion, like other social movements and groups of armed young men. They are unlikely to be destroyed as long as ghettos and conditions of extreme poverty continue.

I believe simplistically equating gangs with terrorists and refusing to treat them as social actors can bring neither peace, justice, nor security. As Touraine (2000) puts it, the persistence of different social actors and conflicting identities demands we make greater efforts to assure we can all live peacefully together.

## Note

1. Robert Park, in his discussion of ethnic succession, surprisingly compares Chicago to South Africa and cites the replacement of the "Bantu" by the Boers as an "obvious and impressive example" of succession (1936, 173).

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