



The Nature and Scope of Hispanic/Latino Gangs in North Carolina

North Carolina Governor's Crime Commission

North Carolina Criminal Justice Analysis Center

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Executive Summary

Last year the North Carolina Criminal Justice Analysis Center replicated its 1999 gang study in an effort to ascertain how youth gangs have changed over the course of the last five years. Trend data indicates a 16.6 percent increase in the number of reported gangs with 387 distinct groups being reported in 2004. Likewise, an increase occurred in gang membership with the number of reported gang members growing from 5,068 in 1999 to 8,517 five years later. This equates to an increase of 68 percent over the five year period or an average annual growth rate of 13.6 percent in gang membership (Hayes, 2005).

Comparative analyses, between the 1999 and 2004 data, suggest that the greatest rate of growth in North Carolina's youth gang population has occurred within the Hispanic and Latino communities. Results of the 1999 study revealed that Hispanic/Latino gangs only comprised 6.5 percent of the 332 gangs which were identified. Five years later this same group accounted for 22.5 percent of the recognized 387 youth gangs.

This monograph seeks to assess the nature and extent of Hispanic/Latino gangs within North Carolina's communities with an emphasis on identifying recent criminal activities, geographic dispersion, the magnitude of relationships with other national Hispanic/Latino criminal groups and how local gangs differ from gangs that demonstrate national affiliations. Regional comparisons and comparisons between urban and rural gangs were also drawn in an effort to determine if Hispanic/Latino gangs differ on these factors.

A two part survey instrument was designed with Part One assessing the basic and general attributes of Hispanic/Latino gangs across the state. Questions addressed such issues as the presence of these gangs in the respondents' respective jurisdictions, the length of time these gangs have been active and how prepared law enforcement is for managing gang activity. Other items addressed gangs in the schools, the extent of female involvement in these gangs, the contextual aspects of gang violence and the related causative factors for this violence. Part Two focused on the identified Hispanic/Latino gangs to assess the level of criminal activity, the size and composition of gang membership and the magnitude of the gangs' involvement in drugs and violence. Survey items also included an examination of gang mobility, organization and the extent to which these gangs maintain, and protect, a unique territory or turf.

A random sample, proportionate to city and county populations, of both municipal police departments and county sheriffs' offices was drawn with surveys being mailed to these agencies. A total of 164 surveys were returned producing a response rate of 58.2 percent. Fifty-one, or 31.1%, were received from the county sheriffs' offices with the remaining 113, or 68.9%, being received from the municipal police departments. Surveys were returned by agencies located in 82 of the state's 100 counties.

Of the 164 respondents 48, or 29.4%, reported the presence of Hispanic/Latino gangs and gang activity within their respective jurisdictions. Of this number almost half of those respondents, from agencies which acknowledged a gang presence, also noted that these Hispanic/Latino gangs posed a significant problem for their service areas (N=22, 45.8%). The remaining 26 respondents acknowledged a gang presence but reported that, to date, Hispanic/Latino gangs did not present a significant problem or threat to their communities.

These gangs were estimated to have committed an average of less than 10% of the total crimes which were reported in the respondents' respective jurisdictions during 2004 (X=8.6%). Responses ranged from attributing no reported crimes to these gangs to the sample high of 50 % of the total crimes last year being directly tied to Hispanic/Latino gangs in the respondent's service area.

Study results indicated that when gang related disputes arise, which involve at least one Hispanic/Latino gang, slightly more than one-third of these can be attributed to retaliatory violence (33.5%) followed by drug related disputes (29.6%). Territoriality or disputes arising from turf related issues accounted for 24.5% of the gang conflicts. Disputes related to vandalism or arising from graffiti related wars, such as one gang spraying defamatory markings over another gang's graffiti and artwork, accounted for the smallest percentage of the Hispanic/Latino gang conflicts.

Consistent with the existing gang literature these gang related disputes remain within the Hispanic/Latino community and almost exclusively involve Hispanic/Latino gang members. Respondents indicated that on the average 79.7% of the disputes that an Hispanic/Latino gang engages in is perpetrated against another similar ethnic group.

Respondents estimated that on the average 73.7% of their gang members migrated into their jurisdictions from either another city in the state, another state or another country. Raleigh, Charlotte, Durham, Greensboro and Winston-Salem were the most commonly reported cities from which these members migrated. California and Texas were cited as the largest feeder states with gang members also arriving in North Carolina from Virginia, Georgia, New York and Florida. The majority of the respondents cited Mexico and El Salvador as the most common countries from which their gang members migrated with Honduras and Nicaragua also being reported.

Sixty-five percent of the survey participants noted that Hispanic/Latino gangs do not differ from other racially oriented gangs while the remaining 35% did view these gangs as being dissimilar from predominately African-American, Asian or White gangs. Of those respondents who suggested distinct differences no clear patterns or trends occurred with varied and unique comments being received.

Eighty percent of the survey participants found gangs and gang members in their public school systems with the same percent noting that local School Resource Officers (SROs) are actively working to identify gang members and gang activity within the public schools. The two most common approaches were coordinating and sharing information with other local law enforcement agencies (67.5%) and providing gang awareness and identification information to teachers, parents and students (55.0%).

Commenting on the general Hispanic/Latino communities across the state 31, or 73.8%, of the participants, who reported an Hispanic/Latino gang presence, felt that there was a significant divide within their communities where Hispanic/Latino residents were disconnected from the general community and its activities. Slightly more than half noted that their agencies were not prepared to deal with the unique cultural differences of the Hispanic/Latino community nor were they adequately equipped to understand how these cultural factors affect, and influence, both gang and non-gang youth (57.4%).

Almost all of the law enforcement agencies represented in the study do not currently have any specific programs or initiatives which solely address Hispanic/Latino gangs (89.6%). However, these agencies have developed and implemented a variety of intervention, prevention and suppression methods and programs to more effectively manage and address the general gang presence in their communities. The use of SROs and automated gang information management systems were used by 72.7% of the respondents and 47.7% respectively. Having a specialized gang officer and community policing strategies were also common with just under one-half reporting their use. Fifteen agencies currently have detailed gang units (31.3%) of which three were formed prior to 2001 with the oldest unit being in existence since 1993.

A total of 118 Hispanic/Latino gangs were reported of which 91 were reputed to be nationally affiliated with, or have connections to, similar gangs outside of the respondents' respective counties and beyond state boundaries. Twenty-three gangs were considered local with no known documented associations or connections to any other gangs either outside of the county or on the national level. A total of at least 3,420 gang members were identified of which 276 were female members (8.1%).

Surenos, or Sur-13, was the most prevalent gang with distinct gangs being identified in 23 different counties and consisting of at least 1,855 reported gang members. Twenty-two (95.7%) of these gangs were described as possessing national ties to other Sur-13 gangs across the country with one gang's affiliation status being unknown. Mara Salvatrucha, or MS-13, gangs were reported to exist in at least 18 counties with a minimum number of 430 members being recognized. All of these gangs were reputed to have national affiliations or connections to other MS-13 sets. Data on the Vatos Locos gangs also indicates known national ties for 16 of these gangs with 10 of the Latin Kings groups having similar ties beyond the county boundaries. Each of the reported Mexican Mafia gangs and five of the 18th Street sets were described as national in scope.

Study findings indicate that numerous statistically significant differences exist between and across the nationally affiliated Hispanic/Latino gangs and the local gangs with no known national connections. Differences were also found to exist between the urban and rural gangs. Numerous other differences were found to exist despite the fact that these did not approach statistical significance.

As a general rule the nationally affiliated Hispanic/Latino gangs are somewhat visible, mobile, violent, profit-oriented and involved in drug-related activities as demonstrated by average respondent ratings of five, out of a possible scale maximum of ten, or less. The MS-13 and Sur-13 gangs were reported to be the most prevalent, most violent, most drug involved and more extensively organized.

Comparisons of the local Hispanic/Latino gangs indicate that those gangs residing in the central, or Piedmont, region of the state, may be the most problematic, or have the greatest potential, for becoming more of a threat. These gangs were consistently rated as being more visible, slightly more violent, more profit-oriented and more organized than either the local gangs in the eastern or western portions of the state.

Nationally affiliated Hispanic/Latino gangs are, on the average, larger in size, more violent and more extensively organized than their local counterparts. Surprisingly, the local gangs were perceived to be more turf and profit-oriented and slightly more involved in the drug trade. These local gangs were also perceived to be more visible perhaps in an effort to establish their presence and exert more of an intimidation factor in the community thus establishing a new and stronger reputation.

Urban gangs, especially those with national affiliations, appear to be more problematic and demonstrate a greater potential for becoming more of a community threat. Typically, these gangs are larger, more criminally active and more violent than their rural counterparts irrespective of whether the rural gangs demonstrate a national affiliation or are strictly local in the scope of their activities.

Based upon the study findings six recommendations were offered in an effort to address the emerging issue of Hispanic/Latino gangs across the state. These recommendations include:

- Increase the involvement of law enforcement, and other human service agency personnel, in Hispanic sponsored community programs and involve members of the Hispanic community in general community affairs.
- Increase and implement training programs which instruct Hispanic community members and parents on gang awareness and on how to identify early warning signs that their children may be involved in gangs and gang-related activities.

- Slightly more than one-half of the respondents felt that their officers were not adequately trained on understanding the Hispanic/Latino culture and on how these cultural differences can affect the nature of Hispanic/Latino gangs. Thus, it may be important to train law enforcement on these factors as an effective strategy for improving police-community relations within the Hispanic communities.
- Almost all of the responding law enforcement agencies do not have programs which are geared specifically to Hispanic/Latino gangs. Given the sharp increase in the number of these gangs across the state over the last five years it may be feasible to develop and implement a pilot program which is predominately aimed at the issue of Hispanic/Latino gangs.
- A standardized and uniformly automated gang tracking and intelligence system should be developed and implemented which would allow for detailed crime analysis, such as reporting the number of crimes committed by individual gangs and gang members. More importantly this network would allow law enforcement from diverse agencies and regions to share gang-related information and increase their effectiveness and efficiency in addressing gang-related criminal activity.
- Based upon this study efforts and resources should be primarily directed at preventing, intervening with and suppressing the nationally affiliated gangs in the state's larger urban areas with more of an emphasis being directed at those gangs in the central part of the state. Further research and analysis of intelligence information is also recommended in an effort to either refute or validate the major findings of the current study.

Introduction/Study Rationale

In 1999 the North Carolina Criminal Justice Analysis Center, of the Governor's Crime Commission, released a report which examined the nature and extent of youth gangs across the state. Study findings revealed a total of at least 332 distinct gangs comprised of at least 5,068 members. The presence of these youth gangs was noted in urban, suburban and rural areas stretching across the three regions of the state – Coastal, Piedmont and Mountain (Yearwood & Hayes, 2000).

Last year the Analysis Center replicated its 1999 study in an effort to ascertain how youth gangs have changed over the course of the last five years. Trend data indicate a 16.6 percent increase in the number of reported gangs with 387 distinct groups being reported in 2004. Likewise, an increase occurred in gang membership with the number of reported gang members growing from 5,068 in 1999 to 8,517 five years later. This equates to an increase of 68 percent over the five year period or an average annual growth rate of 13.6 percent in gang membership (Hayes, 2005).

Comparative analyses, between the 1999 and 2004 data, suggest that the greatest rate of growth in North Carolina's youth gang population has occurred within the Hispanic and Latino communities. Results of the 1999 study revealed that Hispanic/Latino gangs only comprised 6.5 percent of the 332 gangs which were identified. Five years later this same group accounted for 22.5 percent of the recognized 387 youth gangs.

Much of this growth can be correlated with a corresponding growth rate in the state's general Hispanic population which increased dramatically from 1990 to 2000. According to Census figures the state's Hispanic population was 76,726 in 1990 and 378,963 a decade later (United States Census Bureau, 2001a; Gibson and Jung, 2002). This represents an increase of 393.3 percent over the last decade. In 1990 Hispanics comprised 1.2 percent of the state's population. A decade later this group represented a significantly larger 4.7 percent of the North Carolina population. The state's growth rate in the Hispanic population, during the last decade, was six times greater than the national rate which increased a substantially lower 57.9 percent (United States Census Bureau, 2001b).

Members of the Analysis Center presented a brief overview of youth gangs to the Governor's Advisory Council on Hispanic/Latino Affairs, in March of 2005, with an emphasis on Hispanic/Latino gangs and their activities. While this briefing was limited in scope and elementary the Council members expressed an interest in the topic and suggested that a more in-depth examination of Hispanic/Latino gangs would be beneficial and contribute to a greater understanding of these groups and their activities.

Consequently, this paper seeks to assess the nature and extent of Hispanic/Latino gangs within North Carolina's communities with an emphasis on identifying recent criminal

activities, geographic dispersion, the magnitude of relationships with other national Hispanic/Latino criminal groups and how local gangs differ from gangs that demonstrate national affiliations. Comparative rankings in the areas of gang violence, drug involvement, organizational leadership and mobility will also be addressed. In addition, regional and urban/rural comparisons will be drawn in an effort to determine if Hispanic/Latino gangs differ on these geographical and demographical variables.

Methods

Survey Instrument

A two part survey instrument was designed with Part One assessing the basic and general attributes of Hispanic/Latino gangs across the state. Questions addressed such issues as the presence of these gangs in the respondents' respective jurisdictions, the length of time these gangs have been active and how prepared law enforcement is for managing gang activity. Other items addressed gangs in the schools, the extent of female involvement in these gangs, the contextual aspects of gang violence and the related causative factors for this violence. Emphasis was placed on trying to ascertain if Hispanic/Latino gangs differ from other racial/ethnic gangs and, if so, delineating these differences.

Part Two focused on the identified Hispanic/Latino gangs to assess the level of criminal activity, the size and composition of gang membership and the magnitude of the gangs' involvement in drugs and violence. Survey items also included an examination of gang mobility, organization and the extent to which these gangs maintain, and protect, a unique territory or "turf".

The extent to which these gangs demonstrate an alliance, or a unique connection, with other nationally recognized Hispanic/Latino gangs was documented for comparative purposes. Specifically, to facilitate both within group, and between group, comparisons of those gangs possessing an identified national affiliation and those local gangs with no known relationships or ties to national Hispanic/Latino gangs.

Survey Sample

Two separate samples were drawn based on county and city populations as derived from the latest Census Bureau data. A proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to produce a list of 80 sheriffs' offices for inclusion in the study.¹ Seventeen surveys (22% of the county sample) were mailed to the smallest sheriffs' offices in those counties with populations less than 21,865. Twenty-two surveys (28%) were mailed to agencies in counties with a population base between 21,866 and the median county population of 47,879. The remaining surveys were mailed to 38 sheriffs' offices (47%) with county

¹ Note: Sample sizes were calculated based upon 95% confidence limits with population medians being used to derive the four groups or strata for each sample.

populations ranging from 47,880 to 323,788 and to the three largest offices (3%) as defined by populations greater than 323,789.

A total of 202 municipal police departments were selected with 28 (14.4%) departments representing the smallest cities with populations ranging from 50 to 693. Forty-three departments (21.2%) with populations between 694 and the median city population of 1,435 were selected for inclusion in the study. Mid-size and larger departments constituted the remainder of the survey sample with 120 (59.2%) departments, in the population range of 1,436 to 29,916, being selected. The remaining 11 (5.2%) police departments had jurisdictions of more than 29,917.

Results

A total of 164 surveys were returned producing a response rate of 58.2 percent. Fifty-one, or 31.1%, were received from the county sheriffs' offices with the remaining 113, or 68.9%, being received from the municipal police departments. Surveys were returned by agencies located in 82 of the state's 100 counties.

Of the 164 respondents 48, or 29.4%, reported the presence of Hispanic/Latino gangs and gang activity within their respective jurisdictions. Of this number almost half of those respondents, from agencies which acknowledged a gang presence, also noted that these Hispanic/Latino gangs posed a significant problem for their service areas (N=22, 45.8%). The remaining 26 respondents acknowledged a gang presence but reported that, to date, Hispanic/Latino gangs did not present a significant problem or threat to their communities.

These gangs were estimated to have committed an average of less than 10% of the total crimes which were reported in the respondents' respective jurisdictions during 2004 (X=8.6%). Responses ranged from attributing no reported crimes to these gangs to the sample high of 50 % of the total crimes last year being directly tied to Hispanic/Latino gangs in the respondent's service area.

Table 1 depicts an historical profile of the most commonly reported Hispanic/Latino gangs in North Carolina and the length of time that these gangs have been active in North Carolina's communities. The Very Dangerous Mexicans were reported as the oldest existing gang; having been in the state's communities an average of 41 months or 3 ½ years. 18th Street and Surenos, or Sur-13, have been present in North Carolina for an average of slightly less than three years with Vatos Locos and the Latin Kings having been present for an average of slightly more than two years. The remaining three Hispanic/Latino gangs are relatively new to the state with an average active presence of under two years.

Table 1

Hispanic/Latino Gang Presence by Length of Time in Community

| Gang Name | <u>Reported Time in Community</u> | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| | Range (months) | Average Time (months) |
| Very Dangerous Mexicans | 18-60 | 41.0 |
| 18 th Street | 6-60 | 32.4 |
| Surenos (Sur-13) | 5-96 | 30.1 |
| Vatos Locos | 6-96 | 29.0 |
| Latin Kings | 2-60 | 27.3 |
| Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) | 3-68 | 21.8 |
| Malditos | 15-24 | 21.0 |
| Mexican Mafia | 6-48 | 16.5 |

Study results indicated that when gang related disputes arise, which involve at least one Hispanic/Latino gang, slightly more than one-third of these can be attributed to retaliatory violence (33.5%) followed by drug related disputes (29.6%). Territoriality or disputes arising from turf related issues accounted for 24.5% of the gang conflicts. Disputes related to vandalism or arising from graffiti related wars, such as one gang spraying defamatory markings over another gang's graffiti and artwork, accounted for the smallest percentage of the Hispanic/Latino gang conflicts.

Consistent with the existing gang literature these gang related disputes remain within the Hispanic/Latino community and almost exclusively involve Hispanic/Latino gang members. Respondents indicated that on the average 79.7% of the disputes that an Hispanic/Latino gang engages in is perpetrated against another similar ethnic group. In other words, gang violence is predominately intra-ethnic with Hispanic/Latino gangs having conflicts with other Hispanic/Latino gangs and rarely engaging in disputes with African-American, Asian or White gangs.

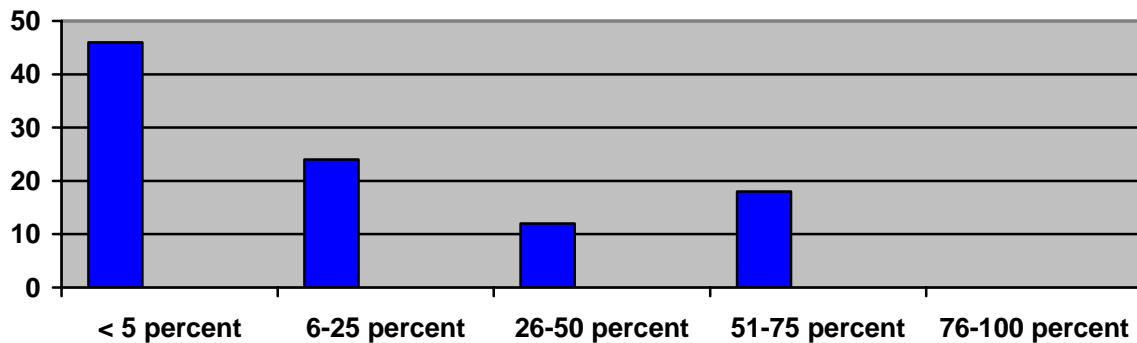
Respondents estimated that on the average 73.7% of their gang members migrated into their jurisdictions from either another city in the state, another state or another country. Raleigh, Charlotte, Durham, Greensboro and Winston-Salem were the most commonly reported cities from which these members migrated. California and Texas were cited as the largest feeder states with gang members also arriving in North Carolina from Virginia, Georgia, New York and Florida. The majority of the respondents cited Mexico and El Salvador as the most common countries from which their gang members migrated with Honduras and Nicaragua also being reported.

Survey respondents reported that the majority (64.5%) of the Hispanic/Latino gang members that migrated into their jurisdictions were born abroad and immigrated to this country with the remaining gang members (35.5%) being second generation Americans; i.e. their parents were born abroad yet the members were born here.

Responses varied on the extent of how many of the Hispanic/Latino gang members were residing in the state illegally and ranged from estimates of zero to 100 percent. On average, the respondents estimated that 65.7% of the Hispanic/Latino gang members were residing in North Carolina illegally.

Figure 1 presents data on the percentage of the Hispanic/Latino youth in the community who were reported to be involved in gang activity and actively involved in a gang. Results were mixed with 46 percent, of the respondents, reporting that less than 5 percent of these youth were involved with gangs and gang-related activities. Twenty-four percent suggested that between 6 and 25 percent of the Hispanic/Latino youth in their communities belonged to gangs, while 12 percent reported that 26 to 50 percent of these youngsters were involved with gangs. The remaining 18 percent reported that 51 to 75 percent of the Hispanic/Latino youth in their communities were actively involved in gangs. None of the respondents reported more than 76 percent of their youth as being in gangs or engaging in gang-related activities.

Figure 1: Estimated Percent of Hispanic/Latino Youth in Gangs



Sixty-five percent of the survey participants noted that Hispanic/Latino gangs do not differ from other racially oriented gangs while the remaining 35% did view these gangs as being dissimilar from predominately African-American, Asian or White gangs. Of those respondents who suggested distinct differences no clear patterns or trends occurred with varied and unique comments being received. Some of these noted differences included:

- Language barrier
- More low key, hard to recognize
- Very loyal and family oriented
- Very open about being involved in a gang
- More defined groups
- More violent
- Commit more illegal activity

National research studies indicate that female involvement in gang activity has increased in both magnitude and severity with females performing more than simple auxiliary functions for the male dominated gangs. In many cases females are considered as equal partners or members and cases of exclusive female gangs have been documented as well. (Refer to Campbell, 1990; Esbensen and Winfree, 1998 and Miller, 2000 for an excellent discussion on females and their involvement in gangs and gang activity).

Seventy-three percent of the responding law enforcement officials asserted that females are involved with their respective gangs with the majority noting that these females are considered as full members (60.9%) versus performing auxiliary roles (39.1%). Officials noted that when Hispanic/Latina females do associate with gangs, but are not considered as complete and equal members, the most common functions that these women perform are holding drugs/paraphernalia (62.5%) and carrying/concealing weapons (56.3%). Slightly more than one-third of the respondents noted that these auxiliary females may still occasionally commit criminal acts as part of their association with the gangs.

Intervention, Prevention and Suppression Initiatives

The issue of gangs in the state's public schools has garnered much attention over the last few years as gangs have spread beyond the larger cities and into suburban and even rural communities. Of those survey participants who acknowledged an Hispanic/Latino gang presence in their communities 36, or 80%, also noted that gangs and gang members are present in the public school systems. Estimates on the number of Hispanic/Latino gang members in the schools ranged from a low of 10 students to a high of 350 youth claiming

gang affiliations. The average number of Hispanic/Latino gang members, in the public school systems, was 80 per each local education authority.²

Approximately the same number of respondents (N=35, 79.5%) noted that local School Resource Officers (SROs) are actively working to identify gang members and gang activity within the public schools. Table 2 depicts the methods and strategies which are being used by these SROs for both identifying gang members and for addressing and managing the issue. The two most common approaches were coordinating and sharing information with other local law enforcement agencies (67.5%) and providing gang awareness and identification information to teachers, parents and students (55.0%). Enforcing school dress codes to alleviate gang related apparel was also fairly common and was reported as one strategy by 45 percent of those who recognize gang members and gang activities within the schools.

Table 2

SRO Practices for Identifying Gang Members and for Addressing the Gang Issue

| Strategy | Number Using | Percent |
|--|--------------|---------|
| Consult with local law enforcement | 27 | 67.5% |
| Provide gang information to teachers, parents and students | 22 | 55.0% |
| Enforcing dress codes | 18 | 45.0% |
| Defining gang related violations | 14 | 35.0% |
| Support groups | 6 | 15.0% |
| Enforcing punishment policy for gang-related behavior | 4 | 10.0% |
| Targeting gang members for alternative education | 6 | 15.0% |

Note: Survey respondents were encouraged to select all strategies which are used within their schools, thus percentages do not equal 100.

² Note: Respondents were asked to estimate the total number of gang members in the local schools not the number per school. Consequently, the data reflect the average number per district as opposed to the number in each school.

Unlike other gangs the Hispanic/Latino gangs in North Carolina do not appear to be using information systems technology, such as the Internet and e-mail, as a means of planning, facilitating, or discussing criminal activity. Only 13.8 % of the respondents stated that these gangs communicated through technological means.

Commenting on the general Hispanic/Latino communities across the state 31, or 73.8%, of the participants, who reported an Hispanic/Latino gang presence, felt that there was a significant divide within their communities where Hispanic/Latino residents were disconnected from the general community and its activities. Slightly more than half noted that their agencies were not prepared to deal with the unique cultural differences of the Hispanic/Latino community nor were they adequately equipped to understand how these cultural factors affect, and influence, both gang and non-gang youth (57.4%).

Almost all of the law enforcement agencies represented in the study do not currently have any specific programs or initiatives which solely address Hispanic/Latino gangs (89.6%). However, these agencies have developed and implemented a variety of intervention, prevention and suppression methods and programs to more effectively manage and address the general gang presence in their communities (Refer to Table 3).

Table 3

Reported Gang Intervention, Prevention and Suppression Strategies

| Strategy | Number Using | Percent |
|-------------------------------|--------------|---------|
| School Resource Officers | 32 | 72.7% |
| Creating gang database | 21 | 47.7% |
| Specialized gang officer | 19 | 43.2% |
| Community policing | 19 | 43.2% |
| Establishment of gang unit | 15 | 31.3% |
| After-school programs | 9 | 20.5% |
| Nuisance abatement | 4 | 9.1% |
| Enforcement of loitering laws | 4 | 9.1% |
| Curfew enforcement | 3 | 6.8% |

Note: Survey respondents were encouraged to select all strategies which are used within their communities, thus percentages do not equal 100.

The use of SROs and automated gang information management systems were used by 72.7% of the respondents and 47.7% respectively. Having a specialized gang officer and community policing strategies were also common with just under one-half reporting their use. Fifteen agencies currently have detailed gang units (31.3%) of which three were formed prior to 2001 with the oldest unit being in existence since 1993. The number of officers assigned to these units ranged from 2 to 30 with a sample average of 4.4 officers per unit. Only one respondent felt that their gang unit was large enough with the remaining respondents sensing a need for more personnel. Likewise, only one unit required that the officers be fluent in Spanish.

Nationally Affiliated versus Local Hispanic/Latino Gangs

Inconsistencies exist in the academic literature surrounding the extent to which gangs are local entities, with no documented networks or connections to other gangs beyond their respective cities or counties, or possess strong links or ties to other national gangs (Valdez, 2000; Starbuck, Howell and Lindquist, 2001). Confounding this is mixed debate over the extent of gang migration as well as the notion of “super gangs” or nationally syndicated gangs who operate as essentially organized crime groups engaged in national, and often transnational, continuing criminal enterprises.

As part of the research study respondents were asked to identify the affiliation status of the gangs in their communities; i.e. do the gangs have national affiliations and connections or do they retain, and exercise influence, solely within the local jurisdiction. The following section will delineate how North Carolina’s Hispanic/Latino gangs are viewed within this contextual framework and test various assumptions surrounding the perceived differences between nationally affiliated gangs compared to local gangs. Specifically, these groups will be compared on membership size, visibility in the community, actual violence, and territoriality, the extent of involvement in drug-related activities and the extent to which they are profit driven or motivated. Comparisons will also be drawn on gang mobility and the types of criminal activities these gangs commit. Comparisons will be made within both national and local gangs as well as between those gangs with national affiliations and those gangs with no such association.

A total of 118 Hispanic/Latino gangs were reported of which 91 were reputed to be nationally affiliated with, or have connections to, similar gangs outside of the respondents’ respective counties and beyond state boundaries³. Twenty-three gangs were considered local with no known documented associations or connections to any other gangs either outside of the county or on the national level.⁴ A total of at least 3,420 gang members were identified of which 276 were female members (8.1%).

³ Note: Caution should be exercised when drawing extrapolations or conclusions on the number of reported gangs and gang members since not all agencies were randomly sampled, some agencies did not respond to the survey and some respondents were not capable of providing membership estimates. These numbers should be interpreted as representing the **minimum** number of gangs and gang members.

⁴ Note: An affiliation status was not known for the four remaining gangs thus the data were excluded from further analyses.

As Figure 2 reveals these gangs are located in at least 30 different counties stretching from as far west as Henderson and Polk Counties to the eastern most counties of Beaufort and Craven. Geographically Hispanic/Latino gangs were reported in seven Mountain region counties, nine Piedmont counties and 14 Coastal counties as defined as those counties west of the Durham, Lee and Hoke County boundaries. The greatest number of gangs were reported in Wake County (N=11), Durham County (N=9) and Rowan County (N=9).

Figure 2

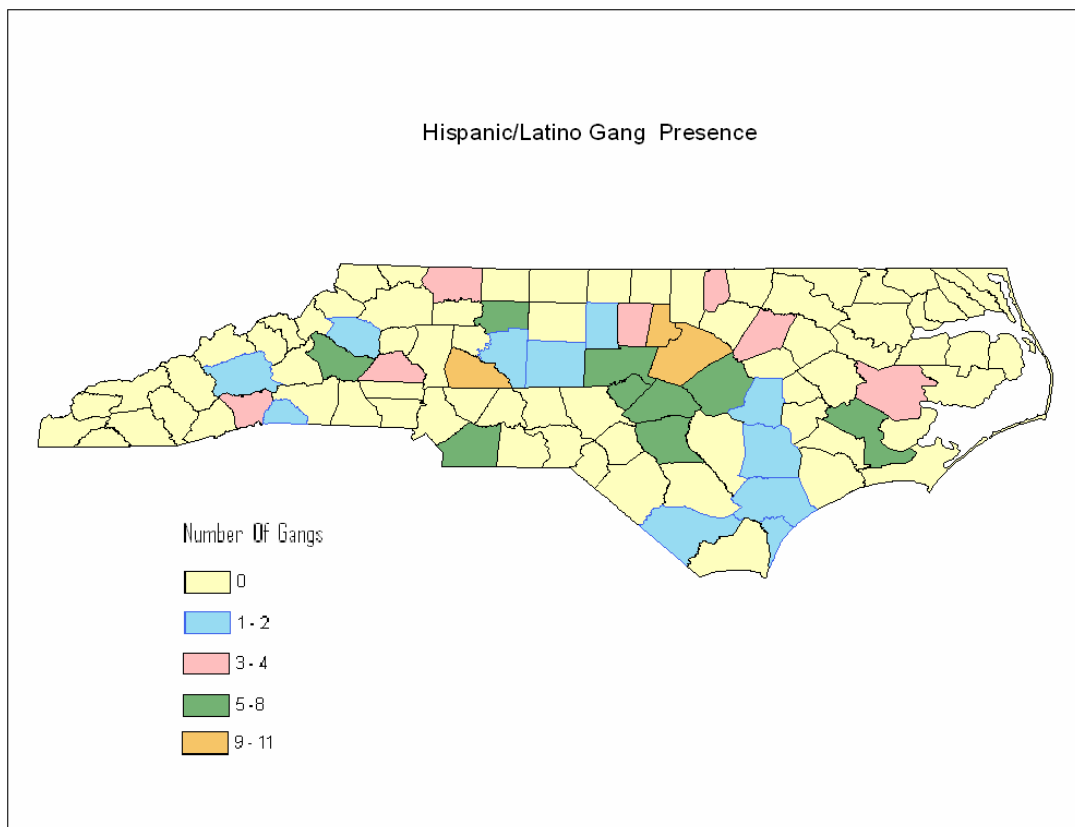


Table 4 provides data on the most prevalently reported Hispanic/Latino gangs. Surenos, or Sur-13, was the most prevalent gang with distinct gangs being identified in 23 different counties and consisting of at least 1,855 reported gang members. Twenty-two (95.7%) of these gangs were described as possessing national ties to other Sur-13 gangs across the country with one gang's affiliation status being unknown. Mara Salvatrucha, or MS-13, gangs were reported to exist in at least 18 counties with a minimum number of 430 members being recognized. All of these gangs were reputed to have national affiliations or connections to other MS-13 sets. Data on the Vatos Locos gangs also indicates known national ties for 16 of these gangs with 10 of the Latin Kings groups having similar ties beyond the county boundaries. Each of the reported Mexican Mafia gangs and five of the 18th Street sets were described as national in scope. Of the most prevalent gangs identified, and listed in the table, only the Brown Pride gangs did not possess national affiliations and were described as local gangs whose activities did not transcend county or state lines.

Table 4

Most Prevalent Hispanic/Latino Gangs by Membership Size

| Name | Number of counties | Minimum total number of members | Mean size |
|--------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Surenos (Sur-13) | 23 | 1,855 | 123.7 |
| Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) | 18 | 430 | 33.1 |
| Vatos Locos | 16 | 361 | 36.1 |
| Latin Kings | 11 | 72 | 14.4 |
| Mexican Mafia | 8 | 162 | 40.5 |
| 18 th Street | 6 | 93 | 31.0 |
| Brown Pride | 4 | 25 | 25.0 |

Note: Not all respondents were capable of providing data on the number of members thus the number of gangs reported in the counties was not necessarily used as the denominator when calculating the mean size.

Survey respondents were asked to rank each of the gangs, in their respective jurisdictions, on seven different factors using a ten point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 10 with the severity or magnitude of the factor increasing in ascending order where one represented the lowest point and ten the highest⁵. Tables 5 and 6 present the average rank score, for the major national Hispanic/Latino gangs which were identified, on such factors as gang visibility, violence, drug involvement and gang mobility.

Table 5

Average Severity or Magnitude Rankings for Nationally Affiliated Hispanic/Latino Gangs

| Gang Name | Visibility | Level of Violence | Turf-oriented | Drug Involvement |
|-------------------------|------------|-------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Surenos (Sur-13) | 6.51 | 4.20 | 4.70 | 4.98 |
| Vatos Locos | 4.44 | 3.00 | 3.71 | 4.08 |
| Latin Kings | 3.65 | 1.95 | 3.00 | 4.14 |
| Mexican Mafia | 3.44 | 3.75 | 2.43 | 4.71 |
| MS-13 | 4.50 | 4.32 | 3.00 | 5.33 |
| 18 th Street | 4.80 | 2.30 | 3.60 | 3.25 |
| Group Average | 4.85 | 3.52 | 3.60 | 4.69 |

The average rank score for gang visibility, across the major nationally affiliated gangs, was 4.85. Significant differences were found to exist with the Sur-13 gangs being significantly more visible in the community when contrasted with the Latin Kings and the Mexican Mafia. Comparisons between the other gangs yielded no statistically significant differences; i.e. MS-13 was not significantly more visible than the Latin Kings who were not significantly more visible than the 18th Street gangs, etc.

Based on the survey respondents' rankings the extent of violence perpetrated by the Hispanic/Latino gangs appears to be minimal at this time as indicated by an average group ranking of 3.52. The MS-13 gangs were considered to be the most violent

⁵ Note: As a general guide for the respondents the Likert scale included four set points: 1= Not involved, 4= Somewhat involved, 7= Involved and 10= Extremely involved.

($X=4.32$) followed by the Sur-13 gangs (4.20). The Latin Kings were perceived to be the least violent of the nationally affiliated gangs as indicated by an average ranking of 1.95. However, no statistically significant differences were found to exist between the gangs in terms of their current level of involvement in violent offenses.

As with the violence indicator no statistically significant differences were found to exist among the nationally affiliated Hispanic/Latino gangs in terms of the extent to which they are turf-oriented. The extent to which all of the national gangs maintain and protect a territory was perceived to be relatively minimal as indicated by an average group rank score of 3.60. The Sur-13 gangs appear to be the most territorial ($X=4.70$) followed by the Vatos Locos gangs ($X=3.71$) and the 18th Street gangs ($X=3.60$). The remaining gangs demonstrated less of a turf orientation as indicated by their average rankings being less than the group average.

Despite the lack of any statistically significant differences, between the gangs, all of the major nationally affiliated Hispanic/Latino gangs in North Carolina were perceived to be relatively equally involved in drug-related activities with the average rank score being 4.69. The MS-13 gangs ($X=5.33$) were reported to be the most drug involved followed by the Sur-13 ($X=4.98$) and the Mexican Mafia gangs ($X=4.71$). The 18th Street gangs demonstrated the least amount of drug involvement and drug-related activities ($X=3.25$).

Table 6

Average Severity or Magnitude Rankings for Nationally Affiliated Hispanic/Latino Gangs

| Gang Name | Profit motivated | Extent of Organization | Mobility |
|-------------------------|------------------|------------------------|----------|
| Surenos (Sur-13) | 4.82 | 5.10 | 6.18 |
| Vatos Locos | 3.31 | 3.27 | 3.71 |
| Latin Kings | 2.93 | 2.67 | 3.63 |
| Mexican Mafia | 5.14 | 4.29 | 8.50 |
| MS-13 | 5.17 | 4.75 | 6.56 |
| 18 th Street | 3.00 | 3.75 | 5.63 |
| Group Average | 4.35 | 4.18 | 5.66 |

No significant main effect, or differences, existed among the gangs in terms of the extent to which they are profit driven or motivated. The MS-13 gangs ($X=5.17$), the Mexican Mafia ($X=5.14$) and the Sur-13 gangs ($X=4.82$) were more profit driven as indicated by their mean rankings being higher than the average group ranking of 4.35. The Latin Kings appear to be the least profit driven ($X=2.93$).

All of the nationally affiliated gangs appear to be relatively the same in terms of the extent of their organization. The Sur-13 gangs were rated as being the most extensively organized ($X=5.10$) followed by the MS-13 gangs ($X=4.75$) and the Mexican Mafia ($X=4.29$). The Latin King gangs and the Vatos Locos gangs were ranked as being the least extensively organized.

Significant differences were found to exist among the gangs in terms of their mobility with both the Mexican Mafia and the MS-13 gangs being significantly more mobile than the Vatos Locos gangs. As a general rule the nationally affiliated Hispanic/Latino gangs in North Carolina are somewhat mobile as indicated by an average ranking of 5.66 which is slightly higher than the midpoint of the Likert scale. The Vatos Locos gangs and the Latin Kings were reported as being the least mobile in their activities.

As part of the survey respondents were provided with a list of 30 distinct criminal offenses⁶ and were instructed to provide the number for each of these offenses which were committed by each nationally affiliated gang within the last 30 days. Respondents were also asked to estimate the extent of each gang's criminal activity, during the prior month, as a percentage of the total crimes which were reported in their respective jurisdictions, during this period.

Respondents noted that the average nationally affiliated Hispanic/Latino gang accounted for eight percent of the total crimes which were reported in their areas during the past month. The Sur-13 gangs were reported as the most active during the 30 day period accounting for an average of 25% of the total crimes reported. Mexican Mafia gangs committed an average of five percent of the reported crimes followed by an average of two percent which was attributed to the MS-13 gangs. On the average less than one percent (.50%) of the total reported crime was attributed to the national Vatos Locos gangs.

⁶ Note: These offenses included: the drug-related offenses of possession, production, smuggling, transporting and distributing, prostitution, murder, weapons trafficking, money laundering, felonious assault, bombings, possession of stolen property in general as well as motorcycle parts, intimidation, extortion, arson, drive-by shootings, offenses involving explosives, insurance and credit card fraud, identity theft, kidnapping, robbery, general larceny-theft, smuggling illegal aliens and other contraband, counterfeiting, vandalism/graffiti, burglary and rape/sexual assault.

Table 7

Number and Mean Number of Reported Offenses in Last 30 Day Period by Nationally Affiliated Gang

| Gang Name | All Offenses | Drug Subscale | Violent Subscale | Property Subscale |
|-------------------------|--------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|
| MS-13 | 54 (X=10.80) | 42 (X=10.50) | 1 (X=1.00) | 11 (X=3.67) |
| Sur-13 | 33 (X= 8.25) | 6 (X=3.00) | 1 (X=1.00) | 26 (X= 6.50) |
| Latin Kings | 10 (X= 5.00) | 5 (X=5.00) | 0 (X=0) | 5 (X=2.50) |
| 18 th Street | 5 (X=5.00) | 0 (X=0) | 0 (X=0) | 5 (X=5.00) |
| Vatos Locos | 5 (X=2.50) | 0 (X= 0) | 0 (X=0) | 5 (X=2.50) |
| Group | 107 (X=7.64) | 53 (X= 7.57) | 2 (X=1.00) | 52 (X=4.33) |

Note: Data were unavailable for the Mexican Mafia gangs.

The average across all offenses may not necessarily equal the sum of the subscales due to incomplete and missing data and the fact that some offenses, such as bombings or alien smuggling, were not included in any of the three subscales. Also, different denominators were used in the calculations.

Given the limited number of respondents, who were able to provide reported crime data for this 30 day period, it is not advisable to derive any significant policy or programmatic conclusions based on this information.

As Table 7 demonstrates the MS-13 gangs were reported as being the most criminally active during the 30 day study period with 54 total offenses being known for an average of 10.8 offenses per gang. The Sur-13 gangs were the second most criminally active committing 33 offenses or an average of 8.25 offenses per Sur-13 gang during the 30 day period.

The MS-13 gangs were also more heavily involved in drugs during the last month (N=42; X=10.5) followed by the Latin Kings who averaged five drug offenses per group during the last 30 days. On the average the nationally affiliated Hispanic/Latino gangs committed 7.6 drug-related offenses during the 30 day period.

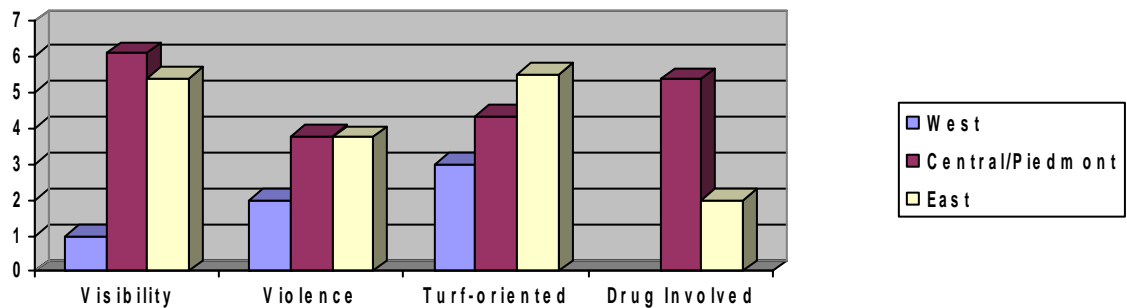
Violent crimes did not appear to be problematic during the last month with only the Sur-13 and MS-13 gangs committing, on the average, one violent crime each during the last month.

Property crimes were more commonplace with the Sur-13 gangs being reported as having committed 26 property-related crimes for an average of 6.5 every 30 days followed by the 18th Street gangs averaging five property crimes during this last month. Across all the nationally affiliated Hispanic/Latino gangs an average of 4.33 property crimes were committed by each gang over the last month.

A total of 23 Hispanic/Latino gangs, with no known national ties, were identified by the survey respondents with three (13%) of these gangs residing in the western portion of the state, seven (30.4%) in the eastern part of the state and the remaining 13 (56.5%) being identified by respondents in the central or Piedmont region of the state. The following section will analyze these gangs on a regional basis in an effort to ascertain if any discernible differences exist between these local Hispanic/Latino gangs.

As with the nationally affiliated Hispanic/Latino gangs survey participants were asked to rank each of the local gangs on the same seven factors, and using a similar ten point Likert scale, as previously discussed. Figures 3 and 4 depict the mean, or average, rankings for the local Hispanic/Latino gangs by region of the state.

Figure 3 Average Severity or Magnitude Rankings of Local Gangs by Region



The Hispanic/Latino gangs in the central region of the state ($X=6.08$) were reported as being significantly more visible when contrasted to the gangs in the western portion of the state ($X=1.0$). These central gangs were also reported as being slightly more visible than the Hispanic/Latino gangs in the eastern region ($X=5.40$). Irrespective of region the local Hispanic/Latino gangs were reported as having an average visibility ranking of 5.2, indicative of a middle range level of visibility in the community.

No statistically significant differences were found to exist in terms of the magnitude or perceived severity of the gangs' levels of violence. The Hispanic/Latino gangs in Central North Carolina were reported to be slightly more violent ($X=3.78$) than their eastern counterparts ($X=3.75$) and almost twice as violent as the western gangs ($X=2.0$). Overall, the local gangs were reported as having an average violence ranking of 3.4 placing them between non-violent and somewhat violent as an aggregate group.

As Figure 3 depicts the eastern Hispanic/Latino gangs had the greatest turf-orientation ($X=5.5$) followed by the gangs in the central part of the state ($X=4.33$). The Hispanic/Latino gangs in the mountains were less turf-oriented ($X=3.0$) as their perceived territoriality was less than the average ranking across all the groups ($X=4.4$).

Data for the local western gangs' involvement in drug-related activities was not available; however the centrally located Hispanic/Latino gangs were rated as being substantially more involved with drugs ($X=5.38$) when contrasted with the eastern gangs ($X=2.0$).

Figure 4 Average Severity or Magnitude Rankings of Local Gangs by Region

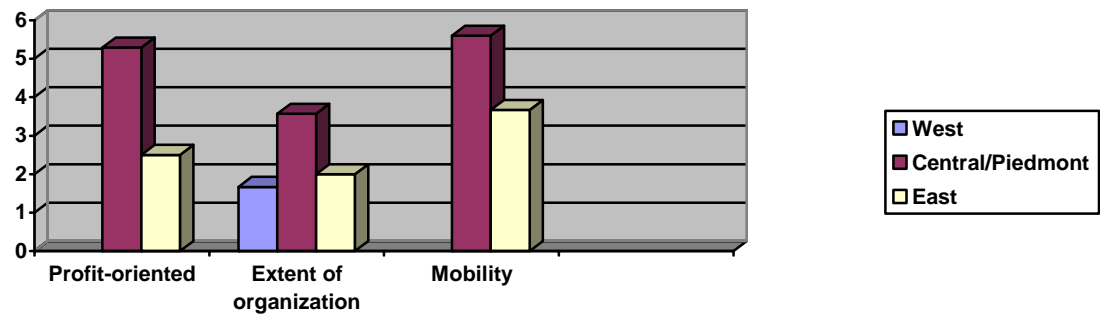


Table 4 documents the extent to which the local Hispanic/Latino gangs are profit-oriented, the extent of the gangs' organization as well as their perceived mobility. The gangs located in the central part of the state demonstrated the greatest profit-orientation with an average rank score of 5.29. Eastern gangs were less financially motivated as indicated by an average rank score of 2.50.

The Hispanic/Latino gangs in the central portion of North Carolina were perceived to be the most extensively organized ($X=3.57$) followed by those gangs in the east ($X=2.0$). The westernmost Hispanic/Latino gangs were seen as being the least organized ($X=1.67$). Both western and eastern Hispanic/Latino gangs were seen as being less organized with their respective average organization ratings falling below the group average of 2.83.

While mobility data were not provided for the western gangs mobility ratings for the Hispanic/Latino gangs in the central Piedmont region ($X=5.60$) were slightly higher than the average mobility rating for the gangs located in the eastern part of the state ($X=3.67$).

Comparisons between the nationally affiliated, and the local, Hispanic/Latino gangs reveal that the nationally affiliated gangs have a substantially larger average membership with the national gangs averaging 57.4 recognized members contrasted with the local gang's average membership of 34.5 members.

Tables 8 and 9 present the data for comparisons between the local and nationally affiliated gangs on the seven previously discussed gang attributes. Only one statistically significant difference was found to exist between the nationally affiliated gangs and the local Hispanic/Latino gangs with the national gangs being significantly more organized as indicated by an average rank score of 4.19 versus an average rating of 2.83 for the local gangs.

Table 8

Average Severity or Magnitude Rankings for Nationally Affiliated Hispanic/Latino Gangs Compared to Local Hispanic/Latino Gangs

| Gang Type | Visibility | Level of Violence | Turf-oriented | Drug Involvement |
|-----------------------|------------|-------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Nationally Affiliated | 4.96 | 3.71 | 3.61 | 4.55 |
| Local | 5.15 | 3.44 | 4.38 | 4.70 |

Table 9

Average Severity or Magnitude Rankings for Nationally Affiliated Hispanic/Latino Gangs Compared to Local Gangs

| Gang Type | Profit motivated | Extent of Organization | Mobility |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------------------|----------|
| Nationally Affiliated | 4.22 | 4.19 | 5.76 |
| Local | 4.67 | 2.83 | 4.88 |

While not approaching statistical significance the local gangs were reported as being slightly more visible in the community and more turf-oriented when contrasted with the nationally affiliated Hispanic/Latino gangs. These gangs were also rated as being slightly more involved with drug-related activities and consequently slightly more profit-oriented or financially driven. The nationally affiliated gangs were viewed as being moderately more mobile and slightly more violent than the local Hispanic/Latino gangs.

Table 10

Number and Mean Number of Reported Offenses in Last 30 Day Period by Affiliation Status

| Gang Type | All Offenses | Drug Subscale | Violent Subscale | Property Subscale |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Nationally Affiliated | 118 (X=5.90) | 53 (X=7.57) | 4 (X=1.00) | 61 (X=3.59) |
| Local | 5 (X=1.25) | N/A | 1 (X=1.00) | 4 (X=1.00) |
| All Gangs | 123 (X=5.13) | N/A | 5 (X=1.00) | 65 (X=3.10) |

Note: Given the limited number of respondents, who were able to provide reported crime data for this 30 day period, it is not advisable to derive any significant policy or programmatic conclusions based on this information.

Based upon a relatively small group of responses the nationally affiliated Hispanic/Latino gangs were significantly more criminally active, during the last month, averaging 5.90 offenses during this period compared to an average of 1.25 for the local gangs. The two groups did not demonstrate discernible differences in terms of the number of violent crimes committed with each group averaging one such incident during the 30 day period. Significant differences were found to exist for property-related offenses with the nationally affiliated gangs averaging 3.59, over the last month, compared to a significantly lower average of 1.00 for the local gangs.

Hispanic/Latino Gangs in Urban versus Rural Counties

The identified counties, with an Hispanic/Latino gang presence, were subdivided into an urban/rural dichotomy using the weighted mean state population density of 165.2 persons per square mile. Counties above the mean were classified as urban and those below rural. Based upon this classification a total of 82 urban Hispanic/Latino gangs (69.5%) were located in 18 (60%) of the 30 counties in which these gangs were identified. Fifty-eight of these urban gangs were purported to have national affiliations (74.4%) with 20 (25.6%) having no known national connections to other Hispanic/Latino gangs. The remaining 36 (30.5%) gangs were classified as rural as the 12 counties (40%) in which they were located had population densities less than the state average. Thirty-three of these rural gangs had reported national ties (91.7%) and three (8.3%) did not.

Not surprisingly, the urban gangs were larger in size averaging 60 members per gang contrasted with the smaller rural gangs whose average membership was 43.3 gang members. The number of female gang members was almost four times larger in the urban Hispanic/Latino gangs with an average of 19.9 females per gang versus 5.7 in the rural gangs.

Figure 5 presents an urban/rural comparison for the factors, or attributes, of gang visibility, violence, territoriality and the extent of drug involvement. The urban gangs were rated as being significantly more violent ($X=3.93$) than the rural gangs ($X= 3.04$) and slightly, but not statistically significantly, more involved in drugs. The rural gangs were perceived to be moderately more visible ($X=5.28$) than the urban gangs ($X=4.76$) and slightly more turf-oriented ($X=3.70$) than their urban counterparts ($X=3.64$).

Figure 5 Average Severity or Magnitude Rankings by Urban/Rural Jurisdiction

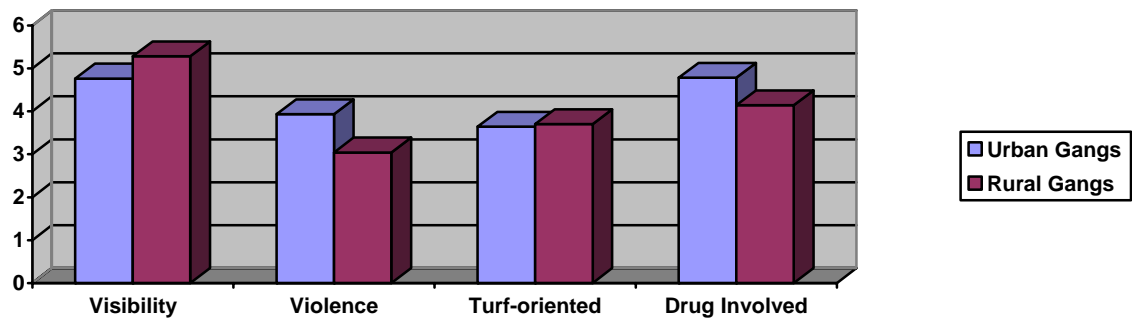
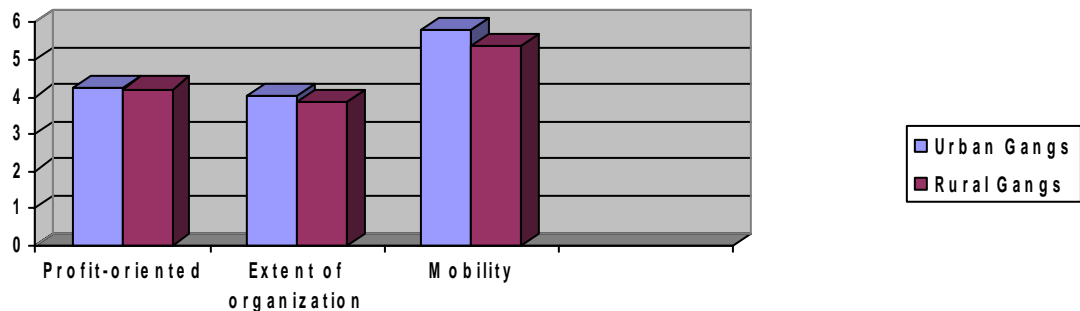


Figure 6 depicts the same urban/rural comparison on the factors of profit orientation, and the extent of gang organization and mobility. No significant differences emerged suggesting that the urban and rural Hispanic/Latino gangs do not differ greatly in terms of being financially motivated (urban, $X= 4.25$; rural, $X=4.21$), the extent of gang organization (urban, $X=4.03$; rural, $X= 3.87$) nor their mobility (urban, $X=5.81$; rural, $X=5.38$).

Figure 6 Average Severity or Magnitude Rankings by Urban/Rural Jurisdiction



Urban gangs were described as being significantly more criminally involved, over the last 30 days prior to the respondents' time of questionnaire completion, as an average of 10.9 percent of all reported crime during that period was attributable to Hispanic/Latino gangs. The percentage of reported crime in rural areas, which was attributed to Hispanic/Latino gangs, was a significantly lower one percent.

Urban Hispanic/Latino gangs averaged significantly more criminal offenses, during the last month, compared to their rural counterparts (urban, $X=5.50$; rural, $X=1.0$). Property-related offenses were committed significantly more often, during the 30 day period, by urban gangs ($X=3.32$) than by the rural Hispanic/Latino gangs which averaged only one property offense during this same period. Insufficient data precluded comparisons on the average number of violent and drug-related offenses across the urban and rural gangs.

Drawing comparisons across both affiliation status and the urban/rural dichotomy produced two significant differences. The urban, national gangs committed significantly more crime during the last 30 days ($X=6.44$) compared to both the urban, local gangs ($X=1.25$) and the rural, national gangs ($X=1.00$). The urban national gangs ($X=3.93$) also committed significantly more property crime during the 30 day period than both the local urban gangs ($X=1.00$) and the nationally affiliated rural gangs ($X=1.00$).

Discussion/Policy Implications and Recommendations

The dramatic and rapid rise in the number of Hispanic and Latino/Latina individuals across the state coupled with an increasing gang presence necessitates a variety of proactive measures in order to prevent an exacerbation of gang-related criminal activity and violence. This issue becomes all the more pronounced when considering that almost half of the respondents noted that Hispanic/Latino gangs posed significant problems for their communities, nearly three-fourths felt that the Hispanic population was disconnected from the community and its activities and 90 percent of the responding agencies did not have programs aimed specifically for Hispanic/Latino gangs and gang members.

Recommendation # 1

Increase the involvement of law enforcement and human services personnel, as well as key community leaders, in culturally specific Hispanic community events in order to alleviate the disconnection or schism that exists between the non-Hispanic and Hispanic communities. Conversely, members of the Hispanic communities should be invited to attend, and participate in, general community activities.

Recommendation # 2

Increase and implement training programs which instruct Hispanic community members and parents on gang awareness and on how to identify early warning signs that their children may be involved in gangs and gang-related activities. Since 80% of the respondents noted the presence of gang members in the public school system the local school administrators should be included and actively involved in this training. Close to 80% of the respondents mentioned that SROs are actively engaged in identifying gang members, with nearly one-half noting that their agencies had at least one officer specializing in gangs, thus it is feasible that these officers could provide this community training for both students and parents.

Recommendation # 3

Additionally, slightly more than one-half of the respondents felt that their officers were not adequately trained on understanding the Hispanic/Latino culture and on how these cultural differences can affect the nature of Hispanic/Latino gangs. While only 35% suggested that Hispanic/Latino gangs differ from other gangs it may be important to train law enforcement on these factors nonetheless as an effective strategy for improving police-community relations within the Hispanic communities.

Recommendation # 4

Almost all of the responding law enforcement agencies do not have programs which are geared specifically to Hispanic/Latino gangs. Given the sharp increase in the number of these gangs across the state over the last five years it may be feasible to develop and implement a pilot program which is predominately aimed at the issue of Hispanic/Latino gangs. This pilot program should be evidence based and derived from prior research and evaluation which documents effective practices for gang intervention, prevention and suppression (Refer to the United States Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention website for an excellent discussion on proven and effective gang programs). This pilot program should be community focused and data driven with members of the effected Hispanic/Latino community actively involved in program development and implementation.

Recommendation # 5

One limitation of the current study was an inability on the part of the majority of the respondents to accurately and reliably report the number of gang-related crimes, which occurred over the last month, by each individual gang. Several factors may be postulated when explaining this deficiency. It is possible that the number of reported gang crimes was low because of a true lack of criminal activity during the 30 day period in question with few violent crimes being reported due to a relatively stable period of inactivity related to gang-on-gang warfare or no current feuding or hostilities between the gangs.

Conversely, there may have been far more gang-related criminal activity than reported with only a small percentage of the true crime coming to the attention of law enforcement authorities. Many members of the Hispanic/Latino communities may have imported an inherent distrust of law enforcement, from their respective native countries, thus causing them to not report their being victimized. Also, given the retaliatory nature of gangs many individuals may have failed to report out of a fear of future reprisal by gang members (North Carolina Criminal Justice Analysis Center & Boykin, 1998).

The low number of reported crimes by Hispanic/Latino gangs, during the last month, may be indicative of an inability on the part of law enforcement officials to retrieve crime and criminal history data at such a detailed and disaggregated level. Current record keeping systems may not permit information to be sorted and analyzed for each individual gang or these systems may still be paper-based and consequently compiling information by each gang would be considerably too time intensive for responding to the survey. Despite this fact slightly less than one-half of the respondents noted that their agencies are currently using specialized gang databases thus even these systems may not permit gang specific queries.

A standardized and uniformly automated gang tracking and intelligence system should be developed and implemented which would allow for detailed crime analysis, such as reporting the number of crimes committed by individual gangs and gang members. More importantly this network would allow law enforcement from diverse agencies and regions to share gang-related information and increase their effectiveness and efficiency in addressing gang-related criminal activity. Given the fact that nearly 75% of the survey participants suggested that the Hispanic/Latino gang members in their jurisdictions migrated from other areas, the relatively high level of perceived gang mobility and the presence of numerous nationally affiliated gangs all demonstrate the imperative need for increased data sharing between both intrastate and interstate law enforcement agencies.

Recommendation # 6

Study findings indicate that numerous statistically significant differences exist between and across the nationally affiliated Hispanic/Latino gangs and the local gangs with no known national connections. Differences were also found to exist between the urban and rural gangs. Numerous other differences were found to exist despite the fact that these did not approach statistical significance.

As a general rule the nationally affiliated Hispanic/Latino gangs are somewhat visible, mobile, violent, profit-oriented and involved in drug-related activities as demonstrated by average respondent ratings of five, out of a possible scale maximum of ten, or less. The MS-13 and Sur-13 gangs were reported to be the most prevalent, most violent, most drug involved and more extensively organized.

Comparisons of the local Hispanic/Latino gangs indicate that those gangs residing in the central, or Piedmont, region of the state, may be the most problematic, or have the greatest potential, for becoming more of a threat. These gangs were consistently rated as being more visible, slightly more violent, more profit-oriented and more organized than either the local gangs in the eastern or western portions of the state.

Nationally affiliated Hispanic/Latino gangs are, on the average, larger in size, more violent and more extensively organized than their local counterparts. Surprisingly, the local gangs were perceived to be more turf and profit-oriented and slightly more involved in the drug trade. These local gangs were also perceived to be more visible perhaps in an effort to establish their presence and exert more of an intimidation factor in the community thus establishing a new and stronger reputation. While little violence has occurred between the national and local gangs the potential for future violence appears to be the strongest in communities that have both of these entities present. It is plausible that a local gang may “move in” on a national gang’s territory or drug business creating a cyclical pattern of violence and retaliatory violence within the community. It is also possible that a local gang could merge with the national gang increasing its size, reputation and potential for larger profits and more violence.

Urban gangs, especially those with national affiliations, appear to be more problematic and demonstrate a greater potential for becoming more of a community threat. Typically, these gangs are larger, more criminally active and more violent than their rural counterparts irrespective of whether the rural gangs demonstrate a national affiliation or are strictly local in the scope of their activities.

While Hispanic/Latino gangs are a relatively new phenomenon in North Carolina their presence does pose substantial problems for the communities and its residents and as these gangs become more entrenched in the communities and larger in size the potential for further and more frequent and serious conflicts exist. Obviously, the goal of any community should be to eradicate all gangs and gang-related activities. Based upon this study efforts and resources should be primarily directed at preventing, intervening with and suppressing the nationally affiliated gangs in the state’s larger urban areas with more of an emphasis being directed at those gangs in the central part of the state. Further research and analysis of intelligence information is also recommended in an effort to either refute or validate the major findings of the current study.

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