January 2012

'reel' Gangs Or 'real' Gangs: A Qualitative Media Analysis Of Street Gangs Portrayed In Hollywood Films, 1960-2009

Christopher J. Przemieniecki

'REEL' GANGS or 'REAL' GANGS:
A QUALITATIVE MEDIA ANALYSIS of STREET GANGS
PORTRAYED in HOLLYWOOD FILMS, 1960-2009

by

Christopher John Przemieniecki
Bachelor of Arts, Wright State University, 1992
Master of Science, Illinois State University, 1994

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
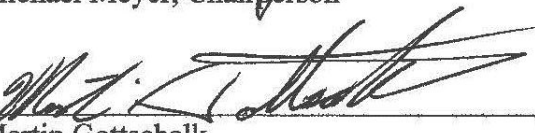

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Grand Forks, North Dakota
August
2012

This dissertation, submitted by Christopher John Przemieniecki in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree Doctorate of Philosophy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

Michael Meyer, Chairperson

Martin Gottschalk

Bruce Dicristina

Roni Mayzer

Glenn Olsen

This dissertation meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

Wayne Swisher,
Dean of the Graduate School

July 26, 2012
Date

iii

PERMISSION

Title   'Reel' Gangs or 'Real' Gangs: A Qualitative Media Analysis of Street
               Gangs Portrayed in Hollywood Films, 1960-2009

Department   Criminal Justice

Degree   Doctor of Philosophy

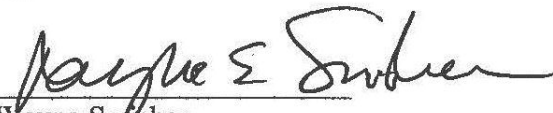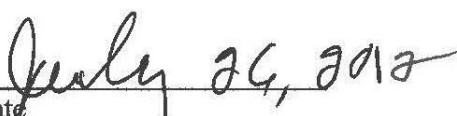In presenting this dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a graduate
degree from the University of North Dakota, I agree that the library of this University
shall make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for extensive
copying for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor who supervised my
dissertation work or, in her absence, by the chairperson of the department or the dean of
the Graduate School. It is understood that any copying or publication or other use of this
dissertation or part thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written
permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to the
University of North Dakota in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in
my dissertation.

                                        Christopher John Przemieniecki

                                        July 17, 2012

TABLE of CONTENTS

viii

\

ix

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the support and guidance from several individuals over the last several years. I am so thankful for all the help I have received and the many friends who have encouraged me along the way. First and foremost, I want to express my sincere appreciation to the criminal justice faculty for their guidance and support during my time in the doctoral program at the University of North Dakota. Most importantly, I want to thank Michael Meyer, the dissertation committee chair, for accepting my request to be my advisor. We had many deep philosophical discussions that went beyond the topic of gangs; you broadened my horizons, my thinking, and especially my understanding of social constructionism. Thank you for all your editorial comments and advising me on my word choices. I am also indebted to committee members Martin Gottschalk and Roni Mayzer who provided much editorial and content feedback. I also want to thank committee members Bruce DiCristina and Glen Olsen for their continued support and feedback during my time as a student. Many thanks also goes to Dorothy Jerik, the backbone of the criminal justice department, for taking all my phone calls, registering me for my classes, and keeping me going from a distance. Lastly, I want to recognize criminal justice faculty member and mentor Wendelin Hume, who began this journey with me and believed that I could accomplish my goals—THANKS so much!

supported me. I would also like to thank Betty Ann Kempf-Townsley from West Chester University (PA) for her support when I needed to step away from the soccer field for a day, or two, to focus on street gangs/films instead of the soccer ball. I also would like to thank all my students from UMC, UND, and MCCC who have endured this long process with me by listening to how my research project was going. Finally, I am most grateful to psychology professor Steve "the Don" Baron of MCCC for his tireless comments, suggestions, and support about this project for the last several years. I am not sure if I will ever be able to repay him for all his feedback, but I will try.

Finally, and most importantly, I want to thank my family. To my wife Michelle who wondered if I would ever come up from my office basement, as I read, wrote, and researched gangs and 'street gang' films. I thank her from the bottom of my heart. Her support was unwavering. And to my son Zachary, who loves the title soundtrack to the film *Colors,* and would say, "good job Daddy." Thanks for being my "little" motivator.

To Mom and Dad

To my wife Michelle and my son Zachary

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the portrayals of street gangs as presented by a select sample of Hollywood films from 1960 to 2009. Using the theoretical framework of social constructionism and cinematic realism, a content analysis of 25 'street gang' films was conducted to (a) determine the comparability of depictions of street gangs in Hollywood films with those characteristics of defining a street gang in the law enforcement and academic literature, (b) identify emergent themes and patterns, including changes over time, and (c) address the representations of realism in the portrayal of street gangs as depicted in films. The films used in the research were selected from a combination of three media sources: (1) references and discussions made about 'street gang' films from the literature, (2) media news reports on gang-related films, and (3) the online categorical lists of 'street gang' films created by *Internet Movie Database* (IMDb) and *All Movie Guide* (AMG).

Based on the content analysis of street gangs portrayed in Hollywood films, 'reel' street gangs resemble many of the characteristics that define 'real' street gangs as suggested by law enforcement officials and the academic literature. In addition, the emergent patterns and themes analyzed from the portrayal of 'street gangs' over a 50 year time-period reveal significant findings that provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between gangs and the media. First, there are changes in the portrayal of race/ethnicity since 1960. Second, street gangs are portrayed as both perpetrators and victims of violence and crime. Third, the producer/directors/writers employed efforts to create an 'authentic' or 'realistic' portrayal of street gangs. Lastly, the majority of the 'street gang' films analyzed in this study were in fact not about street gangs per se but

rather used the film's portrayal of street gangs as a vehicle to tell a broader and more compelling story concerning other universal themes.

The findings lead to a rich understanding of social constructionism and the representations of street gangs in popular film. The implications of this research go beyond the official and academic portrayals of street gangs and to larger sociological implications of how street gangs are constructed in the media and the interpretations of those social constructions.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Research on gangs has been a topic of interest for social scientists since the early 1900s (see Puffer, 1912; Lee, 1915; Fiske, 1910 for early studies on gangs). Today, the interest in the gang phenomenon continues among social scientists, law enforcement officials, and gang experts alike (Howell, 2012; Vigil, 2010; Tobin, 2008; Delaney, 2006; Klein & Maxson, 2006). Studies in mass media are also plentiful, especially those examining the relationship between crime and media (Barkan & Bryjak, 2009; Boyle, 2005; Stevens, 2011; Muraskin & Domash, 2007; Greer, 2010; Jewkes, 2005). An area that has received much less attention is research exploring gangs and the media. Gang research experts Malcolm Klein and Cheryl Maxson (2006) suggested that the portrayal of gangs in the media has not been consistent; in fact, "gangs have not changed much, but their depiction most certainly has" (p. 9).

Through the portrayals of street gangs, the media have contributed to the social construction of street gangs. The media effectively shapes the construct of what a gang is and what its members look and act like. Those images of street gangs ultimately lead to perceptions, labels, and stereotypes. Regardless of how the information on gangs is disseminated, the media contributes in shaping the public's perceptions, descriptions, and understanding of street gangs. According to Sociologist Martin Sanchez-Jankowski (1991), "the sociological consequence is that images have a way of maintaining

1

themselves in the public's mind and in the absence of quality information and analyses, these images have become the primary prisms through which people construct an understanding of social reality" (Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991, p. 302).

Typically, discussions in the academic literature about street gangs in films typically consist of short paragraphs or quick references to a particular 'street gang' film. While the media is regarded as a contributor in providing information about gangs for the public, it is often accused of glorifying and romanticizing the gang culture. Since Hollywood films have become a major source from which the public acquires information about street gangs (Knox, 1999; McCorkle & Miethe, 2002; Hagedorn, 2008), the question of how these street gangs are represented in films is of greater interest for this study. Another question is whether 'street gang' films are contributing to the myth of gangs or if they are producing realistic images.

Klein and Maxson (2006) argued that the public and the media interpret gangs as defined by those advocating the legal (or crime-associated) perspective of street gangs. From the legal perspective, gangs are primarily defined by their criminal actions. The legal perspective also identifies unique characteristics of each gang such as colors (e.g., red, blue), types of crimes (e.g., drive-by shooting, carjacking), tattoos, graffiti, monikers (i.e., nicknames such as Money Mike, Baby Boy), and name (e.g., Hoover Crips, Eight Trey Gangsters). From this definition, though useful for law enforcement officials and policy-makers, the common image of what a street gang looks like and acts like are depicted by the mass media. This constructed definition of a gang by the law enforcement and academia has become the accepted definition for the public.

In the criminal justice and gang literature, there has been little attention given to the influence and/or portrayal of street gangs in films. Criminology/Sociology professor Majid Yar (2010) pointed out that "Within the criminological study of media representations, film has itself been something of a poor relation, lagging well behind studies of factual reportage through newspapers and television" (p. 68-69). Sanchez-Jankowski (1991) had also noted this gap in the literature and offered his insight into the relationship between gangs and the media. Sanchez-Jankowski (1991) briefly discussed a few 'street gang' films (*West Side Story*, *Colors*, *The Warriors,* and *Fort Apache, The Bronx*) noting that gangs are a commodity for the media because stories about gangs generate consumer interest which in turn generates revenue for the media, despite any distortions about the social reality of street gangs. Criminologist Nicole Rafter (2007) suggested that the idea of combining crime and film studies for the purpose of understanding and analyzing relationships is a relatively new approach in criminological research. Moreover, Knox (1999) and Klein and Maxson (2006) recognized the need to further examine the portrayal of gangs in mass media and the gap in the gang literature, specifically films. This depiction, or portrayal of gangs in Hollywood films, is a rich area for study, and thus provides the motivation for this dissertation.

Despite the gap in the literature on gangs and the media, the research is growing with interest in covering topics such as video games (Barrett, 2006), music (Stewart, 2010; Armstrong, 2001; Grant, 2002), the Internet (King, Walpole, & Lamon, 2007; Johnson, 2006), and representations in literature (Durst-Johnson, 2004). Today, street gangs are currently featured or discussed in traditional newspaper articles, on talk shows, on radio/television/cable programs, in books, in magazines, in comic books, in video

3

games, in music, in the academic literature, in films, and on the Internet. All these forms of media are contributors to a broader theoretical proposition known as the social construction of street gangs. Each medium presents its own construction of a street gang by using images, ideas, and language as to what is a gang, who is in a street gang, and where street gangs typically reside. The use of print (books, newspapers), audio (radio), and visual (TV, films) materials help facilitate those images of gangs and their members, leaving consumers with a negative perspective on street gangs. Yet, as media technology changes, representations of street gangs have also changed.

There are a few studies that have examined the portrayal of gangs in films. Those studies have included an examination into white-supremacist gangs (Dessommes, 1999), motorcycle gangs (Osgerby, 2003; Seate, 2000), and Russian organized-crime groups (Rawlinson, 1998). However, most of the attention has been given to the early gangster films of the 1930s and 1940s (Baxter, 1970; Shadoian, 1977, Rosow, 1978; Clarens, 1980; McArthur, 1974; Kaminsky, 1972; Sarris, 1977).   Although representation of street gangs in films has been largely ignored, a few studies have analyzed more modern (post 1960s) portrayal of street gangs in film (see Berman, 1992; Knox, 1999; Przemieniecki, 2005; Clapp, 2007; Edwards, 2011). Other studies that analyzed films depicting street gangs have emphasized a broader sociological understanding of issues such as race-relations and the urban environment (see Winokur, 1995; Massood, 2003; Diawara, 1993).

An analysis of street gangs in Hollywood films generates a number of questions. Are the characteristics that define street gangs by law enforcement and the academic community reflected in Hollywood films? Are the representations of street gangs in

4

Hollywood films supported by the findings in the gang literature? What changes, if any, have occurred in the portrayal of street gangs in films from 1960 to 2009? What common themes arise when analyzing 'street gang' films? These are some of the questions that comprise the basis for exploring the portrayal of street gangs in Hollywood films.

This study is intended to add to the literature on gangs in the mass media, specifically films. However, unlike previous studies, this descriptive qualitative analysis aims for depth and breadth by examining the common themes, patterns, and characteristics of selected 'street gang' films and the similarities between the 'real' street gangs in American communities and the 'reel' gangs portrayed in Hollywood films.

Organization of the Chapters

This dissertation is comprised of six chapters and follows the approach of a sociological film analysis as suggested by sociologist/criminologist Jean-Anne Sutherland and Kathryn Feltey (2010). Chapter I introduces the need to explore the portrayal of 'street gangs' in Hollywood films. It asks a number of questions relating to 'real' street gangs and the 'street gangs' depicted in Hollywood films. Chapter II consists of a theoretical overview of social constructionism and cinematic realism. Chapter III explores the literature on the definitions of street gangs and the challenges of defining a gang, research related to gang films, a history of Hollywood gang-related films from the early 1900s to today, and the differences between 'gangster' films and 'street gang' films. It also provides an overview of gangs and the mass media with numerous examples. Chapter IV provides the methodological design of this study, including the sampling procedure, final selection of the films, and limitations/delimitations for this study.

5

Chapter V provides the results and analyzes, discusses, and interprets the data, themes, patterns, and characteristics found in the selected films. Chapter VI provides a discussion and conclusion. It also offers recommendations for future studies related to gangs and films. Various figures, tables and appendices are included to assist the reader and to provide the necessary supporting material for the data collected.

CHAPTER II

THE THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS:
SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM AND CINEMATIC REALISM

The media is a source whereby information about events, people, and phenomena is recorded, disseminated, and often interpreted by the public. Media messages, particularly images, often influence our ideals, values, and beliefs and affect how we interpret/perceive a singular event, individuals and/or groups, and the world around us. Today, one of the most powerful and influential types of media is film (Campbell, Martin, & Fabos, 2009). The existing academic literature examining films has included introductory film texts (Prince, 2010; Nichols, 2010; Nowell-Smith, 2000), anthologies (Geiger & Rutsky, 2005; Mast, Cohen, & Braudy, 1992), and theoretical interpretations (Andrew, 1976; Hallam & Marshment, 2000; Armstrong, 2005). As a medium, films express meanings, but it also is subject to interpretation by viewers. Films represent a collaborative function between the art of film making and the business of making a film (Prince, 2010).   Film studies go beyond the film making process of set design, lighting, props, dialogue, costumes, and make-up. There is also considerable discussion in the literature as to the influence of films on individuals and/or groups. Research on the effects, or influence, of a film's image or message has been discussed in studies involving juvenile delinquency (Snyder, 1991, 1995a, 1995b), crime (Jewkes, 2005), violence (Freedman, 2006; Best, 1999; Young, 2009; Slocum, 2001), policing (Crawford, 1999),

7

the law (Greenfield, Osborn, & Robson, 2010; Boyle, 2005), prison life (Bennett, 2006; Mason, 2006; Wilson & O'Sullivan, 2004), and attitudes and perceptions about gangs (Wiese & Cole, 1946; Swetnam & Pope, 2001; Fox & Lane, 2010).

The images displayed by the media often affect perceptions of reality. According to film scholar James Monaco (2000), "movies reflect our society, but also mold our view of it. A film validates reality but it also changes how audiences perceive what is real" (Monaco, 2000, preface). Monaco (2000) also suggested that "movies amplify certain aspects of our culture while attenuating others" (p. 125). Other film scholars such as Bell Hooks (1996) claimed that films provide a shared experience when viewing a movie and that those images projected on the screen capture our attention.

Since film is a powerful medium, an examination into the portrayals of street gangs in Hollywood motion pictures is the primary focus of this study. Critical to our perception about images of street gangs is how street gangs are portrayed in those films. The more those portrayals are replicated in other films, the more likely viewers will come to accept those portrayals as an accurate representation. It is those representations that ultimately lead to stereotypes and labels (Swan, Meskill, & DeMaio, 1998). In this context, films play an integral role in the construction of street gangs. However, the basis of social constructionism is not limited to how movies depict street gangs for audiences but also how the academic literature serves as a separate construction to the understanding of street gangs, and how consumers socially construct the reality of street gangs.

The informing theoretical perspectives that guide this study are social constructionism and cinematic realism. Social constructionism is rooted in the field of

8

sociology and is aimed at explaining how meanings are constructed and interpreted from people's social interactions. Cinematic realism, a film and film criticism theory, is aimed at recreating social reality through the lens of a camera. The idea behind cinematic realism is to make a film that looks and feels 'real' to audiences. This chapter presents the theoretical backgrounds to social constructionism and cinematic realism, and discusses how these theories are used in the study of street gangs in films.

Theory of Social Constructionism

Social constructionism is a theoretical construct that focuses on knowledge, understanding, and social relationships (i.e., interactions) that can change or shape the meaning of how people perceive a symbol, an event, or social phenomenon. Social constructionism begins with the assumption that social reality is constructed and knowledge is constructed through societal relations such as language, family, and culture (Hoffman, 1990). Coming from a broader theoretical understanding of the sociology of knowledge and how one comes to know something, social constructionism draws its ideas from sociology, philosophy, and linguistics (Burr, 2003). It was social philosophers Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) who established the theoretical framework for social constructionism in their seminal work, *The Social Construction of Reality*. Berger and Luckmann (1966) suggested that reality is constructed by everyday social interactions through a system of social, cultural, and interpersonal processes. Influenced primarily by the phenomenological work of philosopher Alfred Schultz, Berger and Luckmann's (1966) treatise on the social construction of reality was also influenced by the works of Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Edmond Husserl, Karl

Mannheim, and Michel Foucault (Lock & Strong, 2010). Though social constructionism was popularized by Berger and Luckmann (1966), they were not the first to use the term. The term 'social construction' first appeared in a 1905 article entitled, "Evolution of Social Structure" by Sociologist Lester Ward. Ward, the first president of the American Sociological Association, stated that "a structure is something that has been constructed, and a study of social structure is the study of a process and not a product. Our task, therefore is …to inquire into the methods of social construction" (Ward, 1905, p. 589). This theory is used to examine the representation of street gangs portrayed in Hollywood films.

According to Surette (2011), social constructionism is built on four sources of knowledge that people acquire: personal experiences, human relationships (such as family and friends), institutional relationships (such as school, church, and government), and the media (such as news, literature, and film). These four sources "focus on human relationships and the way relationships affect how people perceive reality" (Surette, 2011, p. 30). While these sources of knowledge are important, Surette (2011) contended that, "In addition to personal experiences, we also learn and define reality from the experiences of others, and to a considerable extent, from the portrayals found in the media" (p. 30).

Social psychologist Kenneth Gergen (2009) explained social constructionism as a perspective that emphasizes discourse between self, the world, and the ensuing relationships between the two. According to Gergen (2009), there are four major assumptions of social constructionism: (1) understanding our social world is determined by concepts, categories, and methods, and any word that is used to describe a

phenomenon, an event, a group or ourselves (e.g., 'street gang,' 'criminal gang,' 'youth gang,' 'crew,' 'posse'); (2) the meaning and connotations of language and other forms of representations vary considerably over time and across different cultures (e.g., the concepts and categories of street gangs); (3) as concepts, categories and/or definitions are described, explained and represented, they gain in popularity and thus become more useful, especially for those needing to exploit their usefulness (e.g., police, policy-makers, and writers of criminal statutes); and (4) interpreting the meanings of concepts, categories and/or definitions ultimately has consequences (i.e., an impact on perceived reality).

Social constructionism assumes that reality is the product of social process (Neuman, 2003). Social reality is what people construct by what they hear, see, or read. Reality, according to Surette (2011) is based on personal experiences and knowledge acquired through social interactions. Surette (2011) also stated that there are three types of social construction theory: experimental reality, symbolic reality, and socially constructed reality. Socially constructed reality is a combination of experimental and symbolic reality, and this is what "is perceived as the 'real'" (Surette, 2011, p. 32).

From a social constructionist perspective, the media (especially film) have a lot to do with shaping how crime and justice are portrayed. As Rafter (2006) noted, "crime films reflect our ideas about fundamental social, economic, and political issues while, at the same time, they shape the ways we think about these issues" (p. 3). Welsh, Flemming, and Dowler (2011) suggested that "the meanings the film attaches to crime, criminality, and justice are ambiguous and, ultimately, challenge viewers" (p 458). Thus

11

examining the portrayal of street gangs in Hollywood films from the social constructionist's perspective is particularly relevant for this study.

Theories Related to Social Reality

Three other theories within the scheme of social constructionism, worth mentioning because of their examination into the perceptions of reality, are Richard Quinney's social reality of crime, Serge Moscovici's social representation theory, and George Gerbner and Larry Gross' cultivation theory. Quinney (2001) maintained that conflict is rooted in the competition for power and that the perception of crime and its definitions are dictated by those in powerful positions. In his "six propositions" on the social reality of crime, Quinney (2001) explained that "the social reality of crime is constructed by the formulation and application of criminal definitions, the development of behavior patterns to criminal definitions, and the construction of criminal conceptions" (p. 23).

Social representation theory, a less popular but valuable theoretical model for its usefulness in investigating media representations (Hoijer, 2011), suggests that the critical elements to social reality are how meanings are employed, interpreted, and represented. Developed and coined by Serge Moscovici in 1961, this theory argued that definitions, images, and representations are social constructions, and ultimately become a part of public discourse. Social representation theory is the result of a social construction. Furthermore, when individuals have shared meanings, this constitutes a social reality of the phenomenon observed (Moscovici, 1984).

Lastly, cultivation theory posits that the prevalence of images and violence in the media reflects viewers' conceptions of social reality (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980). Gerbner and Gross' (1976) intense study on violent themes, images, and depictions in television programs concluded that, by watching television, individuals construct the world as a dangerous place and believe that what is viewed on television is a snapshot of reality.

Social Constructionism and Gangs

There are several studies that use social constructionism within the context of criminal justice-related issues (e.g., Jenkins, 1994; Jacobs & Henry, 1996; Archbold & Meyer, 1999; Yar, 2005; Rawlinson, 1998), but few sources specifically examine the social construction of gangs. Two notable research studies that utilized social constructionism as the theoretical basis for their research were Richard McCorkle and Terance Miethe's (2002) *Social Construction of the Street Gang Problem* and Dennis Rome's (2004) study on *The Media's Depiction of the African-American Male Criminal Stereotype.*

In McCorkle and Miethe's (2002) study, the authors concluded that the street gang problem in Nevada, though limited in scope, was a moral panic and there was "little question that gang members have been portrayed as modern day 'folk devils' in order to sell papers, attract viewers, increase police payrolls, secure federal funds, and win elections" (p. 217). The authors noted that the social construction of street gangs can lead to moral panics. When the media characterizes gangs as violent, criminal, and a social problem, the threat is perceived as 'real.'

13

Sociologist Stanley Cohen (1972) coined the term 'moral panic' in his study of two groups of adolescents—the Mods and the Rockers. Cohen (1972) found that the media exaggerated the groups' confrontations with each other resulting in the belief that these two groups were far more menacing than they were in reality. The implications of Cohen's study are relevant to the findings suggested by McCorkle and Miethe (2002) on the perceived gang problem in the Nevada. Other studies on 'moral panics' and gangs have reached similar conclusions. Welch, Price, and Yankey (2002) pointed out that media characterizations of 'wilding' groups in New York City as gangs fueled a panic. Similarly, Zatz (1987) showed how the perception of Chicano gangs categorized as 'violent fighting gangs' in the media created a moral panic with residents in Phoenix, Arizona. Springhall (1998) determined that many of the crime/gangster films of the 1930s fueled a 'moral panic' leading state film boards to censor gangster films and resulted in the creation of the Hays Code for Hollywood motion pictures.

Rome (2004), on the other hand, outlined the dangers of how the media presents African-American males in movies, television, news articles, and music. According to Rome (2004), young black males are viewed as criminals or 'Black Demons.' This portrayal is driven not by a moral panic created by the media but by a stereotype that has perpetuated our beliefs as to the type of people blacks are in society. While Rome (2004) agreed that many blacks (e.g., musicians, actors, and film directors) helped perpetuate the negative image of their own race by portraying gang members as violent criminals in films and/or television, he asserted that this portrayal was a far cry from reality. In fact, Rome (2004) argued that this portrayal is not a moral panic because the public continues

14

to purchase, watch, and listen to the negative images presented by the mass media of young black males who are often associated with crime, violence and gangs.

Another study that focused on the social construction of gangs was Ezeonu's (2008) study of gun violence and gangs in black neighborhoods in Toronto. Respondents in this study expressed concern for how the media presents the problem of guns as the result of gang activity. In addition, respondents expressed their beliefs that the gang problem was a young black male problem which reinforced the negative stereotypes about blacks. Ezeonu (2008) also pointed out that visual portrayals of violence in television and movies are the "easiest ways to socialize youths to glamorize violence and the use of guns" (p. 208). Respondents of the study also associated the 'gangsta image' with 'gangsta rap' music and the negative images presented by Black Entertainment Television (B.E.T.), Music Television (MTV), and other media formats, as contributing factors to the social construction of gangs.

While Rome (2004) and Ezeonu (2008) primarily referenced males in their examples of the social construction of gangs, Smith-Shomade (2003) presented a constructionist view about the roles of black females in gang films. Prior to the 1990s, women portrayed in typical gang films were secondary characters. However, by the 1990s, black women became central figures in the gangster films and the black cultural norms of the hip-hop 'gangsta' films (Smith-Shomade, 2003). According to Smith-Shomade (2003), the difference between a typical urban-crime gang films such as *Boyz N the Hood* and a hip-hop 'gangsta' film such as *Set It Off* was the inclusion of black women playing a more central role in the films. Smith-Shomade (2003) suggested that early films portrayed black women negatively (as helpless girlfriends or junkies), but in

the last 20 years, black female characters are now represented as progressive and fierce. For example, in *New Jack City,* a female is portrayed as the gang's enforcer, and instead of portraying the role of a passive submissive girlfriend or drug addict, she executes those who threaten the gang.

The theory of social constructionism is important to the foundation of this study because it fosters an examination into the multiple representations of the street gang phenomenon in the media. The representations of street gangs in films, newspapers, and the academic literature are all independent social constructions that offer a perspective of what is a street gang.

In films, imagery is important in the construction of a street gang, but the social surroundings, the context of the dialogue, and the personality of the characters contribute to constructing a 'realistic' film about street gangs. Thus, cinematic realism, a theoretical construct applied to film analysis, is an extension, and a part of the process of social constructionism.

Film Theory

A foundation for understanding films is film theory. Film theory is aimed at exploring the phenomenon of making motion pictures, but it also examines the conceptual frameworks of how films relate to society, individuals, culture, politics, and other aesthetic perspectives. According to Prince (2010), film theory is a "systematic attempt to think about the nature of cinema: What it is as a medium, how it works, how it embodies meaning for viewers, and what kind of meanings it embodies" (p. 286). Some

of the key scholarly journals that explore films and theory are *Film Quarterly, Cinema Journal, Screen*, and *Wide Angle*.

One of the most well-known theories in film studies is 'auteur theory.' Auteur theory, though often viewed as a critical method and not a theory (see Andrew, 1976), explores the personal views of a director in film making. Other types of film theories include cinematic time, psychoanalytical, feminist, Marxist, structuralist, contemporary, semiotic, genre, and cinematic realism or realist models (Andrew, 1976; Glendhill & Williams, 2000; Mast, Cohen, & Braudy, 1992).

Film theory is not a singular concept that easily explains the dynamics of films. Instead, film theory is a complex set of interpretations that encompasses many ideas (Glendhill & Williams, 2000). The film journal *Screen* defined film theory as "addressing three distinct but overlapping problems: the relation of the film to the world it represents; the internal organization of filmic discourses, and the reception of the film by the spectator" (see Nowell-Smith, 2000, p. 8). Early methodological approaches for investigating those problems in film theory were derived from historical materialism, semiotics, and psychoanalysis. However, Nowell-Smith (2000) argued that while these theoretical propositions have been vigorously contested, and ultimately abandoned, the central focus of modern film theory today lies in the representation and meaning of a film.

Genre

As with any discussion of films and film theory, an examination of what is a genre is an ongoing debate among film scholars and critics. 'Genre' is a French word that means 'type' or 'kind,' thus suggesting some ambiguity for creating a precise

17

definition (Neale, 2008).   Defining a film genre is complex and it requires "thinking of genres as ubiquitous, multifaceted phenomena rather than as one-dimensional entities to be found only within the realms of Hollywood cinema" (Neale, 2008, p. 28).   According to Neale (2008), there has been considerable debate among film scholars and critics as to the various types of genres in film today.   Some of these genres include film noir, melodramas, westerns, war films, comedies, horror films, science-fiction films, musicals, animated films, biopics, action-adventure films, crime films, detective/gangster films, teenpics, social problem films, and epic films.   Neale (2008) suggested that films, and the many types of genres that a film is categorized by, are best described as "hybrid and multi-generic" (p. 51).   Neale's (2008) explanation of genre refers to a multi-dimensional approach in understanding a genre and is contingent on audience expectations, the construction of those images, and how films are categorized.

Genres are also defined as simple taxonomies (Ryall, 1998).   Films are allocated or categorized within a certain genre because of a film's resemblance to other previously produced films with similar content.   McArthur (1974) explained that what distinguishes, and ultimately defines a genre or film type, is the visual element that suggests resemblance to what is to be expected in the film.   For example, gangsters have guns, women, money, and a certain style of dress.   A musical will have dancing and singing.   A horror film will have monsters, or some other visual image that is designed by the director to scare audiences.   These specific images help define and shape the type of film in a particular genre.   These images also validate the realism in a film from the viewer's perspective.

One of the most popular genres in the film industry is crime films (Leitch, 2002). The crime film genre explores many types of crime and justice themes, often referred as subgenres, such as detective/police work, prison life, the judicial/legal process, and gangster/street gang films. While many film scholars have agreed that film genres are a good way to classify or identify a film (Clarens, 1980; Mason, 2002; Slocum, 2001; Shadoian, 1977), others argued that some film types such as crime films "do not belong to any genre…. Instead, [they] embody many genres" (Langman & Finn, 1995, p. ix).

<div align="center">Realism</div>

The other theoretical concept that is central to this study on the portrayal of street gangs in Hollywood films is cinematic realism. Realism is a broad concept that derives its roots from Aristole's *Poetics* where the philosopher suggested that art imitates nature (see Mast, Cohen, & Braudy, 1992). The idea of realism has been discussed in paintings, literature, drama, photography, and film. According to film scholar Bill Nichols (2010), "realism…constructs a cinematic world that bears strong resemblance to the world with which viewers are already familiar" (p. 86). While there has been considerable debate about realism and its changes over the decades (e.g., realist movements), film theorists agreed that a basic understanding of realism entails examining the complex relationship between images, appearances, and reality (Armstrong, 2005; Hallam & Marshment, 2000; Andrew, 1976).

Realism arose during the height of the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century, and offered graphic representations to the new world of commerce, industry, urban growth, and images of the working and middle class (Nichols, 2010). Realism, as

a form of art, represents everyday life. The intent is to describe and depict how the world exists in any given medium. For example, images that are depicted in film are a reflection of those same images society sees in everyday reality.

Nichols (2010) explained that there are two types of realism in film: formal and social. In formal realism, a film presents a story as unobtrusive so that the narrative, or storytelling, is the focus, and audiences accept those images in the film. Science-fiction, horror, and musicals are films that are not often deemed as realistic, but realism can exist because "the story unfolds effortlessly, as if propelled by nothing more than the actions of the characters themselves…this, in turn, encourages viewers to make an emotional investment in the situations and events, characters and actions that unfold in this unfamiliar space" (Nichols, 2010, p. 177). An example of this type of fantasy realism that Nichols (2010) referred to is presented in *West Side Story,* a musical and 'street gang' film. While the story surrounds two youth street gangs and the challenges they face – a realistic view, it is their violent encounters with each other that are not interpreted as realistic because the street fights are choreographed dancing routines rather than a traditional street gang fight. Nonetheless, the storyline, the characters, and the fact that the film is a musical, transforms audiences into accepting this film as a film about street gangs with the added component of being a musical.

In contrast to fantasy realism, social realism in film, as Nichols (2010) suggested, departs from the magical, mythical, and musical, and more successfully depicts the everyday life of those from the lower, working, and middle-class. Social realism depicts the world as we, the audience, see everyday life and experience it. Social realism in films also tends to focus on issues of poverty, injustice, and crime.

20

Realism relies not only on the images depicted by the director and screenwriter of the film but also on how the audience interprets the film. Without an audience to connect with the reality of what is observed and expected in a film, then realism is not achieved. An element that is contingent on audience expectations of a film is verisimilitude, which comes from the Latin root words *vernum* meaning 'truth' and *similis* meaning 'similar' (http://www.dictionary.com, 2012). Verisimilitude is the appearance of truth—or the likeness of what appears to be real—to which audiences relate.

According to Todorov (1981), there are two basic types of verisimilitude: generic and social/cultural. Generic verisimilitude refers to the 'rules of the genre' (p. 118). In making a film, there are certain expectations or rules about how to display images to audiences—whether the film is about war, a musical, or even science-fiction, the film should encompass verisimilitude. In other words, a war film should have guns, tanks, bombs, and soldiers and a musical should incorporate singing and dancing. Failure to conform to these rules violates the genre. Social/cultural verisimilitude is more frequently related to social reality and cinematic neo-realism. As Aristotle suggested, verisimilitude is "what readers believe is true" (Todorov, 1981, p. 119). Neale (2008) pointed out that the social/cultural verisimilitude in gangster films has drawn on newspaper headlines, memoirs, and other discourses in order to authenticate the film's story. This authenticity becomes an important element in connecting realism with 'street gang' films.

Cinematic Realism

As a prominent aspect in art, realism applies to many different types of arts, literature and paintings. In its application to films, cinematic realism is an approach this

www.manaraa.com

study employs in order to analyze the construction of street gangs in Hollywood films. With respect to making films, "cinematic realism refers to the verisimilitude of a film, to the believability of its characters and events" (http://www.filmreference.com/Realism, 2012) and depicts real objects and real experiences in film. Film scholar/critic Richard Armstrong (2005) argued that cinematic realism is "as much about representation as it is about reality" (p. 1). One of the earliest accounts of cinematic realism was suggested by film theorist Rudolph Arnheim who wrote that when images in film and images in reality become indistinguishable, this is known as "the mechanical imitation of nature" (http://www.filmreference.com/Theories of Realism, 2012; see also Mast, Cohen, & Braudy, 1992). The scholar and critic most often associated with cinematic realism is French film theorist Andre Bazin. Bazin argued that films depict an "objective reality" and that the director of a film should minimize the artificial elements of film making such as props and set-designs and use more natural setting (i.e., streets, alleyways) and non-professional actors to represent the images as seen in the 'real' world (Gledhill & Williams, 2000). In other words, cinematic realism is representing the world as we perceive it.

However, not all scholars have agreed with this concept of cinematic realism. Film scholar Christian Mertz (1974), a follower of semiotic theory, argued that realism and the images on screen are nothing more than an illusion (see also Mast, Cohen, & Braudy, 1992). Armstrong (2005) argued that realism is actually a representation of the 'real' thing, and not the 'real' thing itself. Since audiences are seeing images through a camera lens, what is perceived to be 'real' is actually what is being represented. It is important to note that Armstrong (2005) was not suggesting that realism does not exist.

In fact, it is quite the opposite. Instead realism "depends upon the industrial context, in which it was made, the cultural context in which it was received, and you and me as members of the audience" (Armstrong, 2005, p. x).

Cinematic realism is also referred to as a stylistic movement in film making. One of the first films to record 'real' events as they happened was in 1895 of workers leaving a factory called *Workers Leaving The Lumière Factory in Lyon* [also known as *La Sortie des usines Lumière à Lyon* (original title)]. The film showed the daily grind and grittiness of life in a factory. Armstrong (2005) argued that even when things appear far-fetched in a film, provided that the social surroundings are recognizable to the audience, employing cinematic realism creates a sense of realism in the film. An example of this would be the film audience's acceptance of dancing during gang fights in *West Side Story* and of some of the eccentric gangs portrayed in *The Warriors*, and the violence depicted in *Gangs of New York*.

Cinematic realism is most closely associated with the Italian neo-realism movement in film making (Brunette, 1985; Hallam & Marshment, 2000; Armstrong, 2005). The Italian neo-realism film style was developed after World War II. Once Italian dictator Mussolini's fascist regime collapsed, film directors were able to show the 'realities' of everyday life in Italy. Film-makers explored issues of poverty, the hardships of life, deplorable living conditions, and hopelessness in their films. It was a period when film makers focused more on the characteristics of background images than on the main character. Neo-realist film makers wanted to "show the world as it really is" (Armstrong, 2005, p. 71).

Other types of cinematic realist movements or traditions in film making have included French realism, British social realism, Hindi realism, Iranian cinema, Independent films, and Mockumentary and Documentary films (Armstrong, 2005). French realism was developed in the 1960s, but the idea of showing realistic images dates back to the late 1800s (Armstrong, 2005). French realism is also known as *cinema verite,* which means 'film truth' (McConnell, 1999; Issari & Paul, 1979). *Cinema verite* is where French filmmakers use unobtrusive cameras (i.e., small hand-held cameras), shoot their scenes on location, and use non-professional actors to convey a realistic appearance for viewers. The goal of the filmmaker is to show life as it really is, being observed by people every day. French realist filmmakers are also responsible for developing documentaries as a unique style in filmmaking (McConnell, 1999; Armstrong, 2005; Issari & Paul, 1979).

Hindi realism was introduced in the 1940s and had considerable success with films showing the disparity between the rich and the poor (Armstrong, 2005). British social realism was expressed in the 1950s and 1960s with its emphasis on the working class (Armstrong, 2005). British cinematic realism focused on social issues and problems such as money, drugs, crime, youth behaviors, prostitution, and sex, class, religion and political differences (Armstrong, 2005; Seino, 2010). Iranian cinematic realism began to develop in the 1990s with directors focused on "economic hardships, natural disasters, crime, and religious and gender oppression" (Armstrong, 2005, p. 84).

Independent, mockumentary, and documentary films are other styles in filmmaking that reflect cinematic realism. Independent (i.e., Indie) films are not produced by major Hollywood studios but rather by small startup companies or are

financed by private donors. Indie films also cost significantly less to make, and give directors more creative freedom to shoot the film with their own vision in mind rather than the studio's (Armstrong, 2005).

A mockumentary (i.e., faux documentary) film is similar to a documentary, but all the events, depictions, and representations in the film are falsified. Though mockumentaries are a far stretch from reality, it is the realistic style of filming, such as the use of interviews, voice-overs, use of real locations, and archival footage that leaves viewers with a sense that the images are in fact real (Prince, 2010; Armstrong, 2005).

Lastly, documentaries are made to inform and educate audiences. Documentaries reflect the actualities of the real world rather than reconstructing the images of the real world on the screen (Nichols, 2010). Documentaries are meant to reflect reality, without interference from the filmmaker. However, occasionally, reconstructions are necessary to show the audience the 'realism' of an event and sometimes directors rearrange, dictate, and manipulate the images in a film and its characters. This type of film editing is tantamount to violating the ethics of documentary film (Prince, 2010). Examples of documentary realism for 'street gang' films are *Hood 2 Hood* (2005) and *Crips and Bloods: Made in America* (2009). These films are also called 'gangsploitation' films because they tend to accentuate and glorify the gang lifestyle through film (Gunckel, 2007).

While those international stylistic approaches of cinematic realism have been important for filmmakers to show the images of the 'real' world, Prince (2010) explained that there are three broad categories of realism in films, which are ordinary fictional realism, historical realism, and documentary realism. Ordinary fictional realism

25

"employs an audiovisual and narrative design that aims to replicate on screen, with a fair degree of resemblance, the spectator's understandings of space, time, causality, and the dynamics of human behavior" (Prince, 2010, p. 342). 'Street gang' films such as *Colors* (1988), *Boyz N the Hood* (1991), *Menace II Society* (1993), *Mi Vida Loca* (1993), *Havoc* (2006) and *Gran Torino* (2008) are examples of ordinary fictional realism.

Historical realism attempts to authenticate the images of a different time period in history. The film maker must research everything about that era—the nuances of language, attitudes, and social norms of people, in addition to duplicating that era in the set designs, costumes, and surrounding environment (Prince, 2010). An example of this type of historical realism is Martin Scorsese's *Gangs of New York* (2002), and Phillip Kaufman's portrayal of New York street gangs in the 1950s.

Finally, documentary realism is a style of filmmaking in which the events taking place in the film are independent of the camera recording the event for the film. First, audiences assume that the events depicted on film are not of the director's manipulation but in fact real people, places, and objects. Second, the "absence of fictionalized" elements such as actors, props, and narrative structure further validates the film as 'authentic' and realistic (Prince, 2010, p. 299). While no documentaries were examined in this study, examples of this style of realism include *Street War Stories (2006), Slippin' (2005), Gangbangin' Fo' Life (*2006), and *Hood-2-Hood* (2006).

Cinematic Realism in 'Street Gang' Films

The literature discussing cinematic realism and street gangs in Hollywood films is minimal. When cinematic realism is discussed in the academic literature, it is often

26

referenced with the rise of the black urban-crime films of the late 1980s and 1990s (Diawara, 1993; Rome, 2004; Giroux, 1995; Massood, 1996; Hallman & Marshment, 2000). In those few studies, the 'street gang' films were commonly described, primarily by the news media, as black urban 'hood' films (Rome, 2004; Massood, 1996; Diawara, 1993; Macek, 2006; Guerrero, 2010). These films typically include *Boyz N the Hood* (1991), *Menace II Society* (1993), *Do the Right Thing* (1989), *Straight Out of Brooklyn* (1991), *Juice* (1992), and *New Jack City* (1991). With the exception of *New Jack City*, most of these films are classified as 'cross-over' films and/or 'coming-of-age' films, which reflect the life of young black males in the ghetto (Hallman & Marshment, 2000; Guerrero, 2002; Kitwana, 2002).

Hallman and Marshment (2000) characterized the African-American cinema of the early 1990s as violent depictions of life in the ghetto. The authors noted that these films were socially and politically prevalent during the 1990s, and addressed critical issues such as poverty, crime, violence, gangs, drugs, police relations, racism, social mobility, and marginalization.

Film scholar/theorist Matthias Diawara (1993) suggested that many of the African-American films from the 1990s were the "New Black Realism" in film making (p. 23-25). The reality of those films was depicting young black males deciding between the gang/hip hop lifestyle and an education. For Diawara (1993) realism "imitates the existent reality of urban life in America," where the life of a young black male in an urban setting going from childhood to manhood results in a potentially dangerous outcome. This dangerous outcome "leads to death both in reality and in film" (Diawara, 1993, p. 427). Diawara (1993) also pointed out that the directors of *Boyz N the Hood,*

27

Straight Out of Brooklyn, and *Menace II Society*, who are all African-Americans, intended to show audiences the constant police presence in neighborhoods; this constant surveillance is no different than Foucault's panopticon (cited in Hallam & Marshment, 2000).

Film scholar Ed Guerrero (2010) examined contemporary black screen violence, and in particular, the 'hood-homeboy' films of the 1990s. Guerrero (2010) argued that *Boyz n the Hood* and *Menace II Society* were making political and social statements about life for young black males but through the depictions of chaotic, destructive and violent images. According to Guerrero (2010), the most salient political points were failed affirmative action policies and the lack of social progress by blacks. As neighborhoods were infested with drugs, crime, and violence, they were contained by the police departments. With violence as a central feature to these urban black youth films, a question of realism became the focal point, in particular for the Hughes Brothers' *Menace II Society*. While *Boyz N the Hood* offered hope at the end of the film, *Menace II Society* countered those representations of life in the ghetto by presenting images of despair and hopelessness further trapping individuals in a vicious cycle of violence.

Another film scholar, Henry Giroux (1995) argued that the 'reality' of the images depicted by the media and film industry with respect to 'real' life becomes blurred in the representations of black youth in America. According to Giroux (1995) films that depict the perceived 'realistic' portrayals of the urban ghetto life inevitably produce stereotypes. While representations of violence, depression, and welfare of those living in the ghetto may provide viewers with a snapshot of the economic, political and social problems that

28

individuals face in an urban setting, this does not imply that the representations of black-on-black violence is not real, in fact, quite the contrary.

The 'realistic' portrayals of street gangs in films are typically a cause for concern, especially for law enforcement. For example, in Los Angeles, local authorities expressed their concern when *Colors* was released in 1988. A *Los Angeles Times* (1988) article titled "*Street Gang Film 'Too Realistic,'*" stated that "life could imitate art, resulting in outbreaks of gang violence." The then-Los Angeles County sheriff Sgt. Wes McBride and president of the California Gang Investigators Association was quoted as saying, "We'll be sorry that movie was ever made. It's going to leave dead bodies from one end of this town to the other." Of course this dire prediction never came about; instead the article, and McBride's comments, added fuel to the social constructionist perspective of how terrible street gangs are to communities and reinforced the belief that this film would contribute to the already on-going violence in Los Angeles.

Finally, film scholar Paula Massood (1996) claimed that the 'hood' films that followed *Boyz n the Hood* would not have gained popularity as they did if the representations of young black males in the ghetto had not had some truth to them (i.e., verisimilitude). Meanwhile, Edwards (2011) argued that films like *Menace II Society* and *Juice,* released after *Boyz N the Hood*, featured a "new and grittier realism" that those previous films about young black males in an urban environment did not portray (np). Edwards (2011) also suggested that *Menace II Society* was the cinematic high-point in depicting the 'gangsta' lifestyle in the 'hood' films of the 1990s.

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW:
STREET GANGS, the MEDIA and HOLLYWOOD FILMS

This chapter focuses on a literature review of six topics relevant to the study's discussion on the portrayal of street gangs in Hollywood films: (1) defining a street gang; (2) the common characteristics that represent street gangs and its members; (3) a brief overview of the representation of gangs in various forms of media; (4) research related specifically to Hollywood gang films; (5) the history of gang-related films; and (6) the differences between 'gangster' films and 'street gang' films. By utilizing those topics as a foundation for this study, one can examine the representations and images of street gangs in films and determine how close those images of 'reel' street gangs are to the definitions and characteristics of 'real' street gangs.

Definitions of Gangs/Street Gangs

The definition of a gang, although it can vary, is suggested by law enforcement officials (Savelli, 2006; Jackson & McBride, 1996; Christensen, 1999; Valentine, 1995; Valdez, 2005a), state criminal statutes (see Gilbertson & Malinski, 2005), and gang researchers (Thrasher, 1927; Hagedorn, 1988; Spergel, 1995; Yablonsky, 1997; Delaney, 2006; Tobin, 2008; Miller, 1980; Klein, 1971; Klein & Maxson, 2006). Defining a gang largely depends on who is asking what a gang is.

30

In 1964, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart wrote in his concurring

opinion in *Jacobellis v. Ohio* [378 US 184], "I know it when I see it," when referring to

the difficulty of defining 'hard-core pornography.' The challenge of defining a gang can

be said to have the same difficulty. In 2000, the North Carolina Criminal Justice

Analysis Center's study on street gangs addressed the challenge of defining a gang with

such statements as "nobody knows," "depends on who you ask," "whatever you think it

is," and most profoundly, "I know one when I see it" (Yearwood & Hayes, 2000, p. 1).

With statements such as these, it is evident that defining a gang is a challenge for

academics, criminal justice professionals, and the public. Anthropologist and gang

researcher Walter Miller (2001) stated that "how to define a youth gang is one of the

most contentious issues in the field of youth crime" (p. 7).

The problems in defining a gang have generated considerable debate in the

academic literature (Wood & Alleyne, 2010; Klein, 2007; Bursik & Grasmick, 2006;

Esbensen, Winfree, He, & Taylor, 2001; Ball & Curry, 1995; Horowitz, 1990; Decker &

Kempf-Leonard, 1991). According to Esbensen et al. (2001), "gang research in the

United States suffers from definitional shortcomings" (p. 105), and this lack of consensus

creates problems for social researchers trying to measure, operationalize, make

comparative analyses, and replicate studies. According to some researchers, a universal

and precise definition would better reflect the nature and extent of the gang problem in

the United States (Klein, 2007; Egley, Maxson, Miller, & Klein, 2006; Klein, Kerner,

Maxson, & Weitekamp, 2001; Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993; Klein & Maxson, 1989;

2006). By employing a precise definition of a gang, researchers could provide more

reliable statistics and make better statistical comparisons between cities and states

31

(Decker & Kempf-Leonard, 1991). A precise definition would also enable researchers, public officials, legal scholars, and communities to have a clearer understanding of what is and is not a gang.

In contrast, other academic researchers argue that flexibility in defining a gang is more important than a precise, or universal, definition. Sociologist Ruth Horowitz (1990) pointed out that keeping definitions unrestricted would foster a debate and articulate variations in assessing gangs and gang behavior. Other gang researchers have criticized the search for the 'correct' definition because law enforcement, social scientists, policy-makers, and even gang members themselves define gangs to suit themselves (Greenan, Britz, Rush, & Barker, 2000; Peterson, 2004; Conley, 1993). Peterson (2004) stated that a universal definition is not necessary, while Zatz (1985) argued that a universal definition will only create problems such as labeling a gang and its members inappropriately.

There are two perspectives that suggest the definition of a gang: the legal/crime perspective and the academic/group perspective. From the legal/crime perspective, gangs are made of individuals belonging to groups who commit crimes and are often identified by their unique characteristics. Researchers who prefer this approach find that their definitions are often utilized by law enforcement officials and policy-makers, and implemented in state criminal codes (Klein, 1971; Miller, 1975; 1980). From the group perspective, gangs are observed as a group phenomenon. The emphasis for the group perspective is the social dynamics of how the group (i.e., gang) functions, operates, and interacts.

32

Defining gangs from the group perspective was the primary focus for gang researchers prior to the 1970s. However, in 1971, gang expert and researcher Malcolm Klein suggested a definition that moved away from the group phenomenon and emphasized the criminal activities of the group. Known as the 'legal/crime' perspective, it suggests a descriptive list, or characterization, of what is included in defining a gang. By providing a list of characteristics, this approach effectively helps identify who is in a gang and the illegal activities associated with gangs. A descriptive list also provides the public with information as to how to identify a gang and who are the gang's members. For example, gang colors, organizational structure, and tattoos are unique identifiers to gangs. However, it is critical to the definition of a gang, from the legal perspective, to include delinquent or criminal activities.

Based on his research on Los Angeles street gangs, Klein (1971) introduced the delinquent/criminal element as a critical component to the definition of a gang. Klein's definition is one of the most cited definitions in the gang literature. According to Klein (1971):

> a juvenile gang is any denotable adolescent group of youngsters who (a) are generally perceived as a distinct aggregation by others in their neighborhood, (b) recognize themselves as a denotable group (almost invariably with a group name), and (c) have been involved in a sufficient number of delinquent incidents to call forth a consistent negative response from neighborhood residents and/or law enforcement agencies (p.13).

Klein's (1971) definition made a significant impact on gang research and public policy. In 1988, California passed the Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention Act (S.T.E.P.), which Klein was instrumental in helping shape. This act was one of the nation's first attempts to legally define a street gang for the purpose of criminal prosecution. This anti-gang legislation became the model for many other states to follow,

33

and specified the definition by using the expression 'criminal street gang.' Most gang statutes define a criminal street gang as "criminal groups of three or more, formal or informal, with names and signs, where members have committed such acts as murder, attempted murder, assault, drive-by shootings, robbery, arson, and witness intimidation" (Klein, 2007, p. 73). Twenty-five years later, Klein revised his definition, which further emphasized the term 'street gang,' and provided a more expansive list of descriptors such as age, gender, ethnicity, territory, and criminal patterns to define the gang. In all of his definitions, Klein excluded some groups, such as terrorists, football hooligans, motorcycle gangs, and prison gangs, so as to not create confusion about which type of group he was attempting to identify. Though definitions and the characteristics of a gang have been suggested by previous gang researchers (e.g., Thrasher, 1927; Whyte, 1943; Cohen, 1955; Cloward & Olin, 1960; Yablonsky, 1962), it was Klein (1971) who paved the way for a working definition of a gang.

Despite the emphasis on criminal/delinquent activities in the definition of a gang, researchers also combine the use of demographics (e.g., race, age, gender, and social class), common descriptors of the group (e.g., identifiable leader, structure, permanence, territory, colors, and tattoos) and the criminal element to define a gang. Identifying the group as a 'gang' and listing their unique characteristics separates gangs from non-gangs, such as the local Boys Scouts or a high school/college sports team. With the inclusion of a criminal element in the definition, the public is better able to understand what a gang is (e.g., Leet, Rush, & Smith, 2000; Esbensen, 2000; Curry & Decker, 2003; Delany, 2006; Tobin, 2008).

34

On the other hand, the academic perspective on defining a gang has primarily been predicated by theories of group dynamics, without requiring the element of criminal behavior (e.g., Ball & Curry, 1995; Bursik & Grasmick, 1993; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991; Moore, 1991; Hagedorn, 1988; Thrasher, 1927; Yablonsky, 1959). When defining a gang, it is critical to understand the group's behavior. Those early analyses of the 'group phenomena' have become the foundation for the definitions of gangs and subsequent research based on these definitions.

One of the earliest contributions to gang research was the work of Frederick Thrasher (1927), who followed Chicago's Polish and Jewish gangs in the late-1920s. In his works, he described juvenile gangs as 'spontaneous playgroups' that evolved into adolescent groups that were in conflict with each other, as:

> an interstitial group originally formed spontaneously, and then integrated through conflict. It is characterized by the following types of behavior: meeting face to face, milling, movement through space as a unit, conflict, and planning. The result of this collective behavior is the development of tradition, unreflective internal structure, esprit de corps, morale, group awareness, and attachment to a local territory (p. 46).

Thrasher's (1927) description introduced a number of key points. Foremost is that a gang is a group. Thrasher emphasized that the social dynamics of the group (i.e., 'play group') often lead to cohesion and then to development of the gang. Second, the group activities are both negative (i.e., involving conflict) and positive (i.e., having a sense of pride and support for one another). Interestingly, Thrasher did not mention delinquent or criminal activities in his identification of a gang, other than to say that not all gangs are delinquent/ criminal. Finally, the gangs Thrasher observed came from deteriorating sections of the city. Thrasher used the term 'interstitial' to describe those

35

sections of the city where gang members often reside. According to Thrasher, gang members were poor, immigrant youths residing in Chicago's inner-city.

Unfortunately, the perception of groups and how they are defined are often determined within their social and cultural context. For example, the term 'gang' is often applied to youths in lower socioeconomic groups that typically reflect the minority population (Cohen, 1955; Miller, 1958; Bloch & Niederhoffer, 1958). As Bloch and Niederhoffer (1958) suggested, most of the sociological literature rarely refers to middle/upper-class youths as gangs, but rather focuses on the lower-class. Today, those observations made by Bloch and Niederhoffer generally hold true, as seen in more recent gang studies (Esbensen & Winfree, 1998; Spergel, 1995), but there have been a few studies that explore the gang phenomenon in middle- to upper-class youths (Lowney, 1984).

Characteristics of Street Gangs and Gang Membership

As previously mentioned, in an effort to go beyond the group phenomena and the criminal element of a street gang, definitions have often included demographic (e.g., age, gender, race/ethnicity), structural (e.g., leadership), and identifying characteristics (e.g., symbols) that typically differentiated the gang from other groups. Below are some of the common characteristics, or key elements, as discussed in the literature that both law enforcement officials and academic scholars have suggested when defining a gang. These characteristics are, in part, the basis for this study's analysis into the portrayal of street gangs in Hollywood films.

36

Group/Group Size

As suggested in many definitions, the identification of 'group' is a critical element in defining a gang (Thrasher, 1927; Klein, 1971; Short, 1990; Spergel, 1995; Curry & Decker, 2003; Delaney, 2006). While some definitions have favored the legal perspective suggesting that a gang should consist of three or more members (e.g., California State Criminal Statute; Illinois State Criminal Codes; see also Gilbertson & Malinski, 2005), definitions derived from the sociological perspective do not address the size of a gang but rather the general concept of a group phenomenon (Thrasher, 1927; Cohen, 1955; Klein, 1971; Miller, 1975; Short, 1990). Curry and Decker (2003) pointed out that "any useful definition of a gang must include [the word] *group*" (p. 3).

Permanence

According to Curry and Decker (2003), the existence of permanence must be included in a gang definition. In order to be considered a 'gang,' the group "must be in existence for a period of time" (p. 5). While Curry and Decker (2003) explained that permanence could vary from newly formed gangs to gangs that have existed since the 1960s (e.g., Latin Kings, Gangster Disciples), Whitehead and Lab (2009) suggest that to be considered as 'gang,' the group must persist in a community for "at least one year or more" (p. 104). Street gangs that become entrenched in a community for an extended period of time become more difficult for law enforcement officials to eradicate.

Turf/Territory

A gang's turf/territory refers to the neighborhood or designated location within a community that a street gang will claim ownership. Since the early development of immigrant gangs (e.g., Irish, Jewish, Italian) in New York City in the late 1800s, the notion of protecting turf has been paramount (Sheldon, Tracy, & Brown, 2004). The purpose of claiming turf/territory is either for the protection of those individuals living in the gang's designated area or for the purpose of controlling drug distribution and sales. Spergel (1990) noted that as gangs became more mobile, and territorial lines became more blurred, claiming turf/territory was less of a significant concern for the gang's personal space and more relevant for controlling the drug trade (Fagan, 1990, 1996; Klein, 1995).

Leadership

Another key characteristic of the gang's structure is the group's leader. Leadership is defined as someone in the gang who is recognized by others (either law enforcement or other gang members) as the top official or critical decision-maker of the group (Delany, 2006). Some gang definitions have recognized leadership as an important element in defining a gang (Miller, 1975/1980; Short, 1990; Curry & Spergel, 1988; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991; Christensen, 1999). Leadership is also critical in establishing a hierarchy within the gang.

Graffiti (Communication)

Another common element found in gang definitions is the various forms of communication by the gang. Communication is expressed as verbal and non-verbal language. Often gangs communicate with hand-signs and graffiti. Hand-signs are deliberate movements by the hand and fingers to express words or ideas. Most often hand-signs are used to identify with a particular gang. The signs made by the hands and fingers are used to identify gang affiliation, to intimidate others, and to issue a challenge to a rival gang (Valentine, 1995).

Graffiti is a form of written communication typically found on walls, trains, street signs, garage doors, schools, and bridges. Paints (spray cans), pens, and markers are common tools to create graffiti messages. Graffiti is also a mechanism used to claim ownership of or territory in a particular area. Phillips (1999), Hutchinson (1993), and Ley and Cybriwsky (1974) discussed the importance of symbolic imagery of gang graffiti, which not only represents the cultural identity of the gang and its members, but the ongoing conflict between gangs for territory and respect.

Gang Identifiers (Colors, Style of Dress, Monikers, Gang Name)

Gang identifiers, referred to as symbols, are defined as objects or material items that uniquely identify with the characteristics of a gang (Curry & Decker, 2003). For example, some common gang identifiers include colors, tattoos, clothing/ jewelry (e.g., hats, shoelaces, shoes/sneakers), monikers (e.g., nicknames), and the name of the gang (e.g., Bloods, Crips, Gangster Disciples). Often these symbols have meaning only within the gang. For instance, colors are often associated with gangs. The red is often

39

associated with the Bloods and the color blue is associated with the Crips. Though colors were at first an easy way for law enforcement to identify gang members, street gangs are less inclined today to display their colors in order to hide their association with a particular street gang (Walker, 2012)

Another common gang identifier is the style of dress that often distinguishes one group from another. The challenge with style of dress is to not confuse the unique choice of clothing or how the clothes are worn with current fashion trends. Typically, clothing, accessories, and jewelry are seen as key identifiers of gang membership. For example, hats that are tilted to one direction, a pant leg that is up or down, jackets, shoelaces, belt buckles, rosary beads, rings, earrings, necklaces and bandanas are all symbols that indicate potential gang affiliation. Even professional sports apparel can have a symbolic meaning for the gang. For example, members of the Piru Bloods prefer the Philadelphia Phillies because of the letter 'p' on the baseball hat. The LA Dodgers baseball hat is often associated with the Crips. Today, style of dress and clothing accessories have not automatically identified an individual as a gang member. While style of dress was more prevalent in the 1950s through the 1990s, since then the influence of the hip-hop and rap culture and of the fashion industry has made detecting gang members much more difficult (Garot & Katz, 2003). Another common symbol that identifies a gang is tattoos. Gang members will often have tattoos on their bodies to show allegiance to the gang.

Monikers are also considered symbols as they identify who a gang member is through his/her nicknames, often created by gang members' peers. For example, "Money Mike" could imply Mike makes the money for the gang and "Slick Willy" could be a

name given to a gang member who evades the police or is clever with women (Lawson, 1994).

Another symbolic identifier is the actual name of the gang. Some of the most well-known gang names are the Bloods, Crips, Latin Kings, and Gangster Disciples. However, the name of the gang often symbolizes who and where they are from in the community. For example, the East Side Riders or the 123rd Hoover Crips are specific to the location of where the gang primarily resides.

Negative Responses by Law Enforcement/Community

Since gangs have been a problem for law enforcement and a concern for communities, definitions have often included those two elements. Klein (1971) stated that "a consistent negative response from neighborhood residents and/or law enforcement agencies" is a defining characteristic of what is a street gang (p. 13). A negative response consists of comments or action by law enforcement personnel such as showing disdain, making disparaging remarks about gangs, and/or arresting gang members. A negative response from community members consists of voicing their concerns over the threat of gangs and gang violence, physical/verbal confrontations with gang members, and their outward frustration or disdain in their communities towards gangs.

Crimes

The involvement and commitment in criminal activities is a distinction that differentiates gangs from other groups. However, there are particular crimes that gangs engage in with greater frequently than other crimes committed by non-gang members.

41

Delany (2006) offers a list of criminal activities that are often committed by street gang members. These criminal activities can be broken down into three categories: drug sales, homicides, and other crimes.

Drug and alcohol use is an activity that has remained constant among gang members for over a century (Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991). However, gangs and drugs have become linked to each other in the public imagination as gangs have become more involved with drug trafficking and drug distribution (Fagan, 1990; Miller, 1992; Taylor, 1990; Thornberry, 1998). The research on gangs involved in the drug market has been contradictory. One research perspective is that gangs are a highly organized enterprise that runs a sophisticated drug operation (Taylor, 1990; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991; Padilla, 1992). The other research perspective is that street gangs are loosely organized groups that sell drugs for personal benefit and not for the gang (Fagan, 1996; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Hagedorn, 1994).

Homicides, more specifically gang-homicides, have become one of the leading causes of death among gang members (Delany, 2006; Curry & Spergel, 1988), and according to Klein (1995) the use of firearms is the primary contributor to all gang-homicides. Unlike the gang rumbles of the past, this type of crime has become a consistent problem for cities with a gang problem. Sheppard, Grant, Rowe, and Jacobs (2000) noted that juvenile homicides increased from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s and those gangs were the significant contributor to homicides (Block & Block, 1993). Today, according to the Center of Disease Control (CDC), "gang-homicides account for a substantial proportion of homicides among youths in some U.S. cities." The cities with the highest prevalence of gang-homicides include Los Angeles, California; Oklahoma

42

City, Oklahoma; Long Beach, California; Oakland, California; and Newark, New Jersey (Center of Disease Control, 2012).

One unique form of gang-homicide is called 'drive-by shooting.' Drive-by shooting involves the killing of gang members by shooting them with a gun while in an automobile. Drive-by shootings date back to the Al Capone days of the 1920s and 1930s and continued to flourish in major urban areas through the 1980s (Sanders, 1994). Other crimes listed by Delany (2006) that gangs typically commit are aggravated assaults and battery, robbery, burglary/breaking and entering, larceny/theft, motor vehicle theft, vandalism, extortion, rape, and witness intimidation.

Demographic Variables of Street Gangs/Gang Members

Some other common characteristics expressed in the gang literature and surveys about gangs and gang members (see National Gang Center, 2012; National Gang Threat Assessment Report, 2011) are demographical variables such as race/ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic status, and location. The characteristics observed for this study were race/ethnicity, gender, age, and location (i.e., urban, suburban, rural).

Race/Ethnicity

A common myth is that gang members are exclusively members of racial and ethnic groups but using race/ethnicity to identify and categorize gangs is not uncommon, even though this is not a legal criterion for defining gangs. Though previous studies have shown that most gangs are composed of racial and ethnic minorities (Klein, 1995; Miller, 1982), mixed or hybrid street gangs do exist (Starbuck, Howell, & Lindquist, 2001). But

43

gangs are typically homogenous groups, even in a heterogeneous neighborhood (Klein, 1971; Spergel, 1966). According to the most recent study by the National Youth Gang Survey from 1996-2008 (see Figure 1), 50 percent of gang members are Hispanic/Latino, 32 percent are African-American/black, 10 percent are white, and the final eight percent are from other racial/ethnic gangs.
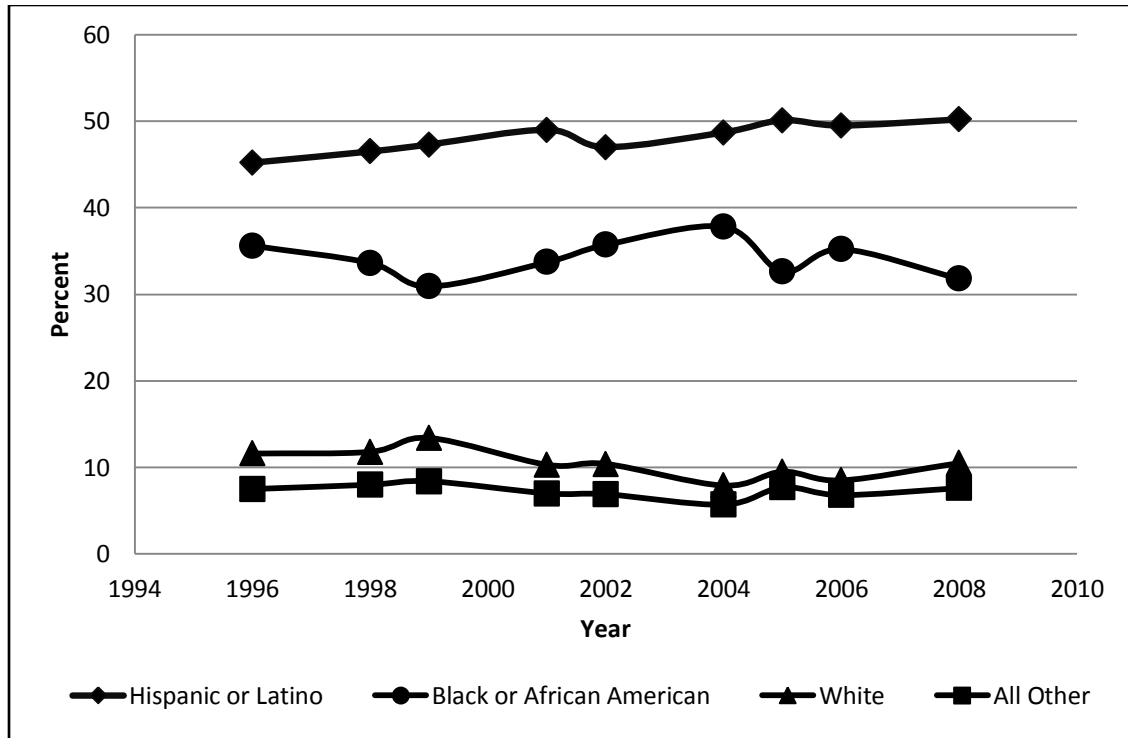
Figure 1. Race/Ethnicity of Gang Members, 1998-2008 (Source: National Gang Youth Survey Analysis, 2012)

Gender

Traditionally, gangs are exclusively male (see Figure 2), but that does not discount the increase of female involvement in gang membership. Early gang research suggested that gangs were viewed only as a male phenomenon and females were ignored or seen only as sex objects rather than hard-core gang members (Campbell, 1984). Recent reports have shown female gang membership and participation does exist but it is

44

still relatively small when compared to male participation rates (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001; National Gang Center, 2012).
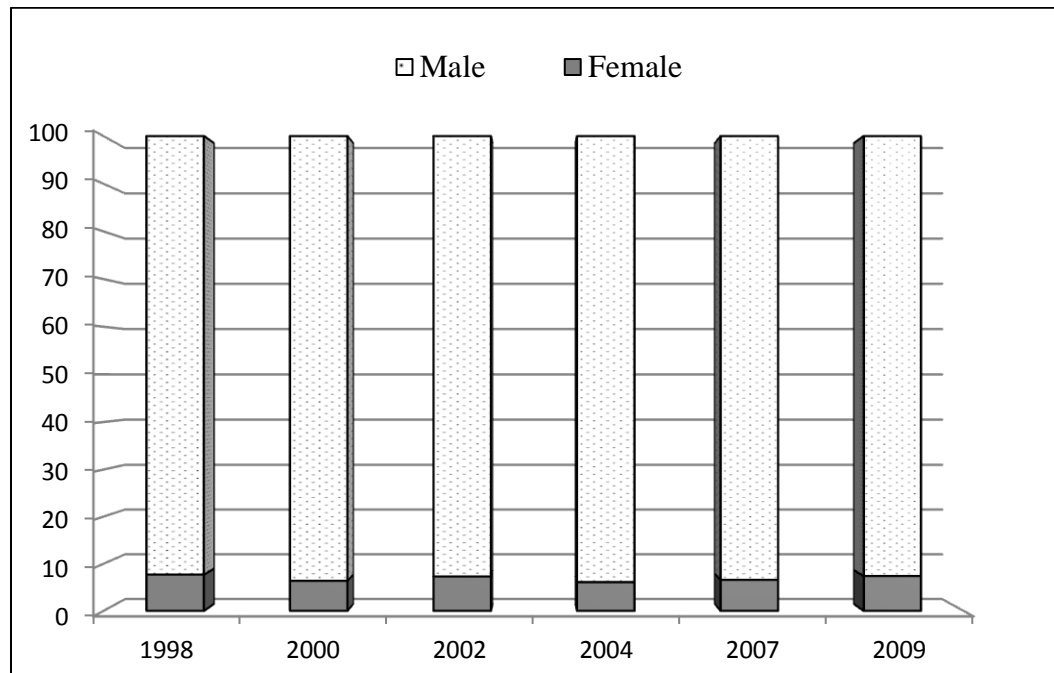
Figure 2. Gender of Gang Members, 1998-2007 (Source: National Gang Youth Survey Analysis, 2012)

Age

Gang studies from the 1920s to the 1970s primarily reported that the typical gang member was a teenager (Thrasher, 1927; Klein, 1971; Delany, 2006). Today, according to the National Youth Gang Survey (National Gang Center, 2012; see Figure 3), "approximately three out of every five gang members are adults" (18 or older). Particularly within the Latino gangs, street gang members tend to be much older than members of other types of gangs (Valdez, 2005b).

45
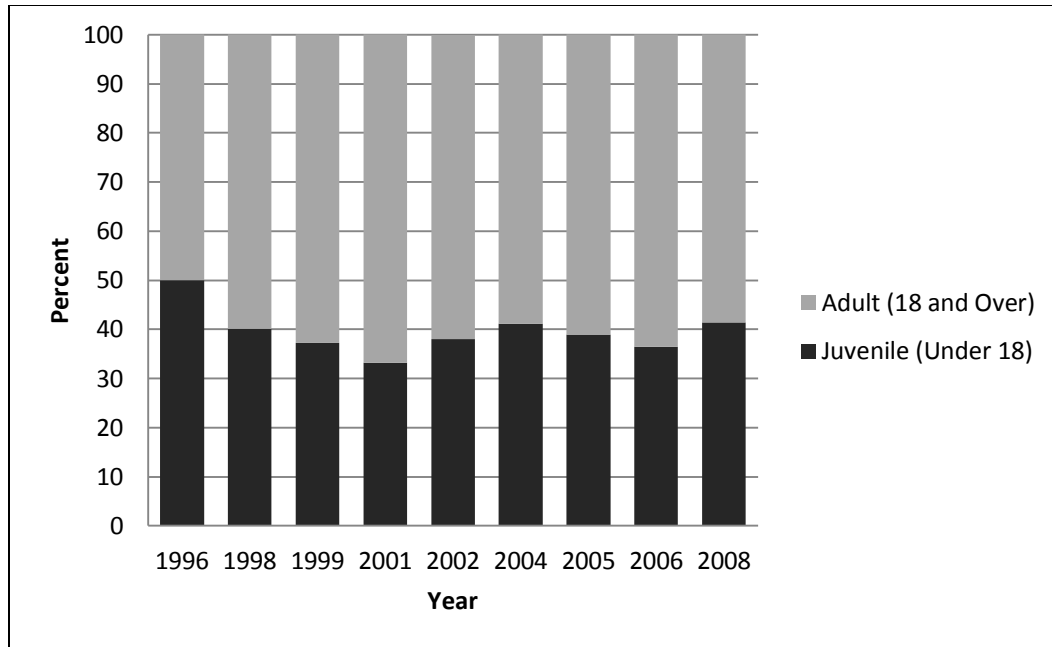
Figure 3. Age of Gang Member, 1996-2008 (Source: National Gang Youth Survey Analysis, 2012)

Location

While geographic location is not a common characteristic expressed in the suggested definitions of a street gang by academia or law enforcement, the presence of gangs, however, is more suited for an urban setting as opposed to rural locations. According to the most recent National Youth Gang Survey (National Gang Center, 2012; see Figure 4), the problem of gangs exists primarily in large cities (50,000+ populations) as compared to rural counties. Gang membership and the number of gangs are also significantly higher in urban settings. However, smaller gangs with fewer members tend to flourish in smaller cities (2,500-49,999) and rural counties. Though street gangs are often associated with the ghetto or an urban setting, gangs are found in all types of geographic locations: urban, suburban, and rural settings.

46
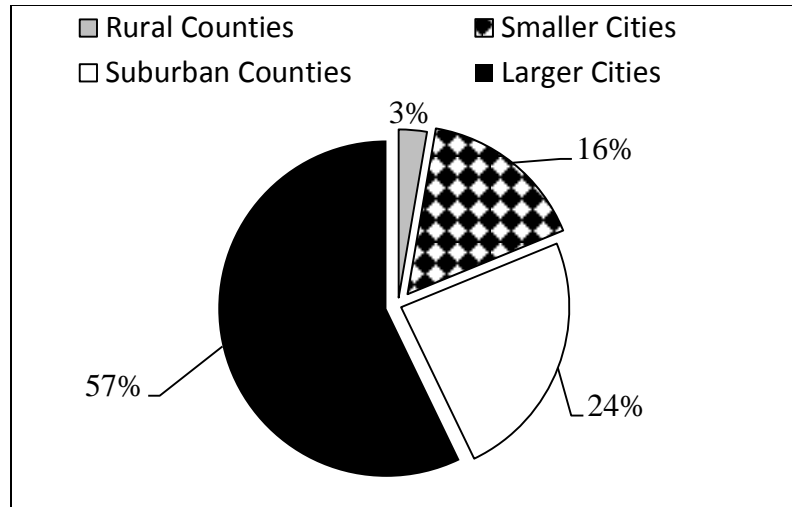
Figure 4. Distribution of Gang Members by Area Type, 2010. (Source: National Gang Youth Survey Analysis, 2012)

Gangs and the Media

With academic research and law enforcement officials defining a street gang, who is in a street gang, and how a street gang operates, the media also plays a significant role in shaping, creating, and informing the public's views about street gangs. It is suggested that the portrayal of street gangs in the media either glorifies/romanticizes a gang's behavior, or provides viewers with a realistic view of what life is like in a gang (Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991; Decker and Van Winkle, 1996; Christensen, 1999; Fisher, 2006). While only a handful of studies have specifically examined the relationship between gangs and the media, particularly in films (Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991; Knox, 1999; Przemieniecki, 2005; Clapp, 2007; Edwards, 2011), some studies have asserted that the media contribute to the creation of moral panics when examining gangs (e.g., McCorkle & Miethe, 1998, 2002; Springhall, 1998; Perrone & Chesney-Lind, 1998; Thompson, Young, & Burns, 2000; Tovares, 2002; Zatz, 1987; Cyr, 2003; Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994).

47

Since most of the public does not deal directly with street gangs, images portrayed by the mass media become critical to the perceptions, stereotypes, assumptions and social construction about what is a gang and what a gang member looks like. The various forms of mass media are categorized as print media (e.g., news reports/articles, books, magazines), audio/sound media (e.g., radio, music), visual media (e.g., television, movies), and new/interactive media (e.g., video games, Internet) (Surette, 2011). Each of these forms of media have represented street gangs in some form or another.

Print Media

According to Surette (2011), one of earliest forms of media, and the first to generate a mass market, was print media. Examples of print media include penny press newspapers of the early to mid-1800s, modern day newspapers, 'dime novels', comic books, pamphlets, brochures, magazines, and books (fiction and non-fiction). In particular, 'dime novels' (i.e., detective and crime thrillers and stories of the Old West) were extremely popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, comic books presented stories of gangs and their way of life. For example, the series *Gangbusters* (1935-1957) from DC comics, which was also a radio show, featured stories of G-men (FBI) tracking down gangs and gang members.

Popular culture books have also featured stories of gangs and gang members. Those stories are told from the author's perspective of living life in the gang (i.e., self-admission to the gang). Non-fiction books examining the life of a gang member have included *My Bloody Life: the Making of a Latin King* (Sanchez, 2000), *8 Ball Chicks: A*

48

Year in the Violent World of Girl Gangs (Sikes, 1997), and *Monster: the Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member* (Shakur, 1993).

Periodical magazines, another type of print media, feature all types of content such as sports, fashion, music, news, health and crime. Articles featuring gangs as the central focus are found in popular news magazines, such as *Time* (see McCarthy, 2001) *Newsweek* (see Vistica, 1995), and *US News & World Report* (see Kingsbury, 2008) Other magazines, such as *Life* (see Wallace, 1957) and *Harper's Magazine* (see Jones, 1954) featured articles on Chicago and New York City (Brooklyn) street gangs. Although no attempt to define a gang has been suggested in these journalistic accounts of street gangs, these articles do discuss many of the characteristics and lifestyles of a gang found in Thrasher's (1927) and Whyte's (1943) studies. Popular culture consumer music magazines such as *Rolling Stone* (see Bing, 2001) *Spin* (see James, 1994; Cooper, 1994), *The Source* (see Baker, 2008; Kitwana, 1996; Kirkorian, 2000; Alonso, 2006), and *XXL* (see Caramanica, 2005; Alvarez, 2005) have also featured articles providing information about street gangs and the gang culture. In addition, the editors of *Don Diva* and *ASIS* label their magazines as 'street' magazines and have further outlined the exploits and lifestyles of gangs, gangsters, and the gang culture. These magazines' 'matter-of-fact' approach in presenting the gang lifestyle is evident from the articles about former and current gang members, pictures, news stories, and promotional items featured within the magazines. Both magazines also have a parental advisory warning label, similar to that used in the music industry, warning parents of the 'gangsta content' that is featured in these magazines (see *Don Diva, ASIS*).

With respect to the academic research on gangs and the media, most studies have focused on the local news reports of gang activity and the perceptions of gangs in the news. One study that examined youth gangs in print media analyzed articles that featured youth or street gangs (Esbensen & Tusinski, 2007). The authors searched for the word 'gang' in headlines or titles of articles appearing in *Newsweek, Time,* and *U.S. News & World Report* from 1980 to 2006. Esbensen and Tusinski (2007) concluded that the depictions of gangs and gang members by news agencies are not accurate, often exaggerated (especially concerning violence), and stereotypical (e.g., depicted as a male, poor, minority, urban problem). Journalists, according to the authors, have been partially to blame for failing to properly understand the nature and extent of gangs in our society. Journalists' news reports have incorrectly portrayed the images of youth gangs and their members (Esbensen et al, 2007).

Thompson, Young, and Burns (2000) and Perrone and Chesney-Lind (1998) also examined gangs in the news media and reached similar conclusions about how the stories about gangs are perceived. Perrone and Chesney-Lind (1998) documented a significant increase in news articles over a ten-year period about gangs and juvenile delinquency in Hawaii, thus leading the consumer to believe that there was a gang crime epidemic. Thompson et al. (2000) suggested that gang news is viewed as primarily social disorder or moral disorder news. Social disorder refers to the threat and damage gangs have on our daily lives by disrupting families, schools, and communities. Moral disorder refers to the gang rejecting the community's basic moral values and beliefs.

Sound/Audio Media

Another type of media is the audio medium (e.g., radio), or what Surette (2011) called the 'sound medium.' Examples of sound include radio and music. Radio, the first broadcast medium, has been used to deliver music, news, programming shows, and advertisements since the early 1900s (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003). The importance of sound is the perception of sound. Sound is an important component for music and films, because sound stimulates the senses beyond the visual to other sensory receptors. Sounds allow an audience to connect with an image in a film or with words in a song. The success and impact of radio shows were not only about the quality and believability of the actors voicing their roles, but also about the quality of sound effects.

One radio broadcasting show that epitomized the use of sound effects was *Gangbusters*. *Gangbusters* was a gang-related radio broadcasting show that featured the lives of gang members and the stories of how the police (FBI) successfully captured them. The series ran from 1936 to 1957. The show used a variety of sound effects including police sirens, machine guns firing, and tires squealing to enhance and authenticate the story for listeners.

In the music industry, there are many styles of music, such as country, rock, classical, jazz, heavy metal, blues, and punk. Each style of music has its own distinctive sound. However, it is the hip-hop/rap industry, specifically 'gangsta rap,' that is directly and indirectly associated with street gangs appealing to today's youth (Grant, 2002; Stallworth, 2004). According to Stallworth (1999), the hip-hop/rap industry contributed to the creation of the 'gangsta' persona, which was later represented in Hollywood films by the late 1980s and early 1990s. The label 'gangsta rap' was coined by music critics

51

for its "seeming glorification of street gang activity" (Grant, 2002, p. 7). The link between life on the streets and gangs is echoed by those artists associated with real-life street gangs. For example, some of the industry's most famous 'gangsta rap' artists were once, or still are, associated with street gangs. They include Snoop Dogg (Rolling 20s), Coolio (Corner Pocket CRIPS), The Game (Cedar Block Piru Bloods), Ice-T (Hoover CRIPS), Easy E (Kelly Park Compton Crips), Tupac Shakur (Bloods), Notorious B.I.G. (Crips), and Suge Knight (Compton MOB Piru Bloods) (http://www.gangwatchers.org for a more extensive list linking hip-hop/gangsta rap artists to their respective street gangs). In addition to the above-mentioned popular 'gangsta rap' artists, there are documented accounts of lesser-known hip-hop/gangsta rap artists linked to street gangs and criminal behavior (see "*Hip-Hop Behind Bars*," 2004, 2007). Two of the most famous cases involving former street gang members are those of Christopher Wallace (aka, Notorious B.I.G.) and Tupac Shakur (aka, 2Pac). Although both musicians were allegedly linked to street gangs, it is believed that the murders of these two musicians were the result of an ongoing battle between the East Coast (New York) and the West Coast (Los Angeles) hip-hop/rap industry and their associations with gangs, thus fueling a bitter rivalry (Rome, 2004; Parker & Diehl, 2006). The portrayal of gangs in the music industry and the messages in the lyrics suggest a lifestyle that further perpetuates the image of gang members and the gang culture (Stallworth, 1999; Tucker, 1996; Landre, Miller, & Porter, 1997).

52

Interactive/New Media

A third type of media is called 'interactive media' or 'new media' (Surette, 2011). Interactive/New media refers to the technological advances our society has made in providing various types of media to the public. Examples of this type of media are the Internet and video games. Within the video gaming industry, *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* has been likened to the film *Boyz N the Hood* (Barrett, 2006). Przemieniecki (2009) also discovered numerous examples of gang-related video games that depicted the images of gangs, gang violence, and the gang culture.

The Internet is another medium in which information about gangs is disseminated to the public. Gangs have utilized the Internet to recruit future prospects via social networking sites (Valdez, 2005a; Johnson, 2006, Hesse & Przemieniecki, 2009). In some instances, postings made by rival gang members on MySpace, Facebook, and YouTube have resulted in gang violence (Hesse & Przemieniecki, 2009; Johnson, 2006), while other gangs have utilized the Internet for their criminal enterprises and gang recruitment (Johnson, 2006; Carvin, 2008; Gordon, 2008; Kaplan, 2001; Farrell, 2008).

Visual Media

The final type of media, as suggested by Surette (2011), is visual media, the focus of this study. The most common types of visual media are television/cable and films, and both of these formats have depicted various types of street gangs. Most television/cable programs, including films, are made for entertainment purposes, educational/informative purposes, or social commentary (Prince, 2010).

53

In the television/cable industry, gangs are featured as both primary and secondary characters within shows. For example, the *Sons of Anarchy* is a cable-based show, created for entertainment purposes, depicting the life of an outlaw motorcycle gang. The members of the motorcycle gang are the central focus of the show's story. Other shows from the 1980s and early 1990s, such as *LA Law*, *The Mod Squad*, and *Cagney and Lacey* were police/detective shows that featured the members of street gangs in their episodes, but the gang members were not the primary characters (Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991). Television/cable shows have also included documentaries such as *American Gangster* (on Black Entertainment Television, BET), *Gang Nation* (on Investigation Discovery, The Discovery Channel), *Gangland* (on The History Channel), and *Inside Gangs* (on National Geographic Channel). The purpose of these documentary shows is to educate and inform audiences about the history, life, and problems associated with the featured gang.

The film industry, on the other hand, established itself in the late 1800s, beginning with the silent-film era. Films are now considered one of the most popular forms of entertainment (Shipley & Cavender, 2001). According to Surette (2011), films were the first to "blanket all of society…making its content available to every social, economic, and intellectual stratum" (p. 11). In 2010, the film industry generated a combined total gross income of over $10 billion just from ticket sales (http://www.the-numbers.com). However, movies do more than entertain audiences; they also inform audiences. Since the silent era of film making, movies have redefined how the public receives and perceives the content on screen. Unlike print material, which requires some level of knowledge, films are able to cut across all social, economic and educational backgrounds (Surette, 2011). As the popularity of films grew, the images displayed in films were

instrumental in shaping American culture (Surette, 2011). Movies have a unique way of influencing our choices and have the "ability to combine fantasy and realism in a seamless fashion so that fiction seems authentic, believable and…true" (Hiebert & Gibbons, 2000, p. 187).

One of the most popular genres in film is crime films (Leitch, 2002). The crime film genre explores many types of criminal justice themes or subgenres, such as detective/police work, prison life, and the judicial process. Among these many types of subgenres, there is also the gangster, or gang-related type films. Gangs are portrayed in films in a variety of ways. For example, *American Me* (1992) and *Blood In-Blood Out* (original title *Bound by Honor*, 1993) featured prison gangs. *The Wild One* (1954) and *Born Losers* (1967) featured motorcycle gangs.   *The Warriors* (1979) and *Colors* (1988) featured street gangs.   Other gangster/gang-related type films have included blockbuster hits such as *The Godfather* series (1972, 1974, 1990), *The Departed* (2006), and *Gangs of New York* (2002) which were all well-received and critically acclaimed, earning numerous film accolades. There have also been many less popular, low-budget, straight-to-video films such as *The Barrio Murders* (2001), *Homeboys* (2007), and *Gang Tapes* (2001). Other types of gang-related films have included the portrayals of female gangs (*Mi Vida Loca*, 1993; *Set It Off*, 1996; *Hood Rats*, 2006), white supremacist/neo-Nazi gangs (*Gang Boys*, 1997; *Romper Stomper*, 1992; *Aussie Park*, 2003), Asian gangs (*Savage Boys*, 2002; *Tongs*, 1986), Latino/Hispanic gangs (*Boulevard Nights*, 1979; *Latin Kingz*, 2000), Russian gangs (*Eastern Promises*, 2007; *Freight*, 2010), Brazilian gangs (*City of God*, 2002), Jamaican gangs (*Shottas*, 2002) and gangs portrayed in a high school setting (*Tuff Turf*, 1985). Gang films have also featured biographical or biopic stories

55

(*Redemption*, 2004 for the story of Crips founder Stanley 'Tookie' Williams; *American Gangster*, 2007 for the story of Frank Lucas) and documentaries (80 *Blocks from Tiffany's*, 1980; *Crips and Bloods: Made in America*, 2009).

History of Gang-Related Films

One the first films to portray street gangs was D.W. Griffith's silent film, *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* (1912). Although Griffith is most recognized for his controversial portrayal of the KKK in the film *Birth of a Nation* (1915), *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* showed audiences how street gangs operated, the various types of crimes they committed (such as extortion and petty theft) and the importance of claiming the gang's territory.

Gangster films thrived from the early 1900s through the 1940s, largely due to the Roaring Twenties, the Great Depression, the creation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the Prohibition Era (Parish & Pitts, 1976; Mason, 2002). As organized crime grew, the gangster became the sole focus for law enforcement, thus helping create stories and images for Hollywood films (Parish & Pitts, 1976). As 'real-life' gangsters, such as Al Capone, Bugsy Siegel, John Dillinger, and Charles 'Lucky' Luciano, plagued American society, many of their exploits were eventually glamorized in Hollywood films. In fact, many of the gangster films that were produced from the early 1900s to the 1930s were thought to be too violent and to have negatively portrayed the American criminal justice system (Silver & Ursini, 2007). It was then that the Motion Picture Production Code of 1930 (known as the Hays Code) along with special interest groups effectively put a stop to the glorification of crime, gangsters, and organized crime

(Lee & Van Heckle, 1971; Springhall, 1998). The purpose of the Hays Code was to censor violent crime films. The goal was to reduce the violence that was portrayed to audiences and eliminate the perceived success that gangsters were having against law enforcement officials and society. Showing that the justice system was inept was considered inappropriate content for viewers. Thus, the Hays Code outlined the rules for film content stating that "the treatment of crimes against the law must not (1) teach methods of crime, (2) inspire potential criminals with a desire for imitation, and (3) make criminals seen heroic and justified" (Bynum, 2006, n.p.) The Hays Code censored films from 1934 (though it was adopted in 1930) until the mid-1950s, and then after many modifications, met its final demise in 1968.

In the 1950s and 1960s, outlaw biker gangs were common images portrayed in Hollywood films, such as *The Wild One* (1954) and *Born Loser* (1967). When the Hell's Angels motorcycle gang became a focal point for law enforcement, the film industry saturated the viewer's market with many biker gang films, such as *The Wild Angels* (1966) and *Hells Angels on Wheels* (1967) (Seate, 2000). In addition to motorcycle gang films, films about delinquent behavior were also of interest, reflecting many of the societal concerns being expressed by the media. In 1955, *Blackboard Jungle* was highly criticized because it was believed that the film sensationalized delinquency and gang violence, and the use of rock-n-roll music would influence youth behaviors (McCarthy, 2007). Furthermore, the filmmakers made claims in the promotional advertisements that this film would "shock" audiences for its "realistic" portrayal of teenage delinquency and gang violence (see *Blackboard Jungle* film trailer).

57

In 1961, *West Side Story* portrayed rival gangs, the Jets and Sharks, with a unique perspective on the images of gang violence—with choreographed dancing. This film is often cited in articles, textbooks, and anthologies as a film that 'romanticized' street gangs (Gardner, 1983, Yablonsky, 1997). By the 1970s, the number of gang-related films produced by Hollywood studios increased. *The Lords of Flatbush* (1974) portrayed 1950s white gangs. The *Wanderers* (1979) featured a variety of street gangs (e.g., skinheads, Asian, Black) and *The Warriors* (1979) portrayed numerous street gangs throughout New York City (see http://warriorsmovie.co.uk/gangs/ for a complete list of all the street gangs featured in the film). *The Warriors* was later criticized for its on-screen gang violence spilling onto the streets. One youth was fatally stabbed after the screening of this film in Boston, Massachusetts. The victim's family filed suit against the filmmakers and Paramount Pictures but were unsuccessful (*Yakubowicz v. Paramount Pictures Corp*, 1989). Other 'street gang' films from the 1970s included *The Bad Bunch* (1976), which featured violent confrontations between black and white gangs; *Cat Murkil and the Silks* (1976; reissued as *Crusin' High*), which depicted intra-gang violence; and *Boulevard Nights* (1979) which explored the Los Angeles Hispanic gang scene. According to Jefferies (1979), *Boulevard Nights* claimed to be the first gang film to use 'real' Hispanic gang members, thus giving the film a more authentic look. The producers of *Boulevard Nights* also faced similar charges like those of *The Warriors* suit, where the plaintiff was shot outside of a theater by an apparent rival gang member (*Bill v. City of San Francisco*, cited in Quinlan & Persels, 1994).

The 1980s and 1990s introduced a new kind of gang, the urban street gang, and films about gangs from this era are often referred to as 'hood' films (Rome, 2004;

Giroux, 1998; Edwards, 2011) or 'ghetto-centric' films (Massood, 2003; Fisher, 2006).

Hollywood's portrayal of street gangs persisted with films focusing on the violence

associated with the inner city and focused primarily on minority groups (e.g., blacks and

Hispanics/Latinos). Some of the more popular 'hood' films were *Colors* (1988), *Boyz N*

the Hood (1991), *New Jack City* (1991), *Menace II Society* (1993), *Clockers* (1995), and

Juice (1992). Other less popular films featuring urban violence and street gangs from the

1980s and 1990s included *Heartbreaker* (1983), *South Central* (1992), *Strapped* (1993),

Straight Out of Brooklyn (1991), *Fresh* (1994), and *New Jersey Drive* (1995). All of

these films garnered an incredible amount of public attention and concern because of the

violent images portrayed on screen. Theaters across the country increased their security

with the presence of law enforcement officers as violence erupted inside and outside of

theaters. Though the films were not solely responsible for the gang violence occurring on

the streets, many critics blamed the producers, writers, and directors for glorifying street

gangs in Hollywood films because adolescent youth were imitating what they saw in

films (Rome, 2004).

However, like the types of definitions offered by academia of what is a gang,

there is considerable disagreement about which films are considered gang films and

which are not. Silver and Ursini (2007), McCarty (2004), Leitch (2002), Mason (2002),

Clarens (1980), Parrish and Pitts (1976), and Baxter (1970) all provided lists of gang and

gangster-themed films, but there was no uniformity or explanation of how these authors

made their selections. For example, McCarty (2004) listed *Boyz N the Hood* as a gang-

related film, whereas Leitch (2002) and Mason (2002) did not. Schneider (2009)

provided readers with a list of 101 'must see' gangster films, spanning from the early

59

1900s to the late 2000s. Included in Schneider's (2009) list were *Musketeers of Pig Alley, Boyz N the Hood, New Jack City, West Side Story, Menace II Society,* and *Gangs of New York*. Although there were many similarities among film scholars/critics' lists, such as *Scarface* (1932) and *The Public Enemies* (1931), differences in their selection criteria raise questions about how each film scholar defines a gang-related film.

<div align="center">Distinctions between 'Gangster' Films and 'Street Gang' Films</div>

Often in the film industry, 'gangster' films and 'street gang' films are seen as one-and-the-same types of films. Adding to the multitude of definitions that the gang literature suggests, as previously discussed, the media also contributes to defining a gang through its portrayal and representations of street gangs in film. However, defining 'gangster' films and 'street gang' films is as problematic as defining the gang for academia and law enforcement. Film scholar Edward Connor (1976) suggested that a definition of a gangster is "a colloquialism for a 'member of the gang'…by extension the word came to apply to all who operate outside the law (especially in gambling, narcotics, prostitution or the protection rackets" (p. 1). On the other hand, some film scholars simply offered vague descriptions of gangs and gangsters or suggested characteristics such as violence, criminal activities, and a unique lifestyle (Mason, 2002; McCarty, 2004).

Film scholar Mark Winokur (1995) distinguished the difference between gangster films and other 'gang' type films (i.e. 'street gang' films) by the way the gang members were portrayed in the film. Winokur explained that the typical 'street gang' film placed significant emphasis on youth and street life. Furthermore, the language within the street

gang culture is so distinct that viewers who are not privy to the gang world will not fully understand it. According to Winokur (1995), the gangster film tries to capture the pursuit of an American success story while the 'gangsta' film portrays the opposite.

One media outlet that does offer a definition for both gangster films and 'street gang' films is the online film database All Movie Guide (AMG). AMG's definitions are intended for consumers who are interested in searching their database for information about a film, its plot, and its characters. AMG defines a 'street gang' film as a "film about modern urban gang life." AMG defines a 'gangster' film as "a film which often glorifies the criminal activities of gangsters, elevating them to almost hero status… They present the criminal's rise to power and subsequent fall, when he overreaches and becomes too ambitious" (http://www.allrovi.com/movies/subgenre/%20gangster-film-d577).

<div align="center">Research Related to Hollywood 'Street Gang' Films</div>

The literature examining gang-related films, specifically Hollywood produced 'street gang' motion pictures, is limited. While some authors have examined the gang phenomenon and made references to a gang-related film (Hagedorn, 1998; Christensen, 1999; Valdez, 2005a; Whitehead & Lab, 2009; Bartollas & Miller, 2011), most of the academic discussions of street gangs and/or gangsters in Hollywood films have involved an analysis by media/communication/cultural scholars (Edwards, 2011, Winokur, 1995; Giroux, 1995; 1998; Kitwana, 2002; Fisher, 2006; Diawara, 1993; Macek, 2006; Fregoso, 1993,1995; Denzin, 2001; Walker-Fields, 2004) and film scholars (Silver & Ursini, 2007; Mason, 2002; McCarty, 2004; Massood, 2003; Munby, 2005; Zalcock, 2001; Shadoian,

1977). However, there are a limited number of articles that have focused on the potential influence and portrayal of street gangs in Hollywood films (e.g., Knox, 1999; Przemieniecki, 2005; Berman, 1992; Clapp, 2007).

One of the few gang researchers who extensively examined gang films was George Knox, Director of the National Gang Crime Research Center. Knox (1999) analyzed 25 gang-related films and analyzed documentaries, films, television/cable movies, and weekly television programs. Knox (1999) examined the mass media and gangs, and addressed the potential impact that the media and gangs have on perceptions, respect for law, promotion of myths, and vigilantism. Knox (1999) also argued that the portrayal of gangs in films may, in fact, be sending false images about gangs to the public who view these films. Though Knox (1999) provided a list of 25 films in his analysis, he failed to offer a definition of a gang. As a consequence of the absence of a definition, the author failed to provide a systematic, supportable, methodological approach to his sample of films. The methodology was based on his own personal and professional opinions about the definition of a gang-related film. Knox (1999) did, however, advocate that the messages in the mass media, especially gang films, promote the gang problem.

Other research that has explored the relationship between gangs and films has focused on interview responses by gang members and law enforcement officials. These interviews appeared to show a connection between gang-themed films and the respondents' experiences. In Decker and Van Winkle's (1996) study of gang life, the authors interviewed gang members from St. Louis. The responses from gang members indicated the importance of Hollywood gang films and the impact of these films on gang

behavior and the proliferation of gangs in St. Louis. The following quotes are examples of this connection:

> The reason how it got started is they had the movie *Colors*, which was a gang-related movie and the action impact that had on teenagers, they liked stuff like that. They looked at it like the real reality of things in the movie *Colors.*

> All I know is when *Colors* came out that's when they started sparking up all of these gangs, Crips and Bloods and all that.

> The Crips been around for a long time. People just never heard of them until the movie *Colors* came out then it started spreading from LA out to here. Coming down here to St. Louis (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996, p. 88-89).

The film *Colors* is often regarded as a 'street gang' film because it introduced the Bloods and Crips to mainstream society, along with influencing 'gangsta' rap music (Landre, Miller, & Porter, 1997). However, according to Landre et al. (1997), gang officers and gang experts noted that this film was not an accurate portrayal of gang life.

In another study that examined gang films and gang behavior, similar responses were given about the potential influence of gang-related films on youth (Przemieniecki, 2005). Przemieniecki (2005) suggested that many gang-related films such as *Boyz N the Hood, Colors, New Jack City, Juice*, and *The Warriors* have actually contributed to the learning process of the gang's lifestyle. In fact, "gang films depicting characters rewarded for gang-life behaviors act as a blueprint for young aspiring gang members" (Wood & Alleyne, 2010, p. 106).

In a study by Klein (1995a), a gang task-force police officer observed that *Boyz N the Hood* was responsible for perpetuating the gang culture in his community. The officer also noted that what resonated most about Boyz N the Hood with gang members in his community was the callous and calculated approach that gang members had in the

63

film when gunning down their rivals. The officer explained that gang members in his community would often say "that was a righteous gang execution" (p. 206).

The common thread with most 'street gang' films mentioned in the literature is how these films all take place in an urban setting (i.e., the ghetto) (Clapp, 2007). Some of the 'street gang' films shot on location in the city of Los Angeles were *Colors, Boyz N the Hood, Menace II Society, Walk Proud,* and *Boulevard Nights*. The films shot on location in New York City were *West Side Story, The Warriors, The Lords of Flatbush,* and *The Wanderers*. In the films that featured New York City, urban turf wars were prominent and rival gangs competed for power, prestige, and wealth. On the other hand, the gang films featured in Los Angeles focused more on individual gang members and their constant struggle with daily life in a gang-ridden environment (Clapp, 2007)

Norman K. Denzin (2001), a communications and qualitative research expert, also offered an analysis of gang-related films and the violence associated with them. Denzin's (2001) focus was on the Chicano culture of gangs, gang membership, and how these films differed from black-urban-crime films of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Denzin (2001) examined only films with Hispanic/Latino gangs such as *American Me, Blood In Blood Out,* and *Zoot Suits*. While Denzin (2001) was critical of the portrayals of the characters and images in all Chicano films, he applauded Hollywood's attempt to show the challenges of Chicano life in prison and the barrios, and how the white majority has viewed Chicanos in society.

The portrayal of female gangs was also explored in the Chicano film *Mi Via Loca*. Fregoso (1993; 1995) examined the portrayal of female gangs in this film and observed both the sexist and authentic appearance of the characters (Pitman, 2010). However,

64

most of the criticism of *Mi Vida Loca* comes from the fact that the director was white, even though the film was about Chicano gangs (Pitman, 2010). Regardless, these films were not just about gang life and the Chicano struggles. These films also focused on Hispanic religion, history, culture, and family life (Denzin, 2001).

Film scholar Bev Zalcock (2001) examined the cinematic misogyny of "girl gangs in films" that included prison gangs, motorcycle gangs, girl gangs in schools, and girl gangs in occupations, such as nurses and nuns. In the portrayal of street gangs, Zalcock (2001) examined the women in *West Side Story,* describing them as "girlfriends" and "marginal members" specifically of the Sharks, the Puerto Rican gang (p. 12). The Puerto Rican "sisters" were not violent and were portrayed as more practical than their male counterparts. However, the Latino characters in the film *Mi Vida Loca* were quite the opposite from the West Side Story Latinas. The females in *Mi Vida Loca* were violent, sold drugs and faced poverty, discrimination, and constant confrontations with the police. According to Zalcock (2001), examining Latino female gangs has been long overdue and, like the films portraying male street gangs, *Mi Vida Loca* offered a fresh perspective on female street gangs.

Gang research expert Martin Sanchez-Jankowski (1991) also explored the relationship between gender and the gang's social environment in Hollywood films. Women, often nonwhite (as those depicted in *West Side Story, The Warriors, Colors*, and *Fort Apache, The Bronx),* are regarded as having "loose morals," as engaged in prostitution, and as "alcoholics and/or drug addicts" (p. 300).

Sanchez-Jankowski (1991) also analyzed the social environment (i.e., the communities) within a film's setting. The Hollywood gang films he studied were set in

65

low-income communities where gangs were disorganized and violent. Since the members of the community were portrayed as incapable of solving the gang problem, the police became the only solution. He referred to police presence in the films as "colonial symbolism" (Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991, p. 301). If the police did not act as agents of social control for the community, then chaos would consume the community and gang violence would persist. Finally, he argued that Hollywood's portrayal of gangs has contributed to the "gang myth" and "Hollywood has created mythical kingdoms and mythical characters" (Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991, p. 301-302). Thus, the consequence of producing such films has simply enhanced the social construction of reality. It is those images of gangs, as depicted by Hollywood that the public believes are 'real.'

Research Objectives

There are four primary objectives in this study: (1) to examine the images of street gangs as presented by a select sample of Hollywood films from 1960 to 2009, (2) to determine if the depictions of street gangs in Hollywood films are supported by the characteristics that define a gang in the literature, (3) to observe the emergent patterns and themes in the portrayal of street gangs, including any changes that may have taken place over time, and (4) to address how film makers aim to create a 'realistic' portrayal of street gangs in Hollywood films. The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the representations of street gangs in Hollywood motion pictures and to address the gap in the academic literature relating to those depictions in film. The methodology used in this study is a qualitative content analysis.

CHAPTER IV

METHODS

The general focus of this study is to analyze the portrayal of street gangs in Hollywood films over a 50-year period (1960-2009). This study uses a naturalistic qualitative paradigm that allows for relevant meaning (i.e., themes and categories) to emerge from the collected data (i.e., films). To answer the research questions and identify the patterns, themes, and messages in the 'street gang' films selected for this study, a traditional content analysis is conducted. A qualitative content analysis is defined as "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p.1278). Though content analysis is traditionally associated with quantitative analysis (Altheide, 1996), a qualitative approach allows for a more in-depth analysis into the representations of street gangs in Hollywood films. In addition, a qualitative approach allows for the inquiry to have flexibility. In other words, a qualitative approach has unlimited freedom of movement between the steps of a research study (Tuli, 2010).

When conducting a content analysis, specificity and depth are two important outcomes of research inquiry to consider in a study. This examination searches for the manifest and latent content (Gray, Williamson, Karp, & Dalphin, 2007). Manifest content refers to the visible or surface content such as the actual images in films. For this

67

study, coding of the manifest content are the images depicting the common characteristics of defining a street gang as suggested by the gang literature (group, turf/territory, permanence, leadership, symbols, gang identifiers, law enforcement/ community responses, and crime). A matrix with the definitional variables of a street gang was created and observations were appropriately recorded.

Alternatively, the latent content refers to the underlying meanings behind the representations of street gangs. Furthermore, this study utilizes inductive reasoning to determine the significant meanings behind the themes and emergent patterns of street gangs/gang members portrayed in Hollywood films. In addition to analyzing the visual content in each film, steps were taken to record and analyze the dialogue between gang members, determine the film's primary and secondary storyline, and analyze the background material for creating each 'street gang' film.

A total of 25 films, five from each decade, were examined for their portrayals of street gangs in Hollywood films. All the films selected for analysis were purchased from Amazon, eBay, or rented from Netflix. All the films analyzed were in DVD (digital video disk) or VHS (video home system) format. Each film was viewed in its original theatrical format, and multiple viewings were necessary to achieve a complete and thorough analysis of each film. Anniversary/Special Edition DVDs which provided viewers with a 'behind-the-scenes' look in how each film was made and commentary from the director(s), writer(s), and producer(s) were also observed. The anniversary/special edition DVDs were viewed for background material and directors' insight into decisions made about the film during the filming process.

Initially, each film was viewed without interruption in order to simulate a first time viewing experience; only brief notes were taken during this initial observation. However, in order to adequately provide a rich and descriptive analysis, each street gang film was viewed multiple times to provide a more detailed account of the street gangs images, the actions and reactions of the characters, the social and environmental surroundings taking place in the film, sound effects, music score, and the ongoing dialogue between each character in the film. The importance of film notes (Altheide, 1996) was to construct emerging themes regarding the framing of street gangs portrayed in these Hollywood films.

Selection Process of 'Street Gang' Films

When selecting any film or groups of films for analyses, methodology is always a point of concern, and there are always disagreements about which film is an appropriate choice (Rafter, 2007). Therefore, in an effort to avoid selecting films based on personal opinions, this study implemented more than one resource for data collection in order to help validate the data and provide a more representative sample for final analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). To conduct a content analysis on the portrayal of street gangs in Hollywood films and observe the emergent patterns and themes in these films, it was necessary to explore multiple data sources that best represent the depiction of street gangs in Hollywood motion pictures. Three data sources to determine the final selection of 'street gang' films are: (1) the academic literature that focused on street gangs and 'street gang' films, (2) news reports on 'street gang' films associated with gang violence, and 3) a list of 'street gang' films as suggested by two popular online film databases, the

Internet Movie Database (IMDb) (http://www.imdb.com) and *All Movie Guide* (AMG) (http://www.allmovie.com). This process allowed for a representative sample of 'street gang' films to be selected and further examined. More importantly, these three data sources—themselves forms of media—are also significant sources to the social construction of street gangs.

<center>Academic Literature</center>

The primary source of data collected to determine which 'street gang' films to include in the final sample was the academic literature specifically discussing 'street gang' films. A search in the library's *Academic Search Premier* database for peer-reviewed journal articles and books that mentioned or discussed 'street gang' films was conducted using key words such as 'gang,' 'street gang,' 'movie,' and/or 'film.' While most articles were found in the social science journals (criminal justice, criminology, sociology), the humanities and film journals also mentioned some gang-related films. In addition, this author's own personal library collection of literature on gangs was utilized.

<center>News Sources</center>

Newspaper reports were the second source utilized for collecting a representative sample of 'street gang' films for this study. Articles that focused on gang movies and gang violence were searched in the Newspaper database *Pro Quest*. Film reviews were not considered as a source for analysis. Instead, articles considered for this study were the ones that discussed the controversy behind the screening of a gang film, any association that a film might have with real gangs or gang violence, and/or the film's

<center>70</center>

overall influence on youth behavior. Articles about gang films and theater violence were reported in major newspapers and magazines, such as the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, the *Boston Herald*, *Cincinnati Post*, the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, the *Washington Post, Newsweek*, *Time, the Houston Chronicle*, and the *San Francisco Examiner*.

Internet Sources

The final data sources used to determine which 'street gang' films to include in the final sample were the two popular online film databases, *Internet Movie Database* (IMDb) and *All Movie Guide* (AMG). IMDb is an online film, television, and entertainment database that exceeds 1.5 million entries. IMDb has a staff of film critics and reviewers who classify films and place them in their appropriate categories or genres. The public can subscribe to IMDb's membership, which allows consumers to categorize and review films. According to IMDb (2010), the database is the "most comprehensive and authoritative source of information on movies, TV and celebrities." IMDb, the more popular of the two Internet film databases examined in this study, is used in other studies examining criminal justice issues in film (e.g., Rafter, 2007; Sulkunen, 2007; Goering & Krause, 2005; Welsh et al., 2011).

Similar to IMDb, AMG is an online website for public use that specializes in digital entertainment technology solutions. The primary goal of AMG is to provide consumers with information about films such as plot summaries, total gross sales, distribution year, who directed/produced each film, and genre. Currently there are over 220,000 films listed in the database. AMG has its own film industry experts who provide plot summaries, reviews, and also categorize the films.

71

Both IMDb and AMG offer features that allow consumers to search a film based on a particular category, theme, genre, or film type. Some of the categories or themes suggested for gang-related films are 'gangster,' 'gang warfare,' 'gang leader,' and 'youth gang.' Both IMDb and AMG provide consumers with 'street gang' films as a category to select. This study is the first to utilize AMG's film database and combine it with IMDb in order to cross-reference the two sites for similarities and differences in which gang films are categorized as 'street gang' films.

<div align="center">Steps in Film Selection Process</div>

Below is the seven step process that was implemented to construct the final sample of 'street gang' films for a qualitative data content analysis:

STEP 1 – From academic sources, a search for 'street gang' films discussed in the literature was recorded. This resulted in 87 sources that analyzed/discussed/mentioned 'street gang' films by gang researchers, social scientists, and film scholars. A frequency distribution of the 'street gang' films in the academic literature is presented in Table 1. Based on the frequency in referencing a 'street gang' film, these films are considered the best examples observed in the academic literature for the portrayal of street gangs, the violence associated with street gangs, and how life of a gang member is depicted. Only those with five or more film referenced by authors were recorded.

Table 1. 'Street Gang' Films Mentioned/Discussed in the Academic Literature (f >= 5).

Film	Mentioned in Literature (f >= n)
Boyz N the Hood	44
Colors	32
Menace II Society	27
New Jack City	24
West Side Story	22
American Me	20
The Warriors	16
Juice	11
Mi Vida Loca	11
Boulevard Nights	10
Blood In, Blood Out	10
Scarface	9
Zoot Suit	8
Clockers	6
Straight Out of Brooklyn	6
Godfather Series	5
Once Upon a Time in America	5
Pulp Fiction	5
South Central	5
Sugar Hill	5
Walk Proud	5

STEP 2 – A search for 'gang' and 'street gang' was conducted on IMDb. Because IMDb provides the capability to search for specific categories in their database, any combination using the keyword 'gang' (e.g., 'gang war,' 'gang leader,' 'girl gang,' 'youth gang') was included in the search in order to generate a substantial list of films for consideration in the selection process for analyzing 'street gang' films. There were 2,391 'gang' films from 1900-2012 before exclusions and duplications.

STEP 3 – From the initial IMDb search, a search for only 'street gang' films was conducted. This generated a list of 121 films from 1960-2009 before exclusions (see Appendix A).

STEP 4 – A search for only 'street gang' films was conducted on AMG. AMG does not offer an extensive search engine feature like IMDb but does provide a list of 'street gang' films. This generated a list of 84 films from 1960-2009 before exclusions (see Appendix B).

STEP 5 – Next, a search for newspaper sources was conducted. Using the initial list of films referenced in the academic literature and from the online film databases, a search was conducted in *ProQuest*. The news articles selected were those that included the title of the gang-related film and reports of gang violence associated with the film (see Table 2). Most of the significant news reports about the portrayal of street gangs in Hollywood films were reported during the period immediately following the original release date of the film. The news articles referenced and examined for this study were those reports that included information about a 'street gang' film, any reported criminal/delinquent activities potentially associated with the film, and any concern that the film's release might lead to problems for theaters, law enforcement, and communities.

Table 2 shows those Hollywood 'street gang' films with article(s) linking the film to some type of gang-related behavior. The most common films reported by newspapers were *Colors* and *Boyz N the Hood.*

Table 2. List of Top 'Street Gang' Films (based on Academic/Online Sources) in News Reports that Reported on a Films Impact/Influence on Gang Culture/Violence.

Film Title	News Reports
Boyz N the Hood	(Becker, 1991; Bryant, 1991; Fleming & Robbins, 1991; Harris & Zamora, 1991; Lancaster, 1991; Miller, 1991; Neely, 1991; Newsweek, 1991; Palmer, 1991; Schaefer & Reibman, 1991; Stevenson, 1991)

Table 2. Cont.

Film Title	News Reports
Colors	(Alim, 1988; Brower, 1988; Cling, 1988; Cooper & O'Connor, 1988; Emerson, 1988; Goldstein, 1988; Hernandez, 1988; Manning & Rojos, 1988; McCarthy, 1988; New York Times, 1988; O'Sullivan, 1988; Pool & Malnic, 1988; Scott, 1988; Voland, 1988; Hays, 1988; Walsh & Kavanaugh, 1988)
The Warriors	(Stein, 1979; People Magazine, 1979; Globe and Mail, 1979)
New Jack City	(Balley & Ingersell, 1991; Barnhill, 1991; Kuntzman, 1991; Leland, 1991; Mydans, 1991; New York Times, 1991; Painton, 1991, Parks, 1991)
American Me	(De La Pena, 1997)
Menace II Society	(Burbach, 1993; Charles, 1993; *Philadelphia Daily News*,1994; Jaaffar, 2004; Mal, 1993; Milling, 1993; Newman, 1993; Schaeffer, 1993; Seymour, 1993; Stinebaker, 1993; Turnquist, 1993; Will, 1993)
Juice	(Fox, 1992; McBride, 1992; New York Times, 1992)
Blood In, Blood Out	(Weinraub, 1993; Schaefer, 1993)
Boulevard Nights	(Gillott, 1979; The Associated Press, 1979)

Notes: See Appendix C for full listing of citations.

STEP 6 – From the lists generated from Step 1 (academic sources), Step 3 and 4 (the 'street gang' film lists from IMDb and AMG), and Step 5 (news reports), a sample list of films representing street gangs was generated. In addition, by applying Klein's (1995) exclusions the following gang-related films were excluded: motorcycle, prison, superhero, horror, westerns, science-fiction, fantasy, foreign, documentaries, television/cable movies, biographies, music videos, and docu-dramas were omitted from the selection criterion. After exclusions, there were 195 films from 1960-2009 (see Appendix D).

Of all the films suggested by IMDb and AMG, only seven (7) films were categorized in both online database lists as 'street gang' films. The seven films are *The Warriors* (1979), *The Outsiders* (1983), *Rumble Fish* (1983), *Colors* (1988), *Boyz N the Hood* (1991), *Feel the Noise* (2007), and *Gran Torino* (2008). Those films were automatically included in the final sample.

STEP 7 – From the list of 195 'street gang' films, five (5) films per decade for a total of 25 films were selected for the final sample. A convenient sample was implemented for each decade, but priority went to films that were most often represented in the academic literature, the 'street gang' films listed in IMDb and AMG, and the availability to view these films. Since more than five films were represented in each decade, it was necessary to create selection criteria for each decade in order to generate the top five films of each decade. The following criteria were given priority for final selection:

1) Films mentioned in the academic literature with 10 or more references. This served as the most important criterion,

2) Films represented in both IMDb and AMG,

3) Films mentioned in newspaper reports with the most references,

4) Films with at least two or more keywords using the phrase 'gang' or some combination (e.g., 'gang war,' 'teenage gang,' 'gang leader') when searching IMDb, and

5) Films with the highest revenue (when available) and distribution to theaters (when available).

The final sample of Hollywood films portraying 'street gang' films for further analysis is presented in Table 3. Also included in this list are the estimated budget

figures, total domestic (adjusted and unadjusted) gross ticket sales, and number of

releases to theaters.

Table 3. Final List of 'Street Gang' Films Selected for Analysis, includes Estimated
Budget, Total Domestic Lifetime (Unadjusted) Gross Income, Total Domestic (Adjusted)
Gross (based on 2010 ticket sales), and Number of Releases to Theaters, 1960-2009.

Year	Title of Film	Estimated budget (millions)	Total Domestic lifetime (Unadjusted) Gross Income	Total Domestic Adjusted Gross Income	Number of Releases to Theaters
1960	*This Rebel Breed*	NA	NA	NA	NA
1961	*West Side Story*	NA	$43,656,822	$441,605,500	NA
1962	*13 West Street*	NA	NA	NA	NA
1966	*Teenage Gang Debs*	NA	NA	NA	NA
1967	*I Call First*	$75k	NA	NA	NA
1976	*Cat Murkil and the Silks*	NA	NA	NA	NA
1979	*The Wanderers*	NA	NA	NA	NA
1979	*Walk Proud*	NA	$1,675,040	$5,265,400	NA
1979	*Boulevard Nights*	$2	$832,384	NA	NA
1979	*The Warriors*	$3.5	$22,490,039	$70,695,800	551
1980	*Defiance*	NA	NA	NA	NA
1982	*Death Wish II*	$2	$16,100,000	$43,207,100	377
1983	*The Outsiders*	$10	$25,697,647	$64,366,500	1002
1983	*Rumble Fish*	$10	$2,494,480	$6,248,100	296
1988	*Colors*	NA	$46,616,067	$89,489,200	1388
1991	*Boyz N the Hood*	$6	$57,504,069	$107,768,900	931
1991	*New Jack City*	$8.5	$47,624,353	$89,253,200	905
1992	*Juice*	$5	$20,146,880	$38,303,400	1100
1993	*Menace II Society*	$3.5	$27,912,072	$54,194,700	581
1993	*Mi Vida Loca*	NA	$3,267,313	$6,167,300	NA
2001	*Training Day*	$45	$76,631,907	$106,824,400	2712
2002	*Havoc*	$9	NA	NA	NA
2002	*Gangs of New York*	$97	$77,812,000	$102,751,300	2340
2007	*Feel the Noise*	NA	$5,898,393	$6,764,300	1015
2008	*Gran Torino*	$33	$148,095,302	$168,739,800	3045

Variables, Definitions, and Coding Scheme

The unit of analysis for this study was US-made Hollywood 'street gang' films. A coding scheme was created based on the culmination of definitions of a 'street gang' and a 'gang member' as suggested by the academic literature in order to create frequency distributions. The independent variable is time (e.g., 1960-2009) and the dependent variables are listed below (see Appendix E for coding instrument; and Appendix F for coding scheme).

Independent Variable

'Time' is the independent variable in this study. The time frame in which 'street gang' films were analyzed was from 1960 to 2009. The films were divided into five decades (1960-1969, 1970-1979, 1980-1989, 1990-1999, and 2000-2009).

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables in this study (listed below) were the common characteristics that typify a definition of a 'street gang' and a 'gang member' found in the literature. In addition, demographics variables most often included in national gang data such as gender, race/ethnicity, age, and location were examined. Most of the variables were dichotomous and were coded as 'yes = 1' and 'no = 0' and entered in an Excel spreadsheet in order to determine frequencies and possible relationships.

Group/Group Size

To define the 'group' and the 'group's size,' the portrayal of the gang and its members was documented by the number of individuals in the group (three or more) observed in the film. 'Group' was treated as a dichotomous variable (yes = a group was observed, and no = no group was observed). 'Group size' was coded into two categories: 1 = the group (i.e., street gangs) had three to nine individuals; 2 = the group had ten of more members; and 0 = a group was not observed.

Permanence

Most of the films observed were not portrayed over an extended period of time but rather over the course of a day (e.g., *The Warriors, Training Day*), several months (e.g., *Menace II Society, Walk Proud, Boulevard Nights, 13 West Street*), or a time period that was undetermined. While the presence of street gangs was possible to observe, the permanence of a gang was more problematic. For a gang to have permanence in the film, the story or image needed to show that more than one year had elapsed. Some of the more obvious films that extended beyond one year were *Gangs of New York* and *Boyz N the Hood*. 'Permanence' was treated as a dichotomous variable: Yes/1 = permanence was observed; and No/0 = permanence was not observed.

Turf/Territory

'Turf/territory' was defined as the observation of gang members protecting or dominating a particular geographic location. The incidence of gang fights, graffiti tags, or dialogue related to the gang's turf/territory was observed. 'Turf/territory' was treated

as a dichotomous variable: Yes/1 = turf/territory was observed; and No/0 = turf/territory was not observed.

Leadership

'Leadership' was observed as the presence of a gang leader who provides direction and order within the gang, and it highly respected. 'Leadership' was treated as a dichotomous variable: Yes/1 = leadership was observed; and No/0 = leadership was not observed.

Graffiti (Communication)

'Graffiti' was observed in two ways: (1) as 'presence'—the tagging on any type of structure (e.g., building or car) and (2) more narrowly, as a 'form of communication'—tagging to communicate a specific message to others (e.g., to claim ownership over a territory, to demonstrate disrespect to a rival gang and its members, or to memorialize a fallen gang member.)

Presence. 'Presence' of gang graffiti was defined as being able to identify any type of graffiti, gang-related or not, on the structures or ground around the characters in any scene in the film. 'Presence' of graffiti was a dichotomous variable: Yes/1 = graffiti was observed; and No/0 = graffiti was not observed.

Form of communication. Graffiti was also recorded based on the intention of the gang members tagging a structure. If the tagging was intended to claim territorial rights, boast presence, disrespect a rival gang, or memorialize a fallen gang member, then the tagging was identified as a form of communication. 'Form of communication' was

80

recorded as a dichotomous variable: Yes/1 = form of communication was observed; and No/0 = form of communication was not observed.

Gang Identifiers (Colors, Style of Dress, Monikers, Gang Name)

The observation of 'colors' (e.g., red, blue), 'monikers' (i.e., nicknames), 'style of dress' (e.g., clothing, accessories), and 'gang name' (e.g., Bloods, Crips) was recorded.

Colors. 'Colors' was defined as any observable color on clothing (e.g., t-shirt, jacket) or an accessory (e.g., scarf, hat, and bandana) that was worn by any member of the street gang. Colors was a dichotomous variable: Yes/1 = colors were observed; and No/0 = colors were not observed).

Style of Dress. Whether gang members wore a distinctive 'style of dress' was treated as a dichotomous variable: Yes/1 = distinctive style of dress for gang members was observed; and No/0 = distinctive style of dress for gang members was not observed.

Monikers. 'Monikers' was defined as nicknames given to gang members. Any audible dialogue between gang members or between gang members and law enforcement where a 'moniker' was used was recorded. A 'moniker' was recorded as a dichotomous variable: Yes/1 = a moniker was used; and No/0 = a moniker was not used.

Gang Name. Another symbolic identifier of a gang was the street gang's name. The gang's name was typically expressed in either dialogue or as some form of graffiti (i.e., tagging). The 'gang name' was treated as a dichotomous variable: Yes/1 = the name of the gang was discussed or observed; and No/0 = the name of the gang was not discussed or observed.

81

Negative Responses by Law Enforcement/Community

A negative response was defined as any comment or action by law enforcement personnel that would show disdain or disapproval towards gang members. A negative response from community members was defined as their expressions of physical and verbal frustration or disdain with having to deal with gangs and the gangs' behavior in their communities. The negative response by law enforcement officials and/or the community was observed and coded as a dichotomous variable: Yes/1 = negative responses by law enforcement and/or the community were observed; and No/0 = negative responses from law enforcement and/or the community were not observed.

Types of Crimes

The crimes observed in the film were defined by their actions or implied actions by the actors in the film. The types of crimes selected are derived from the 2011 National Gang Threat Assessment report. 'Drug/alcohol-use' consisted of gang members smoking and drinking. 'Drug trafficking/distribution' was the gang member's selling and/or purchase of drugs. 'Homicide/murder' was a death of one person caused by another in the film. However, it did not have to be caused by a gang member. 'Drive-by shooting' was the act of committing murder by gunning down a rival gang member or other individual from the moving vehicle. 'Assault/battery' was the act of beating another individual up. This included aggravated assaults. 'Robbery' was the stealing of personal property from a person by using force or the threat of force. 'Burglary/breaking' and entering was the act of entering a dwelling with the intent to steal. 'Larceny/theft' was the act of intentionally taking items without the owner's consent. 'Motor vehicle theft'

was the taking of an automobile without the owner's permission. 'Vandalism' was the destruction of property including defacing property with graffiti. 'Extortion' was obtaining money through the use of force or coercion. 'Rape' was the act of sexually assaulting another and engaging in sexual intercourse against that person's will. 'Witness intimidation' was the act of threatening a person by a gang member's demonstration of power and strength to prevent the person from reporting the gang's illegal activities. The various types of crime were observed and coded as a dichotomous variable, yes or no. The various types of crimes were coded into thirteen categories in order to present frequency distributions of the types of crime observed in the films: 1 = drug/alcohol use; 2 = drug trafficking/drug distribution; 3 = homicide/ murder; 4 = drive-by shooting; 5 = assault and battery; 6 = robbery; 7 = burglary/ breaking and entering; 8 = larceny/theft; 9 = motor vehicle theft; 10 = vandalism; 11 = extortion; 12 = rape; and 13 = witness intimidation.

Demographic Variables

Race/Ethnicity

Race/ethnicity was coded for only those individuals portrayed as gang members in the film. Race/ethnicity was coded into five categories: 1 = White; 2 = Black; 3 = Hispanic/Latino; 4 = Asian; and 5 = other.

Gender

Gender is defined as either male or female. The gender of each portrayed gang member in the film was coded as a dichotomous variable: 1 = male; 2 = female.

Age

Age was defined as the number of years since the gang member's birth. Many times the age of the actors portraying gang members in films was assumed or the storyline clearly indicated the age of the gang members. However, when the age of the gang member was not clearly defined or the portrayal of the gang member's age was in question, the film's corresponding scenes such as drinking, driving, contact with police and peers, an indication of a school setting, and the general storyline of the film helped identify the approximate age of the gang members. Therefore, age was divided into two categories and measured at the ordinal level: 1 = teenage years (13-19 years old), and 2 = Non-teenage years (20 years old and older).

Location

Location was defined as the geographic setting where the gang was located and where the story primarily took place in the film. The indicators which distinguished geographic locations included houses, buildings, streets, trash/litter, and the general appearance in the film's background settings. Location was coded into ordinal categories: 1 = Urban; 2 = Suburban; 3 = Rural.

Limitations/Delimitations

As with any study on films, the selection process is often burdened with methodological issues and disagreements over film choice. Although an extensive search of potential films featuring street gangs was conducted, this study relied on previous researchers' input on 'street gang' films found in the academic literature, news reports,

84

and online databases. It is possible that some of these films were wrongly identified, mislabeled, and/or improperly categorized. For example, the online film databases IMDb and AMG rely on film experts to categorize each film. In addition, both sites offer membership where consumers are able to make suggestions and/or offer information about a film. The fact that only seven films are similarly categorized as 'street gang' films in the online databases shows the lack of consistency in identifying what is a street gang. Nevertheless, this study demonstrates the importance of suggesting a more valid list that best represents street gangs in Hollywood films.

Similarly, there are limitations with using academic/popular culture literature. There is no way to verify that the authors, especially those who only briefly mention a gang-related film, have actually viewed them. One can only assume that those experts in researching gangs are able to suggest an accurate example of what is a 'street gang' film. In addition, an author may simply be citing previous examples suggested by others. There is no way to verify or validate their selection processes.

In studies that do offer an analysis of gang-related films, the methodological approach to selecting the films is often based on personal opinion or expertise (e.g., Knox, 1999), or the films are randomly selected because the author(s) believe(s) that the films are good examples of street gangs (Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991; Clapp, 2007).

News reports are also fraught with problems. News reports are more subjective than objective, despite claims made by media outlets that what is being reported is based on objective reporting. Also, news reports are often recycled, telling the same story but from a different perspective and by a different author (Surette, 2011). Finally, researcher bias is a criticism for any content analysis.

85

The delimitation of this study was the decision to focus only on 'street gang' films and not on all types of gang-related films, particularly gangster, motorcycle, and prison gang films. In addition, due to the volume of films produced since the early 1900s, this study concerned itself only with films from 1960 to 2009. Finally, this study was limited to just one researcher who coded and interpreted the data.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS and DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter reports the findings from a content analysis regarding the portrayal of street gangs in Hollywood films from 1960-2009. The qualitative approach of this study incorporates frequencies and percentages to describe the characteristics of a gang found in the sample of films used in this study. Comparisons are also made between the academic constructions of a street gang and those constructions made by Hollywood. A reflexive approach to analyzing the film's content, images and dialogue allows for the discovery of emergent themes and patterns that portray street gangs over a 50-year time period.

The Emergent Themes/Patterns of 'Street Gang' Films

After a content analysis of 25 selected films was conducted, five patterns and themes emerged from observing and analyzing the portrayal of street gangs in Hollywood films from 1960 to 2009: (1) the extent to which the portrayal of street gangs in films resembles the portrayals of street gangs by the academic literature and law enforcement accounts; (2) the desire to project authenticity on the part of the directors, producers, and writers for films that portray street gangs is important in creating cinematic realism; (3) the changes in the portrayal of the racial and ethnic makeup of street gangs occurs over each decade; (4) street gangs are portrayed as perpetrators of violent criminal acts, but

also as victims of failed social, economic, and political structures; and (5) the thematic focus of each film is not about street gangs per se, but rather the films use street gangs as a vehicle to tell a broader story of social significance.

'Reel' Street Gang Resemblance to 'Real' Street Gangs

One of the research objectives was to determine whether street gangs depicted in Hollywood films resemble the depictions of street gangs that come from the existing academic and law enforcement literature on gangs. To address this question, the definitions and characteristics of street gangs that come from academic and law enforcement definitions were coded, observed, and analyzed.

Characteristics of Street Gangs Portrayed in Films

There is a reasonably strong correspondence between the characteristics of street gangs that are provided by law enforcement officials, policy-makers, and gang researchers to the representation of street gangs that appear in the selected sample of Hollywood films in the current study. Table 4 provides an overview of the films that were analyzed and identifies the observed definitional characteristics of street gang and gang members in the films. The definitional elements and characteristics are discussed below.

Table 4. Definitional Characteristics Observed in 'Street Gang' Films.

		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1960	*This Rebel Breed*	x		x	x			x	x	x	x	x
1961	*West Side Story*	x		x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
1962	*13 West Street*	x			x			x			x	x
1966	*Teenage Gang Debs*	x			x				x	x	x	x
1967	*Who's Knocking at My Door?*	x										x
1976	*Cat Murkil and the Silks*	x		x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
1979	*The Warriors*	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
1979	*Boulevard Nights*	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
1979	*The Wanderers*	x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
1979	*Walk Proud*	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
1980	*Defiance*	x		x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
1982	*Death Wish II*	x						x	x		x	x
1982	*The Outsiders*	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x
1983	*Rumble Fish*	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
1988	*Colors*	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
1991	*Boyz n the Hood*	x				x	x		x		x	x
1991	*New Jack City*	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
1992	*Juice*	x	x			x			x	x	x	x
1993	*Menace II Society*	x				x			x		x	x
1993	*Mi Vida Loca*	x	x	x		x			x	x	x	x
2001	*Training Day*	x					x	x				x
2002	*Gangs of New York*	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
2005	*Havoc*	x		x	x			x	x	x	x	x
2007	*Feel the Noise*	x				x						x
2008	*Gran Torino*	x		x	x	x			x		x	x
	Totals	25	9	18	17	15	9	17	21	17	22	25

Notes: A = Groups of 3 or more; B = Permanence; C = Turf/Territory; D = Leadership;
E = Graffiti; F = Colors; G = Style of Dress; H = Monikers; I = Gang Name; J = Law
Enforcement/Community Response; K = Crime

89

Group/Group Size

As one would expect, the concept of 'group' is an important attribute for virtually all scholars in their efforts to define a gang. Likewise, group membership is essential to law enforcement definitions, although thirty-two states allow groups as small as three people to constitute a street gang (National Gang Center, 2012). Figure 5 shows that 62% of the films observed had gang membership of three to nine individuals who represented the gang. The remaining films (38%) had 10 of more gang members represented. The largest gangs represented (10 or more gang members) were featured in *The Wanderers, Colors, The Warriors, Gangs of New York, This Rebel Breed, The Outsiders, West Side Story, Walk Proud, New Jack City, and Havoc*.
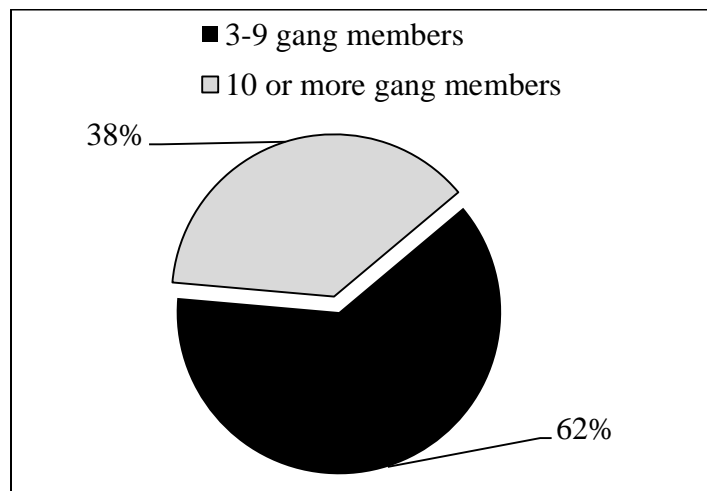
Figure 5. Percentage of Films Depicting Group/Group Size

Permanence

Figure 6 shows that only 28% of the films indicate that the gang had operated longer than one year while 72% of films do not depict permanence in the film.
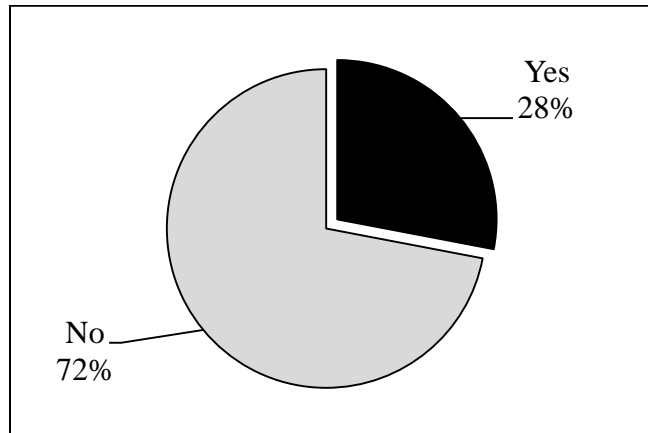
Figure 6. Percentage of Films Depicting Permanence of the Gang

Turf/Territory

Curry and Decker (2003) pointed out that turf/territory claims are not always present in definitions of street gangs, but they are common. Figure 7 shows that 64% of the films make some reference to the gang claiming turf or territory while 34% make no reference to territory or the gang members do not engage in any confrontation about their territory/turf.
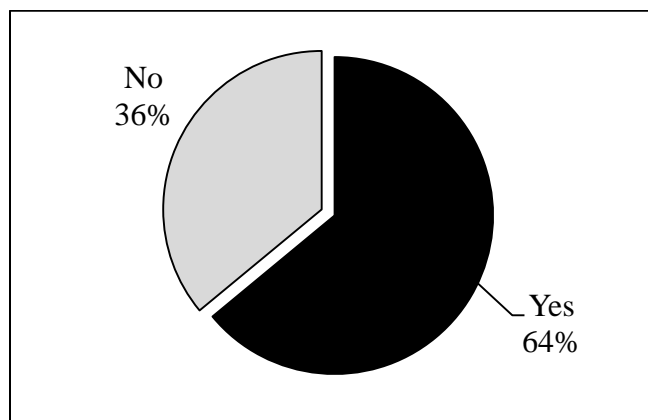
Figure 7. Percentage of Films Depicting Turf/Territorial Fights

91

For example, there is dialogue between gang members on the importance of claiming a territory for the specific purposes of drug control (see *New Jack City*) or racial/ethnic boundaries are established in the community (see *Walk Proud, Boulevard Nights, Colors*). The act of tagging (i.e., defacing property with markers and paint to show support for the gang) a wall or building as an indicator of who controls the territory (see *Colors, Mi Vida Loca, Boulevard Nights*) also denotes territory. In another example, members of the Cash Money Brothers (CMB) in *New Jack City* take over an apartment complex and push all other competitors out of the drug trade in order to maintain control of drug distribution in the city. The CMB also execute, in broad daylight, a local drug dealer named Fat Smitty who controlled much of the drug sales in the area.

The films that offer the best visual examples of turf battles are *West Side Story, The Warriors, Walk Proud and Boulevard Nights*. The gangs in *West Side Story* fight over territory and the right to claim certain areas in the community. The film displays multiple gang fights in the form of choreographed dances. Those gang dances were the reason for some of the criticism that followed *West Side Story* on the grounds that it romanticized gang life. In *The Warriors*, the Warriors, a street gang from Coney Island, encounter a handful of gangs on their way home after an all-gang meeting in the Bronx. The importance of turf is depicted most directly when the Warriors encounter the Orphans; the latter do not take it lightly that the Warriors are passing through their territory without permission and consequently take action against them. After the Orphan confrontation, the Warriors face numerous additional gangs as they make their way home back to Coney Island.

92

Other films such as *Menace II Society, Boyz N the Hood,* and *Mi Vida Loca* do not have clear visual examples of the importance of turf/territory, but they do make references to turf and the importance of protecting one's neighborhood. For example, in *Menace II Society*, Caine and Sharif are arrested by the police, beaten, and then dropped off in Latino territory with the hope that the Latino gangs would beat them up for being in the wrong neighborhood. Another subtle example of turf/territorial dominance is in *Boyz N the Hood*. Sitting on the stoop with his friends, Doughboy observes a red car with tinted windows stop at an intersection in the neighborhood. After the car spends an unusual amount of time at the stop sign, Doughboy gets up and extends his arms in a confrontational gesture, at which point the car quickly drives off.

Leadership

For most street gangs, a gang leader is someone who provides direction and order within the gang, and is highly respected. As indicated in Figure 8, 68% of the films show the gang having some form of leadership by an individual.
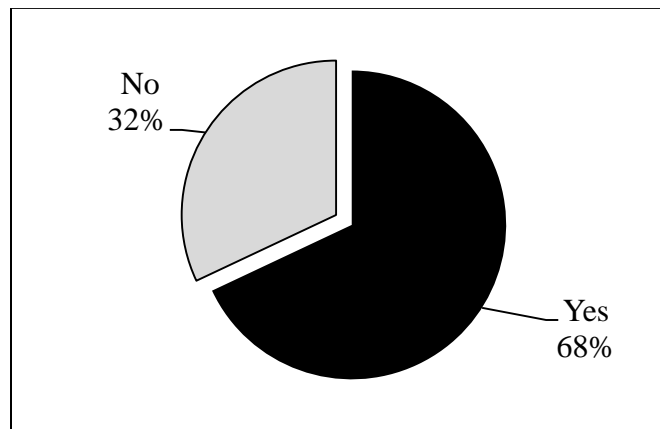
Figure 8. Percentage of Films Depicting an Identifiable Leader in the Street Gang

In some instances, the leadership role is challenged. For example, in *Teenage Gang Debs*, the first gang leader, Johnny, is betrayed and killed by Nino who takes up the role as the gang's new leader. Challenge for leadership is also expressed in *The Warriors* and *West Side Story*. In both films, the leader is killed and a lower ranking gang member rises to stake his claim to leadership of the gang. In *West Side Story*, Riff is the leader of the Jets and Bernardo is the leader of the Sharks. However, once Riff is killed, Ice takes over as leader of the Jets, despite being challenged by another member. In *The Warriors*, Cleon is the leader, but only briefly, as he too is killed early in the film, allowing Swan to take over. In turn, Swan's leadership is challenged by another member. In *The Outsiders*, both the Socs and Greasers have leaders. The former leader of the Greasers is Darryl "Darry" Curtis who joins the gang for a rumble at the end of the film, but most of the younger Greasers seek Dallas for advice and protection. In *New Jack City*, Nino Brown is the leader of the Cash Money Brothers (CMB), an organization that he builds into a crack-cocaine empire with his best friend. Lastly, the gangs in *Gangs of New York* are led by Bill "The Butcher" and the Priest. Other films with identifiable leaders include *Colors, Cat Murkil & the Silks*, *13 West Street, This Rebel Breed, Walk Proud,* and *Boulevard Nights*.

Graffiti (Communication)

Gang graffiti is another phenomenon that is used by law enforcement to identify the existence of a gang. While there are various styles, types, and rules about gang graffiti, one common aspect of gang graffiti is that it either represents the name of a gang or a gang member. Figure 9.1 graphically represents the observation of graffiti anywhere

94

in the film (i.e. presence). In the sampled films, graffiti is found on buildings, walls, and even on the ground as in *West Side Story*. Of the films analyzed, 60% have presence of graffiti in the background.
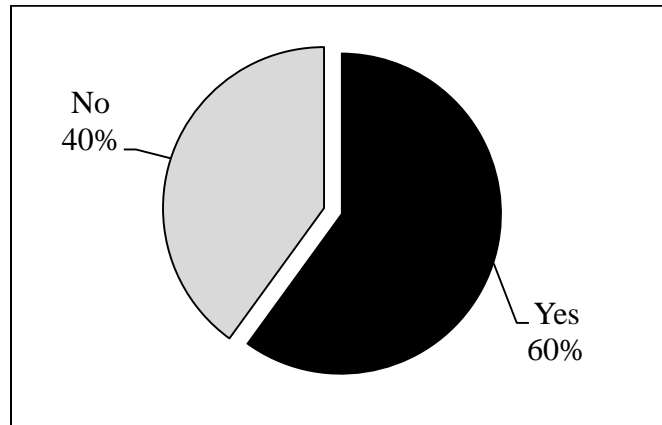
Figure 9.1. Percentage of Films Depicting Graffiti Observed Anywhere

While the presence of graffiti is prevalant in the 'street gang' films analyzed, the use of graffiti as a form of communcation known as 'tagging' is less common, as illustrated in Figure 9.2. According to law enforcement and academic sources (Delany, 2006; Leet et al, 2000; Howell, 2012), tagging is a form of vandalism whereby an individual or a group defaces property (e.g., buildings, bridges) with spray paint cans or paint markers in an effort to announce their presence in a given neighborhood or show disrespect to a rival gang However, not all tagging is done by gang members, and the tagging tends to be conducted by non-gang members seeking notority and prestige through their artistic abilities (Tobin, 2008, Howell, 2012). Only 20% (n = 5) of the 'street gang' films show any gang member tagging their gang name or crossing out a rival's name. For example, in *The Warriors*, a member of the Warriors sprays a 'W' on a gravestone to let others know that the gang was in the area. In the film *Colors,* gang members tag their gang monikers (i.e., names) or cross out the graffiti of rival gangs to

95

show disrespect to that gang. In *West Side Story*, the graffiti tagging of the 'Jets' and 'Sharks' is present throughout the film on the building walls, trash cans, and on sidewalks.
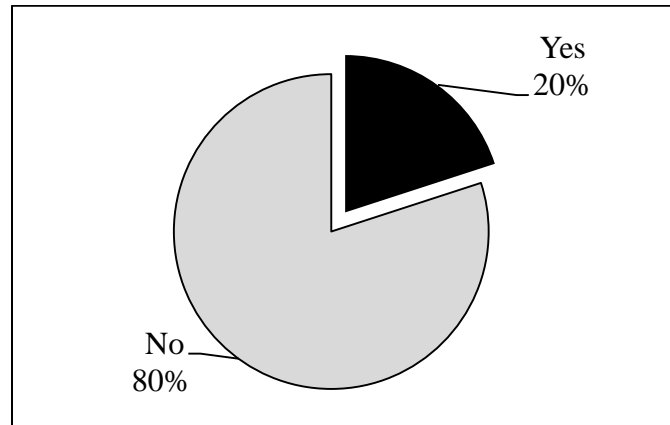
Figure 9.2. Percentage of Films Depicting Tagging as a Form of Communication

Gang Identifiers (Colors, Style of Dress, Monikers, Gang Name)

    Colors. Law enforcement officials often use gang identifiers such as colors, graffiti, and monikers to distingush street gangs from other non-criminal groups. In fact, 25 states use symbols as a key characteristic in defining a street gang in their state criminal statuates (Gilbertson & Malinski, 2005). As indicated in Figure 10.1, the use of colors to identify the group or to allow members to show their allegiance to a particaulr group is not typically found in films. In only 32% of the films analyzed were colors an observable trait among the gangs represented. Though the use of colors is typically a prominent identifer for law enforcement officials today (2012), the films of three significant time periods, the 1960s, 1980s, and 1990s fail to link the street gang with any color. In addition, five films (see *This Rebel Breed, 13 West Street, Teenage Gang Debs, Who's Knocking at My Door?*, and *Rumble Fish*) were featured in black and white. Thus no observation could be made as to the gang's identifying color.

96
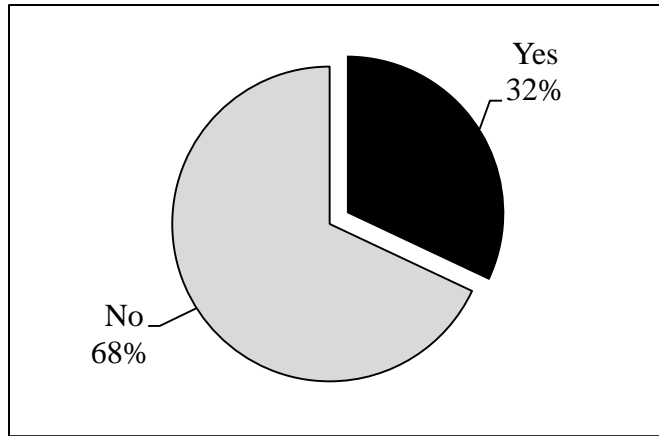
Figure 10.1. Percentage of Films Featuring 'Colors' as a Gang Identifier

Style of Dress. Style of dress is another identifier used by law enforcement in their effort to distinguish gang members from the rest of the general public; however, the influence of popular culture and the fashion industry has transformed this identifier into a challenge for law enforcement (Curry & Decker, 2003). As shown in Figure 10.2, a unique gang style of dress is observed in 72% of the films. The challenge in assessing this characteristic is differentiating between the common dress of the film's decade and the unique style of clothing that might indicate an association with a street gang. For example, a currently popular depiction of the dress of Hispanic gang members involves loose fitting khaki pants or shorts, a white t-shirt with a button-down plaid or flannel shirt over it, with only the top button done. Older depictions of Hispanic gangs often incorporate dress shirts, suspenders and a fedora inspired by zoot suit fashion. Black street gang members are often depicted as wearing hooded sweatshirts, baggy jeans or 'Dickie' work pants, and Doc-Martin boots or a brand name basketball shoe (e.g., Converse, British Knights, and Adidas) or old style Nike tennis shoes. Other fashion accessories often attributed to gang members are bandanas, jewelry (custom and religious), and baseball-type hats to signify association with a particular gang.

97
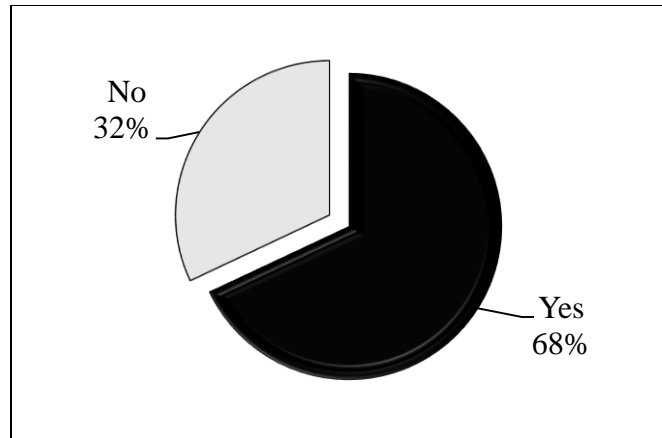
Figure 10.2. Percentage of Films Depicting 'Style of Dress' by Street Gangs

Monikers. The use of monikers, the nicknames given to gang members, is another

gang identifier for law enforcement. As shown in Figure 10.3, 84% of the films observed

have monikers used by gang members. Some of the more prominent monikers from the

films analyzed include Q from *Juice*, Motorcycle Boy from *Rumble Fish*, Sad Girl and

Mousey from *Mi Via Loca*, O-Dog from *Menace II Society*, Gee-Money from *New Jack

City*, Daddy-O from *West Side Story*, and Rocket and Frog in *Colors.*
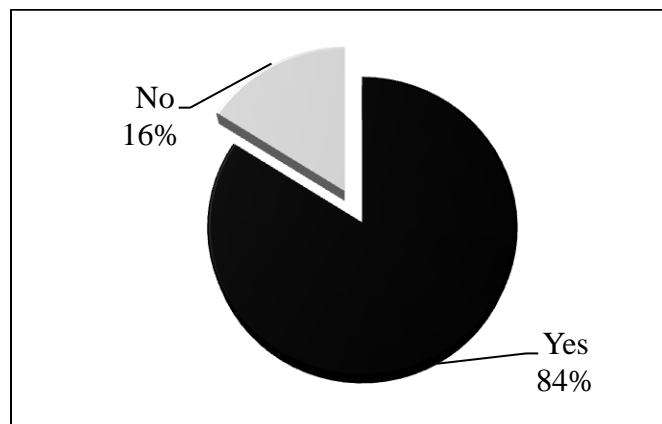
Figure 10.3. Percentage of Films Using 'Monikers' to Distinguish Gang Members.

98

Considering the time-periods when these films were produced, the distinctive style of clothing is not easily distinguishable unless the director took special care to differentiate between the gang and other characters. For example, in *West Side Story,* the style of dress differs between the two rival gangs. The Jets (the white gang) wear jeans and t-shirts while the Sharks (the Puerto Rican gang) wear fancy shoes, dress pants with suspenders, and nice button-down shirts. In *New Jack City,* the gang members have a unique style of dress with core members wearing fancy suits. Director Mario Van Peebles explained that this style of dress was intentional, reflecting the fashion of the 1930s and the new wave hip-hop movement with its bright colors (see *New Jack City* DVD Documentary). The remaining gang members, or soldiers, wear black sports jackets with "CMB" embroidered on the back of the jacket. Most of the films in the 1990s and 2000s do not have a unique style of dress for gang members with the notable exception of the film *Havoc*, which features Hispanic gang members wearing their sleeve-less t-shirts and khaki pants.

Gang Name. Another characteristic of street gangs that is often discussed by law enforcement and academic sources is the name of the gang. According to these sources, street gangs often identify themselves by either their geographic location (e.g., Grape St Crips, Crenshaw Mafia) or by linking the gang's name to some spiritual or higher authority (e.g., Latin Kings, Vice Lords, The Warriors) (Jackson & McBride, 1996; Gardner, 1983; Valentine, 1995; Valdez, 2005a; Christensen, 1999).

As can be seen in Figure 10.4, the name of a gang is presented in 68% of the films observed. Some of the gang names include the Jets and Sharks (*West Side Story*), the Wrecking Crew (*Juice*), Cash Money Brothers (*New Jack City*), the Warriors (*The*

Warriors), the Silks (*Cat Murkil and the Silks*), the Falcons and Rebels (*Teenage Gang Debs*), Varrio Grande Vista-VGV and 11th Street (*Boulevard Nights*), Los Aztecas (*Walk Proud*), the Wanderers and the Baldies (*The Wanderers*), Echo Park (*Mi Vida Loca*), 16th Street (Havoc), Bloods, Crips, White Fence and 21st Street (*Colors*), the Socs and the Greasers (*The Outsiders*), the Souls (*Definace*), the Royals, the Ebonys, and the Caballeros (*This Rebel Breed*), and the Dead Rabbits (*Gangs of New York*).
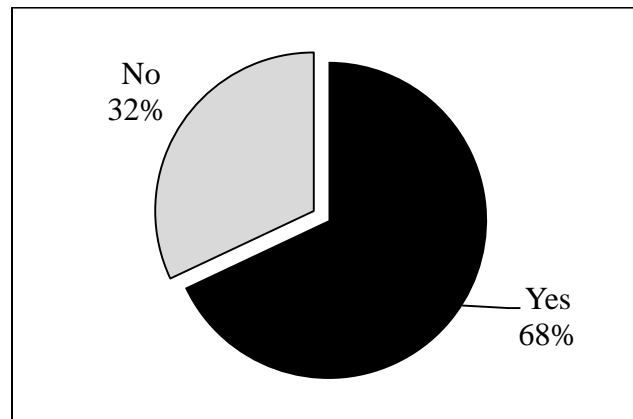
Figure 10.4. Percentage of Films Identifying Street Gangs by Their 'Gang Name'.

Negative Response by Law Enforcement and the Community

According to Klein's definition of a street gang, a negative reaction by law enforcement and/or the community is essential to being a gang. As seen in Figure 10.5, 84% of the films show law enforcement and/or members of the community disapproving, or voicing their concern about the growing problem of gangs and gang violence in their neighborhoods.

www.manaraa.com
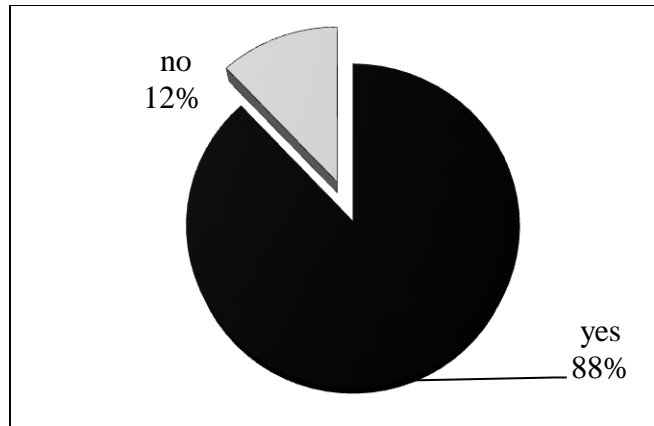
Figure 10.5. Percentage of Films Depicting Negative Responses by Law Enforcement Officials and Members of the Community.

Importantly, as we will see later, law enforcement officials are often shown to be engaged in unethical behavior. For example, in *Menace II Society*, Caine and Sharif are taken by law enforcement officials, beaten and dropped off in rival gang territory with the hope that the Hispanic gangs in this rival territory will continue to assault the two black gang members. Fortunately for Caine and Sharif, this does not happen and instead they are taken to a local hospital. In *Boyz N the Hood*, Tre and Ricky are stopped by the police and an officer puts a gun to Tre's head. At the very least, most films show law enforcement officials in conflict with gangs or their members (see *13 West Street, This Rebel Breed, Colors, New Jack City, The Warriors, Juice, Havoc, West Side Story*).

Numerous films also show strained relations between gangs/gang members and other members of the community. In the film *Colors*, as officers drive around a corner where street gang members are loitering, a woman points to the group and tells the officers "you get them off the streets," and the officer responds, "Lady, we're trying." In *The Warriors*, in addition to there being evident conflict between the gang and police, representatives of the community also react negatively to the gang. For example, when the gang is riding the subway, passengers are quick to show fear, and when a group of

101

students coming home from the prom sees the gang, they quickly get off the train to avoid any confrontation. Likewise, in *West Side Story*, city residents actively seek to avoid the violence accompanying the conflict between the Jets and the Sharks.

Types of Crimes

The final and most important element in defining a gang from the legal perspective is criminal activity. Some of the crimes committed by the characters in the films include murder, armed robbery, theft, aggravated assaults, vandalism (e.g., graffiti), burglary, illegal weapon use, drug trafficking, and threats/ intimidation.

Figure 11 presents 13 crimes listed by the National Gang Intelligence Center [NGIC] (2011) as commonly committed by street gangs, along with the number of films in this sample in which the listed crimes are depicted. Assault/Battery and Homicide/Murder were observed in 21 of the 25 films, with the use of drugs and alcohol featured in 19 films. While most of these types of crimes can occur without any connection to a street gang, the one type of crime incorrectly, but stereotypically, associated with gang violence is the drive-by shooting. Though drive-by shooting occurs in only four films – *Menace II Society, Colors, Boyz N the Hood*, and *New Jack City* – all of these films were produced during the height of the nation's perceived gang problem in the late 1980s and 1990s. Showing drive-by shootings in 'street gang' films of this era was, presumably, to add a dimension of authenticity to the films, reflecting the commonly received wisdom that 'real life' gangs commonly engage in this behavior. Before the 1980s, drive-by shootings were nearly non-existent in the public imagination, and this

absence is reflected in those Hollywood films produced and distributed prior to the late 1980s.
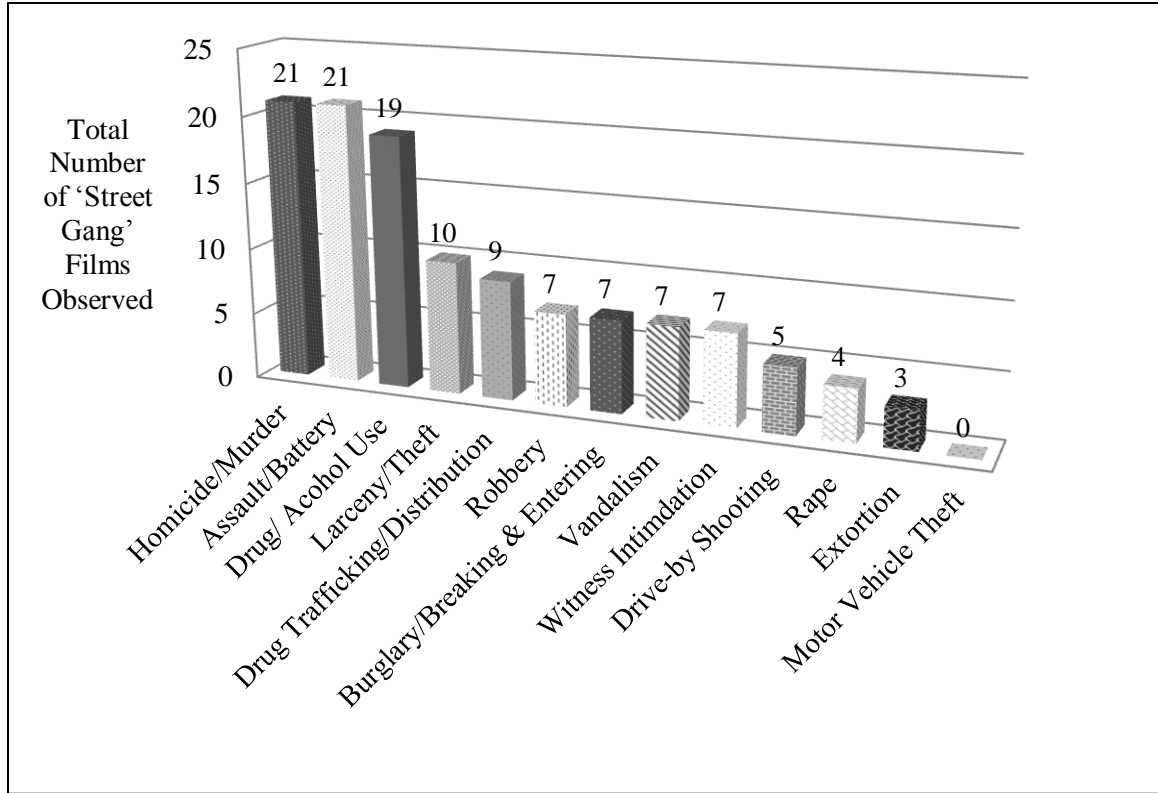
Figure 11. The Number of Films that Depicted Various Types of Crimes.

In *Boyz N the Hood,* Ricky is gunned down by a rival gang. In *Menace II Society*, Caine and Sharif are killed when a group of black males retaliate after Caine and O-Dog beat up one of them. *Colors* features several drive-by shootings directed at individuals on the street and in homes. *New Jack City* depicts a drive-by on a motorcycle, similar to the way assassinations were conducted by the Medellin drug cartels in Columbia back in the 1980s and 1990s. Nino Brown and a CMB member use an automatic weapon to gun down members of the competing Italian mafia while they are having lunch outside an Italian bistro. The scene is similar to the early gangster films when prohibition era gangs

would gun down their rivals while driving by an establishment—the forgotten origin of the drive-by shooting.

Demographic Variables

The demographic variables of street gangs portrayed in the films are consistent with the official data on gang research. The demographic variables observed are characteristics used to typify a street gang and its gang members. These characteristics are often included in the data of gang research but are not reflected in the definitions suggested by researchers and state criminal statutes. Yet these variables contribute to the social construction of gangs.

Race/Ethnicity

Only five of the 25 films analyzed solely depicted street gangs as white (see *13 West Street, Teenage Gang Debs, The Outsiders, Rumble Fish*, and *Gangs of New York*). The remaining films portrayed blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, Asians, and whites as gang members. The representation of the portrayal of street gangs is consistent with the data regarding race/ethnicity of gang members (see Figure 12). See below for a more in-depth discussion on the images of race/ethnicity portrayed in the films analyzed.

104
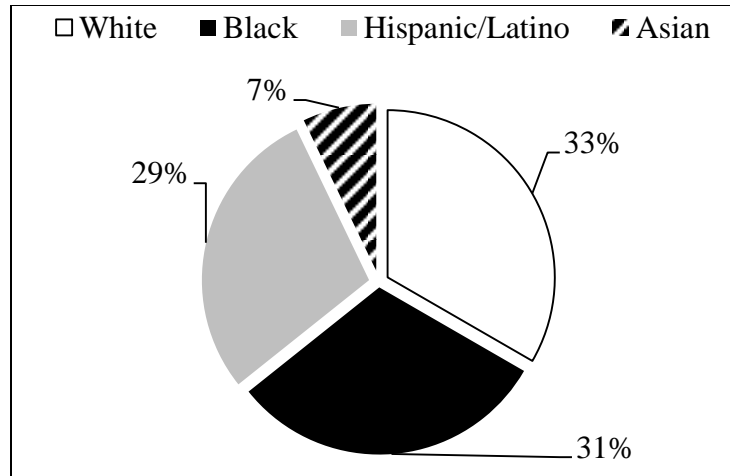
Figure 12. Percentage of Street Gang Members Depicted by Race/Ethnicity.

Gender

   Twenty-three (23) of the 25 films analyzed feature males as the dominant gang member in the film. Only *Teenage Gang Debs* and *The Warriors* feature female gang members taking an active role in gang activities. The remaining films portray the women as girlfriends or acquaintances. The most recent FBI National Gang Threat Assessment (see National Gang Intelligence Center, 2012) reported that female gang membership is on the rise but did not provide any data to corroborate this claim. However, the earlier National Gang Youth Survey (2008) reported that female gang membership is below 10% (see Figure 13). This statistic corresponds with the depiction of females in the selected films on portraying street gangs.
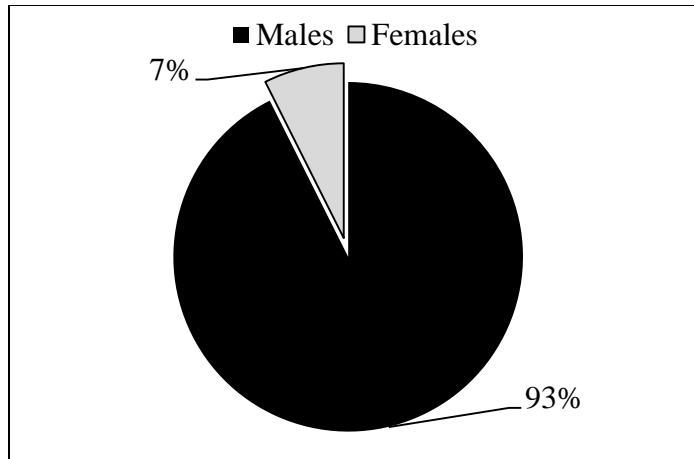
Figure 13. Percentage of Street Gang Members Depicted by Gender.

Age

All the films analyzed in this study portray gang members as teenagers or young adults. However, films like *Colors, The Outsiders, Rumble Fish, Gangs of New York, Menace II Society, Defiance*, and *Boulevard Nights* also have one or two individuals featured in the film that are either a gang leader(s) or former gang member(s) that can be assumed to be in their late 20s to late 30s. Figure 14 shows that 81% of a gang members age was observed as teenagers (between 13-19 years old) while 19% of gang members age was observed as 20 years or older (see Figure 14). According to the official reports, juveniles (under the age of 18) make up approximately 42% of all gang membership (National Gang Center, 2012; see Figure 3). This is also consistent with the portrayal of street gang members since most of the films reflect teenagers (18-19 yrs. old) and young adults (20-30 yrs. old).

106
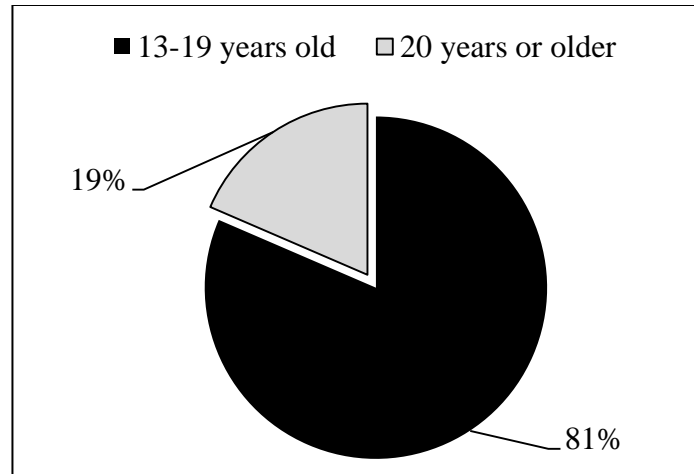
Figure 14. Percentage of Street Gang Members Depicted by Age.

Location

Of the 25 films analyzed, only *Rumble Fish* and *The Outsiders* appear to be set in a rural location rather than the inner-city. The remaining 23 films analyzed feature the street gangs and their activities in an urban environment. Figure 15 shows that 92% of the 'street gang' films were set in the inner-city, As noted in the gang literature and displayed in Figure 4, street gangs are a phenomenon occurring primarily in urban areas.
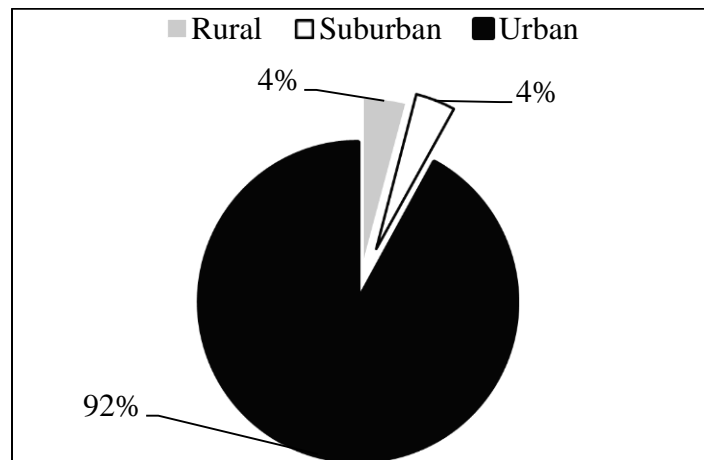
Figure 15. Percentage of 'Street Gang' Films by Location.

107

Seeking Authenticity - Making the 'Reel' Street Gang 'Real'

While there is a fair concordance between the representations of street gangs in films and law enforcement definitions of gangs, the claim to authenticity in cinematic depictions of street gangs is influenced by many other factors. For example, the personal experiences of a director/writer, the basis of the story in historical events, the use of self-identified 'real' street gang members as extras in the film or as consultants, the violence associated with the film, the marketing of a 'street gang' film, and the images and messages implied in a film all might help to shape what audiences believe to be real.

Background of Director/Writer

Contributing to the purported reality of a 'street gang' film are the views of the director(s) and/or writer(s) view on, and experiences with, the subject matter. A few films analyzed in this study were directed and/or written by individuals who experienced life in a gang or around a gang. For example, three more recent films were primarily directed by black directors (Ernest Dickerson for *Juice,* John Singleton for *Boyz N the Hood*, and Allan and Albert Hughes for *Menace II Society*). These directors were less inclined to concern themselves with gang consultants, as other films did, since they had grown up in gang-ridden environments; thus, they brought their own personal experiences as foundations for the film. For *Juice*, Dickerson had conducted interviews with young African-Americans in Harlem to better understand adolescence, anger, and ambition (Donalson, 2003). John Singleton wrote the script of *Boyz N the Hood* based mostly on his own experiences growing up in South Central LA and the friends he had associated with during his adolescent and teenage years (see *Boyz N the Hood* DVD

documentary). However, despite the sad ending to Singleton's film (i.e., the death of Tre's friends, Ricky and Doughboy), text over the final images of Tre and his girlfriend informs audiences that they are both going to college. The message that Singleton was trying to convey to his audience, in particular to black viewers, was that the possibility of getting out of a difficult environment and producing change does exists.

A similar but more controversial film is *Menace II Society.* According to the Hughes Brothers, the original idea of their story had come to them when they were 15 years old. Many of the characters in the film were based on people they knew who experienced the lifestyle of drugs and gangs, and some of the film's characters were composites of real individuals who were modeled into one character. The message that the Hughes Brothers sent to audiences with their movie was that "kids can become criminals out of desperate conditions" (see *Menace II Society* DVD Commentary/ Interview). However, unlike the ending in *Boyz N the Hood* in which the main characters go to college on the East Coast and get out of the ghetto, the Hughes Brothers opted for a purportedly more realistic outcome involving drug dealing and death. While the Hughes Brothers commended director John Singleton for his efforts to explore the life of young black males in South Central LA in *Boyz N the Hood*, the Hughes Brothers claimed that the ending in *Menace* was a better, more realistic representation of the lifestyle of those living in that type of environment (see *Menace II Society* DVD documentary)—the main character in *Menace II Society* dies from a drive-by shooting.

Richard Price, the author of the book *The Wanderers*, published in 1974, grew up in the Bronx and wrote a group of short stories about teenagers growing up in the city. But, it was director and screenwriter Philip Kaufman, who had once belonged to a gang

109

in Chicago in the 1950s, who created a cohesive story from Price's work and then turned that story into a feature gang film (*American Film*, 1983).

Havoc presents the perspective of white teenage 'wanna-be' gangsters and their fascination with hard-core Latino gangs. Author and screenwriter Jessica Kaplan wrote *Havoc* "based on her own observation of affluent white classmates in West Los Angeles who mimicked gangster culture" (Fritz, 2003, n.p.). Another female writer/director is Allison Anders who wrote *Mi Vida Loca*. Despite being white, Anders provides a gritty look at Chicana gang members from Echo Park, a neighborhood northwest of Los Angeles. Her portrayal of Hispanic female gang members and the challenge of being a single mother who is poor, unemployed, and neglected were based on her own experiences living in Echo Park with local Chicanas for about 10 years (Fregoso, 1995).

Based on a True Story

Many of the films examined base their storyline on actual events or events surrounding a larger social phenomenon. *Menace II Society* and *Boyz N the Hood* explore the real life challenges that young black males face living in inner-city neighborhoods where life is riddled with crime, violence, drugs, and the lack of legitimate economic opportunities. *Colors* tells the story of the ongoing gang problem in Los Angeles. The film *Havoc* was based on 'real' events observed and written by Jennifer Kaplan, who witnessed first-hand her classmates from West Los Angeles High School emulating the "gangsta" lifestyle (Fritz, 2003).

Other films have drawn on historical accounts and characters, and retold the story thus staking a claim to the 'reality' of the film's portrayal. For example, *Gangs of New*

York is loosely based on the book of the same title by Herbert Asbury (1927), a journalist and writer who had spent several years interviewing and researching gangs in New York City as well as examining the violence associated with the Five Points District. However, scholars and historians have severely criticized the film for being inaccurate as there is very little similarity to the book except for a few street gang names such as the Bowery Boys, Plug Uglies, and the Dead Rabbits (Oestreicher, 2003; Curnutte, 2002).

Though *Gangs of New York* is a loose interpretation of Asbury's book, another film *New Jack City* replicates the 'real' life gang problem that originated in Detroit in the 1970s and the growing crack-cocaine epidemic of the 1980s that many cities faced. Two of Detroit's biggest African-American drug cartels started off as street gangs before turning into criminal drug enterprises: the Young Boys, Inc., which controlled the heroin market from the late 1970s to the early 1980s, and the Chambers Brothers, which dealt crack cocaine in the 1980s (Cooper, 1987). In addition, the film's main character, Nino Brown, was based on the exploits of 1970s heroin kingpin Nicky Barnes of Harlem.

Using 'Real' Gangs and Consultants/Advisors

Since the very first gangster film in 1912 that featured street gangs in D.W. Griffith's *The Musketeers of Pig Alley*, Hollywood directors, producers, and writers have made an effort to depict street gangs in the most accurate sense but with still enough imagination to attract viewers. Many of the films had technical advisors allowing the films' creators to assert the authenticity of the street gangs they portrayed. Either a former gang member or a gang officer served as a consultant for the film. By including actual street gang members in a film, little doubt is left as to the authenticity of the film's

111

portrayal of street gangs. In *Colors,* Ansen and Reese (1988) reported that 'real' gang members were used as cast members to create a more realistic appearance for the film. Other films such as *The Warriors* and *Training Day* had technical advisors, though there is no mention of them in the film credits. The use of these gang-affiliated technical advisors is declared in the DVD extras (i.e., documentary on the making of the film), and in the film's commentaries (see *Training Day* DVD Special Features and *The Warriors* DVD Special Features/Director Commentary). These films along with *Menace II Society, Boulevard Nights* and *Walk Proud* also cast purportedly 'real' gang members as background actors. The 1960s film *Teenage Gang Debs* includes images of 'real' Club Tesian, a popular hang-out for teenagers in Brooklyn, New York, in the early 60s, and of a local motorcycle gang called RPM Motorcycle Club (see film credits for *Teenage Gang Debs*). *The Wanderers* was also said to have featured two Brooklyn street gangs that originated in the 1950s. They were the Ducky Boys, an Irish gang, and the Fordham Baldies, a mixed-Italian gang (see Lantern Media, 2011).   Though the film did not actually use any 'real' gang members from these gangs, the film's director Phillip Kauffman commented that many ex-members complained about the portrayal of the Baldies because the 'real' Baldies were not bald and they were not criminals (see *The Wanderers* DVD Commentary).

Marketing of a 'Street Gang' Film

Another way that Hollywood films contribute to the belief that the images of street gangs are 'real' is by presenting the audience with 'real' information about the

112

gang problem. For example, in the opening scene of the film *Colors*, the audience is given the following text information:

> The Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department each has a gang crime division. The Police Department's division is called C.R.A.S.H. (Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums) and the Sheriff's division is called O.S.S. (Operation Safe Streets). The combined anti-gang force numbers 250 men and women.

> In the greater Los Angeles area there are over 600 street gangs with almost 70,000 members.

> Last year there were 387 gang related killings (opening statement in *Colors*)

.
This opening statement for the film *Colors* was intended to remind audiences that Los Angeles had a gang problem and that law enforcement officials were overwhelmed by this problem. With that statement, the director/writer/producers are giving audiences a preface to the film by informing consumers about the 'reality' and legitimacy of the gang problem faced by law enforcement and the film's portrayal of street gangs. According to Emerson (1988), technical advisors were used from the LAPD, the Sheriff's Department, and the Los Angeles County Probation Department to ensure accuracy in the portrayal of LA street gangs.

A film's trailer, used in the marketing of a film, can also be intended to create a sense of 'realism' in the portrayal of gang members. In the *Colors* trailer, the narrator states in a dramatic tone, "Gangs rule the streets…the streets are at war…the war must be stopped." The two-minute trailer exploits the preconceptions and stereotypes possessed by interested viewers by feeding them images of what 'real' gangs do, the types of crimes 'real' gangs commit, the violence associated with 'real' gangs, many of the gang's key identifiers, and the challenges that police face when trying to confront the gang problem.

In another trailer, for *Teenage Gang Debs*, the narrator offers lurid clues to the content of the film, thus leaving potential movie-goers with a highly sensationalized and prurient glimpse of what life is like in a female street gang. Below is the text of what audiences hear in the trailer:

> *Teenage Gang Debs*, they all talk, fight, and love just one way—dirty …They are as mean and vicious as the cement jungle they live in…From back room binges to back alley rumbles, anything goes as long as its violent….They respect no law but the code of the gang, and swear their allegiance in blood. Underage, and oversexed, girls that won't take no for an answer (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_w6HCw3p5c)

Another gang film, *Menace II Society*, took a different approach in its trailer, using rapidly edited scenes from the movie interspersed with the streetwise lesson the protagonist is being told by another. The film makers intentionally wanted to make a 'gangster' film (see *Menace II Society* DVD Director's commentary), but as academic research has noted, this film is more frequently referenced as a 'street gang' film. Furthermore, the promoters of this film make factual claims as to the authenticity of gang life on the promotional poster and DVD covers. Statements, such as, "This is the truth. This is what's real," suggested to audiences that they were about to see the reality of gang life. Also, as the title suggests, a 'menace' is someone who seeks havoc, chaos, and destruction in a society where there is little hope for a young black male to succeed. Caine comments in the beginning of the film that "O-Dog is society's living nightmare." O-Dog and the others, living the lives of gangsters, are menaces to society.

The advertising campaign for the film *Juice* was severely criticized by various advocacy groups. It was believed that the film promoted violence and would have a significant impact on young black males. The title of the film was one problem that

114

public officials had with this film. According to Maslin (1992), the word 'juice' means "to kill or gun down a rival enemy in the street." Reinforcing the sensationally promised violence, the original advertising for this film included a poster featuring the four main characters with Tupac holding a gun in his hand. The tag line for the film (under the film's title *Juice*) says "How far will you go to get it?" The film displayed the word 'Juice' in red and the characters in blue, possibly an oblique reference to the Bloods and Crips (despite the film's central setting in Harlem). Turan (1992) reported that public officials demanded that Paramount Studios remove the gun from the group picture on the poster because officials felt that this depiction would incite violence. As a result of the mounting public pressure to regard this film as gang-related, the studio removed the gun by doctoring the photo.

The 1960s films particularly played into people's fear that juvenile delinquency was on the rise. For *This Rebel Breed*, the poster tag line states, "The picture that looks straight into the hearts of youth who makes its own rules—and tosses away others." Another message tag line is "With shattering impact it captures the wild emotions of today's teen-agers!" *13 West Street* proclaims on its DVD cover box that "Evil enters the house at 13 West Street," referring to the street gang who invades the home of the protagonist Walt and his wife. The DVD cover also makes the claim that, "It's shocking as a scream in the night!!!"

Another promotional tag line designed to convince audiences of the film's authenticity accompanied *The Warriors*. In a promotional poster, hundreds of street gang members are recognizable by their gang colors and style of dress. The appended tag line reads, "These are the armies of the night. They are 100,000 strong. They outnumber the

cops five to one. They could run New York City. Tonight they're all out to get the Warriors."

In the promotional ads for *Havoc*, the tag line for this film is "Too much is never enough" and another says, "Some lines were not meant to be crossed." Some of the promotional posters for this film feature images of the white teenaged gang members posing in front of their cars. However, one of the most intriguing promotional posters is a composite image of the right half of Ann Hathaway's face and other half of a street gang member head shown from behind. On the back of the gang member's head is a tattoo that displays his affiliation to the 16th Street gang.

Changes in Race/Ethnicity

Another emergent theme that has significantly changed in the portrayal of street gang members' is their race/ethnicity. As previously shown in Figure 12 there is a balanced representation of Black (31%), Hispanic (29%) and White (33%) street gang members portrayed in films. However, when racial representations are analyzed by decade, a different picture arises (see Figure 16).

116
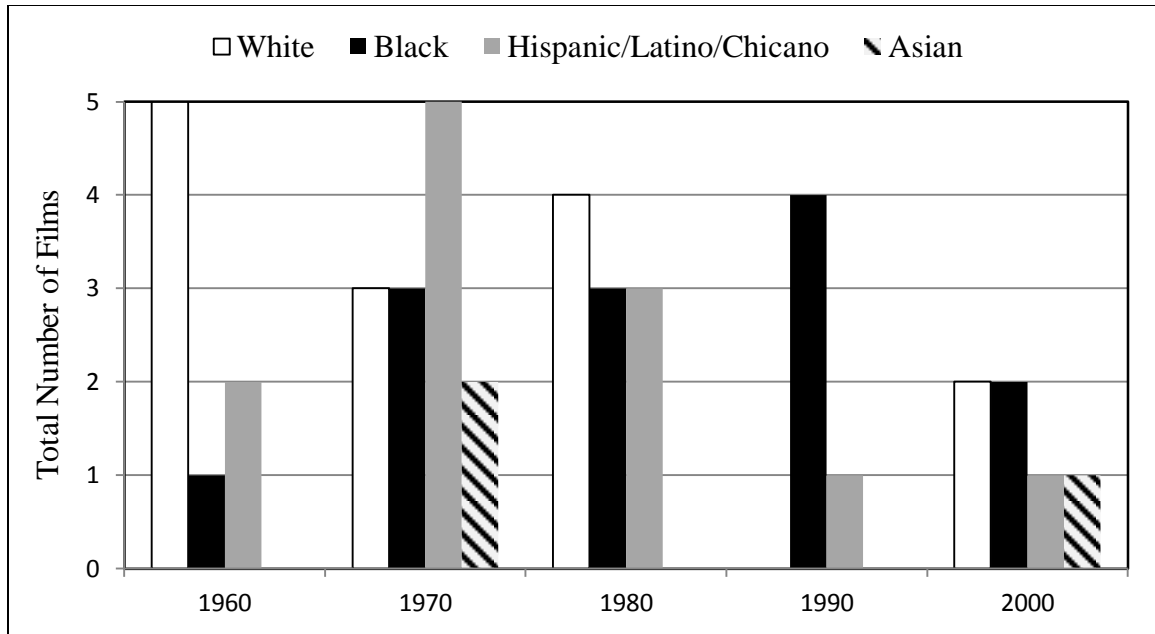
Figure 16. Number of 'Street Gang' Films Depicting Race/Ethnicity by Decade, 1960-2009

In the 1960s, gangs were overwhelmingly portrayed as white or Hispanic/Latino teenagers or young adults. *West Side Story* provides images of two competing gangs, a white gang and a Puerto Rican gang. *Who's Knocking at My Door*? features an Italian immigrant gang that rumbles briefly with a white gang in the opening minutes of the film. Of all the films analyzed in the 1960s, the films depicted to audiences rebellious, rambunctious, and rowdy behaviors of white kids who terrorized neighborhoods (see *13 West Street, This Rebel Breed*, *and Teenage Gang Debs*). Most of the gangs' victims are other whites, though the climactic ending of *This Rebel Breed* shows a local Hispanic gang and a white gang fighting in a suburban home before the police finally arrive.

The racial characteristics of gang films have undergone a dramatic change, however, since the 1970s. The first 70 years of the twentieth century were marked by a massive migration of African Americans from the rural south to the industrialized north, producing ever greater racial tensions as competition for manufacturing jobs intensified.

117

In combination with African Americans' ongoing confrontation with Jim Crow and the growing civil rights movement following World War II, the stage was set in many American cities for a new level and form of racial conflict. In some areas, like Los Angeles, white residents used violence in order to prevent blacks and Hispanics/Latinos from moving into their neighborhoods. As Davis (1992) noted, the negative response that blacks received from whites in South Central LA resulted in the creation of early youth gangs. Blacks sought to protect themselves from the violence perpetuated by white youths. In addition, tensions escalated between blacks and the police (who presented the most visible and regularly encountered face of the larger political structure), eventually culminating in the Watts Riots of 1965. The racial conflict that was taking place in American cities was not merely physical, it was ideological as well. Increasingly, blacks, particularly black youths, were demonized as a threat to the social and political order.

In the 1970s and in most of the 1980s, there was a fairly balanced representation of black, white, and Hispanic gang members portrayed in film. However, the cinematic image of white gang members gave way to Hispanic/ Latino representations. Illustrative here are the 1979 releases, *Boulevard Nights* and *Walk Proud*. This change could reflect a number of influences including a history of immigration and the continuing effects of the Bracero Program (laws created to favor jobs for immigrant Mexican workers), the rise of the farm workers movement, the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s, the ending of the Vietnam War, and the War on Poverty. Regardless of the cause, the rise of Mexican-American street gangs in the United States, particularly in the Southwest (California, New Mexico, and Arizona), grabbed newspaper headlines (see Tovares, 2002), and ultimately made great source material for the movies. Mexican-American

118

activists during the civil rights movement of the 1960s sought to change the catch-all terms 'Latino/a' or 'Hispanic' to 'Chicano/a' as a way to separate themselves from other closely related ethnic groups, and to speak to the cultural pride that existed amongst Mexican-Americans. This desire for distinction is particularly evident in the films *Boulevard Nights* and *Walk Proud*. In both films, gang members speak of Chicano pride as a source of unity, especially with respect to other gangs.

In the 1990s, the focus shifted away from Hispanic/Latino and white street gangs and moved toward the portrayal of blacks/African-Americans as gang members. Though the film *Colors* (1988) was the catalyst for this change in race/ethnicity, black gang members dominated storylines throughout the 1990s. Other films that were not included in the final sample but that fit the criteria of 'street gang' films with the portrayal of black gangs and gang violence include *South Central* (1992), *Straight Out of Brooklyn* (1991), *Blood Brothers* (1993), *Fresh* (1994), and *New Jersey Drive* (1995).

Not only did social changes influence the images in Hollywood films, but Hollywood also made significant changes in casting minorities in films. The 1970s saw the explosion of the 'Blaxploitation' era when African-American writers, producers and directors cast blacks as both anti-heroes and heroes in films specifically marketed to black audiences. Out of this era came the outsized portrayal of black gang members, slickly dressed in large fur coats and hats, creating a wildly flamboyant image for the public to seize upon (see *Defiance, Cat Murkil and the Silks*).

The 'Blaxploitation' era of the 70s and 'hood' films in the 90s also showcased aspiring musicians. In the 1970s, soul, funk, and the precursors to what would become hip-hop played in these films. However, the 'street gang' films produced in the 1990s,

infused what has come to be called 'gangsta' rap into the films' scores.   Moreover, the films' casts included rising rap artists like Ice-T, Ice Cube, Tupac Shakur, and McEiht, all of whom were said to have participated in 'real' gang culture—thus, again, promoting the authenticity of the films' portrayals.

As law enforcement began to focus its attention on black gangs in the 1980s, and the presence of crack cocaine became more prominent in many urban settings, the image of black gang members shifted from the flamboyant characters of the 1970s, to the humorless, violent and intimidating characters of the 'gangsta' genre as depicted in films like *Juice*, *Menace II Society*, and *New Jack City*.

Interestingly, like the two Chicano films of 1979 (*Boulevard Nights* and *Walk Proud*), and the 'Blaxploitation' movies of the 1970s, the inner-city crime films released in the 1990s also feature blacks as directors, writers, protagonists, and antagonists. Rome (2004) has convincingly argued that the 'hood' films of the 1990s exploit the urban experience of African-Americans and portray them as drug-pushers and gang-bangers. Whether exploitative or well-meaning attempts to bring awareness to the ongoing problems of poverty, political alienation, hopelessness and the other effects of institutionalized racism that African-Americans face, the effect of the inner-city crime films of the 1990s is to perpetuate the image of young black males as violent, sexist, macho, 'gangstas.'

In contrast, one of the more interesting collection and compositions of gangs, perfectly in keeping with the optimism of the post-civil rights era, is featured in *The Warriors*. The Warriors are best defined as a 'hybrid gang' which is not typically found in the law enforcement and academic representations of street gangs. One of the first

documented reports of a hybrid gang was by a Kansas City Gang Unit officer in the early 1980s (Starbuck et al., 2001). Hybrid gangs are composed of members who represent a mix of racial/ethnic groups. In addition to the hybrid Warriors, every type of gang is represented in the Warriors: blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, white, Asians, and females.

In the last twenty-years, however, the return to a more monochromatic depiction of gangs in film is occurring. In contrast to the portrayals of the white gangs of the 1960s and the racially eclectic gangs of 1970s, the films of the 1980s and beyond have been dominated by portrayals of black and Hispanic gangs. No longer is the out of control white teenager seen as dangerous as they were in the 1960s. Instead, the major threat to the social order during the more recent era is, much anticipated but never realized, the black and Hispanic/Latino 'super-predator' (Welch, Price, & Yankey, 2002). As the 1990s featured black gangs, Hollywood films in the 2000s observed a reduction of all racial/ethnic groups represented. Gang films lost their interest to filmmakers in favor of terrorists, although black and Hispanic gang members retained their prominence in the few cinematic portrayals that were produced. In the 2000s, *Havoc* features Hispanic gangs and a white gang imitating the style of dress, walk, and lingo of black gangs. *Training Day* and *Feel the Noise* provide brief images of black street gangs but only as background characters.

Cycles of Violence—Street Gangs as Perpetrators and Victims

Another theme that emerges from watching the selected films is how street gangs and gang members are both perpetrators of criminal acts and victims of social, economic, and political problems. Typically, the Hollywood films examined in this study do not

121

portray the gang world with positive rewards or outcomes. Instead, audiences are shown the poor living conditions experienced by gang members, their lack of hope for a better future, the frustration of being the 'outsider' to society's dominant culture, and the insurmountable amount of violence—and ultimately death, that comes too often and too quick.

In all the films that portrayed street gang members, numerous types of property and personal crimes are committed. From such acts as vandalism (e.g., graffiti), theft, and burglary to robbery, assaults, and murder (including the killing of police officers), gangs wreak havoc on the people in the community, against rival gangs, and against law enforcement officials. Most of the gang violence associated with the portrayal of street gangs is depicted as gang-on-gang violence, thus reflecting the most common type of gang violence reported by law enforcement (National Gang Center, 2012; Los Angeles County Interagency Gang Task Force, 2007). However, a few films depict members of the community lashing out against the street gangs, creating a story of vigilantism because law enforcement has failed the community (see *Defiance, 13 West Street, Death Wish, Gran Tornio,* and *New Jack City*).

The films analyzed in the study reflect to a certain degree what is discussed in the academic literature, the news media, and law enforcement accounts about gang life. The impending result of both 'reel' and 'real' gang life is often death, destruction, and despair. Though sociological accounts of street gangs have discussed the positive functions that street gangs might provide individuals, such as camaraderie, family and protection, this type of lifestyle when portrayed in film tends to mirror the interests of law

122

enforcement, emphasizing the negative consequences of gang life and its threat to the larger, legitimate culture.

As gang members are presented with few options, they do what they can to survive. This notion of surviving, before becoming a victim of death, destruction and despair, is best articulated in *Menace II Society* when Sharif's father, Mr. Butler, tells Caine:

> "What you going to do? F--- around out there on the streets, until you get killed like your cousin, maybe….What are you going to do if you stay? Whatever changes you have to make, just do it. You got to think about your life. Being a black man in America isn't easy. The hunt is on, and you're the prey. All I'm saying is survive."

In virtually all modern representations of gangs, survival for many gang members often requires the use of violence. This aspect of gang life is seen as all-consuming and permeates the gang world. A common gang activity associated with street gangs is drugs and some of the films showed gang members selling drugs rather than getting a legitimate job (see *New Jack City, Menace II Society, Boulevard Nights, Havoc, Colors,* and *Mi Vida Loca*). Equally pervasive, however, is the moral upshot of these tales; gang culture does not bring riches, women, and fame (i.e., respect)—at least, not for long.

In each decade that Hollywood has released a 'street gang' film, crime and violence have been the recurrent messages delivered to audiences. *New Jack City, Menace II Society, Gangs of New York* and *Teenage Gang Debs* take the portrayal of gang violence to remarkable extremes. In *New Jack City*, there are numerous scenes depicting the power and violence of the Cash Money Brothers (CMB). Death is a constant theme in this film. For example, a member of the CMB executes a drug dealer in broad daylight, the CMB raided an apartment complex and randomly kill all those who

123

defy them, and the CMB killed a police informant by slitting his throat and strapping a bomb to him. The most violent and destructive gang member is CMB leader Nino Brown, who tells the story of killing a school teacher just to show his toughness and loyalty to the street gang as a young gang member. Echoing a scene from *The Godfather*, the CMB leader drives a knife into the hand of another member in frustration because law enforcement has infiltrated his criminal enterprise. The CMB leader also kills his best friend by executing him as he pleaded for his life, asking him, "Am I my brother's keeper? Yes, I am." True to the classic morality play, however, the violence that Nino Brown employs to gain his success is also his downfall, as he is finally gunned down in the courthouse by a local member of the community.

Images of violence are an essential characteristic of all gang-related films. Making a claim to authenticity, however, requires that at least some of this violence be motivated by a certain street code (i.e., the expected conduct of gang members). As expressed by sociologist Elijah Anderson (1999), adherence to the 'code of the street' requires a violent and often deadly response when one person shows disrespect to another's parent or friend, though most may regard this disrespect as trivial. That gang members deploy such outsized violence in reaction to matters that most people regard as trivial emphasizes the representations of gang members as fundamentally 'alien' and 'other'—not at all like 'us.' An example of this needless, code-driven violence is observed in the opening scene of *Menace II Society* when Caine and O-Dog are in a liquor store. After they purchased some beer, the Korean store clerk tells O-Dog that he feels sorry for his mother. Sent into a violent rage by this comment, O-Dog shoots the store clerk several times before killing the store clerk's wife. Subsequent actions

124

emphasized O-Dog's cold reserve: after going to the back room to remove the surveillance tape, he steals the money from the cash register as well as from the victim.

In fact, throughout *Menace II Society*, death, destruction and despair are the dominant images for audiences to endure. For example, Caine car-jacks another black male's car for its rims and then steals his jewelry and money. Caine also assaults another black male, with the help of O-Dog, for questioning Caine's sexual encounter with a girl. O-Dog shoots a crack-head for his offer of sexual services in exchange for drugs. O-Dog then offers the crack-head's cheeseburger to his friends, who stand about watching without showing any concern over O-Dog's actions. Throughout the film, Caine (who narrates the film) speaks to the audience about his criminal actions, offering no rational explanation for his behavior but revealing his self-knowledge that despair and death await him—it will be only a matter of time. The most destructive and self-destructive character in the film is O-Dog. In a line freighted with menace, Caine explains that O-Dog is "America's worst nightmare…young, black, and doesn't give a f---."

In *The Warriors*, the title gang find themselves caught in the cross-fire, hunted down by rival gangs and the police after incorrectly being blamed for killing a powerful rival gang leader named Cyrus of the Gramercy Riffs. The Rogues, who had actually killed Cyrus, pursue the Warriors because the Warriors know the truth. Learning of the Warriors' escape from another gang, the Rogues leader Cyrus happily states "I'm havin' a good time" in reference to the excitement of hunting down the Warriors in order to kill them. Ultimately, the truth is discovered after a confrontation on the beach between the Rogues and the Warriors, so the Gramercy Riffs settle the score with the Rogues, leaving the Warriors alone. The film's audience can easily support the underdog Warriors, as

they fight rival gangs and the police, because they are depicted as victims rather than as perpetrators.

Another film that displays images of crimes and gang violence is *Boyz N the Hood*. Interestingly, this film is less violent than the other 'hood' films of the 1990s, assaults and drive-by shootings do occur. For example, Doughboy, the self-identified protector of the group, beats up another male who tries to steal a necklace from one of Doughboy's friends. Also, Doughboy's brother, Ricky, is killed in a retaliatory drive-by shooting, prompting Doughboy to seek out his brother's killers and execute them. Since crime and violence are the common denominators in many of these gang-ridden communities, a number of filmmakers seem to be suggesting that, for the inhabitants of these communities, any hope for the future is futile. But that is seen as a realistic portrayal since crime and violence are a significant aspect of the 'real' gang world.

Examples of death within the culture of the gang are found in 21 of the 25 films analyzed. In *Juice*, Bishop kills a store clerk after a robbery attempt goes awry, and then kills one of his best friends. Bishop himself ultimately meet his demise by falling from a roof top in a fight with another gang. In *Boulevard Nights,* the former gang leader's mother is gunned down in a drive-by while in her home celebrating the marriage of her son and his new wife. In *Gangs of New York*, the gang leader of the Dead Rabbits and the Natives, along with many members of the other street gangs, are brutally murdered while battling in the Five Points in New York City. In *West Side Story,* the two leaders of the Jets and the Sharks are killed along with a former leader of the Jets. In *Mi Vida Loca*, Ernesto, a local drug dealer, gang member, and boyfriend of the film's two female protagonists is killed by a rival gang. In *The Outsiders*, Johnny Cade, a member of the

126

'Greasers,' kills a member of the 'Socs' while defending Ponyboy. In *Rumble Fish*, Motorcycle Boy is killed by the police. In *Cat Murkil and the Silks*, a number of gang members are killed during a gang fight.   Edward 'Cat' Murkil himself is killed by a disgruntled member of his own gang. This story is repeated in *Teenage Gang Debs* as the leader is killed by his best friend in their competition for power and respect. In *This Rebel Breed*, Buck, the leader of the Royals, kills Jimmy who is another member of the gang. In *The Wanderers*, the Ducky Boys, an Irish gang, kill Turkey, a member of the Wanderers. In *Gran Torino*, the Hmong gang executes an elderly Korean-war veteran. In *Havoc*, the PLC crew (a white gang) retaliates against the 16th Street gang (Hispanic) by killing some gang members for the alleged rape of one of their female friends; those images are not shown, but gunfire is heard. Finally, *Colors* is the epitome of gang warfare in Hollywood films, as the Bloods, Crips, and the 21st Street gangs battled each other and the police, resulting in the deaths of multiple gang members and one LAPD CRASH officer.

While crime and violence are the main ingredients for these films featuring street gangs, the academic literature has suggested that violence associated with street gangs are less prevalent than actually observed. Klein (1995) noted that gangs spend more time socializing, telling stories, and exaggerating than actually committing violent crimes. A film typically has 90 to 120 minutes to tell its story, so the need to portray the characteristics of gang life within the two-hour window becomes critical for directors/writers. Thus, the most sensational features of purported gang life are featured. Of course, in the end, gang films are often really about subjects other than gangs as suggested in the next emergent theme.

127

Hollywood 'Street Gangs' as the Vehicle for Storytelling

While this analysis indicates that the street gangs portrayed in Hollywood films resemble the characteristics of gangs identified in the law enforcement and academic literature to a reasonable degree, the majority of the films in this study ultimately are not about street gangs. The analysis does not imply that street gangs were not an important element in the films' content, but rather, that these films use street gangs as a vehicle to tell a broader, more compelling story. Street gangs often are a convenient and attention grabbing means by which filmmakers can comment on our social and political life or on the human condition more generally. In some cases, the 'street gang' is a central character of the film (e.g., *West Side Story, The Warriors, Colors*). In other films, the street gang is the background character or provides only minimal support to the overall storyline of the film (e.g., *Death Wish II, Defiance, Training Day, Gran Torino, Feel the Noise*). However, to create realism, the presentation of the street gang is expected to display many of the common characteristics of street gangs as defined in the academic literature, by law enforcement officials, and by policy makers.

Street gangs are often viewed as 'outsiders' to the dominant social and political structures of society. Thus, with very few options to improve their social status in society, street gang members are portrayed as forming groups to provide the position and rewards denied them by the dominant society. The resulting insularity and 'alienness' of the street gang member contribute to their role, in film and otherwise, as a social threat.

While the goal of a director/writer is to tell a story, the core elements of film-making are the dialogue, character development, and images (foreground and background) depicted. For many viewers, those images are transformed into, what

128

constitutes for them, a 'real' gang. By using gangs as a backdrop, filmmakers are able to create socially and culturally significant films that deal with issues such as race-relations, relationships, the impact of drugs, honor and pride, family, social disorder, and structural location and conflict arising from social class, among others.

Many universal themes are depicted in these films, for example, there are 'coming-of-age' stories (see *Juice, Boyz n the Hood, Menace II Society, Rumble Fish, Mi Vida Loca, The Wanderers, Feel the Noise, Havoc, Boulevard Nights, Teenage Gang Debs, The Outsiders*), love/friendship stories (see *West Side Story, Walk Proud, This Rebel Breed, Who's Knocking at My Door?, Gran Torino*), as well as Manichaean stories of good versus evil (see *Defiance, 13 West Street, Death Wish II, Colors, Cat Murkil & the Silks, Training Day, Gangs of New York, New Jack City, The Warriors*). It is important to note that many of these films have multiple themes.

Relationships and Love

One example of the more popular storylines in 'street gang' films concerns how race and ethnicity are intertwined with relationships and love. Race relations played a prominent role in *West Side Story*, *Colors, Havoc*, *This Rebel Breed*, and *Walk Proud*. Similar to Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*, each film develops the story of a person of one race falling in love with someone of a different race/ethnicity. These films all explored the pressing challenges the characters face in trying to make their relationships work knowing that they will receive negative reactions from their family and friends. In *Walk Proud*, it is the white female from an upper-class neighborhood who falls for a Chicano gang member. In *This Rebel Breed*, race relations are further complicated when the white

129

gang leader of the Royals discovers that his girlfriend is partially black. This discovery sends him into a fit of rage while the rest of the gang refuses to acknowledge her. In *Colors*, a white police officer falls for a Latina associated with the local gang. In *Havoc*, an affluent white suburban teenager falls for an inner-city Hispanic gang member only to realize that their two worlds are very different. The importance of race/ethnicity lies deeper than the issue of falling in love with someone from a different race. Social acceptance and cultural differences are important factors when two individuals cross the racial/ethnic barriers that ultimately complicate the relationship. The cinematic reality of that type of relationship is that it seldom works.

Police Relations

Consistent with the theme of 'the system' as the enemy, police play a prominent role in many gang films. In most of the films analyzed, law enforcement officials are seen as combating or trying to combat the street gang problem, at least on a superficial level (see *Juice, The Warriors, Colors, This Rebel Breed, West Side Story, 13 West Street, New Jack City*). However, more careful observation reveals considerable ambivalence or outright skepticism about law enforcement. The film *Colors* portrays not only the gangs of South Central LA but also the real-life anti-gang Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums (CRASH) unit of the Los Angeles Police Department—a unit that has been roundly criticized in the 'real' world for abusive and corrupt behavior. The film primarily focuses on the relationship between a young officer just joining CRASH and a veteran officer nearing his retirement. The older, wiser, more humane officer is leaving the system; the young, abusive, thoughtless and overzealous officer is entering the

130

system, and symbolizing all that is wrong with the mechanisms of social control. The police in *Colors* may be combatting gangs, but they are portrayed as being a significant part of the problem.

Police corruption is also found in *Training Day*, *Menace II Society,* and *Boyz n the Hood*. Importantly, in *Boyz n the Hood*, it is a black rather than a white officer, who chastises, humiliates and threatens Tre and Ricky after pulling them over. This is the same black officer that Tre had confronted when he was a young boy after his home was burglarized. The officer then had also degraded other blacks and had showed disappointment for the failure of Tre's father, Furious, to kill the young black burglar. In the officer's opinion, in that way there would have been be "one less n---- on the street." That portrayal of the police officer—with his racist attitude and his choice of words to describe other blacks—is an example of the corrupting power of the political system. The black officer symbolizes the power of a corrupt political system to co-opt the citizenry—making even African Americans complicit in the oppression of other African Americans.

Other films also depict the harsh actions of law enforcement toward street gangs. In *Havoc*, police officers, without apparent cause, pull over a car occupied by members of the 16th Street gang, chastise the gang members, and escort them out of an affluent suburban neighborhood in Los Angeles. In *Menace II Society*, Caine and Sharif are taken by law enforcement officials, beaten by the officers in the police car, and dropped off in a rival gang's territory—again, without apparent cause.

The most socially significant theme that surfaces after analyzing the portrayal of street gangs in Hollywood films is the issue surrounding race relations. The presentation of race-related concerns is not new for Hollywood film makers. Using the street gang theme to explore those concerns is particularly relevant to this study's film analysis. The issue of race and ethnicity and how street gangs are the vehicle used to explore this larger social phenomenon or how street gangs are primarily viewed by the public as a black or Hispanic/Latino problem is evident in a number of films (see *This Rebel Breed, West Side Story, Walk Proud, Boulevard Nights, Mi Vida Loca, Boyz N the Hood, Menace II Society, Juice, Gangs of New York, Havoc*).

In a pivotal scene in *Boyz N the Hood*, Tre's father, Furious, speaks about gentrification—when the property values in a neighborhood fall and those who can afford the homes buy, improve, and then rent or sell the homes at a higher value. That increase in property values causes displacement for those who can no longer afford to live in the neighborhood. Furious also explains that black-on-black violence is the result of whites introducing drugs and drug dealing to black neighborhoods. He asserts that as long as the gang-on-gang violence and drug dealing stays in black neighborhoods, then nobody will care; that those issues will become 'problems' only when they involve white communities, affluent areas, or Wall Street because those areas do not have blacks. In his monologue, Furious further vents his pent-up frustration with 'the system':

> "Why is it that there is a gun shop on almost every corner in this community? For the same reason that there is a liquor store on every corner in the black community? Why? Because they [referring to whites] want us to kill ourselves. You go to Beverly Hills, you don't see that shit…who is it that is dying every night on these streets, you all" [pointing to the young black males listening to his monologue].

132

With *Boyz N the Hood*, writer/director John Singleton taps into the social consciousness of what life is like for young black males in neighborhoods fraught with gangs, violence, and little hope for a future. In an interview, actress Nia Long (who played Brandi, Tre's girlfriend), revealed that she did not realize that the world had no idea about what was going on in South Central LA (BlackTreeTV, 2011). Though she did not recognize at the time how little the outside world knew of what life was like in all black neighborhoods, Singleton clearly understood how the rest of the world was oblivious to what happens in the inner-city, particularly in South Central LA. To reflect that point, in the final scene of *Boyz N the Hood*, Doughboy sums up the despair of young black males best when talking with Tre about his brother's death not making the local news. Doughboy somberly states, "I started thinking, man: either they don't know, don't show, or don't care about what's happening in the 'hood'." As he walks away, Doughboy pours his beer on the ground and his image fades from the picture. Text then informs the audience that Doughboy will die two weeks later as the result of another act of gang violence. In an earlier scene concerning issues of race relations, Furious explained to a younger Tre that "the black man ain't got no place in the army—that is, he should never join the system—because the system works on behalf of whites and against blacks."

Another film that focuses on ethnic conflict between groups is *Gangs of New York*. However, this film is used as a vehicle for a more comprehensive indictment of the larger political system. The theme of hatred for all immigrants, especially Irish immigrants, by local 'natives' (i.e., Americans) is very pronounced in this film. For example, the natives ridicule and assault the Irish as they disembark the ships arriving in

133

New York's harbors. The irony, of course, is that the 'natives' were themselves once immigrants. While the film shows how racial and ethnic conflict helped foster the many street gangs that flourished during the late 1800s, and on a superficial level seems to deliver a naïve message about 'good guys' (i.e., the immigrants) versus 'bad guys' (i.e., the natives), much more is going on here. On a deeper level, the film is comments on the exploitation of immigrant and 'native' alike by an uncaring and self-interested political system. Political figures from the mayor down to the cop on the street are depicted as thoroughly corrupt, benefitting at the constant expense of the citizens. When the 'native' and the immigrant street gangs square off for the film's final battle, they are wiped out—not by each other, but by federal forces quelling a riot started by the reaction to the government's forced conscription of citizens for use in the Civil War. Gangs are not the disease; rather they are a symptom of a problem that runs much deeper.

Class Conflicts

The prevalence of class conflict in American society is another popular theme found in 'street gang' films like *Walk Proud, Havoc,* and *The Outsiders.* In *Walk Proud*, a poor Chicano gang member falls for a wealthy white girl and strives for acceptance by the girl's family. *The Outsiders* is about class conflict and the struggles of trying to fit in, when others in the community see you as troubled/bad/evil simply because you come from 'the other side of the tracks.' In *Havoc*, the main protagonist, Allison, is fascinated by people living in the inner-city and how they differ from those from her wealthy upper-class environment. More importantly, the film explores Allison's own self-identity crisis. As in many middle- and upper-class families, the source of Allison's discontent and

134

problems is not lack of economic opportunities and power, or the presence of crime and violence but rather parental neglect, no family structure, and a mother and father who are in an unhappy relationship. For Allison, those are her 'real' problems, and she states that a "little rich girl needs the gang as *mi familia*" to replace the family that is broken in her own home. As she continues to search for this alternative lifestyle by venturing into the inner-city and befriending a local street gang (16th Street), she enters a world that has its own set of problems clearly in stark contrast to hers. Throughout the film, Allison moves between the two worlds, from the one world with million dollar homes and fancy cars to the downtrodden world with people sleeping on the streets, drug dealing, prostitution, graffiti, and bars on windows. Interestingly the director shows life in the inner-city mostly at night with shadows and reflections, projecting the gritty realism associated with inner-city neighborhoods, while the images portraying the rich suburban neighborhoods were shot during the day with bright lights and colors. Aesthetically and symbolically, there is a clear difference between the two social classes in the film.

In the film, the leader of the 16th Street gang, Hector, gives Allison a tour of the neighborhood explaining to her that the people who live in these environments are perceived by outsiders as drug dealers. Hector explains that "People live here. They grow up here." He then shows her that the ones buying the drugs are not the locals, but in fact, people from 'her world' coming to the ghetto in their BMWs, Mercedes, and Cadillac's for drugs. In her fascination to want to *connect* with the gang, she is ultimately arrested and spends some time in juvenile detention. Though she is not involved in any illegal activity, she experiences first-hand how law enforcement treat gang members even when they are not engaged in illegal activity. Allison is initially

135

accepted by the gang but is later criticized for trying to live in their world where she does not belong because at any time she can go back to her secure wealthy environment and not have to face the real challenges of poverty, police scrutiny, and having few legitimate opportunities for a better life.   As things start to unravel for Allison and her friend, Emily, Hector, the gang leader is identified for his involvement in the rape of Emily despite the girls agreeing to be initiated by the gang. As Emily lies to the police, the parents of both families use their influence to protect their daughters and their boyfriends (members of their own gang called PLC), and Allison begins to understand that crossing the street gang will lead to disaster for her friends.

Social Environment/Neighborhoods

Related to the idea of class conflict is the story of growing up in a dysfunctional, disorganized, dilapidated and violent neighborhood. Of course, this theme is also popular in gang films and is often used to illustrate that in an environment that is poor and that lacks legitimate opportunities for success, promotes gang membership, and supports illegitimate opportunities, crime and violence will flourish. As mentioned earlier, the theme of social environment—the impact of growing up in a poor, violent neighborhood—is an important element in the final scenes in *The Warriors*. The dramatic question raised by films that focus on this theme is often whether individuals can escape their environment or will fall victim to the cycle of violence, poverty, and the hopelessness characteristic of it. *Juice, Boyz N the Hood*, *Menace II Society* and *Feel the Noise* all tell the stories of young African-Americans trying to survive life in the ghetto. *Boulevard Nights, Walk Proud* and *Mi Vida Loca* tell the stories of young

136

Hispanic/Latinos and Latinas facing the same challenges. All the characters in these films live in troubled neighborhoods, lack any form of social control, and are surrounded by drugs, alcohol, crime and violence. While most of these films have been defined as 'coming-of-age' films by film critics and online film databases (IMDb, AMG), *Juice, Boyz n the Hood, Menace II Society* and *Feel the Noise* are really concerned with 'coming-of-age' in the face of insurmountable structural and institutional disadvantage.

A number of films in this study also have themes that are less concerned with social and political commentary and were more concerned with universal themes endemic to the human condition. For example, *Gran Torino* is a story about the unlikely friendship that develops between an elderly Korean War veteran and a local Hmong boy and his family—the former alienated from the rest of society by his age and experiences and the latter alienated by his ethnicity. The film's focus is the simple human need for contact, friendship and belonging; the street gang component of the story (a local Hmong gang trying to persuade the boy to join) merely acts as a foil and spur to the friendship.

In *The Warriors,* the film's plot was taken from Sol Yurick's (1966) novel of the same name, which itself was based on the story of *Annabasis* by Xenophon, the Greek writer and mercenary solider. *Annabasis* is the story of a group of Greek warriors lost, defeated, and facing seemingly insurmountable odds, who fight many battles in an effort to find their way home. It is a homecoming tale involving survival, revenge, power, and the testing of the human spirit. In *The Warriors*, the street gang setting is used to tell the same story in modern guise. The theme of social environment—the street gang lifestyle and the dismal surroundings where the gang lives—is made evident to the audience at the film's conclusion. Upon the Warriors' return home to Coney Island, their leader, Swan,

137

while standing on the train platform, surveys the roof tops of their turf and asks, "Is this what we fought all night, to get back to?" This rhetorical question displays the despair, hopelessness, and lack of opportunities that await the gang members on their own turf, which is no different from any of the other run-down areas they traveled through to get to Coney Island.

Rumble Fish is the story of a younger brother worshipping his older brother, knowing that he can't live up to the status and reputation that his older brother commanded in the community. The street gang component here is simply an arena within which the sibling relationship can play out—the older brother had been a former gang leader who left town and returned only to find his younger brother trying to fill that void as gang leader.

As a final example, *New Jack City* tells the epic tale of the rise and fall of a notorious drug lord and his empire. The basic story structure is ancient with roots in Greek tragedy and has modern cinematic progenitors in *The Godfather* and *Scarface*. The film's plot line plays out against the backdrop of the common themes that were prevalent in the 1980s and 1990s—drug dealing and crime. The film displays a violent world from which the only but inevitable escape is death.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, and RECOMMENDATIONS

"This is the truth. This is what's real."
– *Menace II Society* (tag line on DVD cover jacket/promotional poster)

"Maximum honesty and realism"
– *Boyz N the Hood* (comment on DVD back cover jacket)

"From confidential police files….THE SHOCKING STORY OF TEENAGE GANGS"
– *Cat Murkil and the Silks* (tag line for film's marketing poster)

Criminologists Gary Potter and Victor Kappeler (1998) ask, "What does the public really know about crime and how do they know it?" (p. 2). That same question can be applied to street gangs. The knowledge the public acquires about street gangs is often the result of multiple representations of gangs through an array of sources. Among these sources are the representations of law enforcement officials and academic researchers. Much of this literature has explored the understanding of gang formation, gang identification, and suggestions on how to combat gangs through intervention and prevention programs, resulting in an authoritative construction of gangs. Although these sources are often the foundation of public knowledge of gangs, much of this public knowledge is also shaped by exposure to various forms of media that offer their own perspectives and representations of the gang phenomenon. Using a comparative method and drawing on the social constructionist framework from Sociology, the focus of this

139

study draws on one form of media representation, Hollywood movies, to explore the representations of gangs across a fifty year period. These representations are then compared with those found in official and academic sources to investigate the correspondence between these sources and thus the extent to which Hollywood representations affirm, or support, these more 'authoritative' sources in the construction of the social reality of gangs in American society.

These film representations become significant in shaping 'reality' as they are filtered through the viewer's personal history, background, cultural beliefs, experiences, and interactions with others. This filtering results in judgments by the viewer as to the realism of the images; that is, is there verisimilitude or a fit between expectations and images. This evaluation of correspondence is constructive even in cases where the symmetry between expectation and observation is not experienced; the absence of symmetry informs the viewer as to what it is not. In the present case, that what is being viewed is not a 'gang.' Through these processes films contribute to the social construction of 'gangs.' Thus, for example, one finds that with few exceptions (see Fremon, 2004 for Father Greg Boyle's work with gangs in East LA) street gangs are depicted as criminal, dangerous, and as antisocial, a societal problem.

Drawing on the analysis of Hollywood 'street gang' movies in the previous chapter, the following discussion expands on this analysis offering further insight into the gang film genre and to the social construction of street gangs. First, the 'cycle' of 'street gang' films produced by Hollywood is discussed. This discussion includes the Hollywood portrayal of street gangs from the 1900s to today and how this portrayal has changed, especially with respect to which groups are represented as dangerous and a

140

threat to society. Second, the various definitions of gangs suggested by academic researchers and law enforcement officials are discussed with special attention to the extent to which Hollywood representations appear to correspond to these identifiers. Third, the film-making approach of cinematic realism is applied to the analysis, as this approach contributes to the social construction of street gangs. Fourth, changes in the portrayal of the racial and ethnic make-up of street gangs are discussed. These portrayals have a profound effect on the construction of contemporary images of street gang membership. Lastly, the social construction of street gangs can fuel moral panics that characterize the public's consciousness of street gangs.

Hollywood's Cycle of 'Street Gang' Films

Hollywood has produced gang related films since the early 1900s with films mirroring contemporary concerns regarding notorious gangsters and their exploits. This genre of films has generated millions of dollars for Hollywood studios but as with all types of films, genres and subgenres come and go. Some of these early and current gangster/gang-related films are based on a 'true story' while others are fictional accounts of gangs and gang members. These gang-type films provide structurally and thematically useful storylines for film makers to address social, political and artistic concerns. Regardless of how the story is told, the longevity of a genre/subgenre is, of course, largely dependent on what consumers want to see and how often they attend a screening of a film. This is usually best reflected in the total gross ticket sales of a movie.

The gang film genre began with *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* (1912) and has waxed and waned in viewer interest since its inception in what those in the film industry

call the 'cycle' of film type (Klein, A., 2007; Neale, 2008). For example, in the 1930s and 1940s, gangster films flooded the market, often pulling their stories directly from police files and newspaper headlines. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s interest in gangster films dwindled considerably, though a handful of gang-type films were produced. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Hollywood emphasis shifted to producing motorcycle gang films (see *The Wild One*, 1953; *Motorcycle Gang*, 1957) and films addressing juvenile delinquency and youth gangs (see *Blackboard Jungle*, 1955; *Rebel Without a Cause*, 1955). This movement away from the gangster era of gambling, bootlegging, prostitution, and money laundering to teenage and motorcycle gangs reflected the changing interests of the news media and the entertainment industry. The new gang-type films focused their attention on the negative influences of music, drinking, and drugs. Not coincidently, these negative influences were also the focus of attention of other agents of social control dealing with crime and delinquency, further cementing the construction of these groups as a social problem for communities.

Moving away from a focus on the individual (i.e., the gang leader) which characterized gang films in the 1930s' and 1940s', gang-related films of the 1960s and 1970s moved towards depicting the group and its behaviors as the central focus of the film's story. Even though the gangster genre (i.e., mafia films) was revived with Martin Scorsese's *The Godfather* in 1972, consumer demand culminated in an unprecedented number of street gang films in 1979. Four films featuring street gangs were shot within months of each other—two in New York City and two in Los Angeles. Given the demand, directors/producers knew that getting their film into theaters first was crucial to the film's success (see *The Warrior's* DVD Special Edition, commentary), *The Warriors*

142

was the first 'street gang' film released to theaters nationwide in 1979 followed by *Boulevard Nights*. Following the putative crime and gang violence associated with the release of *The Warriors* and *Boulevard Nights,* both films were pulled from theaters and later films, such as *The Wanderers* and *Walk Proud,* never reached a wide audience. Ultimately, all but *The Warriors* failed at the box office and were reduced to the direct-to-video market. Today, *The Warriors* has achieved cult-like status and has supporting websites, a comic book series, and a video game featuring many of the street gangs originally portrayed in the film.

After the 1979 'street gang' film rush, the cycle appeared to fade in popularity in the 1980s. During the 80s the majority of street gang films failed at the box office. In those films that did have some success, street gangs were scripted as secondary or background characters to the primary storylines such as vigilantism (see *Death Wish II*) and taking back the community (see *Defiance*). The lone exception in the 1980s was *Colors,* featuring street gangs and the LAPD anti-gang crime unit. As *Colors* enjoyed wide viewership and generated over 20 million dollars in revenue, the film also brought national attention and notoriety to Los Angeles' two most powerful street gangs, the Bloods and the Crips. *Colors* also represented a shift away from white, Hispanic, and the 'hybrid' gangs commonly featured in the 1970s and early- to mid-1980s to films portraying gang members as young, violent, black males.

In Hollywood, writers/directors in the 1980s seemed cognizant of the need to differentiate the 'bad' guys from the 'good' guys. Thus, the contribution to the social construction of street gangs was the exaggeration of the signifiers (i.e., gang identifiers) that represented the street gangs such as colors, hand signs, tattoos, graffiti, gang name,

143

monikers and style of dress. Once these images of street gangs were shown to viewers, the transition to the new image of who was a gang member and who was not was complete.

In the early 1990s, Hollywood produced another cluster of 'street gang' films. Some of the films that portrayed street gangs but were not selected in the final sample included *Bronx War* (1990), *Hangin' with the Homeboys* (1991), *Gang Justice* (1991); *Street Soldiers* (1990), *Romper Stomper* (1992), *Straight Out of Brooklyn* (1995), *Blood In Blood Out* (1993), *American Me* (1992), *Trespass* (1992), *The Wrecking Crew* (1999), *Clockers* (1995), and *Fresh* (1994). The 1990s films included in this study were all produced within three years of one another (*Boyz N the Hood, Juice, Menace II Society, New Jack City*, and *Mi Vida Loca*). Unlike the 'street gang' films of 1979, the 1990s' films achieved box office success, won numerous film awards (e.g., MTV Award, BMI Film Award, New York Film Critics Circle Award, and Academy Award nominations) and were critically acclaimed. Despite, or perhaps because of, the success of these 1990s 'street gangs' films, they were also linked to gang violence in and around theaters in a number of communities. Outraged police and community groups criticized the film makers for their depiction of excessive violence, crime, the portrayal and glamorization of street gangs, and for perpetuating the 'gangsta' culture. These 'street gang' films have also been referred to as "the ghetto action cycle" (Klein, A., 2011, p. 8) or 'hood' films (Rome, 2004; Massood, 1996; Diawara, 1993; Macek, 2006; Guerrero, 2010) to reflect the social environments faced in inner-cities and their neighborhoods.

Five films in six years depicted the same general theme: the story of young minorities living in the inner-city with the gang culture consuming their lives. Four of

the five films (*Boyz N the Hood, Juice, Menace II Society,* and *New Jack City*), like the earlier film *Colors* (1988), attracted national attention for their portrayal of street gangs and showed audiences the effects of living in crime-ridden, depressed, urban environments. Of the films selected in the final sample in this study, only *New Jack City* is considered more of a 'gangster flick' because of the film's focus on the rise and fall of one individual, Nino Brown, the leader of the gang's criminal enterprise. The director of *New Jack City*, Mario Van Peebles, commented that it was his intent to pay tribute to many of the early gangster films of the 1930s through 1980s such as *The Public Enemy, Little Caesar, The Godfather*, and Brian DePalma's *Scarface* (see *New Jack City* DVD commentary).

The 2000s again witnessed the declining popularity of 'street gang' films despite the financial success and critical acclaim for a few of the films in this study such as *Training Day, Gangs of New York,* and *Gran Torino*. As in several earlier decades, there were also many inner-city crime films produced in Hollywood during the 2000s that failed at the box office or were specifically produced for direct-to-DVD sales (see *Gang Tapes*, 2001; *The Barrio Murders*, 2002; *Savage Boyz*, 2002; *Hood Rats, 2006; Dope Game 2*, 2003; *Baby Boy*, 2001; *Dirty*, 2005; *Life is a Hot Cracktown*, 2009; *State of Property*, 2002). Two films in the 2000s, *Gangs of New York* and *Havoc*, brought gangs to the forefront, but the remaining three films selected for this study offered minimal representation of street gangs. For example, in *Training Day,* the street gangs are featured as background characters to the exploits of two narcotic officers. In *Feel the Noise,* an aspiring rapper has a very brief confrontation with a local gang and in *Gran Torino,* a Hmong boy is courted to join the local Hmong gang, but ultimately refuses.

The gangs portrayed in *Gran Torino, Training Day* and *Feel the Noise* had the least amount of screen time featuring the gangs when compared to the other films examined in this study. These movies did not depict street gangs as reflected in the academic literature, rarely showing many of the gang identifiers commonly found in gang definitions.

Based on the observation of the 'cycle' of 'street gang' films over the last 50 years, the question of whether Hollywood will take up another cluster of 'street gang' films to entertain audiences or provide viewers with some underlying socially significant issue about race, class, or the inadequacy of the criminal justice system remains to be determined. With the 2000s failing to generate a popular interest in 'street gangs' films, the next decade of films (2010-2019) appears to be following suit—reflecting a lack of interest by viewers and Hollywood. Currently, Hollywood's interest in making 'street gang' films has waned, shifting the focus to terrorists and drug traffickers as dangerous groups. The most significant indicator of this shift is in the portrayal of race/ethnicity as it is a balanced representation of street gang members from the films analyzed in the 2000s. In addition, as mentioned earlier, little screen time is devoted to street gangs and gang members in these films except for *Gangs of New York*. This cinematic shift in the representation of gang members corresponds to post-9/11 media depictions of what and who is dangerous.   In the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, gang members were invariably depicted as young black males in an urban environment. They were portrayed by Hollywood as violent, criminal, and dangerous. However, since 9/11, the media has constructed a new enemy and a new threat to the social order of American communities. Street gangs have not disappeared and law enforcement is still very much combating the

146

gang problem (see National Gang Threat Assessment Report, 2011). However, through the cinematic lens, film makers are now constructing new criminals for society to fear—drug cartels and terrorists.

<center>Identifying Street Gangs and Their Meaning</center>

There is considerable research documenting the formation of gangs, gang initiations, why individuals join gangs, and the crimes gangs commit (Spergel, 1995; Leet et al, 2000; Hagedorn, 1988; Klein & Maxson, 2006; Valdez, 2005; Osman, 1992; Tobin, 2008; Delaney, 2006). However, as research has suggested, providing a precise definition of a street gang has been problematic for academic scholars, policy-makers, and law enforcement officials alike (see Chapter 3 for discussion on defining a gang). Terms such as 'street gangs,' 'youth gangs,' 'teenage gangs,' 'juvenile gangs,' and 'criminal gangs' are often used interchangeably to mean the same thing. The interchangeability of these terms often creates confusion when trying to establish a precise definition of a street gang. Definitions have also been developed by special interests for purposes related to their own objectives and needs. For example, some state criminal statutes define a gang as having three or more individuals giving law enforcement officials scope when stopping and detaining suspected gang members (e.g., criminal statues in Alaska, Alabama, California, Colorado, and Florida). Despite the differences in how street gangs have been defined, many common characteristics (i.e., signifiers) do exist. In this study, those common characteristics were presented in Table 4 and served as a basis for comparison with the portrayals of 'street gangs' in film.

<center>147</center>

While academic scholars and law enforcement officials provide relevant definitions of street gangs, the two online film databases examined in this study, IMDb and AMG, provide de facto definitions of street gangs. Their classifications of 'street gang' films are created by media experts hired by the companies and subscribers to IMDb and AMG. Interestingly, however, these two databases appear to use very different criteria in classifying a movie as a 'street gang' film. Of the more than 200 films initially reviewed from 1960 to 2009 from IMDb and AMG, there was agreement (overlap) for only seven 'street gang' films. This lack of consistency leads to the conclusion that the process is highly subjective.

Surette (2011) and others (Sanson, Duck, Cupit, Ungerer, Scuderi, & Sutton, 2000; Rome, 2004; McCormick, 1995; Altheide, 2002) have noted that much of the scholarly literature has commented on the inaccuracy of media representations of crime and violence. In contrast, gang representations in the films chosen for analysis in this study appear to have significant overlap with those found in law enforcement and academic gang research. Of all the variables chosen for analysis (see Table 4), 75% of the characteristics observed in the films reflect those characteristics of street gangs found in the literature. In other words, group membership (i.e., group/group size) exceeding three or more individuals, permanence of the gang, the use of symbols (e.g., colors, monikers, and the name of the gang), the presence of graffiti, the negative responses from law enforcement officials and community members, and the commission of a crime are all portrayed in the films. Other representations of street gangs commonly observed in the films corresponding with gang representations in the literature include the predominance of black and/or Hispanic/Latino youths in the constitution of the gang. In

148

addition, street gangs are depicted as predominantly residing in the inner-city, with the typical image of a declining, decaying, and/or poverty-stricken urban environment. These films also presented the age of gang members as somewhere between 12 and 25 years old, and almost invariably as male. Many of the films featured conflict between gangs over territory/turf. Finally, these films, as well as the literature, present gangs as social problems in their communities and are in constant conflict with the dominant system as represented by the police.

The significance of this correspondence between official and academic descriptions of gangs with Hollywood representations of gangs is that the general public's perceptions of gangs and their characteristics are more likely to be derived from the visual representations in films than from either official or academic sources alone. While it is important to note that the academic and media-driven representations of street gangs both play a part in the process of socially constructing street gangs, one construction is not necessarily "better" than the other. In fact, these social constructions rely on each other in creating the "reality" of street gangs, corroborating and reinforcing each other.

Cinematic Realism–Seeking Authenticity for Hollywood Images of Street Gangs

In an effort to create authenticity in a film's appearance, directors often adhere to a film making style known as cinematic realism. Cinematic realism aims to minimize the use of props, artificial locations (i.e. set designs), and professional actors. Instead, directors maximize the use of the original environmental surroundings, of non-professional actors (often people who are in a gang or who have personal knowledge of a

149

gang), and of personal accounts that reflect the daily challenges that an individual or a group actually faces in society. Most of the films that adhere to cinematic realism are documentaries, Independent, low-budget, and social commentary films.

The level of success in creating a cinematic experience that makes its subject matter look and feel 'real' is dependent on how the viewers are drawn into the story and how they can relate to the story and its characters, even when what is being portrayed is fiction. With regard to the portrayal of street gangs, if the audience believes that a film is to feature street gangs, and the gangs in the film sing and dance like in *West Side Story* or the faces are painted like the Baseball Furries in *The Warriors*, then the sense of realism of the film can be lost. However, if the audience goes to the movie expecting to see a musical or a futuristic gang, then realism is not completely lost. The experience of verisimilitude also differs from person to person and from era to era. The appearance of street gangs in *Gangs of New York* is appropriate for the time period (the late 1800s and early 1900s) but would not convey any sense of realism if compared today to modern-day street gangs. The goal in cinematic realism is to make the audience believe that what they are seeing on the screen is very much a 'real' experience.

The more the setting, actions, and dialogue fit with the viewer's expectations, the more likely it is that what is represented on the screen will be perceived or experienced as a realistic and accurate portrayal of street gangs. Authenticity is essentially derived from viewers' previous knowledge of street gangs. The more a viewer is exposed to elements that create the appearance of authenticity on the screen, the more likely the viewer will experience what is presented as an example of a 'real' or authentic street gang. For example, if a gang member is wearing a red shirt or a red bandana in a movie to signify

150

his alliance with the Bloods, those same images would need to be visible on the 'real' street to be perceived as a realistic portrayal.

In the modern era, some of the elements that contribute most heavily to the experience of authenticity include colors, graffiti, and other gang identifiers. Dialogue between gang members is also important in the effort to create 'realism.' For example, modern audiences expect gang members to talk in a certain way and all the films analyzed in this study have dialogue between gang members where a unique style of language is pronounced. The language, choice of words, and expressive ideas are reflective of the supposed gang culture and not commonly found in other settings. For example, in *Juice* the protagonist (Q) and the antagonist (Bishop) are watching the evening news which reports on a friend who has been killed by the police after a robbery attempt. Bishop commends the actions of the robbers and discusses the importance of earning respect by committing crimes. Bishop states:

> You gotta snap some collars and let them motherf***** know you here to take them out anytime you feel like it! You gotta get the ground beneath your feet, partner, get the wind behind your back and go out in a blaze if you got to! Otherwise you ain't s***! You might as well be dead your damn self!"

In this example, for the dialogue to be experienced as authentic, it has to fit with audience expectations about how a gang member in the 1990s ought to talk.

In addition to seeking a fit between audience expectations and cinematic representations, other means to further authenticate a film are taken. Directors, producers, and writers often seek experts, both law enforcement officials (i.e., 'gang cops') and former gang members, to lend their knowledge about gang culture as technical advisors for the film. Other means to creating a 'realistic' film are to replicate the journalistic accounts of a gang (see *Gangs of New York*, *Havoc*), base the film on a true

151

or loosely adapted story (see *New Jack City, Boyz N the Hood, Menace II Society, Boulevard Nights*), as well as draw on the experiences of the film-makers themselves. For example, directors Phillip Kaufman of *The Wanderers*, John Singleton of *Boyz n the Hood,* and Albert and Allan Hughes of *Menace II Society* have personal experiences with living in a gang-infested environment. As mentioned, additional devices taken from cinematic realism that help to achieve a sense of authenticity in modern street gang films include hiring real gang members as part of the cast and crew (see *Training Day, Boulevard Nights, The Warriors*), and filming on location (many films from the selected sample did this).

Even the promotion of a film, as noted in the quotes at the beginning of this chapter and what was discussed in Chapter 5, helps to create a film's realistic appeal. Finally, a number of films have incorporated official data with respect to the gang problem in their promotional material and in the film itself (see *Colors, Boyz N the Hood*) to give audiences a sense of the magnitude of this 'real-life' problem. In *New Jack City,* news reports are included as voice-overs in order to give audiences a sense of the ensuing urban crisis in the city of New York. Text citing statistics about the high rate of black unemployment, the gap between the rich and the poor, and the rising crime rates is shown to audiences in order to construct a 'realistic' portrayal in the film.

However, even when audiences accept a film as 'realistic', the message that a film maker is trying to convey can still be lost. Directors John Singleton and Allen and Albert Hughes (the Hughes Brothers) were idealistic and optimistic about their intended messages with *Boyz N the Hood* and *Menace II Society.* Unfortunately, audiences, particularly youth, missed the anti-gang, anti-drug messages; instead, youthful audiences

152

praised and raved over the images of the characters portrayed in the film. In trying to convey the important message about the struggles of young black males, their choices, and what it is like to live in inner-city neighborhoods, Singleton and the Hughes Brothers constructed a violent, dangerous and chaotic environment that inadvertently validated the preconceptions of the audience. The 'realism' of those films and others (see *New Jack City, Juice*, and *Colors*) was reinforced by media reports of gang violence and the increased attention given to gangs by law enforcement officials. In turn, these beliefs were claimed to be further validated by a number of outbreaks of violence in theaters across the country associated with the showing of these films—even though much of the violence was not gang related.

Hollywood is no stranger to making films that attempt to relate social, economic, psychological, and political messages. However, film studios are also motivated by profit. While director/writers are motivated by an artistic exploration of issues such as racism, sexism, or other social injustices, the violence portrayed in their films often overshadows their intended point. As Guerrero (2010) explained, 'popcorn' violence or action-adventure films generate dollars for Hollywood. In the present study all of the gang-themed films observed portrayed high levels of violence including gang fights as well as murder, assaults, and threats/intimidation. However, what was presented was also disproportionate to the level of violence associated with gangs according to official sources.

Films, like the other forms of media, are responsible for shaping and influencing the public's understanding of street gangs and gang culture. Through the use of

153

cinematic realism, Hollywood film makers have done much to construct that understanding.

Social and Cinematic Changes in the Image of the Racial/Ethnic Makeup of Street Gangs

A key observation from the findings of this study concerns the changing racial composition of gang members in the films reviewed (see Figure 12.2). These changes appear to parallel broader changes in social attitudes regarding race and ethnic relations.

In the 1960s, the dominant portrayal of street gang membership consisted of individuals who were white or 'native' (i.e., former immigrant). Although black and Hispanic/Latino gangs were visible in some of these films (see *This Rebel Breed, West Side Story, 13 West Street*), their depictions generally served as secondary, or background, to the primary story. *West Side Story* was a major exception since one of the central characters was a member of a Puerto Rican gang. *West Side Story* was a modern day retelling of Romeo and Juliet with race substituting for family affiliation as the basis for conflict. The 1960s films in this study not only concerned themselves with crime and delinquency, but also used the images and storylines to reflect the racial and ethnic tensions prevalent in the larger society of that era. The underlying use of race relations was being depicted by Hollywood directors and writers through the portrayal of gang membership and inter-gang conflict. In *This Rebel Breed*, the issue of race and racial tension was brought to the forefront when the leader of the white gang, the Royals, learns that his girlfriend is actually of mixed race. Yelling in disbelief, "You're black…You're black," he, the gang, and their girlfriends, abandon her at the bar. As she sits crying and asks for a cup of coffee from the bartender, he replies, "We don't cater to….ah, have one

154

on the house"—a reflection of how businesses in the 1960s often treated minorities. The rejection of the girl by the gang served as a poignant reminder of the influence of race on social relationships even in the face of a supposed strong interpersonal attachment between the characters.

Ultimately, the civil rights movement began to change the social and legal landscape for minorities and women, as reflected by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Immigration and Nationality Services Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968. With so many different racial and ethnic groups staging peaceful protests in the 1960s, the notion of 'the melting pot' was fading, and the failure of assimilation as a political and social goal was becoming evident. Instead, society began to move toward acculturation and to a culturally pluralistic society. Though Hollywood began to diversify, racial/ethnic actors in lead roles still lagged. Hollywood film making was, and still is, a white dominated industry. The Blaxploitation Era of the 1970s helped blacks enter the film industry with all black casts and crews. Rita Moreno, a Latina woman, is featured as the lead in both *West Side Story* and *This Rebel Breed.* In *Training Day* and all of the 1990s films observed in this study, blacks were featured as the lead. When looking at these later films, however, one wonders whether this is progress. Interestingly, the street gangs, particularly those minority portrayed as gang members, were featured as key protagonists/antagonists who were violent and dangerous criminals and not the hero-type character. Since a majority of those portrayals were negative, it reinforced the stereotype of minority groups as dangerous and a threat to society. One of the most common stereotypes afforded to blacks that are reinforced by the media is the criminal type—what Rome (2004) calls 'Black Demons.' This

155

stereotype has been frequently reinforced in Hollywood films depicting blacks in the role of criminals, drug dealers, and gang members.

During the 1970s the portrayal of gangs showed greater diversity, although Hispanic/Latino gangs were more prominent. One film that portrayed a range of racial/ethnic gang membership was *The Wanderers*. At the end of the film, an Italian-American gang, the skinheads, an Asian gang, and a black gang joined forces to battle an Irish-immigrant gang called the Ducky Boys. The Ducky Boys represent the dominant white immigrant beliefs that other racial/ethnic gangs do not belong in New York City and they will do all that is necessary to preserve the dominant cultural beliefs, including ethnic cleansing. The only way to stop the violence of the Ducky Boys is for the various racial/ethnic gangs to work together in stopping them. The film, and the book of the same name (see Price, 1974), explore the challenges of various ethnic groups in a city unsure about how to deal with racial and ethnic change.

During the 1980s, white gangs and 'hybrid gangs' were prominently displayed in four of the five films studied, along with both Black and Hispanic/Latino street gangs in three of the five films. In *Defiance* and *Death Wish II*, hybrid-gangs, with white, black and Hispanic gang members, were depicted as criminals in the films, though their roles were minor. In *Rumble Fish* and *The Outsiders*, only white gang members were featured. However, in the late 1980s, an apparent shift towards associating gang membership with primarily young black males was triggered by *Colors* (1988). *Colors* was the first film to introduce two of Los Angeles' prominent street gangs—the Bloods and the Crips. While both these gangs have existed since the early 1970s and law enforcement officials had been dealing with them for many years prior to the release of the films, *Colors* introduced

156

the Los Angeles gang problem to America. While previous 'street gang' films had success in exploiting other minority groups as gang members, *Colors* was the first film to centrally focus on blacks as gang members. A new social construction of gang membership and of their violence, destructiveness, and senselessness was built around young, Black males. Many gang researchers have argued that the film *Colors* contributed to the proliferation and dissemination of gangs and the gang culture, particularly Los Angeles'—the Bloods and Crips (Klein, 1995; Howell, 2012; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Przemieniecki, 2005).

The 1990s became dominated by the portrayal of street gang membership as primarily comprised of young black males. What is striking about the 1990s is that, unlike in the previous and succeeding decades, absolutely no white gangs are featured in the films studied. The street gangs portrayed in the 1990s are comprised of young black males. Four of the five films in the 1990s (*Boyz N the Hood, New Jack City, Juice*, and *Menace II Society*) presented gang membership as exclusively a young urban black male phenomenon, while the other film, *Mi Vida Loca*, depicted Hispanic female youth.

'Street gang' films produced in the late 1980s and 1990s received considerable media attention due to the films' portrayal of black-on-black violence and gangs. Both directors and films studios were criticized (see Rome, 1998, 2004; Stallworth, 1999) for producing these controversial films because these films reinforced the stereotypes of blacks that the dominant white majority already had—that is, blacks are gang members who are violent, dangerous, and criminal. While the films portray conventional images of street gangs and the negative behaviors associated with them, such as drive-by

157

shootings and drug trafficking, the central storyline of these films was more often about the survival of young black males in contemporary American society.

Boyz N the Hood, Juice, Menace II Society, Juice, Mi Vida Loca, New Jack City, and *Colors* address many of the issues involving the impact of race relations, drugs, gang violence, and the ongoing struggle of young black males trying to survive in a society where they have been significantly excluded from its benefits and opportunities. Two films that explicitly address the tensions between the dominant culture and being a young black man in contemporary society are *Menace II Society* and *Boyz N the Hood*. In *Menace II Society*, Mr. Butler, a high school teacher/counselor, advises the protagonist, Caine, to leave town in hope of a better future instead of maintaining his current lifestyle of gangs, violence, and drug dealing. Speaking to Caine, Mr. Butler says:

> "Whatever changes you have to make, can you just do it? You got to think about your life. Being a black man in America isn't easy. The hunt is on, and you're the prey. All I'm sayin' is, all I'm sayin' is, survive."

Mr. Butler's speech reflects the film's underlying message, as described by the Hughes Brothers (the film's directors), of how difficult it is for young black males to survive when so much in their environment is going against them (see *Menace II Society* DVD Commentary). While Mr. Butler speaks to Cain about the importance of making a change, police sirens are heard in the background, underlying the film's tension along with the director's intent to show the 'realism' of the constant presence of police in the area. In this 'real' world, the outcome for many young black males in South Central LA is death. Despite Mr. Butler's speech to Caine, Caine's reality is that no matter where he goes, the challenge of being a black man in America will continue. Before finally being

158

convinced to go with Ronnie and her son to Atlanta, Caine expresses the expectation that life will not necessarily be better:

> "Ain't nothing going to change in Atlanta. I mean, I'm still going to be black. Just another n***** from the ghetto…because it's true. You act like Atlanta ain't in America. They don't give a f***."

Caine's statement reflects the Hughes Brothers' interpretation of the grim reality of life in the ghetto: regardless of where blacks live in America, their challenges continue. This is seen as especially true for young black males. Simply moving across the country will not automatically foster a change for the better.

In the films from the 2000s, the data indicates a more balanced representation in the portrayal of the street gang's racial and ethnic makeup. The shift away from young black males as the predominant image of a gang member in the 1990s reflects Hollywood's change in its construction of what and who is a street gang member in the 2000s. The images of street gangs are not as prevalent as they were in previous decades, thus lending to the observation that film makers and studio execs are no longer featuring storylines that need some type of gang in a film. The apparent decline of portraying blacks as the primary group representing gang membership is also attributed to the criticism and excessive violence associated with the 1990s films. In addition, Tupac Shakur (featured in *Juice* and *Gang-Related*) and Christopher Wallace were killed in 1996 and 1997, respectively. Both made significant contributions to the film and music industry. Their connections to the gang world and their linkages to the film and music industry ultimately lead to their deaths. Effectively, the culture of the 'street gang' film became too much for the film industry and a change was necessary. Whether in the

159

movies or in 'real' life, the young black male is no longer represented as the only type of gang member that law enforcement or communities face.

<div align="center">Moral Panics, the Super-Predator, and Street Gangs</div>

It is noted in McCorkle and Miethe's (2002) study that the social construction of street gangs contributed to a moral panic, maybe not a full-scale moral panic but enough to question how the media and the official data report the significance of the gang problem. In fact, McCorkle and Miethe (2002) suggest that gangs are portrayed as "modem day 'folk devils' in order to sell papers, attract viewers, increase police payrolls, secure federal funds, and win elections" (p. 217). To conclude that the social construction of street gangs results in a moral panic is not to say that gangs are not a problem in American society. Street gangs are violent. Street gangs commit crimes and street gangs instill fear in communities. However, the hype surrounding gangs was disproportionate to the problem.

The moral panic of street gangs is documented in two distinct time periods, the 1930s and the 1990s. In the 1930s, as Hollywood depicted the senseless violence of gangsters and their corrupting power over the economic and political structures in society, state film review boards and special interest groups challenged the value of making such films and many were censored. Gangster films were seen as tearing at the moral fabric of society. Many people believed that these films "led to an increase in juvenile delinquency and accused Hollywood of delivering impressionable youth into a career of crime" (Springhall, 1998, p. 137). As the moral panic surrounding gangster films ensued, Hollywood finally gave way to the Motion Picture Production Code (Hays

Code) that established rules for how to portray these types of films. The MPPC stipulated that movies should not portray gangsters as heroes, show sympathy for the criminal, or leave audiences with the desire to imitate their criminal acts. Proper behavior, respect for government officials (i.e., the police), and good Christian values were what films should be displaying for viewers (Springhall, 2003).

A second distinct period of moral panic related to street gangs occurred in the 1990s, where Hollywood 'street gang' films containing gratuitous violence, destructiveness, and senselessness were common. Ironically, as juvenile crime rates rose in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the same behaviors were seen in the 'street gang' films produced by Hollywood. As the films representing street gangs in the early 1990s coincided with the official reports of crimes and gang violence, not only were the images in films perceived as 'realistic' by audiences but the belief was that there was a 'real' gang problem.

During the 1990s, while films constructed their images of gangs and law enforcement constructed its definition of gangs, one academician offered his construction of a 'super-predator' that resembled the stereotypical gang member. John Dilulio (1995) created a stir with his 'super-predator' thesis that argued that juvenile crime would become increasingly violent and actually become an epidemic over the next several decades.

The super-predator thesis, initiated by Dilulio and his statistical interpretations and assumptions about juvenile crime, along with media (i.e., news agencies) reports, added to the hype and social construction of gangs. Dilulio made inflammatory remarks describing juveniles as "fatherless, Godless, and jobless" and characterizes them as

161

"radically impulsive, brutally remorseless youngsters…who murder, assault, rape, rob, burglarize, deal deadly drugs, join gun-toting gangs and create serious communal disorders… To these mean-street youngsters, the words 'right' and 'wrong' have no fixed moral meaning" (Bennett, Dilulio, & Walters, 1996, p. 27). Those descriptions suggested by Dilulio and his colleagues are many of the same descriptive characteristics that are depicted in the characters found in films such as *Colors*, *New Jack City, Boyz N the Hood, Menace II Society, Juice* and *Mi Vida Loca*. This depiction cemented in the public's psyche the modern image of the street gang.

Dilulio (1995) called the problem a "crime bomb" waiting to explode (p. 15). Two other criminologists (James Fox and Alfred Blumstein) provided support to Dilulio's claim of the upcoming wave of teen violence, and James Q. Wilson further popularized the myth, resulting in major changes within the juvenile justice system. Fortunately, the 'super-predator' thesis did not come to fruition; juvenile crime rates declined according to official sources and Dilulio has since regretted making those characterizations about juvenile crime (Becker, 2001). Unfortunately, the damage was done. Psychiatry Professor Edward Mulvey expressed his concern, "I think that we have created an image in the public's mind over an extended period that will take a while to decay" (University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development, 2000). Once DiIulio's claims were made and the media amplified the problem, a moral panic was created. The cinematic portrayals of street gangs as violent, dangerous, and irrational seemed to justify DiIulio's claims. Though Hollywood contributed to the social construction of gangs, Dilulio's own construction gave validation to what Hollywood had produced.

As the 'super-predator' thesis fizzled, so has the perceived moral panic surrounding street gangs. In fact, at the time of this writing, gangs in the media are rarely discussed in the news and infrequently portrayed in films. The disappearance was in part related to the lack of media interest which is the crux of most moral panics and social constructions. In each decade observed, street gangs were portrayed as young minority males (except in the 1960s) who are deviant, dangerous, dysfunctional, and violent. Now the media has shifted their focus to new threats facing Americans. Even though 'street gang' films are being produced in the 2000s, none have reached the level of academic interest, or media notoriety, of those produced in the 1930s and the late 1980s and early 1990s. The fact that street gangs are not highly visible today lends credence to the argument that the street gang problem of the 1980s and 1990s was a moral panic. Street gangs do not hold the same social significance that they did twenty years ago.

Conclusion

This study examines the portrayal of street gangs in films. Historically, gangs have been featured in various media forms such as dime novels, comic books, radio shows, and silent-films since the late 1800s and early 1900s. More recently, gangs have been featured in video games, on television/cable programs, in music (e.g., 'gangsta rap'), social networking sites (via YouTube, Facebook, and MySpace), and in Hollywood films. While these images of gangs in the media have existed for some time, academic research exploring the relationship between gangs and films is not as prevalent. Regardless of whether street gangs are defined by academic scholars or how street gangs are represented in the media—whereby consumers read about gangs (print media), watch

163

TV/films about gangs (visual media), listen to 'gangsta' music (audio media), or play video games depicting gangs (interactive media)—the public's understanding of street gangs is ultimately shaped by the media.

This study contributes to the growing body of popular culture studies, film/media studies, and criminology/sociology studies. After a rigorous selection process in order to minimize research bias and select films that best represent the Hollywood 'street gang' film, the following 25 films were selected for the study, with five films representing each decade: The 1960s – *West Side Story*, *This Rebel Breed, 13 West Street, Teenage Gang Debs,* and *Who's Knocking at My Door* (aka *I Call First*); the 1970s – *Cat Murkil and the Silks* (aka *Crusin' High/LA Gangs Rising*)*, Boulevard Nights, Walk Proud, The Warriors,* and *The Wanderers*; the 1980s – *The Outsiders, Rumble Fish, Death Wish II, Colors*, and *Defiance*; the 1990s – *Boyz N the Hood, Menace II Society, New Jack City*, *Juice,* and *Mi Vida Loca*; and the 2000s – *Gangs of New York, Havoc, Gran Torino, Training Day*, and *Feel the Noise*.

The selected films were derived from a longer preliminary list obtained from the combination of three media sources: (1) references and discussions made about gang-related films in the academic literature, (2) media news reports on gang-related films and the violence associated with these films; and (3) a categorical list of 'street gang' films suggested by two popular Internet film databases, *Internet Movie Database* and *All Movie Guide*. The films selected represented the images, depictions, and representations of 'street gangs' in Hollywood films.

The purpose of this dissertation is to gain insight into the representations of street gangs in Hollywood motion pictures. Social constructionism and cinematic realism

provided the theoretical framework for this study. A qualitative content analysis was conducted in order to (1) examine the images of street gangs as presented by a select sample of Hollywood films from 1960 to 2009; (2) determined how the depictions of street gangs in Hollywood films compare to the characteristics of street gangs defined in the gang literature; (3) observe the emergent patterns and themes in the portrayal of street gangs, including any cinematic changes that took place over the fifty year time period; and (4) address how film makers aim to create a 'realistic' portrayal of street gangs through the use of cinematic realism. .

Based on the analysis of street gangs portrayed in Hollywood films, 'reel' street gangs have resemblance to many of the definitional characteristics found in the academic literature that defines what a gang is. Since the images in films reflect the characteristics of both the group perspective and legal perspective of defining a gang, these images reaffirm the 'taken-for-granted' construction of street gangs, and conversely, these definitions reaffirm the images that are represented in films. Thus, the construction of street gangs is dependent on both.

Additionally, emergent patterns and themes analyzed from the portrayal of 'street gangs' over a 50 year time-period revealed some interesting findings that provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between gangs and the media. First, the tradition of cinematic realism lends to the film's efforts to create an authentic or 'realistic' film about street gangs. This was achieved by the personal experiences directors, writers, and producers have with street gangs, using 'real' gang members or gang consultants for the film, basing the film on a true story, and lastly, marketing the film so audiences believe that what they are watching is 'real.' These contributing

165

factors in making a 'street gang' film provide viewers with a realistic 'look and feel' to the film. Thus, the depictions of street gangs better resonates with audiences when film makers adhere to the 'cinematic realism' style.

Second, this study revealed the emergent theme of how street gangs are portrayed as both perpetrators and victims of crime. Typically, the media depicts only the crimes that street gangs are committing, gang-on-gang violence, or the fear that gangs instill in neighborhoods. However, gang members are also victims. They are victims of gang-related violence, victims of poverty and victims of a failed social, political and justice system. Ultimately, the analysis revealed that the films depicted little hope for those in gangs and that destruction, despair, and finally death where the only outcomes of street gang life.

Another emergent pattern in the analysis of street gang films concerned the changes in the portrayal of race/ethnicity that occurred since 1960. More importantly, this study showed how and where those changes occurred. Unlike other studies that have typically focused on one particular time period, this study broadened the scope by examining changes in the cinematic portrayal of race/ethnicity among street gangs over multiple decades. In the 1960s, it was common to portray gangs as white in composition. In the 1970s, Hispanic/Latinos were the most common street gangs featured in the films. In the 1980s, the street gangs were depicted as 'hybrid' street gangs, with mixed races and genders. In the 1990s, the face of the street gang was young black/African-Americans. In the 2000s, a more racially and ethnically balanced representation of street gangs was common. The portrayals of white, black, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian were balanced throughout the decade.

Lastly, a majority of the 'street gang' films analyzed in this study were in fact not about street gangs per se. Rather they used the film's portrayal of street gangs as a vehicle to tell a broader and more compelling story concerning other universal themes. Popular themes include stories about love and romantic relationships, friendship, police relations, social class differences, coming-of-age/personal journeys, and/or race relations. Hollywood is trying to tell these other stories—though not always successfully—behind all the drive-by shootings, drug deals, and violent assaults.

Recommendations for Future Research

A number of recommendations for future research emerge from this dissertation. One suggestion is to expand from the current decades examined, 1960 to 2009, and begin the study in the 1900s when street gangs were first depicted in film. Examining the portrayal of street gangs over 100 years could uncover additional emergent themes and patterns. In addition, an increase in the sample size of films per decade would provide a broader and thereby perhaps more representative analysis for each decade regarding the characteristics of street gangs portrayed in films.

Since this study does not concern itself with perceptions of law enforcement officials, gang members, or consumers (i.e., movie-goers), a follow-up study would sufficiently expand on the social construction of gangs by considering how individuals interpret images and the impact that those interpretations could have on public policy, law enforcement, or the general understanding of the gang culture. In particular, understanding where the 'knowledge' about street gangs originates would lend credence to the perceptions of how a gang is defined. Survey questions could address law

167

enforcement officials', gang members', or consumers' perceptions of street gangs and gang members in Hollywood films. For example, law enforcement officials and gang researchers have contact with gang members, but members of the public do not, then what is the basis of their information about gangs and why do they believe what they see on the screen is 'real'? What other assumptions do the members of the community make concerning the images of street gangs?

Another approach to examining gangs and films is further studying the depiction of 'real-life' gangs in gang documentaries. As mentioned earlier, there are two types of documentaries—educational or informational films (e.g., *Gangland* series; *Crips and Bloods: Made in America*), and 'gangsploitation' films (see *Hood 2 Hood)*, which are filmed by using 'real' gang members. A documentary film on gangs reflects the perspective of the director/writer, but a 'gangsploitation' film is seen through the eyes of a gang member. This type of study would offer a unique perspective on the 'gang,' thus further contributing to an understanding of the social construction of gangs.

APPENDICES

Appendix A
List of identified IMDb 'street gang' films (n = 121) before exclusions, 1960-2009*
(*films were accessed on 2/20/2012; title translations provided when possible)

1961	*West Side Story*		1988	*Colors*
1962	*13 West Street*		1988	*Red Heat*
1962	*Die Glatzkopfbande (The Baldheaded Gang)*		1988	*Salaam Bombay!*
			1988	*Seven Hours to Judgment*
1964	*The Cool World*		1988	*Short Circuit 2*
1966	*Maenbalui Yeonin*		1988	*Twice Dead*
1967	*Who's Knocking at My Door*		1989	*Bloodfight*
1971	*The Sandpit Generals*		1989	*Dance to Win*
1973	*American Graffiti*		1989	*East L.A. Warriors*
1973	*Mean Streets*		1990	*Angel Town*
1974	*Death Wish*		1990	*Àtame! (Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!)*
1976	*Assault on Precinct 13*			
1976	*Cat Murkil and the Silks*		1990	*Downtown*
1977	*Billy Jack Goes to Washington*		1990	*Geronimo*
1977	*The Magic Curse*		1990	*Lionheart*
1978	*Grease*		1990	*Street Soldiers*
1978	*Jubilee*		1990	*Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*
1979	*The Warriors*		1990	*Wild at Heart*
1980	*Apocalypse Domain*		1991	*Boyz N the Hood*
1982	*1990: I guerrieri del Bronx (1990: The Bronx Warriors)*		1991	*Gu ling jie shao nian sha ren shi jian (A Brighter Summer Day)*
1982	*Death Wish II*		1991	*Lunatics: A Love Story*
1983	*Rumble Fish*		1991	*Ring of Fire*
1983	*The Outsiders*		1991	*Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II: The Secret of the Ooze*
1983	*Trading Places*			
1984	*Dang doi lai ming*		1991	*The Perfect Weapon*
1984	*Exterminator 2*		1992	*American Me*
1985	*Death Wish 3*		1992	*City of Joy*
1985	*Fei fat yi man (The Illegal Immigrant)*		1992	*Lam Gong juen ji fan fei jo fung wan*
1985	*Los Angeles Streetfighter*		1992	*Street Wars*
1985	*The New Kids*		1993	*American Cyborg: Steel Warrior*
1986	*Band of the Hand*		1993	*Only the Strong*
1986	*Knights of the City*			
1986	*The Quest*			
1986	*Touch and Go*			

1993	*Priveste înainte cu mânie (Looking Ahead with Anger)*		2005	*Harsh Times*
1994	*Enjeru dasuto (Angel Dust)*		2005	*Hazard*
			2005	*Isnats*

1993 *Priveste înainte cu mânie (Looking Ahead with Anger)*
1994 *Enjeru dasuto (Angel Dust)*
1994 *Killer Kid*
1994 *Lookin' Italian*
1994 *Sibak (Sibak: Midnight Dancers)*
1995 *Batman Forever*
1995 *Clockers*
1995 *Hung fan kui (Rumble in the Bronx)*
1996 *A Family Thing*
1996 *Disturbing the Peace*
1996 *Kizzu ritân (Kids Return)*
1996 *Rome + Juliet*
1997 *Janko fudo (Junk Food)*
1998 *Pizze, birra, faso (Pizza, Beer, and Cigarettes)*
1998 *The Wisdom of Crocodiles*
1999 *Enbamingu*
1999 *Johnny*
1999 *Juyuso seubgyuksageun (Attack the Gas Station)*
1999 *Ratcatcher*
1999 *The Corruptor*
2000 *Aberdeen*
2000 *Yau ching sui yuet saan gai goo si (Those Were The Days…)*
2001 *Shiqi sui de dan che (Being Bicyle)*
2001 *Training Day*
2001 *Wesh wesh, qu'est-ce qui se passé*
2002 *8 Mile*
2002 *Chihwaseon (Painted Fire)*
2002 *Cidade de Deus (City of God)*
2002 *Deuces Wild*
2002 *Gangs of New York*
2002 *Le défi (Naked)*
2003 *Bruce Almighty*
2003 *Bulletproof Monk*
2003 *Crime Spree*
2003 *Malibu's Most Wanted*
2003 *Okkadu*
2004 *Crash*
2004 *Ghilli*
2004 *Kung fu*

2005 *Harsh Times*
2005 *Hazard*
2005 *Isnats*
2006 *Crank*
2006 *Przebacz (Facing Up)*
2006 *Rain*
2006 *The Departed*
2007 *Beantown*
2007 *Feel the Noise*
2007 *Tribu*
2008 *Ai no mukidashi (Love Exposure)*
2008 *Gekijô ban Kara no kyôkai: Dai san shô - Tsukakû zanryû (Kara no Kyoukai: The Garden of Sinners - Remaining Sense of Pain)*
2008 *Gran Torino*
2008 *Mutant Vampire Zombies from the Hood!*
2008 *The Promotion*
2009 *Gekijô ban Kara no kyôkai: Satsujin kôsatsu (Go) Kara no Kyoukai: The garden of Sinners – A Study of Murder (Part 2)*
2009 *Heartless*
2009 *Life is Hot in Cracktown*
2009 *Street Project*

171

Appendix B

List of identified AMG 'street gang' films (n = 84) before exclusions, 1960-2009*
(*films were accessed on 2/20/2012; and title translations provided when possible)

1960	*This Rebel Breed*	1996	*Don't Be a Menace to South Central While Drinking Your Juice in the Hood*
1960	*West Side Story*		
1967	*L'Efnace Nue (Naked Childhood)*		
1970	*If You Were Young: Rage*	1996	*Young and Dangerous*
1970	*Stray Cat Rock: Sex Hunter*	1997	*Dangerous Ground*
1974	*The Furious*	1997	*Fakin' Da Funk*
1979	*Boulevard Nights*	1997	*Strays*
1979	*The Warriors*	1998	*American History X*
1981	*The Fierce One*	1998	*Brain Drain*
1983	*80 Blocks from Tiffany's*	1998	*Fifth Ward*
1983	*Rumble Fish*	1998	*Pizza, Beer & Smokes*
1983	*The Outsiders*	1998	*Thug Immortal*
1984	*Mixed Blood*	1999	*Black and White*
1988	*Colors*	1999	*Insane Clown Posse: Big Money Hustla$ - The Movie*
1989	*True Blood*		
1989	*Ballbuster*	1999	*Thicker Than Water*
1991	*Ghetto Blaster*	2000	*Obstacles*
1991	*Boyz N the Hood*	2000	*Split Decision*
1991	*New Jack City*	2001	*Baby Boy*
1991	*Straight Out of Brooklyn*	2001	*Blue Hill Avenue*
1991	*The Return of Elliot Ness*	2001	*Jacked Up*
1992	*South Central*	2001	*Living the Life*
1992	*Trespass*	2001	*Stranger Inside*
1993	*Dead Homiez*	2002	*City of God*
1993	*Menace II Society*	2002	*State Property*
1993	*Mi Vida Loca (My Crazy Life)*	2003	*Dope Game 2*
1993	*Romper Stomper*	2003	*Drug Lordz*
1993	*Strapped*	2003	*Still 'Bout it*
1994	*Above the Rim*	2003	*Streets of Legend*
1994	*Fresh*	2004	*Cool!*
1995	*La haine*	2004	*Dead Man's Shoes*
1996	*Drive*	2004	*Kung Fu Hustle*
1996	*Squeeze*	2004	*Never Die Alone*
1996	*Touch and Go*	2004	New Police Story
1996	*Romeo + Juliet*	2004	*On the Outs*
		2004	*Rize*

172

2004	*Stryker*	2005	*Dirty*
2004	*Unknown Soldier*	2005	*Venice Underground*
2005	*Bangin'*	2007	*Bra Boys*
2005	*Get Rich or Die Tryin'*	2007	*City of Men*
2005	*Green Street Hooligans*	2007	*Freedom Writers*
2005	*Havoc*	2008	*Gran Torino*
2005	*State Property 2*	2009	*District 13: Ultimatum*
2005	*Tsotsi*	2009	*Shinjuku Incident*

173

Appendix C
Reference List of News Articles about 'Street Gang' Films

News Articles for *Boyz N the Hood:*
Becker, M. (1991, Jul 22). Stepping up cinema security. *Variety*.

Bryant, C. R. (1991, July 15). Bloody opening for 'Boyz.' *Washington Times*.

Fleming, M. & Robbins, J. (1991, July 22). Hollywood Hangin' with the 'Boyz.'
        Variety.

Harris, S. & Zamora, J. H. (1991, July 14). Nationwide violence mars opening of 'Boyz'
        movie. *Los Angeles Times*.

Lancaster, J. (1991, July 14). Film opens with wave of violence: In a dozen cities,
        incidents accompany 'Boyz in the Hood.' *Washington Post*.

Miller, C. (1991, August 19). Violence fuels movie-marketing debate. *Marketing News*.
        25:17

Neely, A. (1991, July 22). Film: A warning to Cincinnati. *Cincinnati Enquirer*.

The 'Boyz' of bloodshed. (1991, July 22). *Newsweek, 118*, p. 57.

Palmer, J. (1991, July 14). Fights spill from screen into theatre. *Arkansas (Little Rock)
        Democrat*.

Schaefer, S. & Reibman, G. (1991, July 16). Violence can't stop 'Boyz.' *Boston Herald*.

Stevenson, R. M. (1991, July 14). An anti-gang movie opens to violence. *The New York
        Times*.

News Articles for *Colors:*
Alim, F. (1988, April 27). 1 cinema won't show 'Colors;' 2 other do. *Sacramento Bee*.

Brower, M. (1988, May 2). Gang violence: Color it real. *People Weekly*.

Cling, C. (1988, April 22). 'Colors' isn't first film accused of glamorizing gang life,
        violence. *Las Vegas Review Journal*.

Copper, C. J. & O'Conner, J. (1988, April 16). Protests as gang movie 'Colors' opens. *San Francisco Examiner*.

Emerson, J. (1988, April 15). No glamour in the gangland of 'Colors.' *Santa Ana Orange County Register*.

Goldstein, P. (1988, April 14). 'Colors'--A gang film that's caught in a crossfire: Gritty realism makes movie the subject of bitter debate. *Los Angeles Times*.

Hayes, E. (1988, Mar 25). Link between gang violence and films? *Los Angeles Times (Pre-1997 Fulltext),* pp. 19-19.

Hernandez, R. (1988, April 20). Film could incite violence, some say. *Arizona Republic*.

Manning, S. & Rojas. A. (1988, April 16) 'Colors' opening provokes controversy. *Boston Herald*.

13 are seized in gang fights at Los Angeles film opening. (1988, April 17). *New York Times, v137*, p. 14.

O'Sullivan, E. (1988, April 24) 'Colors' most explosive at nation's box offices. *Asbury Park Press*.

Pool, B. & Malnic, E. (1988. April 16). 13 arrested at 'Colors' opening. *Los Angeles Times*.

Scott, N. (1988, April 17). Gang film: A P.R. dream or a cop's nightmare? *San Francisco Examiner*.

Voland, J. (1988, April 19). Big – but quiet – 'Colors' opening. *Los Angeles Times*.

Walsh, J. & Kavanaugh, M. (1988, April 28). Shocking 'Colors.' *Cincinnati Post*.

News Articles for *Menace II Society*:
Burbach, C. (1993, June 1). Shooting could end gang film showings. *Omaha World – Herald*, pp. 1-1.

Charles, J. (1993, December 12). Here's gang life, straight from `Monster'. Houston Chronicle (Pre-1997 Fulltext), pp. 23-23.

Film cited in fatal carjacking cops: Teens blamed 'Menace II Society'. (1994, January 27). *Philadelphia Daily News*, pp. 19.

Jaaffar, J. (2004, June 19). Does movie violence really breed violence? *New Straits Times*, p. 10.

Mal, V. (1993, Jun 01). A menacing reality will scare you in `Society'. *Virginian – Pilot*, pp. B.7-B7.

Milling, T. J. (1993, Aug 30). Gang violence at theater leaves teen shot. *Houston Chronicle (Pre-1997 Fulltext),* pp. 9-9.

Newman, G. (1993, June 1). Police arrest three in shootings; theater stops showing film. Omaha World - Herald, pp. 1-1.

Schaeffer, S. C. (1993, May 26). Opening of `Menace' prompts fears of violence at theaters. *Boston Herald*, pp. 046-046.

Seymour, G.   (1993, May 25). Menace II Society, an L.A. story: A harrowing inside view of gang violence. *Newsday*, pp. 44-44.

Stinebaker, J. (1993, September 5). 2 gang members charged in killing/Police expect 2 more arrests. *Houston Chronicle*, p. 31.

Turnquist, K. (1993, May 26). Violent film moved. *The Oregonian*, pp. G.01-G01.

Will, G. (1993, June 18). Troubling movie about violence. *Times - Picayune* (Pre-1997 Fulltext), pp. B.07-B07.

News Articles for New Jack City:
Balley, C. & Ingersell, B. (1991, March 11). Violence follows 'New Jack' movie. *Detroit News*.

Barnhill, W. (1991, March 10). Movie spurs fatal violence. *New York Daily News*.

Kuntzman, G. (1991, March 11). Shooting no damper. *New York Daily News*.

Leland, J. (1991, March 25). Night of the living crack-heads: Violence on and off-screen at 'New Jack City.' *Newsweek,* p. 52.

Mydans, S. (1991, March 13). Film on gangs becomes part of world it portrays. *The New York Times*.

Shut out of movie, Los Angeles crowd goes on a rampage. (1991, March 10). *New York Times*, v140, p. 15.

Melees erupt in Las Vegas at film showing. (1991, March 11). *New York Times, v140*, p. A10.

Painton, P. (1991). When life imitates art: A hot new gang movie sparks widespread
        violence. *Time*, *137*(12), p. 19.

Parks, L. B. (1991, March 13). Film leads to more security in theaters. *Houston
        Chronicle*.

News Articles for *Juice:*
Curbing urban violence in films. (1992, February 4). *New York Times*.

Fox, D. J.. (1992, January 13). 'Juice' ads raise fears of violence. *Los Angeles Times*.

McBride, J. (1992, January, 20). Par downplays acts of violence at 'Juice'opening.
        Daily Variety.

News Articles for *American Me:*
De La Pena, N. (1997). In the line of fire. *Premiere*, 10(9), p. 61.

News Articles for *The Warriors:*
A street-gang movie called The Warriors triggers a puzzling, tragic wave of audience
        violence and death. (1979, March 12). *People Magazine, 11*, 10

New gang movie sparks violence. (1979, Mar 28). *The Globe and Mail,* pp. P.14-P.14.

Stein, E. (1979, May/June). In dubious battle. *Film Comment, 15*(3), p. 31.

News Articles for *Blood In Blood Out:*
Weinraub, B. (1993, April 21). Spinning a grim tale of Chicanos coming of age amid
        violence. *New York Times*, p. 15.

News Articles for *Boulevard Nights:*
Gillott, R. (1979, March 27).

Appendix D

List of Films from IMDb, AMG, Academic Sources, News Reports, and Films Tagged
with Any Combination of Keyword 'Gang' at least 2 or More Times (n = 195),
1960-2009*
(*films were accessed on 2/20/2012)

1960	*Five Bold Women*	1980	*Exterminator*
1960	*Juke Racket*	1982	*Class of 1984*
1960	*The High Powered Rifle*	1982	*Death Wish II*
1960	*The Wild Ride*	1982	*Hey Good Lookin'*
1960	*This Rebel Breed*	1983	*Heartbreaker*
1961	*The Young Savages*	1983	*Rumble Fish*
1961	*West Side Story*	1983	*The Outsiders*
1962	*13 West Street*	1983	*Trading Places*
1965	*Satan's Bed*	1983	*Vigilante*
1966	*Teenage Gang Debs*	1983	*Young Warriors*
1967	*Who's Knocking At My Door/I Call First*	1984	*City Limits*
1968	*The Other Side of Bonnie and Clyde*	1984	*Crackers*
		1984	*Exterminator 2*
1969	*The Girl from Pussycat*	1984	*Mixed Blood*
1971	*The Sandpit Generals*	1984	*Savage Streets*
1972	*The Getaway*	1985	*Death Wish 3*
1973	*American Graffiti*	1985	*Los Angeles Street fighter*
1973	*Mean Streets*	1985	*Year of the Dragon*
1974	*Death Wish*	1986	*3:15*
1975	*Let's Do It Again*	1986	*Band of the Hand*
1975	*The Jezebels*	1986	*Dangerously Close*
1976	*Assault on Precinct 13*	1986	*Knights of the City*
1976	*Cat Murkil and the Silks*	1986	*The Quest*
1977	*Billy Jack Goes to Washington*	1987	*And Then You Die*
1977	*Deadbeat*	1987	*Big Shots*
1978	*Convoy*	1987	*China Girl*
1978	*Grease*	1987	*Dead Aim*
1978	*Youngblood*	1987	*Enemy Territory*
1979	*Boulevard Nights*	1987	*Miami Connection*
1979	*The North Avenue Irregulars*	1987	*The Principal*
1979	*The Wanderers*	1988	*Blood Orgy of the Leather Girls*
1979	*The Warriors*	1988	*Colors*
1979	*Walk Proud*	1988	*Daddy's Boys*
1980	*Defiance*	1988	*Deadbeat at Dawn*
		1988	*Red Heat*

178

1988	*Seven Hours to Judgment*	1996	*Disturbing the Peace*
1989	*Ballbuster*	1996	*Don't Be a Menace to South Central While Drinking Your Juice in the Hood*
1989	*Crack House*		
1989	*East L.A. Warriors*		
1989	*Ghetto Blaster*	1996	*Drive*
1989	*True Believer*	1996	*Freeway*
1989	*True Blood*	1996	*High School High*
1990	*Angel Town*	1996	*Mug Shot*
1990	*Class of 1999*	1996	*Romeo + Juliet*
1990	*Downtown*	1996	*Squeeze*
1990	*Geronimo*	1996	*Street Corner Justice*
1990	*King of New York*	1997	*The Substitute*
1990	*Lionheart*	1997	*Breakdown*
1990	*Street Soldiers*	1997	*Dangerous Ground*
1990	*Wild at Heart*	1997	*Flipping*
1991	*Boyz N the Hood*	1997	*Hurricane*
1991	*Grand Canyon*	1997	Strays
1991	*New Jack City*	1997	*Trojan War*
1991	*Ring of Fire*	1998	*No Code of Conduct*
1991	*Straight Out of Brooklyn*	1998	*Placebo Effect*
1991	*The Perfect Weapon*	1998	*Replacement Killers*
1991	*The Return of Elliot Ness*	1999	*Black and White*
1991	*Wilding*	1999	*Corrupt*
1992	*American Heart*	1999	*Pros & Cons*
1992	*Lethal Weapon 3*	1999	*The Corruptor*
1992	*Reservoir Dogs*	1999	*The Wrecking Crew*
1992	*South Central*	1999	*Thicker Than Water*
1992	*Street Wars*	2000	*Brother*
1992	*Trespass*	2000	*Obstacles*
1993	*Blood Brothers*	2000	*Turn It Up*
1993	*Blood In Blood Out: Bound by Honor*	2001	*Baby Boy*
		2001	*Blow*
1993	*Falling Down*	2001	*Blue Hill Avenue*
1993	*Menace II Society*	2001	*Jacked Up*
1993	*Mi Vida Loca (My Crazy Life)*	2001	*Rush Hour 2*
1993	*Only the Strong*	2001	*Stranger Inside*
1993	*Strapped*	2001	*The Fast and the Furious*
1993	*Street Knight*	2001	*Training Day*
1994	*Above the Rim*	2002	*8 Mile*
1994	*Flashfire*	2002	*Deuces Wild*
1994	*Fresh*	2002	*Gangs of New York*
1995	*Clockers*	2002	*Paid in Full*
1995	*Heat*	2002	*Savage Roses*
1995	*The Basketball Diaries*	2002	*State Property*
1996	*A Family Thing*	2002	*The Street King*
1996	*American Chinatown*	2003	*Dope Game 2*

2003	Drug Lordz	2006	*Alpha Dog*
2003	*I Witness*	2006	*Crank*
2003	*Levity*	2006	*Rain*
2003	*Malibu's Most Wanted*	2006	*The Departed*
2003	*Still About It*	2007	*Death Sentence*
2003	*Street of Legend*	2007	*Feel the Noise*
2004	*Crash*	2007	*Freedom Writers*
2004	*Never Die Alone*	2007	*In the Valley of Elah*
2004	*On the Outs*	2007	*The Air I Breathe*
2004	*Rize*	2007	*The Brave One*
2004	*Unknown Solider*	2007	*The Hunting Party*
2005	*Back in the Day*	2007	*Trade*
2005	*Dirty*	2007	*War*
2005	*Get Rich of Die Tryin'*	2008	*Gran Torino*
2005	*Harsh Times*	2008	*The Promotion*
2005	*Havoc*	2008	*Vegasland*
2005	*State Property 2*	2008	*While She Was Out*
2005	*State of Grace*	2009	*Breaking Point*
2005	*Venice Underground*	2009	*Life Is Hot in Cracktown*

Appendix E
Coding Instrument

Title: _____

Director(s):_____

Studio: _____

Year (Released): _____

Race/Ethnicity: _____ White, _____ Black, _____ Hispanic/Latino, _____ Other

Age: _____ Teenagers (19 or younger), _____ Adult (>= 20)

Location: _____ Urban, _____ Suburban, _____ Rural

Primary Gender Portrayed as Gang Member: _____ Male, _____ Female

Role(s) of Female: _____ Female Gang Member(s)/Auxiliary Member
                          _____ Girl Friend only

Group: _____ Yes. _____ No

          Group size: _____ 3 to 9 members, _____ 10 or more

Permanence: _____ Yes, _____ No

Turf/Territory: _____ Yes, _____ No

Gang Fight/Rumble: _____ Yes, _____ No

Leadership: _____ Yes, _____ No

Communication (Graffiti): _____ Yes, _____ No

Presence of Graffiti (in background): _____ Yes, _____ No

Style of Dress: _____ Yes, _____ No

Symbols/Colors: _____ Yes, _____ No

Symbols/Monikers: _____ Yes, _____ No

Symbols/Name of Gang: _____ Yes, _____ No

Negative Response by LE/Community: _____ Yes, _____ No

Types of Crimes:

_____ Drug/Alcohol Use	_____ Burglary/Breaking and Entering
_____ Drug Trafficking/Distribution	_____ Larceny/Theft
_____ Homicide/Murder	_____ Motor Vehicle Theft
_____ Drive-by Shooting	_____ Vandalism
_____ Assault/Battery	_____ Extortion
_____ Robbery	_____ Rape
_____ Witness Intimidation	

181

Appendix F
Dependent Variable Codes and Values

Group/Size of Gang
0 = a group was not observed
1 = 3 to 9 gang members
2 = 10 or more gang members

Permanence
0 = permanence was not observed
1 = permanence was observed

Graffiti (Presence)
0 = graffiti was not observed
1 = graffiti was observed

Graffiti (Form of Communication)
0 = communication by tagging was not
   observed
1 = communication by tagging was
   observed

Identifiers/Symbols—Colors
0 = no color was not observed as an
   identifier linking the
   individual/group to a street gang
1 = color was observed as an identifier
   linking the individual/group to street
   gang

Identifiers/Symbols—Monikers
0 = no moniker was used to identify
   gang member
1 = moniker's were used to identify a
   gang member

Identifiers/Symbols—Gang Name
0 = no name was given to the street gang
1 = a name was identified with a
   particular street gang

Identifiers/Symbols—Style of Dress
0 = no distinctive style of dress observed
1 = a distinctive style of dress is
   observed

Turf/Territory
0 = claiming/protecting turf/territory is
   not observed
1 = claiming/protecting turf/territory is
   observed

Negative Response by Law Enforcement/Community
0 = response was not observed
1 = response was observed

Types of Crimes
1 = drug/alcohol use
2 = drug trafficking/drug distribution
3 = homicide/murder
4 = drive-by shooting
5 = assault/battery
6 = robbery
7 = burglary/breaking and entering
8 = larceny/theft
9 = motor vehicle theft
10 = vandalism
11 = extortion
12 = rape

Race/Ethnicity
1 = White
2 = Black
3 = Hispanic/Latino
4 = Other

182

Age
1 = teenage years, 13 to 19 years old
2 = non-teenage years, 20 and older

Gender
1 = male
2 = females

Leadership
0 = no leadership identified
1 = leadership identified

Location
1 = Urban
2 = Suburban
3 = Rural

REFERENCES

Alonso, A. (2006, December).   Blood pressure rising. *The Source, 205*, 82-87.

Altheide, D. L. (1996). *Qualitative media analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.

Altheide, D. L. (2002). *Creating fear: News and the construction of crisis*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.

Alvarez, G. (2005, April). Shyne on: Snoop Dog. *XXL, 68*, 12-126.

Anderson, E. (1999). *Code of the street: Decency, violence and the moral life of the inner city*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Andrew, J. D. (1976). *The major film theories: An introduction*. London: Oxford University Press.

Ansen, D. & Reese, M. (1988, April 18). The arts: movies: War on the mean streets. *Newsweek*, 111, 73.

Archbold, C. A. & Meyer, M. (1999). Anatomy of a gang suppression unit: The social construction of an organizational response to gang problems. *Police Quarterly, 2*(2), 201-224.

Armstrong, E. G. (2001). Gangsta misogyny: A content analysis of the portrayals of violence against women in rap music, 1987-1993. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture, 8*(2), 96-126.

Armstrong, R. (2005). *Understanding realism*. London: British Film Institute

Asbury, H. (1927). *The gangs of New York: An informal history of the underworld*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press.

Ball, R. A. & Curry, G. D. (1995). The logic of definition in criminology: Purposes and methods for defining gangs. *Criminology, 33*, 225-245.

Baker, S. (2008, July). Each one teach one. *The Source, 223*, 46-49.

Barkan, S. E. & Bryjak, G. J. (2009). *Myths and realities of crime and justice: What every American should know*. Sudbury, MA: Jones & Bartlett Publications.

Barrett, P. (2006). White thumbs, black bodies: Race, violence, and neoliberal fantasies in *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*. *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies, 28*, 95-119.

Bartollas, C. & Miller S. J. (2011). *Juvenile Justice in American* (6th ed). Boston, MA: Prentice Hall.

Baxter, J. (1970). *The gangster film.* New York: A.S. Barnes & Company.

Bazin, A. (2009). *What is Cinema?* (Timothy Barnard, Trans.) Montreal: caboose

Bennett, J. (2006). The good, the bad and the ugly: The media in prison films. *The Howard Journal, 45*(2), 97-115.

Berger, P. L. & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge.* New York, NY: Anchor Books.

Berman, S. J. (1992). View at your own risk: Gang movies and spectator violence. *Loyola of Los Angeles Entertainment Law Review, 12*(2), 477-507.

Best, J. (1999). *Random violence: How we talk about new crimes and new victim.* Berkley, CA: University of California Press.

Bing, L. (2001, April 12). Homegirls. *Rolling Stone, 866*, 0035791X

BlackTreeTV. (2011). *John Singleton talks about 20 years since Boyz N The Hood @ 15th Annual American Black Film Festival.* Retrieved from http://my.blacktree.tv/video/john-singleton-talks-about-20.

Block, R. & Block, C. R. (1993). *Street gang crime in Chicago.* Research in Brief. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice.

Bloch, H. & Niedderhoffer, A. (1958). *The gang: A study of adolescent behavior.* New York: Philosophical Library.

Bogdan, R. C. & Bilken, S. K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon

Boyle, K. (2005). *Media and violence.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Brunette, P. (1985). Rossellini and cinematic realism. *Cinema Journal, 25*(1), 34-49.

Burr, V. (2003). *Social constructionism* (2nd ed). New York: Routledge.

Bursik, R. J. & Grasmick, H. G. (1993). *Neighborhoods and crime: The dimensions of effective community control.* Lanham, MD: Lexington.

Bursik, R. J. & Grasmick, H. G. (2006). Defining and researching gangs. In A. Egley, C. Maxson, J. Miller, & M. Klein (Eds.), *The modern gang reader* (pp. 2-13). Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury Publishing Company.

Bynum, M. (2006) The Motion Picture Production Code of 1930 (Hays Code). Retrieved from http://www.artsreformation.com/a001/hays-code.html.

Campbell, A. (1984). *The girls in the gang*. New York: Basil Blackwell.

Campbell, R., Martin, C. R., & Fabos, B. (2009). *Media and culture: An introduction to mass communication.* Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's Press.

Caramanica, J. (2005, April). Limelight: The Game. *The Source, 68*, 112-118.

Carvin, A. (2008, April 15). *Gangs, social networks and media literacy*. PBS Teachers, Retrieved from http://www.pbs.org/teachers/learning.now/2008/04/gangs_social_networks_and_medi_1.html.

Center of Disease Control. (2012, January 27). Gang homicides – Five U.S. cities, 2003-2008. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly, 61*(3), 46-51. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6103a2.htm

Christensen, L. W. (1999). *Gangbangers: Understanding the deadly minds of America's street gangs*. Boulder, CO: Paladin Press.

Clapp. J. A. (2007). Growing up urban: The city, the cinema, and American youth. The *Journal of Popular Culture, 40*(4), 601-629.

Clarens, C. (1980). *Crime movies: From Griffith to the Godfather and beyond.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Cloward, R., & Ohlin, L. (1960). *Delinquency and opportunity*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Cohen, A. (1955). *Delinquent boys*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Cohen, S. (1972). *Folk devils and moral panics.* London: MacGibbon and Kee

Conley, C. H. (1993). *Street gangs: Current knowledge and strategies*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice.

Connor, E. (1976). Gangsters on the screen. In J. Parish & M. Pitts (Eds.), *The great gangster pictures* (pp. 1-36). Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Cooper. B. M. (1987, December 1). Kids killing kids: New jack city eats its young. *Village Voice*.

186

Cooper, M. (1994, July). Reality check. *Spin, 10*(4), 52-56.

Crawford, C. (1999). Law enforcement and popular movies: Hollywood as a teaching tool in the classroom. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture, 6*(2), 46-57.

Croteau, D. & Hoynes, W. (2003). *Media society: Industries, images, and audiences* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Curnutte, R. (2002). Gangs of New York. *The Film Journal*. Retrieved from http://www.thefilmjournal.com/issue4/gony.html

Curry, G. D. & Decker, S. H. (2003). *Confronting gangs: Crime and community* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury Publishing Company.

Curry, G. D., & Spergel, I. A. (1988). Gang homicide, delinquency and community. *Criminology, 26*(3), 381–405.

Davis, M. (1992). *City of quartz: Excavating the future in Los Angeles*. London: Vintage.

Decker, S. H. & Kempf-Leonard, K. (1991). Constructing gangs: The social definition of youth activities. *Criminal Justice Policy Review, 5*, 271-291.

Decker, S. H. & Van Winkle, B. (1996). *Life in the gang: Family, friends, and violence.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Delaney, T. (2006). *American street gangs*. Upper Saddle, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Denzin, N. K. (2001). Zoot suits and homeboys (and girls). *The Review of Education/Pedagogy/Cultural Studies*, *23*(2), 167-199.

Dessommes, N. B. (1999). Hollywood in hoods: The portrayal of the Klu Klux Klan in popular film. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 13-22.

Diawara, M. (1993). *Black American cinema*. New York: Routledge.

Dictionary.com. (2012). *Gang*. Retrieved from http://www.dictionary.reference.com/browse/gang?fromAsk=true&o=100074.

Dilulio, J. J. (1995, November 27). The coming of the super-predators. *The Weekly Standard, 1*(11), 23.

Donalson, M. (2003). *Black directors in Hollywood*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Durst-Johnson, C. (2004). *Youth gangs in literature*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Edwards, T. J. (2011). Realer than reel: Menace II Society and the 1990's hood film cycle. *Kino: The Western Undergraduate Journal of Film Studies, 2*(1) Article 3

Egley, A., Jr., Maxson, C. L., Miller, J., & Klein, M. W. (Eds.). (2006). *The modern gang reader* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury.

Emerson, J. (1988, April 15). "No glamour in the gangland of 'Colors.'" *Santa Ana Orange County Register*.

Esbensen, F. A. (2000). Preventing adolescent gang involvement. *Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. U.S. Department of Justice.

Esbensen, F. A., & Huizinga, D. (1993). Gangs, drugs, and delinquency in a survey of urban youth. *Criminology, 31*(4), 565–589.

Esbensen, F.A. & Tusinski, K. E. (2007). Youth gangs in the print media. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture,* 14(1).

Esbensen, F. A., & Winfree, L. T. (1998). Race and gender differences between gang and nongang youths: Results from a multistate survey. *Justice Quarterly, 15*(3), 505-525.

Esbensen, F. A., Winfree, L. T., He, N., & Taylor, T. (2001). Youth gangs and definitional issues: When is a gang a gang, and why does it matter? *Crime and Delinquency, 47,* 105-130.

Ezeonu, I. (2008). Dudes, let's talk about us: the Black "community" construction of gun violence in Toronto. *Journal of African American Studies, 12*, 193-214.

Fagan, L. (1990). Social process of delinquency and drug use among urban gangs. In C. Huff (Ed.), *Gangs in America* (pp. 183-219). Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Fagan, J. (1996). Gangs, drugs, and neighborhood change. In C. Huff (Ed.) *Gangs in America* (2nd ed.) (pp. 39-74). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Farrell, N. (2008, October 10). *MySpace used in gang recruitment*. Incisive Media Investments, Ltd. Retrieved from www.theinquirere.net.

Fisher, C. A. (2006). *Black on Black: Urban youth films and the multicultural audience*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Fiske, G. W. (1910). *Boy Life and Self-government*. New York, NY: Young Men's Christian Association Press.

Fox, K. A. & Lane, J. (2010). Perceptions of gangs among prosecutors in an emerging gang city. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 38*, 595-603. doi: 10.1016/j.jcrimjust.2010.04.031.

Freedman, J. L. (2006). *Media violence and its effect on aggression: Assessing the scientific evidence.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Fregoso, R. L. (1993). The representation of cultural identity in "Zoot Suit" (1981). *Theory and Society, 22*(5), 659-674.

Fregogo, R. L. (1995). Hanging out with the homegirls? Allison Anders's 'Mi Vida Loca'. *Cineaste, 21*(3), 36-38.

Fremon, C. (2004). G-Dog and the homeboys: Father Greg Boyle and the gangs of East Los Angeles. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.

Fritz, B. (2003, June 9). Jessica Kaplan, screenwriter. *Variety*. Retrieved from http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117887662?recatid=25

GangWatchers. (2012). Partial list of Male & Female Rappers with Gang [Bloods & Crips] Affiliations, Felonies or in Prison. Retrieved from http://www.gangwatchers.org/g-rappers.html.

Garot, R. & Katz, J. (2003). Provocative looks: Gang appearance and dress codes in an inner-city alternative school. *Ethnography, 4*(3), 421-454.

Gardner, S. (1983). *Street gangs*. New York: Franklin Watts

Geiger, J. & Rutsky, R. L. (Eds.). (2005). *Film analysis: A Norton reader*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Gerbner, G. & Gross, L. (1976). Living with television: The violence profile. *Journal of Communication, 26, 76.*

Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signorielli, N. (1980). The "mainstreaming" of America: Violence profile no. 11. *Journal of Communication*, *30*(3), 10-29.

Gergen, K. (2009). *An invitation to social constructionism*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Gilbertson, D. L. & Malinski, S. J. (2005). Gangs in the law: A content analysis of statutory definitions for the term gang,. *Journal of Gang Research, 13*(1), 1-16.

189

Giroux, H. A. (1995). Racism and the aesthetic of hyper-real violence: Pulp Fiction and other visual tragedies. *Social Identities, 1*(2), 333-354.

Giroux, H. A. (1998). Hollywood and the demonization of youth (pp. 35-64). *Channel surfing: Racism, the media, and the destruction of today's youth*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.

Gledhill, C. & Williams, L. (Eds.). (2000). *Reinventing film studies*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Goering, E. & Krause, A. (2005). Still enemies at the gate? The changing iconography of Russia and Russians in Hollywood films. The *International Journal of Humanities, 3*

Gordon, S. (2008, August 17). Gangs turn to Internet to recruit, advertise. *North County Times.*

Grant, E. (2002). Gangta rap, the war on drugs and the location of African-American identity in Los Angeles, 1988-92. *European Journal of American Culture, 21*(1), 420.

Gray, P. S., Williamson, J. B., Karp, D. A., & Dalphin, J. R. (2007). *The research imagination: An introduction to qualitative and quantitative*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Greenan, S., Britz, M. T., Rush, J., & Barker, T. (2000). *Gangs: An international approach*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Greenfield, S., Osborn, G., & Robson, P. (2010). *Film and the law*. Portland, OR: Hart Publishing.

Greer. C. (2010). *Crime and Media: A reader*. New York, NY: Routledge

Guerrero, E. (2002). Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film. In S. Ross (Ed.), *Movies and American society* (pp. 250-273). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Guerrero, E. (2010). The spectacle of black violence as cinema. In J. Sutherland & K. Feltey (Eds.), *Cinematic sociology: Social life in film* (69-85). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Gunckel, C. (2007). 'Gangs gone wild': Low-budget gang documentaries and the aesthetics of exploitation. *Velvet Light Trap: A Critical Journal of Film & Television, 60,* 37-46.

Hagedorn, J. M. (1988). *People and folks: Gangs, crime, and the underclass in a rustbelt city*. Chicago, IL: Lakeview Press.

190

Hagedorn, J. M. (1994). Neighborhoods, markets, and gang drug organization. *Research in Crime and Delinquency, 31*, 264–294.

Hagedorn, J. M. (1998). Gang violence in the postindustrial era. In M. Tonry & M. Moore (Eds.), *Youth Violence* (pp. 365-419). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hagedoen, J. M. (2008). *A world of gangs: Armed young men and gangsta culture*. Minnesota, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Hallam, J. & Marshment, M. (2000). *Realism and popular cinema*. Manchester, England: Manchester University Press.

Hesse, M. & Przemieniecki, C. J. (2009, August). *Are your kids cyber-chatting with gangs?* Presentation at the 10th annual National Gang Crime Research Center International Gang Specialist Training Conference, Chicago, IL.

Hiebert, R. E. & Gibbons, S. J. (2000). *Exploring mass media for a changing world*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Hip Hop Behind Bars. (2004). *The Source, 174*, p. 48-62.

Hip Hop Behind Bars. (2007, March). *The Source, 208*, p. 53-65.

Hoffman, L. (1990). Constructing realities: An art of lenses. *Family Process, 29*, 1-12.

Hoijer, B. (2011). Social representations theory: A new theory for media research. *Nordicom Review, 32*(2), 3-16.

Hooks, B. (1996). *Reel To real: Race, sex, and class at the movies*. New York: Routledge.

Horowitz, R. (1990). Sociological perspectives on gangs: Conflicting definitions and concepts. In C. Huff (Ed.), *Gangs in America* (pp. 37-54). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Howell, J. C. (2012). *Gangs in America's communities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S.E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research, 15*(9), 1277-1288.

Hutchinson, R. (1993). Blazon nouveaun: Gang graffiti in the barrios of Los Angeles and Chicago. In S. Cummings & D. Monti (Eds.), *Gangs: The origins and impact of contemporary youth gangs in the United States* (pp. 137-171). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

191

Issari, M. A. & Paul, D. A. (1979). *What is cinema verite?* Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Jackson, R. K. & McBride, W. D. (1996). *Understanding street gangs*. Incline Village, NV: Cooperhouse Publishing Company.

Jacobellis v. Ohio, 378 U.S. 184 (1964).

Jacobs, J. B. & Henry, J. S. (1996). The social construction of a hate crime epidemic. *The Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology, 86*(2), 366-391.

James, D. (1994, May). Gangstaphobia. *Spin, 10*(2), 64-68.

Jefferies, G. (1979). The Low Riders of Whittier boulevard. *American Film, 4*(4), 58-63.

Jenkins, P. (1994). *Using murder: The social construction of serial homicide.* New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Jewkes, Y. (2005). *Media & crime*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Johnson, B. (2006). *Online communities abused by predators, gangs, Special Report*. Regional Organized Crime Information Center. ROCIC Publications. Retrieved from http://www.internetsafetyconsulting.net/Online%20 Predators%20&%20 Gangs%200707.pdf

Jones, S. V. (1954, November). The Cougars: Life with a Brooklyn gang. *Harper's Magazine, 209*(1254), 35-43.

Kaminsky, S. M. (1972). Little Caesar and Its Role in the Gangster Film Genre. In A. Silver & J. Ursini (Eds.), *Gangster film reader* (pp. 47-64). Pompton Plains, NJ: Limelight Editions.

Kaplan, K. (2001, May 31). *Gangs finding new turf: Members are claiming corners in cyberspace, taking their rivalries online with Web sites*. Retrieved from http://www.streetgangs.com/topics/2001/053101gangsnet.html

King, J. E., Walpole, M. S., & Lamon, M. S. (2007). Surf and turf wars online— Growing implications of Internet gang violence. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 41*, S66-S68. doi: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2007.09.001.

Kingsbury, A. (2008, December 15). The war on gangs. *U.S. News & World Report, 145*(13), 33-36.

Kitwana, B. (1996, April). A tale of two cities: Are America's black street gangs a menace to society of the result of decades of urban neglect? *The Source, 79*, 58-69.

Kitwana, B. (2002). *The hip-hop generation: Young blacks and the crisis in African American culture*. New York, NY: Basic Civitas Books

Klein, A. A. (2007). *Excavating the ghetto action cycle (1991-1996): A case study for a cycle-based approach to genre study* (Doctoral Dissertation). University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA.

Klein, M.W. (1969). On group context of delinquency. *Sociology and Social Research*, *54,* 63-71.

Klein, M. W. (1971). *Street gangs and street workers.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Klein, M. W. (1995). *The American street gangs: Its nature, prevalence, and control.* New York: Oxford Press

Klein, M. W. (1995a). *Gang Cop: The words and ways of officer Paco Domingo.* Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Klein, M.W. (2005). The value of comparisons in street gang research. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice, 21* (May), 135-142.

Klein, M. W. (2007). *Chasing after street gangs: A forty-year journey.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Klein, M. W., & Maxson, C. L. (1989). Street gang violence. In M. Wolfgang & N. Weiner (Eds.), *Violent crime, violent criminals* (pp. 198-234). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Klein, M. W., & Maxson, C. L. (2006). *Street gang patterns and policies.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press

Klein, M. W., Kerner, H. J., Maxson, C. L., & Weitekamp, E. G. (2001). *The Eurogang paradox: Street gangs and youth groups in the U.S. and Europe.* Dordrecht/ Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Knox, G. W. (1999). The promulgation of gangbanging through the mass media. *Journal of Gang Research, 6,* 19-38.

Kolker, R. P. (1999). *Film, form, and culture*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Kirkorian, M. (2000, April). Rough love. *The Source, 127*, 166-169.

Landre, R., Miller, M., & Porter, D. (1997). *Gangs: A handbook for community awareness*. New York: Facts on File, Inc.

193

Langman, L. & Finn, D. (1995). *A guide to American crime films*. Westport, CT:
　　　Greenwood.

Lantern Media, Inc. (2011). *Gangs of the Bronx—Biographies*. Retrieved from
　　　http://lantern-media.com/BronxGangs-DuckyBoys.htm.

Lee, J. (1915). *Play in education*. New York, NY: Macmillan Company.

Leet, D. A., Rush, G. E. & Smith, A. M. (2000). *Gangs, graffiti, and violence: A
　　　realistic guide to the scope and nature of gangs in America* (2nd ed.). Incline
　　　Village, NV: Cooperhouse Publishing.

Leitch, T. (2002). *Crime films*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ley, D. & Cybriwsky, R. (1974). Urban graffiti as territorial markers. *Annals of the
　　　Association of American Geographers, 64*(4), 491-505.

Lock A. & Strong, T. (Eds.). (2010). *Social constructionism: Sources and stirrings in
　　　theory and practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Los Angeles Times. (1988). 'Street Gang Film Too Realistic.

Los Angeles Interagency Gang Task Force. (2007). *The Violence Prevention Coalition
　　　of Greater Los Angeles*. Retrieved from
　　　http://www.ph.ucla.edu/sciprc/pdf/GANG_VIOLENCE.pdf

Lowney, J. (1984). The wall gang: A study of interpersonal process and deviance among
　　　twenty-three middle-class youths. *Adolescence, 19*, 527–538.

Macek, S. (2006). *Urban nightmares: The media, the right, and the moral panic over
　　　The city.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Mason, F. (2002). *American gangster cinema: From Little Caesar to Pulp Fiction*.
　　　New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mason, P. (2006). Prison decayed: Cinematic penal discourse and populism 1995-2005.
　　　Social Semiotics, 16(4), 607-626. doi: 10.1080/10350330601019975.

Massood, P. J. (1996). Mapping the Hood: The genealogy of city space in *Boyz N the
　　　Hood* and *Menace II Society*. *Cinema Journal, 35*(2), 85-97.

Massood, P. J. (2003). *Black city cinema: African American urban experiences in film.*
　　　Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Mast, G., Cohen, M., & Braudy, L. (1992). *Film theory and criticism: Introductory
　　　readings* (4th ed). New York: Oxford University Press.

194

McArthur, C. (1974). Iconography of the Gangster Film. In A. Silver & J. Ursini (Eds.), *Gangster film reader* (pp. 39-46). Pompton Plains, NJ: Limelight Editions.

McCarthy, K. E. (2007). Juvenile delinquency and crime theory in Blackboard Jungle. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture, 14*(4),

McCarthy, T. (2001, September 3). LA gangs are back. *Time, 158*(9), 46

McCarty, J. (2004). *Bullets over Hollywood: The American gangster picture from the silent's to "The Sopranos."* Cambridge, MA: De Capo Press.

McConnell, R. (1999). *French realism & cinema verite*. Retrieved from http://www.parlez-vous.com/misc/realism.htm.

McCorkle, R. C. & Miethe, T. D. (1998). The political and organizational response to gangs: An examination of a―moral panic‖ in Nevada. *Justice Quarterly*, *15*(1), 41–64.

McCorkle, R. C. & Miethe, T. D. (2002). *Panic: The social construction of the street gang problem.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

McCormick, C. (1995). *Constructing danger: the mis/representation of crime in the news*. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing.

Mertz, C. (1974). *Film language: A semiotics of the cinema* (M. Taylor, Trans.). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Miller, W. B. (1958). Lower class culture as a generating milieu of gang delinquency. *Journal of Social Issues, 14* (3), 5-19.

Miller, W. B. (1975). *Violence by youth gangs and youth groups as a crime problem in major American cities*. Washington, DC: National Institute for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Miller, W. B. (1980). Gangs, groups, and serious youth crime. In D. Schicker & D.H. Kelly (Eds.), *Critical issues in juvenile delinquency*. Lexington, MA: Lexington.

Miller, W. B. (1982). Youth gangs: A look at the numbers. *Children Today*, 11 (March – April):10–11.

Miller, W. B. (1992). *Crime by Youth Gangs and Groups in the United States*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Miller, W. B. (2001). The growth of youth gang problems in the United States: 1970-1998. *Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention*. U.S. Department of Justice.

Monaco, J. (2000). *How to read a film: Movies media and beyond* (3rd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.

Moore, J. W. (1991). *Going down to the barrio: Homeboys and homegirls in change.* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Moore, J. W. & Hagedorn, J. M. (2001). *Female gangs: A focus on research.* Bulletin. Youth Gang Series. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Moscovici, S. (1984). The Phenomenon of Social Representations. In R. Farr & S. Moscovici (Eds.), *Social representations* (pp. 3-69). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 3-69.

Munby, J. (2005). The underworld films of Oscar Micheau and Ralph Cooper: Toward a genealogy of the black screen gangster. In L. Grieveson, E. Sonnet, & P. Stanfield (Eds.), *Mob culture: Hidden histories of the American gangster film* (pp. 263-280). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Muraskin, R., & Domash, S. F. (2007). *Crime and the media: Headlines vs. reality*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Hall.

National Gang Intelligence Center. (2012). *2011 national gang threat assessment*. Washington, DC: National Gang Intelligence Center. Retrieved from http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/2011-national-gang-threat-assessment/

National Gang Center. (2012). *National Youth Gang Survey Analysis*. Retrieved from http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Survey-Analysis.

Neale, S. (2008). *Genre and Hollywood*. New York: Routledge.

Neuman, W. L. (2003). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (5th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Nichols, B. (2010). *Engaging cinema: An introduction to film studies*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Nowell-Smith, G. (2000). How films mean, or, from aesthetics to semiotics and half-way back again. In C. Gledhill & L. Williams (eds.), *Reinventing film studies* (p. 8-17). New York: Oxford University Press.

Oestreicher, R. (2003). How should historians think about 'the Gangs of New York'? *History Workshop Journal, 56*, 210-215.. Retrieved from http://www.tazi.net/JFriedman/IMG/pdf/ro_how_should_historians_think_about_the_gangs_of_new_york.pdf.

Osgerby, B. (2003). Sleazy riders: Exploitation, "otherness," and transgression in the 1960s biker movie. *Journal of Popular Film and Television, 31*(3), 98-101.

Osman, K. (1992). *Gangs*. San Diego, CA: Lucent Books, Inc

Padilla, F. M. (1992). *The gang as an American enterprise: Puerto Rican youth and the American dream*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University.

Parish, J. R., & Pitts, M. R. (1976). *The great gangster pictures*. Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Parker, D. & Diehl, M. (2006). *Notorious cop: The inside story of the Tupac, Biggie, and Jam Master investigations from the NYPD's first 'Hip-Hop Cop'*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Perrone, P. A. & Chesney-Lind, M. (1998). Media Presentations of Juvenile Crime in Hawaii: Wild in the Streets? *Crime Trend Series, 6*, 1-11.

Peterson, R. D. (2004). *Understanding contemporary gangs in America: An interdisciplinary approach*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

Phillips, S. A. (1999). *Wallbangin': Graffiti and gangs in L.A.* Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Pitman, T. (2010). Policing the borders of Chicano cinema: The critical reception of Allison Anders's *Mi Vida Loca/My Crazy Life* (1994) by the Chicano community. *Journal of Contemporary Film, 8*(2), 71-86. doi: 10.1386/ncin.8.2.71_1.

Potter, G. W, & Kappeler, V. (1998). *Constructing crime: Perspectives on making news and social problems.* Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.

Price, R. (1974). *The Wanderers.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company

Prince, S. (2010). *Movie and meanings: An introduction to film* (5th ed). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Przemieniecki, C.J. (2005). Gang behavior and movies: Do Hollywood gang films influence violent gang behavior? *Journal of Gang Research, 12* (2), 41-71.

Przemieniecki, C.J. (2009, August). *Gang-related video games: Prevention and intervention strategies.* Presentation at the 12th annual National Gang Crime Research Center International Gang Specialist Training Conference, Chicago, IL.

Puffer, J.A. (1912). *The boy and his gang*. Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press.

Quinlan, M. & Persels, J. (1994). It's not my fault, the devil made me do it: attempting to impose tort liability on publishers, producers, and artists for injuries allegedly "inspired" by media speech. *Southern Illinois University Law Journal, 18*(winter), 417-437.

Quinney, R. (2001). *The social reality of crime*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Rafter, N. (2006). *Shots in the mirror: Crime films and society*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Rafter, N. (2007). Crime, film and criminology: Recent sex-crime movies. *Theoretical Criminology, 11*, 403-420.

Rawlinson, P. (1998). Mafia, media and myth: Representations of Russian organised crime. *The Howard Journal, 37*(4), 346-358.

Rosow, E. (1978). *Born to Lose: The Gangster Film in America*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Rome, D. (2004). *Black demons: The media's depiction of the African American male criminal stereotype*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Ryall, T. (1998). Genre and Hollywood. In J. Hill & P. Church Gibson (Eds.), *The Oxford guide to film studies* (pp. 327-341). New York: Oxford University Press.

Sanchez, R. (2000). *My bloody life: The making of a Latin King*. Chicago, IL: Chicago Review Press.

Sanchez-Jankowski, M. (1991). *Islands in the street: Gangs and American urban society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Sanders, W. B. (1994). *Gangbangs and drivebys: Grounded culture and juvenile gang violence*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter

Savelli, L. (2006). *Gangs across America and their symbols*. Flushing, NY: Looseleaf Law Publications.

Sanson, A., Duck, J., Cupit, G., Ungerer, J., Scuderi, C., & Sutton, J. (2000). *Media representations & responsibilities: Psychological perspectives*. The Australian Psychological Society. http://www.psychology.org.au/Assets/Files/media_position_paper.pdf.

Sarris, A. (1977). Big funerals: The Hollywood gangster, 1927-1933. In A. Silver & J. Ursini (Eds.), *Gangster film reader* (pp. 85-96). Pompton Plains, NJ: Limelight Editions.

Schneider, S. J. (2009). *101 gangster movies you must see before you die*. London: A Quintessence Book

Seate, M. (2000). *Two wheels on two reels: A history of biker movies*. North Conway, NH: Whitehorse Press.

Seino, T. (2010). *Realism and representations of working class contemporary British Cinema* (master's thesis). DeMontfort University. Retrieved from https://www.dora.dmu.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/2086/4720/SOCIAL%20REALISM %20AND%20REPRESENTATION%20OF%20THE%20WORKING%20CLAS S%20IN%20CONTEMPORARY%20BRITISH%20CINEMA.pdf?sequence=1.

Shadoian, J. (1977). *Dreams and dead ends: The American gangster/crime film.* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Shakur, S. (1993). *Monster: The autobiography of an L.A. gang member*. New York: Grove Press.

Sheldon, R. G., Tracy, S. K., & Brown, W. B. (2004). *Youth gangs in American society* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Sheppard, D., Rowe, W., Grant, H., & Jacobs, N. (2003). *National Evaluation of the Partnerships to Reduce Juvenile Gun Violence Program*. Bethesda, Maryland: COSMOS Corporation.

Shipley, W. & Cavender, G. (2001). Murder and mayhem at the movies. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture, 9*(1), 1-14.

Short, J. F. (1990). New wine in old bottles? Change and continuity in American gangs. In C. Huff (Ed.), *Gangs in America* (pp. 223-239). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Sikes, G. (1997). *8 ball chicks: A year in the violent world of girl gangs*. New York: Anchor Books.

Silver, A., & Ursini, J. (2007). *Gangster film reader.* Pompton Plaines, NJ: Limelight Editions.

Slocum, J.D. (2001). *Violence and American cinema.* New York: Routledge.

Smith-Shomade, B. E. (2003). Rock-a-bye baby! Black women disrupting gangs and constructing Hip-Hop gangsta films. *Cinema Journal, 42*(2), 25-40.

Snyder, S. (1991). Movies and juvenile delinquency: An overview. *Adolescence*, *26* (101), 121-132.

Snyder, S. (1995a). Movie portrayals of juvenile delinquency: Part 1-epidemiology and criminology. *Adolescence, 30*(117), 53-64.

Snyder, S. (1995b). Movie portrayals of juvenile delinquency: Part 2-epidemiology and criminology. *Adolescence, 30*(118), 325-337.

Spergel, I. A. (1966). *Street Gang Work: Theory and Practice*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley.

Spergel, I. A. (1990). Strategies and perceived agency effectiveness in dealing with the youth gang problem. In C. Huff (Ed.), *Gangs in America* (pp. 288-309*)*. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Spergel, I. A. (1995). *The youth gang problem: A community approach.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Springhall, J. (1998). Censoring Hollywood: Youth, Moral Panic and Crime/Gangster Movies of the 1930s. *The Journal of Popular Culture, 32*(3), 135-154.

Stallworth, R. (1999). *Gang culture in the media: A pre-millennium perspective*. Utah Department of Public Safety. Salt Lake City, Utah.

Stallworth, R. (2004). *Gangster rap music: Does it influence & incite violence among youth* (unpublished master's thesis). Columbia College, Missouri.

Starbuck, D., Howell, J. C., & Lindquist, D.J. (2001). *Hybrid and other modern gangs.* Bulletin. Youth Gang Series. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Stevens, D. J. (2011). *Media and criminal justice: The CSI effect*. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.

Stewart, J. (2010). Real to reel: Filmic constructions of hip hop cultures and hip hop identities. *Interdisciplinary Humanities, 26*(2), 49-67.

Sulkunen, P. (2007). Images of addition: Representations of addictions in films. *Addiction Research and Theory, 15*(6), 543-559.

Surette, R. (2011). *Media, crime and criminal justice: Images, realities, and policies* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.

Sutherland, J. A. & Feltey, K. (2010). *Cinematic sociology: Social life in film*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Swan, K., Meskill, C., & DeMaio, S. (Eds.). (1998). *Social learning from broadcast television*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Swetnam, J. & Pope, J. (2001). Gangs and gang activity in a non-metropolitan community: The perceptions of students, teachers, and police officers. *Social Behavior and Personality, 29*(2), 197-208.

Taylor, C. S. (1990). Gang imperialism. In C. Huff (Ed.), *Gangs in America* (pp. 103-115). Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Thompson, C., Young, R. L., & Burns, R. (2000). Representing gangs in the news: Media constructions of criminal gangs. *Sociological Spectrum, 20*, 409–432.

Thornberry, T. P. (1998). Membership in youth gangs and involvement in serious and violent offending. In R. Loeber & D. Farrington (Eds.), *Serious and Violent Juvenile Offenders: Risk Factors and Successful Interventions* (pp. 147–166). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.,

Thrasher, F. M. (1927). *The gang: A study of 1,313 gangs in Chicago*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Tobin, K. (2008). *Gangs: An individual and group perspective*. Upper Saddle, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Todorov, T. (1981). *Introduction to poetics* (R. Howard, Trans.). Brighton: Harvester Press.

Tovares, R. D. (2002). *Manufacturing the gang: Mexican American youth gangs on local television*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Tucker, C. D. (1996). Gangsta rap may encourage gang behavior. In D. Bender, B. Leone, & C. Coznic (Eds.), *Gangs: Opposing viewpoints*. San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press.

Tuli, F. (2010). The basis of distinction between qualitative and quantitative research in social science: Reflection on the ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives. *Ethiopian Journal of Education and Sciences, 6*(1), 97-108. Retrieved from http://www.ajol.info.

Turan, K. (1992, January 17). Is this 'Juice' fresh? *Los Angeles Times*.

University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development. (2000). Facts vs. perceptions: "Superpredator" theory belies crime data. *Children, Youth & Family*. Retrieved from http://www.pitt.edu/~ocdweb/background.htm.

Valdez, A. (2005a). *Gangs: A guide to understanding street gangs* (4th ed.). California: Law Tech Publishing

Valdez, A. (2005b). Mexican American youth and adult prison gangs in a changing heroin market. *Journal of Drug Issues*, *35*(4):843–867.

Valentine, B. (1995). *Gang intelligence manual: Identifying and understanding modern-day violent gangs in the United States.* Boulder, CO: Paladin Press.

Vigil, J. D. (2010). *Gang redux: A balanced anti-gang strategy.* Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.

Vistica, G. (1995, July 17). 'Gangstas' in the ranks: Gang violence in the U.S. military. *Newsweek,* A1.

Walker, R. (2012). *Identifying gang colors.* Retrieved from http://www.gangsorus.com.

Walker-Fields, I. W. (2004). Family values and feudal codes: The social politics of America's twenty-first century gangster. *The Journal of Popular Culture, 37*(4), 611-633.

Wallace, R. (1957, September 9). Crime in the U.S. *Life, 43*(11), 46-70.

Ward, L. F. (1905). Evolution of Social Structures. *American Journal of Sociology*, *10* (5), 589-605.

Welch, M., Price, E. A., & Yankey, N. (2002). Moral panic over youth violence wilding and the manufacture of menace in the media. *Youth & Society, 34*(1), 3-30. doi: 10.1177/0044118X02034001001

Welsh, A., Fleming, T., & Dowler, K. (2011). Constructing crime and justice on film: Meanings and messages in cinema. *Contemporary Justice Review, 14*(4), 457-476.

Whitehead, J.T. & Lab, S.P. (2009). *Juvenile Justice: An Introduction* (6th ed). LexisNexus: Anderson Publishing.

Wiese, M. J. & Cole, S. G. (1946). A study of children's attitudes and the influence of a commercial motion picture. *Journal of Psychology: Interdisciplinary and Applied, 21*, 151-171. doi: 10.1080/00223980.1946.9917278

Wilson, D. & O'Sullivan, S. (2004). *Images of incarceration: Representations of prison in film and television drama.* United Kingdom: Waterside Press.

Winokur, M. (1995). Marginal marginalia: The African-American voice in the nouvelle gangster film. *Velvet Light Trap, 35*, 19-33.

Whyte, W. F. (1943). *Street corner society: The social structure of an Italian slum.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.

Wood, J., & Alleyne, E. (2010). Street gang theory and research: Where are we now and where do we go from here? *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 15*(2), 100-111.

Yablonsky, L. (1959). The delinquent gang as a near-group. *Social Problems, 7*, 108-117.

Yablonsky, L. (1962). *The Violent Gang*. New York: Macmillam.

Yablonsky, L. (1997). *Gangsters: Fifty years of madness, drugs, and death on the streets of America.* New York: New York University Press.

Yakubowicz v. Paramount Pictures Corp., 536 N.E.2d 1067 (Mass. 1989)

Yar, M. (2005). The global 'epidemic' of movie 'piracy': crime-wave or social construction? *Media, Culture, Society, 27*(5), 677-696.

Yar, M. (2010). Screening crime: Cultural criminology goes to the movies. In K. Hayward & M. Presdee (Eds.), *Framing Crime: Cultural Criminology and the Image* (pp. 68-82). New York, NY: Routledge.

Yearwood, D., & Hayes, R. (2000). *Perceptions of youth crime and youth gangs: A statewide systemic investigation.* North Carolina Criminal Justice Analysis Center, Governor's Crime Commission Report.

Young, A. (2009). The screen of the crime: Judging the affect of cinematic violence. *Social & Legal Studies, 18*(1), 5-22.

Yurick, S. (1965). *The Warriors.* New York: Grove Press.

Zalcock, B. (2001). *Renegade Sisters: Girl Gangs on Film*. San Francisco, CA: Creation Books.

Zatz, M.S. (1985). Los cholos: Legal processing of Chicano gang members. *Social Problems*, *33*, 13-30.

Zatz, M. S. (1987*). Chicano* youth gangs and crime: The creation of a moral panic. *Contemporary Crisis, 11*, 129–158.