Examining Gang Violence, Disabilities and Rehabilitation Service Delivery Needs within Diverse Populations

Valerie E. D. Russell, Ph.D., CRC
Outline

- What is a gang?
- History/Information
- Cycle of violence
- Importance of disability related research
- Current Research
- Future Direction(s)
What is a gang?

- A criminal street gang is a formal or informal ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons who have:
  - A common name or common identifying signs, colors, or symbols.
  - Members or associates who individually or collectedly, engaged in or have engaged in a pattern of gang activity such as fighting, vandalism, murder, and drug sales.
History

- 1200s – Thuggee formulated signs and symbols still in use today
- 1800s – New generation of gangs created by immigrants appeared in New York City
- 1940s – Latin Kings emerged in Chicago and Mexican gangs formed on the west coast
- 1960s/1970s – African American gangs were formed in Los Angeles
- 1990s – “Super Gangs” were formed
- Today: 800,000 gang members and 30,000 gangs (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010)
Incident
Individual is “jumped” or “Sexed” into the gang; Member may also be required to perform a solo act of violence against an innocent person

Incident
Individual is “mentored” and shown how to complete crimes successfully (e.g., stealing, robbing, drug activities)

Incident
Individual is required to perform acts of violence upon sight of an opposing gang member in the wrong territory or in retaliation (e.g., drive-by shootings, stabbing, other physical violence)

Incident
Individual is required to participate in the initiation of another gang member (e.g., beating, sex)
Why do members stay in gangs?

- Support
- Money
- Protection
- Lack of friends
- Disconnection from family support
- Unaware of other services
- Mental illness
- Substance abuse

Friends are as damaged and hurt as they are
Importance of disability related research

- Gangs are typically associated with delinquency, violence, drug dependence, conduct disorder, legal problems, and victimization.
  (Hamrin, 2004; Bryant & Harvey, 2000; Hamrin, 1998)

- Gang violence can come from a variety of sources including other gang members in the form of “beat ins” and violations.
  (Peterson, Taylor, & Esbensen, 2004)

- Gang rivalry between competing gangs may also result in negative consequences and injuries to members. These violent acts can result in disabling conditions.
Importance of disability related research

- Since homicides are a dominant societal issue, they are researched at length; whereas, much less research has been devoted to individuals living in neighborhoods with high rates of gang involvement who were not killed, but instead shot, stabbed, assaulted, impaired, and seriously disabled as a result of violence (Cook & Ludwig, 2000).
Current Research

- **Gang affiliation and disability: An initial investigation into rehabilitation counseling implications**

- **Study objectives:**
  1. Determine if gang members/former gang members are aware of the services available to persons with disabilities, including those of vocational rehabilitation counseling.
  2. Determine the attitudes that gang members/former gang members have toward persons with disabilities.
Current Research

- Instruments
  - Scale of Attitudes toward Disabled Persons Form R (SADP-R)
  - Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale Short Form - C
  - Knowledge of Services – scenario vignette
  - Demographic survey

- Instrument Pilot testing –
  - Police Department - Gang Unit
  - Think Aloud method
Current Research

Location - Homeboy Industries – Los Angeles, CA

- **8 Programs/Services:**
  - Case Management
  - Curriculum/Education
  - Employment Services
  - Twelve Step Meetings
  - Solar Panel Installation Training and Certification Program
  - Legal Services
  - Mental Health
  - Tattoo Removal

- **4 Businesses:**
  - Homeboy Bakery
  - Homegirl Café & Catering
  - Homeboy/Homegirl Merchandise
  - Homeboy Silkscreen & Embroidery
Data

- N=171
- Alaskan and Native American (n=4)
- Final N=167
Demographics

Sex
- Male – 108 (65%)
- Female – 59 (35%)

Ethnicity
- White – 5 (3%)
- African American – 29 (17%)
- Hispanic/Latino – 133 (80%)
Demographics

- **Education**
  - High School and below – 54 (33%)
  - High School diploma/Vocational Training – 95 (58%)
  - Associates Degree and higher – 16 (9%)

- **Current Age**
  - 18 – 66
  - M = 30

- **Age – Joining gang**
  - 7 – 25
  - M = 13 (28%)
Demographics

- Last participation in gang activities
  - 5 years or more – 77 (46%)
  - 4 years or less – 56 (34%)
  - 6 months or less – 22 (13%)
  - Currently active – 12 (7%)

- Personal injury that limits 1 or more MLA(s)
  - Yes – 45 (27%)
  - No – 122 (73%)

- Acquaintance disabled by gang violence
  - Yes – 126 (75%)
  - No – 39 (25%)
Research Question 1

Do gang members/former gang members have knowledge of rehabilitation counseling services?

- Yes – 26 (16%)
- No – 141 (84%)
Those who have knowledge of RC services:

- Male/Female – 50%/50%
- White – 1; African Am. – 2; Hispanic/Latino – 23
- HS and below – 7; HS equiv/VT – 16; AA or higher – 3
- Personal injury w/limitations – 7
- Acquaintance disabled by gang violence – 22
- Age joining gang – 9 – 16
- Last participation – 5 years or more – 19; 4 years or less – 1; 6 months or less – 5; Currently active – 1
Exploratory Analyses

- Are gang member/former gang member demographic characteristics significantly associated with knowledge of vocational rehabilitation services?
  - Logistic Regression

- **DV:** Stated/Did not state Rehab Counseling Services

- **IV:** Ethnicity; Sex; Participation; Education level; Age joining gang; Current age; Acquaintance; Personal injury
  - 20:1
Exploratory Analyses

- Logistic Regression
  - Baseline accuracy rate – 85.9%
  - Outliers/Influencers – 86.2%

Hosmer and Lemeshow Test

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(χ² = 13.027; p > .05)

Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients

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(χ² = 32.470; p < .05)
## Exploratory Analyses

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Research Question 2

What attitudes to gang members/former gang members have toward individuals with disabilities.

\[ M = 92.57 \quad \text{M = 7.34} \]

Scale of Attitudes toward Disabled Persons - Form R (SADP-R)

- Positive: 144
- Negative: 0

Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale Short Form - C

- Socially Desirable: 13
- Honest: 0
Are gang member/former gang member characteristics significantly associated with their attitudes toward individuals with disabilities?

- **Multiple Regression**

- **DV:** SADP-R
- **IV:** Ethnicity; Sex; Participation; Education level; Age joining gang; Current age; Acquaintance; Personal injury
## Exploratory Analyses

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a. Dependent Variable: Attitudes Toward IWD
Limitations

- Survey research
- Participants were volunteers
- Cultural understanding of demographic question regarding gang participation
- Generalizability
Future Directions

- Replication of the study
  - *LA Times Article*(2009): Former L.A. gang members take their message to Alabama

- Intervention strategies/follow-up
  - Gang Alternatives Agency: Miami, FL. (Little Haiti)

- Counselors knowledge of population
  - Multicultural competencies

- Training modules


