

Serving Gang-Involved Latino Youth: Strengths and Service Gaps for a Community Violence Prevention Plan

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Significance

- Most empirical research on youth violence and gangs has been conducted in North America (Hemphill et al., 2009).
- Over the last decade, scholars have begun to explore youth violence and gangs in a transnational and global context (Decker & Pyrooz, 2010).
- Very little research has systematically examined youth violence and gangs in El Salvador in a transnational context.
- Community violence prevention programs are needed.

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Background

- USA: Rates of youth violence are alarmingly high on a global scale, particularly for youth of color and gang involved youth (Decker & Pyrooz, 2010).
- USA: Homicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for Latino youth ages 10 to 24 (CDC, 2010)
- El Salvador: One of the highest homicide rates of non-conflict nations worldwide (UNDP, 2009)
- El Salvador: Gang members estimated to be responsible for up to 25% of violent crime (Cruz, 2005).

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Research Questions

1. What are the differences and similarities between youth gang members and youth non-gang members in Boston and San Salvador?
2. What are the differences and similarities between youth gang members in Boston and San Salvador?
3. Based on the answers of the two previous questions, what are the implications for a community violence prevention plan?

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Methods: Sample

	Boston N=374	San Salvador N=208
Total N (%)	374 (64.3)	208 (35.7)
Age (SD)	19.30 (2.6)	20.07 (4.5)
Gender (%)		
Male (N)	50.8 (190)	81.7 (170)
Female (N)	49.2(184)	18.3 (38)
Gang Involvement (Yes %)	32.5 (115)	65.2 (135)
Born in the US / in El Salvador (Yes %)	61.3	100.0
Immigrant Family / Lived in the US (Yes %)	40.7	5.0
Latino (Yes %)	65.7	-
At-risk youth behaviors:		
School Dropout (Yes %)	52.5	58.5
Unemployed (Yes %)	62.9	69.2
Age first time sex (SD)	14.07 (2.4)	13.72 (2.4)
Unprotected sex (No condom Yes %)	23.1	56.9
Marijuana use (Yes %)	67.6	66.2
Legal problems (Yes %)	46.0	51.2
Violence: hit someone (Yes %)	15.2	41.7

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Methods: Survey

- Objective: to assess the individual, situational, and socio-cultural influences on the lives and experiences of high risk youth and youth gang members
- Cross-sectional survey (in Spanish and English) of young adults participating in three youth organizations in Boston and San Salvador
- Youth completed the surveys in 35 to 50 minutes

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Analytic strategies

- Comparison of high-risk youth and youth gang members in each city: employment status, family relationships, school attendance, and legal problems.
- Examine specific mean and proportional differences across variables using independent samples t-tests and chi-square tests.
- Examine effect sizes such as Cohen's d (Cohen, 1988) to assess the magnitude of statistically significant differences across samples.

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Limitations

- Focus on individual risk factors
- Cross-sectional sample of convenience
- Self-report measures
- Translation and cultural context of some expressions and constructs
- San Salvador: active gang members; Boston: gang members at some point
- The varied data collection techniques (individual / group)

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Results

	Boston N=374		Boston Comparison		
	YGM	YNGM	t/ χ^2	p	d / w
School					
Attending School (Yes %)	21.9	40.1	11.276	.001	0.18
Dropout from School (Yes %)	63.2	46.9	8.214	.004	0.15
High School Graduation (Yes %)	14.9	19.6	1.128	ns	0.06
Work					
Employed (Yes %)	37.4	36.6	.021	ns	0.01
Employed Full Time (Yes %)	44.7	44.9	.983	ns	0.01
Sexual Behavior					
Sexual Intercourse (Yes %)	.94 (.2)	.80 (.4)	10.545	.001	0.44
Age first time sex†	12.86 (2.7)	14.85 (1.8)	4.217	<.001	-0.87
Condom use (Yes %)	.87 (.3)	.72 (.5)	6.658	.010	0.36
Substances Use					
Alcohol: More than 5 drinks† (Yes %)	.81 (.4)	.64 (.5)	3.250	ns	0.38
Alcohol: Age first 5 drinks†	14.27 (2.0)	14.95 (2.0)	1.400	ns	-0.33
Marijuana: Smoke (Yes %)	.95 (.2)	.54 (.5)	53.922	<.001	1.08
Marijuana: Age first time smoke	13.23 (2.4)	13.76 (2.4)	1.576	ns	-0.22
Violence and Delinquency					
Violence (0-3)	.58 (.9)	.22 (.6)	4.271	<.001	-0.44
Legal Problems (Yes %)	77.4 (.4)	31.8 (.5)	64.853	<.001	0.43
Delinquency Index (0-24)	5.04 (5.2)	2.43 (3.9)	5.312	<.001	0.57
Official Delinquency: Arrest (Yes %)	.28 (.4)	.09 (.3)	21.483	<.001	0.54
Official Delinquency: No. of arrest	1.71 (1.9)	1.48 (1.0)	-0.509	ns	0.15
Physical Aggression Index (4-24)	8.88 (5.5)	7.25 (4.6)	-2.904	.004	0.32
Gang Involvement Index (7-42)	20.49 (5.1)	17.27 (4.1)	-5.938	<.001	0.70

YGM = Youth Gang Members YNGM = Youth Non Gang Members † = Cohorts if ns non significant † = Sample for Boston N = 104

	San Salvador N=208		San Salvador Comparison		
	YGM	YNGM	t/ χ^2	p	d / w
School					
Attending School (Yes %)	23.1	26.4	.414	ns	0.05
Dropout from School (Yes %)	62.4	50.7	2.492	ns	0.11
High School Graduation (Yes %)	6.8	20.8	8.816	.003	0.21
Work					
Employed (Yes %)	34.9	23.6	2.753	ns	0.12
Employed Full Time (Yes %)	44.4	17.6	3.797	.051	0.25
Sexual Behavior					
Sexual Intercourse (Yes %)	.96 (.2)	.086 (.4)	5.873	.015	0.32
Age first time sex	13.36 (2.2)	14.43 (2.5)	2.963	.003	-0.45
Condom use (Yes %)	.44 (.5)	.43 (.5)	.002	ns	0.02
Substances Use					
Alcohol: More than 5 drinks (Yes %)	.81 (.4)	.64 (.5)	7.493	.006	0.38
Alcohol: Age first 5 drinks	13.90 (2.1)	14.67 (2.5)	1.966	.051	-0.33
Marijuana: Smoke (Yes %)	.77 (.4)	.46 (.5)	20.105	<.001	0.68
Marijuana: Age first time smoke	14.67 (2.7)	14.84 (2.5)	.332	ns	-0.06
Violence and Delinquency					
Violence (0-3)	1.39 (1.2)	.31 (.6)	-7.081	<.001	-1.14
Legal Problems (Yes %)	66.2 (.5)	23.9 (.4)	33.036	<.001	.040
Delinquency Index (0-24)	8.60 (5.9)	3.76 (4.0)	-6.176	<.001	0.96
Official Delinquency: Arrest (Yes %)	.50 (.5)	.24 (.4)	13.028	<.001	0.57
Official Delinquency: No. of arrest	2.54 (2.1)	1.38 (.62)	-2.237	.028	0.75
Physical Aggression Index (4-24)	10.25 (4.2)	7.49 (3.8)	-4.643	<.001	0.69
Gang Involvement Index (7-42)	25.13 (5.6)	19.56 (4.5)	-7.001	<.001	1.10

YGM = Youth Gang Members YNGM = Youth Non Gang Members † = Cohorts if ns non significant

	Boston N=115	San Salvador N=135	t/ χ^2	p	d / η
	YGM	YNGM			
School					
Attending School (Yes %)	21.9	23.1	.051	ns	0.01
Dropout from School (Yes %)	63.2	62.4	0.15	ns	0.01
High School Graduation (Yes %)	14.9	6.8	4.240	.039	0.13
Work					
Employed (Yes %)	37.4	34.9	.166	ns	0.03
Employed Full Time (Yes %)	44.7	44.4	.001	ns	0.03
Sexual Behavior					
Sexual Intercourse (Yes %)	.94 (.2)	.96 (.2)	.400	ns	0.04
Age first time sex†	12.86 (2.7)	13.36 (2.2)	-1.118	ns	-0.20
Condom use (Yes %)	.87 (.3)	.44 (.5)	40.154	<.001	.044
Substances Use					
Alcohol: More than 5 drinks† (Yes %)	.81 (.4)	.81 (.4)	.000	ns	0.01
Alcohol: Age first 5 drinks†	14.27 (2.0)	13.90 (2.1)	.853	ns	-0.18
Marijuana: Smoke (Yes %)	.95 (.2)	.77 (.4)	14.883	<.001	0.25
Marijuana: Age first time smoke	13.23 (2.4)	14.67 (2.7)	-3.996	<.001	-0.56
Violence and Delinquency					
Violence (0-3)	.58 (.9)	1.39 (1.2)	-5.685	<.001	-0.73
Legal Problems (Yes %)	77.4 (.4)	66.2 (.5)	3.804	.051	0.12
Delinquency Index (0-24)	5.04 (5.2)	8.60 (5.9)	-4.979	<.001	-0.66
Official Delinquency: Arrest (Yes %)	.28 (.4)	.50 (.5)	12.351	<.001	0.22
Official Delinquency: No. of arrest	1.71 (1.9)	2.54 (2.1)	-1.898	.061	0.42
Physical Aggression Index (4-24)	8.88 (5.5)	10.25 (4.2)	-2.214	.028	-0.28
Gang Involvement Index (7-42)	20.49 (5.1)	25.13 (5.6)	-6.551	<.001	-0.87

† = Cohorts if ns non significant YGM = Youth Gang Members † = Sample for Boston N = 104

Discussion

- Youth gang members may face a higher concentration and intensity of externalizing risk behaviors when compared to youth non-gang members
- Interventions targeting high risk youth in Latin America and the Caribbean tend to ignore important differences between YGM and YNGM
- Policies and youth interventions exclusively targeting youth gang members in the US often disregard similarities between youth gang members and high risk youth residing in shared communities

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