REDUCING INTERGANG VIOLENCE:
NORMS FROM THE INTERSTATE SYSTEM

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We maintain that the norms guiding interstate behavior offer a point of departure for the reduction of violence among territorial urban youth gangs. Gangs have been a part of the American urban landscape far too long to assume that they can be eradicated simply by arresting and incarcerating more youths (although this function remains important) without addressing the larger issues that compel individuals to join gangs. Since the relations that exist among territorial urban gangs bear some important structural similarities to the decentralized interstate system, we contend that the expansion of the norms that already appear in both systems, such as respect for spheres of influence, reciprocity in cooperative exchanges, and the observance of treaties, can serve as the basis for moderating intergang conflict. We suggest intervention and mediation strategies that seek to institutionalize the conflict-dampening norms within the intergang system.

The violent deaths of urban youth, primarily minority group members, may be America’s most serious social and moral problem. Many of those deaths occur through intergang violence, in the killing either of contending gang members or of innocent bystanders. Efforts to stem the violence by eliminating gangs through stricter law enforcement measures have met with little success. Estimates of the presence of gangs in inner city schools increased dramatically between 1989 and 1995. A joint Bureau of Justice Statistics and the National Center for Education Statistics survey of 10,000 students aged 12–19 indicated that the presence of street gangs reported in inner city schools jumped from 24.8 percent to 40.7 percent between 1989 and 1995.1 Gangs are likely to remain part of the urban landscape for as long as youths view them as a source of status or a means of coping with the insecurity and powerlessness of their lives in many of America’s cities. Short of changing the physical environment in the inner city, a useful approach to reducing the level of intergang violence may lie in attempting to encourage norms of behavior that have proved useful in an analogous context. Rather than treating intergang violence as a public health issue or a problem of failed
socialization, we argue that it should be analyzed from the perspective of groups seeking power and security in a relatively anarchic environment. Moreover, we argue that in many ways the environment of the international system is analogous to the context in which intergang relations take place, and therefore norms of behavior that have met with some success in the international system may be applied to intergang relations in an effort to reduce intergang violence.

This essay examines the extent to which norms found in the interstate system are operative in the intergang system, and considers whether an expansion of these norms might serve to reduce the level of intergang conflict. First, we discuss the interaction of gangs with the domestic political context in which they are situated that constrains (or, at times, facilitates) their activity. Second, we compare and contrast the structure of the interstate and intergang systems. Third, we discuss several of the more prevalent norms operative in both systems. Fourth, we consider the prospects for extending to intergang relations conflict-reduction norms that have been accepted as obligatory by states. Fifth, we discuss the challenges of expanding norms in the intergang system in order to reduce intergang violence. Sixth, and finally, we briefly discuss some of the policy and research implications of our study. Initially, however, since gangs, unlike territorial states, function within two political systems—the established domestic political order represented by the community in which the gang is situated, and an “intergang system,” characterized by the relationships and interactions among gangs—it is important to show the reader that this clear difference between the intergang and interstate systems does not preclude a comparison of the two. A brief examination of the relationship between gangs and the local political order will demonstrate this point.

GANGS AND THE LOCAL POLITICAL ORDER

While there are many different definitions and typologies of gangs, in this article we rely on Henderson’s working definition of a gang as a voluntary, and often illegal, association organized to coordinate the production and provision of resources within a community. Gangs coordinate, produce, and provide resources primarily through their access to territory, commercial entrepots, and/or markets. Gangs can be divided into three basic types: territorial, commercial, and corporate. This categorization is a modification of Taylor’s original typology, which included scavenger, territorial, and corporate gangs, to which he later added commercial gangs. Territorial gangs have as their main objective the provision of status and security within a given
territory. Territorial gangs are not criminal organizations per se. They may be involved in petty crimes, but the economic livelihood of the gang member is not facilitated through gang activities or membership. Territorial gangs are similar to the stereotypical *West Side Story* gangs that were primarily intent on “protecting their turf.” On the other hand, territorial gangs often sprout commercial and corporate gangs. Commercial gangs are not necessarily territorial, and are organized for the sale, purchase, or delivery of goods or services to the larger community for the economic benefit of gang members. These goods and services are often illegal; therefore, commercial gangs are often criminal conspiracies (e.g., many drug-dealing gangs fall into this category). Corporate gangs are organized to monopolize entire markets; territorial control is secondary to the exploitation of the market within the territory. Even more than is the case for commercial gangs, corporate gangs (e.g., the Mafia and Yakuza) are criminal conspiracies. Law enforcement initiatives are the most appropriate institutional strategies for dealing with the latter two gang types. Nevertheless, territorial gangs often have the largest number of members of any of the gang types, many of the more developed gangs often evolve from territorial gang roots, and much of the violence in inner cities still derives from the activity of territorial gangs. Therefore, it makes sense to target prevention, intervention, and redirection strategies at territorial youth gangs. Further, given our concern with the problem of urban youth violence, our focus on relations among territorial urban youth gangs (which we will term simply “territorial gangs”) rather than other types is justified.

Gangs, like other sub-state actors, are subject to the political and legal authority of the community. Failure to accept that authority places gangs in an adversarial relationship with the local political order (exceptions include cases where gangs corrupt the local political system, as was evident in Cicero, Illinois, during the Capone era). At first blush, the relationship between territorial gangs and the larger community bears some similarities to that between rebellious communal groups seeking greater autonomy and empowerment, such as the Albanians in Kosovo, the Kurds in Iraq, the Basques in Spain, and Catholics in Northern Ireland, and the states in which they are situated. Members of these groups, who view themselves as minorities oppressed by a morally illegitimate political system that discriminates against them culturally, politically, and economically, transfer their loyalties from the state to their communal group to gain a sense of empowerment in what they perceive as a hostile community. Similarly, youths often join gangs out of fear and in an effort to overcome a sense of powerlessness in the dangerous environment of the inner city. Like rebellious communal groups, gangs reject the legitimacy of the existing order, that is, the “rightfulness” of its exercise of
Political orders attain legitimacy through instrumental means, that is, by providing goods and services to their citizens, and through what might be described as moral acceptance, each group’s acceptance of the justice of the political order and its institutions, and its sense of enjoying a fair share of the benefits of the community. Inner city youths who do not accept the legitimacy of the established political order are more likely to transfer their loyalties to gangs (or, in some exceptional cases, they may have never given their loyalty to any higher order in the first place). Gangs, like rebellious communal groups, exist in opposition to the established political order.

Unlike rebellious communal groups, however, gangs have little if any prospect of achieving greater autonomy through a challenge to the legitimacy of the existing political structure. They cannot secede from the state, organize a rebellion, carry out a coup, or start a civil war in the manner of more broad-based communal groups (nor do most intend to). Instead, they attempt to achieve relative autonomy vis-à-vis the legal institutions of the society by functioning outside the laws of the existing order. It is this outlaw behavior, which is often rationalized as necessary to provide for the security of the gang, that threatens the security of the larger community. While operating within a hierarchical system of law and order, gangs nonetheless attempt to control the interstices of the domestic system where the central government’s influence and legitimacy is diminished. In such a context, gangs behave in their relations with each other as if they were operating in something like the global anarchy of the interstate system.

The similarities between interstate and intergang activity do not end with resemblances between their respective operational milieux. For example, Holsti has estimated that 77 percent of the wars since World War II have been, not between states, but between communal groups and states or between competing communal groups. Just as an inordinate amount of state-level violence in the post–World War II era has resulted from the activity of communal groups, gangs are similarly implicated in the excessive violence that plagues American cities (and, increasingly, suburbs and small towns). Gangs do not directly account for a comparable proportion of domestic violent crimes, but they have a chilling effect on perceptions of security in the inner city. For example, Klein estimates that, although homicides represent less than five percent of all serious gang offenses, street gangs accounted for a total of 2,166 homicides in 1991. Moreover, among 800 “gang-involved” cities in the United States, 52 had ten or more gang homicides in 1991.

We do not contend that the contexts of interstate and intergang systems are identical or that the role of gangs within states is entirely consistent with that of communal groups; nevertheless, there are some striking similarities.
Those similarities have not been completely lost on previous researchers, but the implications of these similarities for conflict reduction have yet to be explored adequately. These similarities suggest opportunities for cross-fertilization whereby the processes associated with conflict reduction in the interstate system can be usefully applied to the intergang system.

The similarities between relations among gangs and those among states in the international system are most apparent as one focuses on the security components of the international system, as distinct from its economic relations, which are considerably more integrated and institutionalized. Therefore, the description of the international system that follows is limited to the security dimension. In our initial discussion, which is concerned with the functioning of the international system, we focus on those situations of intense competition in the system where security issues are paramount, such as in the post–World War II rivalries between Israel and its Arab neighbors, the ongoing conflict between India and Pakistan, or the fragile peace that now exists among the newly independent states of the former Yugoslavia. From this point of departure, we observe several similarities between the intergang system and the interstate system. For example, the intergang system and the interstate system are both decentralized and devoid of a central governing authority to deter and moderate conflict among actors who are intent on defending and expanding their power, including their territorial domains. Within each system, the principle of self-help prevails. Cooperation is based on the principle of reciprocity; disputes are resolved through either negotiation or the resort to force. Peace between hostile states and between adversarial gangs is maintained through a balance of power resulting from deterrence strategies. A more complete picture of the similarities between the systems is provided in the next section, which describes the structure and functioning of the interstate security system and then compares it with the intergang system.

INTERSTATE AND INTERGANG SYSTEMS

Interstate System

States are territorial entities, which assume authority over and responsibility for the welfare of the inhabitants living within their territory. As multi-purpose organizations, states attempt to provide for the political, economic, and social welfare of their citizens while providing security against potential challenges to the state from international rivals. The major paradigm of world politics, (neo)realism, insists that, given the nature of the international environment, security is the first imperative of foreign policy.
The most obvious feature of the traditional interstate system is that there is no accepted authority above that of states. The system is anarchic in the sense that politics take place in the absence of government. Each state is left largely to its own devices to maintain its security and to achieve other foreign policy objectives. When major powers find it in their common interest, they may intervene diplomatically, or even militarily, to contain or terminate conflicts between minor powers. But, more often, peace within the system depends on the extent to which states either find the observance of peaceful norms of behavior in their mutual interest or are deterred from aggressive action by the military capabilities of adversary states and their allies.

In return for providing a wide range of goods, the state demands fealty from its citizens. The allegiance of the citizenry to the sovereign includes citizens’ acceptance of the costs and risks of pursuing and defending state interests in disputes with other states. Acceptance of the legitimacy of the state’s authority and of its demands for loyalty is based partly on the extent to which the state is perceived as successfully fulfilling its goals and obligations, and also on the maintenance of a symbolic association with the institutions of state government which are evinced in citizens’ emotional attachment and devotion to the values of the state (i.e., patriotism) and/or their perception of their shared identity as a people (i.e., nationalism). The potential consequences of intense patriotism and/or nationalism are well known. The pursuit of state interests provides a rationalization whereby citizens condone actions by the state that they would condemn in individuals. In such situations, as E. H. Carr put it, “we delegate our animosities.” Furthermore, nationalist promotion of the interests of the state is often seen as a higher moral duty, but one which, nonetheless, can spawn what Morgenthau called its “degenerate offspring”—racism—and, ultimately, aggressive war.

As the interstate system has evolved since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, there has been an ongoing effort to constrain aggressive state behavior through the establishment of obligatory norms of behavior and procedures for dealing with interstate conflict. Over the past three-and-a-half centuries, the interstate system has established systemic norms and institutions designed to moderate interstate conflict. This is not to say that these efforts have achieved complete success. As even the most casual observer of international affairs is aware, the international system today is a far cry from a fully domesticated security community in which peace and security are based on habitual compliance with the community’s norms. Nevertheless, when one adjusts for the number of states in the system, there has been a considerable decline in the amount of interstate war since World War II. In fact, the
older, more established states of Europe and North America have avoided war with each other since the end of World War II. 20

Several hypotheses have been put forward to explain what is now almost a half-century of peace among the great powers—the existential deterrence of nuclear war, the prevalence of democracies among the major powers, an extended period of economic prosperity. One of the most prominent hypotheses has been that there has been a shared belief among the major powers, after two World Wars, that war has become morally revolting and economically impractical. 21 Moral revulsion toward war can be related to the development of norms favoring the moderation and peaceful resolution of conflict; the economic impracticality of war arises from a consensus among the major powers on the legitimacy of the existing international order. Therefore, norms that are derived from this “Long Peace”—if applicable to other settings (e.g., the intergang system)—may provide a template for conflict reduction in other contexts as well.

Several studies have demonstrated that conflict within states often proceeds in a manner akin to conflicts between states. For example, Vasquez argues that the factors at work in communal conflicts are quite similar to those operative in interstate conflicts, and this basic argument is supported in McClintock’s case studies. 22 Moving to more systematic evidence, Benson and Kugler’s empirical analysis of political violence within 26 countries from 1985 to 1989 found that power parity and democratic peace processes—two dominant theses in international relations—are just as applicable to domestic conflict as they are to interstate conflict. 23 Moreover, Schweizer not only agrees that interstate war “has analogues in domestic politics” but also asserts that the “clearest example centers on the struggle for wealth, power, influence, and prestige among gangs in inner cities.” 24 That is, “to the extent that gangs are free from the control exercised by local, state, or national authorities, they exist in a ‘Hobbesian state of nature’ in which each gang competes with other gangs for wealth, power, influence, and prestige.” 25 He adds that “just as nations in a Hobbesian state of nature may revert to war to achieve their goals in world politics, so gangs may resort to gang warfare to achieve their goals.” 26 To gain a more complete picture of the commonalities between interstate and intergang security relations, we need to take a closer look at intergang relations per se.

Intergang System

The intergang system in the United States is almost as old as the interstate system. 27 Although territorial gangs function within a local political
system, with regard to their relations with each other, they can be described as operating within a decentralized political system similar to the interstate system. Even law enforcement officials will admit that, in some cases, there is a lack of (de facto) higher authority to regulate intergang relations. The degree to which gang leadership is capable of exercising authority over its members varies across gangs. While gangs have diverse levels of formal organizational structure across each respective gang type, none have anything like the formal governmental structures seen in states. But, some urban gangs, particularly intergenerational gangs such as the Crips and Bloods in Los Angeles, have highly organized leadership systems and exercise considerable control over their membership. In others, though, the leadership is considerably less stable, just as it is in some states, as recent internal conflicts, such as those in Yugoslavia, Cambodia, Liberia, Rwanda, and Somalia, remind us.

Relations among gangs tend to be intensely competitive, with order maintained by an unstable balance of power, with shifting alliances upsetting or solidifying the balance. Each gang views itself as engaged in a constant struggle to maintain and expand its control over a given territorial domain. As a member of Chicago’s Vice Lords puts it: “You was out there. You was holding that street twenty-four hours a day. You just had to fight life and death out there . . . We was a little city.” This is not to suggest that all intergang conflict is over territory. Gangs, like states, become involved in hostilities for a variety of reasons, including competition over potential recruits and affiliates, material goods, and other issues related to status and influence. But, as in interstate conflicts, whatever the more specific precipitant may be, the struggle for power and status lies at the heart of intergang conflict.

**Intergang Conflict**

The intergang system clearly lacks the range of norms and institutions that have developed through the evolution of the interstate system. Thus the intergang system comprises something similar to the interstate system in its barest or rawest form. Nonetheless, the development of a consensus on norms to moderate conflict is a critical first step in the reduction of intergang violence. It is important to remember, however, that it is possible for two systems to share major structural similarities but to be afflicted by distinctly different social pathologies. That the interstate and intergang systems might be structurally similar does not necessarily mean that they suffer from similar causes of conflict. We would argue, however, that the essential goods provided by gangs to their members, and the loyalties demanded in return for those goods, are not unlike those provided by the state, and that, in both
instances, the combination of the relatively anarchic structure of the system and the attributes of its entities promotes outbreaks of violence.

Moreover, the purpose of the territorial gang, like that of the territorial state, is political: the authoritative allocation of values. First among those values, as in the state, is security. The provision of security allows for the furnishing of other material and social goods to gang members, while providing the gang with the status, prestige, and legitimization of its authority that comes with the delivery of those goods. For youths living in the inner city, the neighborhood streets, and even the school, are often dangerous places. In such environments, the appeal of the gang is simple: join and survive. Youths, moved to fatalism by the violence in their communities, turn to gangs not to avoid conflict but to be better prepared when the inevitable conflict arises. The gang delivers feelings of security that parents and the larger community fail to provide. In this way, the perception that the gang provides greater security for its members is similar to the perception that the state provides security for its citizens. In addition, although the gang is often viewed as an institution that furnishes security, the extent to which the gang actually provides security is another issue. When youths join gangs they get members to “watch their backs,” but they also assume new risks—not the least of which is the potential for violence with rival gangs and police. The result is that the drive to join a gang out of fear for one’s security actually results in an individual’s greater insecurity, which often pushes him or her further into the gang: a classic security dilemma writ small at the gang level.32

Like the state, the gang also fills emotional, or psychic, needs for its members (especially for its teenage members). In fact, the words used by the most dedicated gang members to describe their attachments to the gang often resonate with those of the most devoted jingoists: “It was my life, my one and only way. It was my neighborhood. They were like my brothers and sisters. I mean, at that time, that’s the only thing I had.”33 The sense of identity and loyalty is reminiscent of the cries of “My Country, Right or Wrong” heard throughout history. The almost nationalistic advocacy of gang affiliations (some gangs are actually called “nations” and have written “constitutions”) is striking; it often results in the balkanization of whole communities, as the boundaries of gang membership often generate artificial distinctions within otherwise homogeneous societies.34 Just as citizens may find ego fulfillment in the aggressiveness of the state, gang members can gain a greater sense of self-worth, status, and power through their identification with the gang and its actions. A former member of the 83rd Street (Eight-Tray Gangster) Crips in Los Angeles describes his attachment to the gang: “the sense of importance, self-worth,
and raw power was exciting, stimulating, and intoxicating beyond any other high on this planet... nothing outside my set mattered.\textsuperscript{35}

One reason why both intergang violence and interstate conflicts can be so difficult to resolve is their intrinsic appeal as expressions of raw power. War represents the interstate system at its most violent, yet thoughtful participants have described the irony of the “enduring appeal of battle” and the allure of power in even the most brutal conditions of war.\textsuperscript{36} Violence, justified in the name of the “set,” has a particular appeal to youths in inner cities (as well as to suburban and rural youth) who perceive themselves as shut out of, or who are largely indifferent to, the more conventional avenues for self-expression and status attainment.

It is interesting that, while proffering analogies between interstate and intergang behavior, scholars have not applied conflict-dampening lessons from international relations to the relations among gangs. This lacuna understandably arises, in part, from the hesitance to observe gangs as anything more than criminal organizations that should be destroyed. However, this approach fails to appreciate both the embeddedness of gangs in the domestic order and the functional nature of many gangs. One implication of both the embeddedness and functional capacity of gangs is that, to the extent that prevention, intervention, and redirection strategies do not provide the functional equivalent of what gangs provide, gangs will persist. Moreover, states routinely recognize the power and influence of gangs and even use gangs to further state interests without “legitimizing” gangs per se. This was evident, for example, in the U.S. Navy’s collaboration with the Mafia boss Lucky Luciano to prevent sabotage on the New York docks during World War II.\textsuperscript{37} Clearly, gangs have considerable influence, whether or not that influence is acknowledged by politicians, law enforcement officials, or scholars. To acknowledge gang influence is not to condone it or “legitimize” it—although for too many inner city residents it is the gang that is viewed as “legitimate,” while those who decry gang activity often lack credibility.

**INTERSTATE AND INTERGANG NORMS**

The reduction of conflict in any social system depends on the acceptance of norms to frame discussion and ground behavior. We have argued that, although there are some significant differences between the interstate and intergang systems, there also are important similarities, both in the structure of the systems and in the attributes of states and gangs, that create commonalities in the security dilemma facing both gangs and states. We now extend that comparison to consider the normative state of intergang relations and
the prospects for achieving consensus on the acceptance of obligations to reduce the level of intergang violence. There are at least five international norms that could serve as templates for the reduction of conflict in intergang relations: (1) the prohibition against interference in the internal affairs of other states, (2) the obligation to observe treaties, (3) the protection of innocents and other noncombatants during the course of conflict, (4) the obligation to attempt to resolve disputes through peaceful means, and (5) the obligation to respect individual human rights. In the next section, we consider how the norms that have emerged to moderate conflict in the interstate system might be applicable to intergang conflict as well.

Interstate System

The preservation of order within any social system is dependent on the acceptance by its members of norms to guide their interactions with each other. Without established norms of behavior, order is based on nothing more than mutual deterrence, that is, each party’s prudent recognition of the costs and risks of attacking its neighbor. But this unstable peace depends on a rational calculation of power and interests that is continually threatened by the risks of miscalculation and the flare-up of passions among the leaders—and citizenry—of competing states.

The interstate system has never been without some obligatory norms to guide state behavior. The obligation comes from consent, either stated explicitly through treaties or implicit in tacit acceptance. The consensus that leads to a widely accepted norm grows out of the perception that there is mutual advantage in self-restraint. The development of such an international consensus has become evident with respect to the five norms listed above. Concern for the authority of states over their own citizens led to acceptance of the prohibition of interference in the internal affairs of other states, which is now well established in customary international law as well as many multilateral conventions. The second of the five norms, pacta sunt servanda, or the obligation to observe treaties or agreements with other states, is a natural extension of the reciprocity principle that has become accepted as peremptory international law. When states find themselves at war, the use of force is limited to military objectives and to “combat between combatants”; there is a class of people—noncombatants—who are to be protected from the violence associated with the war. The killing of innocent bystanders, that is, those who are not involved in the fighting, is prohibited. The rights of noncombatants, which are codified in the laws of war, are generally assumed to have the status of peremptory norms. That is not to say that there are
not egregious violations of international norms. The conflict in the former Yugoslavia is an obvious example of outrageous violations of the rights of noncombatants, but there is no doubt that such actions represent violations of systemic norms. The work of the Hague Tribunal represents an effort by the interstate system to apply appropriate sanctions.

The enormous human costs of World War I led to efforts to add new norms, which were further institutionalized in the United Nations Charter following World War II. The principle that war was not an acceptable means of settling conflicts, which was implied in the League of Nations Covenant, is stated unequivocally in Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, which prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. Article 33 of the Charter states the positive obligation of states to seek peaceful means of settling their disputes.

The horrors of the Second World War and its accompanying genocide also led to new norms that promote restraints on internal state sovereignty with regard to individual human rights. The UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights extends these norms to the protection of group or minority rights. These norms have been reasserted in Annex 6 of the Dayton Accords ending the Bosnian War.

The significance of the gradual extension of norms in the international system lies less in its members’ willingness to state explicit sanctions for violation of these norms—especially to carry out those sanctions—than in their willingness to accept the norms as obligatory standards of behavior. The achievement of consensus on obligatory norms creates a climate in which those who violate the norms are morally censured, “shamed,” or adversely sanctioned by other members of the interstate system. Moreover, system-wide acceptance of an obligation to observe norms that promote the peaceful settlement of disputes provides an environment in which the application of peaceful settlement techniques are more likely to be successful.

**Intergang System**

The norms currently observed by territorial gangs are few in number. Gangs assume that they enjoy sovereignty over their own members and the freedom to operate without any external restraints in their relations with each other. Gangs share the state norms of noninterference in the affairs of other gangs and respect for their territorial spheres of influence, even if, like states, they violate those norms with some frequency. Gangs usually must seek permission for entry into the territory of another gang; those pursuing commercial operations in foreign territory must pay rents and make certain
“structural adjustments,” such as allowing a local ethnic group to control some aspect of the illicit trade, just as foreign corporations might be required to hire a percentage of workers from a host state.

It can be argued that territorial gangs recognize the obligation to observe treaties and truces, even if they do not always do so. Treaties in intergang relations perform the same security functions as they do in the interstate system: to demarcate spheres of influence, to establish alliances in order to increase the capabilities of the signatories, and to ratify the cessation of conflict and establish the terms for peace between warring parties. Truces arranged with the help of outside mediators have met with some modest success in achieving cessations in violence—if not actual peace—among major urban gangs in Chicago, Minneapolis, and Los Angeles, a phenomenon to which we will return in the discussion of conflict resolution techniques. On the whole, however, intergang agreements tend to be tenuous and truces short-lived.

In recent years, intergang violence has become notorious for the indiscriminate killing of innocent bystanders, and it is not surprising that there is no established norm among gangs with regard to the protection of innocents. It could be argued that there are unspoken prohibitions against the use of violence in religious institutions or in the course of funerals, and that there is a stigma attached to the killing of very young children, especially when these children are members of the same ethnic group as the gang members. Nevertheless, the violence committed by gangs against innocent bystanders and against unarmed and unsuspecting members of other gangs who would be considered noncombatants by the norms of the interstate system represent major problems of intergang violence.

In the interstate system, the prohibition against the use of violence against noncombatants may be brutally shattered by transgressors, as the recent conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo attest; nevertheless, the norm exists, as establishment and operation of the Hague Tribunal as part of the Dayton Accords in 1995 and the indictment of the Serbian leadership for their actions in Kosovo in 1999 have demonstrated. Within American cities, strong reactions by the larger community, particularly to the deaths of young children, occasionally have resulted in positive responses by gangs. But even when those responses have occurred, they have not been accompanied by a recognition of the right of innocents to be protected from intergang violence.

The intergang system has nothing like the interstate system’s requirement to seek peaceful settlement of disputes before resorting to violence, nor does it have any prohibition against the threat or use of force. Wars still occur in the interstate system, and some are started by renegade leaders with no
interest in seeking a peaceful solution first. But those national leaders are viewed as renegades by the larger interstate system, and war itself is viewed as revolting and economically self-defeating by a growing number of states. When war does occur, there is no doubt that at least one party has violated the system’s norms.

That is not the case within the urban intergang system, where violence remains an accepted means of demonstrating power and achieving greater status. But just as war-proneness varies from state to state and region to region within the contemporary interstate system—compare the Middle East with Scandinavia—researchers find some variation among gangs in their proneness to violent conflict. As in the interstate system, violence is a variable attribute of gang behavior, not a constant. A study of Milwaukee’s Latino gangs by Miller found that Puerto Rican gangs had gone to great lengths to avoid intergang violence. The efforts by the Puerto Rican gangs, to be sure, were based on mutual interest, but that is the basis on which virtually all political norms are established. Such examples offer some hope of achieving additional gains in the reduction of intergang violence. Nevertheless, it should be noted that by some estimates there has been an increase in the overall amount of intergang violence in this decade.

The intergang system also lags behind the interstate system with regard to the recognition of human rights. Sexism, religious intolerance, and racism pervade intragang and intergang relations. In recent years the international community has made some steps forward—as well as backward—in the promotion of the rights of minorities. The recent conflicts in Bosnia and Rwanda represent steps backward, but the reassertion of individual human rights and the addition of minority rights in Annex 6 of the Dayton Accords, along with the establishment of a Human Rights Commission and Ombudsmen, are steps forward, as is the work of the Hague Tribunal to investigate and punish violators of human rights in both conflicts. One should not be overly optimistic about the practical effects of such efforts, but they do underscore the obligatory nature of the norms.

Racist attitudes also have dominated the intergang system. Membership in urban youth gangs frequently is drawn from a particular racial or ethnic group, although most intergang violence occurs within racial and class lines. As in the promotion of an obligation to seek peaceful settlements of disputes, efforts to establish norms to protect individual and group rights within the intergang system could have significant educational, as well as social, benefits.

In sum, of the five interstate norms listed at the beginning of this section, only two can be said to have widespread acceptance as obligations within the
intergang system: respect for territorial spheres of influence, and the observance of treaties and truces. None of the norms dealing directly with issues pertaining to interstate conflict now exist within the intergang system. The interstate system’s rule granting protection to noncombatants has not achieved the status of an established norm in intergang relations. The obligation to seek peaceful settlement of disputes and the prohibition on the threat or use of force have not been accepted in the intergang system. Nor have any of the interstate norms regarding respect for individual and group human rights. Nevertheless, the very fact that gangs already consider it an obligation to observe some of the same norms that exist in interstate relations suggests that it may be possible to encourage, enlist, and educate gang members to recognize the mutual advantages of accepting normative obligations to reduce intergang violence.

EXPANDING NORMS IN INTERGANG RELATIONS

The discussion to this point has attempted to demonstrate that, although territorial youth gangs are unique groups in many respects, their relations with each other share important attributes with states in the interstate system. The remainder of this article considers the prospects for extending conflict-reduction norms that have been accepted as obligatory by states to intergang relations. Before doing so it is important to offer two caveats. The first is that we do not underestimate the difficulty of the task or overestimate the likelihood of achieving major successes. Even if gangs were to accept the norms listed as obligatory, that would by no means guarantee they would observe the norms in practice, as the history of the interstate system has demonstrated. We do argue, however, that any gains would be beneficial, and that the educational approach that we suggest would have important side-benefits in the improved socialization of gang members, potential recruits, and the larger community. The second caveat is that we are not suggesting that our proposal is a complete answer to the larger problem of the often sociopathic behavior of gangs. It deals only with the limited, although important, issue of intergang violence. Because of gang’s often destructive behavior, the ultimate solution to the problem of intergang violence is to find a means of discouraging youths from joining gangs and preventing gangs from using violence or the threat of violence in pursuit of their objectives. But, as we argued at the beginning of this article, attempts to outlaw gangs are likely to be unproductive. In fact, for adolescents, it is likely to have the effect of making gang membership—like prohibitions against smoking or drug use—more attractive. Youth gangs are likely to remain a component of the inner city—and suburbs and rural areas, as
well—so long as youths feel insecure and powerless within the larger community and reject the legitimacy of the established political order.

The issue of legitimacy also impinges on the acceptance and observation of norms of behavior. Societal norms are most likely to be accepted and observed by individuals who view the political order as legitimate. As Kissinger put it in his classic study of the Congress of Vienna, “a legitimate order does not make conflicts impossible, but it limits their scope.”

The actors most likely to observe the norms of the interstate system are satisfied, established states; the actors most likely to reject or fail to observe the norms listed above are alienated groups that reject the legitimacy of the existing order. That is also true of domestic communities. Gangs reject the legitimacy of the existing political order; therefore, they feel under no obligation to observe its norms. By the same token, gang members are unlikely to respond positively to attempts by representatives of the local political order to promote the establishment of obligatory norms for intergang relations. On the other hand, the intergang system is far too rudimentary to expect gang leaders to act solely on their own to establish such norms. There is an enormous gap between the diplomatic experience, maturity, and permanence of leaders of state governments and the often informal, ephemeral, and adolescent leadership of youth gangs. There is no doubt that an educational effort is needed. But where should it come from? And how should it be conducted? Clearly, this educational effort should accompany an effort to mediate intergang disputes, but successful mediation, in turn, is incumbent on the opportune timing of the intervention, the employment of suitable third parties, the establishment of an appropriate setting for the mediation, and the use of proper strategies during the mediation. We explore each of these.

**Timing and “Ripeness”**

The mobilization of members of the interstate system to achieve multilateral agreement on new norms of behavior has been most successful when certain conditions have existed, most notably: (1) a period marked by a high level of violent conflict that has demonstrated the costs of existing behavior, (2) followed by relative peace, and (3) the support and leadership of the most powerful and influential members of the system in promoting acceptance of the new norms. The system-wide gains in the League of Nations Covenant and the UN Charter followed the First and Second World Wars, and they were led by the major victorious powers. Similarly, the Genocide Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights followed on the heels of the atrocities of the Second World War.
It could be argued that the intergang system is in a comparable condition today, with growing community concern over the escalation of intergang violence and “collateral” casualties and cease-fires among some of the most powerful and influential gangs in major cities. However, the willingness of these hegemonic gangs to eschew the very violence that often allows them to ascend to prominence is highly unlikely. Moreover, although the demonstration effect of the redirection of a major gang away from violence would be a fortuitous development, more hegemonic gangs are mostly of the commercial and corporate type—as opposed to the territorial gangs on which we have focused—and such gangs are both highly resilient to outside pressure and more inclined to pursue “peace” only as a means of facilitating their greater exploitation of the communities in which they operate. Nevertheless, among urban territorial gangs the prospect for reductions in violence is heightened by the recent willingness of several larger gangs to participate in truces and other forms of conflict-dampening agreements.51

Zartman has used the term “ripeness” to describe when the appropriate moment has arrived to offer mediation.52 When the community is attempting to move to a new set of norms to guide behavior, the “ripe” moment is likely to follow on the heels of traumatic violent conflict. For example, the casualties associated with the Los Angeles Rebellion of April 1992 helped solidify a truce that had been organized the previous January between Blood and Crip sets in Watts. In Chicago, calls for peace following the murder of seven-year-old Dantrell Davis helped promote a city-wide extension of the truce among six Chicago gangs in the Cabrini Green Housing Project.53

In the interstate system, the major powers have taken the lead in promoting the establishment of new norms and in organizing multilateral negotiations to put them in place. Similarly, there is a tendency for less-established gangs to emulate the practices of the most visible and prominent gangs in major cities, but the intergang system does not possess anything like the well-established diplomatic network that exists in the interstate system. Gang leaders, who are more often adolescents or young adults, also lack the diplomatic skills that we associate with prominent national leaders, although it would be a mistake to underestimate the political savvy of some gang leaders.54 Given these differences, a successful initiative to encourage, educate, and enlist gang members to accept norms to moderate intergang violence would have to come through the intercession of third parties. Some of this work has been undertaken through law enforcement initiatives and community-based organizations. Such programs should be more effectively implemented, funded, managed, and expanded.
Mediation and Education by Third Parties

The most prominent structural difference between the intergang system and the interstate system is that gangs are embedded within larger social and political communities. This difference offers advantages for effective intervention to mediate relationships among gangs in that respected community leaders, drawn from the same culture and locale as that of the gangs, are able to exert influence over gang leaders in a manner that is not available to most international mediators. Thus, the most feasible approach to developing new norms in intergang relations would be through the mediation of respected third parties drawn from the same culture and locale as that of the gang members.

The standard role of a mediator is to help parties to change their behavior, settle disputes, or resolve problems without resorting to physical force or antagonistic legal adjudication.55 The mediation problem in the case at hand is not just a matter of finding common ground among hostile gangs, but of persuading—and educating—the gangs that it is in the interest of their members to recognize, accept, and adhere to norms for intergang relations that serve the security interests of the larger communities in which they operate as well as their own. The selection of appropriate mediators is critical to the success of such an effort. It is essential that the mediator be respected and viewed as impartial by gang members.

One of the advantages offered by mediation is that mutually hostile parties are likely to be more willing to accept the suggestions of a respected mediator than those of the other side. The leaders of gangs might suffer from the appearance of weakness in the eyes of their members, as well as other gangs, if they were seen as accepting the proposals of another gang.56 The greater the respect that gang members have for the mediator, the easier it is to accept his or her suggestions. The greater the legitimacy of the mediator, the greater the leverage that he or she wields in persuading the parties to frame the problem in a particular way and move toward an agreement.57 In intergang mediation, members of law enforcement agencies or local political leaders, who are likely to be viewed as representatives of an oppressive establishment, lack the necessary legitimacy to be effective. Those with the most legitimacy are likely to be individuals who are community leaders with backgrounds similar to those of the gang members themselves.

The quality of communication also is central to the success of any negotiation or mediation effort. The difficulties that can obtain in negotiating across cultures has been demonstrated in recent studies of interstate negotiations.58 Similar problems would be likely to occur in attempts by outsiders to
mediate disputes among the leaders of territorial youth gangs, which are part of an inner city subculture shaped by poverty, racism, educational neglect, and physical and emotional insecurity. Taken together, these considerations provide a strong argument for employing mediators from the same cultural backgrounds as the gang members. For example, Marian Stammps, a local community activist, organized the truce among rival gangs in Chicago’s Cabrini Green housing project. Stammps understood the subculture of the gangs, and she was able to appeal to the gang members based on their sense of responsibility to other community members. Stammps’s success as a peacemaker was tied to her status as a survivor of violence and as an organizer within the local community, which gave her legitimacy in the eyes of the gangs. Kressel and Pruitt have made a useful distinction between “contractual” and “emergent” mediation. Contractual mediation is performed by a professional with expertise, but no prior relationship with the parties. Emergent mediation is performed by a nonspecialist who typically has a relationship with the parties as well as a stake in the outcome. Mediators in this category are likely to work not only for a settlement of issues but also to improve the relationship between the parties. Stammps’s success is consistent with the advantages enjoyed by an emergent mediator.

In fact, some of the most effective mediation efforts to date have been led by community activists working in cooperation with gang leaders. For example, the efforts to establish the Los Angeles truce between the Crips and the Bloods were led by local activist Mujahid Karim and PJ Watts Crips leader Dewayne Holmes. Community activists and gang leaders also played major roles in organizing intergang truces in Minneapolis and Fresno. Community leaders and law enforcement officials have found it difficult to accept the notion of working in cooperation with individuals who may have criminal records, but they often are the ones with the most influence over gang members. Working with such individuals does run the risk of legitimizing them; however, to achieve results it is necessary to deal with those with the most influence. Returning to the interstate analogy, successful international mediators, such as Henry Kissinger and Jimmy Carter, have not hesitated to deal with unsavory national leaders if they had the most power to influence the course of events. Richard Holbrook’s efforts to mediate the Dayton Accords were aided by a close working relationship with Serbia’s Milosevic, the individual most responsible for the outbreak of war in the former Yugoslavia. President Clinton was roundly criticized by the British government, as well as key members of his own administration, for inviting the Sinn Fein leader, Gerry Adams, to the White House in 1994, but the symbolism of that visit
was described as the “key” to the mediated negotiations that led to the historic accord on April 10, 1998.  

The Setting

During this century it has become possible to view interstate relations as occurring within a truly global system, with major multilateral meetings including virtually all its member states. The meetings following World Wars I and II—in Paris in 1919 and San Francisco in 1945—to establish the two world organizations included virtually all of the members of the interstate system at those times. A somewhat similar approach to establishing a nationwide intergang truce through a “peace summit” was taken in 1993, when over 200 gang members representing 22 cities met in Kansas City. What became known as the “Urban Peace and Justice Summit” grew out of local initiatives for peace in several cities in the Midwest, Northeast, South, and the West Coast, and included various African American, Latino, Native American, Asian American, and European American community organizers, civil rights leaders, activists, and spiritual leaders. The Kansas City summit was followed by similar meetings in Cleveland, Minneapolis, Chicago, and several other cities. Most of the intergang mediation efforts were conducted by older gang members unaffiliated with the gangs embroiled in the disputes. The summits produced a powerful demonstration effect, and were relatively successful short-term peacemaking efforts. Unfortunately, because of a combination of political and economic factors, the movement faltered during the following year.  

Two major lessons may be drawn from the Urban Peace and Justice Movement. The first is that carefully organized mediation efforts can be successful in reducing intergang violence. But the second lesson is that an attempt to achieve immediate results at the national level is premature. The horizons of territorial urban gangs generally are limited to the particular cities (or other venues) in which they reside. For this reason, along with the desirability of employing respected local community leaders as mediators, efforts to establish new norms for intergang relations should be focused on the local level (e.g., the United for Peace initiative among gangs, community organizers, law enforcement officials, and religious leaders in Minneapolis). A strong demonstration effect may be achieved by beginning with the most established and powerful gangs within the largest cities. The acceptance of new norms in the interstate system generally has followed the lead of the system’s most powerful states. A similar effect might be achieved by gaining the support of some of the nation’s most powerful and visible gangs, such as those in
Los Angeles, Chicago, and Minneapolis, but this must be done deftly to insure against the manipulation of the process by duplicitous gang leaders pursuing their own unsavory agendas. The next step would be to work within local areas, with local leaders, to expand and institutionalize the acceptance of new norms for intergang relations.

A second issue with regard to the setting is that of site openness. Diplomats invariably prefer that sensitive negotiations remain secret, at least until the final stages, to avoid pressure from constituencies to take tough positions and public posturing by the participants. Most of the recent successfully mediated settlements among hostile states have taken place in secret: the negotiations between Israel and the PLO in Oslo in 1993 and in Egypt in 1995, Carter’s mediation efforts in Haiti in 1994 and in North Korea in 1995, and the Dayton peace conference to settle the Bosnian dispute in 1995.

Publicity presents diverse risks in gang mediation. As with states, there is the danger that highly public talks will encourage rigid positions, posturing, and an intensification of rivalries instead of their moderation. Another alleged danger is that the publicity attending the talks will increase the legitimacy of the gangs and, consequently, increase gang membership and encourage more aggressive gang behavior. This argument is not unlike those proffered by some national leaders for refusing to negotiate with rebel groups. Israel once made a similar argument against negotiating with the PLO, as did South Africa with leaders of the ANC and PAC, and the British with regard to the IRA. The other side of the issue is that publicizing the fact that secret talks are taking place adds to the pressure on the participants to achieve a successful outcome. A “summit meeting” would put additional pressure on gang leaders to achieve meaningful results.

Mediation Strategy

At opposite ends of the mediation strategy continuum are communication-facilitation strategies, in which the mediator takes a fairly passive role, with little control over the process or substance of negotiation, and directive strategies, in which the mediator attempts to control the negotiation process and its content, often with inducements in the form of threats and promises. Mediation would have to be directive for gang members to accept the norms described above. On the other hand, a heavy-handed attempt to coerce the parties to agree to accept certain norms would be a meaningless exercise. The objective would be to create an atmosphere conducive to learning and understanding, while maintaining control over the issues under discussion. The goal of the mediators would be to persuade gang leaders to
assume responsibility for the consequences of intergang violence and work together to introduce new norms of behavior. That has been most successful in the interstate system when the global community has acted out of a sense of revulsion at the human costs of war. A similar effort may be possible in the intergang system as a result of the heavy toll in the lives of urban youths. The first task of a mediator, in fact, may be that of compelling gang leaders to accept responsibility for the human costs of their own behavior, recognizing their violation of basic norms, while also providing a demonstration effect of respected community leaders demanding that the gangs take responsibility for their wrongdoing. It is important to remember that fundamentally it is these community leaders—more than national leaders—who have the legitimacy to undermine the appeal of gangs and to discourage membership in them. The work of Marian Stammps offers a model. Her first step in mediating the Cabrini Green truce was to insist that the Chicago gang members accept responsibility for their actions by apologizing to the mothers in their community for the violence they had perpetrated on their community—especially that which led to the deaths of children in the community. Then she directed the gangs to a broader consideration of their obligation to work toward peace in the community. She pointed out that, just as their graffiti displayed claims of territorial control over sectors of the community, the gangs had to take responsibility for the violence that occurred within “their” territory, particularly that which befell mothers and children. Stammps’s status within the local community allowed her to take a strong, directive approach; she also had the advantage of understanding the culture in which she was working.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The high costs that intergang conflict inflicts on society, particularly on minority youths, has been recognized at the highest levels of American government. The government’s approach has been to attempt tougher law enforcement, or what President Clinton has described as “tough, targeted deterrence.” It is our contention that gangs have been a part of the American urban landscape far too long to assume that they can be eradicated simply by arresting and incarcerating more youths. As long as society fails to eliminate problems such as poverty, racism, drugs, and social marginalization, urban youths will find gang membership an attractive, if ultimately illusory, means of achieving security, self-respect, and a sense of power in an oppressive and threatening environment. We have argued that the relations that exist among territorial urban gangs bear some important structural
similarities to the decentralized interstate system, where relations among sovereign states are conducted on the basis of self-help and reciprocity. States, like territorial urban gangs, are multipurpose organizations. The primary good provided to their members is security, but they also provide for less tangible needs, such as a sense of power through the individual’s identification of his/her own ego with the accomplishments of the state or gang. On the basis of these similarities, we have argued that the norms that have been developed to moderate interstate conflict over the past three-and-a-half centuries can serve as the basis for moderating intergang conflict. Some of those norms already appear in both systems: respect for spheres of influence, reciprocity in cooperative exchanges, and the observance of treaties.

In this article, we have argued for a concerted effort to promote conflict-reduction norms among territorial urban youth gangs mirroring those in the contemporary interstate system, specifically: the protection of noncombatants, the requirement to seek peaceful settlement of disputes, a prohibition on the threat or use of force, and respect for human rights. Progress on the extension of norms that place restraints on conflict in the interstate system generally have grown out of periods exhibiting high levels of violence, followed by periods of relative peace, when the most influential members of the system have taken the lead in promoting new norms. The conditions in a number of major cities may be “ripe” for similar efforts, although initially the leadership would have to come from outside of the gangs, that is, through the mediation of respected community leaders. Finally, based on approaches that have met with success in the interstate system, we have suggested some criteria for the selection of those mediators, the structure of the settings for multilateral negotiations, and appropriate mediation strategies. These efforts would complement grassroots initiatives to reduce youth violence, such as those of Save Our Sons and Daughters (SOSAD) in Detroit, and efforts at training gang members in interpersonal conflict resolution techniques. Often elites and academics evince little faith in such violence reduction approaches, but the members of the community—even with very limited resources—continue to employ whatever methods they have at their disposal to reduce the incidence of violence that confronts them every day. These groups have enjoyed some success, while others falter, but there is a growing commitment among community-based organizations and citizens’ groups to quell the violence in the inner city. Their motivation is simple: they have little choice, because their children, friends, and families are affected by intergang violence. What they need is a useful model to draw on to understand the nature of the intergang environment and the steps required to reduce intergang violence. This article is intended as a modest attempt towards the provision of such a model.
To be sure, the difficulties that have plagued the interstate system in achieving widespread acceptance of those norms that place constraints on state behavior offer warnings of the difficulties facing any effort to extend these norms to the intergang system. We recognize that there are important differences between the two systems, although the most significant of those differences, that gangs are embedded within a larger domestic political system, could work to the advantage of our proposal by linking local initiatives with larger regional and national efforts. We also argue that this would be an effort in education where any degree of success is better than none. Serious discussions of issues relating to violence that would be conducted between gang members and community organizers whom they respect would be beneficial in their own right. They also would have the important side effect of raising questions about the goals and objectives of gangs.

However successful these efforts may be, they would deal mainly with the symptoms rather than the causes of the problems associated with intergang violence. The ideal solution would be to eliminate youth gangs, but gangs too are symptoms of larger problems. Beyond criminality, it is clear to us that until inner city youths are freed from the clutches of poverty, neglect, racism, drugs, physical insecurity, and a pervasive sense of hopelessness, gangs will provide an enticing means of coping. There is much to be said, in the meantime, for reducing the casualties among gang members and innocent bystanders through encouraging, educating, and enlisting gang members, potential recruits, and members of the broader community to accept normative constraints on intergang conflict as the first step in reducing intergang violence.

NOTES

An earlier version of this article was presented to the International Association for Conflict Management, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, June 1996. We thank Theodore Sasson and Carl Taylor for their comments on earlier drafts of this article. This article is dedicated, in memoriam, to Marian Stammps, whose struggle for peace and justice continues.


5. Although law enforcement initiatives are important, antigang laws are largely misinformed because where gangs are illegal (i.e., where they are involved in illegal activities) they are conspiracies and there are already a plethora of criminal conspiracy laws. Since there is little consensus on what constitutes a “gang,” gang membership is often in the eye of the beholder. One fear is that, bolstered by antigang laws, police on the beat are more likely to assume that African American and Latino youths—rather than European American youths—are gang members. Often residence in a community dominated by gangs will lead to the labeling of youths as gang members just because they associate with members of their own family, neighborhood, or school. Clearly, if gangs are guilty of criminal activity, then they should be charged with conspiracy; however, we are hesitant to support laws that grant almost unlimited discretion to law enforcement officials to define “gang” membership. These concerns are heightened by the fact that a gang’s criminal activity is not necessarily related to an individual member’s criminality. For an empirical analyses of this relationship, see Joseph F. Sheley, Joshua Zhang, Charles J. Brody, and James D. Wright, “Gang Organization, Gang Criminal Activity and Individual Gang Members’ Criminal Behavior,” Social Science Quarterly 76 (1995): 53–68.

6. In addition, Taylor, Dangerous Society, argues that “it is during the territorial stage that older experienced gang members educate the new, younger members” (p. 94).


10. Ibid., 21.


12. Ibid.

Our intent is not to offer a full description of both systems, including the economic interdependence and regional and global regimes within the international system or the networks of economic relations among gangs, but to focus on the relations among insecure rival states in the global anarchy and among more formal and conflictual territorial gangs in order to highlight the common security dilemma and proneness to violent conflict in both the interstate and intergang systems.


16. In the nineteenth century the intervention was often through the Concert of Europe; in the twentieth century it occasionally has been through the League of Nations Council or the United Nations Security Council.


25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.


28. The exception would be (at times) the “Commission” consisting of the heads of the five Mafia families in New York City.


30. Other intergenerational territorial gangs include, but are not limited to, Chicago’s Vice Lords, Black Gangster Disciples, El Rukns, Latin Kings, Latin Cobras, and the Spanish Gangster Disciples. Among other types of gangs, the Mafia, Yakuza, Tongs, Hell’s Angels, the Ku Klux Klan, the Aryan Brotherhood, California’s La Eme (Mexican Mafia), and La Nuestra Familia are intergenerational.


32. On the centrality of fear as a precursor to and a consequence of gang membership, see Richard Dukes, Ruben Martinez, and Judith Stein, “Precursors and Consequences of Membership in Youth Gangs,” Youth and Society 29 (1997):139–65.


42. An expansion of norms regarding group and minority rights has occurred in recent European conventions, such as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in

43. Ibid.

44. A notorious example is the case of “Yummy” Sandifer, an eleven-year-old reputed member of Chicago’s Disciples gang who allegedly murdered fourteen-year-old Shavon Dean as she stood near her house on August 28, 1994. The murder brought negative publicity to the Disciples just as they were attempting to promote a more peaceful image within the local community. Allegedly, two of Sandifer’s fellow gang members, using the pretense of transporting him out of the city to safety, killed him instead.

45. See Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday*.


49. See Katz, *Seductions of Crime*, 119. The exception, in this regard, is among racist gangs such as the Ku Klux Klan, racist Skinheads, the Aryan Brotherhood, and assorted white supremacist gangs.


51. See Carl Upchurch, *Convicted in the Womb: One Man’s Journey from Prisoner to Peacemaker* (New York: Bantam, 1997).


53. The gangs included the Black Disciples, Gangster Disciples, Black Gangster Disciples, Cobras, Blackstones, and Vice Lords.

54. Within their local communities, gang leaders can achieve tremendous status and are often accorded a very high degree of deference, with some acquiring national reputations.


59. In fact, nongang members with the highest status among gang members are often the mothers of children killed in intergang violence.


61. Sharif Willis, the Minister of Justice of the Conservative Vice Lords, played a central role in organizing the Minneapolis truce. The Fresno truce was organized under the leadership of Chicano activist and former gang member, Nane Alejandro.


63. Political conflicts among some organizers and the loss of several key leaders through death, defection, and disillusionment played a role in slowing the momentum of the summits. One of the major inducements for the peace summits was the prospect of assistance in creating jobs for inner city youths—a commitment that did not survive the initial euphoria generated by the movement’s early successes, as political and financial support from the larger national community declined after the first year.

64. See Klein, *The American Street Gang*, 150.


