Youth Gun Violence in Chicago with a Case Study of the Englewood Neighborhood

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Dedication

Working at a youth center in Chicago's Greater Grand Crossing neighborhood in the summer of 2014, I had a chance to interact with youth ages 8-18 from locations throughout the city. For the most part, the youth who attended this center were from neighborhoods on Chicago's South Side, such as Grand Crossing, South Shore, Roseland and Englewood. As I got to know these children and our conversations became more informal and informative, I learned that many of them knew or were close to someone who had been the victim of gun violence. Countless youth had lost classmates, narrowly missed a possibly fatal incident or had a family member affected by the violence in their communities. It was unfathomable to me how these children were able to continue functioning normally when their lives were constantly affected by the presence and danger of guns. I have vivid memories of a conversation with an animated and energetic eighth grader who told me of a classmate who was the victim of gun violence. I told him how sorry I was, feeling deeply upset that he had lost a friend so young to something so random; he responded with a blasé shrug and returned to his boyish horseplay with the other students. I was in shock; how could kids this young be so nonchalant about losing acquaintances, friends and loved ones to gun violence? Over time, I realized that it was overexposure that leads them not to internalize the pain, but rather to accept these occurrences as part of life. While this discussion of youth gun violence in Chicago will not affect or help any of these children, I credit these rambunctious and high-spirited kids with solidifying my determination to at the very least attempt to understand why life can be so fleeting in this part of Chicago.

Introduction

What gets called to mind when one thinks of a neighborhood that gave rise to millionaires like Derrick Rose, Jennifer Hudson and Anthony Davis may not be the same as a neighborhood where multiple shootings and murders are occurring nearly every day. Each day, the ABC 7 Chicago Twitter publishes tweets with Chicago-area and national news, often including sobering statistics on numbers of persons shot or killed overnight. In a society where we are constantly bombarded with worldwide tragedy and sorrow, these statistics can be numbing. Only affected or interested readers might click the hyperlink to the full news story, and even fewer readers seem to take note of where a preponderance of these Chicago-area shootings take place: Englewood (Figure 1). At first sight, most readers will not know, let alone care, where Englewood is located. To many, Chicago is the Midwest's answer to New York City and Los Angeles, a Mecca of culture, diversity, opportunity and promise. Rather than comparing these three unique urban centers, I aim to analyze one of Chicago's most noteworthy neighborhoods, Englewood, from the perspective of the youth gun violence that riddles the community.

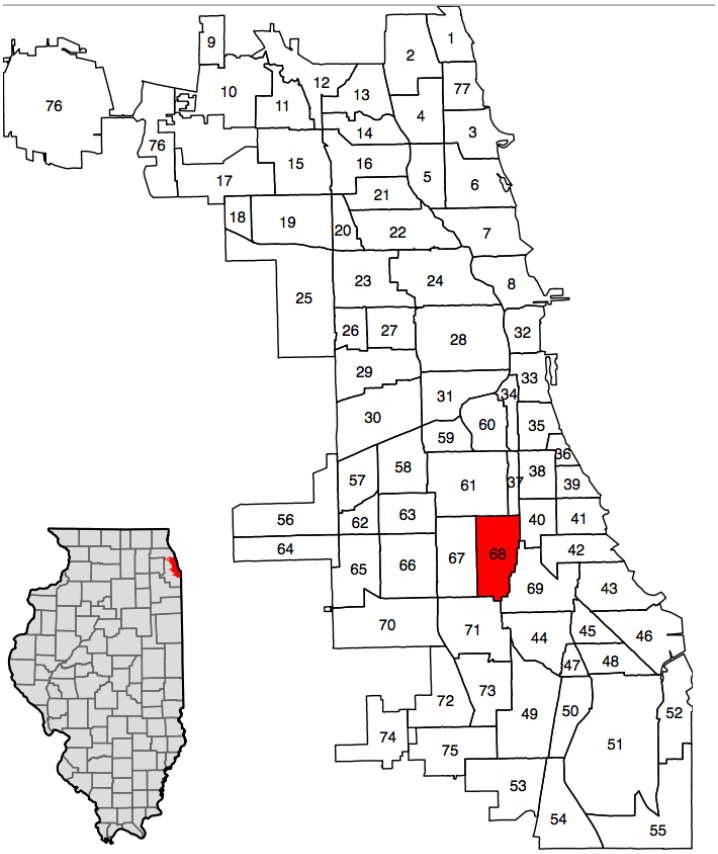

FIGURE 1: Englewood (Community Area 68)[1]

The narrative regarding social ills arising from society's structural problems is often one with an underlying tone of individual responsibility; it is this tone that leads to the idea of individuals "lifting themselves up by their bootstraps." More often than not, society looks at the problems experienced by certain groups as being the result of a lack of willpower to change their circumstances. If some other individual or group could overcome a seemingly similar circumstance, why can't *this* group or individual? Historically, this argument has been made to explain different levels of societal

[1] Christopher Siciliano and Jeremy Atherton, "Location within the city of Chicago – Community Area 68 of Chicago, Illinois – Englewood," map, 2010, Wikipedia.org, created December 31, 2010, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Englewood,_Chicago#/media/File:US-IL-Chicago-CA68.svg.

advancement by different racial and ethnic groups. However, this narrative of self-sufficiency overlooks many of the structural problems that cause these conditions in the first place. In this analytical discussion, I hope to shake the belief in this narrative and demonstrate some of the structural obstacles that, when it comes to the issue of youth gun violence, make "pulling yourself up by your bootstraps" all the more challenging.

Though the national rate of gun violence has decreased in the last 20-odd years, the epidemic of youth gun violence that is rooted in structural inequality has continued to plague society. The perception of this type of violence is that these altercations turned violent and deadly are the result of trigger-happy gang members who have little regard for human life. A variety of causes are attributed to this deadly problem, such as rampant gang violence, lenient gun policies, not enough policing, inadequate schools and a lack of economic opportunity. Some of these attributed causes are founded on fact, and some, like more policing and stricter gun policies, are based on hopeful speculation. More often than not, the conversation on gun violence demonizes "wayward youth" who fall into the "wrong group of friends" and end up making life-altering mistakes. We are bombarded with media imagery of mostly young, black men responsible for violent crimes; with this dialogue, it is easy to fall into the trap of thinking of these acts as either personal or familial failures. Without denying personal responsibility, it is important to analyze the ways in which the failures of society have impacted these youths.

Three centralizing questions will be used to delve deeper into the existing research: why (and how) guns, why Chicago and why youth? These three fragments help in the understanding of why and how guns are such popular weapons, why the issue is unique in Chicago and why this phenomenon is predominantly a youth phenomenon.

When it comes to youth gun violence in Chicago, structural inequality has greatly shaped this destructive epidemic. Without dismissing personal responsibility, I argue that the intersection of historical, socioeconomic and political factors, such as the contentious influence of gangs and drugs, has created a situation where for many youth gun violence is an everyday occurrence and having a gun is far from out of the ordinary.

In this analysis of the issue of youth gun violence in Chicago, with a case study of the Southside neighborhood of Englewood, I do not attempt to assess individual motive or what others may deem "complacency" with "the way things are." This analysis serves the purpose of attempting to understand why "norms" differ from community to community: what historical, socioeconomic, and political factors affect these differences at the city and community levels? Additionally, I in no way seek to argue that gun violence is "normalized" or "accepted." Rather, I attempt to highlight a certain level of familiarity with gun violence that many residents in Englewood experience.

Englewood will serve as the case study for this analysis, without a discussion of the adjacent neighborhood of West Englewood. While their histories are deeply tied and the neighborhoods are not all that dissimilar, I do not intend to speak to the experiences of West Englewood residents. I will not focus on the differences and similarities between these two communities, though I acknowledge that where residents call home is not always limited by municipal demarcation; there does exist some degree of fluidity between these two communities. However, the data and analysis put forth in the ensuing case study will be limited to Englewood alone.

While the discussion of the factors relating to Chicago's epidemic of youth gun violence is certainly one that could encompass the experiences of all racial identities, this

critical analysis will focus primarily on the experiences of the black community. I do not intend to speak *for* any community or individual, as I am conscious of the importance of my racial and socioeconomic location as a white woman from an upper-middle-class family. My intentions are to write an analytical discussion of the historical experiences and current life conditions of many black residents living in Chicago, more specifically in Englewood. In this discussion, the focus will not be on individuals and individual decisions, but rather on the community and how structural disadvantage has impacted individuals at a community level.

In looking at gender as it pertains to Chicago's youth gun violence, the scene is male-dominated. As will be seen in the ensuing chapters, males make up a much higher proportion of the number of murder victims and offenders in the United States. In 2010, for the murder victims and offenders whose data were received by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, around 77% of murder victims and 90% of murder offenders were male.[2] Thus, without dismissing the role of women in gun violence perpetration and victimization, males play a greater part in this American phenomenon. In the ensuing analysis of youth gun violence in Chicago, the discussion will center more heavily on the male, rather than the female, experience. Far from discounting the experiences of women living through or participating in gun violence, this choice of gender focus is made solely based on the frequency of male victimization and offense.

When discussing youth gun violence, it is important to define the term "youth." Different sets of data use different age group categories, but for the sake of the discussion

[2] "Crime in the United States," FBI, Accessed April 3, 2015, http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2010/crime-in-the-u.s.-2010/offenses-known-to-law-enforcement/expanded/expandhomicidemain.

of "youth gun violence," "youth" will be used to refer to individuals between 13 and 25 years old, roughly. While the term "youth" is admittedly nonspecific, it is inarguable that individuals under the age of 25 have statistically not yet reached even half of the average American lifespan.[3,] In a few sections of this analysis, the upper limit of "youth" may be extended to 34 years old. These age-based parameters will help narrow the focus of the ensuing analysis.

The relationship between victim and offender is also crucial to the understanding of who is perpetrating this violence and against whom it is being perpetrated. While we may read news stories of stray bullets hitting unsuspecting victims and individuals who were merely in the wrong place at the wrong time, "nearly two-thirds of all gun homicides occur between individuals who know each other."[4] Offender and victims have also been shown to exist in networks that demonstrate victims as both victims and offenders, and offenders as both offenders and victims; in looking at the data of Chicago arrestees between 2006 and 2012, 70% of all non-fatal gunshot injuries occurred in one co-offending network of individuals.[5] These co-offending networks highlight individuals who have been victims or offenders themselves and their connections with other individuals who are also either victims or offenders; thus, 70% of all non-fatal gunshot injuries could be connected to individuals in a limited set of arrestees. This shows that non-fatal gunshot injuries are more clustered than previously thought. In this network, we

[3] With the average American lifespan at 78.8 years, half of this lifespan would be 39.4 years. "Life Expectancy," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, last modified February 6, 2015, http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/life-expectancy.htm.
[4] Andrew Papachristos, Christopher Wildeman, and Elizabeth Roberto. "Tragic, but Not Random: The Social Contagion of Nonfatal Gunshot Injuries." *Social Sciences & Medicine* 125 (2015): 140.
[5] Ibid., 142-143.

were also able to more definitely see the interchange of offender and victim roles; all victims in these networks had been arrested at least once in the previous five years, underscoring the connection between victims and exposure to "situations, people, and behavior…that are conducive to gun use and violence."[6] This finding highlights the importance of the surrounding environment in becoming a victim and/or victimizing others. Environmental factors aside, these findings reveal that the conversation over gun violence pertains to both victims and offenders, because many offenders may be victims themselves. While the conversation generally questions why individuals are being shot, it is also important to approach the issue of youth gun violence by asking what factors affect the decision to offend and what are the repercussions of these decisions, both physical and non-physical.

Before delving into the main analysis of youth gun violence, a disclaimer must be made in regards to terminology; with much debate regarding the usage of terms "African-American" and "black," I acknowledge that my usage of these terms might be considered controversial to some. When children are young, they are often taught that to call someone "black" is offensive; the preferred term that many in the white community condone is "African-American." While "African-American" is often seen as a more politically correct term, "black" is sometimes more accurate; not all individuals considered black might truly be African-American, as some may identify as Afro-Caribbean, African and or something else entirely. Similarly, recent debate has centered on the notion of "African-American" being a pejorative qualifier to their "Americanness." Identification is both personal and external; we define ourselves, but regardless of our

[6] Ibid., 143.

self-definitions, we are simultaneously defined by others. Without trying to enmesh this analysis in the complex world of identification and for the purpose of the ensuing discussion, both "black" and "African-American" will be used. This decision reflects the appropriateness of these terms in different situations. While I fully acknowledge some might disagree with the language of this analysis, I believe it is important to provide a justification for its usage.

Another important aspect of this discussion on youth gun violence is that much of this violence and the conversations surrounding it relate to handguns and homicide. Many of the ensuing statistics report on firearms in general. While the term "firearms" encompasses handguns, using data specific to handguns would be more accurate, but unfortunately, such specific data are not available in all research studies. Similarly, many of the ensuing statistics relate to homicide and not non-fatal gunshot injury. However, it is important to note that gun violence includes the violence that leaves an individual injured but still alive. One source of data for non-fatal gunshot injuries comes from hospitals across the nation; every year, 60,000 individuals are treated for "non-fatal gunshot injuries caused by assault."[7] Unfortunately, data on these sorts of altercations are harder to come by, as many incidents go unreported and unexamined. More research on the frequency and causes of non-fatal gunshot injury would allow for a better and more general understanding of the use of guns in altercations, but for the purpose of this analysis, most statistics will pertain to homicide and deaths.

With the specifications of "youth gun violence" and the set parameters in mind, Chicago's youth gun violence epidemic can be analyzed more thoroughly and

[7] Ibid., 139.

appropriately. Given my racial and socio-economic location, I aim to provide an analysis of this societal issue that is as impartial as possible. While I know that no individual can be impartial to a problem that affects and involves all members of society, I hope to approach the subject from the viewpoint of an anthropological, sociological and psychological field of study.

In Chapter 1, I will discuss national gun and homicide trends; this discussion will help provide a picture of high gun usage in the United States as compared to other countries, as well as elucidate the trends and the national conversation on guns in terms of various major cities. In Chapter 2, I will discuss citywide gun and homicide trends and how national trends inform gun usage in Chicago. These trends show that the homicide rate in Chicago has decreased less drastically than in other major U.S. cities. In Chapter 3, I will examine the history of many of Chicago's black communities from the lens of the Great Migration in the early 1900s. This discussion of the Great Migration will provide a historical context for the formation of many street gangs and their at times active political presence, as well as the prominent role of guns in street gangs. With Chicago's street gangs as the backdrop, Chapter 4 will discuss the role of drugs, both in street gangs and in society as a whole. The War on Drugs will be briefly discussed in order to illuminate the racial effects of many of these policies and the contentious relationship between law enforcement and communities of color. After explaining many of the historical and structural issues that affect the prevalence of guns and gun violence in the previous four chapters, Chapter 5 will serve to demonstrate the combined effects of these issues in one neighborhood in particular, Englewood. Other aspects of Englewood's structural disadvantage will be highlighted in order to shed light on the conditions in this

neighborhood that make gun violence so common. Thus, the scope of this analysis is hourglass in its procession, going from broad international and national trends, to more specific citywide trends, to the ramifications and actualizations of these issues in Englewood. The conclusion will serve to broaden the hourglass into the conversation regarding how this information might inform social practice and policy.

Chapter 1: National Gun and Homicide Trends

America's struggle with gun violence is a heavily documented epidemic: "every year, more than 100,000 people are shot in America – more than 30,000 of them fatally."[8] These figures alone are unsettling, but what makes the situation even more disquieting is who is at the receiving end of these guns: youth. With over half of these fatalities being young people under the age of 30, it is reported that an average of one American under 25 years old is killed by a gun every hour.[9] Before delving into the trends specific to firearm homicide, the United States' overall homicide rate as compared to other nations' rates will be analyzed.

Between 1955 and 2011, the homicide rate for the United States with a three-year moving average looked like a very slight mound, generally increasing until around 1980 before starting to gradually decline in the early 1990s (See Figure 2).[10]

[8] Robin L. Kelly, "2014 Kelly Report: Gun Violence in America," *Congresswoman Robin Kelly: Illinois' 2nd District,* June 26th, 2014, http://robinkelly.house.gov/sites/robinkelly.house.gov/files/wysiwyg_uploaded/KellyReport_1.pdf, pg. VII.
[9] Ibid., pg. VII.
[10] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Global Study on Homicide 2013," United Nations Publication, Sales No. 14.IV.1, 2013, pg. 36

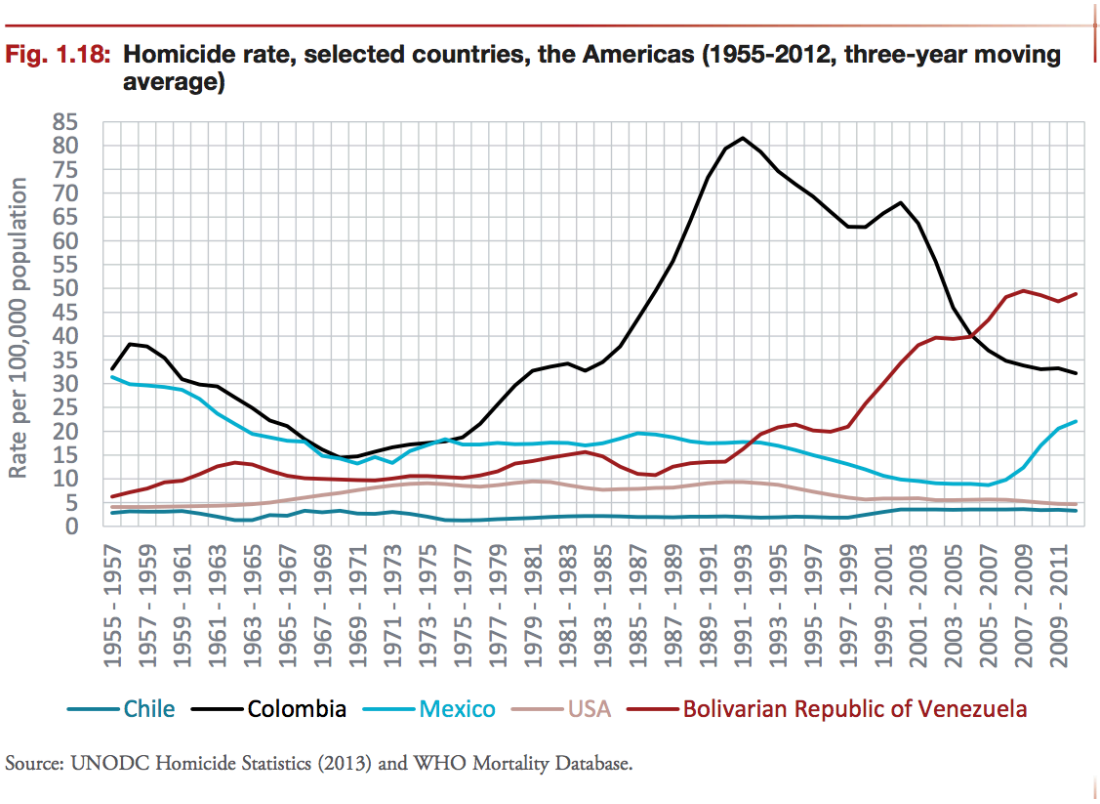

FIGURE 2: Homicide Rate, Selected Countries, the Americas (1955-2012, three-year moving average)[11]

In relation to other countries in the Americas, the United States had a visibly lower homicide rate than many other nations. In terms of national trends, North America has experienced an overall decline in homicide rate.[12] However, when comparing these trends to many European nations, the rate per 100,000 population is so vastly different that the United States and other countries in the Americas need a different y-axis scale; the lowest y-axis value for the homicide rate of countries in the America was 5, while 5 serves as the

[11] UNODC Homicide Statistics (2013) and WHO Mortality Database, qtd. in United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Global Study on Homicide 2013," pg. 36
[12] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Global Study on Homicide 2013," pg. 33

highest y-axis value for many European nations.[13] With a homicide rate higher than many European nations but below that of some of its American neighbors, we must delve deeper into the types of homicide represented by this rate. For the United States, some reports state that 60% of all homicides are by firearm, a nation with a figure in the same 60-80% range as countries like Brazil, Venezuela and Ecuador.[14] While these figures certainly help obtain a clearer picture of rates of homicide by firearm across the globe, this figure can be misleading for nations with fewer homicides in general; for instance, if a nation has only 100 homicides committed and all are by means of a firearm, then their rate of homicide by firearm would be 100%, a daunting number that does not truly reflect the possible scarcity of these occurrences. However, for the United States, this 60% is high not for a minimal number of homicide, but rather for the opposite; 9,146 homicides by firearm were reported in the United States, thus making the reality of possibly being killed by a firearm much more threatening.[15] Other reports, such as that by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, report that "firearm violence accounted for about 70% of all homicides" in the United States between 1993 and 2011.[16] These statistics demonstrate the imminent danger that is guns, one that affects the United States in a way that is startlingly higher than might be predicted based on homicide rate of socio-economically comparable nations, such as many nations in Europe.

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[13] Ibid, pg. 36.
[14] Simon Rogers, "Gun homicides and gun ownership listed by country," The Guardian, Accessed March 20, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2012/jul/22/gun-homicides-ownership-world-list.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Michael Planty and Jennifer L. Truman, "Firearm Violence, 1993-2011," U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs Bureau of Justice Statistics, May 2013, Pg. 1

On an internal level, looking at data for overall homicide rates in Los Angeles, New York City and Chicago in 2002, one might not expect that Chicago would be the forerunner. Though it is the smallest of the three cities, its murder rate was 22.3 homicides per 100,000 people versus Los Angeles's 17.8 and New York's 7.2.[17]

FIGURE 3: Homicide per 100,000 Population, 1985-2012, in Chicago, Los Angeles and New York City[18]

Police attribute Chicago's homicide rate to gang violence and drug trafficking, two issues that have plagued the city for years.[19] Though the two aforementioned issues are also present in New York City and Los Angeles, Chicago still had the higher homicide rate.

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[17] David Heinzmann, "Chicago falls out of 1st in murders." *Chicago Tribune*. January 1, 2003.

[18] Aurélie Ouss, "Gang Violence in Chicago, Innovations in Research and Policy," The University of Chicago Crime Lab, accessed February 20, 2015, http://iis-db.stanford.edu/evnts/8224/Aurelie_Ouss,_Preventing_Youth_Gang_Violence,_Evidence_from_Chicago.pdf.

[19] David Heinzmann, "Chicago falls out of 1st in murders."

While the rates represented in Figure 3 are not specified by type of homicide, gun homicide figures are important for understanding these inter-city differences. Guns play a prominent role in the homicide rate in Chicago, reportedly used in approximately 80% of Chicago's killings.[20] Indeed, in 2011, shootings were the cause of approximately 83.4% of homicides in Chicago.[21] Thus, at a significantly higher homicide rate than New York City and Los Angeles, about 4 out of 5 of every homicide in Chicago was the result of a shooting.

The racial dimension of many of these homicides is a national phenomenon that greatly informs the discussion on gun violence. In looking at national homicide trends from 1980-2008, race plays an important role, as 51.4% of all gun homicide victims were black, as compared to whites at 46.5% and "other" at 2.0%.[22] While this may not seem drastically higher than one might predict in the racial binary through which many view the world, the black population in the U.S. has hovered around 12-13%, as seen in 1990, 2000 and 2013.[23] On top of this, many of the gun deaths in white communities were the

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[20] Ibid.
[21] Chicago Police Department, "2011 Murder Analysis Report," Chicago Police Department Research and Development Division, Accessed January 10, 2015, http://home.chicagopolice.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/2011-Murder-Report.pdf, pg. 22.
[22] Alexia Cooper and Erica L. Smith, "Homicide Trends in the United States, 1980-2008," U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs Bureau of Justice Statistics, November 2011, http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/htus8008.pdf, pg. 12.
[23] U.S. Census Bureau, "Difference in Population by Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin, for the United States: 1990 – 2000*,"* U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, 2001, (Accessed December 21, 2014, http://www.census.gov/population/www/cen2000/briefs/phc-t1/tables/tab04.pdf; U.S. Census Bureau,"Population by Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin, for All Ages and for 18 Years and Over, for the United States: 2000*,"* U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, 2001, Accessed December 21, 2014, http://www.census.gov/population/www/cen2000/briefs/phc-t1/tables/tab01.pdf; U.S. Census Bureau, "State and County QuickFacts," U.S. Census Bureau, Accessed December 21, 2014, http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html.

result of suicide and not interpersonal gun violence.[24] With these data in mind, the percentage of black homicide victims is disproportionately higher than their representation in the general US population. This racial phenomenon is also made evident in Chicago; in 2011, 75.3% of all murder victims were black, a figure over three times as high as the next closest racial/ethnic group, Hispanic, at 18.9%.[25] This huge racial disparity speaks to where these shootings are occurring and who inhabits these spaces, both locally and nationally.

Another site of racial disparity is the conversation on gang-related violence. While gangs are not a historically black phenomenon, as will be discussed in the following chapters, gang-related violence has become associated with communities of color. Given the disproportionate toll gun violence takes on communities of color, discussing the numbers of "gang-related" homicides is not necessarily in poor taste. However, we must keep in mind that gangs cross racial boundaries and can be better seen as insight into many inner-city communities, rather than merely a racialized concept.

Without specifically focusing on race, statistics on adult and juvenile gang violence are also pertinent to the overall picture of national homicide trends. Homicides relating to adult and juvenile gang violence have increased nationally from 220 in 1980 to 960 in 2008. Between 1980 and 2008, the number of homicides accounted for by gang violence increased from 1% to 6%. Thus, gangs have had increasing significance to homicide rates and trends. Similarly, gun use played an important role in gang related

[24] Robin L. Kelly, "2014 Kelly Report," pg. VII.
[25] Chicago Police Department, "2011 Murder Analysis Report," pg. 37.

homicides, increasing from 73% in 1980 to 92% in 2008.[26] In keeping with the conversation regarding the impact of gun violence on youth, between 1980 and 2008, 24% of gang-related homicides were under age 18. Between 1991 and 2004, the two age groups with the most gang-motivated murder victims were 15-19 years old and 20-24 years old, with over 1,000 victims respectively.[27] The assignment of a murder being "gang-motivated" can be somewhat tricky to designate, given that the association of a murder with a specific gang or gang involvement can at times be more difficult to assess. While assessing "gang motivation" in terms of murder designation is difficult, the significant numbers of gang-related homicides marks this as a phenomenon worth further exploring, as will be seen in chapter 3. As evidenced by the aforementioned data, gangs, guns and homicide were and are inextricably and increasingly connected.

Guns of all sorts thus clearly play a role in the violence experienced in the United States. For many, violence is experienced at the other end of a gun, a weapon used to intimidate the victim. Guns can be used for lethal purposes, to show bravado, or merely to intimidate a victim into compliance. But when and why did guns become so popular? The United States experiences a markedly higher rate of gun murders than other developing nations, a feat that may be explainable by the fact that though United States makes up only 4.5% of the world's population, 40% of all civilian-owned guns are owned by Americans.[28] From an analysis of information on homicide, suicide and unintentional

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[26] Alexia Cooper and Erica L. Smith, "Homicide Trends in the United States, 1980-2008," pg. 26.
[27] Tim Lavery, "Gang Motivated Murders .. 1991-2004." Chicago Police Department, Research and Development Division. Chicago Crime Trends, vol 1 issue 1. August 2005, Accessed December 21, 2014, http://home.chicagopolice.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Gang-Motivated-Murders-1991-2004.pdf.
[28] Robin L. Kelly, "2014 Kelly Report," pg. VII.

firearm death from World Health Organization's Mortality Database, it was found the United States has a firearm homicide rate that is 19.5 times greater than 22 other high-income nations. Among these 23 high-income nations, 80% of all firearm deaths happened in the United States.[29] Therefore, in understanding homicide and firearm homicide in the United States, it is important to understand a brief history of guns in the United States.

One of the most controversial American gun laws is that raised by the Constitution of the United States' Second Amendment: the "right of the people to keep and bear arms."[30] In a nation with the highest rate of gun ownership in the world, centuries of debate have centered on whether this U.S. constitutional amendment provides individual citizens with the right to keep and bear guns, or whether the explicated purpose of arms pertaining to "a well-regulated militia" provides states with the right to self-defense.[31] This debate is of crucial importance because it endows individuals with the right to own guns, and brings into debate what limitations or restrictions should be placed on such ownership. If the amendment grants individuals the right to "keep and bear" guns, the discussion of gun violence and practical means of addressing this issue becomes more challenging. Clearly, even if the Second Amendment is indeed granting individuals this right, it is not an unfettered right to use a gun at any given moment; there are still restrictions in regards to gun use. However, if, as many scholars believe, the Second Amendment is not discussing the rights of individuals but

[29] Ibid., pg. 38.
[30] Legal Information Institute, "Second Amendment," Cornell University Law School, Accessed December 21, 2014, http://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/second_amendment.
[31] Simon Rogers, "Gun homicides and gun ownership listed by country," The Guardian; Legal Information Institute, "Second Amendment," Cornell University Law School.

rather the rights of states, then many subsequent debates regarding gun control become less complex and obfuscated. Guns have a very long history and complicated presence in the United States; many laws have addressed our abilities to own, use or not use guns, and many more have been struck down prior to being codified. Thus, from its ratification in 1788, the U.S. Constitution and its Second Amendment have given American citizens the right to have guns in their lives. Though only some citizens utilize this right, all citizens must bear the consequences of a gun-toting society.

As mentioned in regards to the Second Amendment, one of the most pertinent questions regarding guns is possession. Guns can be purchased at gun shows, in stores that sell guns and through a variety of online means. However, many guns are not obtained through legal measures. This begs the question that if guns are generally not obtained through legal pathways, then how are they so common? The answer to this question seems to lie in illegal and underground gun markets. Though both Illinois and Chicago have extensive federal regulation on gun sales, including regulation in regards to secondary-market sales, many illegally obtained guns are merely the product of manipulations of the legal gun market; many legally bought guns are stolen or resold, ways that continue on without tampering with the legal market.[32] There are legal restrictions on secondary gun transactions, such as one can only sell a gun in a secondary sale to a licensed individual, but in an underground market, these restrictions hardly affect transactions. Importantly, the illegal gun market is not characterized by huge numbers of transactions; as explained by Philip J. Cook and colleagues, the underground

[32] Philip J. Cook, Jens Ludwig, Sudhir A. Venkatesh and Anthony A. Braga, "Underground Gun Markets," National Bureau of Economic Research, November 2005, Accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.nber.org/papers/w11737, Pg. 3

gun market is characterized by the combination of "illegality and thinness."[33] Illegality is self-explanatory, but thinness refers to the relatively low number of transactions, given steep prices, high risk and difficulty associated with arranging transactions.[34] However, if the market is characterized as "thin" and illegal guns make up only a fraction of the general underground market, why are illegal guns still an issue? Between 1999 and 2003, the Chicago Police Department alone averaged over 10,000 firearm confiscations per year.[35] One possible explanation for the continuance of illegal guns without formal transactions is the role of street gangs. In many ways, gangs act as an almost supplementary underground gun market for individuals who prefer to rent/loan a gun rather than go through the difficult and often high-risk transaction of buying a gun in the underground market. More detail will be provided regarding the transaction and use of guns within street gangs in the third chapter, but suffice it to say, illegal gun markets are unfortunately not uncommon. Thus, while stricter and more exhaustive gun laws are valuable, these regulations will be unable to completely stem the tide of gun violence.

Our gun markets and the Second Amendment influence many of our national homicide trends because of the role of guns in the United States' significant number of homicides. Homicides, specifically homicide by firearm, are higher in the United States than other countries of similar economic stability. However, nationally, homicides and homicide by means of firearm have been decreasing. Major cities like New York, Los Angeles and Chicago have all seen reductions in the last 20 years. However, Chicago has seen less of a decrease in homicide, especially homicide by firearm, than either New

[33] Ibid., Pg. 13.
[34] Ibid., pg. 6.
[35] Ibid., pg. 5.

York City or Los Angeles. With a better understanding of national trends and influences on gun usage, we are able to look at what is happening in Chicago with more acuity.

Chapter 2: Chicago Gun/Homicide Trends

Moving beyond the national trends for homicide, firearm-specific homicide and gun violence, it is important to ground the discussion of Chicago's gun and homicide trends in Chicago-area data and active gun laws. Looking at the annual reports published by the Chicago Police Department, the number of murders in the Chicago-land area between 1980 and the present show a significant trend. In 1980, the reported number of murders was 863, with 551 of these deaths due to firearms. This number is particularly high, given that between 1980 and the present the highest numbers of murders occurred between 1990 and 1997. 1992 was reported to have the most homicides since 1974, with the 1992 total at approximately 936 (some deaths were still under investigation as to whether they could be deemed homicide).[36] Of these 936 homicides, 647 were reportedly due to gun violence.[37] During this seven-year window between 1990 and 1997, murders ranged from 759 to 940, with respective deaths due to firearms between 570 and 691. Both before and after these years, the number of homicides was lower, especially in the years after. In 2010, 440 murders were recorded, with 354 due to firearms.[38] While it is clear from the data that the number of murders and murders by firearm have been consistently decreasing, the reality of this violence is still one with which many lower-income communities are grappling. The statistics on murder and murder by firearm demonstrate the huge toll violence and guns took and continue to take on Chicago-area

[36] William Recktenwald and Colin McMahon, "Deadly End To Deadly Year," *Chicago Tribune,* January 01, 1993, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1993-01-01/news/9303175195_1_murder-rate-deadly-year-gunshot.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Chicago Police Department, "Annual Report: A Year in Review," 2010, https://portal.chicagopolice.org/portal/page/portal/ClearPath/News/Statistical%20Reports/Annual%20Reports/10AR.pdf

communities. It may be difficult to internalize numbers and statistics, given that our society relies on numbers to demonstrate sometimes-abstract concepts. However, if nothing else, the fact that these figures for homicide and gun homicide in particular are so high, being closer to 1000 than 0, is cause for major concern.

While many discussions have centered on stricter gun laws and regulations, two current laws have given individuals more leeway with guns. Even though there are many federal laws regarding gun usage, such as "Conceal and Carry" and "Stand Your Ground," these laws will be discussed in relation to Chicago and not the nation as a whole. Though the Second Amendment sparks much political debate regarding the ownership and use of guns, most recent discussions have centered on "Conceal and Carry" laws. As reported by the Chicago Sun Times, between February and July of 2014, over 69,000 Conceal and Carry permits were issued in the state of Illinois. Over 17,000 of these 69,000 permits were issued in Cook County, the county containing the city of Chicago.[39] While Conceal and Carry may not be the most dominant method of youth obtaining guns in these neighborhoods, it is a significant finding that the majority of Conceal and Carry permits issued in Illinois were issued in the County containing the South Side. A Conceal and Carry permit allows an individual to "carry a loaded or unloaded concealed firearm, fully concealed or partially concealed, on or about his or her person; and keep or carry a

[39] Sun-Times Staff, "Map: Breakdown of concealed carry permits across Illinois," *Chicago Sun-Times,* August 13, 2014, http://chicago.suntimes.com/politics/7/71/161275/map-breakdown-of-concealed-carry-permits-across-illinois

loaded or unloaded concealed firearm on or about his or her person within a vehicle."[40]To obtain one of these licenses, there are numerous qualifications an applicant must have, including: the individual must be over 21 years of age, must have a valid Firearm Owner's Identification Card, must complete firearms training and any other requisite training and must not fall into any of the numerous categories pertaining to a criminal history.[41] In terms of the benefits of Conceal and Carry, individuals who feel that their safety might be threatened or who feel some obligation to carry a gun on his or her person now have the legal means to do so. Concealed firearms are restricted from many locations, including schools and school-property, but aside from specified locations, concealed-gun carriers are allowed to publicly carry a gun for whatever reason.

Not all findings agree on the outcomes of the establishment of Conceal and Carry laws; while some believe that the legal hoops through which individuals must jump to obtain and carry a concealed weapon will minimize illegal gun use, these laws might adversely affect feelings of safety and might not greatly deter crime. As mentioned above, Conceal and Carry is likely not the means through which most youth are obtaining guns; in Illinois, one is not legally allowed to own any gun under age 18, and if under age 21 he or she must have parental consent.[42] Thus, Conceal and Carry is a law that allows adults the ability to carry a partially or fully concealed weapon, not youth. According to results of a 2012 survey administered by UCAN, a social service organization in Chicago, when

[40] Illinois State Police Firearms Service Bureau, "PUBLIC SAFETY (430 ILCS 66/) Firearm Concealed Carry Act," October 9, 2014, https://www.ispfsb.com/Public/AboutTheAct.aspx (Accessed March 1, 2015).
[41] Ibid.
[42] Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, "Minimum Age to Purchase & Possess Firearms Policy Summary," Smartgunlaws.org, October 1, 2013, http://smartgunlaws.org/minimum-age-to-purchase-possess-firearms-policy-summary/

youth were asked if adults should be allowed to carry loaded handguns in public places, 73% of youth ages 13-15 and 75% of youth ages 16-18 said no.[43] This research finding is interesting as it pertains to who are the victims of gun violence. Given that a third of all victims of gun violence are under age 25, youth opinions on adults carrying guns should be treated with respect and importance.[44] Approximately ¾ of youth ages 13-18 disagree with adults carrying loaded handguns, almost the exact freedom granted by "Conceal and Carry" laws. If youth disagree with this reality and are more often the victims on the other side of the gun, the harm of this law and the fear it instills in youth should be taken into account by lawmakers. Similarly, Conceal and Carry laws might come into conflict with findings about the weighted impact of having a gun on one's person. The Chicago Police Department reported that in 2007, nearly 75% of all homicide victims were found outdoors and thus in public; with the victim outdoors, it is highly likely that the offender was carrying the gun in public before the altercation.[45] With laws that make carrying a weapon even easier, and many scholars noting that the presence of a gun can affect an altercation becoming a lethal altercation, Conceal and Carry might in some ways reinforce gun violence as opposed to helping regulate it.[46]

Another important law to consider when discussing gun regulation is the "Stand Your Ground" law. While Illinois does not have the same "Stand Your Ground" law recently brought to public attention in the Sanford, Florida altercation between Trayvon Martin and George Zimmerman, Illinois does have a variant of this self-defense law.

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[43] UCAN, "Teen Gun Survey 2012," UCAN, Accessed February 21, 2015, www.ucanchicago.org/tgs-2012/.
[44] Alexia Cooper, "Homicide Trends in the United States, 1980-2008," pg. 3.
[45] Robin L. Kelly, "2014 Kelly Report," pg. 34.
[46] Robin L. Kelly, "2014 Kelly Report," pg. 26.

According to Article 7 section 7-1 of Illinois's Criminal Code of 2012 720 ILCS5, one is only allowed to use lethal force or inflict great bodily harm in the event that he or she believes such force is "necessary" to prevent death or great bodily harm to himself, herself or another.[47] This type of statute might fall under what we believe to be self-defense; however, what is seen as imminent danger to one's personal safety is very subjective. This law allows persons "under attack" to decide to use "necessary" force, terms that are hard to define and justify; "Stand Your Ground" laws expect honesty, integrity and a lack of prejudice from both parties. It is unrealistic to expect that such a statute will be used judiciously when many harbor personal feelings of prejudice against others. Beyond the basic difficulties of this statute, adding a firearm into the equation makes it all the more dangerous. Regulating the use of "self-defense" poses a great deal of trouble to our legal system, and making "self-defense" a potentially lethal reaction only complicates matters. The presence of guns in American society has been carefully demonstrated; the combination of guns and the aforementioned laws and statutes makes for an explosive situation, one where many lives will be lost at the hands of what is deemed "lawful."

Gun laws and citywide homicide and gun trends act as an important insight into why gun violence has not dropped in Chicago as significantly as in other cities across the nation. The statistics on firearm-related homicides from the Chicago Police Department demonstrate the persistence of lethal gun violence in Chicago, while laws such as

[47] Illinois General Assembly, "Illinois Compiled Statutes: Criminal Offenses (720 ILCS 5/) Criminal Code of 2012," 2012, Accessed March 1, 2015, http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs4.asp?ActID=1876&ChapterID=53&SeqStart=8200000&SeqEnd=9700000.

"Conceal and Carry" and "Stand Your Ground" complicate the conversation regarding effective gun regulation. In Chicago, another crucial aspect of the conversation on youth gun violence is rooted in the city's history. As a city, Chicago was molded by the historic migration of millions of Southerners to Northern metropolises. Also growing out of this historical period were many Chicago area street gangs, entities that shaped and continue to shape the worlds of many youth. In the next chapter, I will explicate the relationship between the history of Chicago and its prominent street gangs; I will also connect this history to the gun violence that continues to riddle many communities of color.

Chapter 3: The History and Presence of Chicago Gangs

As mentioned in chapters 1 and 2, a significant number of Chicago's homicides are attributed to gang violence. When discussing the presence of gangs in Chicago, it is important to first explicate the history of many of Chicago's gangs and the history of many of the neighborhoods in which gang violence is most concentrated. Chicago gangs have historical roots as far back as the Great Migration of the early 20th century. Gangs in Chicago have historically served the purpose of community-level protection for both black and white communities; however, the discussion of gangs in Chicago has become largely racialized and taken out of historical context. The Great Migration spanned roughly from the first decade of the 20th century to the 1970s[48] and saw millions of African Americans head North. These men, women and children were oftentimes scared to leave the South, fearful for their own and their families' lives. However, hundreds of thousands of individuals made this journey out of the South in search of their deserved economic and social freedoms.

This flow of Southerners into Northern metropolises, often by way of Southern cities, was said to be caused by a series of "push" and "pull" factors.[49] One might assume that the most critical push factors were the persecution, subhuman treatment and physical and emotional violence felt by black Southerners. While these conditions certainly made blacks less willing to stay, they had endured these same sorts of conditions for many years before what is considered the beginning of the Great Migration. Thus, these unlivable conditions contributed to the urge to leave, but cannot be said to have caused

[48] There are said to have been two waves to the Great Migration, the first being between 1910 and 1930 and the second between 1940 and 1970.
[49] James R. Grossman, "African-American Migration to Chicago," in *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait*, Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995, Pg. 312.

this 20th century outflow.[50] However, the importance of these forms of racial injustice and discrimination is undeniable; constant fear for the life of oneself and one's loved ones is no way to live, and many blacks had reached their limit.

If one were to argue for a single "push" factor, an event that truly catalyzed the movement of Southern blacks to Northern cities, this event would undoubtedly be World War I.[51] Northern cities relied on cheap labor to do the menial and unwanted jobs that were so crucial to these industrial hubs. Up until the early 1910s, this labor was comprised of new European immigrants seeking and settling for any job they might find. However, in the initial years of the First World War, the United States nearly halted European immigration, with numbers plunging from "1,218,480 in 1914 to 110,618 in 1918."[52] This halt to the flow of immigrants drastically affected the wartime industries of the North, creating a huge demand for labor that could not be met by existing European immigrants. These conditions opened up jobs for blacks, "the poorest-paid labor" of the South, in wartime industry, wartime production and industries like the "steel mills, railroads and packinghouses."[53] While these jobs paid more and were in most respects much better than the jobs available in the South, the new black migrants still experienced discrimination and segregation, albeit of the Northern variety. Though the North was no escape from racial prejudice and immigrants encountered many new and unanticipated problems, the North's new challenges were far more enticing than the stifling and thoroughly unlivable conditions of the South.

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[50] Ibid., Pg. 306.
[51] Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns,* New York: Vintage Books, 2010, Pg. 161; James R. Grossman, "African-American Migration to Chicago," Pg. 308.
[52] Isabel Wilkerson. *The Warmth of Other Suns,* Pg. 161.
[53] Ibid., pg. 161.

Aside from the overt and cruel discrimination of the South, one of the major push factors, and subsequently also a pull factor, was earning power; daily or weekly wages for blacks in the South paled in comparison to the drastically higher, though still far from equal or ideal, wages in the North. Daily wages for men in Chicago were between $2.00 and $2.50 in 1916, and women could earn around $2.00 a day as a domestic, a rate that was about as much as many Southerners earned in a week.[54] These differences in economic conditions simultaneously pulled migrants North and pushed them away from the South.

Aside from the economic opportunities offered by this labor-hungry region, many migrants cited other reasons for wanting to move North, including "good schools, equal rights before the law, and equal access to public facilities."[55] Southern blacks wanted to enjoy the rights that were lawfully theirs but were restricted in the South. For many, the North represented this opportunity. Southern blacks wanted the chance for their children to experience a better life than the one they had experienced as children, especially in terms of education, societal treatment and the development of a healthier sense of self. However, as previously mentioned, the North was no escape from racial prejudices and discrimination, and many migrants experienced some of the very same problems of a racist, though more covert, society.

After unbearably long train rides and countless hours of uncertainty and fear, migrants found themselves in unfamiliar cities with often little information beyond that provided to them from family members or friends. When migrants finally reached their destinations of choice, many sought out the relative, friend, friend of a friend or near

[54] James R. Grossman, "African-American Migration to Chicago," Pg. 305.
[55] Ibid, pg. 311.

stranger with whom they arranged to meet. For those who came North without such a contact, often the first task was finding their way to wherever black people lived in that given city.[56] For Chicago, these newcomers sought out the black neighborhoods on the South, and sometimes West, Side.

The region of Chicago in which most blacks settled after migrating North was known as the "Black Belt." Relating to the name of the region in the South where plantation agriculture flourished and African Americans lived, the "Black Belt" of Chicago was an area on the city's Southside where many African Americans were concentrated. The term "Black Belt" might spark some degree of hostility from readers, given its historical roots as a term born in the times of slavery. However, this term will be used for its specificity, referring precisely to a particular geographic region in Chicago.

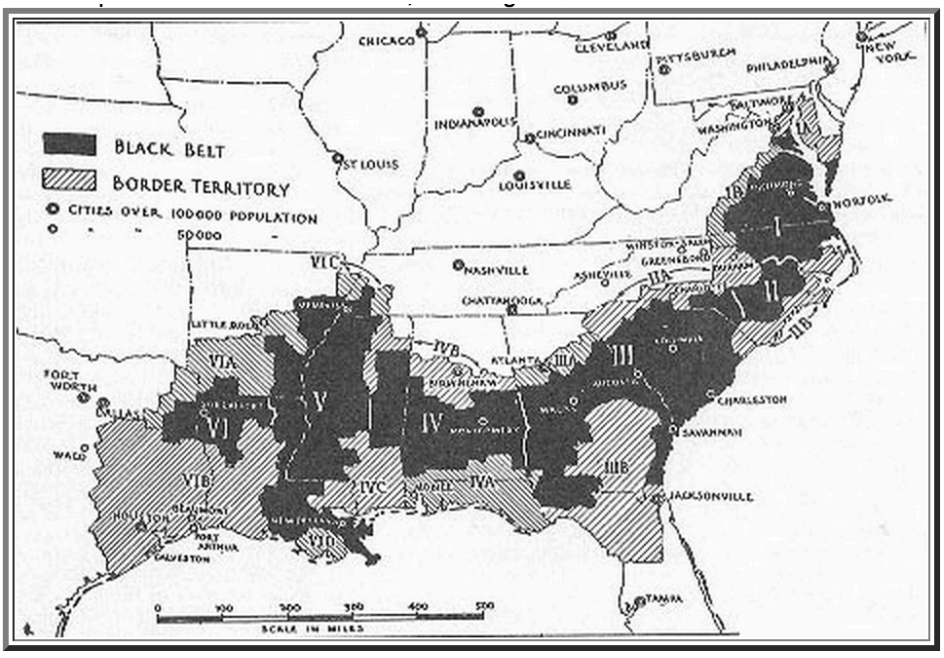

FIGURE 4: Southern "Black Belt" and Border Territory[57]

[56] Ibid, pg. 316.
[57] James S. Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States,* New York: International Publishers, 1936, Pg. 17.

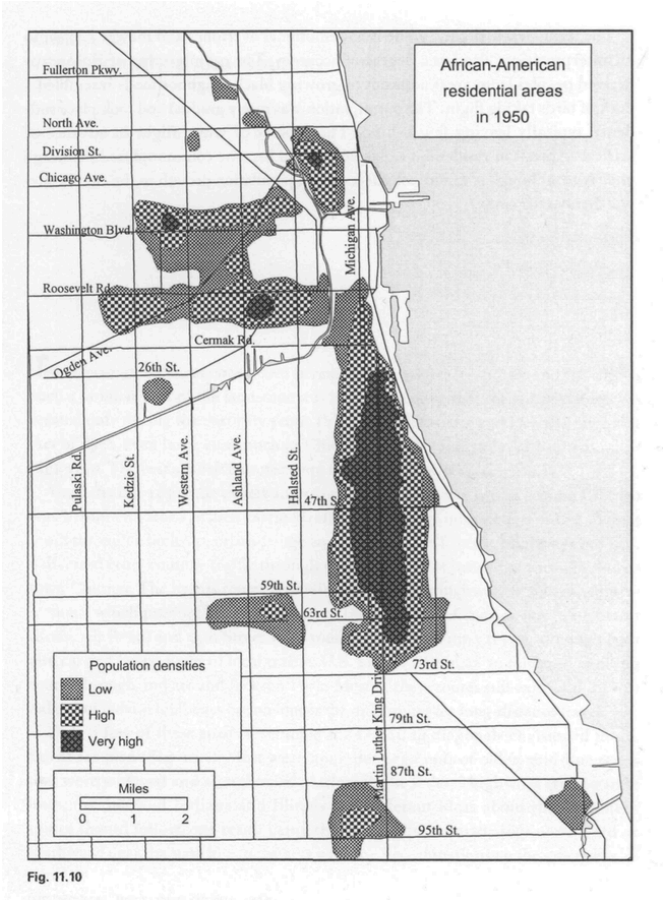

FIGURE 5: African American Residential Areas in 1950 in Chicago ("Black Belt" made evident)[58]

Originally, the "Black Belt" stretched from 22nd street to 31st street along one of Chicago's now main thoroughfares, State Street. The racial and socio-economic distinctions of the "Black Belt" were hugely important in the development of this part of Chicago that continues to be predominantly African American and suffering from structural disadvantage. Blacks were limited to living in this narrow strip by hostile ethnic groups who were fighting for what little geographic territory they could control.

[58] John C. Hudson, *Chicago: A Geography of the City and Its Region,* University of Chicago Press: 2006, Pg. 129.

Thus, in this original 9-block belt, blacks lived in some of the city's most abject conditions, in windowless basements and "kitchenettes." Many buildings were in terrible shape, sometimes without "heat, light or running water."[59] Though living conditions were often poor, moving North carried with it the prospect of freedom and safety. However, as more migrants came up from the South and housing became increasingly hard to find, the "Black Belt" shifted and extended from 39th street to 95th street and from the Dan Ryan Expressway in the West to Lake Michigan in the East.[60] This stretch of Chicago ran through neighborhoods such as Douglas, Oakland, Grand Boulevard, Fuller Park and Washington Park, and subsequent expansions included neighborhoods such as Greater Grand Crossing, South Shore and Chatham [61] This increasingly-large concentration of black residents bled into many neighborhoods in the 1950s, including neighborhoods on the other side of the Dan Ryan Expressway, such as Englewood and West Englewood.

This 20th century influx of African Americans to racially segregated neighborhoods disrupted the contentious race relations that already existed in these communities, a disruption that would greatly inform the existence and importance of street gangs in Northern urban centers like Chicago. As previously stated, in the early 1900s, the United States saw an influx of immigrants from a variety of European nations. When these new migrants settled into their cities of choice across the nation, they created segregated ethnic enclaves in order to both maintain old-world traditions and create a safe space for themselves.

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[59] Hana Layson and Kenneth Warren, "Chicago and the Great Migration, 1915-1950," The Newberry, Accessed December 4, 2014, http://dcc.newberry.org/collections/chicago-and-the-great-migration.

[60] Wallace Best, "Black Belt," Encyclopedia of Chicago, Accessed February 3, 2015, http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/140.html

[61] John C. Hudson, *Chicago: A Geography of the City and Its Region.* Pg. 28.

In Chicago, immigrants from Ireland, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Greece, Russia and Germany made up a large portion of the city's population.[62] These ethnic groups were often hostile to one another and formed separate ethnic organizations. Such organizations were comprised of young, working-class men and these ethnically separate groups were often politically associated, acting as a type of manpower for political candidates. In Irish communities, politically sponsored gangs became known as "athletic clubs," one of their responsibilities being the assurance of voters for their patron.[63] The early 1900s also saw the rise of a substantial number of Italian and Polish gangs, who, along with the existing Irish gangs, participated in race riots that occurred all across the nation in 1919. Being comprised of young, working-class men, these groups were in direct economic competition with one another. When African Americans from the South began to migrate North, many of these organizations turned hostile to the newcomers who acted as yet another hurdle to finding and maintaining a job, especially given that African Americans were often used as strikebreakers when unions struck for better conditions and pay.[64] African Americans were thus the targets of significant racial violence, and in response to these hostilities, African Americans formed their own individual organizations for economic opportunity and protection.

The "Black Belt" region of Chicago was the product of both black immigration and white emigration. As more and more blacks came in to the city, the whites that chose not to fight this influx often sought out new homes in suburbs and other neighborhoods, a

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[62] Walter Nugent, "Demography: Chicago as a Modern World City," Encyclopedia of Chicago, Accessed February 4, 2015, http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/962.html.
[63] Andrew J. Diamond, "Gangs." Encyclopedia of Chicago, Accessed February 4, 2015, http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/497.html.
[64] James R. Grossman, "African-American Migration to Chicago," Pg. 320.

process known as "white flight." Because of restrictive real estate practices barring blacks from being able to buy or rent homes in certain areas, these new migrants were further restricted to Chicago's dense, narrow "Black Belt." Restrictive covenants and practices such as "redlining"[65] helped strengthen the "Black Belt" as an African American stronghold. At the same time, many whites decided to fight back against the growing black community. Using violence, many gangs of European ethnic descent wrought havoc on the arriving and expanding black community. These white ethnic gangs created a need for self-protection in the black community, a need that was met by groups of young men banding together and fighting for their economic, political and social safety. With the need for protection as a driving factor, gangs became more commonplace in both white and black communities. Thus, the influx of Southern migrants sent a chill of fear down the spines of white communities, a fear that turned to anger and hostility. Reacting to this hostility, many young men in the black community took it upon themselves to form groups that would protect their communities from these hostile neighbors. In this way, the Great Migration helped shape many of the tensions between communities that would act as a large component in the formation of street gangs. With the arrival of these perceived outsiders, street gangs proliferated and took on lives and trajectories of their own.

While street gangs might have roots in the economic and residential tensions of the early 1900s, they are very much so a part of today's society. As defined by the Chicago Police Department, a gang is "an organized group with a recognized leader

[65] Redlining is a practice where more desirable neighborhoods are not offered or shown by real-estate agents to "unwanted residents." These prospective buyers are shown homes in neighborhoods that are less desirable and already populated by similarly raced individuals.

whose activities are either criminal or, at the very least, threatening to the community."[66] With good reason, the description of gangs on the Chicago Police Department's Gang Awareness page is negative; for police and many community members, gangs represent a fierce obstacle to community safety and a driving force behind much of Chicago's violence. The CPD goes on to attempt to answer the question of "who [typically] belongs to gangs" with "a male school dropout or truant, who is unemployed or has no employable skills."[67] While gangs are in not necessarily a positive feature of society, the CPD paints a picture of the typical gang member that is far too specific. This description of gangs by the Chicago Police Department is a more modern, everyday interpretation of gangs and gang activities; however, as seen through the above discussion of ethnic tensions in early 20th century Chicago, gangs have a long and at times socially active history.

Many different gangs both have existed and exist today in Chicago. Gangs collaborate at times, but often break into factions and sometimes merely fade into history. Some of Chicago's best-known street gangs are the Black P. Stones, the Vice Lords, the Gangster Disciples, the Black Disciples and the Latin Kings. With the resources available, it is known that there are two major Chicago gang alliances, the "People Nation" and the "Folk Nation." These two "Nations" define themselves through different behaviors, symbols, terminologies and identifiers, among other things. Similarly, each gang within a "Nation" defines itself differently, from different racial memberships and geographic

[66] Chicago Police Department, "Gang Awareness," Chicago Police Department, Accessed February 4, 2015, http://home.chicagopolice.org/community/gang-awareness/.
[67] Chicago Police Department, "Gang Awareness."

fulcra to different constitutions and rituals.[68] Chicago gangs pledge allegiance to one of these two "Nations;" however, just because two gangs are part of the same Nation does not mean they are on friendly terms with one another. Many of Chicago's major gangs, including the five aforementioned, have splintered into subgroups, such as the Renegade Vice Lords and the Blue Fin Black Disciples.[69] In more recent times, even subgroups have started to splinter, giving rise to factions that differ block by block. Gang factions will be further discussed in chapter 5, but are mentioned here for demonstrating the contentious relationship that sometimes exists between, among and within gangs.

With Chicago's five best-known street gangs in mind, it is important to understand their histories as being more complex than what is typically associated with street gangs (illegal trade, drugs and violence). Many gangs are said to have histories of political and social activism. In the 1960s and the 1970s, many Chicago-land gangs participated in the Civil Rights Movement and the general fight for better conditions. In the 1960s, the "LSD" coalition was formed in Chicago, comprised of the "Lords" [Vice Lords], the "Stones" [Blackstone Rangers] and the "Disciples" [Black Disciples]. LSD had ties to politicians and social reform groups, like the Black Panther Party, Reverend Jesse Jackson and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; at the same time, both the Blackstone Rangers and the Black Disciples were given funding by the Office of Economic Opportunities' Youth Manpower Project as part of Federal War on Poverty programs.[70]

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[68] Florida Department of Corrections, "Street Gangs – Chicago Based or Influenced, " Security Threat Intelligence Unit, Accessed February 8, 2015, http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/gangs/chicago.html

[69] "Original Gangs," Chicagogangs.org, Accessed February 8, 2015, http://www.chicagogangs.org/index.php?pr=GANG_LIST

[70] Louis Kontos and David C. Brotherton (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Gangs,* Greenwood Press, 2007, Pg. 106.

However, many have argued that the funding given to these groups was never invested in community reform and social repair and that these initiatives merely helped gangs become wealthier and more organized, though these claims have yet to be fully substantiated. [71] In the 1990s, the Gangster Disciples, a sub-group of the Devil's Disciples,[72] transformed into "Growth and Development," a group aimed at transforming prison inmates into socially acceptable members of society. At the same time, the Gangster Disciples also launched 21st Century VOTE, a program meant to empower residents in exercising their political rights. One of 21st Century VOTE's most notable achievements was a 10,000-person rally helping broker an agreement between teachers and the city of Chicago.[73] Thus, while many argue that these programs did not make a significant impact and the motives behind them were questionable, many Chicago area street gangs attempted to address the societal ills in their neighborhoods.

By highlighting street gangs' complicated relationship with society, the draw to join a gang becomes more than just making money. For instance, in the 1960s, for many individuals in Chicago's black communities, joining a gang was a way to ally oneself with others in the fight against structural disadvantage. This may still hold true for some young men who choose to involve themselves in gang culture, however the current role of street gangs in Chicago is not as perceptibly associated with addressing social ills. The role of social and political activism is an aspect of gangs that complicates their usage of guns. For certain activist groups, such as the Black Panther Party, brandishing a gun was

[71] Ibid., Pg. 106.
[72] The Devil's Disciples was a 1950s/1960s street-gang in Chicago. Both the Black Disciples and the Gangster Disciples formed as splintering of the Devil's Disciples.
[73] Louis Kontos, *Encyclopedia of Gangs.* Pg. 108.

not out of the ordinary. In these circumstances, the presence of guns does not contradict, but merely complicates, many street gangs' histories of social and political activism.

Guns have a strong presence in street gangs and their activities and street gangs are one of the means by which illegal guns are circulated. Street gangs allow for more assurance on who is receiving a gun and the receiver's credibility/trustworthiness, thus decreasing some of the risk involved with illegal gun transactions. The ability to obtain or use a gang-owned gun is differentiated based on rank. Younger gang members are often only allowed to own guns if authorized by the gang leaders, but older members are seen as "human capital" and for these members the gang's gun ownership rules might be waived. Importantly, many of the gun transactions that occur within a gang are loans or rentals, not sales. Some of the reasons for such policies include gang leaders' fears of a hostile takeover from a lower-rung member, gun violence decreasing short term profits by scaring away potential drug customers and the drawing of unwanted police attention.[74] For lower-rank gang members, only certain situations allow them to possess a gun, such as "drug pick-ups and drop-offs outside of the gang's own turf" and occasionally during gang wars.[75] Though there are somewhat strict regulations on gun use within gangs, a substantial number of people join gangs for access to guns.[76] If gangs are a means by which youth can use guns, gang affiliation becomes increasingly dangerous, aside from exposure to other vices and dangers present in gangs and the gang lifestyle. Gang influence is far-reaching, and through such an active presence in most of Chicago's neighborhoods, including Englewood, the draw to join a gang can be inescapable. When

[74] Philip J. Cook, "Underground Gun Markets," Pg. 15.
[75] Ibid., Pg. 17.
[76] Ibid., Pg. 15.

young boys turn to men, they often seek guidance and direction from older individuals in the community. With such an active and diverse gang culture in Chicago, boys growing up in neighborhoods often see friends and family members affiliating with any of a number of gangs. In understanding Chicago's youth gun violence, gangs play no small part, and given the circulation of illegal guns within a gang, gangs strongly impact youth's exposure to gun violence.

A historical analysis is critical in order to fully grasp the far-reaching impact of Chicago's regional development and the development of its many street gangs. Looking at the Great Migration and the historically politically active presence of many street gangs has demonstrated that street gangs are deeply enmeshed in Chicago's history. With gangs acting as an important connector between youth and guns, we must question what else youth are brought into contact with by means of gang association. One of many gangs' primary concerns is illegal trade, especially that of drugs. The importance of drugs to street gangs, as well as the high stakes associated with drug involvement, has created an increasingly violent terrain on which youth and gangs exist.

Chapter 4: The Intersection of Gangs and Drugs

As discussed in the previous chapter, the prominence of gangs in Chicago is undeniable. With their complex histories and their fraught relationships with one another, gangs have become an established fixture of Chicago's social landscape. Given the considerable presence of gangs, the city and its residents must now confront everything with which gangs concern themselves. In the previous chapter, the dimension of gangs that drew most attention was their formation, as understood through the history and racial make-up of the Chicagoland area. Another important dimension of gangs mentioned in chapter 3 was the role of guns in gangs and the way gangs circulate these firearms. In this chapter, I will discuss a third important aspect of gangs that plays an important role in the perpetuation of violence: the prominence of drugs. There exist a fair number of scientific studies linking drug and narcotic use to gun violence and violent behavior; however, I do not seek to analyze the presence of drugs in street gangs from this perspective. Rather, the discussion of drugs, their role in gangs and the effects of the War on Drugs are included for the purpose of more thoroughly understanding the ways in which drugs contribute to the perpetuation of violence and the longevity of street gangs.

As drugs became an increasingly viable option for economic stability in an otherwise relatively barren job market, gangs took to drugs in a way that would tie the two together forever. According to Michelle Alexander, "the decline in legitimate employment opportunities among inner-city residents increased incentives to sell drugs – most notably crack cocaine."[77] Manufacturing jobs that were once available to those living in cities were now being outsourced in attempts to save these businesses money,

[77] Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness,* New York: The New Press, 2010, Pg. 50.

paying workers in other countries far less than what would be considered a "fair wage" in the United States.[78] Communities hit the hardest by these changes were those populated by residents who either lacked a college education or received a drastically inadequate education due to historical inequality and lack of opportunity; urban, black neighborhoods were some of these communities. Without the educational background to overcome these economic changes, many working-class blacks struggled to find other employment opportunities.[79]

While economic difficulty is not racial in nature, much has been said about the effects of race on socio-economic status. Dating back to the antebellum period following the U.S. Civil War, people of color were systematically disenfranchised and barred from economic opportunity and participation in society; non-whites were circumscribed in a narrow range of possible occupations. In the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, many black men, women and children fought for the ability to pursue their "inalienable rights," namely "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." These rights were profoundly impinged upon with Jim Crow laws, policies of disenfranchisement and the ever-present fear of corporal damage or psychological harm. As a nation founded on a slave-based economy, our society and social economic order still in many ways reflects the disparities of the antebellum period. People of color still experience poverty at higher rates than whites, have less access to social services and report worse overall health.[80]. The structural advantage enjoyed by whites is simultaneous with the structural

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[78] Ibid., Pg. 50.
[79] Ibid., pg. 50.
[80] Ann Chih Lin and David R. Harris (eds.), "The Colors of Poverty: Why Racial and Ethnic Disparities Persist," National Poverty Center Series on Poverty and Public Policy, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan, January 2009, http://www.npc.umich.edu/publications/policy_briefs/brief16/PolicyBrief16.pdf

disadvantage experienced by people of color. Scholars like Michelle Alexander, Melissa Harris-Perry, Ann Chih Lin and David R. Harris all highlight the connections between racial and socio-economic location; that is, that race affects socio-economic status in society by way of fewer opportunities and more structural barriers to overcome. In a society where many avenues towards high-paying jobs are more difficult to traverse for people of color, some individuals turn to get-rich-quick alternatives, such as drug dealing. While not all individuals turn to selling drugs in order to make money, when structural disadvantage significantly weakens one's earning power, it should not come as a surprise that some individuals might turn to illegal pathways in desperation. Again, it is important to emphasize that this is not the path chosen by all or most individuals, and individual responsibility for these decisions must still be taken; however, selling drugs can and must be seen as part of the larger picture of structural economic disadvantage.

In this environment, the incentive to sell drugs is drastically increased.[81] This incentive drove many street gangs to take to selling drugs, now making gangs nearly synonymous with drug dealing; as such, many gang members play roles in the complex and intricate drug operations that occur in communities across the city. While it is very difficult to find data on gangs, gang structure and gang membership, given the extralegal and often covert nature of these entities, it is well known that gangs exist in hierarchies. Gang hierarchy is important in understanding which members are in charge of what roles in drug operations. Gangs are made up of members of various ranks, but many of the younger members play a role in the ground operations; one rationale for this choice is that juvenile members face less severe criminal charges. Gang structures vary from gang

[81] Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow,* Pg. 50.

to gang, but there are certain roles that commonly exist in many. Gangs generally have an individual or a few individuals in leadership roles. Known sometimes as the "O.G." (Original Gangster), or the President, the leader or leaders are those who have the utmost power. Below the leadership are the most dedicated gang members, often those with many years of affiliation with and participation in the gang and gang activity. In an analogy of concentric circles, the third circle, after the leadership and the most dedicated gang members, would be a circle of younger members, sometimes known as "Associate" gang members or "Prospects."[82] These members are many of the ground soldiers in drug operations. A fourth circle would be comprised of more peripheral members, either those who are less committed or are not fully accepted by the gang. As can be seen, time and commitment affect one's rank in a gang, with some fluidity and potential for upward mobility. Among all members, there are more specialized roles, such as drug buyers, dealers and distributors, as well as roles pertaining to gun use and gang protection.[83] Gangs and gang members can be involved in gun trade, drug trade and a handful of other lucrative though illegal trades.

In order to understand the role drugs and the drug trade now play in gangs and society as a whole, it is important to historicize society's fraught relationship with these substances. One of the most historically significant changes affecting gangs in urban communities in the period between 1980 and the present is the declaration of the War on

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[82] Michael K. Carlie, "Part 7: The Structure of Gangs" in *Into The Abyss: A Personal Journey into the World of Street Gangs,* Missouri State University, Last modified June 5, 2012, http://people.missouristate.edu/MichaelCarlie/what_I_learned_about/gangs/structure_of_gangs.htm

[83] Ibid.

Drugs. Illegal drugs and drug abuse were deemed "public enemy number one" in 1971 by then President Richard Nixon.[84] However, the campaign against drug use and abuse became a subject of increased national concern starting in 1980, when arrests for drug offenses rapidly increased.[85] Between 1980 and 2008, the number of incarcerated people in the United States jumped from 500,000 to 2.3 million.[86] For some, this numerical change may not seem drastic, given the United States' population of over 300 million. However, the United States, with only 5% of the world's population, has 25% of the world's current prison population. Many, though not all, of these persons newly incarcerated were arrested as a result of the declaration of a full-fledged War on Drugs. According to Michelle Alexander, between 1980 and the present day, drug arrests have tripled and numbers are at all-time highs; "more than 31 million people have been arrested for drug offenses since the drug war began."[87] Needless to say, the War on Drugs was a war supposedly waged against substances but was actually waged against certain groups of people. In 2008, Blacks and Latinos made up 58% of the prison population, while only approximately a quarter of the general population.[88] Though drug use has been shown to be roughly the same by blacks and whites, black communities and other communities of color are targeted by police officers who might need to fill a monthly arrest quota.[89] Similarly, though drug users and dealers are predominantly white, the

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[84] Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow.*
[85] Ibid., Pg. 59.
[86] "Criminal Justice Fact Sheet," NAACP, Accessed March 23, 2015, http://www.naacp.org/pages/criminal-justice-fact-sheet
[87] Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow,* Pg. 59.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Maurice Possley. "Cops ordered to boost arrests." *Chicago Tribune.* March 24, 2002. http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2002-03-24/news/0203240426_1_four-arrests-quota-chicago-police-department

majority of those imprisoned for drug offenses are people of color.[90] This helps understand whom the police are targeting with this "War on Drugs." Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow* details much about the "War on Drugs" and the processes that selectively target people of color. From pretext stops and Stop and Frisk policies, to plea-bargaining and probation, people of color experience a harsher world as a result of the "War on Drugs". Thus, these targeted communities experience, at the most basic level, a fraught relationship with law enforcement; many of these communities do not feel that the police are there to protect them, but rather are only there to make their lives harder. This contentious relationship will be discussed further in chapter 5. With financial incentives given to wage this war, local and federal law enforcement have a vested interest in finding and arresting drug offenders, many of which are petty dealers or users.[91] With such widespread incentives, the "war" is likely not going anywhere any time soon. This "War on Drugs" makes drug dealing higher stakes, with the likelihood of arrest significantly higher. As such, the "War on Drugs" has made the turf on which gangs operate that much more contested and dangerous.

Though research has been done to show a weak connection between "street gangs, drugs and homicide" in the 1980s, the relationship between gangs and violence as well as gangs and drugs is important for the study of youth gun violence.[92] The increase in drugs and drug wars means a stronger gang presence in many of the neighborhoods where gun

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[90] Ibid., Pg. 97.
[91] Ibid., Pg. 72
[92] Carolyn Rebecca Block and Richard Block, "Street Gang Crime in Chicago," National Institute of Justice Research in Brief, U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs National Institute of Justice, December 1993, http://www.popcenter.org/problems/gun_violence/PDFs/Block_Block_1993.pdf

violence and violent crime are at their worst. Thus, while street gangs, drugs and homicide may not be strongly correlated, associations between two of three in this inner-city trinity provide a backdrop for the increase in gun violence. Similarly, these three factors working together create a scenario where entire communities and especially impressionable youth face violence on a routine basis. Thus, drugs play a crucial role in youth gun violence by their importance to street gangs, a documented source of much of Chicago's youth gun violence.

Chapter 5: Englewood: A Case Study

When a 13 year-old boy from Englewood writes a letter to Santa asking for "safety," the problem could not be more obvious. Looking for help from figures like Santa Claus, Malik Bryant recognizes the dangers in his environment and calls upon even the make-believe bearer of just deserts for help in a seemingly hopeless situation.[93] As part of a program that partners Chicago Public Schools students with "big-hearted folks" across the Chicagoland area, students write letters to "Santa" for things such as winter clothes or school supplies. Malik's genuine desire for safety superseded the usual requests one might expect from a 13 year-old boy. This incredibly candid and poignant letter so moved the head of the associated charity, DirectEffect, that she felt it must be seen by the President. One of Malik's gifts this Christmas was a personal response from President Obama. While President Obama articulated that his concern for the safety of communities like Englewood is a priority of his, he also had some unrealistic words of advice and encouragement: "If you [Malik] dare to be bold and creative, work hard every day, and care for others, I'm confident you can achieve anything you imagine."[94] Though President Obama was well-intentioned, his advice for Malik to "be bold and creative" and "work hard every day" is poor when it comes to effectively dealing with the violence that is so much so a part of Malik's daily life. If 13 year olds can recognize the critical issue that is a lack of safety, why can our president not acknowledge the structural disadvantage that makes this communal concern a reality? In looking at Englewood as a

[93] Maudlyne Ihejirika, "Exclusive: Boy's letter to Santa, 'I just wanna be safe,' gets heartfelt response from Obama," *Chicago Sun-Times,* December 28, 2014, http://chicago.suntimes.com/news-chicago/7/71/233231/yes-virginia-er-malik-someone-cares-safety
[94] Ibid.

case study for youth gun violence in Chicago, I will explore the history of Englewood, its socioeconomic and racial demographics and the disparities faced by many residents. I will also utilize first hand testimony from residents and those who've spent considerable time in this neighborhood. This combination of history, social analysis and personal testimony will illuminate the reality of youth gun violence that is particularly harsh in this Southside neighborhood.

In order to better understand Englewood, we must first look to its history. The history of this neighborhood begins in the mid-1840s, with the arrival of new settlers on Native American inhabited lands. In the 1850s, railroad lines were built and new businesses were opened in the region around 63rd Street and Halsted Avenue, an area that became known as "Junction Grove" for its railroad intersections. With the opening of the Chicago Union Stockyards in 1865, Englewood and other neighborhoods not far from the stockyards saw subsequent development and a greater influx of residents. [95] In 1868, the same year that the Cook County Normal School[96] opened, this area became formally known as Englewood, originally a section of the Town of Lake known as Junction Grove. As the resident population increased with many German and Irish immigrants, new businesses established themselves, and the establishment of new businesses led to

[95] Maria Lettiere Roberts and Richard Stamz, *Chicago's Englewood Neighborhood: At the Junction (Images of America)*, Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2002, pg. 7

[96] The Cook County Normal School, permanently residing in Englewood in 1868, was an excellent training institution for teachers. This school was particularly important at a time when the population was increasing and children needed well-equipped and educated teachers. The Normal School helped draw a large professional and business class to Englewood.

continued residential investment.[97] New single-family homes were built and property values soared. The central vein of 63rd and Halsted continued to pulse with commerce, while businesses began expanding to the north and south of 63rd street. In 1889, the city of Chicago annexed a number of neighborhoods including Englewood; this allowed residents to benefit from the city's municipality.[98] Englewood's acme can be said to have occurred in the 1920s, when the population hovered around 86,000 and the shopping district at 63rd street and Halsted Avenue was the second busiest shopping district in the city.[99] Englewood is a now predominantly black community in the southwestern part of Chicago. However, in 1930, the population of Englewood was roughly 98% White and less than 2% Black. In 2000 the numbers were nearly reversed, with a roughly 98% Black and a less than 1% White population.[100] As I discussed earlier, after World War II, the second wave of the Great Migration saw African-American migrants from the South seeking homes in Chicago's Southside. As new migrants established themselves in overcrowded neighborhoods, many permanent residents of neighborhoods with growing migrant populations sought homes in other neighborhoods, like Englewood. However, as time went on, these Southern migrants made their way into Englewood and many whites fled to other locations around the city or in the suburbs.[101] In other words, the wave of migrants heading North after the Second World War sought residence in Southside communities including Englewood and acted as the impetus for subsequent "white flight."

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[97] John R. Schmidt, "Englewood, past and present," Wbez.org, May 31, 2012, http://www.wbez.org/blogs/john-r-schmidt/2012-05/englewood-past-and-present-99518
[98] Maria Lettiere Roberts, *Chicago's Englewood Neighborhood*, pg. 9
[99] Clinton E. Stockwell, "Englewood," Encyclopedia of Chicago, Accessed January 8, 2015, http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/426.html
[100] Ibid.
[101] Maria Lettiere Roberts, *Chicago's Englewood Neighborhood*, pg. 87

This approximately three-square-mile neighborhood now runs from Garfield Boulevard to 75th Street, and from Racine Avenue to State Street. This relatively small community is now home to roughly 30,000 residents, a number far smaller than its peak population in the middle of the 20th century.[102] In 2007, at the original business hub of 63rd and Halsted, a new campus for Kennedy-King College opened.[103] However, this opening and other attempts at revitalizing the neighborhood have struggled to make the sort of impact that many hoped would be possible. Today, Englewood is a neighborhood that experiences many of the hallmarks of economic struggle, with a high percentage of residents living below the poverty line, low housing prices, relatively few married-couple families, many single-mother households and low educational attainment of residents.[104]

While Chicago is made up of many different neighborhoods, Englewood is one of Chicago's poorer and unfortunately more fractured neighborhoods. Data regarding family and household structure as well as educational attainment inform the use of the term "fractured;" however the reader must keep in mind what these data are meant to say. In no way are these data used to illustrate an idea that the less than ideal conditions in Englewood are the result of individual or familial failures. Rather, these data are meant merely to give a picture of the structural problems that plague the individuals and families living and growing up in Englewood. In 2011, while the average household size was only 0.3 higher in Englewood than in Chicago as a whole (2.9 vs. 2.6 people,

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[102] Clinton E. Stockwell, "Englewood."; "Population and Poverty Data by Chicago Community Area, September 2011," Illinois Action for Children, September 2011, http://www.actforchildren.org/site/DocServer/2010_Census_Data_Fact_Sheet_by_Chicago_Community_Area.pdf?docID=1741

[103] John R. Schmidt, "Englewood, past and present."

[104] "Englewood Neighborhood in Chicago, Illinois (IL), 60621 detailed profile," City-Data.com, Accessed November 8, 2014, http://www.city-data.com/neighborhood/Englewood-Chicago-IL.html

respectively) and the percentage of family households as opposed to non-family households was also in close range (47.7% for Englewood and 43.5% for Chicago as a whole), a more detailed look at household and family structure illuminates the differences. Among all households, in Englewood only 16.1% were those of married-couple families, while the percentage for the city of Chicago was nearly twice that rate at 31.3%.[105] A handful of different reasons might explain the lack of married-couple families present in Englewood; one such reason could be the existence of complex relationships and family dynamics, while another possible reason could be conditions seen as seemingly "inadequate" for couples to raise children. Without making inference as to why, it is clear that Englewood has a significantly lower rate of married-couple family households than the city as a whole.

Another startling statistic is the number of single-mother households; in Englewood, the percentage of single-mother households among all households is more than double the corresponding percentage seen in Chicago as a whole, at 29.5% and 13.9% respectively. This finding is hugely significant when looking at the structural differences that affect the rates of violence in Englewood and Chicago. In current times, making ends meet can be difficult with two working parents, let alone one working parent. Thus, a single-mother might need to work more in order to make enough money to cover even her family's basic needs. In the absence of a father or father figure, children are raised by an often-overworked mother. This puts stress on a family from the lens of an overworked parent, and also often means less contact and time spent with children. Many times, other family members will help out in the watching and babysitting of

[105] Ibid.

children or younger siblings. Not to say that other family members are not as reliable or trustworthy as a parent might be, but a single-mother household can put a strain on an entire family including non-immediate relatives. Without the increased stability of two parents, children in these conditions may lead more unbalanced lives. Another important aspect to consider when discussing single-mother households is the lack of a father or father figure. For young men, a father can, though not always, act as a role model. Without this role model, young men might experience more difficulties. Young men may look to others, such as peers or men they might encounter in their neighborhood, for this missing male-guidance. This opens the door to a slew of possible negative influence. The statistics regarding single parent and single-mother households are not meant to show irresponsible parents, but rather the difficulty for children raised in these households; in looking at these data as current conditions, one must question in what way these households affect the children born into them.

Similarly important to the issues plaguing this neighborhood is the educational attainment of residents; 43.1% of Englewood residents have less than a high school education.[106] The Englewood percentage is more than double the percentage for Chicago residents with less than a high school education, at 19.3%.[107] This means that almost half of the population of Englewood has not received their GED, a degree that significantly helps when it comes to economic opportunity. The schools in Englewood certainly play a part in this lack of educational attainment; as seen in Figure 6, many more elementary schools than high schools exist in Englewood. The two high schools, Robeson and Hope High Schools, are below the already low Chicago Public School average for ACT scores,

[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.

graduation rates and college enrollment rates.[108] Thus, students have few options for a high school education and must either travel or attend local schools that are not of the highest caliber. With low caliber neighborhood high schools, it is not as surprising that many Englewood residents have not earned a high school diploma. This also begs the question that if a resident does have their GED, what quality of education has he or she received? The education they have received might not meet standards required by today's workforce. In the past few years, many schools deemed inadequate or underutilized were closed; six such schools were in Englewood.[109] In terms of educational facilities, with more being taken away than added to, the city as a whole has attempted to reduce the number of failing schools rather than address why these schools might be failing. Without giving attention to the inequality of resources and lack of adequate teachers, fewer schools exist and the schools that remain have not necessarily improved. In this snapshot of Englewood, it is no wonder educational attainment remains low; with few opportunities, and even fewer of high quality, residents may struggle to receive a high school diploma based on the evident structural disadvantage of the education system that plays out in Englewood.

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[108] "Hope," John Hope College Preparatory High School, Chicago Public Schools, Cps.org, School year 2014-2015, http://cps.edu/Schools/Pages/school.aspx?SchoolId=609768; "Robeson," Paul Robeson High School, Chicago Public Schools, Cps.org, School year 2014-2015, http://www.cps.edu/Schools/Pages/school.aspx?SchoolID=609707

[109] Wendell Hutson, "Community to Discuss Future of Closed CPS Schools in Englewood," DNAinfo.com/Chicago, April 23, 2014, http://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20140423/englewood/future-of-closed-cps-schools-englewood-will-be-subject-of-meeting

Greater Englewood (West Englewood and Englewood) Map

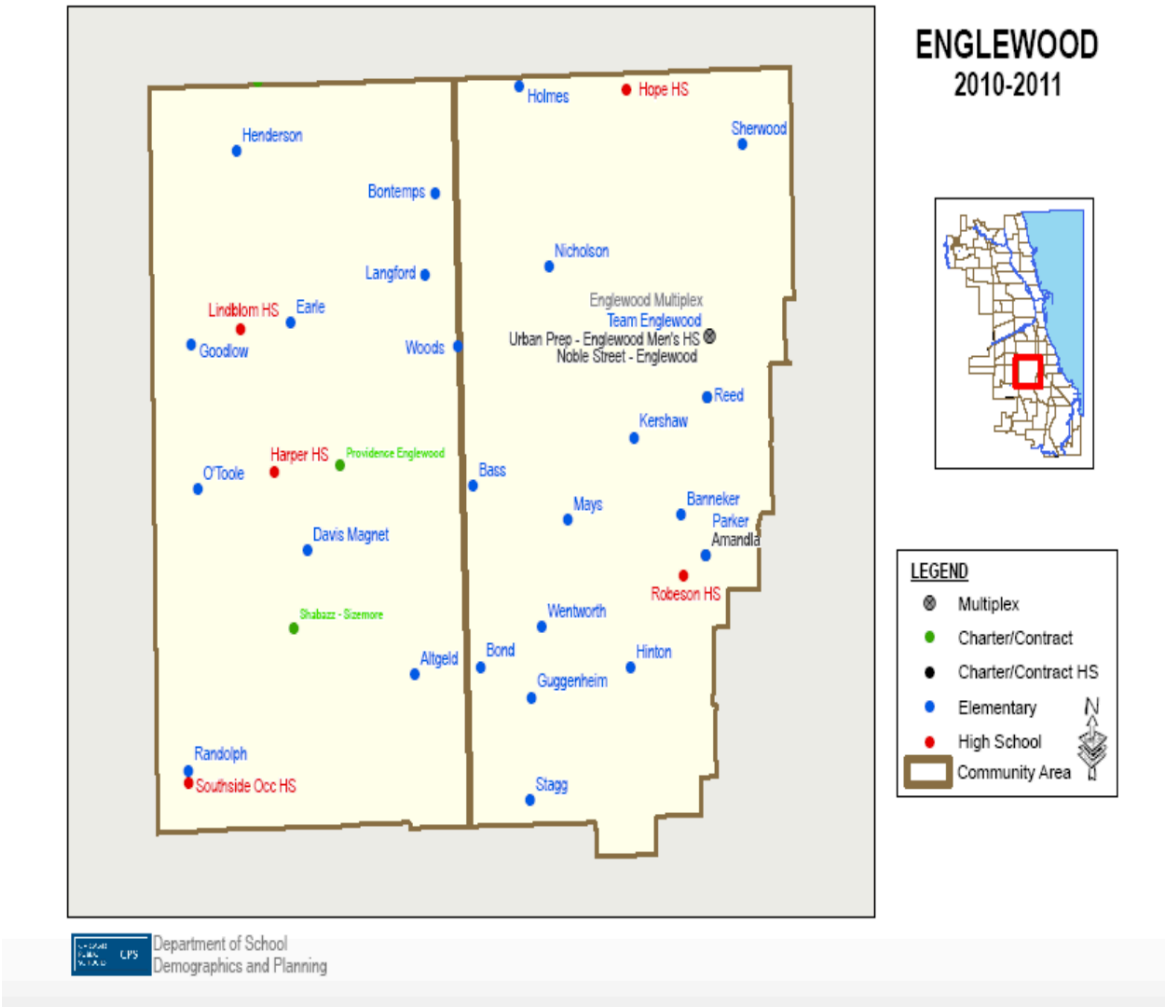

FIGURE 6: Educational Snapshot of Englewood and West Englewood[110]

Another factor that demonstrates Englewood's neighborhood-level structural inequality is access to healthful food options; some sections of Englewood lack this access and are deemed "food deserts." A food desert is a geographic area that is devoid of "fresh fruit, vegetables and other healthful whole foods, usually found in impoverished

[110] "Greater Englewood Community Action Council (CAC) Strategic Education Plan September 2011," EnglewoodPortal.org, September 2011, http://www.englewoodportal.org/uploads/englewoodportal/documents/englewood_cac_strategic_plan_final_jan_5_2012.pdf, pg. 10.

areas." These areas lack "grocery stores, farmers' markets, and healthy food providers."[111] According to the Food Access Research Atlas created by the United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service, only a relatively small tract of Englewood is formally classified as a food desert, meaning that residents in this area are more than 1 mile from the nearest supermarket.[112] However, the formal limitations of the definition of "food desert" obscure the fact that most of Englewood lacks access to grocery stores and healthy food. Though possibly less than a mile away, the food options in Englewood reflect this neighborhood's disparate access to healthy food. As seen in the Food Access Research Atlas, many regions of the United States, urban, suburban and rural, are considered food deserts. However, in the city of Chicago, food deserts "tend to disparately impact African American communities and are intimately aligned with the city's racially segregated housing patterns."[113]The reality of much of Englewood, not just a few small sections, being a food desert is important in understanding the situations and circumstances that affect these community members. Without access to healthy food and without the appropriate information on how to incorporate healthy food into their diet, many community members are made more susceptible to diet-related illnesses.[114] Illness affects all family members, and can serve to make life more difficult in the face of

[111] "USDA Defines Food Deserts," *Nutrition Digest, published by the American Nutrition Association* (37: 2), 2010, Americannutritionassociation.org, http://americannutritionassociation.org/newsletter/usda-defines-food-deserts
[112] "Food Access Research Atlas," United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, Last updated March 11, 2015, http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas.aspx
[113] "Food Deserts in Chicago," United States Commission on Civil Rights, http://www.usccr.gov/pubs/IL-FoodDeserts-2011.pdf, pg. 5.
[114] "Executive Summary," *Deserted?: A Policy Report on Food Access in Four South Side Chicago Neighborhood,* Chicago Policy Research Team, http://cprt.uchicago.edu/0910/reports/CPRTExecSumDeserted.pdf, pg. ii.

already nearly insurmountable challenges. While I am not attributing the gun violence that plagues neighborhoods like Englewood to the lack of access to healthy food choices, at the very least this reality is important in understanding life in Englewood and can also be seen as a factor which makes life more difficult. With factors such as lack of educational and economic opportunity, the lack of access to grocery stores and healthful food options demonstrates what minimal control many of Englewood's residents have over their own lives. Thus, persistent structural inequality plagues Englewood as it does many other poor, predominantly-black communities in Chicago.

Whether seen as manifestations of structural disadvantage from the lens of self-protection and economic security or merely seen as dissatisfied youth, street gangs play an important role in the rampant youth gun violence in Chicago, as discussed above. Only three of Chicago's large street gangs will be discussed here; this discussion reflects the three street gangs currently prominent in Englewood. Discussing these street gangs helps inform the reader of the prominence of gangs in Englewood and the importance of gangs in creating an environment where feuding often turns lethal. These three street gangs are the Gangster Disciples, known by community members as GD, the Black Disciples, known as BD, and the Black P-Stones.[115]

[115] John Doe and Joe Doe, Interview by Emily Ehrmann, Personal Interview, Chicago, March 21, 2015.

7th district (Englewood)

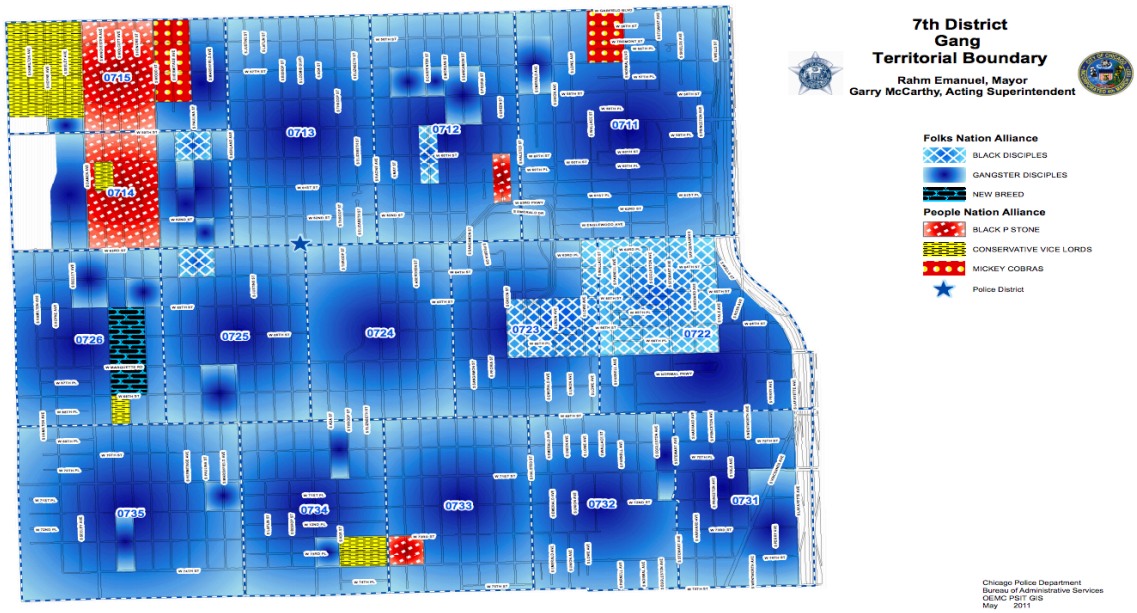

FIGURE 7: 7th District Gang Territorial Boundary[116]

Omitted from this discussion are the Vice Lords, another of Chicago's largest street gangs. The Vice Lords are not as common in Englewood, and thus, while pertinent to an understanding of Chicago's street gang history, a discussion of the Vice Lords might make the general understanding of how gangs play a role in Englewood more convoluted. In Figure 7, the reader is able to see the territories of the Gangster Disciples, the Black Disciples and the Black P. Stones. The reader is also able to see the existence of other gangs in this neighborhood; however, it is these three gangs that play the most significant roles in Englewood's gang rivalries. Another disclaimer to the discussion of street gangs

[116] Aurélie Ouss, "Gang Violence in Chicago, Innovations in Research and Policy."

is the relative difficulty in procuring information. Given that street gangs often participate in illicit trade and the black market, their histories, formations and general inner-workings are difficult for scholars to obtain. In the same vein, these street gangs are very much alive and well and are constantly subject to change and mutation. The discussion of the three street gangs most prominent in Englewood will be based on available resources and firsthand testimony. The Black P. Stones are a set within the aforementioned "People Nation," while the Black Disciples and the Gangster Disciples belong to the aforementioned "Folk Nation."[117] As previously discussed, street gangs generally develop in response to perceived outside threat and the need for protection. Each of these street gangs was born in the 1950s/1960s era. The Black Disciples, the Gangster Disciples and the Black Stone Rangers all have very similar histories, with different key players. The Black Disciples were formed by David Barksdale in 1960, with original territory in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago. Under Barksdale, the Black Disciples allied with other Disciple street gangs to form the Black Disciple Nation, a powerful super-gang meant to combat the increasingly powerful Black Stone Rangers.[118] The Gangster Disciples underwent a process similar to the Black Disciples. The Gangster Disciples were led by Larry Hoover, who, like Barksdale, was a Southern migrant by way of the Great Migration. In the late 1960s, Hoover led the Gangster Disciples into an amalgamation of many Englewood street gangs, a group known as the Gangster Nation.[119] In 1969, under the leadership of Barksdale and Hoover, the Black Disciples

[117] Florida Department of Corrections, "Street Gangs – Chicago Based or Influenced."
[118] "Black Disciples," Chicagogangs.org, Accessed February 8, 2015, http://chicagogangs.org/index.php?pr=BDN.
[119] "Gangster Disciples," Chicagogangs.org, Accessed February 8, 2015, http://chicagogangs.org/index.php?pr=GDN.

and the Gangster Disciples joined forces and became the Black Gangster Disciple Nation.[120] This alliance was created in order to create a strong front possible of countering the Black P. Stone Nation, a rival super-gang discussed below.[121]

The history of the Black Stone Rangers follows a pattern similar to both the Black Disciples and the Gangster Disciples. The Black Stone Rangers are known for one of their most powerful leaders, Jeff Fort. Fort, like Barksdale and Hoover, was a Southern migrant who came to Chicago with his family in the 1950s. With a small group of neighborhood boys around the 64th street and Blackstone Avenue area, Fort and his friends started a gang that fought local white and black gangs. Originally known as the Black P. Stones, Fort's gang later merged with nearby gang the Black Stone Raiders headed by Eugene Hairston. This merge gave rise to the Black Stone Rangers, a gang that would later merge again with rival gangs to form the Black P. Stone Nation.[122] The Black Stone Rangers, the Gangster Disciples and the Black Disciples all represent a complex history of street gang development, filled with gang wars and truces, mergers and factions. These three street gangs, the Gangster Disciples, the Black Disciples and the Black P. Stones, play no small role in Chicago's gang culture: the estimated number of members for each of these gangs is quite significant, numbering in the thousands for the Black Disciples and the tens of thousands for the Black Stone Rangers and the Gangster Disciples. Each of these street gangs has their own complex history, but their presence in both Englewood and Chicago is one that is very much so felt today.

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[120] "Gangster Disciples," Chicagogangs.org.
[121] "Black P-Stones," Chicagogangs.org, Accessed February 8, 2015, http://chicagogangs.org/index.php?pr=BPSN
[122] "Black P-Stones," Chicagogangs.org.

As previously discussed, major gangs have fractured into sub-gangs and even gangs differing block-by-block. In an environment where many want to make a name for themselves, affiliating with a smaller gang allows for more responsibility and power within that gang. Younger, newer members of large street gangs are often in more peripheral roles; without the major leaders of these three gangs, individual members were able to vie for and establish power in ways that were not possible in earlier years. With gang sub-groups and factions controlling small, neighboring tracts of land, rivalries and gang tensions become heated in increasingly close quarters. The histories of these gangs proves crucial in understanding why neighborhoods like Englewood look the way they do in terms of street gang factions and rivalries. Without an understanding of these factions and the history of the area gangs, it is difficult to understand how groups under the same "Nation," or even affiliating with the same gang, can become rivals. It is also crucial in understanding what historical and contemporaneous factors have drawn youth into street gangs. While certainly not all youth partake in this lifestyle, some find more draws than others.

One former gang member from Englewood, Durk Banks, speaks to some of the pulls and perils of this lifestyle. Known as Lil Durk, Banks is a burgeoning artist in the local and national rap scene. Banks' roots in Englewood make him an interesting insight into life in this neighborhood. Looking at what he expresses in many of his songs and interviews, the reality of violence on the streets in Englewood is made evident. Though rappers are often given grief for acting recklessly in terms of the lifestyle they promote, Banks makes a point of emphasizing the reality of his lyrics. He stresses that much of what he raps about is a reality for individuals growing up on the South Side, specifically

in his Englewood stomping grounds. When it comes to motives for gun violence and the shooting of others, an important reason to consider is that of bravery and proving oneself. Lil Durk discussed the realities of gun violence and the countless victims in an interview with Vlad TV. Asked why the violence was happening today at the hands of many youth themselves, Lil Durk explains that "everyone wants a name."[123] Whether it is through killing others, selling drugs, playing basketball or a career title, everyone wants a name for himself or herself. Banks also discusses the impact of the Internet on making good on threats; with the use of social media, there is more visibility and thus more accountability for these sorts of statements. When everyone wants to seem "hardened" by society, social media forces those making empty threats into shame and those making true threats to make good on their word. In the early hours of Friday, March 27th, 2015, Lil Durk's manager, Uchenna Agina, was shot and killed while sitting in his car in the Avalon Park neighborhood of Chicago. Agina, known as Chino Dolla or OTF Chino, was only 24 years old.[124] If Lil Durk's credibility regarding his stories of Englewood was not made salient by his upbringing and his lyrics, the gun violence that pervades his life to this very day drives this point home. While Lil Durk does not make outright attempts to cure the problem of gun violence, he has made the personal decision not to raise his children in this neighborhood and to do what he can to protect his loved ones.

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[123] Durk Banks, Interview by VladTV, "Exclusive! Lil Durk: I've Lost $30K On Shows Cancelled By Police," *VladTV.com*, August 15, 2014, http://www.vladtv.com/video/196298/exclusive-lil-durk-ive-lost-30k-on-shows-cancelled-by-police/

[124] Michael Lansu, "Lil Durk's manager, Chino Dolla, fatally shot hours after Joakim Noah's anti-violence event," Homicide Watch Chicago, Chicago Sun-Times, March 27, 2015, http://homicides.suntimes.com/2015/03/27/uchenna-agina-fatally-shot-in-avalon-park/

Not all Englewood residents and visitors approach the gun violence epidemic from the same perspective. Chicago Police Department Officer Craig Lyke believes the solution to this deadly problem lies in the household: "People have to get their households in order; it has to start in the home."[125] Officer Lyke, a member of the Area South Gang Enforcement Unit, spends a significant amount of time in Englewood, among other Southside neighborhoods, patrolling drug and gang hotspots. Lyke and team members focus on gangs and all associated aspects, including drugs, guns and shootings. His daily routine involves checking the reports of shootings from the previous shift, reports that include victim, offender and incident information. Important to his work is checking possible gang affiliation of the victim and offender. According to Lyke, the major gangs in Englewood are the Gangster Disciples, the Black Disciples, the Black P. Stone Rangers and, to some degree, the Vice Lords. However, as previously mentioned, gangs have broken down into factions; in some cases, faction rivalries, even factions of the same gang, have become as heated as inter-gang rivalries. Factions of the same gang can differ by region or even by block; these sub-gangs now focus more on control, though this control is limited to a geographic region of decreasing size. Even if they are no longer unified by gang membership, the faction that controls a certain region or block is empowered by the control of even minimal space. This phenomenon of block-by-block factions is evident in Englewood (see Figure 7). When asked why gangs break into factions, Lyke, like many others, does not have a definite answer; he believes that it is a matter of respect. "It's about being tough, being 'bad,'" argues Lyke. People want to prove themselves and prove that they too deserve respect; apparently, one way of doing

[125] Craig Lyke, Interview by Emily Ehrmann, Personal Interview, Chicago, February 12, 2015.

so is to associate with a small group of individuals and take unofficial and extralegal control of a geographic area. Similar to rapper Lil Durk's assertion, everyone wants to make a name for him or herself, and according to Lyke, for some this name is meant to be associated with respect and toughness.

When following up with the reports of shootings from the previous shift, Lyke and fellow team-members often must rely on street contacts and informants for information. "The victim won't usually talk," explains Lyke. When asked why victims refuse to talk, Lyke gives an answer that is not unfamiliar: "they want to handle it themselves." As many believe, handling the situation oneself and not relying on the police is the more "macho" thing to do. Victims and offenders often know eachother, or know who in general might be to blame, such as a member of another gang or gang faction. Given the importance of reputation, seeking out police help is seen as "weak" and one gains "street cred" for handling the situation oneself.[126] Handling the situation oneself makes one that much "tougher," on top of the "toughness" already associated with belonging to a gang. Unfortunately, this sort of thinking only perpetuates the culture of gun violence, granting individuals respect for retaliatory bloodshed. Of the existing options, unfortunately this is seen as the better choice, with the alternative being coming across as "weak" and reliant on the police.

Officer Lyke has a unique perspective on the situation in Englewood, given his experience and involvement in the community. Acting as insight into the Englewood community from a residential perspective are brothers Joe and John Doe who spent many

[126] Ibid.

of their formative years in Englewood.[127] Joe and John, ages 18 and 19 respectively, spent approximately seven cumulative years of their lives living in Englewood. Ranging from adolescence to their mid-teens, these two brothers lived out many of the experiences referenced in the overall discussion of youth gun violence, such as the hardships at home, the presence of drugs and gangs and the reality of many lives ending far too soon. Joe and John lived in a single-mother household with one sister and many other family members who stayed for varying lengths of time; their father turned himself in to the police soon after Joe was born and is currently finishing up an 18-year prison sentence. Homes headed by single mothers are far too common in Englewood, and both Joe and John felt strongly about this fact; "fathers being away breaks the family up," explains John.[128] "Moms are hurting, [they] have to deal with hungry kids and its not enough. Not enough attention is given to each of those kids. Kids who aren't paying attention to her [their mother] are paying attention to something else, learning from other people."[129] Even if other family members are around to keep an eye on a mother's children while she is out, often working multiple jobs, the lack of parental supervision plays a huge role in kids turning to outside sources of guidance. "You don't always listen to other family members; they're not your parents, so why should you [listen]?"[130] With an overworked and distracted mother, Joe and John turned to their friends and the streets for guidance, subsequently deciding to join gangs; Joe spent time in the Black Disciples, while John initially joined the Black Disciples but later "flipped"[131] to the Gangster Disciples. Both

[127] For the sake of confidentiality, the names of these individuals have been changed.
[128] John Doe and Joe Doe. Interview by Emily Ehrmann. Personal Interview.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.
[131] "Flipping" is when one switches from one gang to another gang.

boys joined to be a part of a group and to make money, but both John and Joe explain that even after joining gangs, they felt no real connection with many of the other members. "It's all about using other people to get what you want…it's a fake family," explains John. "Your own guys will set you up and rob you," he continues. This cutthroat lifestyle is driven by the desire to make money, regardless of who people have to step on in the process. Even supposed best friends can turn on one another within seconds, something experienced by John as he was forced to contemplate murdering his best friend. "People are fighting for a pathway, fighting to go around in a circle," John explains. "Everyone is fighting for something to eat and some money in hand." Without a strong home life with supportive and attentive parents, many youth seek out direction from peers or adults in their neighborhoods.

When asked about the role of the police in the neighborhood, the Doe brothers scoffed, citing not only distrust in the police, but also chilling tales of police misconduct. In order to understand this reaction, as well as the at-times admonishing comments of Officer Lyke, we must understand the fraught relationship that exists between the police and many communities of color. For many, the police are seen as protectors of society or arbiters of peace. In a neighborhood like Englewood, however, this is generally not the case. Investigating much of the crime that occurs on Englewood's streets, Officer Lyke expresses the reluctance of residents to help in these investigations. As previously mentioned, one reason for this reluctance can be attributed to the need to feel "hard" or "tough." However, there do exist other possible reasons why a victim or community members might not seek out the help of law enforcement in enacting justice; one such reason is the contentious relationship between the police and communities of color. In the

wake of the deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner and numerous other victims of police violence, law enforcement agencies have experienced a surge of public scrutiny. While being a police officer is undoubtedly a difficult job, many have questioned the increasingly common instances of police officers abusing their authority and power. Whether violating codes of conduct, verbally stepping out of line with those they are meant to serve or using unwarranted violence, many police officers have been recently exposed for their misconduct. While these offenses are receiving more public attention and condemnation in recent months, the offenses themselves are not by any means limited to recent times. For years, countless transgression, abuses of power and even outright crimes have occurred in communities of color at the hands of the police. Without delving too deeply into these wrongs, the firsthand experiences of Englewood resident Joe Doe help shed light on why many residents in communities of color do not trust the police. At 14 years old, Joe Doe was sitting on the front porch of his apartment complex with a friend who also lived in the building. Though he was gang-affiliated at the time, neither he nor his friend was committing any unlawful act. After a short while, police officers came to the porch unprompted, cuffed the young men and told them that if they wanted to act tough, the police were going to give the young men a chance to prove their toughness. Driving west, the police officers dropped off the two boys in rival gang territory, the territory of the Black P. Stone Nation. Yelling out anti-Black P. Stone Nation phrases that are used to incite violence, the officers sped off as the young boys were forced to fend for themselves. Both Joe and his friend were forced to run over 10 blocks from the rival gang members who were closely tailing them.[132] Without the boys

[132] John Doe and Joe Doe, Interview by Emily Ehrmann, Personal Interview.

committing any illegal act, the police officers not only unlawfully cuffed the boys, but also put both Joe and his friend in mortal danger, just to show the young men their powerlessness to the justice system. According to brothers Joe and John Doe, there even exist gangs comprised of active police officers. Known as the Chicago Police Disciples, these officers act as their own street gang.[133] While this claim is nearly impossible to prove by means of scholarship, the testimony of Englewood residents who have faced gang members with active police affiliation must be given some degree of credibility. Without unraveling and undermining the entire police force, it surely can be said that the relationship between individuals in communities like Englewood and the police officers that are meant to serve them is controversial at best.

It is important to contextualize what type of police work Officer Lyke performs; far from a typical, patrolling policeman, Officer Lyke spends more time in specific areas and tracking specific groups of individuals. This sort of police work gives his testimony a slightly different spin. Lyke describes the policing he and his fellow team members perform as "proactive" policing, as opposed to the "reactive" policing of the average "beat cop."[134] "Reactive" policing is the type of policing where an officer responds to calls, ranging from car accidents to noise complaints. "Proactive" policing, however, is the type of policing where certain areas or people are checked upon, such as gang hotspots and drug dealing locations. This difference in police strategy is important in understanding the type of work in which Officer Lyke and fellow Gang Enforcement Unit team-members engage; their understanding of and involvement in the happenings in Englewood are thus limited to certain groups of individuals and certain locations.

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[133] Ibid.
[134] Craig Lyke, Interview by Emily Ehrmann, Personal Interview.

However, as this work pertains to the conversation on youth gun violence in Englewood, Lyke and his fellow team-members are knowledgeable sources.

When asked who are the victims of the gun violence in Englewood, Lyke estimates that a large portion of this violence is done by and against individuals roughly between the ages of 15 and 22. This figure should give credence to the testimonies of brothers Joe and John Doe, given their membership in this age group and their fortune to have made it out of Englewood in tact. Following up with why this age group, Officer Lyke has more difficulty answering, though he believes it has to do with their environment. Fitting with his belief in the need for stronger households, Lyke believes the origin of the problem may also lie in the home; according to Lyke, many of these youths' decisions are impacted by their "weak home lives," having "no guidance" from family members. [135] Some parents may have little knowledge of their child's whereabouts or with whom their child spends time. Lyke believes that this lack of involvement of many youths' lives allows dangerous behavior to go unchecked for far too long, often until it is too late and the child is either deeply enmeshed in dangerous behavior or a perpetrator or victim of violence. Lyke recounts stories of parents who never ventured into their children's rooms and parents who never questioned their children's new possessions. One parent was unaware of his child's possession of crack cocaine and huge sums of money because it was safeguarded in the child's room by means of a padlocked door. Another parent never questioned how her child had enough personal money to buy multiple pairs of expensive shoes and a car. Interestingly, Lyke also sees family members who are actively involved in a youth's life, though in a negative way. According to Lyke,

[135] Ibid.

some youth have their first experience holding or a shooting a gun with or at the encouragement of a family member. Thus, it becomes evident that many of these high-risk behaviors, such as gun ownership and use or street gang involvement, are part of an intergenerational phenomenon in some families. According to Lyke, it is a lack of disciplinary involvement that allows youth to get caught in dangerous life habits and patterns. When asked about the effects of the lack of educational and economic opportunity, Lyke seemed to believe that these were not the roots of the problem. Officer Lyke claimed that educational and economic opportunities were available, but it was these young men and women who made the decision not to take advantage of these opportunities. It is the youth who do not attend school or find a job; the opportunities do exist, according to Lyke. Again, Lyke emphasized the disinterest of the family as a main cause of many of the issues confronting youth. Though Lyke purports that the lack of educational and economic opportunity does not act as the fundamental obstacle for youth, his view is not without opposition. Officer Lyke emphasizes a focus on the individual, paying close attention to the role of the family and the parents. While involved parents would certainly help in terms of monitoring youth behavior, Lyke negates the effects of structural disadvantage. Raising his children in a home of strict discipline, Lyke adheres to a policy of careful and involved parenting. With this strategy, he aims to make sure his kids do not end up in a slew of dangerous situations. However, children of parents who are unable to find work or have not received their GED are less fortunate. In these scenarios, the impact of the difficulty in finding work and getting an education is very real and can play a very real role in youth development. In a family that may be

struggling as is, youth might turn to a financial quick fix, many of which are illegal. In these scenarios, the issue is not simply solved by "keeping one's household in order."

While Officer Lyke and brothers Joe and John Doe provide much of the gritty and often disheartening detail of life in Englewood, some prefer to highlight the positive attributes of this community. There has been significant pushback against much of the media and negative commentary that circulates around the conditions in Englewood. Local journalist Rashanah Baldwin uses her weekly radio segment to highlight "What's Good in Englewood."[136] As a lifelong resident of this neighborhood feared by many, Baldwin hopes to paint a picture of more well-rounded, vibrant Englewood. Baldwin sees the day-to-day life of Englewood, a reality many cannot say they experience. She documents happenings such as exceptional students receiving scholarships and the local urban farm. While Baldwin acknowledges that Englewood has to deal with its fair share of crime and poverty, her hope is to encourage people who want to help to provide resources and not merely services.[137] The community certainly has its share of problems to deal with, problems only made more public by local and national media that focus on many of the disheartening statistics and figures; however, according to Baldwin, Englewood is a community that has the capacity to overcome some of these seemingly insurmountable barriers.

Rashanah Baldwin is not the only one promoting the good in Englewood; the Resident Association of Greater Englewood, known as R.A.G.E., has sought to address many of the problems faced by Englewood residents. With focuses like economic

[136]Joseph Erbentraut, "Don't Believe Everything You've Heard About Chicago's Most 'Dangerous' Neighborhood," Huffingtonpost.com, May 23, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/05/23/whats-good-in-englewood_n_5360688.html
[137] Ibid.

development, education and youth development, and civic engagement, R.A.G.E. hosts frequent meetings and campaigns aimed at addressing these goals. R.A.G.E. leadership and members work together in attempts to positively and actively address the plight of Englewood residents. R.A.G.E. strategically touts some of Englewood's famous former residents as reason to continue fighting for better conditions and supporting the community, demonstrating these men and women as contributions to art, film and sports that were born and raised on this vilified soil. Far from admonishing residents for the failures of society, R.A.G.E., like Rashanah Baldwin, emphasizes the "good in Englewood."[138]

[138] "FAQs," R.A.G.E.: Resident Association of Greater Englewood, Ragenglewood.org, http://ragenglewood.org/about/faqs/

Conclusion: Where Do We Go From Here?

A unique way to view this gun violence epidemic is taken from the brilliant Dr. Gary Slutkin. Dr. Slutkin, one of the founders of the Cure Violence (formerly Ceasefire) initiative, produced a report on the nature of violence and the way it proceeds through society much like a contagious disease. According to Slutkin, violence mirrors the "three main characteristics of diseases in populations: clustering, spread, and transmission."[139] Clustering refers to geographic space of the disease or disease outbreak and spread refers to the waves of diffusion of the disease. Transmission of violence may not seem to mirror the transmission of a disease, but in fact it does. Slutkin explains that transmission essentially means "the disease or condition causes *something of itself* to be communicated, causing another person (or animal) to take on *some of the same characteristics*."[140] In this way, individuals exposed to violence, "either by observing, witnessing, or being subjected to violence themselves," are more likely to become perpetrators of violence (Widom, 1989; etc).[141] This finding is crucial to understanding the dangers of allowing violence to continue its grip on these neighborhoods.

The idea of violence as a contagious disease helps center the analysis of youth gun violence on structural and social influences, rather than on individual or familial failures. While many may look at the situation and believe that Englewood residents simply have to work harder to get where they'd like to be, it is unfair to fully blame the individuals of a community for a community and a city's structural inequalities.

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[139] Gary Slutkin, "Violence is a Contagious Disease" in *Contagion of Violence: Forum on Global Violence Prevention – Workshop Summary,* Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2013, Pg. 96.
[140] Ibid., pg. 100
[141] Ibid., pg. 100

After examining the somewhat dismal picture that is youth gun violence in Chicago, paying particular attention to Englewood, we must question what can be done from here. I do not seek to answer this question of epic proportions, but rather to offer my opinion on areas of work that might be valuable to address. Certainly one of the main goals must be dismantling society's structural inequality. Disparities in education, economic opportunity, and health, as well as a lack of available resources, are some of the most important disparities to address in communities like Englewood. However, structural inequality and resource distribution are easier to condemn than to repair. In no way do I intend to chastise readers for structural inequity, nor do I believe I have the solutions to creating a more equitable society. Rather, through my analysis, I seek to highlight the persistence and effects of inequalities that plague communities such as Englewood.

In this study, I examined specific historical and social factors that perpetuate these disparities; ranging from national and citywide relations with firearms to racial demographics and the formation of Chicago to the persistence of gangs and drugs in many communities of color, I analyzed the position of youth gun violence as the intersection of history, economics, politics and social influence. However, many aspects of this epidemic require further academic research and analysis. One such aspect that remains relatively uncharted is the structure, functions and activities of street gangs. With a clear association between street gangs and illegal acts, the limitations on obtaining scholarly information have served to weaken our understanding of street gangs as a whole. With greater information on the inner-workings of street gangs, minimizing violence within and between gangs might become more feasible. Another aspect that

would benefit from continued scholarly research is that of the geographic location of this epidemic: Chicago. Scholarly research on gun violence in the United States has focused less on the situation in Chicago than in other U.S. cities. Though Chicago's murder rate exceeds the murder rates of the nation's two largest cities, New York City and Los Angeles, there is a lack of scholarship that focuses solely on Chicago or highlights the uniqueness of the situation in Chicago. With more research focusing on Chicago, politicians and activists might be able to devise more tailored, city-specific solutions. Many aspects of the discussion on youth gun violence in Chicago would benefit from more thorough research, and I believe much of this research needs to be done before we as a society can begin to try to address the problems underlying this epidemic. With my analysis, I do not seek to answer the three centralizing questions stated in the Introduction, namely why guns, why Chicago, why youth; rather, I hope to help deepen our understanding of why these questions exist and why they need to be asked. I also hope to contribute to the discussion on youth gun violence in Chicago by shedding light on a problem that is unknown to many.

According to Slutkin, "the greatest predictor of violence was a preceding case of violence"[142] If violence acts almost as a self-perpetuating cycle, then the importance of stemming this tide is urgent and of dire importance. While I do not believe that my work will directly affect the lives of those affected by this gun violence epidemic, I hope that this analysis will be part of a continued scholarly investigation on what is occurring in Chicago, particularly in communities like Englewood, and what can be done to diminish

[142] Gary Slutkin, "Can violence be cured?" Lecture, TEDMED 2013, Washington, D.C., April 2013, http://www.tedmed.com/talks/show?id=75793

the number of young lives damaged or lost to gun violence.

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