

TRACKED AND TARGETED

EARLY FINDINGS ON
CHICAGO'S GANG DATABASE

FEBRUARY 2018

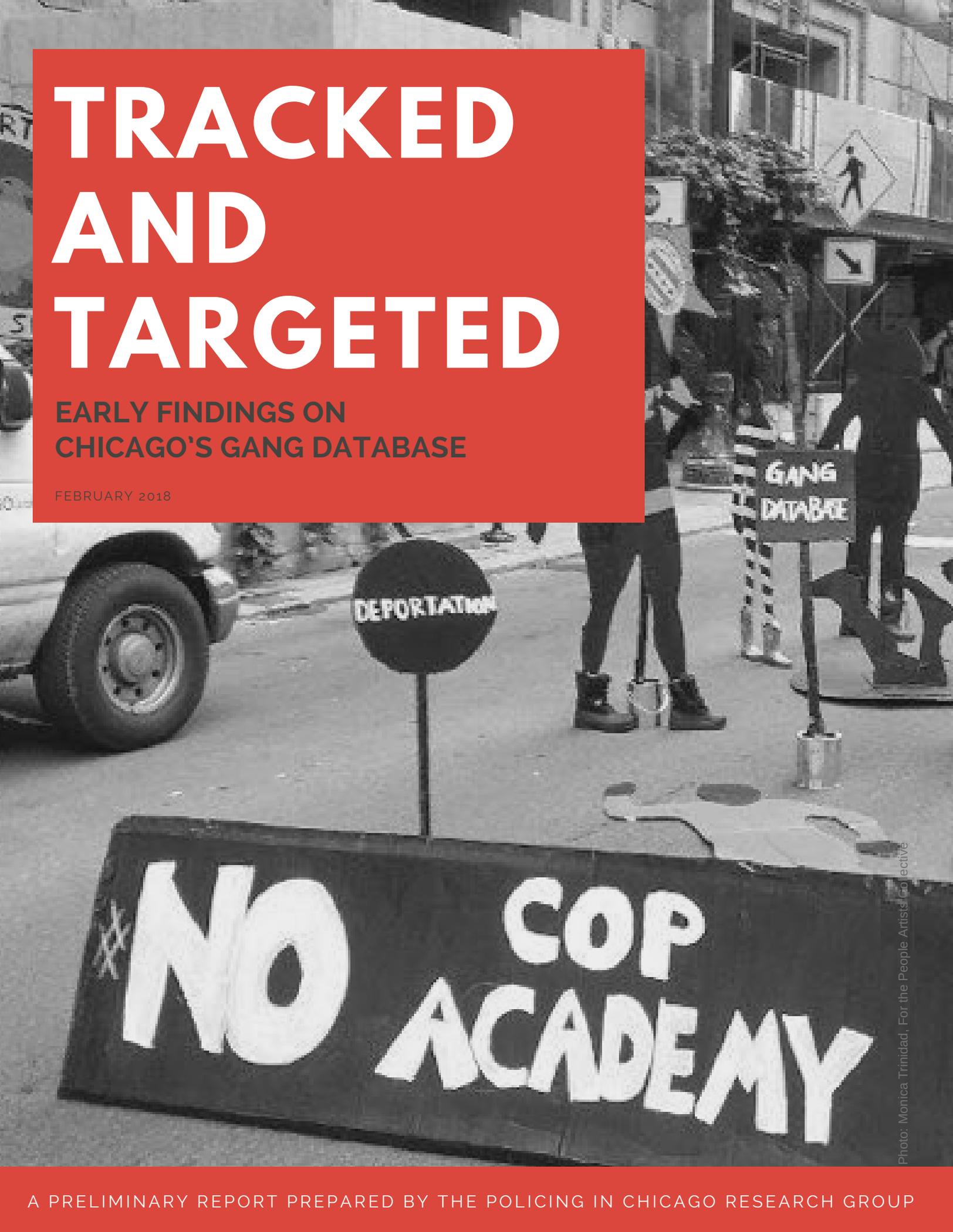


Photo: Monica Trinidad, For the People Artists Collective

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ABOUT THE POLICING IN CHICAGO RESEARCH GROUP

Chicago is at the forefront of struggles against racialized policing. Building on long histories of struggle, people of color in Chicago are forging powerful solidarities as they confront the criminalization and death of Black youth, immigration enforcement and deportations, and the surveillance and harassment of Arab/Muslim communities. Yet most studies of policing analyze these communities in isolation. Beginning in the Spring of 2017, a research workshop at UIC sought to shift the focus by analyzing the growing web of connections between local police departments, federal immigration authorities, and national/homeland security agencies. The Policing in Chicago Research Group is a collaborative effort of faculty and students at UIC in conversation with social movement organizations to offer research support in service to grassroots campaigns addressing police violence and complex webs of policing in Chicago.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was compiled and edited by Janaé Bonsu and Andy Clarno and made possible by the research contributions of graduate students at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The findings presented in this report is reflective of insights from interviews with people directly impacted by policing in Chicago, movement lawyers, researchers and activists and organizers within End the Chicago Gang Database group of the larger Expanded Sanctuary campaign anchored by BYP100, Mijente, and Organized Communities Against Deportations.

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INTRODUCTION

Amid anti-immigrant and “tough on crime” rhetoric from the Trump administration and threats to cut federal funding to sanctuary cities, a group of immigrant and Black-led organizations came together to push for policies in Chicago that expand the vision of what a sanctuary city can be for all its residents. Under the frame of “Expanded Sanctuary,” the campaign posits that for Chicago to call itself a sanctuary city, it needs to strengthen its protections for immigrants and refugees **and** reduce police violence and criminalization of communities of color.

One of the issues that galvanized the Expanded Sanctuary campaign is the fact that Chicago’s “Welcoming City Ordinance” explicitly states that sanctuary status does not apply to anyone listed in a law enforcement agency’s gang database.

As the Expanded Sanctuary campaign seeks to raise awareness about the gang database, mobilize communities that are impacted by its use, and advocate for alternative policies that eliminate the harmful effects of the gang database, the Policing in Chicago Research Group took on the task of answering questions about the criteria used to determine gang affiliation, the accuracy and constitutionality of the database, and the ways that the database is used and shared.

Organized Communities Against Deportations (OCAD), Mijente, and Black Youth Project 100 (BYP100) raised four initial demands in the launch of the Expanded Sanctuary campaign:

- **Protect all Chicagoans from immigration enforcement by eliminating all exceptions or “carve-outs” from the Welcoming City Ordinance (Chicago’s sanctuary policy)**
- **Eliminate the gang database by Chicago Police and law enforcement officials, including in schools and other public institutions**
- **Institute policies that decriminalize and reduce arrests**
- **Decrease policing funding and invest in communities**

Through a combination of in-depth interviews, FOIA requests, and archival research, the Policing in Chicago Research Group sought to:

- **Learn about the impacts of the gang database, including directly from people who have been accused of gang affiliation, arrested, deported (or threatened with deportation), and/or otherwise subjected to harassment or enhanced prosecution; and**
- **Understand the relationships between all law enforcement agencies involved in tracking gang affiliation, including the Chicago Police Department (CPD), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Illinois State Police (ISP), Cook County Sheriff’s Office (CCSO), and other municipal police departments.**

This preliminary report summarizes what the Policing in Chicago Research Group has been able to discover, as well as what we have yet to learn, about Chicago’s gang database.

WHAT IS CHICAGO'S GANG DATABASE?

Chicago is reported to have the highest gang population in the country, and the violent crime for which Chicago has become infamous is largely attributed to gangs. In this context, law enforcement agencies across the country determine criteria as well as create, maintain, and share gang databases to identify suspects and investigate crimes. A "gang database" is an information system that includes individuals who are suspected or confirmed members of street gangs. Gang databases are but one of the techniques that have emerged in the last 25 years to control gangs.ⁱ

The Chicago Police Department defines street gangs as "a group of individuals who may or may not claim control over a certain territory in the community and engage, either individually or collectively, in violent or other forms of illegal behavior. However, one of the simplest and most functional definitions is that a gang is a group of people who form an allegiance for a common purpose and engage in violent, unlawful, or criminal activity."ⁱⁱ According to *The Gang Book*, a guide on gangs that is distributed to every law enforcement agency in the city and state as well as schools, a street gang is an organization that includes the following characteristics: (1) a gang name and recognizable symbols, (2) a definable hierarchy, (3) a geographic territory, (4) a regular meeting pattern, (5) a code of conduct, and (6) an organized continuous course of criminal activity.

THE CITIZEN AND LAW ENFORCEMENT ANALYSIS AND REPORTING (CLEAR) SYSTEM

CPD stores information on gangs and gang affiliation in the Citizen and Law Enforcement Analysis and Reporting (CLEAR) system.^{iv}

Since 2001, the CLEAR system has operated as a huge warehouse of information on "criminal offenders" and people suspected of criminal activity in Chicago and Cook County. CLEAR contains millions of arrest records, incident reports, 911 logs, witness statements, and other information and can be queried from any of the thousands of handheld devices and touchscreen notebooks in CPD vehicles.

According to documents obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request, **the gang database in CLEAR includes more than 128,000 individuals**, 90,208 of whom are Black, 31,873 are Hispanic and less than 6,000 are White.^v These numbers mean that approximately 11% of Chicago's total Black population, 4% of the Hispanic population, and just 0.6% of the white population is in the gang database.^{vi}

HOW IS GANG AFFILIATION DETERMINED?

The criteria used to determine gang affiliation is almost entirely unrelated to criminal conduct or active participation in gang activities. Rather, CPD and other law enforcement agencies determine gang affiliation by what a person wears, who a person is seen with, tattoos, symbols, and even hairstyles. CPD directives specify the following criteria to determine membership in a street gang.^{vii}

.....

SELF-ADMISSION

.....

WEARING DISTINCTIVE EMBLEMS, TATTOOS, OR SIMILAR MARKINGS INDICATIVE OF A SPECIFIC STREET GANG

.....

THE USE OF SIGNALS OR SYMBOLS DISTINCTIVE OF A SPECIFIC CRIMINAL STREET GANG

.....

AN INDIVIDUAL WHO HAS "PROVIDED RELIABLE INFORMATION TO CPD IN THE PAST AND WHOSE INFORMATION CAN BE INDEPENDENTLY CORROBORATED"

.....

ANOTHER CPD OFFICER WHO "HAS SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE CONCERNING THE SUBJECT CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION"

.....

IDENTIFICATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL AS A GANG MEMBER THROUGH ANY DATABASE OR INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THE CLEAR SYSTEM

.....

In addition to the above criteria, social media (such as posts to Facebook and YouTube) has become a significant investigative tool used by law enforcement to identify gang affiliation and gather intelligence on alleged gang activity.^{viii} Online activity can be used as evidence against an individual in gang-related incidents.

HOW IS GANG AFFILIATION DOCUMENTED & RECORDED?

According to CPD directives, people are recorded as gang affiliated through each district's yearly gang audit, through "intelligence" gathered during stops (often in form of gang arrest cards or investigatory stop reports), during booking at the Cook County Jail, or during other police interactions with individuals. Information regarding an individual's gang status can also be compiled and formatted for specific use, such as "gang profiles" assembled by the Crime Prevention and Information Center (CPIC) after a shooting.

All officers who conduct an investigatory stop are required to complete an Investigatory Stop Report (ISR). Officers enforcing the Gang and Narcotics-Related Loitering Ordinances are required to identify the person's gang/faction, known hang-outs, and types of "gang criminal activities" on the ISR. Investigatory stop reports are subsequently uploaded into the CLEAR database and can be cross checked with other information on the database, including information gathered from the Strategic Subjects List (SSL). As demonstrated by the use of ISRs, the CLEAR database includes vast amounts of information on people who have not been convicted, charged or even arrested for a crime.

GANG ARREST CARDS

When an officer arrests someone whose membership in a street gang is "substantiated or self-admitted," arresting or assisting officers as well as lockup personnel can create an automated Gang Arrest Card using the CLEAR Gang Automated Arrest Card application.

INVESTIGATORY STOP REPORTS

An investigatory stop is a non-voluntary encounter between an officer and a person who the officer deems suspicious of previous, current, or future criminal activity. During an Investigatory Stop, a person may be asked to identify themselves and asked about why they are in a particular location and/or what they are doing. Although an individual is not free to leave during this encounter, they cannot be arrested for refusing to answer questions. However, people who participated in interviews explained that the police often try to escalate the stop in order to justify an arrest, such as by planting evidence on people or in vehicles.

WHAT IS CPD'S STRATEGY FOR POLICING GANGS?

The Gang Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS) is CPD's overall strategy for policing gang activity. It is comprised of multiple strategies used by CPD, including information gathering, analysis, data sharing, linking of gangs to their factions, social network mapping focused on targeted people who they believe are gang members as well as their friends and family.

PREDICTIVE POLICING AND SURVEILLANCE

Predictive policing refers to efforts to prevent crime by predicting the location, timing, and individuals involved. The CPD uses mathematical algorithms and advanced data analysis software to target geographic "hotspots" and to identify individuals that they expect will be involved in violent crime.

The CPD currently uses several software packages for predictive policing. Those specifically used in tracking and/or targeting gangs include the Strategic Subjects List, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) such as Caboodle and ShotSpotter, video surveillance through Police Observation Devices, and phone surveillance through Stingrays.

THE STRATEGIC SUBJECT LIST (SSL)

The SSL is a tool used by the CPD for predictive policing. It is based on an algorithm used to predict the likelihood of a person either committing or becoming the victim of violent crime. Each person receives a score of 1 to 500 based on individual arrest and victimization records as well as networks of known and suspected associates, with higher scores supposedly indicating a greater likelihood of involvement in gun violence.

The SSL includes a column indicating whether an individual is "gang affiliated." Of the nearly 400,000 people are on the SSL:

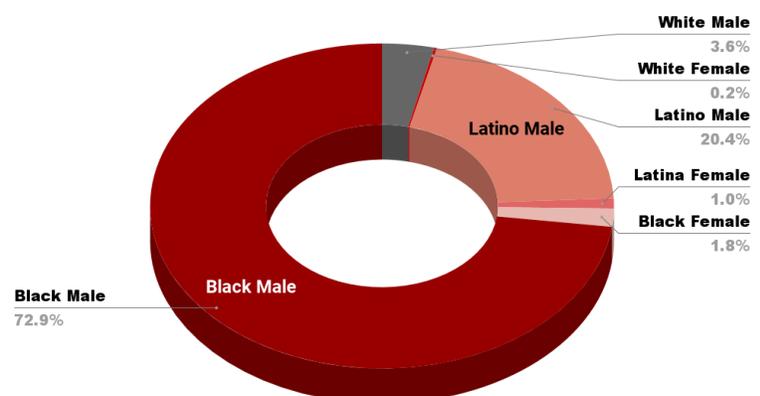
- **52% are Black and 25% are Latinx**
- **45% are under 30 years old**
- **76% are male^{ix}**

Nearly 65,000 people in the SSL are labeled as gang affiliated.

GENDER & RACE/ETHNICITY OF "GANG AFFILIATED" PEOPLE IN THE SSL

According to the SSL:

- **74.5% of people listed as "gang affiliated" are Black, 21.4% are Latinx**
- **60.7% are less than 30 years old**
- **96.9% are male**



The SSL includes data on individuals' record of arrest for unlawful use of a weapon (from 2006-2016), narcotics (from 2006- 2016), and violent offenses (from 2012-2016). Of the people labeled "gang affiliated" in the SSL:

- **67.5% have never been arrested for a violent offense or unlawful use of a weapon**
- **20.9% have never been arrested for a violent offense, unlawful use of a weapon, or narcotics**

While gangs are often blamed for gun violence in Chicago, 67.5% of the people identified as "gang affiliated" on the SSL had no documented arrests for violent offenses or unlawful use of a weapon. This raises important questions about how more than 43,000 people ended up on the CPD gang database. In fact, the CPD recently acknowledged that gang membership cannot predict participation in gun violence and therefore dropped gang affiliation from the current version of the SSL algorithm. In addition, 20.9% of alleged gang members have never been arrested for violent offenses, unlawful use of a weapon, or narcotics. That means more than 13,500 people on the CPD gang database have never been arrested for the three principal activities that the CPD considers gang related.

“There are way too many false positives. It's always been the case that models over-predict.”

JOHN HAGEDORN, PROFESSOR OF CRIMINOLOGY, LAW & JUSTICE

WHAT IS THE SSL USED FOR?

In addition to being used as an investigative resource, the SSL is used as a tool for targeted "intervention" and enhanced prosecution tactics, namely to determine eligibility for the Custom Notifications and the Targeted Repeat-Offender Apprehension and Prosecution (TRAP) programs.

CUSTOM NOTIFICATION PROGRAM

People identified in the SSL as having a high propensity for violence receive a "custom notification" informing them that resources are available if they choose to stop participating in violent activity but also outlining the consequences if they continue violent activity. The notification includes a description of potential enhanced federal and state sentencing options, as well as the potential for seized assets. Individuals in the Custom Notification Program are subject to the highest possible charges for any subsequent arrest.^x

PROSECUTORIAL PROGRAMS

As part of the Gang Violence Reduction Strategy, CPD collaborates with the Cook County State's Attorney's Office (CCSAO) to implement programs to prosecute "violent gang members." Two such programs are the Targeted Repeat-Offender Apprehension and Prosecution (TRAP) program and the Gang Intervention Probation Program (GIPP).

TRAP is a collaboration between the CPD and the Cook County State's Attorney's Office with the primary goal of enhanced prosecution of individuals identified as violent through predictive policing technology. Individuals are identified for TRAP because of their criminal history, alleged propensity for violence, and involvement in narcotics distribution.

The CPD and CSAO collaborate with the Cook County Adult Probation Department's Gang Intervention Unit to implement GIPP. The primary goal of GIPP is to "deter individuals placed in the program from additional criminal gang activity by enforcing the conditions of their probation."^{xi} Probation conditions include mandatory curfew hours, a residency requirement, a prohibition against associating with "known" gang members and engaging in gang activity, though gang activity is not defined in Chicago Police directives.

GANG AUDIT

The Gang Audit is designed to gather information from each district including gang name, gang faction name, territorial borders, faction size, alliances, conflicts, organizational level, and alleged violence. The Crime Prevention and Information Center (CPIC) manages the information, includes the information in the CLEAR system, and periodically updates the gang audit to include new information they have collected from ISRs and other surveillance technologies.

STRATEGIC DECISION SUPPORT CENTERS (SDSC)

SDSCs are hyper-local intelligence centers that support the predictive deployment of officers. Using integrated, geographic-specific, real-time analytics such as crime data, video surveillance, and gunshot detection, SDSCs allow district commanders to activate a district-specific, predictive policing strategy.

SDSCs are currently located in the Englewood (007), Harrison (011), Austin (015), Deering (009), Ogden (010), and Auburn Gresham and Chatham (006) CPD districts. Additional SDSCs in Wentworth, Grand Crossing, Calumet, Chicago Lawn, and Grand Central are scheduled to open in 2018. Each SDSC costs \$1.5 million to operate per year and is paid for by public and corporate funds.

HOW IS DATA SHARED BETWEEN LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES?

The CPD shares and receives gang-related information with other county, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. There are at least three mechanisms for this data sharing.

FUSION CENTERS

After September 11, 2001, the US federal government established a network of "fusion centers" throughout the country to promote data sharing (aka data fusion) between local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. Chicago's fusion center is called the Crime Prevention and Information Center (CPIC). Initially charged with investigating and analyzing suspected terrorist activity, CPIC and other fusion centers quickly expanded their missions to include terrorism and "violent crime." CPIC has become the CPDs overall intelligence center.

Located in CPD headquarters, CPIC manages the CPD's surveillance equipment, maintains the CLEAR database, and prepares "gang profiles" for officers investigating shooting incidents. Yet one of the core missions of CPIC is to facilitate data sharing with state and federal law enforcement agencies. The Federal Bureau of Investigations, the Department of Homeland Security, the Illinois State Police, the Cook County Sheriff's Office, the Transportation Safety Administration, various suburban police departments, and other law enforcement agencies assign officers to help staff CPIC. These agencies have direct access to the CPD data - including the gang database.

FEDERAL DATABASES

The CPD also shares its gang database and other information in CLEAR with the FBI, through platforms such as the National Data Exchange Program (N-DEx). The FBI National Gang Information Center incorporates information from the CPD and other local police departments into an FBI gang database, which becomes part of the National Crime Information Center (NCIC). The NCIC is one of the most important database accessed by local police departments across the country.

CLEAR SHARING PROJECT

The CPD encourages other law enforcement agencies to apply for direct access to the CLEAR database. As a result, information contained in the CPD gang database is directly accessible to hundreds of thousands of police officers throughout Illinois and neighboring states.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE ISSUES WITH THE GANG DATABASE?

DATA-DRIVEN CRIMINALIZATION

In building a gang database, the government is collecting extensive information on thousands of individuals without any underlying criminal predicate. Gang membership itself is not illegal and thus does not qualify as an underlying criminal predicate, nor does it justify maintenance of intelligence information. It is the database itself that identifies an individual as a criminal.

INACCURATE IDENTIFICATION OF GANG MEMBERS

The database is full of inaccurate information and it is not clear whether the CPD has procedures to verify the accuracy of its database. Thus, the gang database includes people who were never gang members, people who joined and then quit gangs, as well as people misidentified with the wrong gang. Because documented gang affiliation is a determining factor for where a person is housed while incarcerated, mislabeling can fuel violence in jails and prisons.

LACK OF NOTIFICATION AND OPPORTUNITY FOR SELF DEFENSE

Those mistakenly included in the database have no mechanism to contest their gang membership label. Even if individuals were to discover that they have been unjustifiably included or that inaccurate information has been entered into the database, there is no established procedure by which they can ensure that their records are removed. The constitutional right to due process would require notice of inclusion in the database and the opportunity to contest the label.

NO KNOWN PROCESS TO PURGE DATA

From the testimony of CPD officials and gang researchers, it appears that names are never removed from the gang database. Moreover, because an individual's alleged gang status appears to not be contained in just a single "gang database," thorough removal processes may be more difficult than simple removal of a marker or one's name from a list.

Criminal records are only purged by court order. Investigatory Stop Reports (ISRs) are supposed to be purged every three years. But it is not clear whether a mark of "gang affiliated" entered as a result of an ISR is removed when the report is erased.

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF BEING LABELED AS GANG AFFILIATED?

HARASSMENT

Once listed in a gang database, individuals will likely encounter increased police attention and harassment. Gang database systems make gang identification information routinely accessible for use during traffic and other police stops. The techniques used to gather information for gang databases are commonly implemented through widespread stops of young people of color without any suspicion of criminal activity.

TARGETED IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT

Gang involvement has resulted in targeted raids, detention, and deportation for immigrants - including Legal Permanent Residents, recipients of Temporary Protective Status (TPS) and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

Alleged gang affiliated immigrants are top deportation priorities for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), regardless of whether or not they have a criminal history.^{xii} If alleged gang affiliated immigrants return to the US after deportation, they will be charged with a felony.

Gang involvement is also one of the criteria used to deny appeals for a stay of deportation through Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, a federal process that allows undocumented immigrants to remain in the United States.

Immigration lawyers and advocates contend that being classified as a gang member in immigration proceedings directly impacts a defendant's ability to plead his or her case. Moreover, many people in immigration court cannot afford to hire private attorneys or adequately challenge the evidence against them without a lawyer.^{xiii}

IMPACT ON BAIL/BOND AND SENTENCING DECISIONS

Allegations of gang involvement has a substantial impact on the presumption of innocence to which people are entitled as well as the right to non-excessive bail.^{xiv}

Since 2012, Chicago police district commanders have been instructed to ensure that "I-Bonds," or personal recognizance bonds that do not require cash payment are not issued to "verified gang members."^{xv} This is true even for misdemeanor offenses.

Homeland Security attorneys often characterize gang members as threats to public safety, and ask judges to withhold bond.

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT & HOUSING

Criminal background checks are routine in employment and housing application processes. Thus, people labeled as gang members can be denied employment opportunities or professional licenses, as well as housing opportunities that require a background check. In Springfield, for example, contrary to federal law, local police officers who conducted criminal record checks of individuals applying for housing with the Springfield Housing Authority were reportedly also providing Housing Authority officials with information that included the suspected gang affiliations of applicants.^{xvi} However, it is not yet clear exactly if or how information on alleged gang affiliation is shared with potential employers in Chicago or Chicago Housing Authority.

HOW CAN ISSUES WITH GANG DATABASES BE ADDRESSED?

Issues with gang databases can be addressed in Chicago and Illinois through action taken at the city, county and state level by: stopping gang designations, exposing data and procedures, and fixing harm.

- Law enforcement officers should stop the designation of Chicagoans as gang members pending an evaluation of the current procedures, civil rights protections, and training pertaining to the maintenance of a gang database.
- Chicago Police Department and Illinois State Police should reveal and review the data that is accessible or shared with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and other federal law enforcement agencies.
- Chicago Police Department should respond to community inquiries regarding the maintenance of a gang database by responding to FOIA requests and making public the current policies, training, and checks and balances, for how people are put into the gang database.
- The City of Chicago should begin a process of inquiry independent from the Chicago Police Department, such as the Office of the Inspector General, to investigate the current procedures, civil rights protections, and training pertaining to the gang database and determine whether the gang database violates the constitutional and civil rights of U.S. born and immigrant Chicagoans.
- Law enforcement agencies should remove gang affiliation tags in all databases. Asking for removal of gang-status could mean asking to have markers of gang-status removed from multiple databases connected through CLEAR that maintain gang data (such as the SSL), as well as removal or alteration of responsive documents that would answer to any query in CLEAR that would indicate positive gang status.
- Grant evidentiary or resentencing hearings for people accused and convicted of gang-related crimes.

NO COP ACADEMY

DATABASE NAME

DESCRIPTION

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION	National Crime Information Center (NCIC)	NCIC consists of 21 files, including the Gang file, which contains “records on violent gangs and their members.” Criteria for inclusion is not public. This data is available to virtually all law enforcement agencies and authorized non-criminal justice agencies nationwide.
IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT	ICEGangs/ FALCON	FALCON was an immigration gang database that was discontinued in 2016, purportedly because ICE agents were not fully utilizing the expensive software. Instead, agents make use of existing databases, such as the Investigative Case Management (ICM) system and the Enforcement Integrated Database (EID), both of which have specific fields for gang affiliation.
ILLINOIS STATE POLICE	Law Enforcement Agencies Data System (LEADS)	LEADS is the largest database in Illinois, tracking more than 68,000 gang members. An entry may include name, date of birth, physical description, description of car, and gang affiliation. Any law enforcement agency can add a gang to LEADS.
COOK COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE	Regional Gang Intelligence Database (RGID)	RGID is a comprehensive gang database for the Chicago/Cook County region (including Wisconsin and Indiana). Information meeting the Criminal Intelligence Systems Operating Policies criteria is housed within the database, profiling gang members and their known associates, including information such as gang affiliation, rank, photos, tattoos, vehicle information, phone numbers, and other information. ^{xviii}

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- ix Chicago Police Department uses binary gender codes.
- x [Directives.chicagopolice.org](http://directives.chicagopolice.org/directives/data/a7a57bf0-1456faf9-bfa14-570a-a2deebf33c56ae59.html). (2015). *Custom Notifications in Chicago*. [online] Available at: <http://directives.chicagopolice.org/directives/data/a7a57bf0-1456faf9-bfa14-570a-a2deebf33c56ae59.html>
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