

Introduction

I visited Sergio, a twenty-five-year-old former Chicano gang member, one bright, sunny Saturday at a small home he was renting near an East Los Angeles cemetery.¹ As I stood on the porch of his house knocking on the front door, I noticed a couple of plants in clay pots and a cluttered mess: weights and a rusty weight machine, cartons and candy wrappers, two lawn chairs with light cigarette ash, and ants creeping around the cracked paint of his porch's thin pillars. Sergio greeted me, shirtless, in his loud, boisterous voice, with a firm handshake that pulled me in to a half-embrace. He invited me inside, offered me a glass of water, and shouted to his son and girlfriend in the next room that I had come to visit.

As we sat down, I noticed that he had two fresh tattoos in green writing: one in block letters above his chest that bore the name of his two-year-old son, Benito, and another that rested on his left shoulder blade with the words "Golden Brown" in cursive. I spotted them just before his son crawled up on a chair and slammed a case of dominos down on

the wooden dining table where we were seated. Sergio asked his son in an eager tone, “Wanna play dominos, Benito?”

Sergio quickly turned to me and asked if I knew how to play dominos. He explained that he had learned when he was incarcerated years before and that he would show me if I didn’t already know. As his son fumbled with our pieces, I asked Sergio about the origin of the second tattoo. He revealed that “Golden Brown” was a phrase that an artist from Homeboy Industries fashioned, referring to “people who come from a street background, and don’t want to feel proud about it” but at the same time “don’t feel ashamed of it” and are now focused on “being family men and supporting their family.” He identified with this group. This book conceptualizes this expression of masculinity, in which Sergio distanced himself from past Chicano gang involvement and embraced domesticity, as *reformed barrio masculinity*.

This book investigates a growing feature of contemporary urban social life: recovery from gang life. Sergio, who had spent eighteen months in Juvenile Hall and experienced drugs and gang violence, was content to have left gang life behind. He was now trying to earn a steady income and “be there” for his girlfriend and child, like several other male recovering gang members we will meet in this volume. Yet in the course of Sergio’s path stood several obstacles, such as a criminal record, lack of education, and a drug addiction problem. However, Homeboy Industries, a nonprofit organization founded by a Jesuit priest, provided a place where he could work and receive individual and group therapy. Although his old habits, such as drug use and getting into fights, were hard to break, Sergio used spiritual practices and new definitions of masculinity he learned at Homeboy Industries to make the shift from gang activity to domestic life as a single father.²

Los Angeles is the epicenter of the American gang problem. In 2000, the U.S. Department of Justice’s National Drug Intelligence Center estimated that there were 152,000 documented gang members in Los Angeles County, the largest gang population in the United States. According to recent estimates, gangs account for more than half of all homicides in the city (Howell et al. 2011). And the gang problem is hardly restricted to Los Angeles alone. Gangs have proliferated across the United States in the past three decades. Criminal gang activity has been reported by law enforcement personnel in states such as Oregon, Iowa, Nevada,

and North Carolina—states with little or no gang activity prior to 1980 (Klein 1995). Rituals and customs from Los Angeles’s Eastside gangs, such as hand signals, graffiti, and clothing styles, have spread to small towns and big cities alike. Drawing from interview data with hundreds of local law enforcement agencies nationwide, gang scholar Malcolm Klein (1995, 97) found that 94 percent of small cities (<10,000 population) and 56 percent of big cities (>100,000 population) that had no gang activity prior to 1980 had reported gang activity in 1992. However, gang members generally commit little crime (Klein 1995). Historically, many have often “matured out” of the gang lifestyle through employment and parenthood as they have reached adulthood (Vigil 1988, 108).

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and local law enforcement agencies around the country have reacted aggressively, assuming that gangs are highly organized, violent, and proliferating due to internal migration (Klein 1995). They have pursued mass-arrest “suppression” tactics and promoted legislation aimed at deterring gang crime through intimidation. In California, as in many other states, these measures have included “gang injunction” laws that prevent gang members from congregating in public spaces, “gang enhancement” laws that enhance sentencing for violent crimes, and “three strikes” laws that mandate life sentences for third-felony convictions. These stiff measures have been shaped by, but have also helped to shape, the public perception that gang members are career criminals and that they must be prosecuted more forcefully and subjected to lengthier sentences to protect the public. Sergio recounted that, while he was incarcerated, he observed corrections officers mock inmates as they were released, declaring that most of them would be back behind bars again.

The suppression approach, which has assumed gang members to be violent and incapable of rehabilitation, is severely misguided; research on gangs suggests that most gang members do not commit serious crimes of violence (Klein 2004). However, through the escalated threat that the police pose to gang members, the suppression approach unintentionally compounds cohesiveness and organization in gangs and escalates criminal activity (Klein 2004). Rather than assume gang members cannot be rehabilitated, gang scholars have argued that gang activity is a product of social environment and suggested that efforts to address the gang problem would be best aimed at ameliorating the

social conditions that give rise to gangs (Horowitz 1983; Klein 1995; Moore 1978; Rios 2011; Vigil 2007). For example, gangs tend to flourish in low-income, highly segregated urban neighborhoods that are severely marginalized and socioeconomically disadvantaged (Klein 1995). Gang members are typically black and Latino men who have experienced strained relations and violence at home, on the streets, and with police (Vigil 1988; Vigil 2007). Socioeconomic disadvantage and marginalization obstruct low-income black and Latino men's access to resources through which they might fulfill conventional expressions of manhood, such as education and employment (Horowitz 1983; Rios 2011).

To compensate for lack of access to conventional expressions of manhood, low-income black and Latino men attempt to exert control and dominance over women (Anderson 1990; Baca Zinn 1982). Marginalized black and Latino men seek areas outside of conventional, mainstream spheres (i.e., school or work), such as the streets, for the development of masculine expression (Ferguson 2000; Lopez 2003; Majors and Billson 1992; Rios 2011). Gang activity, in particular, compensates for the absence of stable employment by allowing men to symbolically create and access alternative expressions of masculine dominance through behavior, dress, and language (Lay 2004; Majors and Billson 1992; Messerschmidt 2005; Rios 2011). Describing the streets as the key setting for drug deals, fights, and love affairs, Richard Majors and Janet Billson (1992, 85) have suggested, "The streets become the community living room, the sports arena, the recreation hall." Harsh police tactics that target disadvantaged and marginalized black and Latino men further emasculate gang members and make hypermasculine performances all the more salient (Rios 2009).

Immigration further refracts the issues of race and class that give rise to gang membership. Second-generation immigrants often suffer strained relationships both with their parents' ethnic community and mainstream society, and, as a result, are particularly vulnerable to urban poverty, marginality, and gang membership (Thrasher 1927; Vigil 1988; Smith 2006). Sons of Latino immigrants often discover that their fathers' homeland "ranchero" culture may not suffice as a masculine badge of dignity or protection on the streets, and they may turn to gangs and drug dealing as masculine badges of honor, income, status,

and protection (Bourgois 1995; Smith 2006). Among second- and later-generation Latinos, masculine status becomes embedded in a community code of honor, and dishonor is experienced as a loss of manhood (Horowitz 1987; Horowitz and Schwartz 1974). As a result, Chicano gang members develop aggressive, hypermasculine stances to cope with the tenuous nature of self-esteem and honor on the streets (Horowitz 1983). Chicano gang members adapt to high levels of interpersonal violence on the streets and in the criminal justice pipeline with more violence (Rios 2009). Thus, gang membership can provide protection on the streets, group loyalty, and a feeling of family belonging, but it can also encompass violent, self-destructive behavior (Hunt and Joe-Laidler 2001; Moore 1991; Vigil 2007).

Whereas the formation of coethnic communities and return visits to the native homeland help keep masculinity contests and violence among immigrants' sons in check (Smith 2006), the hostile legal reception of undocumented Latino immigrants further exacerbates disadvantage, preventing immigrants from returning home for religious and family celebrations, and stifling the formation of an immigrant coethnic community. In light of the factors that give rise to social marginality, compensatory masculinity, and gang activity, the hostile policing method of suppression is counterproductive, exacerbating the very elements that allow gangs and violence to flourish.

Amid the tide of increasingly punitive gang ordinances, support has simultaneously grown for community-based social programs that humanize gang members and attempt to meet their needs. In 1986, Father Gregory Boyle began mentoring gang members through Dolores Mission Catholic Church. Soon after, he started the Jobs For a Future (JFF) program, which sought to link gang members with employment opportunities. *Los Angeles Times* journalist Celeste Fregon (2004[1995]) beautifully captured the early years of Father Greg's outreach, which operated on the idea that labor market integration would help gang members leave gang life, in her book *G-Dog and the Homeboys*. Father Greg subsequently started the Homeboy Bakery in 1992, offering local gang members employment. In 2001, it gave rise to Homeboy Industries, serving both gang men and women.

With substantial public support and donations, Homeboy Industries moved into a large, modern \$8.5 million building in downtown

Los Angeles in October 2007 (Homeboy Industries 2008). By 2010, Homeboy Industries had expanded to offer not just job training and work, but also counseling, educational programs, legal assistance, and tattoo removal. It claimed to be the largest gang intervention program in the nation, operating on a \$9.8 million budget, employing roughly five hundred recovering gang members, and giving assistance to twelve thousand persons annually (Homeboy Industries 2010; Becerra 2010; Rutten 2010).³ Antonio Villaraigosa, mayor of the City of Los Angeles, publicly hailed Homeboy Industries' efforts at the 2007 opening of their new facility, and in the following year he implemented coordinated gang prevention and intervention strategies through contracts with several local organizations.⁴ For example, the City of Los Angeles began to host Summer Night Lights programs in several community parks, at which nonprofits and community groups provided recreational activities until midnight.

The rising popularity of community-based social programs has stirred a debate over restrictive versus reformist crime policy. On the one hand, proponents of "tough on crime" measures have rallied behind the restrictive "suppression" approach, advocating mass arrests and incarceration. This is reflected in public support for measures such as gang injunction laws, gang enhancement laws, and three strikes laws. On the other hand, activists and community leaders have often favored addressing gang prevention and intervention through social reform—public investment in social programs. Examples of this include the famed L.A. Bridges program, established in 1997 in response to the riots that took place in the city five years earlier, as well as the Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) program, created by Villaraigosa to succeed L.A. Bridges. Yet another example is Operation Ceasefire, a youth gun-violence intervention strategy that was first implemented in Boston in 1996 and spread to other cities such as Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Los Angeles.⁵

The debate over crime policy has been further fueled by the immigration reform debate, recasting decades-long concerns with public safety through the post-9/11 concern over "national security." In addition to mass arrest and incarceration, the federal immigration acts of 2003, 2005, and 2006 strengthened the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), "cross-deputizing" local law



Figure I.1. Father Greg in his office with a Homeboy (courtesy of Homeboy Industries)

enforcement officials as federal immigration agents (Marrow 2009, 770). Local officers can screen for undocumented immigrants and turn over suspects to immigration authorities through two programs: 287(g) and Secure Communities. These measures have been widely contested by activists and community leaders, who claim that restrictive immigration policies deepen inequalities in racially segregated neighborhoods. As the Obama administration has detained and deported record numbers of Latino immigrants, critics have pointed out that under 287(g) and Secure Communities many Latinos are deported for minor offenses—or for merely reporting offenses. Former Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) chief William Bratton (2009) even wrote an op-ed

piece for the *Los Angeles Times* defending “Special Order 40,” which prevents the LAPD from cooperating with measures such as 287(g). Bratton defended the immigrant community, explaining that crime increases when immigrants are afraid to come forward as witnesses.

Recent online *Los Angeles Times* articles about gangs have revealed how the hot debate over gangs and crime policy has become tinged by xenophobic hostility toward undocumented immigrants. Three major gang sweeps occurred during the period in which fieldwork was conducted for the present study. In one case, the *Los Angeles Times* reported, twelve hundred law enforcement personnel, including several SWAT teams, were deployed with assault weapons and military vehicles, arresting seventy-eight members of the Avenues gang (see Rubin 2009). Responding to online coverage of the raids, several *Los Angeles Times* readers posted comments that reflected hostility toward gang members, the poor, and immigrants. One remarked, “They don’t get deported and we taxpayers have to support them.” Another wrote, “This FILTH’S parents should have NEVER been allowed in this country. If they hadn’t been we wouldn’t have this problem!!!!” (Surprisingly, the readers failed to take note that the article mentioned federal immigration officials were present, and that none of the arrested were undocumented.) Although these comments might easily be discounted as coming from a few extremists on the fringe of the immigration reform debate, analysis of mainstream media coverage of Latino immigration has suggested that extremist views play a formative role in shaping anti-immigration rhetoric (Chavez 2008). The failure to address gang crime has driven a deep wedge into crime policy debates and compounded the heated rhetoric on the issue of adjusting undocumented immigrants’ legal status.

Segmented assimilation scholars, such as Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut, have taken note of the nativist, anti-immigrant backlash directed at Latinos, as well as the decline of employment prospects and rise of youth gangs in inner-city neighborhoods, and have predicted that many immigrants today will experience “downward assimilation” into the urban underclass of juvenile delinquency, gangs, and drugs (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Portes and Rumbaut, in particular, have suggested that a hostile “context of reception” in the U.S. (as typified, for instance, by California’s Proposition 187 movement) leaves



Figure I.2. Law enforcement just before the Avenues raid (courtesy of *Los Angeles Times*)

some children of immigrants vulnerable to assimilation into “oppositional,” reactive ethnicities—such as Chicano or African American identity—that are associated with a rejection of mainstream American values, such as education, formal employment, and upward mobility. Segmented assimilation theory predicts disturbing outcomes based on these trends: given a hostile context of reception for immigrants, their children and subsequent generations will form reactive racial identities and experience downward assimilation (Portes and Rumbaut 2001).⁶

As dire as the fate of children of Latino immigrants in the U.S. may indeed seem, segmented assimilation theory offers overly pessimistic and deterministic predictions. It has missed the subtle demographic changes that have occurred within the Latino community. Census-based demographic analyses have suggested that, at least on a national level, Latinos are modestly moving up within the labor market (Park and Myers 2010). As posited by segmented assimilation theory, race relations between whites and Mexican Americans are highly contextual, profoundly shaped by salient public policy debates and the extremist views that color those debates. However, in contrast to segmented assimilation

theory, this study suggests that racial identity is not crystallized across adulthood. Rather, in adulthood, formerly delinquent Latino men recede from the locus of gang life, and begin to take on conventional aspirations. As Latino men leave gang life, a transition that gang scholars have noted is common, they distance themselves from Chicano gang masculinity and embrace the warm, nurturing characteristics of conventional fatherhood. This process of exit from gang life is herein termed *gang recovery*, and the masculine expressions that characterize recovery from gang life are termed *reformed barrio masculinity*. Reformed barrio masculinity is by no means an oppositional, reactive ethnicity; rather, recovering gang members' day-to-day lives are much more conventional, focusing on the transition away from street life and into domesticity.

Drawing from participant observation and interviews with adult male former or current Chicano gang members, mostly of immigrant origin, this volume shows that such men are not trapped in a path of downward assimilation into the urban underclass. Rather, Chicano gang members experience social reintegration against a backdrop that is characterized by exclusion and marginality, but also modest social reintegration and mobility. This volume argues that urban street ministries facilitate recovery from gang life through religious practices such as worship services or group therapy, and that discursive and embodied masculine negotiations reorient Chicano gang members away from the street and toward the household.

The first street ministry discussed is Homeboy Industries, a non-denominational, nonprofit organization founded by Father Greg, the Jesuit priest. Homeboy Industries has become a model for gang intervention programs across the nation.⁷ The second is Victory Outreach, a highly spiritual evangelical-Pentecostal church. According to its website, Victory Outreach specializes in urban ministry and has grown to over six hundred chapters worldwide in thirty countries.⁸ These organizations both originated in Los Angeles's Eastside, in the Boyle Heights neighborhood, and continue to operate in the area. Los Angeles is characterized by hyperconcentrations of capital and deep pockets of marginalization and poverty, and gang membership has flourished in this ethnically diverse, postindustrial setting of social inequality. The city, reflective of many other "global cities" (Sassen 1998), is thus the perfect setting for an examination of faith-based social programs addressing the gang problem.

Recovering Gang Members in Los Angeles:
Street Gangs, Religion, and Masculinity
Gangs, Crime, and Desistance

The study of urban life, street gangs and crime dates back to the early-twentieth-century Chicago School of sociology. Led by Robert Park and Ernest Burgess, the Chicago School was the first to hypothesize a link between crime and pockets of concentrated poverty (e.g., Asbury 1928; Thrasher 1927; Whyte 1943). Through the end of the twentieth century and the turn of the twenty-first, gangs grew and so did the application of the Chicago School approach (e.g., Horowitz and Schwartz 1974; Padilla 1992; Venkatesh 2008). Chicago-trained University of Southern California (USC) professor Emory Bogardus transplanted the Chicago School approach to the study of gangs in Los Angeles (e.g., Bogardus 1926; Bogardus 1943), and later, renowned USC gang researchers drew upon the Chicago school's assertions concerning marginality and crime (e.g., Moore 1978; Vigil 1988).

More recent scholarship influenced by the Chicago School, as well as research on Chicago gangs, has suggested that gang activity thrives in a context of drug markets and a lack of social controls (e.g., Fagan 1996; Hagedorn 1998; Padilla 1992; Taylor 1990; Venkatesh 1996; Venkatesh 1997). Likewise, other scholars have emphasized that gangs are rooted in institutionalized racism, poverty, and urban marginality, and that gang life is fundamentally an expression of marginalized masculinity (Majors and Billson 1992; Horowitz 1983; Rios 2011; Vigil 2007; Yablonsky 1997). The long-standing assumption undergirding the Chicago School approach, and much sociological research on gangs, has been that gang membership and activity would decrease if underlying structural factors were to be addressed.

Yet there has not been much social science research on gang recovery programs, programs that facilitate desistance from gang violence and substance abuse. Examining the process of exit from gang life has been challenging for sociologists, and very little research exists on gang desistance (Klein 1971; Decker and Lauritsen 1996). Canonical works in urban sociology have extensively analyzed how low-income men become socialized into street life, while devoting much less attention to how men become socialized *out* of street life. If anything, ethnographers

have sometimes attached short epilogues to new editions of urban classics, documenting research subjects' exit from street life—though only long after the researchers were themselves in the field (e.g., Bourgois 1995[1987]; Macleod 1995; Venkatesh 2008). These epilogues tend to suggest that there is a deep disjuncture between the nature of street life and the demands of domestic adulthood. The reorientation from street life to conventional life is presented as either banal (Venkatesh 2008) or as an existential crisis in adulthood around the meaning of manhood (Bourgois 1995[1987]).

Scholars associated with the Chicago School have noted that strong family ties and stable employment are associated with socialization out of the gang (e.g., Horowitz 1983; Vigil 1988; Moore 1991; Vigil 2007). Likewise, other scholars have described the process of leaving the gang or a delinquent lifestyle as one of “maturing out” (e.g., Matza 1964, 22–26; Skolnick 1988; Vigil 1988). However, contradictions remain in the study of gangs and gang exit. Gang membership and formal employment frequently coexist, indicating that formal employment alone does not necessarily facilitate exit from gang life (Hagedorn 1994; Jankowski 1991).

Complicating the issue of gang exit is the simple question, “What constitutes a gang?” Ethnographers have notoriously struggled with trying to pin down gang membership and territoriality as a singular construct; it may instead arise from highly fluid, contextualized interactions (Garot 2007; Garot 2010; Garot and Katz 2003). Furthermore, researchers have found that gang behavior can be an expression against the racializing and exclusionary tendencies of modernization (Brotherton 2008; Hagedorn 2008; McDonald 2008). For example, the Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation (ALKQN) upholds a charter that emphasizes community empowerment (Brotherton and Barrios 2004).

The context for this study is Los Angeles's Eastside, where Chicano gangs inhabit the space of the street differently than their gang counterparts in Chicago or New York. Chicano gang life in Los Angeles is characterized by expressions of “*locura*,” or wild, destructive behavior, as well as heavy consumption of alcohol and illicit drugs (Vigil 2007, 63). This contrasts with some notable Chicago and New York gangs that do not promote heavy drinking or drug use. Conversations with former

gang members during fieldwork at a few national Victory Outreach events suggested regional differences in gang social dynamics: members discussed how some gangs call themselves “organizations,” operate with a corporate structure, and sell drugs but prohibit their members from using them. In addition, researchers have even found that at least one major New York gang, ALKQN, offers Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous programs (Brotherton and Barrios 2004).

By contrast, Chicano gangs in Los Angeles inhabit a space that incorporates drug use but not drug recovery. This dichotomy opens up a third space, between gangs and mainstream society, for community organizations to operate within. This volume investigates that which could not have been investigated in a different urban street gang context: how faith-based programs operate between gangs and the broader community to facilitate recovery from gang life. Given that a large majority of respondents were immigrants or of immigrant parentage, the issue of faith-based recovery is intimately tied to that of immigrant integration herein. Ultimately, this book argues that Catholic and Pentecostal religious practices facilitate Chicano gang recovery by reorienting masculine expressions away from the street and toward conventional social spheres, such as the church, household, and workplace.

Immigration and Religion

Religious institutions have played a large role in the ongoing history of immigrant America (e.g., Hirschman 2004; Sanchez-Walsh 2003; Espinosa et al. 2005; Badillo 2006). Dating back to the wave of early-twentieth-century European immigration, religious institutions have competed for immigrants’ membership by providing resources to assist with integration. Protestants such as Jane Addams engaged in philanthropic missions to help disenfranchised immigrants, while the Catholic Church countered the spread of Protestantism and the Americanization of new arrivals with programs to aid homeless and alcoholic immigrants (Moloney 2002), and resources such as parochial schools and healthcare (Lopez 2009). The nature of immigrant-community integration and its relationship to religion has also had a gang component. Second-generation European Americans, especially the children of Italian and Irish immigrants, were prone to gang membership

(Thrasher 1927; Whyte 1943), and Italian parents often sent their boys to Catholic school for disciplinary purposes (Gans 1962). Religion has thus historically been an integrative mechanism sheltering immigrant children from the underlying causes of gangs: poverty and marginalization.

America is a competitive religious marketplace; one-third to one-half of Americans have switched religious affiliation at some point in their lives (Hadaway and Marler 1991; Roof and McKinney 1987, 165, cited in Warner 1993, 1075). This point is particularly helpful in underscoring Latino religiosity. Pentecostalism has made the biggest inroads into the Latino community, both in Latin America and among immigrants in the United States. In the U.S., for every one Latino who has converted to Catholicism, four have converted away from it (Espinosa 2006). Storefront Pentecostalism has been the fastest growing phenomenon in U.S. Latino religiosity, serving “socially and culturally homophilous” congregations of marginalized immigrants (Stohlman 2007, 62). Just as with earlier European immigrants, today’s Latino and Asian immigrants have settled into low-income, marginalized communities, but they have also experienced religion as an integrating force. Immigrants have used religion to construct meaning from the experience of being uprooted (Warner and Wittner 1998; Levitt 2001; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Chafetz and Ebaugh 2002; Leonard 2005; Chen 2008). Immigrants have relied on religious communities for both social and material benefits, such as the building of social capital (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Davalos 2002), and to participate in politics and other forms of civic engagement (Menjivar 2003; Pardo 2005; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2007; Levitt 2008; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008). Victory Outreach and Homeboy Industries address a distinct and growing demand in the American religious marketplace: exit from gang life.

The use of Pentecostal conversion to facilitate gang recovery has been documented locally, as well as abroad (Brenneman 2011; Vigil 1982; León 1998; Sanchez-Walsh 2003; Vásquez, Marquardt and Gómez 2003; Wolseth 2010). In one of James Diego Vigil’s (1982) earliest anthropological accounts of Latino life on Los Angeles’s Eastside, Vigil found that Chicano gang members lived in a context of acculturation, but were marginalized from both mainstream American society and the traditional Mexican community. However, through religious conversion at Victory Outreach, gang members experienced human revitalization,

exiting gangs and socially reintegrating into the Mexican American community. Luis León (2004) also conducted research on Victory Outreach in Los Angeles's Eastside. He found that Victory Outreach strategically made use of Catholic imagery to make religious worship among Chicanos much more effervescent. For example, Victory Outreach presented women on stage as chorus singers who embodied mannerisms associated with the Virgen de Guadalupe.⁹ These accounts of religious conversion and gang recovery illustrate the salient features of the religious marketplace in America: it is characterized by dynamic and voluntaristic religious participation (Warner 1993). Stephen Warner (1993, 1076), in his landmark article that contested the secularization thesis and called for a "new paradigm" in the sociology of religion, claimed that, in the American religious marketplace, "[t]aken-for-granted, traditional religion is passé. Born-again, return-to-the-fold neotraditional religion is all the rage." This volume examines gang recovery as an example of religion as "all the rage," in order to fill the gap in scholarly literature on gang exit.

Immigrant Assimilation

Segmented assimilation scholars argue that a pronounced level of anti-immigrant animosity has created a hostile context of reception for black and Latino immigrants. The risks include assimilation into reactive ethnicities and the urban underclass (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993). Analysis of the largest study on immigrant assimilation, the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), corroborated this, revealing that one-fifth of black and Latino second-generation immigrants had experienced incarceration by age twenty-four (Portes and Rumbaut 2006[1990], 280). However, other immigration scholars have protested the idea that contemporary black and Latino immigrants experience a uniquely hostile context of reception, arguing that xenophobic tendencies have always targeted immigrants (Alba 2003; Perlmann 2005; Kasinitz et al. 2004; Kasinitz et al. 2008; Waldinger 2001). The early-twentieth-century eugenics movement asserted that Southern and Eastern European immigrants were biologically inferior, and that their immigration and reproduction threatened the health of the nation (Jacobson 1999).

In immigration studies, the segmented assimilation canon—which has theorized multiple trajectories of immigrant assimilation—extends our understanding of Latino gangs and recovery by slowly integrating the field of religion and immigration with the Chicago School’s focus on immigration, marginalization, and delinquency. Segmented assimilation theory has contrasted immigrants’ experiences with gangs, as well as the empowering potential of religion to shelter immigrant youth from gangs (Portes and Zhou 1993; Zhou and Bankston 1998; Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Research has suggested that 1.5- and second-generation immigrants exposed to adolescent countercultures are vulnerable to dissonant acculturation and downward assimilation into gangs and street life (Zhou and Bankston 1998; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Lay 2004; Vigil et al. 2004; Smith 2006).¹⁰ Conversely, parents can leverage an immigrant community’s resources to foster socioeconomic mobility through selective acculturation, a blending of American educational practices through traditional immigrant values. However, these studies have typically focused on middle-class youth or upwardly mobile working-class youth. A theoretical gap still exists in understanding how religion can empower previously delinquent youth in early adulthood, the focus of this book.

Segmented assimilation scholars’ first line of inquiry dealt with “linear religion” (Portes and Rumbaut 2006[1990], 330), religious worship among immigrants who practiced the same religion as they had back home (i.e., Zhou and Bankston 1998; Zhou et al 2002). This line of inquiry slowly expanded to encompass religious worship among immigrants who converted after immigration and settlement, “reactive religion” (Portes and Rumbaut 2006[1990], 328). However, this too was often situated in the coethnic church (Chong 1998; Ng 2002; Kim 2004; Cao 2005). Only recently has segmented assimilation literature begun to examine how low-income, downwardly assimilated second-generation immigrants experience reactive religion. Extremely high religiosity, through Wicca, Rastafarianism, and evangelical Christianity, has been found to follow after downward assimilation in adulthood (Portes and Rumbaut 2006[1990]; Fernandez-Kelly 2007). The examination of faith-based gang recovery in this book departs from an understanding of American religion as dynamic and voluntaristic, in

which “neotraditional religion is all the rage.” This volume examines how adult Latino recovering gang members use religion in dynamic and voluntaristic ways, experiencing recovery from gang life and bucking predictions of downward assimilation.

Religious Voluntarism

Recent sociology of religion literature has offered a much more caustic response toward the issue of religious voluntarism. Research on religious congregations has suggested that the voluntaristic facets of American religious participation may actually create “particularistic spaces of sociability” (Ammerman 1997, 355). In these particularistic spaces, congregations are formed and reinforced along preexisting divisions in race, class, and nationality. Thus, voluntarism may *undermine* social integration.

As described in his book *Streets of Glory*, Omar McRoberts (2003) found this to be the case in Boston’s Four Corners religious district. Cheap rents in Four Corners created a religious ecology that drew churches serving middle-class suburbanites. These churches were not neighborhood organizations, and their congregants kept local residents at an arm’s length. More troubling, McRoberts found that religious particularism actually undermined neighborhood activism that could have potentially created sustainable change.

In a report published by the Urban Institute, McRoberts (2002) extended the problematic of religious ecology, particularism, and neighborhood activism to the field of ex-offender reentry. He reasoned that the assumption driving federal initiatives to direct resources to churches, in order to guide faith-based reentry, were fundamentally flawed. Anticipating observations he would make in *Streets of Glory*, McRoberts suggested that, because they are not rooted in their respective, surrounding neighborhoods, and because they are often characterized by particularism, churches and faith-based organizations do very little to facilitate ex-offender reintegration into the local community. This book examines the issue of faith-based gang recovery, with a keen eye on the issues of particularism that may arise through efforts to facilitate social reintegration.

Doing Latino Masculinity

In reviewing the research on Victory Outreach, the only gang recovery program studied by U.S. social scientists thus far, one finds that recovery from gang life has been facilitated through the construction of Latino masculinities. Luis León (1998) suggested that Victory Outreach integrates elements of immigrant Latino culture and masculinity, through a patriarchal church structure that promises the American Dream to marginalized immigrants. Victory Outreach codes masculinity in notions of honor: abstinence, economic stability, and nurturing relationships with women and children (Flores 2009; León 1998; Sanchez-Walsh 2003).

Similarly, anthropologist Elizabeth Brusco, in her study of Colombian evangelicalism, suggested that Latino masculinity was constructed against a dichotomy of “macho masculinity” and “machista masculinity” (1995, 78). Macho masculinity, based upon traditional notions of honor, is a closer fit with the model of European-based patriarchy, which had been previously institutionalized through colonization. Machista masculinity sharply contrasts with macho masculinity; it is characterized by absence from the household and cold, distant, and egoistic behavior. I previously found that recovery from street life and substance abuse reconstructed Latino masculinity around the binary of macho and machista masculinity; reformed gang members expressed macho masculinity through participation in the household and labor market, which I termed “reformed barrio masculinity” (Flores 2009, 1004). This study examines Homeboy Industries as a case in comparison to further deepen understandings of gang recovery and Latino masculinity.

To better understand the contests and shifts in Latino masculinities that occur along the path of recovery, this book draws from Candace West and Don Zimmerman’s (1987) understanding of gender: gender is constructed *through* social interaction, as people develop gendered actions as a form of accountability—in relation to expectations based on gendered norms. This “doing gender” approach has been used to analyze how men use every day practices to position and reposition themselves in relation to women and other men, though most of this research has focused on middle-class or white men (i.e., Barber 2008; Dellinger 2004; Pyke 1996). The “doing gender” approach has been applied to the

study of masculinities and crime by few scholars (Messerschmidt 2000; Messerschmidt 2004; Rios 2009; Rios 2011). James Messerschmidt (2004), through his analysis of life histories, found that marginal boys used interpersonal violence as a gendered strategy to compensate for lack of institutional male privilege. Victor Rios (2009), a former gang member-turned-academic, conducted research on delinquency among black and Latino street youth, and suggested that aggressive masculine displays have been constructed as compensatory responses to structural disadvantages in the gender order. Rios (2011) claimed that “the criminal justice system encourages expressions of hypermasculinity by threatening and confusing young men’s masculinity,” as police, probation officers, and juvenile detention guards regularly harassed black and Latino street youth with emasculating threats. He reasoned, “This, in turn, leads them to rely on domination through violence, crime, and a school and criminal justice counterculture” (Rios 2011, 130). He claimed that youth felt only two types of masculine expression were available, both of which led to violence: “play out a masculinity battle,” or submit to the authority of the police and then take out their aggression on each other (Rios 2011, 131).

However, interpersonal violence is highly contextual, as males alternate between subordinate and dominant expressions of manhood when in different environments. In some cases, males use violence only at school but not home, while in other cases they use violence on the streets (Messerschmidt 2004). This volume similarly departs from the “doing gender” approach, exploring how social forces help to reintegrate adult men with gang pasts. Building upon Rios’s research on street gangs and delinquency, this book unpacks how recovering gang members negotiate and affirm Chicano masculinity in order to escape the prison pipeline. Through the examples of Victory Outreach and Homeboy Industries, it examines how religious practices reorient masculine expressions from the street to the household, thereby empowering disadvantaged Latino men with gang pasts to leave gang life behind.

Embodiment

Lastly, this book investigates how men in gang recovery negotiate Chicano masculinity through the body and through the acquisition of

new bodily practices. Raewyn Connell and James Messerschmidt have asserted, “Bodies are both objects of social practice and agents in social practice” (2005, 851). Similarly, masculine gang embodiment is both an object and an agent of gang and street masculinity. Men use the body to deepen gang affiliation and activity; they tattoo themselves with their gang’s name or identifying symbols, flash hand signals, walk in distinctive ways, dress in oversized clothes, display distinctive colors, and groom their hair in particular styles (i.e., Vigil 1988; Major and Billson 1992; Brotherton 2008; Ferrell et al. 2008; Garot 2010).

The scant literature on gang recovery and embodiment has suggested that the body is also important in reformulating gang masculinity. Bodily practices help to position conventional masculinity over gang masculinity, and to socially integrate men into the site of recovery. Robert Brennehan (2009) and Stanley Brandes (2002) have both found that negotiating the meaning of crying helps men facilitate recovery, from alcoholism or gang life, by advancing new meanings of manhood. In addition, León has observed that in ecstatic Pentecostal worship, “[T]he experience of the body is central to worship and to the construction of a social body that coheres with other male bodies; men’s bodies are ritually, emotionally, spiritually, and physically connected to one another” (2004, 238). This volume examines how embodied religious practices facilitate gang recovery, arguing that religious practices contest and negotiate Chicano gang masculinity by redirecting and reshaping the body and bodily practices.

Getting To Know Recovering Gang Members

This book is founded on eighteen months of fieldwork, conducted between June 2008 to December 2009, spent observing recovery from gang life at Homeboy Industries, a Jesuit-founded, nondenominational nonprofit in Downtown Los Angeles, and the evangelical-Pentecostal Victory Outreach, located in Eastside (an area that encompasses Northeast Los Angeles, Boyle Heights, and the unincorporated area of East Los Angeles).¹¹ I shadowed male subjects in their everyday lives, and conducted interviews with thirty-four persons who were or who had been gang members.¹² Of the thirty-four interview respondents, eighteen were from Homeboy Industries, fourteen were from Victory

Outreach, and two were members of both organizations. There were staff leaders in the sample: five were leaders at Homeboy Industries, and five were leaders at Victory Outreach. All of the respondents were male and Mexican or of Mexican origin, except for one who was of Guatemalan descent. Nine were “1.5 generation,” which means that they were born in Mexico but brought to the U.S. before the age of thirteen; seven of these respondents were undocumented. Fourteen were second generation, of which many had been born to at least one undocumented parent. Eleven were third-plus generation.

Homeboy Industries and Victory Outreach both grew out of the Boyle Heights neighborhood. In fact, both grew out of the Pico Gardens and Aliso Village housing projects, built in 1942, which were—until the demise of the latter in 1999—the largest public housing projects west of the Mississippi River (Vigil 2007, 41). Pastor Sonny Arguinzoni, the founder of Victory Outreach, was a Puerto Rican from New York and an ex-drug addict who reformed through David Wilkerson’s evangelical program Teen Challenge, under its director, Nicky Cruz, a former gang leader who had converted to Christianity. After Teen Challenge, Arguinzoni moved to Los Angeles from New York to attend the Latin American Bible Institute. There he met his future wife, Julie, and housed recovering heroin addicts in his one-bedroom apartment on Gless Street. Through the years, Pastor Sonny and Julie hosted gang members and heroin addicts in their home, offering to serve pancakes and small scraps of food that they claimed multiplied like the five-loaves-and-two-fish-miracle that fed five thousand persons in the Gospel (Arguinzoni 1991). After gaining wide popularity in the local community for helping to save gang members through faith in Jesus, Sonny and Julie Arguinzoni founded the first Victory Outreach church in Boyle Heights in 1967. They followed up this effort by starting a second Victory Outreach church in the Southeast Los Angeles County suburb of Pico Rivera, then expanding to the rest of Los Angeles County and northern California. Eventually, Victory Outreach started chapters in other states and abroad, and by 2010, it had over 600 churches worldwide. By recent count, 113 are located in California, most in the southern part of the state and in urban areas, including ten within Los Angeles City limits. Some of these storefront churches also run men’s recovery homes and women’s recovery homes. The Victory Outreach–Eastside

men's recovery home was located in Chinatown, only a few blocks up the street from Homeboy Industries, in a tightly congested residential neighborhood, sloping down on a steep hill next to Dodger Stadium.

Unlike Sonny Arguinzi, Father Greg, the founder of Homeboy Industries, did not have a gang past. He was born in Los Angeles to a third-generation Irish dairy-owning family. After graduating from a local Catholic school, he went on to receive several undergraduate and graduate degrees from private universities. Father Greg then worked in Cochabamba, Bolivia, as a missionary, where he learned the skill of community organizing through Christian Base Communities.¹³ Following his return to the U.S., he dedicated himself to Dolores Mission Catholic Church, serving the poorest parish in the nation. From Dolores Mission—located, like the original Victory Outreach church, on Gless Street—Father Greg reached out to gang members and organized residents through Christian Base Communities. Father Greg started by offering wages to gang members at Dolores Mission for day labor work, such as painting or sweeping, and expanded by creating the employment outreach programs mentioned previously—JFF, Homeboy Bakery, and Homeboy Industries. By the time fieldwork for this book began, Homeboy Industries had developed a model that gang outreach organizations across the country were emulating, such as Light of the Village in Pritchard, Alabama. However, by 2010, Father Greg was encountering great difficulty in raising the five million dollars from donors and foundations needed to keep Homeboy Industries running on the massive scale to which it had grown.

The following descriptions derive directly from the observations I made during my fieldwork, which concluded in 2009. Both organizations had outreach ministries designed to help gang members transition out from gang life. Whereas the evangelical-Pentecostal Victory Outreach drew from a larger network of evangelical Christianity for music, film, and literature, the nondenominational Homeboy Industries offered group therapy classes similar to Alcoholics Anonymous and spiritual classes that drew upon Eastern and Native American spirituality. Other differences between the groups were suggested by their respective mission statements. Victory Outreach's mission statement emphasized a tightly knit, cohesive community and declared that it "inspires and instills within people the desire to fulfill their potential

in life with a sense of dignity, belonging, and destiny.” Homeboy Industries’ mission statement emphasized a porous community and declared, “Jobs Not Jails: Homeboy Industries assists at-risk and formerly gang-involved youth to become positive and contributing members of society through job placement, training and education.” In light of these differences between Victory Outreach’s mission, to build a tightly-knit community among recovering gang members, and Homeboy Industries, to socially reintegrate recovering gang members into broader society, the most striking difference between the two organizations was the amount of time leaders expected members to commit. Homeboy Industries offered work and therapy, sending members home after work, whereas Victory Outreach urged members to spend evenings, weekends, and holidays at the church. Homeboy Industries sought to successfully reintegrate members *into* their local communities, whereas Victory Outreach sought to segregate members *from* their local communities.

Homeboy Industries was organized through a top-down hierarchy, in which few members could rise to the very top. Men in recovery advanced largely through education and work experience obtained outside of Homeboy Industries. In the nonprofit division of Homeboy Industries, about eighty recovering gang members washed windows, about ten served as clerical assistants, a few were supervisors or case managers, and only one was a drug counselor. Few of the men in gang recovery sat in meetings with “senior staff,” a category composed largely of white-collar, middle-class professionals. In contrast, Victory Outreach was organized through a small, tight-knit hierarchy, where members advanced by starting at the bottom. Ascension through the ranks of Victory Outreach was dependent upon commitment rather than job experience or education. All of the church’s pastors had been gang members or drug addicts, and had been residents at the men’s recovery home. Victory Outreach did not solicit outside help from professionals or religious leaders.¹⁴ In fact, no member of Victory Outreach Eastside had a college degree besides the pastor, who had been educated at the unaccredited Victory Outreach Education Training Institute (VETI) and Facultad, a partnering Protestant school of higher education.

Nonetheless, at both sites, barrio symbols were visible on flyers and posters, with airbrush artwork and images of lowriders promoting events. Most male members groomed themselves and wore clothes in

accord with barrio style, including thick mustaches, shaved heads, old tattoos, oversized clothes and white sneakers. Men at both sites used East Los Angeles barrio slang, terms such as *heina* (girlfriend), *homeboy* (close male friend), or *ranking out* (deciding to not participate in something after committing to it). Leaders at both sites drew upon life in the barrio for examples in the lessons they taught.

Explaining the purpose of this project to the study participants, I said that I was seeking to learn more about the meaning of faith-based outreach to (ex-)gang members. I asked some male subjects if they were willing to be interviewed. Although I am not an ex-drug addict or ex-gang member, there appeared to be little discomfort for either me or my subjects when I conducted observations or interviews. At both Homeboy Industries and Victory Outreach, members dedicated much of their free time to meeting new persons. Homeboy Industries survived on public fundraising efforts, and one of Victory Outreach's main goals was to proselytize Christianity. Both organizations had received significant public exposure through television reports, newspaper articles, and books.

They were as eager to know about me, a Latino from a working-class immigrant family enrolled in a Ph.D. program, as I was to know about them. I was even recruited to teach at Homeboy Industries by a case manager, Mario. After drinking a few beers at his apartment and talking about the problems with suppression policing, racism, and immigration, Mario asked me to teach a class that would encourage recovering gang members (men and women) to think about college. I tried this for a few months, leading a one-hour class called College 101 once a week. The class usually had three to six participants, though the same people rarely came in consecutive weeks. While I frequently avoided taking fieldnotes in this class, as minors often participated, it did help me to build better relationships with a couple subjects, as our reading materials became a means to connect with and learn about the men.

I was also encouraged by Victory Outreach leaders to stay at the men's recovery home, just as any recovering drug addict or gang member would. I failed miserably at this. After three days, I found myself physically, mentally, and emotionally drained. The constant, loud Christian rock music, the frequent prayer groups, and the seemingly endless cleanup around the church gave me the greatest writer's block I have

ever experienced. Rick, the home's director, begged me to try to stay and write fieldnotes despite these obstacles. When I went in to see him, Rick gave me a quotation from Scripture, 2 Corinthians 12:9–10, which he said was about finding “strength in weakness.” I left, feeling like an abysmal failure, unable to find the strength to write fieldnotes. Fortunately, the “strength in weakness” concept paralleled previous anthropological research on masculinity and recovery (e.g., Brandes 2002), and turned out to be centrally relevant to this book. It now anchors my analysis of Latino masculinity in the fifth chapter.

This book draws upon qualitative data collection and analysis, following the extended case method (Burawoy et al. 1991). The purpose of this method is to integrate the experiences of respondents who hailed from immigrant backgrounds and had been in gangs into segmented assimilation theory, which has focused largely on downward assimilation among Latinos. Chapter 2 draws from decennial census and American Community Survey (ACS) data to contextualize the demographic changes (age, poverty, and geographic mobility) occurring in the high-gang-activity neighborhoods from which the respondents came. The theoretical impetus to examine cases of young adult “recovering gang members” and frame the context of gang recovery against broad demographic changes across age cohorts in Los Angeles followed from Gans’s (2007) call to expand the concept of immigrant acculturation to encompass third- and fourth-generation immigrants, as well as to theorize acculturation over the adult life-course.

Goals and Purpose of Book

This book demonstrates how recovery from gang life is centrally organized by religion and gender, arguing that religious practices shape the discursive and embodied negotiations that reformulate Chicano gang masculinity and socially reintegrate men away from the street and into the household. As noted above, “tough-on-crime” approaches, fueled by heated rhetoric over crime and anti-immigrant backlash, construct what I term the *Latino crime threat*: racist/sexist depictions of male Latino gang members as undocumented immigrants, career criminals, and terrorists. Recovery reconfigures Chicano gang masculinity to fit with dominant masculine displays, such as the “family man” or

“man of God,” contesting the Latino crime threat and facilitating social reintegration. Masculinity is reformulated from the self-destructive expressions of Chicano gang masculinity—such as gangs, drugs, and uncommitted romantic affairs—to the warm, nurturing “breadwinner” expressions of reformed barrio masculinity.

In addition, whereas segmented assimilation has made grim predictions about the fate of Mexican immigrants’ children—that they will experience downward assimilation as a result of a hostile context of reception, gangs, and incarceration—I contend that these claims are largely overstated. The book shows that Latinos do experience integration and socioeconomic mobility in adulthood, and that Latinos with gang pasts do not necessarily crystallize a reactive ethnicity. Through urban ministry, and the shifts in masculine orientations that urban ministries help inspire and sustain, Latino recovering gang members avoid cyclical, entrenched poverty and marginality.

Chapter 1 investigates how poverty, marginality, and gangs have been long-standing features of Los Angeles’s Eastside barrios. It argues that Latino marginality, despite being a concern of early social reformers, persisted due to the racialized nature of public policies and political platforms. Early-twentieth-century social policy eased integration for Southern and Eastern European immigrants, but left Latinos deeply marginalized. The Civil Rights Movement followed, but so did white resistance against it, centrally expressed through the rise of coded, antiminority suppression tactics aimed at blacks and Latinos. I examine how crime policy debates gave rise to notions of street criminals as lacking the ability to reform, and how this disproportionately targeted blacks and Latinos through the wars on drugs, crime, and terrorism. In the post-9/11 era, the discourse over gang crime has become aligned with the trope of national security and terrorism, further deepening the marginality experienced by disadvantaged Latinos. Sustained anticrime and anti-immigration rhetoric has been a central feature of the late modern era, and it has systematically constructed marginal Latinos as threats to the state.

Chapter 2 employs census and ACS data to evaluate the fitness of Los Angeles as a case study in segmented assimilation theory. Many elements of segmented assimilation theory hold up, such as increases in immigration and the nonwhite population, as well as high poverty

rates. Further analysis, though, reveals that respondents' inner-city neighborhoods were characterized not just by high poverty rates, but also by demographic dynamism—moving up and out. Over time, age cohorts in the respondents' high-gang-activity neighborhoods experienced less poverty and residents were more likely to relocate elsewhere. These demographic trends set a different backdrop for this study on gang recovery, one in which gradual, limited socioeconomic mobility exists in adulthood—rather than the overly dim underclass portrait painted by segmented assimilation scholars.

Chapter 3 builds upon the growing body of literature on segmented assimilation and religion by examining how two urban American ministries facilitated immigrant-origin Latino recovery from gangs in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Despite declining middle-class work opportunities, religion provided gang members the social support and resources necessary to leave gang life behind. Two contrasting models of social reintegration sheltered recovering gang members from gang life, and encouraged them to achieve conventional markers of success, such as employment, home ownership, and marriage. While Victory Outreach facilitated gang recovery by creating rigid social boundaries between the church and the broader local community, Homeboy Industries facilitated gang recovery by maintaining and rearticulating porous boundaries between itself and the community. In examining the two faith-based approaches to gang recovery, this book builds on Omar McRoberts's (2003) *Streets of Glory*, as well as an Urban Institute report by McRoberts (2002). The two faith-based sites in this book socially reintegrate Chicano gang members by shaping the meanings of gang life and recovery, distancing Chicano gang members from the street, and thereby demonstrating that religious voluntarism does not necessarily lead to particularism or undermine ex-offender social reintegration.

Chapter 4 examines how recovering gang members described recovery from gangs, where they saw themselves in five years, and who they admired and tried to emulate. I contend that faith-based gang recovery took shape through reformulated notions of manhood. In faith-based recovery, recovering Chicano gang members contrasted masculine expressions: Chicano gang masculinity and reformed barrio masculinity. Whereas gang members rooted their sense of manhood in gang

activities, such as drug use and gang violence, recovering gang members rooted their sense of manhood in domestic activities, such as being emotionally supportive husbands, fathers, and sons.

Chapter 5 examines how platforms for public speaking, such as group therapy or Bible studies, offered recovering gang members opportunities to experience reform from gang life, as well as to earn legitimacy for being reformed. The public talk of gang recovery invited situated performances that rearticulated Chicano masculinity. Recovering gang members used public talk to advance “redemption scripts” (i.e., Maruna 2001) and construct reformed barrio masculinity, facilitating recovery from gang life and social reintegration.

Chapter 6 examines how these gendered displays also involved the body and bodily practices, for example through dress codes, tattoo removal, and prayer. These gendered displays and bodily practices illustrated “the politics of performance” (Conquergood 1991, 190), as reformed barrio masculinity was used as a performance to challenge dominant ideas about Latinos such as the Latino crime threat. Men in recovery constructed reformed barrio masculinity by shaping malleable facets of Chicano gang masculinity (i.e., hair, dress style), as well as by reshaping and redirecting less malleable facets of Chicano gang masculinity (i.e., speech, cadence, posture).

The conclusion revisits the book’s argument—that faith-based masculine negotiations facilitate recovery from gang life—and telescopes out to examine the implications. While critical criminologists and sociologists have celebrated the resistant nature of gangs to modernizing forces, Homeboy Industries and Victory Outreach show only seeds of resistance. This book instead urges a conceptualization of recovery from gang life as a process of turning inward to cope with racism. The conclusion reiterates the key findings in this volume: that, in spite of gang pasts and declining inner-city job opportunities, Latino recovering gang members seek to cut ties with gang life, build relationships with family members, and land well-paying, formal employment. The conclusion also reexamines how recovery rearticulates Chicano masculinity, from the self-destructive expressions of Chicano gang masculinity to the warm, nurturing characteristics of fatherhood, and how assumptions embedded in such gendered processes may be problematic for challenging hegemonic masculinity. Nonetheless, as Latinos contest

racist/sexist images—admiring and trying to emulate faith leaders in their communities—we must remain open to the transformative possibilities that may lie dormant within recovery.

In closing, this volume brings to bear findings on recovery from gang life to the concept most central to the segmented assimilation paradigm: downward assimilation. As described in chapter 2 and revisited in conclusion, demographic trends indicate that Latinos are slowly, gradually moving up and out of Los Angeles's low-income barrios. The ethnographic findings on faith-based recovery presented herein similarly reject the trope of downward assimilation: Latinos do not embrace a reactive ethnicity nor do they become entrenched in cyclical poverty and marginality. Instead, Latino recovering gang members seek to achieve the American Dream by becoming “family men” or “men of God” who can provide for their families. A closer look at recovery from gang life reveals that while Latinos in the inner city do not follow the clean trajectory of classical assimilation, neither are they doomed to the tragedy of downward assimilation.