Israeli and US Gangs in the Virtual World: The Sociocultural Context of Gang Members’ Online Activity

# Details

## Year

2016

## DOI

10.1007/978-3-319-29602-9\_7

## Issued

2016

## Language

English

## Start Page

## End Page

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## Type

Book chapter

## Book title

Gang transitions and transformations in an international contex

## Journal

Gang Transitions and Transformations in an International Context

## Publisher

Springer International Publishing

## Topics

Internet usage, practices and engagement

## Sample

The sample in this study was drawn from two countries: Israel and the US. Both samples were generated using purposive sampling strategies in order to learn more about the online activities of gangs and gang members based on surveys administered to 192 active gang members. The Israeli sample consisted of 57 respondents from Jerusalem

# Abstract

The Internet has opened up new opportunities for crime and deviance. Although there is growing interest in gang activity on the web, there is a lack of systematic and comparative evidence about online gang activities. This chapter examines the differences and similarities in online behavior and criminal activity between gang members in the US and Israel. Drawing on routine activity theory, the study examines the role of online activities (e.g. hours spent online, YouTube use, social network use) and online gang-related activities (e.g., gangs have websites, organize and recruit online, view the web as important) in online offending and deviance. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews with 136 current gang members in the US and 57 gang members in Israel. Findings indicate that there are differences in online activities of gang members and gangs across countries, although levels of offending are largely similar. Furthermore, the analyses reveal that online routines were positively related to online offending of gang members in the US, while only technological ability was significantly related to offending in Israel. We discuss these findings in the context of existing research on gangs and the web, offer directions for future research, and suggest some response strategies.

# Outcome

the majority of gang members in Israel and the US are actively engaged with digital activities and reported involvement in criminal and deviant activities (Sela-Shayovitz, Pyrooz Decker, 2016). Gang members in Israel reported more virtual time and a higher level of technical knowledge than the US sample. gang members’ online activities are marginally related to crime. the main difference between the two samples is related to the symbolic web presence of gang identity (gang's website) and online collective activities. The rates of gangs' websites and video posting were significantly higher in the American sample than the Israeli sample. only posting videos online increases the likelihood of online offending in the Israeli sample.