
With close to a million youths involved in gang activities, gangs remain a major concern for, and challenge to, the management of community life in US cities. Vigil (Univ. of California, Los Angeles) has been studying this phenomenon for four decades and has written several books and published numerous articles in scholarly journals. In 11 chapters, Vigil illuminates the similarities and differences of gang life in the Mexican American, Vietnamese, African American, and Salvadorian communities in Los Angeles. By looking at the historical processes characterizing the gang experiences in each community and providing testimonies of four gang members, he presents a cross-cultural understanding of motivations for gang membership and meanings associated with such an affiliation. This is an excellent study of street institutions, street socialization, ethnic marginality, peer groups dynamics, and the failure of social control by mainstream institutions. Adequately researched and well written, the book is an important source for those interested in developing culturally sensitive intervention strategies and socially effective law enforcement procedures for dealing with gang activities in large urban settings. Recommended for all general and academic levels and collections. -- *A. Mahdi, Ohio Wesleyan University*