A Valdosta State University Model for Gang Intervention and Delinquency Prevention in Lowndes County

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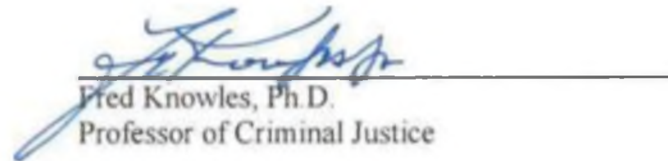

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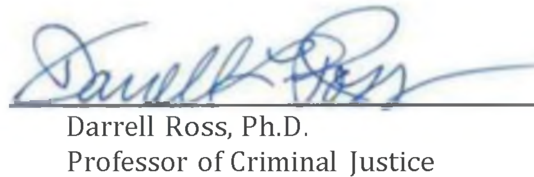

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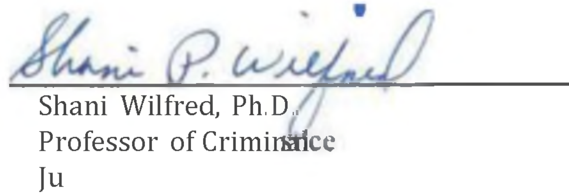

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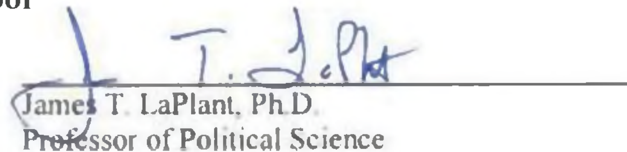

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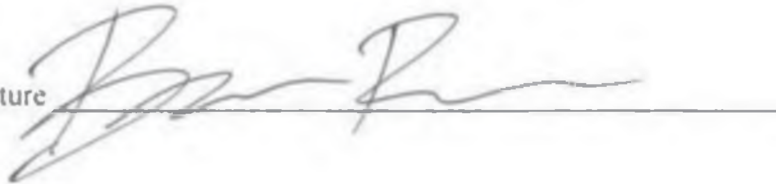

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ABSTRACT

Youth gang problems are proliferating across the United States, even in small cities and towns. At the same time, the composition of youth gangs is changing; smaller, less structured gangs are emerging, and although drug trafficking is generally not an organized activity managed by gangs, drug gangs are more predominant now than in previous decades. The racial/ethnic composition of gangs is also changing, and gangs are becoming more organized. Gang violence, particularly homicide, has increased due mainly to the availability and use of more dangerous weapons, especially automatic and semiautomatic handguns. Most gang problems are "homegrown;" gang migration apparently contributes little to local gang problems. Although significant progress is being made in identifying the major risk factors for youth gang involvement, much more information is needed to specify the developmental sequence by which these risk factors operate. This knowledge will be useful in the development of prevention and intervention programs. A youth gang initiative that saw much success in cooperation with other programs in East Palo Alto resulted in it being called the murder capital of the world to a city now outside the top 20 in murder rates. After an extensive literature review this intervention program is proposed for use in Lowndes County and, more specifically, Valdosta State University as the center. Bringing the intervention program to a college campus provides an opportunity for all parties to understand the racial/ethnic composition of gangs and how to stop the major risk factors of youth joining gangs.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Politicians, police, teachers, the media, elderly, and citizens everywhere seem to be alarmed about youth gangs in today's society. Next to terrorists, gangs seem to be the number two manifestation of evil in the eyes of society. This paper is about youth gangs, yet, there is hardly a consensus as to what a gang really is. As a society, we think we know what a gang is, because we read about it in the papers with headlines about "gang-related homicides" or "gang drive-bys," we see specials on television about the Bloods and the Crips, we see pictures of members of gangs like the Latin Kings, West Coast Bloods, or Hoover Street Crips. But what does it mean, exactly, when we label these groups? In this paper, there is no denial of the existence of gangs, nor is there the assumption that gangs are merely the creation of the news media and law-enforcement officials.

It is known that within society there are individuals who are called and who call themselves gangs, and some of them engage in behavior we fear and detest. But like other aspects of social reality, the phenomenon of gangs cannot be understood without an examination of the social conditions within which it exists—something policymakers have chosen to largely ignore. One of the major themes of this paper is that the problem of gangs, like the problem of crime, is a product of the existing social order placed on social problems. Pertaining to youth gangs, the response has been less than a willingness

to grasp the meaning of the obvious: poverty, frustration, segregation, isolation, and economic despair. In part, this paper attempts to raise a consciousness about these issues when enacting policies to prevent youth gang activity. Another goal of this paper is to look at policies set forth by other police agencies to formulate a database of information, an explanation for, or at least an understanding of, this cultural phenomenon that is youth gangs.

Problem Analysis (Goals and Objectives):

First and foremost, the goal of this thesis is to end society's reliance on incarceration and promote effective solutions to juvenile gang violence and activity. Heavy-handed suppression efforts can increase gang cohesion and police-community tensions, and they have a poor track record when it comes to reducing crime and violence. Suppression remains an enormously popular response to gang activity despite concerns by gang experts that such tactics can strengthen gang cohesion and increase tension between law enforcement and community members. Results from the data in the Office of Juvenile Justice and Defense Prevention OJJDP 10 year study yield no evidence that a flood of federal dollars and arrests have had a positive impact on target neighborhoods.

Georgia's juvenile justice system has attempted to protect the public and to treat and rehabilitate delinquent youth. While that mission still remains at the core of the juvenile justice system today, the system itself has changed dramatically in the past century. This youth gang and delinquency prevention program in Lowndes County is a part of a 4-year plan that has been developed to complement the strategies and programs of other state and federal grant programs. After examining various youth gang and

delinquency intervention strategy this program offers a fresh look on rehabilitation, suppression strategies, end educational opportunities for underprivileged youth and police departments nationwide. This 4-year plan addresses the gaps in services and other areas of need. Additionally, the plan takes into consideration the findings of the evaluation of a nationwide Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) study by Esbensen and Osgood, a 10-year survey conducted by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), and failed suppression tactics, most notably Operation Ceasefire. With this plan, Lowndes County has established a firm commitment to attain a balance between the legitimate needs of the community, the juvenile offender, and the victim.

The 4-year plan consists of creating a non-profit youth development organization for K-12th grade students. The program works to create effective partnerships with families, schools, and volunteers to achieve academic and athletic success. Through one-on-one tutoring, free athletic sport lessons, direct instruction, college counseling, and parent education, the program aims to better prepare students to have productive future! Valdosta State University will provide the perfect backdrop for this new initiative partnering with the Valdosta Police Department and Lowndes County School District. The tutoring program will be housed on campus and Valdosta State students will provide approximately 90 percent of the tutor and athletic volunteers for the programs students. There is no better place for a youth development program to operate than on the campus of a prestigious, private, University!

Theory

According to Frailing and Harper (2013), "the first truly American theory of crime causation was developed in the city of Chicago. During the early part of the 20th

century, the United States in general and Chicago in particular were undergoing major changes" (p. 70). People flocked to Chicago in search of work and the changes the city was undergoing made it something of a living laboratory for social scientists. Among the most famous of these social scientists were Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay (Frailing & Harper, 2013). Shaw and McKay built on the work of Ernest Burgess (1925), who postulated that cities grow outward from an inner core. As they do, various zones develop in which people live and work. The inner core serves at the center of business and industry. The zone immediately next to the inner core is comprised of inexpensive housing for those, particularly new arrivals, looking for work in the inner core. The third, fourth and fifth zones out from the inner core are comprised of housing for those who have acclimated to city life and have the resources to leave the zone adjacent to the inner core; by implication, the zone immediately next to the inner core is transitory (Frailing & Harper, 2014, pp. 74-75).

Shaw and McKay (1942) hypothesized that the transition zone, characterized as it was by poverty, heterogeneity, would have higher rates of juvenile delinquency than the other zones. Using a variety of indicators of juvenile delinquency, including referrals to juvenile court, truancy and recidivism, and then mapping the addresses of confirmed delinquents, Shaw and McKay found that, over time, rates of juvenile delinquency in the transition zone were higher than those of any of the other zones over time, regardless of who lived there (p. 76). Shaw and McKay called the transition zone socially disorganized, contending that poverty, heterogeneity and transiency undermined the organizing effects of social structures such as the family and educational and religious institutions (thus naming the theory). Since the pioneering studies of Shaw and McKay, a

great deal of research has been done on the ecology of urban crime and delinquency. Studies and research data on urban crime remain an important part of criminological research. A trend in migration of both White and Black middle class resident, as well as industry and business, out of the large cities in suburban communities has resulted in even more deprivation, decay, and other conditions of social disorganization within the urban centers. This trend has left a population of the "truly disadvantaged" or "under class" with high rates of unemployment, welfare, support, and violence (Wilson & Howell, 1993).

Social disorganization does a poor job of explaining crime outside of high crime neighborhoods. It is particularly weak in explaining white collar crime, it also does a poor job of explaining why a vast majority of people who live in high crime neighborhoods are law abiding and why a small number of residents in these neighborhoods are the ones responsible for a vast majority of crime. Subcultural theories of crime, however, focus on the development of cultures that are distinct from the mainstream. Subcultural theories have their roots in the concepts of anomie and strain and at their essence, hold that some groups have values that approve or justify crime. These values permit commission of crime at high rates within these groups. A number of theorists have proposed subcultural explanations of crime, among them Albert Cohen.

Cohen (1955) postulated that young people from the lower socioeconomic classes have limited legitimate opportunities available to them in order to achieve middle class success. These youth are frustrated by their inability to achieve and form a subculture as a result that shuns middle class values. Cohen believes that the subculture substitutes its own values that are easier for its members to attain, values such as Cohen contends that

much of the crime committed by lower class youths is expressive and not instrumental in nature. Subcultural theories fit the mold most effectively in response to the phenomenon of youth gangs.

In the Northeast and Midwest, poor, mostly white families from Europe came to the United States in huge numbers between the period between the Revolution's end and 1860. People with shared nationalities and language clustered together in urban areas in the United States, forming the first areas called in slang terms "hoods" in cities. After being discriminated against by native-born Anglo-Americans, immigrants starting to cluster in neighborhoods. Conflict arose between native-born Anglo-Americans and the newly established immigrant groups (i.e., Irish) it lead to the creation of what we know today as gangs. During this same period (1780-1860), Mexican migration and immigration fueled gang development in the West. In the 1960s, immigration to the United States shifted from European points of origin to Central and South American and Asian points of origin. New Asian and Latin American immigrants settled in urban areas and some formed gangs, much in the same way earlier waves of immigrants did. The move away from an industrial economy in the United States at the same time meant fewer legitimate job opportunities for those wishing to earn a living wage, further disadvantaging some, especially those who were undereducated (Howell & Moore, 2010).

What does it mean to be who you are? An identity is the set of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identify him or her as a unique person. For example, individuals have meanings that they apply to themselves when they

are a student, worker, spouse, or parent (these are roles they occupy). People possess multiple identities because they occupy multiple roles, are members of multiple groups, and claim multiple personal characteristics; yet, members of society share the meanings of these identities. Identity theory seeks to explain the specific meanings that individuals have for the multiple identities they claim; how these identities relate to one another for any one person; how their identities influence their behavior, thoughts, and feelings or emotions; and how their identities tie them in to society at large (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 1).

In my thesis, I approach youth gang participation through the premises of social identity theory. The premise of social identity theory will be done by interpreting criminal and violent behavior among gang members as a group-based phenomenon, not in terms of engaging in these behaviors together at the same time (which may or may not happen), but rather in terms of one's motivation to act. This can be done by examining intragroup dynamics of gangs and other peer groups that contribute to delinquency and violence. Hennigan and Spanovic (2011) revealed that group cohesion and group identification are associated with criminal and violent behavior among gang members, but not among members of other kinds of peer groups in the same neighborhoods. Social identity theory maintains that this difference is due to different normative expectations within street gangs as opposed to non-gang peer groups. The stronger one's identification with the gang, the stronger the individual is focused on the gang's normative expectations, regardless of individual concerns (Hennigan & Spanovic, 2011).

While there are many explanations of why youth become involved in gangs, two reasons seem to be cited more than others. First, youth tend to join gangs for social reasons. Specifically, they may join because someone they know (a sibling, cousin, or friend) is already involved in a gang. Second, many youth have expressed their belief they will be safer as a gang member so they join for protection (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Esbensen, 2009). Despite the belief that membership in a gang provides protection, those involved in gangs are far more likely to be victims of violent crime than people with similar backgrounds who do not participate in gang activity (Peterson et al., 2004). Thus, it can be hard to comprehend why individuals would join a group threatening their physical well being and even putting their life in jeopardy, when a basic human instinct is survival. Until recently, most research on gangs has been grounded in the disciplines of criminology, sociology, and public policy, drawing on theoretical frameworks such as: rational choice, cultural deviance, and social disorganization. I focus on the role played by social identity processes in promoting affiliation with gangs (Peterson et al., 2004).

While individual circumstances and characteristics play an important role, involvement in gangs is also, above all, a group phenomenon. Because the interaction of individual and group processes is important in understanding gangs, social identity theory can provide a comprehensive picture of the unique dynamic of gangs. Social identity theory is a social cognitive theory of group processes, intergroup relations, and collective self-conception (Reicher & Wetherell, 1987). Reicher & Wetherell go on to say " it defines groups cognitively as collections of individuals who share a common evaluative self-definition—a shared social identity" (p. 60).

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

National Youth Gang Center

Since the mid-20th century, gang violence in this country has become widespread—all 50 states and the District of Columbia report gang problems, and reports have increased for 5 of the past 7 years (Howell, 2010). Despite the steady growth in the number and size of gangs across the United States (U.S.) and the criminal behavior and violence they spawn, little is known about the dynamics that drive gangs and how to best combat their growth. James C. Howell (2010), in *Juvenile Justice Bulletin,* presents a compilation of current research on gangs, including data on the state of gang problems in the United States today, why youth join gangs, the risk factors and attractions that increase youth's propensity to join gangs, and how gangs form.

Local youth gang problems in the U.S. increased during the 25-year period leading up to the mid-1990s (Miller, 2001). Whereas in the 1970s, only 19 states reported youth gang problems, before the turn of the 21st century, all 50 states and the District of Columbia had acknowledged gang activity. Gang problems reported by law enforcement in the National Youth Gang Survey (NYGS) peaked in the mid-1990s, followed by a precipitous decline (Egley, Howell, & Major, 2004). An overall 15-percent increase in youth gang problems reported in the NYGS from 2002 to 2008 followed this decline, and all segments of the U.S. population reported

increases in gang problems: suburban counties (22 percent), rural counties (16 percent), smaller cities (15 percent), and larger cities (13 percent) (Egley, Howell, & Moore, 2010). The National Gang Center estimates that 32.4 percent of all cities, suburban areas, towns, and rural counties (more than 3,330 jurisdictions, served by city and county law enforcement agencies) experienced gang problems in 2008. This represents a 15 percent increase from the 2002 figure. Approximately 774,000 gang members and 27,900 gangs are estimated to have been active in the U.S. in 2008. The number of gangs increased by 28 percent, the number of gang members increased by 6 percent from 2002 to 2008, 774,000 gang members and 27,900 gangs (Egley, Howell, & Moore, 2010).

According to the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 8 percent of the youth surveyed had belonged to a gang at some point between the ages of 12 and 17 (Snyder and Sickmund, 2006). A 1996 survey of nearly 6,000 eighth-graders conducted in 11 cities with known gang problems found that 9 percent were currently gang members and 17 percent said they had belonged to a gang at some point in their lives (Esbensen & Deschenes, 1998; Esbensen et al., 2011). The demographic characteristics of gang members vary by geographic location—mainly reflecting the demographic mak/eup of the youth population.

According to the 2008 NYGS, half of all gang members are Hispanic/Latino, 32 percent are African American/black, and 11 percent are Caucasian/White (National Gang Center, 2010). However, studies where youth self-report gang membership it reveals a much more equal proportions of race with Whites (7.3 percent), Blacks (8.3 percent), and Hispanics (9 percent), but multiracial groups had the largest percentage (12.9 percent) (Esbensen et al., 2009). To understand the sudden rise of youth gang activity, one must

consider the factors that contribute to a youth's decision to join a gang. According to Howell (2010), these factors fall in to two categories: attractions and risk. Contrary to a common public misconception most youth are not coerced into joining a gang. Most youth who join want to belong to a gang. Gangs are often at the center of appealing social action—parties, hanging out, music, drugs, and opportunities to socialize with members of the opposite sex. Youth reported the following reasons for joining a gang in the order of descending importance: for protection, for fun, for respect, for money, and because a friend was in the gang (Esbensen, Deschenes, & Winfree, 1999). Of these reasons, youth most commonly join gangs for the safety they believe the gang provides (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). In a longitudinal assessment of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) program, youth consistently reported protection as a reason for joining a gang (Peterson et al., 2004, pp. 793-815).

Violence is a regular occurrence in many of the environments where gangs exist, so, to avoid victimization, youth seek out gang membership for protection from rival gangs. As former "Zone 8" gang member, Yusef Shakur, stated in his memoir, *Window 2 My Soul,* (2008):

> The first corner we claimed to stick our Zone 8 "flag" on was on the side of a candy store. During the school year at a middle school, there was never a day that you didn't see one of us representing on that corner. We strategically placed ourselves at this spot because of its vantage point: the students going to and returning from school couldn't miss us. If we weren't there, it was merely because we were being detained or hunted down by law enforcement. While on the block where the candy store stood, we would also take turns catching guys from across the Boulevard and put classic ass whippings on them as they also went to/returned from school. As for retribution, they could only retaliate by jumping us in the school. They were in our 'hood, so they were fair game. An original Zone 8 gang member's attitude was that if he couldn't catch one of them he was gonna kick their sisters', brothers', cousins' or even girlfriends' asses. This strategy left the guys across the Boulevard with no choice but to join one of the gangs in their 'hood (p. 10).

Yusef Shakur's words illustrate a process of protection through intimidation that is common to many gangs. They show how the actions of one gang can motivate youth to join a rival gang for protection and also, in this instance, how the Zone 8 gang protected their neighborhood, which, in turn, kept bigger situations from erupting in which the police would be called. Gang affiliation and the process of protecting territory can also foster a sense of identity and pride rooted in the connection to the community. Youth also occasionally cite economic reasons such as selling drugs or making money, for joining a gang (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). Apart from personal reasons for joining a gang, media representations make gangs seem very appealing. The "hip" lifestyle and portrayals of gangs and their members have a significant influence, particularly on more susceptible youth, for reasons that Miller (2001) explains:

> In the 1950s, the musical drama *West Side Story* portrayed gang life as seen through the eyes of adult middle class writers and presented themes of honor, romantic love, and mild rebellion consistent with the values and perspective of these writers In the 1990's, the substance of gang life was communicated to national audiences through a new medium known as gangsta rap. For the first time, youthful insiders, not adult outsiders portrayed this lifestyle. The character and values of gang life described by the rappers differed radically from the images of *West Side Story*. Language was rough and insistently obscene; women who were prostitutes to be used, beaten, and thrown away; and extreme violence and cruelty, the gang lifestyle, and craziness or insanity were glorified. Among the rappers' targets of hatred, scorn, and murder threats were police, especially black police; other races and ethnic groups; society as a whole; and members of rival gangs… Gangsta rap strengthened the desire of youth to become part of a gang subculture that was portrayed by the rappers as a glamorous and rewarding lifestyle (p. 46).

Increased media popularization of gang culture has led to the point that now, "most young people in America recognize the look, the walk, and the talk of gang members. Many mimic it in part or in whole, trying it out as a personal style" (Klein,

2002, p. 246). The diffusion of street gang culture in modern-day movies, music, and clothing has served to intertwine gang culture with the general youth subculture.

Operation Ceasefire

In 1995, Boston police faced a crisis of gang-related youth homicides. They teamed up with community groups and NIJ-funded researchers to apply an evidence-based, problem-solving approach to the problem. The working group included community-based, street-wise individuals familiar with the local gang culture, such as a police gang unit known as the Youth Violence Strike Force (YVSF). The group struggled for months to design, implement and test an intervention; the result was Operation Ceasefire, which reduced firearm violence by 68 percent in one year. The two main elements of Ceasefire were (1) a direct attack on illicit firearms traffickers and (2) a set of intervention actions that gave gang members a strong deterrent to gun violence. Police placed strong and targeted enforcement pressure on gang members to discourage gun carrying. The researchers called this strategy "lever pulling" and called efforts to spread the word among gang members about increased enforcement "retailing." Operation Ceasefire was an innovative partnership between researchers and practitioners brought together to assess the city's youth homicide problem and implement an intervention designed to have a substantial near-term impact on the problem. Operation Ceasefire was based on the “lever pulling" deterrence strategy which focused criminal justice attention on a small number of chronically offending gang-involved youth responsible for much of Boston's youth homicide problem (Harvard Kennedy School, n.d.).

Given the disruptive influence that gangs pose on school safety and academic performance, gangs and associated violence are targets of prevention and intervention

efforts. Several programs have been developed and promoted as "effective," and school administrators are often confronted with promotional materials advocating the "marvelous" wide array of programs claiming to reduce youth gang activity, increase social skills, promote positive youth behavior, or all of the above. Whenever possible, these school administrators should be encouraged to choose programs with a history of evaluation findings supporting program effectiveness. Finn-Aage Esbensen, et al. (2013) presented a study of the same sort, showing an example of short- and long term findings from a recent randomized control trial (RCTs) assessing the effectiveness of a gang prevention program—Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T, p. 376).

Before starting a program for delinquency and gang prevention, a community should conduct a gang problem assessment to identify elevated risk factors that lead to child delinquency and gang involvement. According to Howell (2012), "several studies strongly indicate that communities must define youth gangs, locate them, and identify and target the youth who are at a greater risk of joining" (p. 226). As part of its Comprehensive Gang Model, OJJDP has published *A Guide to Assessing Your Community's Youth Gang Problem,* a resource for communities conducting a gang-problem assessment (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2009a). This guide simplifies the data-collection process, helping communities determine types and levels of gang activity, and gaps in community services for gang prevention.

G.R.E.A.T.

Esbensen and Osgood (1999) conducted a retrospective 1-year study of the effects of G.R.E.A.T. among eighth graders who had and had not participated in the middle school program during seventh grade. Eleven sites were included in the study, identified

through records indicating that at least two police officers had been trained to teach G.R.E.A.T. The cities include: Kansas City, Missouri; Las Cruces, New Mexico; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Omaha, Nebraska; Orlando, Florida; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Phoenix, Arizona; Pocatello, Idaho; Providence, Rhode Island; Torrance, California; and Will County, Illinois. In each of the sites, researchers selected schools that had offered G.R.E.A.T. programs during the past 2 years. All eighth-graders who attended school on the day the surveys were administered became part of the sample, with attendance ranging from 75 to 93 percent among the schools. The final sample was 5,935 eighth-graders in 315 classrooms from 42 schools (pp. 194-205).

Researchers randomly selected treatment classrooms in which the G.R.E.A.T. program had been offered and selected comparison classrooms from among those that had not implemented the G.R.E.A.T. curriculum (or any other gang-related curriculum). No pretests of students' attitudes or behavior were conducted. Analysis of students' demographic variables revealed few significant differences between groups, with the exception of treatment students being significantly younger than comparison students and being marginally more likely to live only with their fathers. Survey questions contained items measuring self-reports of delinquency and gang membership (Esbensen, F. & Osgood, D., 1999, pp. 194-225).

Esbensen et al., (2001) conducted a second evaluation of the middle school G.R.E.A.T. program. Schools in six cities were selected for the study, based on the existence of a G.R.E.A.T. program in the city, geographic location, and the cooperation of the local school districts and police departments. The study sites included an East Coast city (Philadelphia), a West Coast city (Portland), the original G.R.E.A.T. city

(Phoenix), a Midwestern city (Omaha), a "non-gang" city (Lincoln), and a small border city with chronic gang problems (Las Cruces). Classrooms were randomly assigned to the treatment or control group, and the analysis sample consisted of more than 3,500 students in 153 classrooms from 22 schools, roughly evenly divided between the treatment and control group. Because the G.R.E.A.T. program was implemented differently at each site (varying by class scheduling and structure of the schools), random assignment was implemented differently at each district and/or school (pp. 87-98).

Pretest surveys indicated that the treatment group held more negative beliefs about gangs, higher rates of self-reported status offenses (offenses specific to juveniles, e.g., school truancy, curfew violations, or running away from home), higher rates of delinquency among peers, and lower rates of pro-social behavior among peers. The initial post-test survey was conducted 2 weeks after the program was completed. Subsequently, students were surveyed once a year for 3 consecutive years. The follow-up surveys required active consents from the parents in all sites; the final rate for parental consent was 57 percent of the total initial sample (2,045 students). Eighty-six percent of children, who obtained parental consent, completed the initial post-test (1,761 students), with follow-up rates of 76 percent, 69 percent, and 67 percent in the first, second, and third follow-up years, respectively. The surveys included questions on self-reported gang activity, drug use, and delinquent behavior (Esbensen et. al., 2001, pp. 87-118).

In 2006, the University of Missouri-St. Louis was awarded a grant from the National Institute of Justice to determine what effect, if any, the G.R.E.A.T. program had on students. G.R.E.A.T., which is a 13-lesson general prevention program taught by uniformed law enforcement officers to middle school students, has three stated goals: 1)

to reduce gang membership, 2) to reduce delinquency, especially violent offending, and 3) to improve students' attitudes toward the police. To assess program effectiveness, the study mounted a multi-strategy research design that included the following components: 1) assessment of G.R.E.A.T. officer training; 2) surveying of officers teaching the program and teachers and school administrators in whose classrooms and schools the program was delivered; 3) observation of more than 500 classroom sessions; and 4) a randomized control trial including 3,280 students nested in 195 classrooms in 31 schools in 7 cities (Esbensen et al., 2012, p. 2).

In previous publication, Esbensen et al., (2012), reported on the results of the one-year post program treatment effects. At that point they had found statistically significant differences between the treatment and control students on 14 out of 33 attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. These results can be considered quite favorable and reflect sustained program effects, 1-year post program. Ebsensen et al., (2012) multi-component evaluation found that G.R.E.A.T. program is implemented as it is intended and has the intended program effects on youth gang membership and on a number of risk factors and social skills thought to be associated with gang membership. Results 1-year post program showed a 39 percent reduction in odds of gang joining among students who received the program compared to those who did not and an average of 24 percent reduction in odds of gang joining across the 4 years post-program (Ebsensen et al, 2012, p. 5).

"The G.R.E.A.T. program is a school-based gang- and violence-prevention program with three primary goals: (1) to teach youth to avoid gang membership; (2) to prevent violence and criminal activity; (3) to assist youth in developing positive relationships with law enforcement" (Esbensen et al., 2013, p. 377). Developed as a

universal prevention program targeting youth in early adolescence, the G.R.E.A.T. program was classified as a gang-awareness program.

The original G.R.E.A.T program, developed by Phoenix-area police departments in 1991, was a cognitive-based program that taught students about crime and its effect on victims, cultural diversity, conflict resolution skills, meeting basic needs (without a gang), responsibility, and goal setting. The G.R.E.A.T. program is similar in nature to the well-known D.A.R.E. program. Uniformed law enforcement officers teach the program's eight-lesson curriculum in 1-hour sessions over a 9-week period. Although there are other components directed at lower grade levels, the primary curriculum component is located in middle schools, taught for the most part to seventh and sometimes sixth graders (Peterson & Esbensen, 2004, p. 221). G.R.E.A.T. is designed to enable youth to make sound decisions, avoid conflicts, be responsible, set positive goals, resist peer pressure, and develop positive attitudes toward police officers. Its goal is prevention of violence, especially that which is associated with gang activity. Though G.R.E.A.T. has proven effective in all of these categories when youth have already joined gang activity police departments must be aware of how the ever changing social media landscape effects of youth gangs. For example, texting has become a major form of communication whether on the form or adapting how gangs communicate via notes in prisons.

Tweeners

Gang members are grooming recruits as young as second graders according to a study cited in The Oklahoman (Nov 2009), though most frequently targeted are the "tweeners" in fifth – seventh grade age range. The link to schools is crucial to gangs not only for recruiting purposes, but also as a key drug distribution channel. School

infiltration is so valuable that law enforcement agencies in several states report gangs are directing teenage members who had dropped out of school to reenroll, primarily to recruit new members and sell drugs. These kids typically use cellular phones to conduct drug transactions and prearrange meetings with customers. The most recent statistics from the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the National Center for Education only shows data through 2005, but we should expect to see stark increases in their next biennial report. "We're seeing the gang members coming back from prison looking more and more to those middle-schoolers and the younger kids to recruit them," said Susan Manheimer San Mateo Police Chief, who speaks for the San Mateo County gang task force (McNutt, 2009).

Gang leaders know kids socialize on sites such as Facebook and YouTube, and they are actively reaching out through popular online services to create a new generation of gang members. They describe gang life as glamorous, and seductive. Recruiters tell of a life of power, leisure, and wealth, and instant gratification, as well as a 'family' and a sense of belonging and acceptance that many kids desperately want. They glorify the danger and the excitement. Gangs have pushed hard to make gang clothing a fashion statement to such an extent that gang apparel can be seen everywhere as a fashion statement for young people – on MTV and other teen sites and stations. Gangs use images of rap artists like Snoop Dogg, and promote music with gang themes, violence and attire. Many of today's youth who are not connected with gangs wear the gang styles and colors because of the "cool factor." Certainly wearing the fashion does not make a kid a gang member, however, wearing gang fashion can have tragic consequences when kids are mistaken for being a member of a rival gang (McNutt, 2009).

For the most part, gangs use the same sites everyone else does – MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and so on. There are tens of thousands of websites, message boards and chat rooms created by gang members or young gang "wannabe's." These 'web-banging' 'cyberbanging' 'netbanging' 'phone-banging' sites are typically set to public viewing, and are places to hang out online like everyone else – but with the "gangsta" culture and violence highly glorified through photos, music, gang signs, guns, tattoos, colors, videos, etc. They frequently contain memorials to gang members who have been killed or are incarcerated. The videos and photos posted may just be about the 'life,' but they frequently include documentation of crimes they want to brag about beatings, robberies, graffiti, etc. where everyone in the video has their face covered to avoid identification. The sites are also used to trash rivals and convey threats and intimidate 'bystanders' (McNutt, 2009).

The fact that so many gangs identify themselves on different websites makes each gang relatively easy prey to predators or rival gangs who can quickly profile them and use these websites. Making social media a new battle ground – a turf to defend from being trashed or hijacked. Hacking into and disrespecting a rival gang's site is just one more field of engagement. The threats and disrespect exchanged online are creating a new cause for offline violence as gang members settle disagreements that started online. Gang sites often use a kind of cryptic language that has evolved between gang members enabling them to convey messages on public sites through language and inferences that others will not understand. The actual number of hard-core gang sites is hard to estimate, but is assumed to be only a couple of thousand. These sites are private and much harder to monitor. These are used to plan crimes – the kills and raids on rivals, and the long list

of crimes cited above, plus provide a place to brag about their past crimes and document the gang's 'history.' Cell phones have become as essential to gang members making their organized crime endeavors much more accessible to a vaster population inside the gang. Gang members may have several prepaid phones and calling cards to ensure their calls are untraceable for any communications about criminal activities, and easily disposable. They use encrypted internet technologies like VoiceOverIP (VoIP) on products like Skype on their mobile phones or computers to avoid wiretapping – making it nearly impossible for law enforcement to track their actions or crimes.

Furthermore, gangs use cell phones cameras and video to document crimes or collect information for future crimes, and use GPS coordinate attacks and crimes, as well as surreptitiously monitor those they think might be ratting them out. They use cell phones to assist in robberies, for extortion, as evidence of accomplished hits, to arrange drug deals, set up transactions, prostitute girls and boys, commit identity theft, and more. Gangs have been known to place a member inside a bank, (or near an ATM, or any other place that cash is transacted) to take photos of likely victims and watch to see who withdraws large sums, then send it to another gang member sitting outside the banks to identify the victim to follow and rob. Gangs also use cell phones to communicate with members behind bars, allowing incarcerated gang leaders to continue to conduct business, and for members outside to request hits against rivals also serving time. Though cell phones are illegal, prisons appear to have a very hard time of preventing them from getting into the hands of incarcerated gang members (Thomas, Date, & Venkataraman, 2007).

Klivans (2014) wrote an article after receiving an eight-page confiscated note from a correctional facility. The note contains encryptions. Gang codes change, adapt and mutate just as any language does. As new words and concepts are added to language, they are also added to communications that gang members write in code. Gang codes have long used street and prison slang as part of the communication process. Now with the popularity of "texting" in our society, we see that texting abbreviations are being added to gang documents and written in code. As Klivans examined these pages, he noticed that the document was written in a mix of English alphabet letters and code symbols. When you crack a gang code and identify the symbols used in the code, transcribing the document is just the start of understanding the content. You are going to have to be familiar with street and prison slang and now…the next thing is texting. This new discovery is something G.R.E.A.T. will want to consider as they continue to try and deter youths from joining gangs. Furthermore, social media, in addition to texting, will be used to advance gang conversations and the knowledge will be brought on by the youth members of gangs (Klivan, 2014, p. 1).

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Strategic Action Plan

Because research has been limited and because researchers have no real consensus on the definition of a gang or a gang incident, the scope and seriousness of the youth gang problem are not reliably known. Law enforcement and media reports suggest that criminal youth gangs are active in nearly every state. Youth gangs exist in large, mid-size, and small communities and in suburban areas. Youth gangs and gang incidents are defined in different ways in different communities. Key aspects of youth gang behavior are its prevalence in violent crimes, such as homicide and aggravated assault, and its concentration in some neighborhoods. The close relationship of gangs, violence, and a significant crime problem are most evident, however, when the criminal records of youth gang members are compared with those youths who are not in gangs. Youth gang membership is associated with significantly higher levels of delinquency and index crimes. The rate of violent offenses for gang members is three times as high as for non-gang delinquents. Even gang members without delinquency records have higher adjusted frequencies of hidden delinquency than do non-gang youth with delinquent records (Klivans, 2014).

The Summary of the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's *National Juvenile Justice Action Plan* (*Action Plan*) from 1996 presents innovative and effective strategies designed to reduce violence and victimization.

Through these efforts, communities and citizens are working to bring about positive change. They established neighborhood watches and citizen patrols and working with law enforcement and other agencies to close down drug houses, communities cleaned up playgrounds and parks and creating drug- and weapon-free school zones. Also, they formed community planning teams to identify risk factors for delinquency, assess resources and needs, and provide programs designed to prevent juvenile involvement in delinquency and crime (Bilchik, 1996).

The *National Juvenile Justice Action Plan*, created opportunities for youth to take part in community-building activities. In concert with community oriented policing and strict accountability for offenders, these local prevention efforts are our nation's most effective long-term weapons against crime and violence. According to Bilchik (1996), "although the public is deeply concerned about juvenile violence and victimization, many Americans do not know how they can help. Because the effects of juvenile violence are felt by entire communities, the search for solutions must be a communitywide effort, and every citizen needs to be involved" (p. 2). The *Action Plan* supports State, local, and community-based implementation of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP's) *Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders* (Wilson & Howell, 1993) and Howell's follow-up 1995 published, *Guide for Implementing the Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders* (Howell, 1995), which provide a framework for establishing a continuum of programs and services designed to reverse the trend of increased juvenile violence and delinquency. The *Action Plan,* summarized in this section, is an eight-point statement of objectives and strategies designed to strengthen state and local initiatives to

reduce juvenile violence, increase the capacity of the juvenile justice system to respond, and prevent delinquency. The primary audiences for the *Action Plan* are state and local leaders, juvenile justice practitioners, and community members who are initiating or engaging in these activities and are seeking guidance, support, and resources.

The eight objectives of the strategic action plan are as follows:

- Objective 1 - provides immediate intervention and appropriate sanctions and treatment for delinquent juveniles.
- Objective 2 - prosecutes certain serious, violent, and chronic juvenile offenders in criminal court.
- Objective 3 - reduce youth involvement with guns, drugs, and gangs.
- Objective 4 - provides opportunities for children and youth.
- Objective 5 - break the cycle of violence by addressing youth victimization, abuse, and neglect.
- Objective 6 - strengthens and mobilizes communities.
- Objective 7 - supports the development of innovative approaches to research and evaluation.
- Objective 8 - implement an aggressive public outreach campaign on effective strategies to combat juvenile violence (Howell, 1995).

Based off the failure of the above strategic action plan, the proposed program suggests no city should endorse any particular program. Instead, each city should find a program containing a few common attributes. A program that points toward effective actions we can take to reduce youth violence. The most effective route toward reducing the harm caused by gangs requires a more realistic grasp of the challenges that gangs

pose. The objective should not be to eradicate gangs—an impossible task—but rather to promote community safety. Furthermore, to reduce youth violence communities should expand the use of evidenced-based practice. Evidence-based practices are those interventions that are scientifically proven to reduce juvenile recidivism and promote positive outcomes for young people. Rather than devoting more resources to gang suppression and law enforcement tactics, researchers recommend targeting funding to support research-based programs operated by agencies in the health and human services sector. As Peter Greenwood (2007), former director of the RAND Corporation's Criminal Justice Program and an evaluator of Operation Ceasefire in Los Angeles, notes, "Delays in adopting proven programs will only cause additional victimization of citizens and unnecessarily compromise the future of additional youth" (Ludwig & Cook, 2007).

One city that never embraced the heavy-handed suppression tactics chosen elsewhere has experienced far less gang violence. In New York City, a variety of street work and gang intervention programs were fielded decades ago during a period when gang violence was on the rise. These strategies were solidly grounded in principles of effective social work practices that fall outside the realm of law enforcement, and they seem to have helped dissuade city policy makers and police officials from embracing most of the counterproductive gang suppression tactics adopted elsewhere. No seasoned New Yorker would deny the existence of street gangs. But gang-related offenses represent just a tiny blip on the New York crime screen. "Gang experts conclude that the city's serious problem with street gang violence had largely faded away by the end of the 1980s. Youth violence remains a problem in some New York City neighborhoods, but with crime falling to historic lows, the city's approach to gangs and youth crime seems to

be remarkably effective" (Greene & Pranis, 2007, p. 6). There is no "magic bullet" to end gang crime, but both the lessons from the past (i.e., 1996 OJJDP *Strategic Action Plan*) and results from research on more recent innovations in juvenile justice policy point toward more effective public safety strategies.

East Palo Alto Tennis and Tutoring

The hope of providing safe schools for the nation's youth is atop the priority list for every educator in the country. But in the last few years, law-enforcement and public school officials have experienced an epidemic of youth violence that is quickly spreading from inner cities to the suburbs. Gang activity not only means unsightly graffiti, but accelerated crime and dropout rates, the deterioration of neighborhoods, parks, and playgrounds, and wasted human resources everywhere. Gangs are no longer just the problem of those who live in the crime-ridden neighborhoods where the gangs thrive; they are now everyone's problem. Los Angeles is regarded as the nation's gang violence capital, and has been the focal point and 'guinea pig' of prevention programs and solutions, however, from a personal experience of living on Stanford University's campus and working for an after school tennis and tutoring program from 2010-2012.

- In 1988, Jeff Arons founded East Palo Alto Tennis and Tutoring (EPATT) Arons, a former Stanford tennis All-American, originally conceived EPATT as a "summer, tennis-only" program, conducted on leftover courts of the closed Ravenswood High School. Over the past 27 years EPATT has undergone a number of changes. Full timeline is available on their website epatt.org.

- 1990 - Money raised to build four courts, the only courts in East Palo Alto! EPATT became a year-round program.
- 1991 - also adding academic component. Hired first Academic Director, Dee Dee Terzian.
- 1992 - East Palo Alto earns title of "Murder Capital of the United States" for having the highest per capita murder rate in the U.S.
- 1993 - Initiated Annual Dinner fundraiser. Built four more courts at Cesar Chavez Academy to meet demand.
- 1994 - Added after-school tutoring by Stanford students via Haas Center for Public Service students in Chavez school classrooms. Over 70 Stanford University students are transported to East Palo Alto weekly to provide academic tutoring for students.
- 1995 - EPATT receives first national recognition by being featured nationally on CNN and "CBS Evening News" as a symbol of hope for the East Palo Alto. EPATT featured in Tennis Magazine for the first time as well.
- 1997- Courts removed space needed due to mandated class size reduction to 25 to make space for portable classrooms, parking, etc. Classrooms used for after-school tutoring burned down (EPATT History, 2011).
- 1998 - Stanford Men's Tennis Head Coach and founding chair, Dick Gould moves EPATT program to Stanford University's new Taube Tennis Center, with a new Executive Director and a new Academic Director.

- 1999 - one million dollars raised in one evening to build out classrooms under tennis stadium seating and to lights the tennis courts.
- 2000 - Staff offices move from Haas Center to Taube Tennis Center. Vans donated for transporting EPA students to Stanford. Original format expanded to include one and a half hours of daily after school one-on-one tutoring by Stanford students and 1 hour of daily tennis instruction. Over 100 students and 100 tutors involved daily.
- 2002 - Named one of top three tennis and tutoring programs in U.S. by Tennis Week Magazine. 2003 – EPATT implements its Parent Component.
- 2004 - Receives Stanford University's first Annual "Community Service Award" as a benchmark outreach program.
- 2008 - Named by First Serve as nation's #1 after-school tennis and tutoring program. Considered the model such program in the U.S., and visited by people from throughout the country to see "how EPATT works."
- 2009 - After 12 years under the YTA organization, EPATT becomes an independent non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Stanford signs 5-year facility use extension.
- 2011 - EPATT conducted introductory tennis on resurrected court space and basic group academics in EPA. During 2012 U.S. Open tennis tournament, CBS Sports aired a nationwide tribute to Arthur Ashe featuring a special film about EPATT (EPATT History, 2011).

Violence in East Palo Alto often takes the form of shootings, and inter-gang disputes nearly always involve "turf," or areas in the city where gangs can sell drugs. The gangs have changed over time, however, based on generational and demographic shifts. In the 1980s, East Palo Alto was home to the Midtown Hogs, a predominantly African American gang whose primary source of income was crack cocaine. The Midtown Hogs are partly blamed for the city's crack epidemic of the late eighties and early nineties. Midtown Hogs evolved into the Taliban, which most recently fought Da Vill, another predominantly African American gang, and Sac Street, a Norteño subset, according to members of the San Mateo County Gang Task Force, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they often work undercover (LeVine, 2014).

East Palo Alto's demographic shift has helped determine which gangs pervade the city. In recent years, African-American gangs spread to other parts of the Bay Area, while Latino gangs stayed closer to home. Although most gangs are divided along racial lines, some, like "Sac Street," have absorbed African Americans and Latinos who live on Sacramento Street. Drugs, principally marijuana, are the gangs' primary financial pipelines, according to the task force. Task force members said a handful of families living in East Palo Alto have connections to Mexican cartels, which smuggle drugs across the border and give them to gang members to sell on city streets. Most of the clientele is not from East Palo Alto, the task force explained. Located along Highway 101, the city is a convenient stopping point for outsiders to make a quick purchase and then speed away (LeVine, 2014).

While the Norteños funnel some drug funds to Nuestra Familia, a Mexican-American gang operating from state and federal prisons, much of the money is spent on

accessories that promote image. One task force member recalls finding a closet filled with Air Jordan's, each pair worth around $100. Angel Santuario, a community organizer for Peninsula Interfaith Action, said "bling" gives gang members status. "Some of it may be about liberation and freedom," he said. "There's a huge need in our communities to feel respected, to feel like we have dignity. For some of those folks, that's why they go out and buy brand new Nikes. It's to be respected in their world" (LeVine, 2014, pp. 1-3).

The most successful strategies for dealing with gangs are those, which emphasize prevention and intervention instead of suppression and enforcement. Loading up the environment with police officers doesn't work either. In 1992, just 2 hours before New York's Mayor Dinkins was to address a high school student body, another student shot and killed two classmates. At the time of the shootings, there were 17 police officers in the building not to mention other security personnel and precautions taken especially since the mayor was on the high school campus! Research has shown that increased incarceration does not do much good. If anything, incarceration gives the individual prestige among peers. The publicity that gang violence generates satisfies the adolescent hunger for recognition and attention. This hunger for attention may have sparked the recent outbreak of suburban school shootings. "Kids like to have their names in the paper, even if someone is killed..." said one youngster to the *Boston Globe*. Others brag about things they have done and like to portray themselves as public enemy number one. But treating gangs as a public enemy may encourage gang membership because of the widespread publicity and notoriety furnished by that sort of reaction (LeVine, 2014).

Part of the frustration experienced by adolescents who join gangs is that their academic skills are usually way below par. Thus, mentoring programs, peer tutoring, kids

helping other kids, is one inexpensive way of serving youngsters and helping them raise their confidence. The EPATT (East Palo Alto Tennis Tutoring) is a mentor program that pairs Stanford students with East Palo Alto kids in an attempt to offer them positive role models, after school homework help, and sports activity. Although its main goal is not gang prevention, it does prevent kids from joining gangs.

Though it remains one of the few places in the Silicon Valley where housing costs are within reach for low-income families, East Palo Alto has seen dramatic change in recent decades. Latinos make up the majority in the once-predominantly Black city, and even this demographic shift might be fleeting. The latest tech boom has caused home prices to soar, as start-ups and behemoths like Facebook encroach along the city's edges, pricing out longtime residents.

The demand for housing among skilled tech workers would have been unfathomable in 1992, when the city boasted the country's highest murder rate. Since then, East Palo Alto has seen a dramatic drop in crime, including 345 fewer homicides, rapes, armed assaults and robberies in 2011 than in 1992. But one problem persists — the city has struggled to lose its unwanted reputation as a center for gang activity in San Mateo County. In 2012, the situation became particularly acute for residents, some of who found themselves living in a war zone. The number of assaults involving a weapon jumped from 129 to 230 between 2011 and 2012, and again remained high last year (Crime Statistics City of Palo Alto, 2013).

In March 2011, East Palo Alto implemented Operation Ceasefire; a federally funded initiative designed to target and motivate youth with violent pasts to reshape their lives. Kimberly Smith, the former director of Operation Ceasefire, managed the

program's law enforcement side and served as an intermediary between the city and the county. One of the program's initial challenges was to relieve tension between the need to promote community relations and the need to crack down on gang violence, she said. "The community was very sensitive to having a lot of people all of a sudden being labeled as gang members," Smith said. "That created pushback and resistance" (LeVine, 2014, p. 71).

Further complicating matters is that the city's Latino population — about 65 percent — has trust issues with the police, said Angel Santuario of Peninsula Interfaith Action, a community nonprofit. Santuario has heard complaints that the department makes it difficult for citizens to report suspected criminal activity anonymously. Because residents fear retribution, they are reluctant to come forward. City Councilman Ruben Abrica believes community-policing programs have helped improve those relations. In March, after rumors circulated that the city might outsource police services to the county Sheriff's Office, hundreds showed up at a council meeting to protest. "It's not every day the community comes out to defend the police," Abrica said. "Even young people were saying that the Police Department is not perfect but we can work with the police"(LeVine, 2014, p. 71).

Community groups, notably members of the clergy and youth organizations, helped close gaps between the community and the police, according to Smith and Melvin Gaines, the department's special projects manager. Gaines said community policing reflects a change in a past mentality that police officers could "arrest [their] way out of a problem." Operation Ceasefire approached 83 potential participants, many with gang backgrounds. Forty-eight agreed to take part and 18 remain active. Two of the suspects

arrested in Operation Sunny Day were Ceasefire candidates, according to Gaines. The grant money for Operation Ceasefire ran out in December 2013. Although the city reapplied, the application was not approved because "other agencies had more compelling proposals," Gaines said in a June *Peninsula Press* interview (LeVine, 2014).

Reliance on such money poses its own challenges, he added. While grants allow for East Palo Alto to experiment with a range of community initiatives, the city is also under constant pressure to find a steady source of funding. Sarah Lawrence, the director of UC Berkeley's School of Law's Policy Analysis and Program Evaluation, sees little alternative, saying this is the "nature of federal, local and state dynamics of funding streams." Looking back, Smith thinks Operation Ceasefire could have been more successful had law enforcement been more aggressive. "The whole message of Ceasefire is that 'we hope you guys get some assistance [but] if you call our bluff we're coming after you,'" she said. "And we never went after anyone." While she does not advocate for a "police state," Smith said, having a greater number of police officers on the street is an inherent deterrent (LeVine, 2014, p. 72).

A very different approach has grown tremendous support here in Georgia. The premise based on a get-tough theory of criminology and deterrence. If you're in a gang, and you're living in northeast Georgia, Bibb County District Attorney David Cooke has a message for you. "We're coming." Cooke suspected even before he took office in January 2013, that gangs were the number one problem with crime in Macon and since taking office they have been his number one priority. From the beginning, Cooke brought in Michael Carlson from the Atlanta Metro area as a consultant, who literally wrote the book on how the Georgia evidence codes work, to help guide him and his staff. Carlson

has used his techniques to reduce homicides by 40 percent in DeKalb County and is currently prosecuting cases in Cobb County. With roughly half of all felony crimes in Bibb County being gang motivated, Cooke has a lot of chances to rid the community of gangs, that's for sure. Since taking office, Cooke has yet to lose a conviction of a gang related incident (Knowles, 2014).

At the crux of Cooke's strategy is to prosecute more and more offenders under Georgia statute (§16:15:1), commonly known as "The Georgia Street Gang and Terrorism Prevention Law," which allows Cooke to not only enhance penalties for certain crimes but more importantly allows Cooke to tie anything gang related to the criminal in open court and virtually bring out in court anything and everything a gang does. One way that Cooke is going after them is to re-indict old cases and add gang charges on them like he did in getting a conviction on Cedric Sherrod Newton, Jr. for the 2012 slaying of Udondra Hargrove, a former member of the Crips who was trying to get his life straight. Newton was a member of a rival gang called the "Mafia" (Knowles, 2014).

DeShala Dixon, another Bibb County Assistant District Attorney (ADA), was the main prosecutor in the case of gang member Bernard Bullard, a member of the "East Side Mafia" who was convicted for killing John Johnson III, a rival gang member of the Crips. It took a jury 2 hours to find him guilty of the murder along with possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony, another "add-on" thanks to the Gang Act. Once again, Judge Howard Simms gave the maximum sentence of life without parole plus 20 years. Simms, before sentencing, told Bullard that the people of Bibb County are tired of "the shooting and the killing…they're tired of it and so am I." Cooke

went on to say, “I hope every young person takes note of what the judge had to say” (Knowles, 2014).

Just this past week, Cooke’s efforts paid huge dividends to the Macon community, as his office has filed indictments that include several gang related charges in connection to a prostitution ring headed by Sidney Raymond Sapp, the alleged leader of a local gang called “M.O.E.” or “Money Over Everything.” Cooke also indicted Sapp’s mother Jerryetta, his sisters Justeene and Asialeena, as well as his baby’s mother Jacquelyn Charmain Johnson. Sidney, along with another M.O.E. gang member Navon Christine Johnson are being charged with rape, child molestation, statutory rape, pimping for a person under the age of 18, trafficking of persons for sexual servitude as well as two counts of violation of the Street Gang Terrorism and Prevention Act. Everyone else was indicted for keeping a place of prostitution for a person under 18, pandering as well as prostitution (Knowles, 2014).

On February 22, in another gang related case, 16-year-old Damion Clayton was killed at the Macon Little League field on Anthony Road. Indicted the week of March 16, 2015, for the murder are gang members Jeddarius Treonta Meadows, Trayvon Xavier Sparks and Roland Watson. Meadows and Watson are reportedly members of the “Fuck Life” gang and Starks is reportedly a Crip. Clayton, the victim, was targeted 3 months before his murder in another shooting on Cedar Avenue which killed 16 year old Alyssa Jackson instead. Both murders are the result of a turf war over the Bloomfield area (Knowles, 2014).

According to a 2012 report given by the Macon Police Department to Macon City Council, and according to both David Cooke and Macon-Bibb Sheriff David Davis, there

are three main youth gangs that inhabit Macon called "The Bloods" "The Crips" and "The Mafia" with over 400 sub-gangs, or "hybrids." The hybrids have names like "Alley Boys" and the above mentioned "Money Over Everything" gang as well as the "3400 Gang" of Pendleton Homes, a housing project on Houston Ave and "The Fort Hill Bloods," obviously located in Fort Hill. The gangs leave no area in Macon alone and can be found in Unionville, Village Green, and East Macon and among every other section of Macon-Bibb. Davis states that there has been a definite shift of activity as the East Macon/Fort Hill area used to be the location of the most gang activity. The 'hot bed' has now moved to the Bloomfield area and East Macon has 'calmed down' a good bit (Knowles, 2014). In South Georgia, youth gangs continue to grow more and more susceptible to growth based on a number of facts: migrations from northern gang members, the influx of youth gang membership in metropolitan areas such as Jacksonville (FL), and finally, the constant growth of Lowndes County with a matching gang task force budget staying the same.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

Data

Criminal youth gangs are active in nearly every state and the following research will show the factors influencing gang violence, changes in gang estimates over a decade of research, average age of youth gang members and more. Before addressing the first of the data collected, this paper sets out to address the scope of the problem.

Research has been limited and because researchers have no real consensus on the definition of a gang or gang incident, the scope and seriousness of the youth gang problem are not reliably known. Law enforcement and media reports found in researching this problem suggest that criminal youth gangs are active in nearly every state, as well as American territories such as Puerto Rico. Youth gangs exist in all type of communities and suburban areas. They may be present in one city but absent or less active in another seemingly similar community. Gangs operate in city, county, State, and Federal detention and corrections facilities. They operate in the vicinity of many schools, generally carrying out their activities near rather than within schools.

According to the research conducted by U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (1994), youth gangs and gang incidents are defined in different ways in different communities. Researchers who conducted a survey of 45 cities and six cities found that most frequently mentioned elements of a definition include certain group or organizational characteristics, such as symbols and a range of criminal activities, particularly violence and drug use and sales. "Of 35 discrete cities and jurisdictions with organized programs to combat emerging and chronic gang problems,

law enforcement officials estimated that the U.S. has some 1,439 gangs and 120, 636 gang members. African Americans (54.6 percent) and Hispanics (32.6 percent), mainly Mexican Americans, were the major racial/ethnic groups in the gang populations reported by law enforcement officials" (Bilchik, 1997, p.1). Two-thirds of the law enforcement respondents in this same survey perceived gangs as affiliated across neighborhoods, cities, or states. They stated that 75 percent of youth gang members had prior police records and that youth gang members committed 11.3 percent of FBI index crimes in their jurisdictions. However, the gang problem is not limited to juveniles; adults were reported to be involved in 45.6 percent of youth gang incidents (Bilchik, 1997, p. 1).

Although gang members with arrest records were responsible for a disproportionate amount of violent crime, the proportion of total violent crime committed by gang members is still estimated to be fairly low. However, statistics on violent crimes committed by gang members depended in large measure on the local definitions of gang incidents. Key aspects of youth gang behavior are its prevalence in violent crimes, such as homicide and aggravated assault, and its concentration in certain types of neighborhoods. Gang homicides, using a broad and inclusive definition, such as that used in Los Angeles, have ranged between 25 and 30 percent of all of the city's homicides in recent years. In a city with a more restrictive definition of gang incidents, such as Chicago, the average is about 10 percent (Bilchik, 1997).

The close relationship of gangs, violence, and a significant crime problem are most evident, however, when the criminal records of youth gang members are compared with those youths who are not in gangs. Youth gang membership is associated with significantly higher levels of delinquency and index crimes. According to the 1995

survey, “The rate of violent offenses for gang members is three times as high as for non-gang delinquents. Even gang members without delinquency records have higher adjusted frequencies of hidden delinquency than do non-gang youth” (Bilchik, 1997, p. 8).

The primary source of law enforcement reports on the prevalence of gang problems is the (NYGS). The survey is distributed annually to all law enforcement agencies that serve suburban counties and cities with 50,000 or more residents, along with a random sample of police departments that serve small cities and rural counties. Each agency is asked to describe the nature of the local youth gang problem and estimate the number and demographic characteristics of gangs and gang members in its jurisdiction. Respondents are told to exclude motorcycle gangs, prison gangs, hate groups, and gangs composed entirely of adults from their reports. Response rates have ranged from 84 to 92 percent since 1996 (Egley, Howell, and Major 2006). The National Youth Gang Center (NYGC) uses National Youth Gang Survey (NYGS) data to examine the prevalence of gang problems by type of jurisdiction and to estimate the number of gangs and gang members in the U.S. The strength of gang prevalence and population estimates is limited by the quality of law enforcement data. Local estimates of gang membership can fluctuate from year to year based on shifting definitions of gang activity and changes in the capacity to track it. I will examine the first 10 years of the data from 1995-2005 below and then re-visit the latest NYGS conducted in 2012 to show significant year-to-year variation in the number of gang members. Arlen Egley, a senior research associate, explains the “significant year-to-year reports by a given jurisdiction often reflects a ‘change in approach’ rather than a change in the gangs themselves” (Greene & Pranis, 2007, pp. 33-34).

Sharp year-to-year changes in local gang population estimates are excellent fodder for sensational media reports but say little about the severity of a local gang problem. Deborah Lamm Weisel and Tara O'Connor Shelley (2004) warn "while it is tempting to use law enforcement data about gangs and gang-related offenses to make comparisons between—or even within—jurisdictions, gang-related data are exceptionally unreliable for this purpose" (p. 60). The national estimates of gang prevalence published by NYGC are less volatile because they combine results from hundreds of jurisdictions. Nonetheless, trends in estimated city and county gang membership reversed directions three times between 1996 and 2002 (Egley, Howell, and Major 2006). Despite these flaws, NYGS data do provide a general picture of the scope and direction of the gang problem, as it is perceived by law enforcement. The most recent NYGC report indicates that the U.S. had roughly 24,000 youth gangs and 760,000 gang members in 2004 (Egley & Ritz, 2006). The numbers are daunting, immediately conjuring images of a marauding army of gun toting criminals half the size of the active U.S. military. But NYGC data indicate that the size and reach of gangs have actually declined over the past decade. The estimated gang population is down from roughly 850,000 in 1996, and the proportion of jurisdictions reporting gang problems has fallen sharply (Greene and Pranis, 2007, pp. 33-36).

The number of jurisdictions reporting gang problems fell sharply at the end of the 1990s. The largest reductions have occurred in rural counties, where the proportion of law enforcement respondents reporting gang problems has fallen by nearly half since the late 1990s. One in eight rural law enforcement agencies (12.3 percent) reported gang

problems between 2002 and 2004, while a quarter (24.3 percent) reported problems between 1996 and 1998.

The 1995 NYGS conducted by the NYGC, is the first of decade-long annual survey that will allow comparisons of changes and trends in coming years. The results of this survey confirm what earlier studies had suggested—there has been a growth in the pervasiveness of the nation's youth gang problem over time. NYGC contacted more than 4,000 agencies—the largest number ever surveyed, according to the National Gang Center. "The reports and estimates from responding agencies indicate that there were more than 660,000 youth gang members and more than 23,000 gangs active in their jurisdictions during 1995. Although these are the largest totals reported to date, the actual numbers are likely to be higher" (Gangs, August 1997, p. 1). Not all law enforcement agencies were surveyed, some of those surveyed did not participate, and the data were not extrapolated. The purpose of the 1995 NYG survey was to provide broader baseline data on the current youth gang situation, fill some informational gaps, and establish a network of reporting agencies for future data collection. It was intended, among other things, to build upon cumulative data collected by Dr. Walter Miller, a gang researcher (Bilchik, 1997).

Over nearly 25 years, Miller had collected information about youth gang activity in communities across the country from many sources. NYGC staff worked with Dr. Miller to supplement his data base by adding several hundred cities and towns that had reported youth gang activity in recent surveys, including those conducted by David Curry et al., the National Drug Intelligence Center, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and other studies whose distribution is restricted. Miller prepared a set of lists

for NYGC that identified 6,264 localities and categorized them as: (1) city or county, (2) previously reporting a gang problem or no gang problem reported, and (3) members or nonmembers of the Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS) projects (Bilchik, 1997, pp. 5-20).

From these communities, NYGC staff selected 4,120 localities (2,820 cities and 1,300 counties) to be included in the 1995 survey: 1,877 agencies that had reported having a youth gang problem at some time over the past 25 years, and 2,243 that had not previously reported gangs or that had never been surveyed (Bilchik, 1997, pp. 5-10). Although selection of the 1995 survey localities was not random, the inclusion of localities previously identified by Curry et al. in 1994 added an element of randomness (Curry et al., 1996). The 1994 researchers surveyed all cities with populations between 150,000 and 200,000 and a random sample of 284 of the 1,126 municipalities with populations ranging from 25,000 to 150,000 (Ibid, pp. 8-11).

NYGC staff next identified the law enforcement agencies serving the 4,120 counties, cities, and towns. A useful survey technique is to triangulate data in a community by questioning several agencies with diverse perspectives on the problem being surveyed. Triangulation refers to the use of more than one approach to the investigation of a research question in order to enhance confidence in the ensuing findings. Since much social research is founded on the use of a single research method and as such may suffer from limitations associated with that method or from the specific application of it, triangulation offers the prospect of enhanced confidence. Triangulation is one of the several rationales for multi-method research. The term derives from surveying, where it refers to the use of a series of triangles to map out an area. However,

to keep costs as low as possible for the first NYG survey, inquiries were made to law enforcement agencies only. The survey goal was to involve the largest number of agencies to date, and efficiency and cost were factors (Webb et al., 1966, p. 10).

Law enforcement agencies appear to have become the youth gang survey respondents of choice, particularly in recent years. A final reason for using law enforcement agencies as sources was the close working relationship between Intergovernmental Research (IIR), which operates NYGC, and the six RISS projects, which include in their membership more than 4,600 local, state, and Federal law enforcement agencies. It was believed that support by the RISS projects would facilitate and add credibility to the survey. Membership lists maintained by each RISS project were screened, and state and Federal agencies were deleted. The sample of 4,120 law enforcement agencies ultimately selected for the 1995 survey included 3,230 police and sheriff's departments that were RISS members (Bilchik, 1997, pp. 8-12).

In November and December 1995, NYGC staff constructed an administrative database in preparation for the survey mail out and processing. Using various law enforcement directories and information supplied by the RISS projects, staff created a record for each of the agencies to be surveyed. Each record contained the agency's Chief Executive Officer's or other senior official's name, mailing address, telephone and facsimile numbers, and fields for tracking dispatch, follow-up actions, and return of the survey instruments. Additional data fields indicate RISS project affiliation and whether or not gang problems had been reported previously. A separate database containing U.S. Census Bureau information was obtained and linked to the administrative database. The 1990 census and the latest population estimate for the city or county were linked to the

record of each law enforcement agency reporting. (Because they were asked to report on the unincorporated areas of their jurisdictions only, the census figures for the unincorporated areas were tied to reports from sheriff's departments.) At the same time that the agencies to be surveyed were being indexed, the survey questions and instruments were being developed and refined (Miller, 2001).

Early in planning for the 1995 survey, NYGC decided to automate the process as much as possible. Accordingly, the survey forms were designed using a software program that allowed responses to be returned by mail or by facsimile, whereupon the responses would be entered directly into an electronic database without generating paper copies. Two survey instruments were designed: one for agencies that had previously reported youth gang activity the other for agencies for which no previous report of gang problems was known to NYGC. Page one of each form contained the following instructions:

> Please report only for the jurisdiction served by your agency. Sheriff's departments should report only for their unincorporated service area and any contracted communities. Separate database containing U.S. Census Bureau information was obtained and linked to the administrative database. This was intended to prevent duplicative reporting by law enforcement agencies in the same county (Bilchik, 1995, pp. 8-12).

Instruction number two was an attempt to deal with definitional problems that have divided researchers and practitioners for years. For the purposes of this survey, a "Youth Gang" is defined as a group of youths in your jurisdiction, aged approximately 10 to 22, that you or other responsible persons in your agency or community are willing to identify or classify as a 'gang.' Do not include motorcycle gangs, hate or ideology groups, prison gangs, or adult gangs (Curry et al., 1996). Curry has described well the various definitions of "gang" that have been used by researchers in many national surveys. Further compounding the problem is the development of other definitions used by law

enforcement agencies to test and measure the criminal activity of gangs. The NYGC definition used in the 1995 survey was developed with the assistance of Walter Miller and other researchers, and although it represents consensus among those who drafted it, others may find it does not meet their needs (Miller, 2001). The upper age limit of the definition (21 years) was established by OJJDP's enabling legislation. The final instruction stated:

> This survey form was designed to be faxed to the National Youth Gang Center at [telephone number], where it will automatically be entered into a survey database. If you do not have a fax, or prefer to return the completed form by mail, please use the preaddressed envelope. If that envelope has been misplaced, please mail the survey to: [NYGC address] (Bilchik, 1997, p. 6).

A letter transmitting the survey forms to the law enforcement agencies was prepared in two versions. For agencies that were members of one of the six RISS projects, the letter was sent to the individual with whom the RISS project routinely exchanged law enforcement intelligence. For agencies that were not RISS members, the forms were sent to the police chief or sheriff. In both cases, the cover letter repeated the instructions referred to above and requested that if the addressee turned the survey form over to someone else to complete, that individual must be knowledgeable and be authorized to reply on behalf of the agency (Bilchik, 1997).

Between December 21, 1995, and January 2, 1996, 4,120 surveys were mailed to 2,820 police departments and 1,300 sheriff's departments. Approximately 50 percent of the survey forms were returned by January 31, 1996; one-half by fax and one-half by mail. Follow-up telephone calls to the agencies that did not respond to the mailed survey were then initiated, which increased the response rate considerably. Following the calls, a total of 3,440 surveys had been returned (or 83 percent of the target group); police

departments and 29.5 percent furnished 70.5 percent of these responses by sheriff's departments. (The rate of survey return by police departments was 86 percent and 78 percent by sheriffs.) The valuable assistance of the RISS projects in administering the survey is evident in the return rates: 87 percent by law enforcement agencies that were RISS members, and 72 percent by non-RISS agencies (Bilchik, 1997, pp. 6-10).

Reports were analyzed by Uniform Crime Report (UCR) regional groupings. The area with the highest number of agencies reporting gang activity was the West, followed by the Midwest, South, and Northeast. A total of 1,433 respondents (931 police and 502 sheriff's departments) reported no youth gang activity in 1995. The largest number of agencies reporting no activity was in the Midwest, followed by the South, West, and Northeast. Respondents who reported no youth gang activity were asked to rate the likelihood of youth gang problems developing in their jurisdictions in the near future on a scale from "high" (meaning a high likelihood) to "none" (meaning no likelihood of future problems). Ninety-six percent (1,379) of the respondents reporting "no gangs" provided likelihood ratings as follows: 7 percent (102) thought there was a "high" likelihood of future youth gang problems; 30 percent (409) believed there was a "medium" likelihood; 55 percent (752) rated the likelihood "low"; and only 8 percent (116) ruled out future youth gang activity altogether (Bilchik, 1997).

Respondents were asked to report from their records or, in the absence of records, to estimate how many youth gangs were active in their localities in 1995. About 13 percent of the respondents who reported youth gang problems did not report how many youth gangs were active in their locality. Of the 2,007 agencies reporting gang problems in 1995, 1,741 reported or estimated numbers totaling 23,388 youth gangs in their

jurisdictions. Previous surveys estimated national totals by directly surveying selected major cities and extrapolating data obtained from a sampling of smaller cities. The estimated number of gangs from these earlier projections for the entire country was less than this survey's actual reports from 1,741 communities. For the purpose of analysis, the number of youth gangs per reporting jurisdiction was categorized as "1–9 gangs," "10–19 gangs," "20–29 gangs," and "30 or more." Of the respondents who could report or estimate the number of gangs, about 73 percent (971) of city departments and 65 percent (272) of county agencies said they had fewer than 10 active youth gangs per reporting locality (Bilchik, 1997).

The data below highlights findings from the five NYGS conducted annually since the above 1995 survey by the NYGC. The nationally representative sample of 3,018 law enforcement agencies includes (1) all police and sheriff's departments serving suburban counties and cities with populations of more than 25,000 and (2) a randomly selected sample of police and sheriff's departments serving rural counties and cities with populations between 2,500 and 25,000. Again the survey respondents were asked to consider the same definition for youth gangs and report information only for youth gangs, defined as "a group of youths or young adults in your jurisdiction that you or other responsible persons in your agency or community are willing to identify or classify as a 'gang.'" For all the data collected from 1995-2010, all motorcycle gangs, hate or ideology groups, prison gangs, and adult gangs were excluded from the surveys. Annual response rates ranged from 84 to 92 percent during the survey years of 1996 to 2000 (Bilchik, 1997, pp. 10-16).

The proportion of respondents that reported youth gangs in their jurisdiction decreased over the survey years, from 53 percent in 1996 to 40 percent in 2000. Between 1996 and 2000, NYGC researchers observed three patterns: persistent, transitory, and a total absence of gang activity. In cities with a population of more than 250,000, all respondents reported persistent gang activity from 1996 to 2000. Eighty-six percent of cities with a population between 100,000 and 250,000 and 61 percent of cities with a population between 50,000 and 100,000 reported persistent gang activity over the survey years, whereas only 6 percent and 9 percent, respectively, reported a total absence of gang activity. In cities with a population between 25,000 and 50,000, 38 percent of respondents reported persistent gang activity, 41 percent reported transitory gang activity, and 21 percent reported a total absence of gang activity (Egley, 2002).

In suburban counties with a population of more than 100,000, 61 percent of respondents reported persistent gang activity and 9 percent reported a total absence of gang-activity from 1996 to 2000. Law enforcement agencies serving smaller cities (i.e., with a population of less than 25,000) and rural counties were less likely to report persistent gang activity during the survey years. In smaller cities, 13 percent of respondents reported persistent gang activity and 48 percent reported a total absence of gang activity. Rural counties reported 7 percent and 60 percent, respectively (Egley, 2002, p. 1).

NYGC researchers estimate that more than 24,500 gangs were active in the United States in 2000, a decline of 5 percent from 1999. However, cities with a population of more than 25,000 experienced a slight increase (up 1 percent from 1999) in the number of gangs. The estimated 12,850 gangs in these cities equal the 1996 estimate,

the largest number reported during the survey years. The overall estimate of gang members across the U.S. has exceeded 750,000 in all survey years. NYGC researchers estimate that more than 772,500 gang members were active in the United States in 2000, a decline of 8 percent from 1999. Nevertheless, cities with a population of more than 25,000, which accounted for 66 percent of all gang members in 2000, experienced an increase (up 2 percent from 1999) in the number of gang members (Egley et al., 2006).

The estimated 509,500 gang members in these cities were the most reported since 1996. A total of 284 cities with both a population of more than 25,000 and persistent gang activity reported gang homicide statistics for 1999 and 2000. Ninety-one percent of cities with a population of more than 250,000 reported at least one gang-related homicide from 1999 to 2000, as did 64 percent of cities with a population between 100,000 and 250,000, 55 percent of cities with a population between 50,000 and 100,000, and 32 percent of cities with a population between 25,000 and 50,000. Among those cities with one or more gang homicides, 47 percent reported an increase and 42 percent reported a decrease in the number of gang homicides from 1999 to 2000 (Egley, 2002).

Analysis of the National Youth Gang Surveys from 1996 to 2000 indicates that the Nation's youth gang problem continues to affect a large number of jurisdictions and has been most persistent in the largest cities. All cities with a population of more than 250,000 and 86 percent of cities with a population between 100,000 and 250,000 reported persistent gang activity from 1996 to 2000, and the prevalence of gang-related homicides was highest in cities of these sizes. Additionally, the estimated number of gangs and gang members in larger cities (i.e., with a population of more than 25,000) has remained

virtually unchanged, counter to the overall decline of gangs and gang members over the survey years (Egley, 2002, p. 2).

The 2000 NYGS is the sixth annual gang survey conducted since 1995 by the NYGC. The 2000 survey used the same sample as the surveys conducted from 1996 through 1999, which consisted of the following: A total of 1,216 police departments serving all larger cities (with populations of 25,000 or more), a total of 661 suburban county police and sheriff's departments (all suburban counties), a randomly selected sample (n = 398) of police departments serving cities with populations between 2,500 and 24,999 smaller cities, and a randomly selected sample (n = 743) of rural county police and sheriff's departments (rural counties).

Results from the 2000 NYGS indicate that the characteristics of gang-related violent crime varied according to jurisdictional size. More than half of the larger areas reported that the majority of their gang-related violent crime was committed against members of other gangs, whereas more than half of the smaller areas reported that the majority of their gang-related violent crime was committed against individuals not involved in gangs. More than half of all agencies reported that individual members acting alone or with a few other gang members committed the majority of the gang-related violent crime, and gang members returning from prison were reported to have affected local gang problems in a large number of areas. These findings highlight the importance of continuing systematic assessment and response in combating youth gang problems (Egley et al., 2006).

In 2001, of 3,018 survey recipients, 2,560 (85 percent) responded to the 2001 survey. All cities with a population of 250,000 or more reported gang activity in 2001, as

did 85 percent of cities with a population between 100,000 and 249,999; 65 percent of cities with a population between 50,000 and 99,999; 44 percent of cities with a population between 25,000 and 49,999; and 20 percent of cities with a population between 2,500 and 24,999. Thirty-five percent of suburban counties and 11 percent of rural counties reported gang activity in 2001. Additionally, 95 percent of the jurisdictions reporting gang activity in 2001 also reported gang activity in previous survey years. Based on survey results, it is estimated that nearly 3,000 jurisdictions across the U.S. experienced gang activity in 2001 (Egley et al., 2006).

Available data for gang-problem cities with a population of 25,000 or more show that 42 percent reported an increase in the number of gang members, and 45 percent reported an increase in the number of gangs from the previous two survey years. The largest gang-problem cities (i.e., those with a population of 100,000 or more) have consistently reported greater numbers of gang members over the years the survey has been conducted. A majority (56 percent) of these cities reported either an increase or no significant change in the number of gang members in 2001. Since the emergence of the youth gang survey this fact has been consistent that the greatest proportion of youth gang activity has been found in large cities.

A significant number of gang-problem cities across the U.S. reported gang-related homicides in 2001, including 69 percent of those with a population of 100,000 or more and 37 percent of those with a population between 50,000 and 99,999. More than half of all homicides in Los Angeles and Chicago were reported to be gang related in 2001 (59 percent and 53 percent, respectively). The total number of gang-related homicides (698) in these two cities alone was greater than the total number of gang-related homicides

(637) reported by 130 other gang-problem cities with a population of 100,000 or more (Egley et al., 2006).

Sixty-three percent of gang-problem jurisdictions reported the return of gang members from confinement to their jurisdiction in 2001. More than two-thirds (69 percent) of these jurisdictions reported that gang members returning from confinement considerably affected their jurisdictions' gang problem in 2001. A large proportion of these jurisdictions reported that returning members noticeably contributed to an increase in violent crime (63 percent of respondents) and drug trafficking (68 percent) by local gangs. Additionally, more than one-third (34 percent) of these jurisdictions reported the absence of community programs to assist members returning from confinement, and 35 percent could not provide information regarding these types of programs (Egley et al., 2006).

In 2002, almost 1000 less respondents were surveyed causing the lowest return of survey recipients to date. Of the 2,563 survey recipients, 2,182 (85 percent) responded to the 2002 survey. All cities with a population of 250,000 or more reported youth gang problems in 2002, as did 87 percent of cities with a population between 100,000 and 249,999. Thirty-eight percent of responding suburban county agencies, 27 percent of responding smaller city agencies, and 12 percent of responding rural county agencies also reported youth gang problems in 2002. In general, smaller city agencies outnumber larger city agencies 10 to 1, and rural county agencies outnumber suburban county agencies 3 to 1. Therefore, the steady decline of reported gang problems over the initial survey years is most notable for smaller cities and rural counties. The figure shows the percentage of law enforcement agencies, by agency type, that reported youth gang problems from 1996 to

2002. Based on survey results, it is estimated that, in 2002, youth gangs were active in more than 2,300 cities with a population of 2,500 or more and in more than 550 jurisdictions served by county law enforcement agencies. These results are comparable to those from recent NYGC surveys and provide preliminary evidence that the overall number of jurisdictions experiencing gang problems in a given year may be stabilizing (Egley et al., 2004, pp. 103-106).

According to Egley et al. (2004) it is estimated that approximately 731,500 gang members and 21,500 gangs were active in the U.S. in 2002. The estimated number of gang members between 1996 and 2002 decreased 14 percent and the estimated number of jurisdictions experiencing gang problems decreased 32 percent (p. 105). This difference is largely a result of the decline in reported gang problems by smaller cities and rural counties that have also reported comparatively fewer gang members over survey years. Larger cities and suburban counties accounted for approximately 85 percent of the estimated number of gang members in 2002.

A total of 142 cities with a population of 100,000 or more reported both a gang problem and gang homicide data (i.e., the number of homicides involving a gang member) in 2002. Of these cities, 51 reported no gang-related homicides. Of the remaining 91 cities that reported 1 or more gang-related homicides, 89 reported a total of 577 gang-related homicides and 2 (Chicago and Los Angeles) reported a total of 655 gang-related homicides. When compared with the more than 1,300 total homicides recorded in Chicago and Los Angeles in 2002, these findings suggest that approximately half of the homicides in these two cities were gang related in that year (Egley et al., 2004). Forty-two percent of respondents indicated their youth gang problem was "getting

worse" in 2002 compared with 2001 and 16 percent indicated it was "getting better." In the 2001 survey, these statistics were 27 percent and 20 percent, respectively, indicating an appreciable increase in the proportion of respondents who regarded their gang problem as worsening.

The NYGS was not independently done for the year of 2003 so this is a two-year comparison of the results from the above 2002 and 2003 youth gang survey. Of the 2,405 survey recipients, 2,275 (95 percent) responded to the 2002 and/or 2003 survey (1,524 responded in both survey years), and the remaining 130 (5 percent) did not respond in either survey year. All responding agencies serving cities in the largest population group reported youth gang problems in the study period, as did a large majority of agencies in the next largest population group. Gang problems were least likely to be reported in cities in the smallest population group and, especially, in rural counties.

Most notably, agencies serving cities in the largest population group reported numbers very different from those of all other areas: approximately 6 out of 10 reported more than 30 gangs in their jurisdiction, and an equal percentage reported more than 1,000 gang members. In contrast, a majority of agencies serving rural counties and cities in the smallest population group reported three or fewer gangs and 50 or fewer gang members. Agencies in suburban counties reported substantial variation in these numbers; in addition, more than one-third did not provide estimates of the number of gang members in their jurisdiction (Egley, 2005).

Consistent with the previous 8-year survey results, more than one-third of the agencies serving cities in the largest population group reported an annual maximum of 10 or more gang-related homicides. Relatively few agencies serving rural counties and the

cities in the smallest population group reported a gang-related homicide in the study period (2001 being an outlier year attributed to survey methods). Overall, these findings provide evidence that, in large part, gangs, gang members, and gang-related homicides are predominantly concentrated in larger cities.

Of the 2,554 survey recipients, 2,296 (90 percent) responded to the 2004 survey. NYGC estimates that 29 percent of the jurisdictions that city (population of 2,500 or more) and county law enforcement agencies serve experienced youth gang problems in 2004. Within area type, 82 percent of the agencies that serve larger cities, 42 percent of the agencies that serve suburban counties, 27 percent of the agencies that serve smaller cities, and 14 percent of the agencies that serve rural counties reported youth gang problems (Egley, 2005).

The average percentage of agencies that reported gang problems declined across all area types between the 1996–1998 and 1999–2001 survey periods. Compared with the 1999–2001 survey period, in the 2002–2004 survey period the average percentage of agencies that reported gang problems was slightly higher in smaller and larger cities, slightly lower in rural counties, and virtually unchanged in suburban counties. Based on survey results, NYGC estimates that approximately 760,000 gang members and 24,000 gangs were active in more than 2,900 jurisdictions that city (population of 2,500 or more) and county law enforcement agencies served in 2004 (Egley, 2005). These estimates, although slightly higher than those in the previous two NYGC surveys, are not statistically large enough to indicate a significant change at the national level. A nearly equal percentage of agencies with gang problems reported an increase (52 percent) versus a decrease or no significant change (48 percent) in the number of documented gang

members in 2004 compared with the 2002–2003 survey period. Larger cities and suburban counties accounted for approximately 85 percent of the estimated number of gang members in 2004.

For the first time, the 2004 survey asked about migration of gang members, or the movement of actively involved gang youth from other jurisdictions. Ten percent of responding agencies reported that more than half of the documented gang members in their jurisdiction had migrated from other areas; however, a majority (60 percent) of respondents reported no or few (less than 25 percent of documented gang members) such migrants. Among agencies that experienced a higher percentage of migration, 45 percent reported that social reasons (e.g., members moving with families, pursuit of legitimate employment opportunities) affected local migration patterns "very much." Drug market opportunities (23 percent), avoidance of law enforcement crackdowns (21 percent), and participation in other illegal ventures (18 percent) were reported as reasons for migration to a lesser degree. Agencies that experienced the highest levels of gang-member migration were significantly more likely to report migration for social reasons (Egley, 2005).

A total of 173 cities with a population of 100,000 or more reported a gang problem and gang homicide data (i.e., the number of homicides involving a gang member) in 2004. In two cities, Los Angeles and Chicago, more than half of the combined nearly 1,000 homicides were considered to be gang related. In the remaining 171 cities, approximately one-fourth of all the homicides were considered to be gang related. In addition, the number of gang homicides recorded in these cities in 2004 was 11 percent higher than the previous 8-year average. More than 80 percent of agencies

with gang problems in both smaller cities and rural counties recorded zero gang homicides (Egley, 2005).

Thirty-six percent of the responding agencies that experienced gang problems in 2004, including 51 percent of larger cities, operated a specialized unit with at least two officers who were primarily assigned to handle matters related to youth gangs. Fifty-three percent of the responding agencies indicated their youth gang problem was "getting better" or "staying about the same" in 2004 as compared with 2003, and 47 percent said it was "getting worse," an increase of 5 percentage points over the previous year. Little variation in these numbers was observed across agency types (Egley, 2005).

Of the 2,551 survey recipients, 1,798 (70 percent) responded to the 2005 survey. Within area type, 83 percent of agencies that serve larger cities, 50 percent of agencies that serve suburban counties, 33 percent of agencies that serve smaller cities, and 17 percent of agencies that serve rural counties reported youth gang problems in 2005. The 2005 study shows the percentage of law enforcement agencies, by agency type, that reported youth gang problems over the 10-year period from 1996 to 2005. A number of observations are immediately evident in 2005. First, the percentage of agencies in larger cities reporting gang problems is significantly higher than all other area types, and is followed, in order, by suburban counties, smaller cities, and rural counties. Second, the 10-year trend in prevalence rates of gang problems is remarkably similar across all area types, albeit at different levels. Briefly stated, the percentage of law enforcement agencies reporting gang problems across all areas was highest in the mid-1990s, continued to decline until reaching a low in 2001, and has since begun to trend back upward with 2005 figures most closely resembling 1999 rates (Egley et al., 2006).

Based on survey results, NYGC estimates that gangs were active in more than 3,400 jurisdictions served by city (population of 2,500 or more) and county law enforcement agencies in 2005. This estimate represents a statistically significant increase over the observed 10-year low in 2001. The upward trend of agencies reporting gang problems in recent years also corresponds to notable increases in the estimated number of gangs and gang members in the U.S., which, in 2005, were 26,000 and 790,000, respectively. Echoing the upward trend in the percentage of agencies reporting gang problems in recent years, the 2005 survey year marks the first year in the 2000s in which the estimate of gang membership size is above the 10-year average. This change in trend in 2005, underscored by the statistically significant increase over the 10-year low in 2001, is one to closely monitor in upcoming surveys (Egley et al., 2006).

Here lies the premise for why youth gang initiatives have begun to lose their traction amongst national trends and call for a new strategic action plan. A primary concern for communities is violent criminal activity by gangs, in particular lethal forms of violence generally classified as "gang-related homicides" (i.e., homicides involving a gang member as either the perpetrator and/or victim). Overall, larger cities accounted for nearly 77 percent of the recorded gang homicides across the country. However, suburban counties reported an additional 20 percent, while the remaining two area types accounted for the remainder, or approximately 3 percent. In addition to particular survey items that measure specific aspects of an agency's gang problem (e.g., documented number of gangs and gang members), NYGS also annually requests each agency to provide an overall general assessment of the current gang problem in their jurisdiction compared to previous years. A slight majority (53 percent) of agencies that reported a gang problem

also assessed their gang problem as "getting worse" in 2005 compared to 2004. The remainder reported their gang problem as "staying about the same" (37 percent) or "getting better" (9 percent). These figures varied very little within area types (Egley et al., 2006).

Taken as a whole, the results of the 2005 NYGS continue to emphasize the expansiveness and seriousness of the gang problem across the United States. Following a marked decline throughout the late-1990s, gang-prevalence rates, as well as estimated total gang membership size, have trended upward in recent years, representing statistically significant increases over 10-year lows in 2001. These findings are suggestive of a resurgence of gang activity on a national level.

After examining a decade of National Youth Gang Surveys the provided data must be taken with this caveat, the mental gymnastics required to square law enforcement gang estimates with youth survey data are convoluted, forcing us to carefully consider the possibility that the law enforcement estimates are simply wrong. There are much simpler explanations for why law enforcement would tend to underestimate White gang populations and overestimate nonwhite gang populations.

First, suburban, small-town, and rural law enforcement agencies may be less capable of detecting and tracking gang activity than urban police agencies. Small-town officers may not recognize gang activity, and small-town police departments may find it more difficult to establish and maintain gang databases. These factors could contribute to the undercount of white gang members, who are more likely to live in majority white suburbs and towns than are nonwhite gang members. Second, the practices employed by urban law enforcement agencies to identify and track gang members may contribute to

the nonwhite over-count. Gang databases are notoriously unreliable because there are often too few controls on who is put in them and also because too little effort goes into removing people who are no longer active gang members from the database (Egley, Howell, & Major, 2006).

NYGC staff cites the second problem as one reason for the apparent aging of the youth gang population (Egley, Howell, & Major 2006). Jurisdictions that began tracking gang members at a given point keep people in their files long after they have ceased "banging," creating the false impression that the membership is steadily aging and growing. Egley also observes that law enforcement agencies have an institutional bias toward identifying older individuals as the source of gang problems: "The longer they have the problem ...the more police start focusing on the older members, thinking that it's going to solve the gang problem" (Greene & Pranis, 2007, p. 43).

Third, there is ample evidence that police misidentify minority youth as gang members based on their race and ethnicity, style of dress, and association with gang peers. Siegel (2003) notes that, according to a report prepared by the Los Angeles district attorney's office, "46.8 percent of the African American men between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-four in L.A. County have been entered into the police gang-tracking database" (p. 10). Siegel also cites a 1993 *New York Times* report that "two of three young black men in Denver were on a gang suspect list." As an NAACP official put it at the time: "They ought to call it a blacklist. ... It's not a crackdown on gangs; it's a crackdown on blacks" (Siegel, 2003, p. 11). After considering the extensive list of reasons the OJJDP NYGS results can be skewed varying every year we must also understand why the information is valuable. Among one of the main reasons is

consistency of the same polling data to be asked and evaluated by the same administration agencies. Furthermore, the numbers though a bit varying were extremely consistent considering polling was voluntarily done by cooperating police departments. Finally, the results are examined for a decade in a row and to see the changes in youth gang data cannot be found elsewhere for the same amount of time. Using this many years and the most recent poll below conducted in 2012 gives the best impression of nationwide trends and changes in youth gang trends.

The most recent poll was conducted in 2012 where gangs were active in slightly less than 30 percent of the responding jurisdictions. This estimate has declined slightly over the past 4 consecutive years and is at the lowest point in nearly a decade. The decline from 2011 to 2012 can be almost solely attributed to the drop in smaller cities, where gang prevalence has decreased nearly 10 percentage points since 2010. Across jurisdiction types, prevalence rates of gang activity followed a marked decline in the late 1990s, increased in the early 2000s, and, with the exception of smaller cities, have generally stabilized in recent years (Egley et al., 2013).

Approximately 85 percent of larger cities, 50 percent of suburban counties, and 15 percent of rural counties have reported gang activity in each of the past four surveys. The greatest change in recent years has occurred in smaller cities, where the percentage of agencies reporting gang activity has significantly declined—approximately 25 percent reported gang activity in 2012, down from 34 percent in 2010. This is the lowest rate recorded in more than a decade (Egley et al., 2013).

The increase in the estimated number of gangs (8 percent) and gang members (11 percent) is primarily attributable to increased estimates that larger cities reported. For

example, more than 50 percent of the net increase in the estimated number of gang members in 2012 occurred in areas with larger populations. Along with the declining prevalence rates of gang activity in smaller cities (and the historically low rates in rural counties), these results suggest that gang activity is becoming even more concentrated in urban areas. These findings do not support the popularly held notion that gang activity is spreading outward to less densely populated areas.

In terms of gang-related crime, law enforcement agencies report that they do not regularly record offenses as "gang related," with the exception of homicides. Thus, the NYGS can only report findings related to this one criminal offense type. Respondents reported a total of 2,363 gang-related homicides in the U.S. in 2012. The Federal Bureau of Investigation's *Uniform Crime Reports* estimates that there were more than 14,800 homicides nationally in 2012. Taken together, these findings suggest that gangs were involved in approximately 16 percent of all homicides in the United States in 2012 and underscore the considerable overlap between gang activity and violent crime (Egley et al., 2013).

Compared with the previous 5-year average, the number of gang-related homicides that NYGS respondents reported increased by more than 20 percent in 2012. This increase is due to higher counts of reported gang homicides in certain larger cities in the NYGS sample and also to NYGS respondents reporting more completely compared with previous years (i.e., the increase in 2012 is partly an artifact of agencies reporting more complete data). Fifty-five percent of the responding agencies characterized their gang problems as "staying about the same" in 2012, an increase over the percentage of agencies in 2010 and 2011 and the largest percentage that the survey has ever recorded.

Understanding law enforcement practices and procedures for designating individuals as gang members provides insight into the type and range of data maintained. The 2012 NYGS asked respondents to characterize the frequency of use of six common practices for designating an individual as a gang member. The percentage of agencies reporting the use of a practice as "very often" is as follows, in descending order: displays gang symbols (66 percent of respondents), has been arrested or associates with known gang members (56 percent), self-nomination in a custodial setting (54 percent), self-nomination in a noncustodial setting (49 percent), designated by another law enforcement agency (42 percent), and identified by a reliable informant (25 percent). The frequency of use of self-nomination is notable, since many states permit this technique to be used as a sole indicator (Egley et al., 2013).

The staggering figures below reveal after over 20 years of youth gang initiative and evaluating four different youth gang initiatives, the OJJDP, G.R.E.A.T., D.A.R.E., and Operation Ceasefire, the prevalence of gang problems is again on the rise. In G.R.E.A.T. Esbensen and Osgood in 1999 conducted a 1-year survey and another to verify the results in 2001. The study used cross-sectional and longitudinal design and to recap, the multi-component evaluation found that the G.R.E.A.T. program is implemented as it is intended and has the intended program effects on youth gang membership and on a number of risk factors and social skills thought to be associated with gang membership. Results 1 year post-program showed a 39 percent reduction in odds of gang-joining among students who received the program compared to those who did not and an average of 24 percent reduction in odds of gang joining across the 4 years post-program. However, in 2006, the University of Missouri-St. Louis was awarded a

grant from the National Institute of Justice to determine what effect, if any, the G.R.E.A.T. program had on students. To assess program effectiveness, they mounted a multi-strategy research design that included the following components: 1) assessment of G.R.E.A.T. officer training; 2) surveying of a) officers teaching the program and b) teachers and school administrators in whose classrooms and schools the program was delivered; 3) observation of more than 500 classroom sessions; and 4) a randomized control trial involving 3,820 students nested in 195 classrooms in 31 schools in 7 cities. These students were surveyed six times in the course of 5 years thereby allowing assessment of both short- and long-term program effects. The results showed the G.R.E.A.T. program to be implemented well nationwide but not yielding the desired outcome of reduction of gang involvement. In fact, G.R.E.A.T. has proven to show little deduction in the way of juvenile delinquency at all (Esbensen & Peterson and Taylor, 2012, pp. 125-130).

Braga and Pierce (2005) found that the Ceasefire intervention made a large impact on the yearly percentage of traceable handguns that were new with a fast time-to-crime (which is the time between a firearm's first sale at retail and subsequent recovery in a crime) recovered by the Boston (Mass.) Police Department. Simple pre/post comparisons showed that the percentage of traced handguns with a fast time-to-crime increased steadily between 1991 and 1996, reaching a peak of 53.8 percent of traced handguns in 1996. Then between 1997 and 1999, the percentage of traced handguns with a fast time-to-crime decreased dramatically to 15.6 percent and remained at this lower level through 2003. Counting 1997 as the first full year of gun market intervention, there was a 47 percent reduction in the percentage of new traced handguns in Boston, from an average

of 40.4 percent between 1991 and 1996 to an average of 21.4 percent between 1997 and 2003.

Multivariate analysis (which controlled for other predictor variables) of new handguns recovered in Boston found that Operation Ceasefire was associated with a statistically significant reduction in the percentage of recovered handguns that had a fast time-to-crime. Ceasefire was associated with a 22.7 percent reduction in the average monthly percentage of all recovered handguns that were new and a 24.3 percent reduction in the average monthly percentage of all recovered youth handguns that were new, as well as with a 29.7 percent reduction in the average monthly percentage of illegal possession handguns that were new and a 17.4 percent reduction in the average monthly percentage of all recovered substantive crime handguns that were new, all reductions were statistically significant (Braga & Pierce, 2005). However, in the 20 years following the Boston Gun Project almost 60 cities have participated in Operation Ceasefire with a staggering 1 percent having a 10 percent or better reduction for more than one year after the project has been funded. It is evident that Boston's results will not be duplicated (Braga & Pierce, 2005). Moreover, Operation Sunny Day in East Palo Alto resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars that could have been generated to create other funded initiatives. It is the goal of this thesis to prove that through using the proper delinquency prevention strategies and placing federal and local funding in the proper channels we can again drop youth gang participation to the all time lows of 2000 as seen in the OJJDP survey. Moreover, it is through demographic specific strategies as the one proposed here in Lowndes County that will better assimilate different agencies to one

goal of educating youth, providing futures, and growing the community in ways no other program can provide.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION

Project Design

During the late 19th and throughout the 20th century, strategies of inquiry associated with quantitative research were those that involved the post-positivist worldview and that originated mainly in psychology. These include true experiments and less rigorous experiments call quasi-experiments. Qualitative research methods for gathering data in a criminal justice environment include observing behaviors of small groups of people, focus groups, interviews and individual case studies. Qualitative research focuses on human life experiences in a social context. This method of research emphasizes understanding the meaning attached to events (Creswell, 2014, p. 13).

Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants. They may use a protocol—an instrument for collecting data—but the researchers are the ones who actually gather the information. They do not tend to use or rely on questionnaires or instruments developed by other researchers. This strategic plan is the result of a literature review of multiple gang violence reduction initiatives. East Palo Alto Operation Ceasefire, a 10-year study conducted by the Office of Justice merged with the National Gang Center (1995-2005), also a national youth gang survey conducted most recently by the OJJDP in 2012. Furthermore, the national initiatives and surveys polled in this thesis and National Gang Center have similar components. Its key components reflect the best features of existing

and evaluated programs across the country. The model outlines five strategies: community mobilization, social intervention, opportunities for educational and vocational advancements, suppression, and organizational change and development. As most gang members join between the ages of 12 and 15, prevention is a critical strategy within a comprehensive response to gangs that includes intervention, suppression and reentry.

The youth gang initiative would be implemented in Lowndes County after the Board of Supervisors and County Department heads would convene on a meeting. The meeting consisted of County agencies and department leaders reporting on their efforts to reduce gang violence through prevention, intervention, suppression, and reentry services. The next component is contracting a group of social policy research associates to prepare a strategic plan that improves alignment of Lowndes County's gang violence prevention efforts leading to a greater impact going forward. This plan builds on the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) (Vinz et al., 2013, pp. 1-20).

Stakeholders in Lowndes County and across the nation have gained experience and know-how on models and methods designed to address this phenomenon. A significant body of evidence points to what works and what does not. Another advantage this plan has is the opportunity to partner with Valdosta State University as East Palo Alto Tennis and Tutoring took advantage of accessibility in to Stanford University. This experience offers beneficial effect of attracting technical assistance and some initial funding.

A similar effect can be seen in Monterrey County, California, in the city of Salina. Salina is one of 10 cities chosen to have participate in the California Cities Gang

Prevention Network and National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention—a White House initiative. This experience offers beneficial effect of attracting technical assistance and some initial funding. It has also introduced local professionals to top experts in the field (Vinz et al., 2013, p. 9). The research and interviews done in Monterrey County revealed a positive vision. "County Departments and other agencies working on violence reduction revealed a common vision: creating a healthy, vibrant place for youth to grow strong, parents to be supported, and elders to share wisdom—a safe, sound place to live with economic opportunity for everyone" (Vinz et al., 2013, p. 10). This strategic plan is the product of extensive interviews and literature review. It provides top-level strategies for comprehensive, holistic approach to reducing violence and provides for an organizational structure for implementation.

East Palo Alto Tennis and Tutoring (EPATT) has positively impacted the children of East Palo Alto. Many students in EPA do not focus as much on education as shown through the 35 percent graduation rate. Rather than go to college, many become involved in gangs. This program encourages students from kindergarten to 12th grade to learn and focus on their education. I was able to call my former employer and head of the EPATT program and ask about the success the program is continuing to have. "EPATT requires parent participation or any standing advocate for a child," said Dave Higaki, the executive director of EPATT. They expect a parent, grandparent or older sibling to support their education. EPATT has approximately 160 tutors, Stanford undergraduates, who work one-on-one with students to help with any academic concerns. They also give study tips, and help them prepare for test. This ensures that all kids will learn the needed subjects. Many have used EPATT for 3 to 4 years, and they have been able to go to

college. EPATT does not necessarily deter children from joining gangs or not participating in school, but they make sure education is focused "EPATT makes education relevant," Higaki said.

Here in Lowndes County we can offer better education not by going to the middle and high schools but instead bringing the youth to us on Valdosta State campus. By holding the program here on campus I believe it offers two opportunities unavailable in any other setting. First, the opportunity for the participants to experience a university setting and providing a goal in which to aim to achieve, even if they do not come from families who have shared the same fate. Second, it provides the opportunities for college students to gain valuable experience in giving back and tutoring the underprivileged youth. In EPATT, we used tennis to build skills, persistence, and opportunity to help low-income youth beat the odds, however, I truly believe this should be spread across all athletics at Valdosta and a partner venture with academia.

Policy Implementation

This plan is a product of multiple interviews with county department heads, representatives of key agencies operating in gang violence reduction, and national experts in the field of gang reduction. Also using an extensive literature review of frameworks and best practices in violence prevention (G.R.E.A.T.), OJJDP NYGS (1995-2005, 2012), national review of Operation Ceasefire, and an overview of three regions of Georgia's youth gang problems. Lowndes County must show a willingness to engage on the issue of gang prevention and collaborate across departments in order for this policy to be successful. The ability to engage on this gang issue collaboratively across departments

provides a strong basis for the systematic changes needed to achieve essential objectives, and promises to sustain the partnerships and collaborations necessary for success.

Monterey County, California had a spike in homicides during 2009 that were determined to almost entirely be gang-related. In 2010, Monterey County led the state of California in youth homicide rates for the second year in a row making it a perfect candidate to propose a new gang violence policy. "At 24 per 100,000, for victims between the ages of 10 and 24 years, the County's homicide rate is nearly three times that of the state of California and almost 50 percent higher than Alameda County, which ranks just behind Monterey County in the number of youth homicides" (Vinz et al., 2013, p. 6). Gang violence is concentrated in three 'hot spots' in Monterey County: (1) Salinas, which has suffered a a chronically high homicide rate; (2) South County, where gang violence spiked in 2012 to highest per capita homicide rate in the County; and (3) Seaside, Sand City, and Marina. According to Seaside Chief of Police Vicki Myers, violent crime has risen between 300 percent to 350 percent over the last year (Vinz et al., 2013, p. 7).

According to an article in the *Valdosta Daily Times* (Sept. 7, 2014). The South Georgia Gang Task Force has identified more than a dozen active gangs and hundreds of gang members in the Valdosta/Lowndes County area and are working to educate the community about their existence and to persuade potential recruits not to join.
The South Georgia Task Force monitors and responds to gang activity in the Southern Judicial District, which includes Brooks County, home to an estimated 300-gang members and has become a microcosm of the larger war of many youth gangs. Local and nationally affiliated groups have operations in Lowndes. The MS-13 gang, a nationally

affiliated group, has developed a presence mostly outside Valdosta city limits in Lowndes County. The Hammerskins, a national white power organization, has as well. "We don't see them too much, but when we do see the Hammerskins it is when we are dealing with a narcotics violation," said the specialist. "We do have some form of Crips and some Bloods. Some represent the west coast, and represent the east coast. We do have gang members with Folk Nation and Gangster Disciples, and we do have some hybrid groups," said the specialist (Floyd, 2014, p. 1).

The hybrid groups are mostly homegrown and are not affiliated with a national group, though they may associate with them. As Valdosta has grown, so continues to grow its youth gang problem. Even though whatever exists of a gang culture in Valdosta has largely been imported, it has been established long enough to ensnare local recruits. "They have some that are second generation now. Their brother or sister was in it, or their parents were in it, and it goes from there," said the specialist. "Some live in neighborhoods where gang activity is prevalent, and that's what young people see. The gang members are the ones stepping out with wads of money. They are the ones who have the women. They're the ones who dress cool. They're the ones that nobody messes with. So, these are the ones the kids try to identify with" (Floyd, 2014, p. 2).

These gangs often take the name of their neighborhood or street, according to the specialist. The Center for American Progress' recent year-long study, *The Economic Benefits of Reducing Violent Crime*, estimated "the cost of violent crime in eight American cities in terms of direct and indirect costs to government agencies and individuals at nearly $17.6 billion" (Shapiro & Hassett, 2012, p. 20).

For this proposal Lowndes County would need approximately $1 million per year in gang-violence related costs to be imposed on government agencies and community residents. Currently, public safety in the 2015 Lowndes County Annual budget was $17.5 million of the total expenses. The Lowndes County Sheriff's Office is a member of a multi agency gang and violent crime task force operated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and comprised of investigators from the Lowndes County Sheriff's Office, the Valdosta Police Department, the Colquitt County Sheriff's Office, and the Thomasville Police Department.

The unit targets criminal enterprises focused on violent crimes and related activities as associated to both local and regional organized and semi-organized gangs, as the threats faced by our community have increased with the dramatic rise in such offenses. The goal of the unit is to both deter and/or prosecute offenders involved in gang activities, to educate the community as to the threats posed by these offenders, and to assist other divisions of the Lowndes County Sheriff's Office and associated law enforcement agencies in addressing crime related issues. However, more coordinated and effective prevention, intervention, suppression, and reentry strategies can have a direct positive long-term financial impact, both in cost-savings and potential revenue. The true benefit of this proposal is it strives to increase strategically the impact of every dollar already invested, rather than merely investing more of government funding (Floyd, 2014). This proposal would be in direct partnership with this multi-agency gang and violent crime task force.

A 4-year plan will be implemented to phase out the 15-year-old D.A.R.E program that has been implemented by the Lowndes County Board of Education. After 2019 it is

hoped that all agencies involved in the gang task force will have partnership in this new initiative to promote education and prevent youth delinquency. Currently, in Lowndes a four person D.A.R.E. team go into the elementary schools of Lowndes County and teach students for a 12 week block of instruction per school; ending with a culmination ceremony. D.A.R.E. is also taught with a 2-week program in the middle schools and high school as well. Members of the D.A.R.E. team in addition to being certified law enforcement officers receive additional yearly training in facilitating in a classroom setting and effective teaching methods and updates as mandated by D.A.R.E. America. When not in a classroom teaching, each D.A.R.E. officer remains in the school. Given that many of out schools populations are getting very large, schools are communities of their own. D.A.R.E. officers protect those communities. Many of these attributes of the D.A.R.E. program can be administered in the partnership with Valdosta State University.

The same officers being trained for D.A.R.E. currently in Lowndes County could be trained and facilitated in the same means through this new initiative. Education would be relied on heavily but not limited to a two-week program in middle and high schools as it is now. One glaring issue that must be met in this new program would be an application for federal funding. D.A.R.E. is often classified under the Lowndes County Budget for drug resistance programs, therefore, D.A.R.E. receives the majority of its funding locally from Lowndes Drug Action Council, Inc. (LODAC). LODAC is a non-profit organization funded primarily by Lowndes County and the City of Valdosta. LODAC has received additional funding from High Risk Youth Grants, the Georgia Bar Foundation,

and the Governor's Discretionary Fund. LODAC also accepts contributions (About LODAC, n.d.).

In the first year, the program will be a summer only project until a full-time academic director could be hired. After the phasing out of D.A.R.E. it would be easier to access some of the LODAC funding needed to provide necessary school supplies and other materials for the underprivileged youth to use in the curriculum. Moreover, during the 4-year phasing out it will require the current officers to change their training from D.A.R.E. to the new program that would be facilitated through Valdosta State University. This training initially would be free since the program is being created here in Lowndes County. The major cost would accumulate after the phasing out of D.A.R.E. in order to launch a 5-year study to measure the effectiveness of the program and cooperation of acting agencies involved.

Gang violence though a relatively new phenomenon in Lowndes, is already beginning to exact heavy economic and social costs. Stakeholders in Lowndes County and across the nation have gained experience and know-how on models and methods designed to address this phenomenon. A significant body of evidence points to what works and what does not. Using the five steps proposed earlier in the Comprehensive Gang Model developed by the OJJDP are already in place or are proposed for implementation in this plan.

An initiative will only be successful if it is well managed from its design phase through its implementation. Due to the complexity of the gang violence issue and the fact that different county departments maintain different kinds of resources and assets that can help address the problem, this police department will create a position to oversee the

design and then implementation. This new position will be called the gang violence prevention coordinator. To ensure access to key departments the coordinator will need to have their own office, furthermore, to ensure accountability the coordinator should report to the county administrator. The organizational structure required to carry out the action plan must follow the functional requirements of the plan. This is the job of the coordinator to convene, manage, and support an interdepartmental planning and implementation process, sustain the effort, and manage its progress over time. The implementation needs to be measurable against an agreed upon set of outcomes. The workgroup (district attorney, sheriff, probation, public defender, economic workforce) must receive regular updates about the progress toward these outcomes and their responsibilities clearly defined.

The approach on implementing the plan is based on the Collective Impact Model for Social Change. Collective impact is particularly suited to initiatives that require coordination and collaboration among many different stakeholders who are looking to impact a shared goal, though they may have different and complementary individual missions: collective impact requires all participants to have a shared vision for change, one that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions. Take a close look at any group of funders and nonprofits that believe they are working on the same social issue, and you quickly find that it is often not the same issue at all. Each organization often has a slightly different definition of the problem and the ultimate goal. These differences are easily ignored when organizations work independently on isolated initiatives, yet these differences splinter the efforts and undermine the impact of the field as a whole. Collective impact requires that

these differences be discussed and resolved. Every participant need not agree with every other participant on all dimensions of the problem. In fact, disagreements continue to divide participants in all of our examples of collective impact. All participants must agree, however, on the primary goals for the collective impact initiative as a whole (Kania & Kramer, 2011, p. 1).

Though this approach is typically used across different organizations in a community, it applies equally within a large organization, such as a county government. Even in Lowndes County, collective action on a top priority cause requires a driven department or a dedicated leader.

- This approach requires that the following five conditions are met:
- Common agenda- common agenda that groups have a shared vision for change. That means they also have a shared understanding of the problem and its solutions.
- Shared measurement- shared measurement requires groups to define common data points that are consistently collected and continually monitored for outcomes.
- Mutually reinforcing- Mutually reinforcing activities are groups that have different activities that reinforce and compliment each other around the common agenda, and are coordinated around an action plan.
- Continuous communication is communication between partners and the coordinator is consistent and open, building trust and cohesion between groups.

- Backbone organization is the final requirement, it requires a dedicated staff with the right skill set to coordinate and monitor the activities of the group around the action plan. Neutral means the backbone staff work for the shared agenda only, not to move forward an individual agenda (Kania & Kramer, 2011, p. 20).

Launching an interdepartmental initiative such as this is complex and multi-faceted. The challenge comes defining the success of the program and tracking Lowndes-Counties progress towards that success. An independent third-party evaluator should be brought in to track the initiative.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSION

Findings

The idea that gangs are a temporary phenomenon of deviant youth that criminal justice policies can bring to an end is nothing more than an impossible fantasy. The gangs of the early 20th century, were localized and sporadic and while many gangs are still like this, many others are not. Street gangs are often deeply embedded in their communities and societies. They have been around for generations, have multiple generation members, and are rooted in local underground economies (even some legal economic activity). If it is unlikely that gangs are going to disappear, how should societies minimize their negative impact? One radical approach may be to cut the ground beneath the gang economy by decriminalizing the use of drugs. The government of Mexico, arguably the country most plagued by drug violence, has come to this conclusion and has decriminalized the possession of small quantities of drugs. The War on Drugs is notable because of its almost absolute failure (i.e. Third Strikes Legislation). It has put hundreds of thousands of people into the U.S. prison system. The U.S. prison system is being filled beyond capacity due to the influx of prisoners being penalized for drug related offenses. The U.S. spends billions every year trying to stop the trade in illegal drugs and tens of thousands of people employed in this effort. Yet with all these measures hardly a dent has been made in the demand and consumption of illegal drugs. Drug addiction is a public health problem and should be treated as such

through regulation, counseling, treatment, and education. It is almost arbitrary to decide some drugs, for example marijuana, are illegal and others like alcohol and tobacco are not. In conditions of illegality levels of drug use have not dropped significantly, whereas in conditions of legality the use of nicotine has (Longmire, 2011).

Alcohol prohibition led to the development of the gangster economy that featured widespread corruption and drive-by shootings. The War on Drugs has blown prohibition out of the water when it comes to the damage it has caused. The procuring, transport, and sale of such drugs is the fuel that keeps many gangs in business. It is a major source of violence as gangs fight over territorial markets and to ensure compliance in drug transactions. Without the drug trade, youth gangs and violence would be significantly reduced.

The frontline of defense against violent street gangs must of course be the police. But how this policing takes place is key to whether gangs flourish or are contained. Many police departments have formed gang units with a militaristic approach to the problem, including sweeps, mass incarceration, and crackdown on minor criminality. A more effective strategy would be for police to become more involved with the welfare of poor communities, helping with referrals to social service agencies, and using a less coercive approach with youth (D.A.R.E.). Most youth or street gangs are rooted in a particular geographic community that they can count on for support. This support is obtained in a number of ways—fear and violence, peacekeeping, giving to charity, or even advocating for rights. The relationship between a gang and a community depends on a number of factors—the strength of police or other official presence, poverty level, nature of local economy and rate of drug consumption.

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APPENDIX A:

Institutional Review Board Exemption