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Responding to Gang-Related Crime and Delinquency

A Review of the Literature

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Director's Foreword

In August 1995, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) convened a conference with researchers and practitioners to address the increasingly pressing problem of violence and other crime involving gang members. Researchers who have closely studied this issue developed "working papers" to help stimulate and guide discussion. In an effort to disseminate these papers to the wider audience of researchers and practitioners who did not attend the conference, NIJ has converted two of them into *Research in Action* reports.

This report, *Responding to Gang-Related Crime and Delinquency: A Review of the Literature*, reviews the many types of responses to gang crime that have been implemented in the United States throughout the last century. It also discusses the results of studies of these various responses in an effort to draw lessons from which current efforts can benefit. The second report, *The Link Between Gangs and Delinquency* (published concurrently), presents a detailed review of the research literature concerning the relationship between gangs and delinquency. It is hoped that the reports will help provide researchers and practitioners alike with a strong foundation and historical context from which to build new responses to the gang problem and improve upon existing ones.

Jeremy Travis
Director, National Institute of Justice

Issues and Findings

Responding to Gang-Related Crime and Delinquency

Discussed in brief: A review of the research literature on responses to gang-related crime and delinquency; responses examined were grouped under the five categories identified by the OJJDP National Youth Gang Suppression and Intervention Program: community organization, social intervention, opportunities provision, suppression, and organizational development and change.

Key issues: The review of the literature identified key issues as:

- A tendency to fail distinguish between gang-related delinquency and delinquency in general.

- Problems of denial and exaggeration.

- The linking of responses to perceived causes.

- The need for evaluation.

- The failure of responses to gang problems to take variations in gang problems into account.

Key findings: Though responses to gang crime and delinquency problems date back to the early part of this century:

- Programs have continuously failed to make a distinction between gang delinquency and delinquency in general.

- Programs have rarely been systematically evaluated.

- Program designs have seldom been linked to the theoretical literature or policy makers' own perceptions of the causes of gang problems.

- Programs have not always taken variations in gang problems associated with communities and ethnicity into account.

Target audience: Gang researchers, law enforcement practitioners, social service practitioners, juvenile justice and criminal justice system practitioners.

In recent years, policy makers and the public have become increasingly concerned about the causes and correlates of gang-related crime and delinquency. An unprecedented number of new programs have recently been undertaken or are in the process of being implemented. For example, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has initiated the Comprehensive Community Responses to Gangs and Safe Futures programs, and the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services is sponsoring the Anti-Gang Initiative in 15 cities and a Youth Firearms Violence Initiative in 10 additional cities. These are the most visible (and best funded) programs, but they have been undertaken in concert with a plethora of additional efforts.

These recent efforts follow on the heels of over half a century of programmatic responses to gang-related crime. During this time, just what have we learned? This report reviews the research literature in an attempt to answer this question. (Due to space limitations, the report cannot provide complete details about any specific program; for such information, readers may consult the documents referenced in the endnotes.) In addition to reviewing what we know, the report examines some of the gaps that remain and makes recommendations about what issues need to be addressed in developing future responses to gang-related crime and delinquency.

What Do We Know?

Categories of Response Strategies

In 1988, Spergel and Curry surveyed 254 agency representatives from 45 cities and six institutional sites as part of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP) National Youth Gang Suppression and Intervention Program (NYGSIP).[1] Respondents answered open-ended questions on program activities, priority of strategies employed, and estimates of effectiveness of agency efforts. From their analysis of respondent answers, the researchers identified five categories of response strategies (see Figure 1). Characterizing organizational change/development as a "subsidiary or modifying strategy," Spergel noted that each of the other four strategies—community organization, social intervention, opportunities provision, and suppression—"has assumed some dominance in a particular historical period."[2]

Selected programs under each category are briefly described below. We concentrate on programs either that have been subjected to a considerable amount of research scrutiny or for which systematic evaluations are published. We also focus on programs that were specifically designed

to respond to gang-related crime and delinquency as differentiated from general or non-gang-related crime and delinquency problems. The goal of the NYGSIP survey was to identify promising programs that existed in 1988. Detailed descriptions of the "most promising" of those programs from five communities and one correctional site can be found in Spergel and Chance.[3] Those promising projects studied by Spergel and his colleagues from 1988 to 1991 were used to develop prototypes and models for new programs.[4] Five community-level programs based on these models were implemented in summer 1995 with the support of OJJDP's Comprehensive Response to America's Gang Problem program.[5] These demonstration projects will be systematically evaluated by Irving A. Spergel and a University of Chicago research team.

It is important to point out that there was a gap of more than a decade in which the criminal justice system and many researchers "forgot" or avoided responding to gang problems.[6] If we want to learn from gang response programs that have been systematically evaluated, we have to study programs conducted and studied prior to 1980. Otherwise, we will have to wait for the completed evaluations of programs that have begun since the "rediscovery" of gang problems in the late 1980's.

Community Organization

When Spergel outlined "community action" responses to delinquency problems in his study of New York City gangs, he included "organization" as one of three major categories of responses.[7] But what does "community organization" actually entail? In a subsequent work, Spergel used the term "interorganizing" to describe "efforts at enhancing, modification, or change in intergroup or interorganizational relationships to cope with a community problem."[8] Spergel and Curry classified all strategies that attempted to create community solidarity, education, and involvement as forms of "community organization."[9] They considered "networking" the most basic community organization strategy—as long as it was not restricted to justice system agencies—and also included multiple agency prevention efforts and advocacy for victims.

Frederic Thrasher's research on Chicago gangs in the early decades of this century has continued to receive praise from contemporary researchers.[10] Unquestionably a community organization approach, Thrasher's plan for responding to gang crime problems had six components, shown in Table 1. Thrasher felt that authority for the community response had to be concentrated in one agency that could be held directly accountable to community residents. To be effective, local programs had to be based on timely and systematic social research. Thrasher specifically

Figure 1. Basic Strategies for Dealing with Youth Gangs (Spergel & Curry, 1990, 1993; Spergel, 1995)

eschewed basing program development on "superficial" and unsystematic research. Services intended to prevent gang involvement, in Thrasher's view, had to be "integrated," whether such services were targeted to an individual child, a family, or a gang. By targeting all children in an at-risk area, programs insured inclusion of the most delinquent youths whom Thrasher assumed were the most likely not to be involved in programs. Thrasher maintained that an effective response required community residents to be continuously informed and educated. Thrasher's ideas were never implemented or subjected to evaluation, but with added influence from Shaw and McKay,[11] these ideas are reflected, at least in part, in the best known community organization responses to gang crime problems of this century. Three of these projects are described below.

Chicago Area Project (1929-1962). The Chicago Area Project (CAP) was developed on a foundation of assessment research on patterns of juvenile delinquency. Official records and survey data were used to designate program target sectors that were labeled "delinquency areas".[12] Based on these community assessments, the goals of the Chicago Area Project were to fill gaps of social control and to develop indigenous leadership and neighborhood organization.[13] The guiding theory was Shaw and McKay's concept of "social disorganization."

Table 1 Components of Thrasher's Community "Reorganization" Strategy
Concentrate Responsibility
Base Program on Social Research
Integrate Services
Apply Program *Systematically* to *All* Children
Create New Agencies
Inform and Educate the Public

Six "neighborhood committees" were organized in selected Chicago delinquency areas. Each committee could choose its own director and make decisions about responding to delinquency in its community. The staff of CAP served as community organizers and consultants for these neighborhood committees, assisting the committees in obtaining the resources needed to develop their selected responses and programs. CAP staff assisted the committees in establishing regular communication and interaction with criminal justice, school, and social agency representatives. The committees' primary activities were assisting at-risk youths to complete educational goals and

obtain employment, using formal and informal networks of community individuals and groups strengthened and supplemented by CAP efforts.

One of the best known critiques of CAP is found in Saul Alinsky's *Reveille for Radicals*.[14] As a young CAP street worker, Alinsky decided that his assigned neighborhood committee was inadequate and developed a more confrontational approach as an alternative kind of community response. In 1944, Clifford Shaw, who served as director and lead researcher of CAP, produced a statistical study that showed reductions in delinquency rates in at least one CAP target community.[15] Other researchers, however, subsequently concluded that in terms of implementation the program was a success, but measurement complexities (not unknown in today's efforts to evaluate programs) made impact evaluation conclusions impossible.[16]

Mobilization for Youth, New York City (1961-1967). The goals of the Mobilization for Youth (MFY) project were to restructure the social organization of the Lower East Side of Manhattan through community participation and special programs to involve residents in expanded opportunities. Originally funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, the MFY was in 1962 the recipient of an action grant from the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth. Richard Cloward was the theoretical progenitor and, briefly, research director of MFY. Comparable to the way that Shaw's "social disorganization" theory defined CAP, Cloward and Ohlin's "opportunity theory" shaped MFY.[17] Opportunities provision and community service were primary goals in the context of community organization and the creation of "indigenous" institutions.

At the heart of the institution-building process was the already existing Lower East Side Association. The project was central to the "War on Poverty" and "Great Society" strategies. A youth service corps was established, hiring unemployed youths to teach younger children to read. Special programs focused on gang-involved youths, but delinquency prevention programs targeted all children in the community.[18] From community organizations focused on mobilizing local resources, MFY grew into a social action movement using confrontational strategies similar to those that Alinsky had advocated for CAP.[19] As with CAP, there is sufficient evidence that MFY was a success in terms of process evaluation outcomes in the development of the desired community organizations.[20] What was not conducted, however, was a systematic evaluation of impact on delinquency or gang-involvement. Given the confrontational social organization that it

ultimately became, it is not clear that MFY would have even welcomed or tolerated such an evaluation.[21]

Crisis Intervention Network, Philadelphia (1974-1987). Philadelphia's Crisis Intervention Network (CIN) was primarily a community organization approach, but like CAP and MFY, CIN had components that reflected other strategic approaches and coexisted with a grassroots community organization, House of Umoja. With a street work and probation/parole unit, CIN represented a coalition of neighborhood level community organizations. According to Spergel CIN was "A suppression or surveillance strategy ... added to a social intervention or youth outreach approach within a community mobilization framework in which all key elements of the community, legitimate and illegitimate, joined to reduce the level of gang crime."[22] The House of Umoja was an independent "shelter for at-risk youths" with an emphasis on building self-respect through an awareness of African-American culture and traditions. The House of Umoja pioneered the utilization of gang summits and truces to reduce street violence. The CIN umbrella extended to parents' groups and other grass roots organizations. Although there is no systematic process evaluation of the CIN project, nor was it based on any particular theory of gangs or delinquency, CIN remains worthy of attention due to official statistics that showed a steady decrease in gang-related homicides in Philadelphia in the 1970's— 43 in 1973, 32 in 1974, 6 in 1975, and 1 in 1977.[23] By 1992, the Philadelphia Police Department reported that it did not maintain records on gang-related homicides, and in 1994 it did not officially recognize the presence of a gang crime problem. Without systematic evaluations, it is impossible to know what role gang response programs played in the perceived decline of Philadelphia's gang problem.

Social Intervention

Social intervention encompasses both social service agency-based programs and what are generally referred to as "street work" or "detached worker" programs. According to Spergel, street work is

> "The practice variously labeled detached work, street club, gang work, area work, extension youth work, corner work, etc. It is the systematic effort of an agency worker, through social work or treatment techniques within the neighborhood context, to help a group of young people who are described as delinquent or partially delinquent to achieve a conventional adaptation. It involves the redirection or conversion of youth gangs to legitimate social gangs or conventional organizations. This requires the agent to work with or manipulate the people or other agency representatives who interact critically with members of the delinquent group."[24]

For Klein, among social service approaches, only the detached worker program "has been identified as a 'pure' gang approach."[25] The rationale for this assumption is that gang members either fail to make use of or are barred from other youth services and engage in self-destructive, anti-social behavior that necessitates an outreach action to interrupt the cycle. As noted above, community mobilization approaches have often contained social intervention components. Descriptions of selected landmark detached worker programs follow.

Midcity Project, Boston (1954-1957). The Midcity Project was a street work project conducted in conjunction with community mobilization components. The project was directed at three levels—the community, the family, and the gang, with a special focus on gangs. Seven project detached workers were assigned to "an area, group, or groups with a mandate to contact, establish relationships with, and attempt to change resident gangs." Each worker was professionally trained and had access to psychiatric consultation "so that workers were in a position to utilize methods and perspectives of psychodynamic psychiatry in addition to the group dynamics and recreational approaches in which they had been trained."[26] The target gangs included groups of both African-Americans and whites, and both males and females. A process evaluation demonstrated that it was possible for professionally trained adults to establish contact and interact closely with gang members over a period of time. However, there did not appear to be a significant measurable inhibition of law-violating or morally-disapproved behavior as a consequence of the project efforts.

Chicago Youth Development Project (1960-1965). The Chicago Youth Development Project (CYDP) was a joint effort by the Chicago Boys Clubs and the Institute for Social Research of the University of Michigan supported by the Ford Foundation.[27] Though the use of detached street work coordinated by the Boys Clubs comprised the major strategy of the project, a supplementary community organization component was also included. The program included gang and non-gang youths, and the research component involved continued feedback to field workers throughout the course of the project program. The evaluation report showed no impact on delinquency. In fact, youths who reported being closest to their program workers showed the greatest levels of delinquency.[28] A subgroup of participants showed an enhancement of educational aspirations, but overall the impact evaluation results did not suggest that the kind of "aggressive street work" employed had an impact on reducing delinquency.

The Group Guidance Project (1961-1965) and the Ladino Hills Project (1966-1967), Los Angeles. Malcolm Klein served as the evaluator of the Group Guidance Project (GGP) and as both the evaluator and designer of the Ladino Hills Project (LHP).[29] The GGP followed the general design of the projects described in Boston and Chicago. Klein anchored the Ladino Hills program (and his analysis of the program) around the issue of group cohesion. In the GGP, the detached street workers working out of the Los Angeles County Probation Department provided services to four gangs of about 800 total members. The primary goals of the street workers were to control and prevent gang violence. The street workers organized tutoring sessions and worked with parents' clubs. Klein's process evaluation demonstrated that the project was implemented as designed. The impact evaluation, however, indicated that GGP itself may have increased delinquency among gang members. Specifically, Klein found that delinquency increased among gang members who received the most services. Cohesion among gang members (as measured by clique structure and member contact) increased in direct proportion to the attention paid to the gang by street workers, and delinquency as measured by official records and systematic researcher observation increased in conjunction with cohesiveness. Klein concluded, then, that detached street worker programs not only may *not* have a positive impact, but may have the latent consequence of contributing to the attractiveness of gangs, thereby enhancing their solidarity and promoting more violence.

The LHP gave Klein an opportunity to test his conclusions from GGP. In the LHP, Klein took a detached work program with group programming for a Mexican-American gang cluster of about 140 members and incrementally decreased group programming services while increasing the access to individual non-gang alternative services and activities. As a result, Klein observed decreases in his measures of cohesion and in the size of the gang. While the number of offenses for *active* gang members did not decline, overall offenses by gang members declined by 35 percent due to reduction in the size of the gang.

Social intervention strategies re-emerged in the late 1980s, but they were in new forms, focused primarily on crisis intervention and prevention of gang involvement by younger children.[30] Agencies responding to the 1988 NYGSIP survey reported social intervention strategies as the second most commonly used approach to dealing with gang crime problems. (Only suppression strategies were reported more often.)[31] As noted above, descriptions of selected programs identified in the NYGSIP survey are available, but systematic evaluations of these more recent social intervention projects are not.

Opportunities Provision

John Hagedorn has insisted that, "The main emphasis for dealing with gangs needs to be on creating jobs and improving education."[32] While Hagedorn situates his analysis of gang crime problems in "underclass theory," his conclusion is consistent with two major theoretical perspectives of the 1950's and 1960's—strain theory and differential opportunity theory.[33] These theoretical paradigms underscore the importance of access to legitimate means and opportunities for preventing gang involvement. Under strain theory, youths adopt universal cultural goals that emphasize material success. When the conventional means to achieve culturally mandated goals are not socially available, youth "innovate" and pursue illegitimate means to achieve material success. In differential opportunity theory, Cloward and Ohlin extend strain theory by emphasizing the differential availability of legitimate and illegitimate opportunities to youths. Opportunities provision approaches attempt to offer at-risk youths legitimate opportunities and means to success that are at least as appealing as available illegitimate options.

Opportunities strategies are among the most expensive and challenging. They include job preparation, training, and placement programs, as well as enhanced educational opportunities for gang youths that might improve career opportunities. Among their national agency survey respondents, Spergel and Curry found that opportunities strategies were the least likely to be reported as a primary strategy as well as the least likely strategy to be reported overall.[34]

One noteworthy program sought to incorporate gang structure into the process of opportunities provision. In 1967, the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity funded two job training and job referral centers through Chicago's Woodlawn Organization. The programs were actually staffed and operated respectively by the Gangster Disciples and the Blackstone Rangers. A congressional investigation and ultimately fraud charges against at least one gang leader resulted. An evaluation found that gang violence increased over the one-year period of the project.[35] Other economic and educational opportunities provision programs have been systematically evaluated, but none of them focused on—or even mentioned—any particular problems that may have been associated with opportunities provision programs for gang-involved youths.[36]

Suppression

The rise of suppression as the dominant response to gang crime problems in the late 1970's and the 1980's may have been a function of growing political conservatism, or it may have represented a

reaction to perceived increases in levels of gang violence. Suppression strategies include arrest, special prosecution, incarceration, intensive supervision, gang intelligence, and networking among criminal justice agencies to the exclusion of non-justice agencies.[37]

The most common suppression programs are police department gang crime units, often modeled after Los Angeles Police Department's CRASH (Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums) program. A 1992 NIJ survey of police departments in the largest 79 U.S. cities reported specialized gang units in 53 of them,[38] and the majority were created since 1986 (see Figure 2). The 1992 NIJ survey found that no law enforcement agency surveyed reported relying on suppression strategies alone in responding to gang crime problems. Most important in that context of this report is the absence of systematic evaluations of suppression programs. However, Spergel has commented, "The strategy of increased and targeted suppression has not, by itself, been adequate to reduce the gang problem and return 'control of the streets'—the goal of law enforcement agencies—to local citizens."[39]

Organizational Development and Change
Spergel labeled organizational development and change a "subsidiary or modifying strategy." For him, this strategy is always linked to one or more of the four primary strategies and seeks to modify and elaborate these strategies through new mechanisms and tactics.[40] Organizational development and change include efforts at institutional and policy adaptation and development, such as gang legislation and expanding available resources. Establishing a gang unit, for example, can be viewed as an organizational development strategy that elaborates on a suppression strategy.

Gang legislation constitutes a unique kind of organizational development and change response to gang-related crime. Twenty-five percent of the law enforcement agency representatives in the 1988 OJJDP national survey reported that at some time their agency had engaged in efforts to initiate or modify legislation related to gangs or the gang problem. Only a slightly lower proportion (24.3 percent) of the non-law enforcement agencies in the survey reported trying to influence legislation pertaining to gangs. Perhaps the best known article of gang legislation, which has served as a model for other jurisdictions, is California's 1988 STEP (Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention) Act (California Penal Code Section 182.22). In their review of gang legislation in California over a 10-year period, Jackson and Rudman argue that most gang legislation, including STEP, represented a form of "moral panic" that was "overwhelmingly devoted to gang suppression" and influenced by law enforcement.[41]
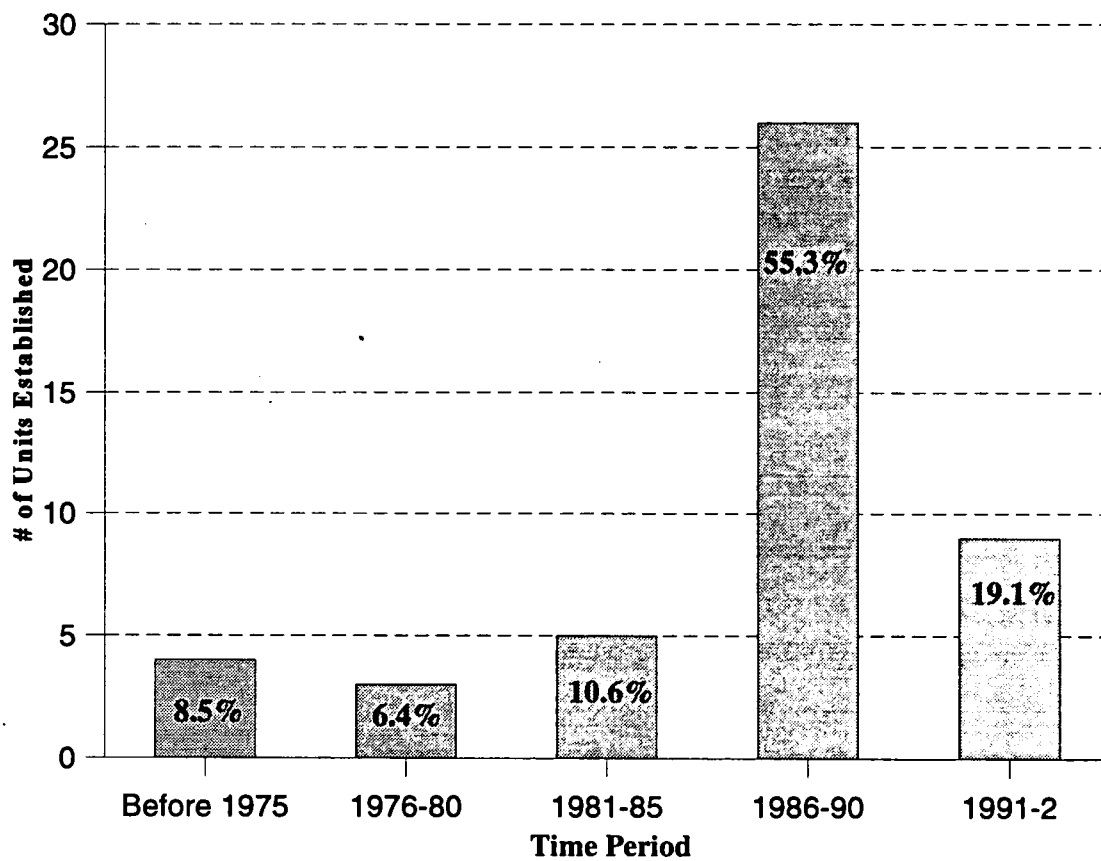
Figure 2. Establishment Dates of Gang Units in Largest U.S. Cities (Curry, _et al._, 1992).

In 1993, the Institute for Law and Justice (ILJ), with the support of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), completed a national study of gang legislation, concentrating on legislative actions that provide anti-gang tools to prosecutors. Fourteen of the 50 states had enacted statutes specifically directed at criminal gang activity. The ILJ study grouped gang legislation into two major categories—those providing criminal sanctions for the justice system against offenders in gang-related crimes and those providing civil remedies for the victims of gang crime. Criminal sanction legislation has most often enhanced sentences for those found guilty of committing a gang-related crime or made provisions for segregating incarcerated gang members. Civil remedy approaches have most often attempted to empower citizens to file civil suits against gang members collectively or individually.

Research has shown that a major impediment to the effectiveness of gang legislation are court rulings maintaining that several specific legislative acts have violated the First Amendment rights of gang members.[42] Neither process nor impact evaluations of specific acts of gang legislation have been conducted, however.

Perceived Effectiveness of Response Strategies

In the absence of measures of direct program effectiveness, Spergel and Curry developed measures of *perceived* program effectiveness.[43] These measures were constructed from three items that were asked of each of 254 agency representatives participating in a survey. The first item asked about changes in the community gang problem since 1980. The second item asked about the respondent's perception of his or her own agency's effectiveness in responding to gang problems. The third asked the respondent's perception of how effective community-level responses in their city had been in dealing with gang problems. A validity check using official records of gang-related crime led to a ranking of community levels of effectiveness that satisfactorily conformed to perceived effectiveness ratings. Spergel and Curry reported significantly higher levels of perceived effectiveness for community programs where community organization and opportunity provision were primary response strategies.

National Level Responses

In concluding his national survey of gang related crime problems, Walter Miller advised, "A major Federal initiative directed specifically at the prevention and control of collective youth crime is one

of the few logical policy options. If the national government does not take the initiative, chances for any significant reduction in collective youth crime are poor." Miller called for the Federal role to involve primarily initiation, development, monitoring, and support of local efforts.

> "The critical element, an element that cannot be provided locally, is a specific national commitment to the prevention and control of collective youth crime, implemented by a planning body with the capacity to develop imaginative programs, the flexibility to abandon unsuccessful approaches and try new ones, and the responsibility for careful evaluation of a range of remedial efforts. The likelihood that local agencies could develop such a policy is just about zero; the likelihood of such a development within the Federal Government is only slightly higher, but it *is* higher."[44]

Over a decade after Miller's call for Federal gang response programs, major efforts are underway, though most are recent and evaluations are limited or incomplete. They include:

- *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Family Youth Service Bureau's Youth Gang Drug Prevention Program.* Established by the Omnibus Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-690), this program has funded consortium projects, special focus demonstration projects, and support programs for at-risk youths and their families.

- *NIJ's Gang Research Initiative.* Inaugurated in 1991, this program has funded a variety of research to produce knowledge required for the formulation of national-level responses to gang-related crime.

- *U.S. Treasury Department Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) Program.* This school-based program involving a partnership between schools and law enforcement was developed by the Phoenix Police Department in 1991 and now has a national scope.

- *OJJDP's Comprehensive Response to America's Gang Problem.* Based on the findings and models generated by NYGSIP, this effort includes a National Youth Gang Center and five community-level gang response projects that are to implement the prototype response models developed by Spergel and his colleagues.

What Are the Gaps?

Delinquency Programs or Gang Programs?

A continuing debate is whether specific "gang-oriented" responses are required for effectively dealing with gang-related crime and delinquency problems. Complicating this issue is a not uncommon tendency among many researchers, practitioners, and policy makers to make no clear

distinction between gang-related delinquency and delinquency that is not gang-related. Having special programs to prevent or intervene in gang involvement is supported by the conclusion of researchers that gang membership facilitates delinquency and that gang members commit significantly more offenses than comparable non-gang offenders.[45] Faced with reduced funds for youth programs, community representatives often feel that they have to make choices about which youth are to receive program services. Writing off gang-involved youths as "delinquent" beyond the scope of general youth programs can be one result. Tailoring programs funded as gang response programs to focus on non-gang youth populations may also occur. One solution to this dilemma would be to follow Thrasher's recommendation that effective gang response programs must encompass the special needs of gang-involved youths, but must also include *all* youths in gang communities.[46] The alternative approach of developing programs that include *only* gang members is based on the assumption that the group dynamics of gang involvement and the heightened levels of delinquency of gang members necessitate programs for their special needs and problems.

Integrating Local Politics, Local Policies, and National Policies on Responding to Gang Crime Problems

Gang response policy is closely tied to community politics. Of the response categories described above, community organization and organizational development strategies most clearly have political implications. Two local political issues—denial and definition—are particularly linked to policy and response.

Denial

Though perhaps obvious, it is important to note that it is impossible to develop a response to gang crime problems in a setting where gang problems are not acknowledged to exist. Gang response when gangs do not constitute a problem has been labeled a "moral panic."[47] Huff described an "official denial" stage in three of Ohio's largest cities in the mid-1980's.[48] The emergence of Columbus, Ohio, from its denial stage was accelerated by a publicly visible gang-related murder and separate gang-related attacks on the governor's daughter and the mayor's son. Huff argued that official denial "appears to facilitate victimization by gangs, especially in the public schools."

From his research on gangs in Milwaukee, Hagedorn described the role that denial can play in shaping the course of a community's response to its gang problem.[49] According to Hagedorn, the motivations for Milwaukee's policy of denial grew out of two kinds of fear. First, political and

business leaders of the community feared that recognition of a gang problem would undermine tourism and the potential for attracting prospective employers and economic ventures. Second, some segments of the community feared that law enforcement would use gang problems as an excuse to crack down on poor and minority communities and that any recognition of a gang problem constituted a form of racism. Ultimately, Hagedorn suggested that the real problem is that too often the initial response to gang-related crime following a period of denial is repression, because by the time recognition occurs community division is so great that the problem has reached extreme levels. A community strategy that is overly centered on suppression strategies can result, in Hagedorn's view, in minority communities not having access to resources needed to deal with the social problems that are the root causes of the gang problem.

Curry, Ball, and Fox contrasted Hagedorn's model of gang problem response with one presented by Curtsinger, a practitioner, at NIJ's first annual Gang Working Group meeting in 1992.[50] In contrast to Hagedorn's model of response, Curtsinger's model assumed a link between levels of gang violence and each level of law enforcement response. The final stage of Curtsinger's model is an institutionalized gang problem correlated with criminal justice "preoccupation" with the problem. From an analysis of both models, Curry and his coauthors concluded that the models were comparable and each required an alternative strategic outcome to break the cycle of denial and repression. Table 2 places the two models side by side and suggests comparable ideal outcome response stages for each. Each response stage is linked to a "reaction paradigm" from criminological theory. (A reaction paradigm refers to a particular set of causes that underly the emergence and persistence of a gang problem.)

Definitional issues

From a survey of members of a politically appointed gang task force, members of a police gang unit, and a population of juvenile detainees, Decker and Kempf uncovered a divergence in perspective on the magnitude and nature of the gang crime problem in St. Louis.[51] Establishing uniformity in gang definitions across jurisdictions was a concern also raised by Miller. In fact, Miller suggested replacing the term "gang" with the broader concept of "law violating youth group."[52] A major recommendation of the OJJDP's National Youth Gang Suppression and Intervention Program was that efforts to reach uniformity in defining gangs continue. Rather than follow Miller's suggestion to develop a new terminology, however, Spergel and Chance offered prototype definitions for gangs, posses, crews, and delinquent groups.[53] The major argument

Table 2. Proposed Model of Criminal Justice Reaction to Gang Violence[a]		
Hagedorn's Stages[b]	Curtsinger's Phases[c]	Dominant Reaction Paradigm
Denial	Ambiguous Signs/ Criminal Justice Disregard	Social Pathology
	Clear Signs/Informal Denial	Labeling Theory
	Gang-Related Violence/ Official Denial	
Recognition	Increased Violence/ Reassessment	Value Conflict
	Dramatic Event/"Scrambling"	Social Disorganization
	External Pressure/Loss of Focus	
Repression	Institutionalized Gang Problem/ Preoccupation	Critical Perspective
Effectively Organized Response	Multiple Strategies Based on Perceived Causes	Systemic Control

[a] Curry, G. David, Richard A. Ball, and Robert J. Fox,"Criminal Justice Reaction to Gang Violence." In *Violence and the Law*, Eds, M. Costanzo and S. Oskamp, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 203-225, 1994.

[b] Hagedorn, John M., *People and Folks: Gangs, Crime, and the Underclass in a Rustbelt City*, Chicago: Lakeview Press, 1988:168.

[c] Curtsinger, *Action Plan Development for the Gangs Initiative*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, 1992.

against more uniform definitions was voiced by Horowitz, who emphasized that knowledge of gangs is still too limited to place definitional restrictions on their study.[54] Ball and Curry have suggested that problems in the logic of definition, especially as applied to gangs, may undermine the generation of useful and uniform definitions of gangs and gang problems. In fact, the ILJ report observed that "... every state that has enacted a gang statute has undertaken to define 'gang'."[55] Uniformity within states may generate new concerns about differences across states.

Linking Policy Makers' Perceptions of the Causes of Gang Problems to Strategic Responses

For an effective response to America's gang crime problems to be developed, it has been argued that both reliable information and a link between explanation and programs are required.[56] In their

analysis of agency representative responses to a question about the causes of gang crime problems in the agency's community setting, Spergel and Curry divided perceived causes into four major categories: social system problems, institutional failure, individual or peer group level problems, and response effects. Social system problems include social forces at the social system level, such as "poverty, unemployment, criminal opportunities, increased prevalence and profitability of drug sales, patterns of migration and changes in population composition, and other conditions of urban life." Family and school are most often mentioned as examples of institutional failure. Individual and peer level problems include "substance abuse, psychological explanations, peer influence, and fear." Response effects are the degree to which elements of reaction programs themselves contribute to or exacerbate gang crime problems. They include failures of elements of the criminal justice system, liberalism, failure or inadequacy of social services, media involvement, discrimination, limited community resources, and, ironically, "denial."[57] Spergel and Curry concluded from Table 3 that there was no discernable relationship between perceived cause and strategy. The causes of gang crime problems require assessment through sound research, but the link between cause and response is fundamental to program logic.

Evaluation

Walter Miller has asserted that, "The virtual abandonment of sound evaluation of gang control efforts is a major reason for our failure [in the United States] to reduce the gang problems."[58] He has argued that "as gang problems have increased, the conduct of program evaluation has decreased." In *Youth Today* a publication for youth program practitioners, a 1995 lead editorial charged that evaluation has failed the needs of practitioners, asking, "Dare it be said that the role of evaluation in shaping the nation's youth programs has hit an all time low?"

A particular case in point is the evaluation of DHHS's Youth Gang Drug Prevention Program. Spergel wrote of the projects funded under the effort, "It was not evident that these programs would be adequately monitored or evaluated. A limited amount of in-house research evaluation was encouraged, and a national evaluation was commissioned years after the programs began."[59] But, the national evaluation results have received extremely limited circulation. Evaluations of consortium project success included no measures at the community-level. Instead, surveys of youth with pre-post retrospective questionnaire items and non-systematic sampling showed that "the youth gang drug prevention consortium projects appear to have had little or no influence on participant gang involvement or avoidance".[60]

Table 3. Primary Agency Gang Response Strategy by Primary Perceived Cause of Gang Problems (Spergel & Curry, 1993, p. 380)					
Perceived Primary Cause	Primary Gang Response Strategy for Agency				
	Community Organization	Social Intervention	Opportunities Provision	Suppression	Organizational Change/Development
Social System Cause	10 (9.5%)	26 (24.8%)	7 (6.7%)	48 (45.7%)	14 (13.3%)
Institutional Failure	6 (8.3%)	24 (33.3%)	3 (4.2%)	31 (43.1%)	8 (11.1%)
Individual-Level Cause	3 (9.7%)	11 (35.5%)	0 (0.0%)	14 (45.2%)	3 (9.7%)
Response Effects	3 (9.1%)	16 (48.5%)	1 (3.0%)	11 (33.3%)	2 (6.1%)

When the DHHS evaluation process is contrasted with the first recorded evaluation of a gang response project, it appears lacking.[61] From 1927 to 1931, an evaluation of a gang delinquency prevention project by a large Boys' Club located in New York City was conducted with $37,500 funding from the Bureau of Social Hygiene. The final report, which was based on descriptive, ecological, statistical, and case-study methods, was completed in 1935 and found that the club was not an important factor in delinquency prevention and did not reach the "boys that it was designed to serve."

The Role of Gang Members in Responding to Gang Crime Problems

In offering his "practical agenda" for gang reform, Hagedorn listed as his first principle, "Gang members must participate in any meaningful programs. By 'participate' we mean gang programs need to train and hire former local gang members as staff, utilize older gang members as consultants in developing new programs, and make sure input from the gang 'clients' takes place and is genuine."[62] Similarly, from their study of communities and crime, Bursik and Grasmik have suggested "the recruitment of gang members as core members of locally based crime prevention programs" based on gang members' knowledge of crime in the community, gang identification with communities as "turf," and a number of historical examples where gang involvement in positive actions have led to short-term reductions in criminal violence.[63]

In the Chicago community of Little Village, a network of police, outreach youth workers, probation officers, court service workers, and former gang members have been working together to reduce violence between two warring coalitions of Latino street gangs.[64] Preliminary evaluation results of this project indicate a reduction in gang-related homicides, increased community organization and mobilization, and the channeling of gang-involved youths into educational programs and jobs. In Ft. Worth, Texas, as a "last ditch" effort, the city government is supporting the "Comin' Up" program. Comin' Up plans to involve 700 gang members in a network of services and activities. Perhaps the most controversial aspect of the Comin' Up program is the hiring of 14 active gang members to serve as outreach workers.[65] In the Chicago community of Englewood, gang member volunteers serve as disciplinary monitors within community schools. School administrators and community leaders work in full cooperation with this project, which treats the gang "as a community group with some redeeming qualities." [66] Gang monitors even have been accorded the authority to levy monetary fines to students who neglect their studies or cause school discipline problems.

In a highly visible book, Goldstein and Glick have challenged Klein's longstanding conclusions on the ineffectiveness of group programming.[67] Goldstein and Glick argue that what Klein and others were measuring in their evaluations of detached street worker programs was a failure of program implementation rather than the ineffectiveness of group programming. Their approach, "aggression replacement training" (ART), is a group approach that they contend is capable of transforming gangs into prosocial groups. The authors offer process and impact evaluation results to support their conclusions. A major concern in interpreting these findings is limited information about the definitions of gang involvement for the delinquent youth tested and the need for structuring controls for variations of gang involvement into the evaluation design.

Variations in Gang Crime Problems

Gang responses must take into account variations in the structure and dynamics of gang crime problems that have been observed to exist across municipalities, communities, gender, and ethnicity. Spergel and Curry, for instance, categorized the 45 cities included in the 1988 OJJDP/University of Chicago national survey as either chronic or emerging gang problem cities. [68] This distinction is comparable to the one noted by Moore and Hagedorn between "new" and "old" gang cities.[69] Chronic cities were those where a gang problem was reported to have existed prior to 1980. Emerging cities were those where gang crime problems had only been reported more recently. While chronic gang problem cities were generally larger cities, such as Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York City, some smaller cities, especially in California, were also in this group. In chronic gang problem cities, gangs appeared to be better organized and more involved in serious crime such as drug trafficking. Some researchers found differences across chronic and emerging cities in how anti-gang response strategies were applied and in how effective responses were perceived to be. Curry and Thomas, for example, observed differences in the relationship between community network structures and policy response to gang crime problems when comparing response patterns in chronic and emerging gang cities.[70]

In their analysis of gang homicide and delinquency problems at the community level in Chicago, Curry and Spergel found significant differences between predominantly African-American and predominantly Latino neighborhoods. In another study of gang involvement processes at the individual level, they found different models of gang involvement and delinquency for African-American youths in comparison to a comparable population of Latino youths residing in close proximity.[71] Hagedorn, in a study of gang organization in drug selling in three different

Milwaukee communities, found that organization and behavior varied with neighborhood characteristics.[72] Additional factors that may condition the peaking of gang involvement include age, gender, and geography, as well as variations that emerge within the same community. To fail to maintain sensitivity to these community and social differences in gang involvement is to undermine the potential for effectively responding to gang crime problems.

What Do We Need to Do in the Future?

In 1971, Malcolm Klein pondered, "Finally, there is the question whether it is even necessary to do gang work. Delinquency in the United States tends to peak at age 16. Gang affiliation similarly peaks at around age 16 or 17. Maturational, cultural, and social forces all combine to bring about a decline in delinquent and gang activity after that time. Shouldn't we be satisfied with this, and put our efforts into areas in which such natural declines do not take place?"[73] We no longer have this option. When comparisons are made between national assessments of the magnitude of the gang crime problem as measured by law enforcement statistics, levels of gang crime problems in terms of numbers of cities with gang problems, gangs, gang members, and gang-related crimes are at all time highs.[74] Gang crime has reached beyond adolescence into young adulthood for both males and females and even into the childhoods of new generations.[75] The question, then, given what we know about gang response and the gaps in what we know, what should we do now? The following three recommendations are not completely new, but nevertheless are important to point out.

Continually Evaluate Programs and Improve Evaluation Itself

Despite nearly a century of calling for evaluations of gang response programs, the practice of systematic program evaluation is comparatively recent. We must learn how to conduct effective evaluation by repeatedly reflecting on the evaluation process itself. The DHHS national-level gang program and the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) required applicants for funding to formulate evaluation plans. From these efforts, we have learned a great deal about how evaluations should be done. The ATF GREAT program and OJJDP's Comprehensive Response also have organized, independent, appropriately funded independent evaluations. In the case of GREAT, the evaluation is administered by a separate agency, NIJ, and is subjected to its own monitoring and review process. In the 1995-1996 NIJ *Research Plan,* the advice on evaluation

proposals was specific: "In most instances, the evaluation should be conducted by persons not connected with the implementation of the procedure, training, service, or technique, or the administration of the project."[76] We must also remember that evaluation is not just a tonic to be prescribed for community organization, social intervention, and opportunities provision strategies. The most frequently applied strategy approach, suppression, must be subjected to systematic evaluation. What we know about the effectiveness of past responses to gang crime problems has been learned by effective evaluation, and we rely on this information to guide our current efforts.

Link Response to Theory

In telling us why the United States has failed to solve its youth gang problem, Miller decries the degree to which our responses have proceeded without using theory as a tool.[77] One reason for this problem is that individuals with the ultimate responsibility for developing and implementing programs are policy makers and practitioners who do not have extensive training in theory. Researchers, on the other hand, who have extensive training in theory, do not often have a significant role in the practical aspects of responding to gang problems. Policy makers and practitioners do not necessrily need to master theories about gangs. But researchers, particularly those who evaluate programs, do not need to take on the responsibility of linking practice to theory. Two excellent examples are readily available. The GREAT program was developed and implemented by practitioners, but the evaluation team of the GREAT program has carefully and systematically linked the components of the GREAT program to Gottfredson and Hirschi's self-control theory and Akers' social learning theory.[78] Similarly, Spergel and Grossman began their preliminary evaluation of the Little Village Gang Violence Reduction Project by noting, "This paper attempts to evaluate the relevance of certain concepts and theories, specifically, anomie, socialization, differential association, and social control, including community and personal disorganization, in explaining gang-related violence among hardcore older gang youths."

Integrate Response Efforts Institutionally and Historically

Miller's suggestion that a single federal agency be responsible for dealing with the national gang problem does not seem entirely warranted, nor does Spergel's call for greater interagency coordination[79] (although there should be added participation in the Federal level effort by the Department of Labor and Housing and Urban Development.) What does need to be continued is the kind of communication and cooperation that has been developing at the Federal and local

levels in the past few years, such as cooperative projects and conferences. In addition, it is important that those who want to relieve the suffering and violence associated with the U.S. gang crime problem remember that the response to gang crimes has been going on for most of this century. Responding effectively to gang crime problems must be an effort that is marked by an awareness of what has gone before, what is going on elsewhere, and what has yet to be tried.

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