



BJA Bureau of Justice Assistance

Monograph

ADDRESSING COMMUNITY GANG PROBLEMS:

A Practical Guide

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Gang Problems:
A Practical Guide**

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Foreword

Urban street-gang involvement in drug trafficking and violent crime is becoming increasingly widespread—not just in large cities, but in suburban areas and small towns as well.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) recognizes that programs aimed at combating gang-related activity must incorporate both crime prevention and crime control initiatives to be effective over long periods of time. Accordingly, in October 1991, BJA initiated the development of a prototype model of the Comprehensive Gang Initiative.

BJA is pleased to present this monograph, *Addressing Community Gang Problems: A Practical Guide*, as a product of that initiative. It is a useful tool that provides guidelines for agencies and community groups to develop individualized responses to local gang problems. This practical manual provides a foundation for understanding the diverse nature of gangs, the problems they pose and the harm they cause, and the two analytical models for addressing gang-related problems.

Two companion monographs complement this one. *Addressing Community Gang Problems: A Model for Problem Solving* provides a prototype to assist communities in identifying, analyzing, and responding to gang-related problems as well as assessing the effectiveness of their responses. *Urban Street Gang Enforcement* focuses exclusively on enforcement and prosecution strategies to protect against urban street gangs and presents strategies to enhance the prosecution of gang-related crimes.

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Executive Summary

Chapter 1: Introduction

Contemporary gangs—variously known as youth or delinquent gangs and street or criminal gangs—have become a widespread threat to communities throughout the Nation. Once considered largely an urban phenomenon, gangs have increasingly emerged in smaller communities, presenting a challenge that severely strains local resources.

All gang problems are local in nature. Whether rooted in neighborhoods, representing a rite of passage, or providing surrogate families or access to economic opportunity, most gangs are inherently local. Even large-scale gangs with reputed nationwide networks attract local youth and take advantage of local opportunities to carry out gang activities.

This monograph presents a problem-solving model that is applied to gang problems. This model is often referred to as SARA, an acronym for the four steps involved in the process—scanning, analysis, response, and assessment. Communities first initiate the problem-solving process by searching for and identifying gang problems—*scanning*. The second step of the problem-solving process—*analysis*—involves investigating the specific gang problem in greater detail. In general, analysis helps a community understand the nature of its gang problem—how it is manifested, who is harmed and how, and when the problems occur. Having identified their gang problems and thoroughly analyzed them, communities can proceed to the third step and develop their local *response*. The final step of the problem-solving process is an *assessment* of the effectiveness of the response. It can also be used to change the response, improve the analysis, or even redefine the problem.

The gang-problem triangle is a method of analyzing or developing a deeper understanding of local gang problems and pointing to fruitful avenues of response. Three elements must be present before a gang-related harm can occur: an offender, a victim, and a place. If a person thinks about each element as representing a side of a triangle, he or she can easily visualize that removing a side of the triangle will cause the triangle to collapse.

An important part of the gang-problem triangle is recognizing that there are third parties with responsibilities for each side of the triangle. Controllers are people who, acting in the best interest of potential offenders, try to prevent them from committing offenses. Guardians are people who try to prevent harm from coming to potential victims. Managers are people who oversee places where harm occurs. Identifying the people responsible for victims, offenders, and places and involving them in the development of plans and programs is necessary if communities are to reduce and prevent future gang problems.

Chapter 2: Defining the Community Youth Gang

The term “gang” carries with it many meanings and evokes a number of images for people. Discussing some of their different characteristics as well as different perceptions about them may contribute to a working definition of gangs. The success or failure of communitywide attempts to address gang problems is likely to rest, in part, on how the problems are understood and diagnosed.

The media, the public, and community agencies use the term “gang” more loosely than the law enforcement community. Politicians and law enforcement officials tend to rely on legal parameters such as criminal behavior to define what constitutes a gang. Unfortunately, this perception fails to recognize that many gangs do not engage solely in criminal acts, or even highly visible ones. Compounding the definition problem is the inconsistent use of the term “gang related.” Police may classify an incident as gang related simply because the individual involved is a gang member.

There is no consensus on a standardized definition of a gang, but there is some agreement on the basic elements. Maxson and Klein developed three criteria for defining a street gang:

- ❑ Community recognition of the group.
- ❑ The group’s recognition of itself as a distinct group of adolescents or young adults.
- ❑ The group’s involvement in enough illegal activities to get a consistent negative response from law enforcement and neighborhood residents.

The centerpiece of Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin’s typology of gangs is the concept of differential opportunity. According to this concept, individuals may become involved in gang life and crime simply because legitimate means of success are unavailable to them. Cloward and Ohlin also see a differential opportunity structure for illegitimate means of achieving success. The significance of this finding is that all opportunities—legal and illegal—are often unavailable to most inner-city youth.

Cloward and Ohlin conclude that young people are likely to join one of three types of gangs—criminal, conflict, or retreatist—because of differential opportunity. Criminal gangs are likely to exist in stable low-income areas where there are close relationships between adolescents and adult criminals. Conflict gangs develop in communities with dilapidated conditions and transient populations. When criminal opportunities do not exist, conflict gangs fight to gain social status and protect their integrity and honor. Retreatist gangs do not possess the skills to be considered criminal gangs. They retreat into a role on the fringe of society that usually involves heavy drug use and withdrawal from social interaction.

A number of other gangs do not fit neatly into Cloward and Ohlin's typology. Tagger crews consist of youth banded together to create graffiti. The main reason for tagging, which is a form of vandalism, is to gain respect from fellow artists and, more important, from members of other tagger crews.

Communities can begin to develop strategies and programs to address their specific gang problems by analyzing the types of gangs affecting their neighborhoods. Communities must recognize that the ways in which gangs are defined will, to a large degree, determine the extent of the gang problem in a neighborhood. Moreover, even when one definition is used, such as the law enforcement definition, this too varies from one jurisdiction to another.

Chapter 3: Gang Involvement in Drugs and Violence

America has become a society almost preoccupied with gangs—especially their relationship to drugs and violence. While it is true that violence among gang members has escalated and involvement in drugs has been a feature of gang life for many years, gangs are now increasingly and almost exclusively blamed for the drug and violence problems of the last decade. This is partly because gangs have grown in number and diversity across the Nation, affecting both large cities and smaller communities.

During various times in American history, particularly the 1970s and 1980s, gangs have received considerable media attention. Moreover, in movies, television, radio, newspapers, and even documentaries, the image created about gangs was consistent—they were heavily involved in the drug trade and exceptionally prone to violence. Based on media accounts, the public believes gangs are extremely violent, are involved in drug trafficking, are highly organized, and are a pervasive part of the social landscape.

Gangs and the media both benefit from exaggerated portrayals of gangs and gang life. The media attempt to increase their profits by providing the public with sensationalized stories that relate to crime and violence. Increasingly, the media achieve this goal by attributing these events to gangs. As the media continue to portray gangs in this negative light, gang members gain a reputation of being tough and savvy, enhancing their standing in their communities.

Another media distortion about gangs relates to their ethnic and racial composition. Gangs are not exclusively a minority phenomenon. Most research has attributed gangs and their associated problems to elements in the social structure—either the social environment or the opportunities associated with being a member of a particular social class. Gangs and violence are associated with urban poverty, and gang life is seen as a source of social identity in the face of impoverished living conditions. Moreover, the social and economic opportunities and living conditions of some groups have not improved—or have become worse. Gang members now

may be more likely to be motivated by the pursuit of profit than by the cultural or territorial reasons used in earlier decades.

One researcher groups gang characteristics into three categories—corporate, territorial, and scavenger. Corporate gangs focus their attention on making money. Territorial gangs focus on possession of turf, and gang members are quick to use violence to secure or protect what belongs to the gang. Scavenger gangs have very little organizational structure, and gang members are motivated by a need to belong to a group.

A number of gangs are involved in using and selling drugs, while others are involved in selling but prohibit use by gang members. Some gangs are highly organized, while others are fragmented, with individual members involved in drug dealing but acting independently of the gang. And still other gangs and gang members are heavily involved in using drugs but do not sell them.

The research community has found little evidence of a relationship between drug use in general and violent behavior. However, drug users do commit crimes to support their habits, which can lead to violent crime such as street robberies. Systemic violence, the type of violence most commonly associated with gangs, is a function of the illegal sale and distribution of drugs. This type of gang violence invades a neighborhood's sense of community and poses a risk to innocent bystanders.

The best possible explanation of the relationship between gangs and violence is that it depends primarily on the gang's organization. Some gangs are organized to fight, while others are organized to make money, and the level of violence associated with each gang depends on its type. In an expressive violent confrontation, the primary goal of violence is injury. The primary purpose of instrumental violence is to acquire money or property. Gangs specializing in instrumental violence are strongest in disrupted and declining neighborhoods. Gangs involved in expressive violence are strongest in relatively prosperous neighborhoods.

Although gang-related violence appears to be increasing, there is little evidence to support the theory that gang involvement in the drug trade is responsible for a substantial proportion of homicides. Moreover, some scholars contend that the connections among street gangs, drug sales, and violence have been overstated by media reports, especially during the mid-1980s when gangs became involved in the crack cocaine trade. Gang involvement in violence and homicide is more often turf related than drug related. In one study of 288 gang-motivated homicides, only 8 were drug related. A 1992 study assessing the relationship among gangs, drug sales, and violence concluded that gang-motivated homicides were less likely than other homicides to involve drugs, and drug-motivated homicides were less likely to involve a gang member. Also, victims of gang-motivated homicides were no more likely to have a history of drug arrests than other victims.

Despite recent increases in the use of violence by gang members, especially if their organizational viability or their competitive edge in the drug market is challenged, much gang activity is fairly mundane. A study in Ohio found that gang members spent most of their time acting like typical adolescents—disobeying parents and skipping school.

Chapter 4: Gang Graffiti

Graffiti can be petty annoyances by juvenile vandals, attempts at artistic expression, or signs that street gangs have moved into the neighborhood. The public has become concerned about graffiti in the last 10 to 15 years for three reasons: the invention of the spray-paint can, enabling taggers to quickly make big, colorful graffiti that are hard to remove; graffiti on buses and subway cars, which move all over a city; and the association of graffiti in citizens' minds with gangs.

There is an important distinction between two major categories of contemporary graffiti. Tagger graffiti, or what some people call street art, are personal expressions of the taggers, and they are an end in themselves, not a threat of something else. Gang graffiti, on the other hand, are intended to represent the presence of a gang. They convey a threat of gang violence in the neighborhood.

In New York City, subway graffiti artists came to be known as “taggers” because they signed their work with their chosen nicknames or tags. To the tagger, the important thing was “getting up,” that is, putting his or her tag on as many surfaces as possible. While artistic quality and uniqueness were also important, a tagger's reputation rested on sheer volume.

Tagging is now occurring all over the United States, and the gap between taggers and gangs is being closed. Taggers often form into groups called “crews” and adopt crew tags. The larger a tagger crew, the more it begins to look and act like a street gang. While street gangs look down on individual taggers with disdain, they are more likely to regard large crews as a threat that must be dealt with. Then the two begin to act like rival street gangs, even though the crew may have started out with less dangerous purposes.

When graffiti are thought to be gang graffiti, they create the impression that the unknown graffiti artists are gang members, suggesting menace and violence. Gang graffiti tell police officers who is in what gang, what gangs are claiming what territories, who is challenging whom, and who is trying to move or expand. Gang graffiti can become dialogue between gangs and eventually a record of gang wars—from initial territorial claims, to challenges to individuals and gangs, to records of individual deaths. Graffiti are the gangs' daily newspaper, printed for all to see.

Graffiti are easy and cheap to put up and entail relatively low risk for the gang graffitist, particularly when compared to other forms of gang activity. Even the risk of getting caught is not terribly threatening to the gang graffitist because legal sanctions, if they are imposed at all, are not heavy.

All three sides of the gang-problem triangle—offender, victim, and place—are involved in graffiti. Both taggers and gang graffitists are offenders in the gang-problem triangle. Taggers often target particular victims, such as a public transit system. And gang graffitists often target other gangs in their graffiti. Everyone involved relies on “tools”—the instruments offenders use to commit their offenses and the instruments and devices that guardians and managers use to defend themselves and their property. Spray-paint cans on which different cap sizes can be interchanged are the favorite tools of graffiti writers.

The broad categories of graffiti sites are fairly obvious: residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, public, and transitional spaces. Residential properties are at greatest risk of becoming targets of graffiti when the residents and surrounding neighborhood have little stake in the property. Commercial and industrial sites most at risk are those that have broad surfaces on which graffitists can write and those distant from other buildings with exterior surfaces visible to passers-by.

Public recreational areas have been particularly tempting targets for both taggers and gang graffitists. Problems get very serious when gangs take over public places as their own domain, intimidating and endangering ordinary citizens. Of public spaces, schools are the most likely to have trouble with gang graffiti simply because gang members, like other youth, have a right to be in school as students.

Matching problem properties with responsible people is most difficult with open public and transitional spaces—parks, streets, and street corners. Graffiti are often seen on bridges, street and traffic signs, and billboards. The managers of these spaces, employees of the government agencies responsible for maintaining them, are seldom present because maintenance does not require daily attention.

It is important for a community to have an anti-graffiti policy, which may fall to the local government, businesses, community residents, or a combination of these stakeholders. A combination approach is most likely to succeed.

Graffitists do not invest heavily in their art, preferring to shoplift rather than buy their spray-paint cans. So an effective first step is to encourage stores that sell spray paints to make them difficult to shoplift.

Quick removal of graffiti is a standard anti-graffiti recommendation, the underlying idea being that graffitists soon tire of having their work obliterated and give up. Also, removing graffiti shows that the community will

not tolerate them. Taggers may regard removal campaigns as a challenge—a game between them and the community—but even taggers ultimately tire of the game.

When property owners are cleaning or repairing surfaces that have been hit, they should consider taking steps to make them less vulnerable. Designers of new structures should take their vulnerability to graffiti into account. If they cannot change the surface, perhaps they can alter access to the surface.

The essential problem with both criminal and civil approaches is that graffiti artists are hard to catch. One alternative to sanctioning offenders is sanctioning *victims*. Some ordinances require graffiti removal within a relatively short period of time, perhaps a few days. Fines are imposed on property owners who fail to clean up their property promptly.

The final step of a graffiti policy is assessing the results of the community's responses. The assessment should determine whether graffiti has completely disappeared from the community or at least been so reduced in quantity and offensiveness that the community no longer regards them as a serious problem.

Chapter 5: Needs Assessments for Gang Problems

A needs assessment is often the first step in planning a comprehensive solution to the “gang problem.” It can help uncover hidden problems, set priorities, and (perhaps most important) help develop a communitywide consensus about what to do. Needs assessments provide local policymakers with an alternative, unbiased source of information. This information is vital if policymakers and service providers are to spend their time and money where it will do the most good.

The consensus-building role of the needs assessment has proved especially useful in many places. As long as funding for social programs remains scarce, communication, coordination, and cooperation among service providers is necessary to eliminate duplication and to ensure that the people with the greatest needs are served.

There are four steps to conducting a needs assessment: laying the groundwork, identifying current activities, identifying and setting priorities, and developing a consensus.

In assembling the team to conduct the assessment, responsibility for big decisions must rest with a large, comprehensive group of “movers and shakers” (the advisory board), while responsibility for implementing the assessment stays with a small team (the assessment team).

With few exceptions, the assessment team's first step should be to find out whether anyone has ever conducted a youth needs assessment before. Then three questions need to be answered. First, should the assessment focus on primary or secondary prevention? Second, should the assessment focus on all youth problems or only those very closely related to gangs? Finally, should the assessment team consider all neighborhoods in the city or only those in greatest need?

It may help to conduct the assessment in stages. For example, a city with limited knowledge and resources but a serious gang violence problem may start by assessing the potential for gang violence in each neighborhood, with the goal of increasing direct law enforcement efforts. Once the police, prosecutor, and probation agencies know where to focus their immediate efforts, the assessment team can turn its attention to primary prevention opportunities.

The board should be kept apprised of where the assessment team is at all stages of the process. Letting the advisory board members in on the nuts and bolts will give them ownership of the project and improve the chances that they will accept the results.

The next step in conducting a needs assessment is to identify what services are actually being delivered, where, when, to whom, and if possible, with what effect. Assessors also need to know what services cost and who pays for them.

It is usually enough to implement what is sometimes called a "snowball sample." That is, the assessors interview knowledgeable members of the advisory board and review readily available documents to get a first-cut list of service providers. Then they interview the directors of these agencies, collecting necessary information and also asking them to name other agencies that provide similar services. Thus the sample increases in size, like a snowball rolling down a hill.

In most cases, a survey of youth, parents, service providers, and others is the centerpiece of the needs assessment—and the most important and difficult part. A series of steps is required to complete a needs survey:

- Decide what to ask.
- Decide whom to survey and how.
- Frame the questions.
- Pretest the survey draft.
- Conduct the survey.
- Analyze and report the results.

The survey will ask about the social service needs of gang-involved and at-risk youth. Useful results can be obtained from at least four separate

groups: at-risk and/or gang-involved youth themselves; their parents; service providers, including guidance counselors, employment trainers, public health nurses, and others; and community leaders, including presidents of neighborhood associations, elected officials, and business leaders.

In conducting a survey, the key is getting a representative sample, not merely a large one. The easiest way to ensure a representative sample is to draw a sample at random from throughout the population and to get a high response rate.

People rarely turn down interviewers who come to their door—response rates of 80 percent are fairly common. Telephone interviewers typically get lower response rates—60 to 80 percent. Mail surveys usually get the worst response rates, varying from 10 to 70 percent. Unfortunately, mail surveys are much cheaper than telephone surveys, which are much cheaper than personal interviews.

Interviewing is almost certainly the best method to use in surveys of community leaders and service providers. For surveys of youth and parents, the safest course of action is to contract with a local university or market research firm to conduct in-person or telephone interviews.

If mail surveys are used, rank ordering is usually simple for both assessors and respondents, so it is probably the best method to use. Questions about the importance of various needs should form the bulk of the survey, but other questions may be needed as well. For example, if the team suspects that current gang prevention programs may be ineffective, it may ask service providers and community leaders for their opinions on those programs.

Maintaining a high response rate requires watching return rates carefully and issuing follow-up letters or phone calls when needed. The principal results of a needs assessment survey can usually be presented in a few pages of text (perhaps six or eight) that summarizes the most important results and relationships and backs them up with a few simple tables.

A second approach to identifying the highest priorities requires collection of social indicators—basic statistics that show the extent of bad outcomes. For example, the police department can supply the number of aggravated assaults in which the victim was under 20 years of age, which in many places is a good measure of gang violence. The school district can measure the number of fights in schools and the dropout rate for each school and grade. The State employment office can supply the youth unemployment rate. These statistics can then be used to track the size of the problem over time and to compare the size of one city's or neighborhood's problem to those in other cities and neighborhoods.

Developing a consensus around a set of priorities is vital to the long-term success of gang prevention and reduction efforts. The solution will probably take continuous and concentrated effort over a long period, and a stable vision backed by widespread agreement is critical to success.

Chapter 6: Addressing Gang Problems Through Strategic Planning

Communities with emerging or existing gang problems must plan, develop, and implement comprehensive, harm-specific responses that include a broad range of community-based components.

No universal strategy works to address all gang problems. The complexity of today's gangs suggests the need for a comprehensive, multifaceted effort that targets the reasons youth join gangs. Such an effort may involve three programmatic approaches:

- ❑ Develop strategies to discourage gang membership.
- ❑ Provide avenues for youth to drop out of gangs.
- ❑ Empower communities to solve problems associated with gangs through collaboration with law enforcement, parents, schools, youth, businesses, religious and social service organizations, local government officials, and other community groups in a comprehensive, systematic approach.

Coalitions are dynamic, single-focused learning and task groups that evolve from the common purposes and needs of diverse organizations and individuals. Through commitment, compromise, and careful planning, they may often be capable of effecting great change in their member organizations and in the communities they serve.

It is essential to involve the formal leaders—elected officials, appointed leaders, agency heads, and ministers—*as well as* the informal leaders—people who influence others by their words and actions. Communities should actively involve all community components that have a potential interest in responding to gang problems.

When it is effective, strategic planning promotes team building, a sense of ownership, enthusiasm, and an environment that maximizes a coalition's chances for success. It is the process by which an organization's guiding members envision the organization's future and develop the procedures and operations necessary to achieve that future.

Strategic planning can help law enforcement, community-based social services agencies, schools, citizens' groups, and other interested community components establish a common mission and common priorities and minimize parochial perspectives in favor of broader goals. The most effective community efforts use successive levels of networking—cooperation, coordination, and collaboration—to achieve the desired goals and objectives.

With commitment from all participating organization heads, a strategic planning team should be created that includes representatives of all participating organizations, such as law enforcement, schools, parks and recreation departments, religious organizations, elected officials, and citizens'

groups. Additional members of the strategic planning team may include key interested individuals, such as youth who may have valuable information about potential obstacles and ways to overcome them.

The coalition's mission statement is the starting point for the strategic plan, from which all other strategic elements flow. The mission statement should include a statement of philosophy (values and beliefs) as well as a purpose on which all members agree.

An important question facing the strategic planning team is whether the coalition has the ability to accomplish its mission—to intervene effectively in the community's gang-related problems by developing and implementing a comprehensive, harm-specific response. The organizational assessment should involve obtaining information on critical issues and ranking the coalition's strengths, weaknesses, future opportunities, and threats. After the strategic objectives have been established (with defined target dates) and tested against the critical issues and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, the planning team should identify ways in which the coalition might achieve these objectives.

Action plans for a harm-specific response to local gangs will vary according to the nature of a community's problems, needs, targeted audiences, and finally, the identified strategic objectives. A coalition may select action plans that include particular methods for identifying current and potential gang members, facilitating conflict resolution among gangs, or working toward graffiti abatement.

At its implementation phase, the strategic plan is delivered to participating organization heads. It then becomes important for the organization heads to become visibly involved in the plan's implementation, publicly committing to it and demonstrating this commitment by dedicating the necessary resources and designating the appropriate personnel to ensure its success. A well-designed and well-executed communication strategy, targeting both participating organizations and the community at large, can help ensure successful strategic plan implementation.

The evaluation step in program development and implementation should not be overlooked. Program planners need to know how well the overall plan is working and how to improve it. The strategic planning team should conduct evaluations of the strategic plan during implementation and make any necessary changes to ensure the objectives are being met and the coalition's mission is being accomplished.

Chapter 7: Civil Remedies for Gang-Related Harm

Virtually every crime is also a tort—that is, a civil wrong against people, businesses, or the community for which the perpetrator is civilly liable in

damages, subject to court injunction, or both. Gang activity is also likely to violate several civil ordinances, and gang members can be held responsible for the harm they create by these violations. Furthermore, civil remedies can reach other people who make it easier for gangs to operate by their failure to comply with local ordinances or commercial regulations.

Someone is responsible for every site where gangs inflict harm, because he or she owns it, manages it, lives there, or works there. The keys to clearing up the harm that a problem place presents are to identify (1) the people responsible for the problem, (2) the people responsible for the place, and (3) the pressures that can be brought to bear on those responsible to remedy the problem. The pressures that can be brought to bear (other than criminal prosecution) fall into two general categories: civil suits for nuisance or trespass and civil code enforcement.

Civil lawsuits ordinarily seek to collect damages for injuries to the plaintiff or the plaintiff's property, or to prohibit the defendants from engaging in some kind of conduct. Private citizens, including private organizations, and public officials can both file civil lawsuits.

An injunctive suit seeks a court order to stop a present harm or prevent future harm. A damage suit seeks money for injuries that have already been inflicted. An injunction is the most powerful of the equity decrees. Violation of an injunction is contempt of court and can be punished by fine or jail or both.

If trespassing gang members cause serious damage to property, they are civilly liable. For example, if gang members set fire to a house, they can be sued for damages as well as prosecuted for arson. Gang members may have no assets at the time of their offense, but civil judgments against them can be renewed for long periods of time, as much as 40 years in many States. Whatever they acquire in the future is subject to attachment to pay the judgment.

Nuisance is a legal concept that applies to physically damaging neighboring property, reducing its value, or reducing its enjoyment. Nuisance also takes into account the neighborhood's general nature and refers to continuing abuses rather than isolated incidents.

Even if an owner and tenants have not themselves committed any specific crimes or offenses, they remain responsible for how their property is used and what happens there. Therefore, legal action can be directed at owners, tenants, or both to compel lawful use of the property, even though they have done nothing illegal.

There are both private nuisances and public nuisances. The difference is that the harm that a public nuisance creates does not affect just one or two neighbors; rather, it affects the general public. For example, public nuisances such as prostitution or crack houses have a negative impact on every property in the vicinity.

Nuisance statutes, ordinances, and cases usually refer to “nuisance abatement.” Abatement essentially means getting rid of the nuisance—doing whatever is required to bring the problem to an end. Abatement orders can impose specific conditions for continuing to operate a property, including establishing a system for screening tenants and installing security systems to keep gang members off a property. Abatement can be an invaluable remedy to gang-related harms. Examples of nuisances subject to abatement include drug trafficking, prostitution, gambling, trafficking in stolen goods, illegal liquor sales, public drunkenness, harassment of passers-by, loud noise, and excessive littering.

It is common in residential zones to regulate how many people can live in a residence, at least in terms of a family. When gangs take over a house, they often violate these occupancy limits.

Trespass refers to an owner’s right to exclusive possession of his or her property and involves coming onto another’s property. Ordinarily, trespass must be an intentional rather than a negligent or inadvertent invasion of someone else’s property. But there are important exceptions involving street gangs. Conduct that is reckless or extremely dangerous can be a trespass even though the perpetrator did not specifically intend to invade the victim’s property. Driveby shootings certainly fall into the category of reckless conduct.

There are several civil remedies for trespass: a suit for damages and an injunction or a suit to oust the trespasser. A trespass is not a criminal trespass unless it is a breach of the peace. The trespasser must intend to violate the rights of the landowner, and the trespass must carry with it at least some implicit intimidation or threat of a breach of the peace.

While precise wording may vary, criminal trespass statutes usually forbid going on, attempting to go on, or remaining on the property of another without authority or after being forbidden to do so. Notice against trespass can be either written or oral and can be given in several ways, including personal communication, posting signs on the property, or fencing the property.

The owner can designate agents, including police officers, to warn trespassers that they are trespassing and ask them to leave. Refusal to leave the premises after notice is a criminal trespass, meaning officers can make an immediate arrest or seek an arrest warrant allowing them to make an arrest later.

Scarcely any aspect of living in a modern American city is untouched by the city’s regulatory power. This power to regulate business stems from the city’s responsibility to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens.

Businesses cannot operate in zones where they are not permitted. Beyond the zoning code, there are building, fire, health and sanitation, and

business-licensing codes. When gangs occupy or dominate buildings, they often damage them in ways that violate building codes. They may block exits, overload electrical circuits, clog plumbing, or destroy security devices. A fire escape that is down rather than in its retracted position may show that gang members are using it to get in and out of a building. Open windows and smoke coming from a building may show that people are cooking with open fires because there is no gas or electric service in the building. Such activity clearly violates fire codes.

Many places of amusement can also become centers of gang activity. In addition to complying with their basic business licenses, sites such as arcades, poolrooms, and dance halls must comply with fire, health and sanitation, and food service codes. Those that serve alcohol must also have liquor or wine and beer licenses and must comply, for example, with minimum drinking-age statutes.

Many gang-related problems arise on rental properties, which are usually subject to intensive local regulation. Rental properties that have fallen under the control of gangs are frequently in violation of several code provisions. City authorities can take action against both tenants and owners to remedy the problems.

Not even vacant buildings and lots escape regulation. Weeds on lots must be kept trimmed. Lots themselves must be free of litter. City codes also require that unoccupied buildings be secured against unauthorized users and vandals. Neighbors can call on code enforcement to make sure that owners meet these obligations.

Why have civil remedies not been put to better use? There are at least three major reasons for this failure: fear of retaliation, difficulty of getting public officials to cooperate, and congestion in the courts. The fear of retaliation in gang-dominated neighborhoods is the greatest obstacle to getting neighborhood cooperation in confronting problems.

The first step may be to get the neighbors to unite—to seek safety in numbers. If citizens are afraid to come forth, then public officials should provide means for them to communicate their concerns without exposing themselves to gang retaliation.

The best chance of getting swift legal action is to bring matters into the courts of limited jurisdiction (also called small claims courts). Involved parties should look for ways to keep within the jurisdiction of these faster moving courts, which allow the disputing parties to try their cases without lawyers and have simplified procedures and relaxed rules of evidence. Most code violations and less serious criminal offenses come before courts of limited jurisdiction and can be disposed of promptly. Landlord-tenant courts are often special divisions that can also handle cases promptly. Many gang-related problems are essentially landlord-tenant problems that can be taken to those special divisions.

Complicated nuisance suits may end up in courts of general jurisdiction, where it may take a long time for them to be resolved. But if plaintiffs are seeking injunctions rather than damages, they can often get their cases expedited because of the irreparable injuries they suffer by delay.

Chapter 8: Evaluating Anti-Gang Efforts

Evaluations provide invaluable information for decisionmakers, document the program so it may be replicated elsewhere, and enable public agencies to justify program costs.

Evaluation steps include:

- ❑ Specifying goals and objectives related to the reduction of harm associated with gang problems.
- ❑ Specifying the target population and time during which the program will operate.
- ❑ Describing the program's activities in detail, directly linking activities with program objectives.
- ❑ Constructing a logic diagram of the program that represents the cause-and-effect relationships between activities and accomplishments.
- ❑ Developing comparisons that show whether the program had the intended effects on the target population.
- ❑ Specifying other factors that might account for changes in the target population.
- ❑ Designing data collection instruments.
- ❑ Developing and analyzing comparisons, which is the data analysis portion of the evaluation.
- ❑ Drawing conclusions.

A process evaluation addresses the elements that characterize the operations and functions of a program, such as organizational structure, policies and procedures, human and technical resources, goals and objectives, and activities.

Process evaluations enable managers to shape the program and make midcourse corrections if necessary. Process evaluations also link objectives and strategies. A third use is providing helpful information to other communities interested in building on a particular gang initiative in the future. Finally, process evaluations garner support for the program from participants and others in the community.

A logic diagram is a valuable tool that traces a program's elements from the goals to the specific activities. By presenting a graphic illustration of a program's logical structure, this diagram aids the evaluation process, helps

managers implement and operate the program, and spells out activities. In addition, this exercise points toward potential measures of effectiveness.

Data needs will vary with each program's focus, activities, and specific strategies. Process evaluations use both quantitative and qualitative data, with emphasis usually on the latter. Questions that focus on characteristics such as program emphasis and possible barriers to implementation often require a detailed knowledge of the program and its target. This is best accomplished with qualitative data that allow the evaluator to glean program insights. Open-ended interviews are useful tools because they provide flexibility for the respondent to elaborate and for the interviewer to explore.

Some types of quantitative data are appropriate for assessing program growth and development. Interim process measures, such as the number of youth reached in programs and the number and type of arrests, tell the evaluator and program staff whether the project's process objectives are being met and whether the program is moving in the intended direction.

Evaluation of the effects of a program involves several design issues that decide the scope and focus of the impact evaluation. These issues include causality, the proper unit of analysis, the various levels of effects expected, the selection of appropriate data, the basics of data collection, and quasi-experimental designs.

The unit of analysis for an impact evaluation corresponds to the focus of program activities. If the action being taken aims at individual-level change (for example, improving parenting skills of teenage mothers), an impact assessment must focus on the individual level of their parenting behaviors. On the other hand, if the focus of project activity is to reduce fear of gangs among residents in an area, the neighborhood is the proper unit of analysis.

As with other aspects of evaluation, decisions about appropriate measures depend on project objectives and activities. One of the most basic issues about any measure is its validity. Data needs depend on the type of change sought by the intervention. Appropriate use of data depends on the nature of the program and interventions.

Whatever kind or combination of data is appropriate, it must be collected systematically and uniformly throughout the evaluation. The instruments or protocols needed will vary depending on the design and the kind of data sought.

Obviously, the ideal is a well-implemented program with a high level of success. Whatever the outcome, however, a well-conceived evaluation in which the process and impact portions are linked enables evaluators to make an informed assessment.

I. UNDERSTANDING GANGS AND GANG PROBLEMS

Introduction

Contemporary gangs—variously known as youth, delinquent, street, or criminal gangs—have become a widespread threat to communities throughout the Nation. Once considered largely an urban phenomenon, gangs have increasingly emerged in smaller communities, presenting a challenge that severely strains local resources.

There is a growing wealth of academic literature about the nature of gangs, the scope and type of their activities, their organizational structure, and their leadership (see bibliography in Appendix A). These books and articles provide a valuable starting point for those interested in expanding their understanding of contemporary gangs. A close reading of the literature points to the inevitable conclusion that all gang problems are local in nature. Whether rooted in neighborhoods, representing a rite of passage, providing surrogate families, or providing access to economic opportunity, most gangs are inherently local. Even large-scale gangs with reputed nationwide networks attract local youths and take advantage of local opportunities to carry out gang activities.

Local problems require local solutions. That is the focus of this monograph. To address the growing concern about gangs, the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) has developed this monograph, *Addressing Community Gang Problems: A Practical Guide*. It is a useful tool providing guidance for agencies in developing individualized responses to local gang problems.

This monograph evolved from a PERF project funded by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) in 1994 involving communities in four cities. Although serious concerns about gang problems permeated each community, PERF found a dearth of programmatic materials designed to offer meaningful guidance to community groups, which often included residents, business owners, municipal government employees, schools, criminal justice personnel, and others. As part of its work with BJA, PERF developed a manual that offers a process to solve gang problems. That manual, entitled *Addressing Community Gang Problems: A Model for Problem Solving*, a companion to this monograph, has been published by BJA.

Community-based organizations, however, often need more indepth guidance on specific issues related to gangs. This monograph provides the reader with a practical foundation for understanding the diverse nature of gangs, the problems they pose and the harms they cause, and the two analytical models for addressing gang-related problems.

This monograph includes a brief theoretical overview of key gang issues relevant to community groups and discusses some specific approaches to

All gang problems are local in nature. Local problems require local solutions.

analyzing and responding to gang problems. It by no means sets forth all the possible responses to gang problems, but it does provide practical guidance—including worksheets and planning documents—to assist community groups. Each chapter can be used separately to address specific community needs.

This monograph and the manual, *Addressing Community Gang Problems: A Model for Problem Solving*, complement a companion document published by BJA entitled *Urban Street Gang Enforcement*. The *Urban Street Gang Enforcement* monograph focuses exclusively on enforcement and prosecution strategies to protect against urban street gangs and presents strategies to enhance the prosecution of gang-related crimes.

Analytical Models

Two analytical models—a problem-solving model and a gang-problem triangle model—are suggested throughout this monograph to help communities understand and develop effective solutions to local gang problems. The two models are briefly discussed here to familiarize the reader with them.

The problem-solving model that is applied to gang problems in this monograph is often referred to as SARA, an acronym for the four steps involved in the process—scanning, analysis, response, and assessment. Communities first initiate the problem-solving process by searching for and identifying gang problems—scanning. This involves narrowing the community’s view of a general gang problem to a more specific problem, such as gang graffiti, drug sales, or driveby shootings. Each problem necessitates a different response.

The second stage of the problem-solving process—analysis—involves investigating the specific gang problem in greater detail. The gang-problem triangle model, described in the next section of this chapter, is useful for analysis. This gang-problem triangle model can help break gang problems into parts to be analyzed more easily. In general, analysis helps a community understand the nature of its gang problem—what form it takes, who is harmed and how, and when the problems occur. Even a common gang problem such as graffiti can be analyzed: When do the graffiti incidents occur? Where do they usually happen? What type of tool is used to apply the graffiti? Only when a community can answer basic questions about the who, how, when, and where of a gang problem is it time to develop a response to the problem.

Having identified their gang problems and thoroughly analyzed them, communities can develop specific responses directed to these harms. Typically, community groups hear about an innovative program for addressing gang-related problems and try to implement that program without regard to the unique characteristics of their local gang. This is a natural response

The problem-solving model SARA includes four steps: scanning, analysis, response, and assessment.

although usually not effective. Implementing afterschool activities for 7th through 10th graders, for example, is likely to have little impact on a gang problem in which 12th graders are causing the harm. Communities following the SARA model, however, can conceptually link specific problems with specific local responses.

The final stage of the problem-solving process assesses the effectiveness of the response. Assessment can determine whether the problem was eliminated or reduced. Assessment also can be used to change the response, improve the analysis, or even redefine the problem. Assessment means more than deciding that the gang went away. A well-planned assessment may indicate that neighbors are less fearful, the incidence of graffiti is reduced, or driveby shootings have diminished. These reductions of harm are important outcomes that should be thoroughly documented.

As referred to previously, the gang-problem triangle model is a method of analyzing or developing a deeper understanding of local gang problems and pointing to fruitful avenues of response. This analytical model stems from the concept of a fire. Three elements are needed for a fire: Fuel (something that will burn), heat (to set the fuel on fire), and oxygen (without which the fuel will not burn). If one of these three elements is missing, the fire will never start. If one element is removed, a burning fire will go out. Part of a firefighter's job is to determine which of the three elements will be easiest to remove. If one thinks about each element as representing a side of a triangle, one can easily visualize that removing a side of the triangle will cause it to collapse.

Similarly, three elements must be present before gang-related harm can occur: An offender, a victim, and a place. An offender is someone who is motivated to commit an offense, such as painting graffiti or committing a robbery. A victim is a desirable and vulnerable target who must be present for the harm to occur. And, of course, there must be a physical place in which the victim and the offender converge, usually at the same time.

If these three elements show up over and over again, removing one of the three elements can break the pattern of offending and prevent future harm. By identifying the elements that are easiest to remove and working to remove them, communities can significantly reduce their gang problems.

An important part of the gang-problem triangle is a recognition that there are third parties with responsibilities for each side of the triangle. Controllers are people who try to prevent potential offenders from committing crimes. Guardians are people who try to prevent harm from coming to potential victims. Managers are people who oversee places where harm occurs. Thus, in an incidence of gang graffiti, one could consider parents or teachers as controllers, police as guardians of the victims in areas where graffiti occurs, and building owners as managers of the places where graffiti occurs. Identifying the people responsible for victims, offenders, and

The gang-problem triangle model includes three elements: an offender, a victim, and a place.

places where crime occurs and involving them in the development of crime prevention programs is necessary if communities are to reduce or prevent future gang problems.

Considering the many different types and characteristics of gangs, crafting a universal definition of a gang is both impossible and impractical.

Organization of the Monograph

This monograph is organized into three major sections: Understanding Gangs and Gang Problems, Learning About Local Gangs, and Responding to Local Gang Problems. Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4 make up Section I, Understanding Gangs and Gang Problems, which provides a basic description of gangs, including their variations, and an omnipresent gang problem, graffiti.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the monograph, describing its development, the two analytical models presented in it, and the organization of the material. Chapter 2 outlines the continuing debate over what defines a gang and how to classify gang-related crimes. Both subjects are integral to determining the scope of gang-related problems and the solutions that are likely to be effective.

What exactly is a gang? Are all gangs involved in criminal activity? What is the extent of drug use and sales among gangs? Why do people join gangs? Chapter 2 explores these questions in detail and describes the difficulties in defining the term “gang.” Considering the many different types and characteristics of gangs, crafting a universal definition of a gang is both impossible and impractical. This chapter suggests that communities develop a local understanding of their own gangs and develop local strategies and programs to address the problems posed by the particular gangs threatening their neighborhoods.

The mass media’s sensationalized accounts of driveby shootings and drug-related crime have popularized the notion that gangs are highly organized, involved in sophisticated drug-trafficking networks, and consist only of poor males of color, among other characteristics. Chapter 3 exposes common myths, discussing the relationship among gangs, drugs, and violence. It also describes the range or types of gangs that exist, the varying activities of gangs, their diverse organizational structures and leadership, and their differing involvement in criminal activities, including drug use and sales.

Chapter 4 distinguishes between tagger graffiti which are designed as art or self-promotion, and more traditional gang graffiti, which are meant to mark territorial claims and convey violent, threatening messages to rival gang members. Important for understanding and solving the graffiti problem at the community level is identifying the people creating the graffiti, the tools they use, the places where graffiti appears, and the people responsible for these places. This chapter suggests that once these elements are identified, the community—local government officials, law enforcement officials, busi-

ness owners, and residents—may take action, such as implementing an antigraffiti policy, reducing the availability of graffiti tools, and developing graffiti-removal campaigns to prevent or reduce the impact of graffiti.

Chapters 5 and 6 make up Section II, Learning About Local Gangs, which involves documenting and analyzing local gang activity through comprehensive needs assessments and developing local strategies to address gang problems. How do communities begin to address their gang problems? Who should be involved in the problem-solving process? What problems should be tackled first? Chapter 5 provides a framework for conducting a needs assessment—the first step in planning a comprehensive solution to gang problems. In general, needs assessments provide a complete picture of all community needs and show which needs are being met, which are not, and which are most pressing. In addressing gang problems, needs assessments allow community stakeholders—social service providers, school administrators and teachers, parents, law enforcement officials, neighborhood organizations, and local government officials—to identify problems, set priorities in addressing those problems, and build a communitywide consensus on the appropriate response. As planning instruments in the problem-solving process, needs assessments help communities identify problems and point toward possible solutions.

Chapter 6 describes how to develop an effective community coalition, as well as design and implement a strategic plan with specific long-term objectives and clearly defined strategies to solve or prevent gang problems. This chapter illustrates the need for cooperation, coordination, and collaboration among coalition members to overcome potential obstacles, such as resource sharing and turf issues, that may threaten the success of their efforts.

Chapters 7 and 8 make up Section III, Responding to Local Gang Problems, which describes some effective responses to gang problems that may have widespread value for antigang efforts, in addition to the process of evaluating local gang programs.

Parents, youth, church leaders, social service providers, law enforcement officials, teachers, and public officials are among the many community stakeholders who, together, can be instrumental in addressing local gang problems. Each person or group has a different and valuable perspective on the problems that gangs pose. Traditionally, communities have looked to the law enforcement community to address gang problems. This limited view overlooks other useful tools such as civil suits and civil code enforcement. Chapter 7 focuses on the places where gang problems occur and suggests several civil actions that individual residents and local government agencies may take to address gang problems.

Evaluating antigang programs is difficult but necessary to ensure the success of these efforts. Chapter 8 provides tools for local government agencies, community-based organizations, and others to assess their

Parents, youth, church leaders, social service providers, law enforcement officials, teachers, and public officials . . . can be instrumental in addressing local gang problems.

gang prevention and intervention programs. Although seldom used, program evaluation is a useful management tool. It provides information on how effectively resources are used; documents a program's specific objectives, strategies, and outcomes so that the program may be replicated; provides feedback on a program's strengths and weaknesses so that it can be adjusted; and helps to justify the use of scarce resources. This chapter stresses the importance of linking program policies, strategies, and resources (processes) to desired outcomes or effects (impacts). Thus, evaluating program processes by directly relating them to their intended impacts is an effective way to assess program successes.

Defining the Community's Gang(s)

The term “gang” carries with it many meanings and evokes a number of images for people. For some, a gang is a small group of four or five adolescents who loiter on a street corner. For others, the term may identify graffiti artists, drug users, Nazi skinheads, or a group of highly organized youth whose purpose is to make money from drug dealing. A discussion of some of the different characteristics of gangs may contribute to a working definition of gangs. As this paper discusses, diverse perceptions and definitions of gangs present particular challenges to communities as they attempt to deal with gang problems in their neighborhoods. Many experts correctly believe that the success or failure of communitywide attempts to address gang problems is likely to rest, in part, on how the problems are understood and diagnosed. There is also the difficulty of people attributing criminal behavior to gangs instead of the responsible individuals. “Gang related” has become a favored term to describe much of the crime that exists in many neighborhoods. This, like much of the popular understanding of gangs, is a distortion of fact. So how does one define a gang?

Which Definition To Use?

The media, the public, and community agencies use the term “gang” more loosely than the law enforcement community. Through sensationalized media accounts, people have come to equate gangs with highly organized drug distribution networks (Fagan, 1993). While drug use and selling have been a feature of gang life for many years—some gangs are indeed involved in drug trafficking—the perception has arisen that all gangs are highly organized and heavily involved in the drug trade. Gangs indeed are more visible than in the past and gang violence has increased—due, in part, to their involvement in drug trafficking (Huff, 1990b). The image of the driveby shooting has also become a common perception of gang life for many citizens (see, for instance, Sanders, 1994). In sum, the public’s definition of a gang describes a group of individuals—mostly inner-city youth—who are highly organized, heavily involved in the drug trade, and very dangerous.

Politicians and law enforcement officials tend to rely on legal parameters to define what constitutes a gang. In fact, most of the definitions of youth gangs come from various law enforcement agencies. However, these formal definitions often reflect only high-profile gangs or the ones that present the most pressing problems for police. Thus, from the law enforcement point of view, criminal behavior appears to be a key component of the definition. For example, the Miami Police Department defines a gang as “a group of persons joined together to commit acts of violence or any other anti-social behavior.” The Los Angeles Police Department defines a gang as “a group of juveniles and/or adults in a geographic area whose activities include the

Many experts correctly believe that the success or failure of communitywide attempts to address gang problems is likely to rest, in part, on how the problems are understood and diagnosed.

[M]uch of what is labeled as gang-related behavior is really not gang related at all.

unlawful use of force, violence, or threats of force and violence to further the group's purpose" (Citizens Crime Commission of Tarrant County, 1991). This is the most common definition used, but it fails to recognize that many gangs do not engage solely in criminal acts, or even highly visible ones.

Compounding the definition problem is the inconsistent use of the term "gang related," which is often used to describe the criminal activities of an individual gang member rather than the coordinated activities of the gang itself (Horowitz, 1983). While some definitions of gang-related behavior do, in fact, properly use the term, much of what is labeled as gang-related behavior is really not gang related at all (Maxson and Klein, 1990). Police may classify an incident as gang related simply because the individual involved is a gang member. Maxson and Klein (1990) refer to this as a member-based definition. Other departments may use a motive-based definition, whereby an incident is gang related because the individual gang member acts on the gang's behalf.

Experts on gangs also have great difficulty in reaching consensus on what constitutes a gang, partly because youth gangs and delinquent groups have characteristic differences. In the 1950s and 1960s, researchers viewed the delinquent gang and the delinquent group as identical (Spergel, 1990). The tendency to consider youth gangs and delinquent groups as the same continues today, especially when juveniles are studied. However, when older adolescents and young adults are considered, researchers are quick to point out that distinctions need to be made (Spergel, 1990).

One way to distinguish between the two is to compare gang behavior with delinquent-group behavior. Research has shown that gang members engage in significantly more criminal behavior than members of delinquent groups; they have higher rates of police contact, more arrests, and more drug-related offenses. Moreover, gang membership tends to inhibit what is known as the "maturational effect." Most youth become less likely to engage in further criminal behavior as they grow older; this is not the case with gang members. According to one estimate (Tracy, 1987), gang membership increases the probability of criminal activity.

There is no consensus on a standardized definition of a gang, but there is some agreement on the basic elements. According to Maxson and Klein (1989), there are three criteria for defining a street gang: community recognition of the group, the group's recognition of itself as a distinct group of adolescents or young adults, and the group's involvement in enough illegal activities to get a consistent negative response from law enforcement and neighborhood residents. Even this definition presents problems because it implies a negative relationship between the community and the gang and ignores the possibility that gangs may have a positive relationship with the residents. In fact, Sanchez-Jankowski (1991) found that gangs often have a positive relationship with their local communities and may serve as a local police force.

The debate continues and it will not be resolved here. Even the experts on the study of gangs have not arrived at a common definition of gangs in this country. However, a certain level of knowledge about the different types and characteristics of local gangs is necessary before communities can begin to address their gang problems.

Gang Diversity

To understand the issue of gang diversity, which, in turn, affects how a gang is defined, it is helpful to describe some of the different types of gangs. As mentioned previously, the public's understanding of gangs in the United States has been colored by media accounts of gang activities and gang life. These sensationalized events have led many people to believe that gang membership always involves violence and participation in the drug trade. This is not necessarily the case. There are indeed a number of gangs involved in drug trafficking, which presents a host of problems for some communities. However, there are other types of gangs that may not seriously threaten a community but still may raise issues of public concern. Descriptive categories called typologies help classify and distinguish among the types of gangs. While there are several different typologies of gangs, Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin (1960) provide one of the easiest to understand.

The centerpiece of Cloward and Ohlin's theory is the concept of differential opportunity. According to this concept, people in all levels of society share the same success goals; however, those in the lower class have limited means by which to achieve their goals. People who see themselves as failures within conventional society will seek alternative or innovative ways to achieve success. Thus, individuals may become involved in gang life and crime simply because legitimate means of success are unavailable to them.

Cloward and Ohlin also see a differential opportunity structure for illegitimate means of achieving success. The significance of this finding is that all opportunities—legal and illegal—are often unavailable to most inner-city youth. Cloward and Ohlin conclude that young people are likely to join one of three types of gangs—criminal, conflict, or retreatist—because of differential opportunity.

Criminal gangs are likely to exist in stable low-income areas where there are close relationships between adolescents and adult criminals. In such environments, adolescents are recruited into organizations that serve as training grounds for successful criminal careers. During this apprenticeship, more experienced members of the gang supervise the new members and limit any activities that might jeopardize the gang's profits. Over time, the new members learn the techniques and attitudes of the criminal world and are introduced to the middlemen of the crime business—fences, pawn shop operators, and drug suppliers, for example.

People who see themselves as failures within conventional society . . . may become involved in gang life and crime simply because legitimate means of success are unavailable to them.

Where criminal opportunities do not exist, many gangs have used violence as a means of gaining social status.

In perhaps one of the most thorough examinations of criminal gangs, Chin (1990) describes the characteristics of Chinese gangs. Chin argues that Chinese gangs are closely associated with and controlled by powerful community organizations and are intertwined with the economic and social structures of their communities. Thus, they are an integral part of community life. Chinese gangs are also influenced to a great extent by Chinese secret societies known as Triads and the norms and values of the Triad subculture. Often, adult criminals in the community serve as role models and mentors for these gang members.

The primary activity of Chinese gangs is making money. Members invest a considerable amount of money in legitimate businesses and spend a lot of time negotiating business deals. Thus, these gangs do not experience the deterioration and poverty that other types of gangs experience. Rather, Chinese gangs grow and become economically prosperous by maintaining ties with the economic and political structures of their communities. In other words, there is a cultural component to the success of Chinese gangs—they have a certain legitimacy within the community based on the historical experience of the Triad societies (Chin, 1990).

Conflict gangs tend to develop in communities with dilapidated conditions and transient populations. There are no successful adult criminal role models from whom youth can learn criminal skills. Violence is thus used as a means of gaining status. Conflict gangs fight to protect their integrity and honor. By doing so, they gain admiration from their peers, which helps them to develop a positive self-image (Klein, Maxson, and Miller, 1995).

Over the years, many conflict gangs have adopted colors to signify membership. The Bloods and the Crips use red and blue, respectively. These gangs, composed primarily of African Americans, tend to be very territorial. Members write their gang name, monikers, names of dead members, or gang slogans on walls, sidewalks, trees or any object in public view. The Bloods and the Crips have recently focused on the drug trade as a means of gaining financial success, although like many African-American and Hispanic gangs, they derive their status primarily from the use of violence (Klein, Maxson, and Miller, 1995; Vigil, 1988). In cases where criminal opportunities do not exist, many gangs have used violence as a means of gaining social status.

Retreatist gangs seek success through both legitimate and illegitimate means. Some may have been involved in criminal activities or used violence but have not been accepted as conflict gangs. In addition, these gangs do not possess the skills to be considered criminal gangs. Cloward and Ohlin (1960) refer to this group as double failures. They retreat into a role on the fringe of society that usually involves heavy drug use and withdrawal from social interaction.

Vietnamese youth gangs, especially in Southern California, are good examples of retreatist gangs. In reaction to the significant problems they have encountered in becoming assimilated into mainstream American culture, Vietnamese youth have developed a retreatist attitude toward gang life. For example, drug dealing in Vietnamese gangs is perceived as too risky and to be avoided; however, drug use—especially cocaine—is heavy. Vietnamese gang members have adopted a low-profile approach by avoiding conspicuous gang symbols such as tattoos or hand signs. The few symbols and signs used as indicators of gang affiliation are easily concealed. In manner of dress, these gangs attempt to blend into the social landscape to avoid the attention of police. Finally, the structure of Vietnamese gangs tends to be unorganized and fluid. Membership changes constantly, and the rituals and practices of traditional gangs are noticeably absent (Vigil and Yun, 1990).

A number of other gangs do not fit neatly into Cloward and Ohlin's typology. For example, some gangs engage in serious criminal activity, but many if not most gangs have few organizational or economic goals. Although these gangs may not pose a serious threat to a community, lesser threats remain. For example, while not engaged in serious delinquency, tagger crews are one of the latest groups to receive classification under the gang label. Tagger crews consist of youth banded together to create graffiti. Crews compete with each other to see who can put up the most graffiti in a given time period or area. In his book *Renegade Kids, Suburban Outlaws*, Wayne Wooden (1995) describes the dynamics of tagging as well as the motivations behind it. The main reason for tagging, which is a form of vandalism, is to gain respect from fellow artists and, more important, from members of other tagger crews.

Developed as part of the emerging hip-hop culture, tagging has taken on a life of its own. What was once a tool for street gangs to stake out their turf is now considered sport by a growing number of youth. According to police officials, in 1993 there were 422 active crews in the city of Los Angeles and approximately 30,000 taggers in more than 600 crews countywide (Wooden, 1995).

To many experts, the popularity of tagging is associated with "gangsta" rap music as well as the emergence of traditional gangs in suburban America. Rather than merely mimicking the vandalism and criminal behavior of urban gang members and taggers, suburban tagger crews are forming to compete with or oppose them. These taggers travel from suburban areas to the inner city, leaving their marks (called pieces) along highways to indicate their presence. As Wooden states, tagging has both passive and aggressive aspects. Tagger crew members are not striking out against a particular person or group, but rather are reacting to the lack of attention from society. Thus, society becomes the object of their frustration.

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Many female groups are no longer simply extensions of male gangs. Female gang members manage their own affairs, make their own decisions, and often engage in a system of norms that is similar to that of male gangs.

In the early literature on female gangs, female gang members were defined solely in terms of their relations to male gang members. Female gang members were classified as either tomboys or sex objects; the latter seems to have been more popular. In the 1950s, according to one account in New York City, virtually all the female gangs were affiliated with male gangs (Campbell, 1990). Their functions included carrying weapons, acting as spies, and providing sex for male gang members. Twenty years later, Miller (1975) identified three possible roles for female gang members—as independent units, as regular members in what he calls coed gangs, and as female auxiliaries of male gangs.

In the past, the identity and social survival of female gangs depended on their affiliation with male gangs. However, current research on female gangs, principally among Hispanic girls, has taken a different turn. Recently, Anne Campbell (1990) has found that many female groups are no longer simply extensions of male gangs. Female gang members manage their own affairs, make their own decisions, and often engage in a system of norms that is similar to that of male gangs, such as sanctioning a member for failing to support another “homegirl” in a fight or failing to identify herself as a gang member. Thus, while some research continues to identify female gangs as extensions of their male counterparts, the evidence is far from conclusive.

Community Concerns: What To Do?

The problems of diversity and the changing definitions of gangs present a host of difficulties for community leaders. Communities can begin to develop strategies and programs to address their specific gang problems by analyzing how local law enforcement officials define a gang and by analyzing the types of gangs affecting their neighborhoods. There are a number of things to look for.

First, communities must recognize that the ways in which gangs are defined will, to a large degree, determine the extent of the gang problem in a neighborhood. Moreover, even when one definition is used, such as the law enforcement definition, this too varies from one jurisdiction to another. It is thus important for community leaders to determine how their law enforcement community defines a gang.

Another problem that communities should consider is the tendency to assign responsibility to an entire gang for the activities of one gang member. As mentioned previously, individual gang members often engage in activities that are not connected to the gang as a whole. Thus, many activities labeled “gang related” may not, in fact, be gang related at all.

As community leaders struggle to understand these definitional problems, they must also recognize the wide diversity that exists among gangs. It is important to understand the age and ethnic distribution of the community’s

population, as well as its social and economic structures. These community characteristics may help to assess the likelihood of gang activity and to identify the types of gangs that may emerge in the community. Once a gang has been identified, it is important to characterize it accurately. As was mentioned, not all gangs are the same and not all gangs are involved in the same types of activities. Communities must clearly understand the nature of their gangs and the problems associated with them before undertaking any strategies or programs.

It is also important that communities determine if economic and recreational opportunities are already available to their youth. In addition, communities should determine whether they have numerous gangs nearby, for competition between gangs could easily escalate into a gang war. Finally, being able to identify and recognize gang graffiti and symbols may help provide insight about future gang activity. This is especially true if a gang identifies a particular area as its turf.

The task of defining and identifying a gang is not easy. As the following chapters indicate, the problems posed by gangs will not be solved quickly or easily. The lack of a clear understanding of gangs is likely to continue to frustrate communities as they attempt to find solutions to their gang problems.

Gang Involvement in Drugs and Violence

Urban gangs are one of the most pervasive problems confronting society. America has become a society almost preoccupied with gangs—especially their relationship to drugs and violence. While it is true that violence among gang members has escalated and involvement in drugs has been a feature of gang life for many years, gangs are now increasingly and almost exclusively blamed for the drug and violence problems of the last decade (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1989). This is partly because gangs have grown in number and diversity across the Nation, affecting both large cities and smaller communities. The problem has gone beyond the inner cities to small-town America.

As with many social problems, Americans have increasingly looked to the legal system for solutions (McNamara, 1995). In the absence of effective informal means of controlling behavior such as family or community rules of behavior, society has become dependent on the use of formal social control—the criminal justice system (Spergel and Curry, 1990). This has been the primary approach to the emergence of gangs. However, while legal remedies may help to ease fears about gang violence and drug-related crime, one social institution cannot be exclusively relied on to perform the work of many.

The criminal justice system struggles to fulfill its responsibilities. As a result, the problems caused by gangs require not only a better understanding of the problem—a goal researchers have been hard pressed to achieve—but also reestablishment of informal social controls at the community level. Many sociologists suggest that the only way to solve social problems is by enhancing the sense of community shared by its members. As the number of people who feel they have a responsibility to other community members increases, individuals are more likely to put the community's needs ahead of their own.

Through community involvement, effective solutions to shared problems are likely to emerge. This is clearly the case with gangs—the most effective solutions must come from within the community itself. These solutions can only come, however, after a clear understanding of the nature of the gang problem. This chapter explores the relationship among gangs, drugs, and violence and attempts to show that this interplay of factors is anything but clear. An understanding of the gang problem is clouded not only by the variations in gang characteristics but also by the quality of information communities receive about gangs.

Gangs are now increasingly and almost exclusively blamed for the drug and violence problems of the last decade.

The Media's Social Distortion of Gangs

Are there links among gangs, drugs, and violence? On the surface, this may seem to be a simple question with an easily attainable answer. However, an understanding of the nature of the problem as well as its possible solutions may be distorted by the type of information available on these subjects. While some misinformation may stem from a community's denial of a gang problem—a situation found in many police departments (Huff, 1988a, 1988b, 1989; Hagedorn and Macon, 1988)—the media's distortion of gang-related information also plays a role.

During various times in American history, particularly the 1970s and 1980s, gangs received considerable media attention. The media became the public's primary source of information about gangs. Moreover, in movies, television, radio, newspapers, and even documentaries, the image created about gangs was consistent—they were heavily involved in the drug trade and exceptionally prone to violence.

There are two primary reasons for this characterization. First, gangs and the media both benefit from exaggerated portrayals of gangs and gang life. The news media, in all forms, are in business to make a profit. As such, the more exciting or dramatic the story, the more likely it is to capture the public's interest. Society has a paradoxical relationship with crime: Americans are terrified of being victimized by crime but at the same time fascinated with crime stories. The media attempt to increase their profits by providing the public with sensationalized stories that relate to crime and violence. Increasingly, the media achieve this goal by attributing these events to gangs.

Gangs also benefit from this situation. For many gang members, gaining a reputation of being tough and savvy allows them to move up their social hierarchy. As the media continue to portray gangs in this negative light, they actually enhance gang members' standing in their own communities. The more a media story focuses on gang violence, the more it serves the gang's interest.

The second problem is one of access. The media have a limited amount of time and space in which to "tell the tale" (Van Maneen, 1988), and very often the information they receive is either limited or reinterpreted by the reporter to fit the story's framework. Thus, in those cases where the details of a particular crime are unknown, it is common for reporters to recast the description and broadly categorize the crime as gang-related (Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991; Conklin, 1992; Spergel and Curry, 1990). In addition, reporters, especially those wishing to spend an extended amount of time with gang members (for example, for documentaries), often have difficulty gaining access to gangs. The most common methods reporters use to learn about gangs are reading other media accounts and interviewing gang members. However, these methods suffer from several limitations, including the truth and accuracy of gang members' responses. These problems also plague social science researchers.

Society has a paradoxical relationship with crime: Americans are terrified of being victimized by crime but at the same time fascinated with crime stories.

The difference, however, is that reporters usually interview gang members only once, while researchers often spend months—sometimes years—learning about the lives of gang members.

Thus, for a number of reasons, the information obtained from the media on gangs is distorted to the point that the public believes gangs are extremely violent, are involved in drug trafficking, are highly organized, and are a pervasive part of the social landscape. This distorted view of gangs influences not only an understanding of the problem, but also has an impact on social policy.

Another distortion the media portray about gangs relates to their ethnic and racial composition. Gangs are not exclusively a minority phenomenon. Although poor nonwhite communities have produced the largest number of gangs, lower class white communities have had gangs in the past and continue to produce them. It is not necessarily race that explains gang life, for gang members usually come from socially and economically disadvantaged communities.

Thus, many of the media's portrayals of gangs do little more than perpetuate existing myths that contribute to the gang problem in this country. Historical examination of gangs shows that no exclusive pattern characterizes gangs or gang life.

It is not necessarily race that explains gang life, for gang members usually come from socially and economically disadvantaged communities.

Historical Overview of Gangs

Concentrations of gang research have occurred at three fairly distinct times in this century. The earliest studies were part of an effort by University of Chicago researchers to study the effects of social disorganization in rapidly growing urban areas (Thrasher, 1927; Shaw, 1930; Shaw and McKay, 1942). The most influential study of gangs in the early part of this century was Thrasher's *The Gang*, published in 1927. Thrasher identified 1,313 different gangs in Chicago and provided the foundation for generations of researchers concerned with the gang phenomenon. Thrasher's study was the first truly sociological analysis that did more than simply describe the gang problem. He addressed some of the social-psychological issues that prompt individuals to join gangs, such as the quest for adventure.

Thrasher also looked at how gangs are organized, how leaders emerge, and how authorities respond to gangs. Similarly, Shaw and McKay (1942) argued that the homes of the poorest and most recent immigrants often had high rates of street crime and delinquency due to the breakdown of their capacity for social control. Social disorganization theorists argued that the concentration of crime and disorder in certain areas of the city was due to the breakdown of social relationships to the point where a community's coordination, teamwork, morale, and social control were impaired. Thus, for this first wave of studies, the explanation of gangs focused on the lack of stable social structures in certain parts of the city.

Gangs serve as substitute families and provide a sense of belonging in addition to offering a ladder of social mobility for some gang members.

The second wave of studies began in the mid-1950s and lasted for approximately 10 years. This group of studies focused on community subcultures. Albert Cohen (1955) argued that delinquent gangs are primarily a lower class, male phenomenon. Lower class boys have the same aspirations as middle-class ones; the problem is that their legitimate opportunities to succeed are often severely restricted. Cohen argued that lower class boys create a subculture—a gang—in reaction to their environment. In contrast, Walter Miller (1958) held that there is no need to create a delinquent subculture because lower class culture itself includes a set of characteristics, such as toughness, smartness, trouble, and excitement, that accounts for higher rates of delinquency and gang life. Thus, delinquency was explained as a natural reaction to living up to the expectations found in a distinct lower class culture.

Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin (1960) contended that not only are legitimate avenues for success blocked for some individuals, but illegitimate ones are as well. Their typology of subcultures—criminal, conflict, and retreatist—has been an important tool for identifying the types of activities in which an individual may engage. Recent research on gangs also identifies three types—hedonistic, drug-oriented gangs; instrumental, theft-oriented gangs; and predatory, violent gangs—that correspond remarkably well to Cloward and Ohlin’s typology (see for instance, Huff, 1989). Both the early and mid-20th-century studies, in one way or another, attributed gangs and their associated problems to elements in the social structure—either the social environment of the city or the opportunities associated with being a member of a particular social class.

In many ways, the research on gangs from the 1980s to the present—the third wave—resembles the gang research of the 1920s. As in previous eras, there is a tendency to associate gangs and violence with urban poverty and to characterize gang life as a source of social identity in the face of impoverished living conditions. What has occurred, however, is that the social and economic opportunities and living conditions of some groups have not improved or have become worse. As a result, in many cases, gang life appears to have taken on much more severe or dramatic consequences. Short (1990a), for example, has argued that members are involved in gangs for longer periods of time and are beginning their affiliation with gangs at a younger age and extending it into early adulthood. He also believes that gangs have become increasingly entrenched in economically depressed communities. Hagedorn and Macon (1988) found similar patterns in Milwaukee, and Fagan (1990) argues that gang membership may now be motivated more by the pursuit of profit than by the cultural or territorial reasons used in earlier decades. Fagan also notes that gang members tend to be more violent than in previous decades. In the absence of stable family and community structures, gangs still serve as substitute families and provide a sense of belonging in addition to offering a ladder of social mobility (Bell, 1953) for some gang members.

In sum, the study of gangs in this country reveals a wide variety of reasons why members become involved in gangs, as well as the benefits of gang membership. If policymakers, community leaders, and police officials are to design and implement effective strategies to control gang activity, they must understand the diversity of gangs in terms of their characteristics as well as the numerous functions they serve for members. This recognition of diversity also helps to organize the links among gangs, drugs, and violence.

Types of Gangs

Building on Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) typology discussed in the previous chapter, Taylor (1990) groups gang characteristics into three categories—corporate, territorial, and scavenger. Corporate gangs focus their attention on making money. There is a clearly defined division of labor, and the criminal activities gang members engage in are committed almost exclusively for profit. Territorial gangs focus on possession of turf, and gang members are quick to use violence to secure or protect what belongs to the gang. While there is some level of organization in these gangs—clearly defined leaders and particular objectives and goals of the gang—it is less refined than in corporate gangs. Finally, scavenger gangs have very little organizational structure, and gang members are motivated by a need to belong to a group. The crimes that gang members of this category perform are usually impulsive and often senseless. There are no objectives or goals for the gang, and the gang members tend to be low achievers who are prone to violent and erratic behavior.

It is impossible to describe every characteristic of every gang. Thus, making general statements about the violent nature of gangs and their involvement in drug trafficking is difficult. The remainder of this chapter investigates the complex relationships among gangs, drugs, and violence as they relate to a variety of gang characteristics.

Gangs and Drugs

Drug Use

Most researchers agree that drug use, drug selling, and crime, especially by youth, are strongly related. However, it is difficult to automatically associate these activities with gangs because gangs have diverse characteristics and behaviors (Fagan, 1989). Although gang members are more involved in drug use, drug dealing, and criminal activity than other youth (Fagan, 1989), gang membership does not necessarily lead to involvement in any of those activities.

In some gangs, using drugs is an important means of gaining social status. In others, drug use is forbidden, especially if the gang is involved in selling them. Chinese gangs, for example, have strict rules regarding drug use

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(Chin, 1990). In other gangs, members are discouraged, but not prohibited, from using drugs (Cooper, 1987). In still other cases, gangs forbid the use of the drug they sell but tolerate the use of other drugs (Mieczkowski, 1986). Finally, some gangs use drugs but do not deal in them at all. For example, Vietnamese gangs use drugs but avoid dealing since it is considered too risky and will attract attention (Vigil and Yun, 1990).

Drug Selling

Considering the recent economic decline occurring in many cities, the underground economy has begun to play an even more important role in low-income communities. It seems likely that youth in these neighborhoods have become involved in drug dealing (Skogan, 1990). It also seems likely that gangs, which in many cases have formed in response to these conditions, have organized themselves around money-making opportunities. However, the research is mixed. In some cases, gangs have become highly organized around drug selling. For example, Skolnick (1990) makes a distinction among instrumental, entrepreneurial, and cultural gangs. This distinction is based on the degree to which gangs are organized around the drug business. Based on interviews with 100 young drug dealers and 100 law enforcement officers in California, Skolnick concludes that gangs, especially entrepreneurial gangs, dominate the drug trade in Northern California. Other research suggests that while individual gang members may sell drugs, it is not necessarily a function of the gang as a whole (Waldorf and Lauderback, 1993; Quicker, Galeai, and Batani-Khalfani, 1991; Decker and Van Winkle, 1994; Hagedorn, 1994; Fagan, 1989).

In sum, whether one is examining drug use or drug selling, the relationship between gangs and drugs has not been clearly defined or understood. A number of gangs are involved in using and selling drugs, while others are involved in selling but prohibit use by gang members. Other gangs are highly organized—almost corporate—in their organizational characteristics, while others are fragmented, with individual members involved in drug dealing, but acting independently of the gang. And still other gangs and gang members are heavily involved in using drugs, but do not sell them.

Drugs and Violence

There are essentially three ways to describe the relationship between drugs and violence (Collins, 1990). First, the physical and psychological effects of use of certain drugs can result in violent responses. This is especially true of crack cocaine, where the user often experiences a sense of paranoia that leads to violent outbursts (Goode, 1989; Lee, 1981). PCP is also known to cause extremely violent behavior. However, the research community has found little evidence of a relationship between drug use in general and violent behavior. Recent research indicates that drug users typically report that their drug use has no relation to violence (Collins, Powers, and Craddock, 1989).

The research community has found little evidence of a relationship between drug use in general and violent behavior.

Second, the most common association between drug use and violence involves users committing crimes to support their habits. This can lead to instances of violent crime, such as street robberies. Available research supports this explanation (see for instance, Johnson et al., 1985; Chaiken and Chaiken, 1982; Inciardi, 1981).

Finally, systemic violence, the type of violence most commonly associated with gangs, is a function of the illegal sale and distribution of drugs. Examples include territorial issues relating to a gang's share of the illegal drug market or, more simply, a transaction between seller and buyer in which a dispute occurs (Skogan, 1989; Little, 1995). This is the type of gang violence on which the media focus their attention, perhaps because it extends beyond the participants in the drug trade, invades a neighborhood's sense of community, and poses a risk to innocent bystanders. However, systemic violence has a number of protective advantages for individual gang members. Through violence, a gang can control competitors and expand markets (see for instance, Moore, 1990; Fagan, 1993; Goldstein, 1985).

The type of violence most commonly associated with gangs is a function of the illegal sale and distribution of drugs.

Gangs and Violence

Of all the characteristics associated with gangs, perhaps none is more important to the general public than violence. As was mentioned, gang-related violence evokes great fear in the public; however, it is not well understood. As with the relationship between drugs and gangs, a clear understanding has not yet emerged concerning the relationship between violence and gangs.

Perhaps the best symbol of the growing problem of gang-related violence is the driveby shooting. In fact, given their notoriety in the media, driveby shootings have become synonymous with gang violence. In his book, *Gangbangs and Drivebys*, William Sanders (1994) describes the essential features of driveby shootings. He contends that drivebys are basically retaliatory measures against an offending gang and that the value of participating in drivebys is grounded in the need for gang members to maintain and enhance their reputations. There is also an economic side to Sanders' explanation. He contends that as the involvement in the drug trade expanded for a number of gangs, turf wars escalated. While the battle for turf has always been a common feature of intergang behavior, drug markets have exacerbated the problem.

In general, research on the causes of gang violence has focused on two factors—the influence of gang leaders on members and gang members' lack of social status.

One body of research argues that gangs become involved in violence as a result of gang leaders who are psychologically impaired. Their need for violence translates into group violence by virtue of their leadership

Some researchers conclude that most gang members feel they have been deprived by society or their own community of the status they are due. The use of violence by gang members reintroduces or enhances their status.

position. Many observers who subscribe to this theory attribute the problem to the pathology of drugs, especially drugs that induce violent and psychotic behavior.

A second body of research most often cites a lack of social status as the primary cause of gang member violence. This research concludes that most gang members feel they have been deprived by society or their own community of the status they are due. The use of violence by gang members reintroduces or enhances their status. This school of thought is based on the idea that violence emerges in low-income communities where it is a natural byproduct of social life. Violence becomes the means by which physical and social goals are achieved. As Sanchez-Jankowski (1991) argues, “violence is the currency of life and becomes the currency of the economy of the gang.”

There is also a tendency to view gang-related violence as intertwined with a gang’s efforts to achieve its goals, such as when an organized gang involved in drug dealing punishes a noncompliant customer. However, evidence supports the idea that much of what we refer to as gang violence is actually committed by individual gang members who do not undertake this activity to further the gang’s objectives (Kornhauser, 1978; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991).

The best possible explanation of the relationship between gangs and violence is that it depends primarily on how the gang is organized. Many studies of gangs have found that there are different types of gangs—some are organized to fight while others are organized to make money—and that the level of violence associated with each gang is dependent on its type. For example, using a variety of data collection techniques, Block and Block (1993) collected information from police records of lethal and nonlethal street-gang-motivated crimes, examined temporal and spatial patterns of those crimes, and described the criminal activities of Chicago’s four largest street gangs over a 3-year period. In this study, Block and Block make a distinction between instrumental and expressive violence. They argue that the dynamics of violence depend on the degree and type of the offender’s motivation. In an expressive violent confrontation, the primary goal of violence is injury, while other motives are secondary. The primary purpose of instrumental violence is not to hurt, injure, or kill but to acquire money or property. According to the Blocks, gang-motivated violence often contains many expressive aspects, such as defense of one’s street reputation, membership in a particular gang, and defense of gang territory. However, some gangs engage in instrumental violence involving possession or sale of drugs.

One of the most important findings from the Blocks’ study is that gang involvement in violence and homicide is more often turf related than drug related. Only 8 of 288 gang-motivated homicides analyzed in this study

were drug related. Moreover, certain types of crimes were clustered in specific neighborhoods. Gangs specializing in instrumental violence were strongest in disrupted and declining neighborhoods. Gangs involved in expressive violence were strongest in relatively prosperous neighborhoods. The value of this study is to show that gang-motivated crime is not random. It occurs in specific neighborhoods and during particular time periods. Some gangs spend a great deal of their time expanding and defending their turf, while others are actively involved in the drug trade. The authors point out that to understand and solve gang-related violence, one must understand the problem in light of the chronic conditions that exist in neighborhoods where gang violence occurs.

Another important variable in understanding the extent of gang violence is the direction of gangs' organizational structures—vertical/hierarchical or horizontal. Gangs with a vertical/hierarchical organizational structure are likely to indulge in group rather than individual violence; however, these gangs generally avoid using violence at all. This type of gang tends to focus on making money, which typically overrides individualistic acts of violence. In addition, these gangs are able to exert greater control over their members. For example, Chinese gangs are likely to use violence, but only in carefully prescribed instances. Chinese gangs are also able to exert control over individual gang members, which reduces the probability of attracting the attention of law enforcement (Chin, 1990).

In contrast, gangs that have a horizontal structure tend to have less control over their members. While some of these gangs may include cliques or subgroups that can be very organized and able to control their members, the gang as a whole is a loose collection of factions with limited organizational coordination.

While the organizational characteristics of gangs help to explain the incidence and prevalence of gang violence—with money-making opportunities acting as an intervening variable—there are some exceptions. For instance, Jamaican Posses are highly organized in their drug-trafficking operations, but their use of violence is partly due to cultural factors. While the evidence on this inverse effect is scant, it is something to consider when discussing the explanations of gang violence. Although it seems that gangs are less likely to engage in widespread violence as their level of organization increases, this conclusion should be used with caution.

This is not to suggest that some gang members shun violence. Violence is common and frequently lethal in gang life. Conflicts can arise from intragang authority struggles, intergang quarrels over turf (sometimes related to drug markets), and perceived threats to a gang's reputation and honor. What is especially disturbing in this regard is the increased firepower of heavy automatic weapons, which makes outbursts of violence more deadly.

Gangs with a vertical/hierarchical organizational structure . . . tend to focus on making money, which typically overrides individualistic acts of violence.

The Relationships Among Gangs, Drugs, and Violence

Research on the relationships among gangs, drug trafficking, and violence is inconclusive. On one hand, it appears that gang-related violence is increasing. For instance, in 1993 gang members were involved—as suspects or victims—in about one-third of all homicides in Los Angeles County (Maxson, 1995). Moreover, between 1980 and 1989 the homicide rate in Los Angeles was more than double the rate for the State of California (Meehan and O’Carroll, 1992). A prevalent theme in this city during the late 1980s was that a substantial proportion of the growing number of homicides was attributable to increasing gang involvement in both drug dealing and drug use. For example, Skolnick et al. (1989) found that street drug dealing in California was dominated by African-American gangs organized specifically for the purpose of distributing cocaine. This theory about the relationship between violence and drugs had broad appeal and was accepted in the media as well as in official reports (California Council on Criminal Justice, 1989).

In contrast, Meehan and O’Carroll (1992) suggested that it is possible that violence relating to territory or turf is of a different type than violence associated with drug dealing. Despite its popularity, there is little evidence to support the theory that gang involvement in the drug trade is responsible for a substantial proportion of homicides (Klein and Maxson, 1989; Meehan and O’Carroll, 1992).

Moreover, some scholars contend that the connections among street gangs, drug sales, and violence have been overstated by media reports, especially during the mid-1980s when gangs became involved in the crack cocaine trade (Maxson, 1995). This perception of a close relationship among gangs, drug sales, and homicides has been challenged by a number of recent studies. For instance, in an elaborate study that drew from several different databases, Meehan and O’Carroll (1992) assessed the relationship among gangs, drug sales, and violence. They concluded that gang-motivated homicides were less likely than other homicides to involve drugs and drug-motivated homicides were less likely to involve a gang member. Finally, victims of gang-motivated homicides were no more likely to have a history of drug arrests than other victims. In sum, they conclude that gang conflicts that result in homicides are often independent of either involvement in the drug trade or the use of drugs.

Despite recent increases in the use of violence by gang members, especially if their organizational viability or their competitive edge in the drug market is challenged (Fagan and Chin, 1990), gang life may not be as dangerous as it appears to be. In fact, many researchers have found that much gang activity is fairly mundane. In Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio, Huff (1989) found that gang members spent most of their time acting like typical adolescents (for example, disobeying parents and skipping school). Similarly,

Gang-motivated homicides were less likely than other homicides to involve drugs and drug-motivated homicides were less likely to involve a gang member.

Sullivan's (1989) study of Brooklyn gangs revealed that gang members derived a sense of satisfaction by engaging in relatively minor acts that were perceived as taking advantage of a system that they felt was stacked against them.

Consequently, despite the fact that there is a greater prevalence of individual gang violence, especially in gangs that have a horizontal organization, much of what passes for gang-related violence is not gang related at all. This does not suggest that gang violence is random, unrestrained, or even confined to certain groups. What it does suggest, however, is that the relationship between gangs and violence is complex and has yet to be completely understood.

In summary, what most gang members find attractive about violence is the things it sometimes can secure for them. Violence is the vehicle by which objectives can be achieved when other alternatives are unavailable. Gang violence, like drug use, varies considerably among gangs.

One characteristic that helps to explain gang violence is the level of organization a particular gang possesses. This, in turn, is based on the money-making ventures in which the gang is involved. Gangs that are able to secure lucrative illegal ventures seem to be less likely to engage in violence. Thus, the type of gang that emerges or moves into a community depends, in large part, on the availability of legal and illegal economic opportunities within it.

The availability of illegal opportunities is an important factor. As Cloward and Ohlin (1960) pointed out several decades ago—a conclusion still relevant today—in highly organized communities with many illegal opportunities, entrepreneurial gangs may emerge (Taylor, 1990). In disorganized communities where there are few illegal opportunities and criminal role models to regulate illegal behavior, “fighting” gangs—highly competitive and violent drug-selling organizations—may emerge. Finally, in areas where gang members have failed to succeed in the legitimate market as well as the illegitimate one, retreatist gangs may emerge (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960). These gangs rarely engage in violence and are perhaps the least harmful to a community since their activities pose little threat to the social order of a neighborhood.

Gangs that are able to secure lucrative illegal ventures seem to be less likely to engage in violence.

Community Responses to the Problem

Review of the literature on gangs essentially leads to two important conclusions—gang activities vary widely and are tied to the characteristics of the particular gang's community, and the catalysts for dangerous and illegal gang activities are found in the deteriorating economic conditions of our inner cities. With respect to the first point, it seems clear that traditional interdiction efforts have had only limited effects on the problem. As such, communities must actively develop less coercive intervention techniques

that will complement more traditional law enforcement approaches. It is also important to distinguish between hardcore gang leaders who are involved in the most serious forms of criminal behavior and peripheral gang members. Hardcore leaders should be the focus of the criminal justice system, while peripheral members may benefit from community or diversion efforts.

As the research clearly indicates, the solutions to gang-related problems are inextricably woven into recent changes in the economic structure of American society. Deindustrialization (due largely to technological advances), competition in the global economy, and the relocation of industry have led to the decline of numerous jobs for many unskilled or semiskilled workers. This is especially true for teenagers in inner cities, whose unemployment rates are much higher than the national average. Thus, our early understanding of gangs as caused by social and economic constraints continues to provide a compelling explanation. As Huff (1989) has argued:

Youth gangs are symptomatic of many of the same social and economic problems as adult crime, mental illness, drug abuse, alcoholism, the surge in homelessness, and multi-generation “welfare families” living in hopelessness and despair. While we are justly concerned with replacement of our physical infrastructure (roads, bridges, sewers) our *human* infrastructure may be crumbling as well. Our social, educational, and economic infrastructures are not meeting the needs of many children and adults. Increases in the numbers of women and children living in poverty (the “feminization” and “juvenilization” of poverty) are dramatic examples of this recent transformation. To compete with the seductive lure of drug profits and the grinding despair of poverty, we must reassess our priorities and reaffirm the importance of our neighborhoods by putting in place a number of programs that offer hope, education, job skills, and meaningful lives. It is worth the cost of rebuilding our human infrastructures since it is, after all, our children whose lives are being wasted and our cities in which the quality of life is being threatened.

To compete with the seductive lure of drug profits and the grinding despair of poverty, we must . . . reaffirm the importance of our neighborhoods by putting in place programs that offer hope, education, job skills, and meaningful lives.

Researchers have examined the effectiveness of intervention programs and have pinpointed four common strategies. The first intervention involves organizing neighborhoods in a way that leads to the reduction in the number of gangs in a particular community. The second targets the problems identified by Huff (1989, 1990a) by creating jobs, training, and other opportunities to lure people away from gang life. The third strategy—arresting and incarcerating gang members—is the most common response to gangs. The fourth strategy is a comprehensive approach that involves various local agencies in the development of community-based approaches to solving the gang problem. This approach also includes media campaigns targeted to potential gang members (Spergel and Curry, 1990; Spergel et al., 1994).

Gang Graffiti

In the Book of Daniel, King Belshazzar was terrified when fingers of a hand mysteriously appeared and wrote four strange words on his palace wall. He became even more frightened when his seers could not tell him what the words meant. Then Daniel told him what they meant—that the message was from God, that Belshazzar’s days were numbered, that he had been weighed on the scales and found wanting, and that his kingdom would be divided among his enemies. That night, Darius the Mede invaded the kingdom and killed Belshazzar. His worst fears were realized.

When words or symbols suddenly appear on a wall in an American city, can nearby residents figure out who wrote them? Can they decipher what they mean? Should they be frightened?

This chapter provides some answers to these questions. Graffiti can be petty annoyances by juvenile vandals, attempts at artistic expression, or signs that street gangs have moved into the neighborhood. It is important to decide whether graffiti are a minor nuisance or signs of a major problem and then to take action appropriate to the seriousness of the local problem.

What Are Graffiti?

What are graffiti? Graffiti are writings or drawings on public surfaces. “Graffiti” is the plural of the Italian word “graffito,” which is derived from “graffiare,” to scratch. The dictionary calls the person who makes graffiti a graffitist, but many people dealing with graffiti today call that person a “tagger.” Tagger also has a more specialized meaning that will be addressed later.

To say that the surface on which graffiti are placed is public does not mean that the surface is in public ownership and belongs to a government. It means that the surface is visible to the public and does not belong to the tagger. Murals, signs, and designs that people place on their own buildings for decorative or commercial purposes are not graffiti.

These public surfaces are any surfaces on which graffiti can be placed—walls, fences, rocks, billboards, street and traffic signs, bridge stanchions, utility boxes, telephone booths, or park benches. They can be indoor or outdoor. They can be the outside or inside of buses, subway cars, or railway cars or in publicly accessible spaces inside buildings.

Graffiti predate the recorded history of mankind. The drawings in the Lascaux caves in France are thought to date from 18,000 B.C. Similar images have been found in Africa, Asia, and Australia.

To say that the surface on which graffiti are placed is public means that the surface is visible to the public and does not belong to the tagger.

Over 1,000 inscriptions are on the walls at Delphi in Greece, where for centuries the devotees of Apollo came to consult his oracle. Many of these graffiti are official—decrees, deeds liberating slaves, or hymns. But many are personal, identifying the graffitist as a poet, grammarian, orator, or astronomer.

Early Christians used drawings of a fish as a sign of their presence. The Greek word for fish, “ichthys,” is an acronym for Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.

In North America, the Petrified Forest National Park in Arizona contains thousands of petroglyphs, or rock drawings. Their age is impossible to determine, but the area was occupied intermittently from about A.D. 500 to A.D. 1400. The petroglyphs depict humans and animals, and they contain geometrical designs of unknown significance. Some seem to be solar calendars. One of the park’s most popular tourist attractions is Newspaper Rock, which contains several of these petroglyphs.

Lavatory walls have long been favored surfaces for obscene and vulgar wit rendered in verse, epigram, dialogues between anonymous writers, or crude drawings. There are several collections of these graffiti, some reaching back several hundred years.

The practice of writing on walls has continued into modern times. Kilroy was everywhere in World War II; wherever American soldiers went, they would see “KILROY WAS HERE.” The Kilroy graffiti were a kind of comfort, a reassurance that some American had already been there. One enterprising team has published several books on the graffiti of various athletic conferences including *Graffiti in the PAC 10* and *Graffiti in the Southwest Conference*.

Political graffiti—straightforward sloganeering or subversive satire—are universal. In repressive societies, political graffiti can be an important form of political expression.

Are Graffiti a Problem?

If graffiti date back for centuries and are found in all parts of the world, why has the public become so concerned about graffiti in the last 10 to 15 years? There are reasons for this newfound concern. The first is technological. Invention of the spray-paint can has enabled taggers to quickly make big, colorful graffiti that are hard to remove. Second, graffiti on buses and subway cars move all over a city. Therefore, graffiti are not confined to the taggers’ home neighborhoods. Third, in many places, graffiti have become associated in citizens’ minds with gangs. They are taken as evidence of the presence of gangs. All of these reasons, separately or in combination, give rise to a feeling that things are out of control, that public authorities cannot control graffiti artists. But should graffiti be a cause for concern?

There is an important distinction between two major categories of contemporary graffiti. Tagger graffiti, or what some people call street art, are personal expressions of the taggers, and they are an end in themselves, not a threat of something else. Gang graffiti, on the other hand, are intended to represent the presence of a gang. They convey a threat of gang violence in the neighborhood.

Graffiti as Street Art

In 1976, Dawson's Book Shop in Los Angeles published the small book *Los Angeles Barrio Calligraphy*, written by Jerry and Sally Romotsky. The title of the book tells the authors' point of view—that barrio graffiti can be seen as calligraphy. Having found no published analysis of wall writing, the Romotskys set out to photograph and analyze it. The authors' presence in a neighborhood usually attracted local observers who wanted to know what they were doing and why. In the process, they learned some of the lore of barrio calligraphy, which they believe dates back several decades. They found some wall writing from the 1940s, but they believe the practice goes back to the early part of this century.

Barrio artists call their graffiti “plaqueasos” or “placas,” words derived from the Spanish word “placa,” which means sign. According to the Romotskys, Los Angeles barrio artists worked within the framework of a long-established street-writing tradition. Communication of a specific message was not important, if any message was intended at all. Artistic expression within a recognized tradition was important. Choice of letters, geometrical figures, symbols, and representations of birds, animals, or humans were all in keeping with an overall design concept, which in turn was derived from the basic barrio graffiti tradition.

At the time of the Romotskys' book, wall artists in the Los Angeles barrios were not necessarily gang members, although gang members did imitate the earlier styles. In recent years, gang graffiti have appeared in all parts of Southern California; while they are not as well done as what the Romotskys had observed, they follow some of the earlier tradition.

As noted earlier, the term “tagger” has a special meaning. In New York City, subway graffiti came to be known as taggers because they signed their work with their chosen nicknames or tags. In 1971, the *New York Times* ran an article on a graffitiist who signed himself “Taki 183.” Taki 183 explained that “Taki” is the traditional nickname for the Greek name Demetrius, the graffitiist's real first name. He lived on 183rd Street.

Taki 183 started his career as graffitiist by writing his tag on ice cream trucks in his neighborhood, then on mail boxes, walls, and subway trains. Because he worked as a messenger and traveled through all of New York's boroughs, he was able to spread his name everywhere.

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While many tags included neighborhood indicators of some kind, the tagger's goal was not to mark or claim territory.

The *New York Times* article may have given Taki 183 a specific human identity in the mind of the average subway rider, but he was already a celebrity among taggers. The article said that Taki 183 had spawned hundreds of imitators, including Joe 136, Barbara 62, Eel 158, Yank 135, and Leo 136.

To the tagger, the important thing was “getting up,” that is, putting his or her tag on as many surfaces as possible. While artistic quality and uniqueness were also important, a tagger’s reputation rested on sheer volume. Some graffitiists thought a tagger had to get up at least 1,000 times before anyone would notice. Taki 183 is thought to have gotten up over 10,000 times—a factor in his legend.

While many tags included neighborhood indicators of some kind, like Taki 183’s reference to his street, the tagger’s goal was not to mark or claim territory. On the contrary, the tagger’s ambition was to be seen everywhere. That is why subway trains became favorite targets. They went everywhere in New York, even if the tagger did not. Taggers’ names could be seen in places they had never been or even heard of. Taki 183 had a natural advantage over other taggers. His job did take him all over New York, and he could mark subway stations as well as subway trains.

Beyond “getting up” anywhere and everywhere, tagging moved into bigger and better artistic effects. It became important for a tag to have some artistic merit. Tags evolved into personal logos.

While still secondary to sheer volume, style became increasingly important in subway graffiti. A new vocabulary developed. Taggers became “writers” who studied and practiced style. They planned their work in sketch pads. They sat in subway stations, critiquing the graffiti on passing trains. Graffiti that showed little effort or style were referred to as “throw-ups.” More sophisticated graffiti were called “pieces,” short for masterpieces. “Top-to-bottoms” ran from the top to the bottom of a car, but not its length. “End-to-ends” ran the length of a car. “Whole cars” covered an entire car from top to bottom, end to end, including even the windows. Finally, a few writers managed to do whole trains, sometimes referred to as “worms.”

To cover a whole car with an integrated painting, the graffiti artist had to have a substantial length of time and relative privacy. Both could be found in the car storage yards, where cars were kept overnight under lax security.

The goals of taggers were quite different from those of gang graffitiists. Self-publicity and artistic expression, not territorial claims or intimidation, were taggers’ goals. Their reaction to law enforcement was therefore quite different from that of gang members. They regarded law enforcement responses that increased technical difficulties in producing their pieces as challenges. Such responses would incite rather than deter further tagging.

Many New York and London subway taggers were extraordinary risk-takers. Being caught and arrested by transit police was a relatively minor

risk. Flattening themselves against tunnel walls, working in layovers (side-tracks in tunnels where out-of-service cars are stored) when other trains were hurtling by, jumping live third rails and dodging moving trains in storage yards—these activities were risky, and some taggers were killed pursuing their art. Getting up in obviously difficult or dangerous places was part of the glory of being a tagger. Everyone would be impressed—other taggers most of all.

Tagger graffiti overwhelmed the New York subway system. Tagger graffiti covered subway cars, inside and out, so that hardly any of the transit system's original paint was visible. Graffiti appeared in all the stations, and even on the walls of tunnels, where they could be seen only as flashes as trains sped from station to station.

Most members of the transit-riding public found the graffiti disturbing. Graffiti here and there, in remote places seen by a few people, may simply annoy people. The effect of the subway graffiti was quite different. Thousands of graffiti, covering every surface a subway rider could see, gave rise to pervasive uneasiness and fear that the city was out of control, that no one was completely safe. Virtually impossible to understand, the graffiti were menacing, showing that the transit authority was unable to maintain the security of its cars and stations. However, some people thought many graffiti showed substantial artistic talent. Pictures were taken and displayed. Art books of subway graffiti were compiled.

As a form of street art, spray-can graffiti spread to large cities in Europe, including London, Amsterdam, Paris, and West Berlin. Some public officials and well-known citizens conferred a degree of respectability on graffiti by commissioning murals. New York graffitiist Jean-Paul Basquiat teamed with Andy Warhol to produce joint paintings. An exhibition of their undertaking filled three London galleries in late 1988.

In 1992, after years of combating graffiti, the London Underground, Ltd., London's mass transit system, published *Getting Rid of Graffiti: A Practical Guide to Graffiti Removal and Anti-Graffiti Protection* (Whitford, 1992). In the introductory chapter, this manual criticized actions that encouraged graffitiists by appearing to condone their activities. The manual specifically mentioned youth club classes in graffiti technique, use of graffiti styles in advertising, media coverage of street art, and invitations to join the art establishment. The manual also mentioned lenient magistrates who refused to regard graffiti as vandalism.

The New York subway graffiti problem subsided, but tagging has subsequently appeared all over the United States. Taggers are “getting up” everywhere. In the early 1990s, two art students in Boston were caught painting murals for which they had laid out detailed plans, including sketches and photographs of their works in progress. Some Boston graffiti artists were known to maintain portfolios of their work and show pictures at graffiti parties. Tag lines of two Boston groups identified them as FAV (Five Angry Vandals) and

Virtually impossible to understand, the graffiti were menacing, showing that the transit authority was unable to maintain the security of its cars and stations.

The gap between taggers and gangs is being closed. . . . The larger a tagger crew, the more it begins to look and act like a street gang.

NBC (Never Been Caught). They represented a reappearance of traditional graffiti, and they required a different approach than gang-related graffiti.

However, the gap between taggers and gangs is being closed—a development that must be watched carefully. Taggers often form into groups, sometimes called “crews,” and adopt crew tags.

Taggers who move in tag crews can achieve more daring feats. They can help each other get to difficult places, like overhead signs, which are referred to as “heavens.” They have been known to help fellow crew members rappel down blank walls to put tags in apparently unreachable places.

The larger a tagger crew, the more it begins to look and act like a street gang. While street gangs look down on individual taggers with disdain, they are more likely to regard large crews as a threat that must be dealt with. Then the two begin to act like rival street gangs, even though the crew may have started out with less dangerous purposes.

Exhibit 1, from Lakewood, Colorado, illustrates the narrowing of the gap between taggers and gangs. The boy pictured in the middle is holding a can with SCC on it, which stands for Subliminal Criminal Crew. The boy on the right is holding a gun, not a paint can. “Dremz” is the artist’s tag.

Exhibit 2, also from Lakewood, shows another tagger development. Taggers paint pictures showing how they dress: baggy pants, hats, and bandannas.

Gang Graffiti

What do graffiti mean to a neighborhood? If they are tagger graffiti, they are a nuisance, but they do not communicate a threat in and of themselves. They may communicate that taggers feel free to operate, but it should be remembered that the challenge of “getting up” is important to taggers. They are willing to take risks simply to become known.

Gang graffiti are different. A neighborhood would be correct in perceiving gang graffiti as a threat to peace. Even if gang graffiti are “thrown up” by neighborhood youth, they are a territorial claim, a communication, and even a challenge to other gangs. Outside gangs may read them as an invitation to attack.

Gang graffiti differ from tagger graffiti in several respects, as described in Exhibit 3 (on page 37).

When graffiti are thought to be gang graffiti, they create the impression that the unknown graffitists are gang members, bringing a menacing and violent lifestyle to the community. For that reason alone, it is important that knowledgeable people determine whether or not the graffiti are gang graffiti.

Gang graffiti are a form of communication reasonably easy to understand with a little effort. Gang graffiti artists do not try very hard to code or disguise

Exhibit 1. Narrowing the Gap Between Taggers and Gangs, Lakewood, Colorado



their messages. There is no point in threatening a rival gang if the rival gang cannot understand the threat. To those who know how to read the graffiti, the messages are usually fairly clear. In some respects, deciphering gang graffiti is no more difficult than reading bad handwriting.

Gang graffiti have several values to law enforcement. They tell police officers who is in what gang, what gangs are claiming what territories, who is challenging whom, and who is trying to move or expand.

Gangs often list their street-name rosters in their graffiti. The street names of gang members are often known to many people in a neighborhood.

Exhibit 2. How Taggers Dress, Lakewood, Colorado



Learning street names is a common police intelligence function. Changes in roster order tell gang officers who is up and who is down in the gang. “RIP” next to a name shows that a gang member has been killed.

Many street gangs give themselves names that tell what their home territory is, using a street name or number, a neighborhood name, or a town name, in combination with some other identifier, such as the name of a larger gang group (for example, the Crips or Bloods).

Territorial claims are but one means used by gangs to make threats. Crossing out or “dogging” another gang’s graffiti shows disrespect or “disses” that gang. Threats are also made against individual gang members. Their

Exhibit 3. Differences Between Tagger and Gang Graffiti

Tagger Graffiti	Gang Graffiti
Communication secondary, if present at all	Intent made to communicate
Artistic effort a major consideration	Artistic effort secondary, if present at all
Territorial claims infrequent	Territorial claims prominent
Explicit threats rare	Explicit threats made
Explicit boasts about tagger common	Explicit boasts made about gang
Pictures and symbols dominant, letters and numbers secondary	Letters, numbers, and symbols dominant
Police intelligence value limited	Intelligence to police provided

names may be crossed out, or “187” or a skull and crossbones may be marked next to a rival gang member’s street name. Both are threats to murder the rival, with “187” referring to the California penal code section defining homicide.

Gang graffiti can become dialogue between gangs and eventually a record of gang wars—from initial territorial claims, to challenges to individuals and gangs, to records of individual deaths. With all the threats, boasts, and claims gang graffitists throw up, they provide an invaluable source of police intelligence.

Reading Graffiti

Alphabets

We can think of graffiti alphabets in two ways. First, alphabets can comprise different types of letters, such as Roman, Greek, Cyrillic, Hebrew, or Arabic. For the most part, American graffitists confine themselves to the Roman alphabet—the alphabet used for Western European languages, including English and Spanish. Occult groups, which often use various ancient alphabets, are a major exception to this general statement.

Second, alphabets can comprise different typefaces, stretching the term “typeface” slightly. American graffitists use a wide variety of typefaces, with variations based on their own stylistic backgrounds and artistic judgments. Exhibit 4, developed by California gang intelligence officers, shows several lettering styles in Hispanic gang writing. An alphabet in a particular style has internal consistency from letter to letter, as in the examples shown in Exhibit 4, but actual throw-ups often fall short, because of the graffitists’ lack of time, talent, or know-how.

Exhibit 4. Hispanic Gang Lettering Styles

Circle	A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
Square	A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
Half Diamond	Q B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
Wavy	A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
Backwards	A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
Diamond	Q B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
Loop	A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

The Romotskys found three basic alphabet styles in the Los Angeles barrios, to which they added a catchall fourth: point lettering, block lettering, loop lettering, and eccentric.

However, the most admired alphabet style is one that barrio graffitists did not invent, Old English, which would be referred to as Gothic by printers and calligraphers. Felt-tip pens are very good for producing these letters, but they do not work well for large undertakings. The Romotskys used the “L” in Exhibit 5 as an example of barrio lettering in Old English. This “L” would certainly seem in place on an English pub sign, but the Romotskys found it representing a Lomas group. The “Corona” in Exhibit 6, similar in style but not quite as complex, is from a police graffiti manual published in Southern California 15 years after the Romotsky book.

The Romotskys believed that Old English, difficult to produce, is the prototype for barrio point lettering. Point letters, as the name suggests, come to points. They are drawn with single lines of uniform width, in contrast to Old English, in which the thickness of a single line varies. Thin-line point letters are easier to draw. Letter angularity is a marked characteristic of point lettering. There are three major subdivisions of point lettering: sharp point, square point, and round point.

The Romotskys provided Exhibit 7 as an example of sharp-point letters. The letters are SSG, standing for South San Gabrielle. The stars or asterisks between the letters are simply dividers. Stars or slashes are frequently used to separate letters or words. The sharp-point style shown by the Romotskys resembles the half-diamond and diamond styles shown in Exhibit 4.

The Romotskys found block lettering to be the most popular barrio lettering style. It often outlines letter shapes, which may or may not be filled in. Simpler to do than point lettering, block lettering can still incorporate some striking decorative effects. The most frequent is a

Exhibit 5. Barrio Lettering in Old English



Exhibit 6. “Corona” in Old English



Exhibit 7. “SSG” in Sharp-Point Letters

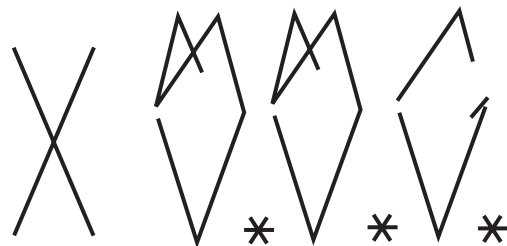


Exhibit 8. “Peace” and “Cats” in Bubble Letters



three-dimensional effect. Flat-block lettering is two dimensional, achieving its effect more by mass than by perspective.

Block lettering is frequently used in ordinary commercial printing and signmaking. New York taggers were proud of bubble letters—block letters rounded to look as if they had been blown up like bubbles. Exhibit 8, not from New York but from Lakewood, Colorado, is an example.

Loop lettering comes in two major types: square loop and point loop. Exhibit 9 is a striking example of loop lettering found by the Romotskys. It says El Blackbird P 12 st, referring to 12th Street in Pomona. The loop alphabet in Exhibit 4 is a later example of square loop lettering.

Exhibit 4 includes a backwards alphabet. Writing letters backwards is a regular feature of graffiti, as are several other peculiarities. Crip graffitiists cross out “b” wherever it appears in a word because it stands for Bloods. Blood graffitiists cross out “c” because it stands for Crips.

Signs and Symbols

Several signs and symbols known for centuries in other contexts have reappeared in gang graffiti. Not surprisingly, the swastika appears in the graffiti of hate gangs, which are often strongly antisemitic. The swastika has been a symbol or ornament since prehistoric times, found in Europe, Asia, and the Americas. The word comes from Sanskrit, where it refers to a good luck sign. Exhibit 10 shows the swastika as it appears in Oriental and American Indian culture. Exhibit 11 is the Nazi symbol.

The Star of David or Shield of David (Mogen David) is a symbol used by Jews since the late Middle Ages. It consists of two overlaid equilateral triangles forming a six-pointed star. The symbol originated in the ancient world and, along with a five-pointed star, was used as a magical symbol. In a 19th century interpretation of the Star of David, the two triangles stand for (1) God, world, and man and (2) creation, revelation, and redemption. The Black Gangster Disciples have adopted the six-pointed star to stand for certain virtues, as shown in Exhibit 12. They have also used the five-pointed star (Exhibit 13) for similar purposes.

Put a circle around the Star of David, and it becomes a hexagram, or Solomon's seal, a medieval amulet against fever (see Exhibit 14, item A). Put a circle around the five-pointed star, and it becomes a pentagram (see Exhibit 14, item B). The pentagram was also a medieval amulet, with the points marked LSROT, standing for a Latin prayer: "Let the boundary of the star hold back the circles of darkness." Turn the pentagram upside down, and it becomes the goat's horns, a satanic symbol (see Exhibit 14, item C). All these symbols supposedly have magical powers and are used by occult groups. But they can also be found, with elaborate colors and variations, in the Pennsylvania Dutch hex signs.

Crosses of various kinds are also used in graffiti. Skinheads sometimes use the Celtic cross (Exhibit 15), usually with the base cut off. The formée cross, a 15th-century heraldic cross similar to

Exhibit 9. "El Blackbird P 12 St" in Loop Letters



Exhibit 10. Swastika in Oriental/American Indian Style Letters

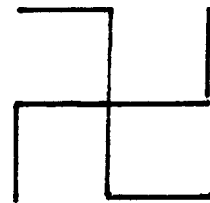


Exhibit 11. Nazi Swastika

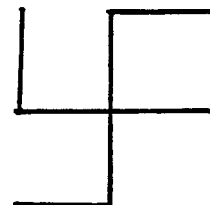
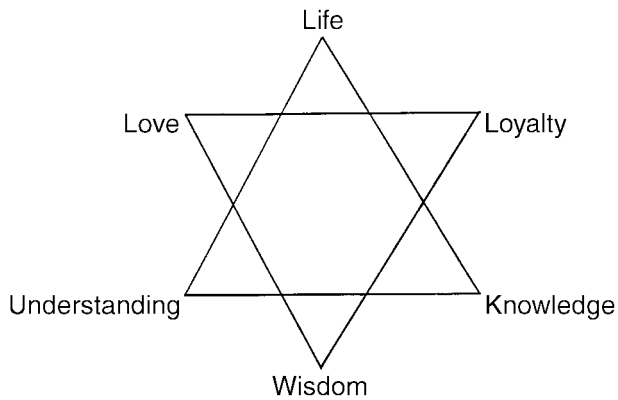


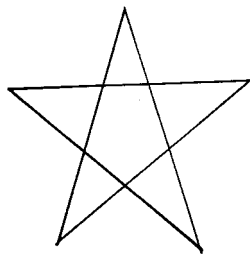
Exhibit 12. Six-Pointed Star



the Maltese cross and the Nazi iron cross, also appears (see Exhibit 16). The ankh is a cross with an open loop for the upper vertical arm (see Exhibit 17). An ancient Egyptian symbol for life in which the upper loop was probably a bow, the ankh survived in Coptic Christianity as the handled or “eyed” cross. It now appears in occult graffiti, and it is sometimes thought to combine the male and female symbols.

Occult groups and sometimes white supremacist gangs put up “666,” the number or sign of the beast in the Book of Revelation. Occult groups use numbers from numerological systems; letters or words from ancient alphabets and languages; and signs and symbols from magic, religion, chemistry, and pagan cultures. An occult favorite, “NATAS EVIL,” is simply “Satan Live” spelled backwards.

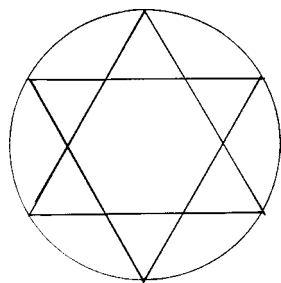
Exhibit 13. Five-Pointed Star



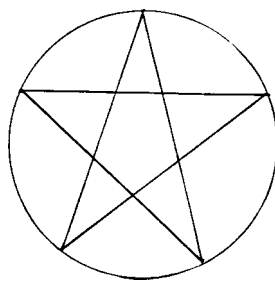
Graffiti artists often replace letters with numbers, or vice versa, in a simple alphabetic code. “M” is the 13th letter of the alphabet, so “13” is used for the Mexican Mafia. The 14th letter is “n,” so “14” stands for Nuestra Familia, a Latino prison gang. In a reversal, “FFF” stands for 666, the Sign of the Beast.

White supremacists use “88” for “Heil Hitler,” “h” being the eighth letter of the alphabet. They

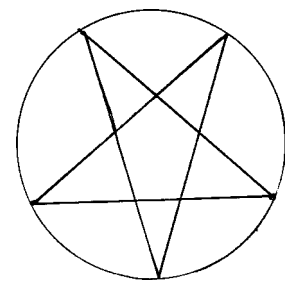
Exhibit 14. Hexagram, Pentagram, and Upside-Down Pentagram



A



B



C

may also use twin lightning streaks, which are a slightly modified “SS,” to stand for Hitler’s SS.

Other symbols that appear are birds and animals of various kinds, dragons, horns, pitchforks, canes, top hats, and whatever else strikes the graffitist’s imagination. Nuestra Familia has used a sombrero pierced by a dagger. Geometric figures—for example, circles, triangles, and squares—represent whatever meaning the graffitists choose to give them. The El Rukns used a pyramid as one of their symbols.

Ethnic Graffiti

Graffiti usually take on marked ethnic characteristics, including different languages, local slang, gang names, insults, and signs and symbols.

In Southern California, Hispanic graffiti have a long history, as mentioned earlier. Hispanic gang graffiti are now far more common than the “plaqueasos” the Romotskys found in their study 20 years ago. Note the types of Hispanic gang lettering in Exhibit 4. Southern California gang officers have developed guides for reading Hispanic gang graffiti; Exhibit 18 shows two examples, items A and B.

Most black youth gangs in Southern California fall into one of two major groups—Crips and Bloods. They regard each other as enemies, although not all Crip sets get along with each other. The names used by Los Angeles Crips and Bloods have spread across the country, although many gangs using these names have no particular connection with the Los Angeles originals. In the Midwest, the Black Gangster Disciples are a significant black gang, as are the Vicelords.

Black gang graffiti have their own characteristics. They often use the slant (/) as a spacer and replace the numbers 1, 2, and 3 with the terms ace, duce [sic], and Trey (often spelled “tray”). For example, 52nd Street becomes Five Duce and 83rd becomes Eight Trey.

Black gang members refer to themselves as pimps, players, dogs, homeboys, and hustlers.

Exhibit 15. Celtic Cross



Exhibit 16. Formée Cross

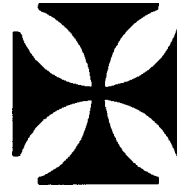


Exhibit 17. Ankh Cross

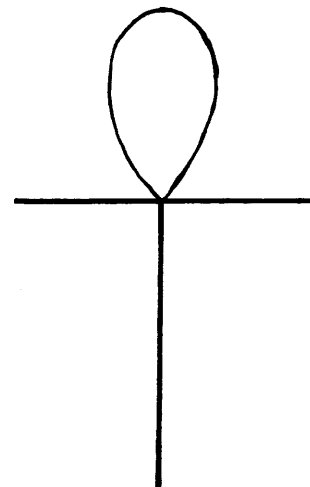


Exhibit 18. Guides to Hispanic Gang Graffiti

VPMV
 -R-
 TRERE
 L\$

A

ES
 RIVA
 SANTOS
 13
 -R-

B

Some of these terms are used in gang names. Crip gang members refer to themselves as “cuz,” “cuzz,” and “cuzzin.” Bloods were once called Pirus; the name continues but is not as prominent as it once was.

Other symbols and slang frequently used include:


Bo	Marijuana
Crab	Crip
Cuz	Crip
Hood	Neighborhood
N-H	Neighborhood
Rag	Gang handkerchief
Rooster	Piru, Blood
Ru	Piru, Blood
Set	Neighborhood or gang
Sway-Boy	Blood or Anti-Crip
Ups	Bloods
187	Murder

Black gang members use colorful monikers such as “Mad Bear,” “Super Fly,” and “Killer.” Graffiti may show the name of a rival gang along with the slant sign and “K,” representing killers.

Crip gang graffiti often include “B/K” which means Blood Killer. The “B” may have a slash through it. Often any “B” or “P,” standing for Piru, appearing in any name or word has a slash through it or is written backwards—all to “diss” the Bloods. Crip graffiti also refer to the Bloods as “Slobs.” Blood graffiti, on the other hand, contain “C/K” for Crip Killers.

In Exhibit 19, item A, Slob Killers means Blood Killers. The diamond around “BK” is another way of saying Blood Killer. The “B” is crossed out and the “R” reversed because they stand for Bloods and Rus, short for Pirus. The “S” has been turned into a dollar sign, indicating that there are drugs for sale in the area. The “24/7” in item B means they are Blood Killers


Exhibit 19. Black Gang Graffiti

S I O  ^x L L E 9 \$

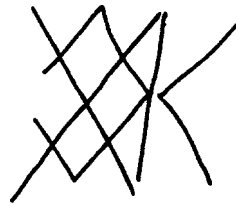
A

$\frac{24}{7}$

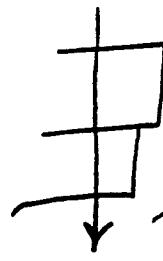
B

187
S I O 

C



D

 DOWN
4 Life

E

WEST
EAST
B/K

F

EAST
SIDE
HILL'S

G

Rollin 60
LUZ

H

24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The “187 Slob” in item C is still another way of saying Blood Killer, 187 being the California penal code section for homicide. The two Blood graffiti in items D and E are “Crip Killer,” with the “C” reversed and crossed out, and “Blood Down 4 Life.” Exhibit 19 gives three additional examples of black youth gang graffiti, items F, G, and H.

White supremacist gang names are often blatantly racist and homophobic. For example:

White supremacist gang names are often blatantly racist and homophobic.

ANP	American Nazi Party
WAY	White American Youth or White Aryan Youth
SWP	Super White Power
WAR	White Aryan Resistance
NSWPP	National Socialist White Peoples Party
NSWWP	National Socialist White Workers Party
AYM	Aryan Youth Movement
SRIW	Super Race Is White

Exhibit 20 shows several variations of white-power graffiti, including use of a Celtic cross as a white-power symbol in item A. “WAY” stands for either White American Youth or White Aryan Youth in items A, B, and C.

Occult groups use alphabets, signs, and symbols whose meanings are not usually clear to the passer-by. Access to hidden knowledge unknown to the common person is the essence of an occult group.

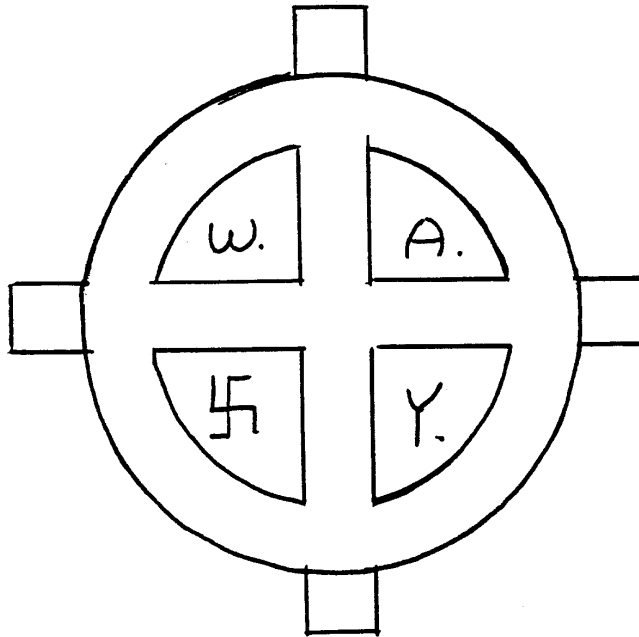
It is difficult to be very precise or exacting in describing tagger and gang graffiti. The alphabets and languages used do not meet scholarly standards. Close study of graffiti will not lead to greater understanding of the human condition because of the graffitist’s unique artistic vision. There are no artistic or linguistic standards. Graffitists do not always know what they are doing. Many a graffitist will write “187” knowing that it somehow means “murder,” but not knowing that it refers to the section of the California penal code that defines homicide.

It is also easy to exaggerate the sophistication of gangs. Gangs do not copyright their wallwritings. They do not register their logos as trademarks. Gangs do not apply for corporate charters, and the Secretary of State does not preserve a gang’s claim to a unique name. The same names crop up in many parts of the country, with the names of Los Angeles streets, neighborhoods, and suburbs appearing as far away as Oklahoma City.

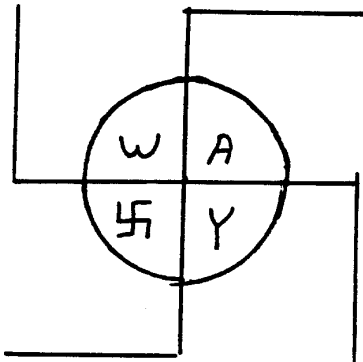
Taggers and gang graffitists are copycats. A tagger may, however, try to add distinctive touches, sometimes achieving true originality.

Finally, graffiti are most intelligible to local people who see them frequently and have an interest in understanding them. Because there is a

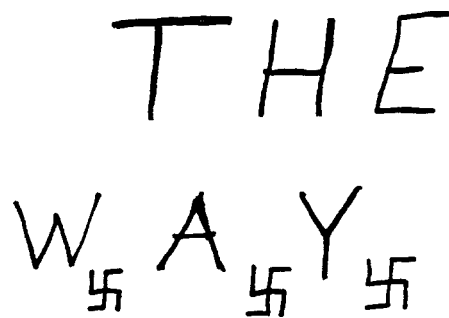
Exhibit 20. White-Power Graffiti



A



B



C

Exhibit 20. White-Power Graffiti (continued)

AC⚡DC

D

HONKIES
RULE

E

卐

F

666

G

STONERS

H

KKK

I



J

13

K

large element of boasting in all graffiti, whether tagger or gang graffiti, graffitiists and their friends are usually willing to tell someone what graffiti mean, if their meaning is not obvious. As already noted, it is a police function to read and keep track of local graffiti; graffiti are the gangs' daily newspaper, printed for all to see.

Attacking a Graffiti Problem

Graffiti present a difficult problem to communities. They are easy and cheap to throw up and entail relatively low risk for the gang graffitiist, particularly when compared to other forms of gang activity. Even the risk of getting caught is not terribly threatening to the gang graffitiist because legal sanctions, if they are imposed at all, are not heavy. Taggers, for their own reasons, may risk physical danger as part of establishing their reputation, but they impose these dangers only on themselves, not on community residents. In addressing the problem of gang graffiti, the gang-problem triangle and a problem-solving model (discussed in the Introduction of this monograph) can and should be used together.

All three sides of the gang-problem triangle are involved in graffiti. Both taggers and gang graffitiists are offenders in the gang-problem triangle. The victim side of the triangle also comes into play. Taggers often target particular victims, such as a public transit system. And gang graffitiists often target other gangs in their graffiti. This chapter concentrates on the place side of the triangle, that is, the places where gangs put up graffiti. Some places can be changed so that they are no longer seen as good graffiti targets.

There are also third parties—controllers, guardians, and managers—with responsibilities for each side of the triangle.

Controllers

The first level of controllers who are failing to control taggers or gang graffitiists are their families. There are many reasons for this failure. One or both parents may be absent, incapacitated by drugs or alcohol, or abusive, or may have poor parenting skills. Some controllers may not regard graffiti as a serious problem.

In socially cohesive neighborhoods, people who know all their neighbors often exert positive controls, setting standards for behavior, giving good advice, and providing positive role models. In transient or disorganized neighborhoods, these positive influences are absent or ineffective.

Social cohesion or a strong sense of community may be the most important factor in dealing with graffiti. Neighborhood residents who feel strongly that an attack on any part of the neighborhood is an attack on the whole neighborhood are likely to react quickly and decisively to the appearance

The risk of getting caught is not terribly threatening to the gang graffitiist because legal sanctions, if they are imposed at all, are not heavy.

of graffiti. All community members assume some responsibility for control of the community's environment.

Guardians

In analyzing most crime problems, the difference between victims and guardians is very useful for problem solving. For example, if there is a rash of robberies of taxicab drivers or convenience store clerks, it is important to see whether these victims have any effective guardians. If they work alone, they are vulnerable because there is no one to act as their guardian.

But the victim-guardian distinction is not as useful in combating graffiti. For one thing, the victim may be not a person but a place. Second, if the victim is an individual (a store owner) or a corporation (the transit system), the analysis almost immediately shifts to how they manage their property, a concern of the place side of the gang-problem triangle.

Managers

People responsible for managing places have great influence over whether these places will be targets for graffiti. For example, managers of apartment buildings or shopping malls function best in preventing attacks on their property when they are most visible. But some property managers perform their roles badly, making their places easy targets. Apartment buildings with dark hallways and broken locks and malls with large groups of unsupervised youth during school hours are examples.

There are also people who are not present all the time but who nevertheless have some managerial responsibility. Individuals and corporations who own and rent buildings are examples. Some choose their tenants very carefully, working to protect their investment. Others worry only about rent collection, caring little about the quality of tenants or their impact on the neighborhood.

Least obvious are the managers of public spaces, such as street corners and parks. These spaces are everyone's responsibility, which may mean in effect that they are no one's responsibility. The willingness of the general public to assume responsibility for these public places usually depends on the neighborhood's cohesiveness.

All the actors in the gang-problem triangle must think about "tools," the instruments offenders use to commit their offenses, and the instruments and devices that guardians and managers use to defend themselves and their property. In coping with graffiti, the first concern is the tools graffitiists use to make their marks, especially the spray-paint can. But there are also the tools property managers can use to protect their vulnerable surfaces. The graffitiists' tools will be dealt with in detail in the discussion of how to apply the gang-problem triangle to the graffiti problem.

Moving to the problem-solving model, scanning for graffiti is easy. If they can be seen, they are a problem. If they cannot be seen, they are not a problem.

Managers of apartment buildings or shopping malls function best in preventing attacks on their property when they are most visible.

Perhaps these generalizations need some qualification. Some graffiti can be seen by relatively few people, but they are extremely offensive and therefore a problem to those people. For example, graffiti in an apartment building's laundry room will be seen only by the residents who do their laundry there, but they can significantly undermine the residents' feelings of security in that laundry room. In contrast, the undersides of bridges and the walls of culverts have long been favorite graffiti sites. Few people, if any, pass these places in the ordinary course of daily life, so few take offense. These places do not represent a serious problem, and they may still serve as a source of police intelligence.

In analyzing a specific graffiti problem, the gang-problem triangle can be used, and the following questions can be asked:

- What kind of offenders are involved? What do the graffiti reveal about the offenders? Are they taggers? Are they gang members? Are they "wannabes"? Are they simply vandals, with no particular connection either to tagger crews or gangs?
- Who are the victims? Is there any identifiable pattern to individual or corporate victims?
- Where are graffiti appearing?

Moving to the triangle's second level of analysis, these questions can be asked:

- Who are the offenders' controllers, or do they have effective controllers?
- Who are the victims' guardians, or do they have effective guardians?
- Who are the managers of the places where graffiti are appearing?

Finally, it is very important to consider the tools involved. What do graffiti artists use to do their graffiti, and what can managers use to defend the places for which they are responsible?

In applying the gang-problem triangle to graffiti, it soon becomes apparent that three elements are the most important: the offenders, the tools involved, and the places attacked.

Offenders

The two primary classes of graffiti offenders are taggers and gang graffiti artists. Two other less important classes—the wannabes and vandals—can be added.

As noted, taggers have a different attitude from that of gang graffiti artists. Taggers want to get their names and their pieces up, and they view attempts to stop them as challenges to be met. Creating graffiti is their main interest. And their graffiti are the main reason they are of concern to a community. Unless they are drifting toward gang activity, taggers represent little threat to the community.

Graffiti in an apartment building's laundry room will be seen only by the residents who do their laundry there, but they can significantly undermine the residents' feelings of security in that laundry room.

When taggers are apprehended, it is important to subject them to sanctions strong enough to deter further tagging, such as substantial fines or community service.

To the extent that taggers are loners, they are harder to identify and apprehend. But the more they get up, and the more distinctive their tags, the more they expose themselves to apprehension. When they are apprehended, it is important to subject them to sanctions strong enough to deter further tagging. Substantial fines may be effective. Community service in the form of cleaning up graffiti is a punishment that fits the crime. Graffiti are much harder to remove than to put up. However, a countervailing consideration is whether cleaning graffiti teaches the tagger more effective ways of doing future tagging. Alternative methods of tagging may be more difficult to eradicate.

Once a tagger has been identified, it is important to involve his or her controllers—family, teachers, or employer—in discouraging future offenses.

Gang graffitists are more interested in marking their territory, boasting of their achievements, or threatening their rivals. Their gang activity is more important to them than their graffiti. And their gang activity is the main reason they are of concern to the community. Their graffiti are the symptom rather than the illness. But both the symptom and the illness are serious matters to the community.

Because gang graffiti are secondary to gang activity, when gang graffitists are apprehended, it is more important to deal with their gang activity. If public authorities and community residents are successful in dealing with gang problems, gang graffiti will diminish.

Wannabes have not yet made the grade, either as taggers or gang members. It is important to discourage them before they reach that next level. Strong sanctions, in the form of stiff fines, or difficult community service, again in the form of removing graffiti, can discourage them. Once again, it is important to involve their natural controllers, if that is possible.

Vandals may be the most difficult to identify, but they are the easiest to deter by quick and effective intervention when they are identified. The approaches used for wannabes should also be used for vandals.

Of the four types of offenders—taggers, gang graffitists, wannabes, and vandals—only taggers are likely to be challenged to commit further offenses by graffiti removal campaigns. Getting up is their main interest. But even in the New York subways, where tagging became a plague, a policy of quick removal of graffiti finally won out. For gang graffitists, wannabes, and vandals, quick removal of graffiti and restoration of clean surfaces are far more likely to be effective deterrents.

Tools

In the gang-problem triangle, the people on each side of the triangle may have tools that enable them to commit or resist offenses. There are several tools that graffitiists can use to make their mark. There are fewer tools with which managers of problem places can defend their properties.

A manual published by the London Underground, Ltd., titled *Getting Rid of Graffiti: A Practical Guide to Graffiti Removal and Anti-Graffiti Protection* (Whitford, 1992) was referred to earlier. In this manual, a table shows the principal markers used by graffitiists, the target surfaces best suited for each kind of marker, and the degree of difficulty of removing graffiti (see Exhibit 21). It provides valuable information on the relationships between markers and vulnerable surfaces. Other parts of that manual discuss in technical detail the chemicals that can be used in removal processes.

The range of materials and tools useful to graffiti artists is far more limited than those useful to legitimate artists. Four questions illustrate the limitations:

- Will the tool make a mark?
- Is it easily obtainable?
- Is it easily concealable?
- Can it be used quickly?

The substance used to make the mark is usually carried in the tool used to make the mark. An exception would be paint applied with a brush, but paint and brushes are not favored by graffitiists. They are not easy to conceal, carry, or use.

The aerosol-paint can, on the other hand, meets the criteria of usability, availability, concealability, and ease of use. Moreover, it is adaptable; several colors can be used, and different nozzles change the line widths. The aerosol-paint can is the technological change that drastically altered the graffiti problem in the last two decades. Without it, the New York subway graffitiists would never have moved beyond obscene words and pictures scratched in paint or written with a ballpoint pen. No one would ever have compiled art books of subway graffiti.

Spray-paint cans on which different cap sizes can be interchanged are the favorite tools of graffiti writers. Tips with either fine or broad sprays can be taken off oven-cleaner cans, hair sprays, deodorant cans, or window cleaners. The interchangeableness of tips makes it easy for taggers to achieve variety in their pieces.

Knives, pointed rocks, nails, and other hard instruments were the tools used by ancient graffitiists. They can still be used to scratch and deface surfaces, even glass, to the annoyance and cost of property owners. But they are hardly suited to the flamboyant and artistic communication styles

Even in the New York subways, where tagging became a plague, a policy of quick removal of graffiti finally won out.

Exhibit 21. Removing Graffiti: Markers and Surfaces

Marker/Device Type	Typical Target Surface	Removability
1. Aerosol paint —acrylic, cellulose, and other bases; pigmented, metallic, fluorescent, and other materials	All surface types (including very rough); very widely used for street art	Varies according to surface attached; very difficult for rough surfaces
2. Brush-applied paints, including domestic and rubber-based underseal	All surfaces; limited use mainly for political or sport graffiti	Varies according to surface attached; very difficult for rough surfaces
3. Felt-tip pens Permanent (solvent based)	Mainly smooth/semi-smooth; very widely used for street art	Fairly easy for nonpermeable/nonporous surfaces; moderate/difficult for permeable/porous surfaces
Nonpermanent (water based)	Smooth/semi-smooth; little used	Easy for most surfaces
4. Ballpoint pen	Smooth surface; mainly small-scale graffiti by individuals	Easy for nonpermeable/nonporous surfaces; moderate/difficult for permeable/porous surfaces
5. Lipstick, wax crayon	Usually smooth surfaces; little used	Moderate/difficult for porous/permeable surfaces
6. Chalk	Various surfaces; little used	Easy
7. Pencil	Smooth surfaces; little used	Usually easy
8. Knife, other scratching implements	All surfaces/textures, mainly soft or crumbly materials; mainly small-scale graffiti by individuals	Difficult; surface may require filling or refinishing
9. Self-adhesive sticker	Smooth surfaces; variable incidence, often political or social comment	Easy for hard surfaces; moderate/difficult for soft surfaces like plastic
10. Pasted fly-poster	Smooth/semi-smooth exterior surfaces; widely used for illicit publicity	Usually easy

of contemporary taggers. Furthermore, nobody can see, let alone read, scratches on a bridge stanchion from a speeding automobile.

Pens and pencils have always been the favored instruments of lavatory poets and comedians. Traditional ink pens were never very effective for writing on hard surfaces. Ballpoint pens will mark on some hard surfaces, but sometimes by scratching rather than applying ink. Felt-tip pens may make a mark on many hard surfaces, but only small marks. Pencils will write on many surfaces, but not very visibly. As annoying as pen and pencil graffiti may be, they are not perceived as a threat to public safety.

Lipstick and wax crayons will mark on smooth surfaces, but they are hard to use for anything beyond a few words or a small drawing. Chalk is easy to use on many surfaces, even semirough surfaces. But it is not well suited to large pictures and graffitiists do not use it much.

The London Transit System lists posters of various kinds as forms of graffiti, with considerable justification. Printed posters have been a form of political and commercial communication since the invention of the printing press. “Post No Bills” signs are directed at such posters. While printed posters have not appeared as a form of gang graffiti, they were widespread during the antiwar movement during the 1960s and 1970s—a movement that spawned a variety of political graffiti.

Exhibit 21 relates marker types to typical target surfaces. One of the problems with spray paints is that they can be used on almost any kind of surface, even rough surfaces. Rough surfaces with many concavities or indentations make it hard for a tagger to get up a coherent picture so, in that respect, they are less vulnerable than smooth surfaces. But that advantage is offset by the fact that rough surfaces are much more difficult to clean. As Exhibit 21 shows, the marks made by most other tools—knives and scratching instruments—are much easier to remove.

Property owners are not likely to modify external walls that have not yet been hit by graffitiists; but when they are cleaning or repairing surfaces that have been hit, they should consider taking steps to make them less vulnerable. Obviously, in building new structures, designers should take their vulnerability to graffiti into account. If the surface cannot be changed, perhaps access to the surface can be altered.

Problem Places

Where do graffiti appear? These are the problem places with which residents are concerned. They can separate the places within their communities into broad categories, using the groupings to help identify, analyze, and respond to problems.

For every kind of place, residents want to be able to identify the responsible managers. The broad categories of sites are fairly obvious: residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, public, and transitional spaces.

Rough surfaces . . . make it hard for a tagger to get up a coherent picture, but . . . rough surfaces are also much more difficult to clean.

There is some overlap among these broad categories, but the distinctions among categories help identify who might be responsible for particular places.

Residential properties are at greatest risk of becoming targets of graffiti when the residents have little stake in the property. They become problem properties under one or several of the following circumstances:

- Gang members live there. The presence of gang members can make a property a graffiti target no matter what its condition may be. Gang members may mark their own property, or rival gangs may mark it to show their contempt for the residents.
- The property has deteriorated to the point that restoring it and maintaining it in good condition are beyond the owner's financial means. A poor owner will find it difficult to pay for graffiti removal.
- Residents have little stake or interest in maintaining the property because:
 - They do not own it.
 - They are transients and will not stay long.
 - They can afford to live on the property only because of its bad condition.
- Neighborhood conditions are such that:
 - Deterioration of any given property is not seen as a problem.
 - Rehabilitation of a property will not attract better clientele.
- Vacant or abandoned properties are especially vulnerable to graffiti because:
 - No one is present to interfere with graffiti artists, who can pursue their art at a leisurely pace.
 - An obvious lack of maintenance or security tells the graffiti artists that no one will try to deal with graffiti after the fact.
 - Previous graffiti are an open invitation to add graffiti.

Residents have little stake or interest in maintaining the property and preventing graffiti because they do not own it, they are transients and will not stay long, and they can afford to live on the property only because of its bad condition.

Commercial sites most at risk are those that have broad surfaces on which graffiti artists can write. Small business establishments that are distant from other buildings present tempting graffiti targets if their exterior surfaces are visible to passers-by and suitable for graffiti. Most proprietors want to keep their exterior walls clean and free of graffiti. Allowing graffiti, especially gang graffiti, to stay up for any length of time tells the public that the business owner is giving up to gang presence. That, in turn, undermines the feeling of safety or security that customers have when patronizing the business.

The same principles apply to shopping centers. When all the stores are doing well and there is frequent pedestrian and automobile traffic, shopping center proprietors should be able to keep their properties free of graffiti. But in areas where many stores are closed and overall patronage is down, graffiti can add to a shopping center's decline.

There are other factors that make places vulnerable to graffiti. Are particular places attractive to gang members for any reason? Are they convenient places for gang members to congregate for substantial periods of time? Taverns and restaurants are obvious examples of such places, as are bowling alleys, pool halls, amusement arcades, and parks. But many kinds of commercial enterprises can become gang hangouts if the managers allow it. Parking lots of all kinds of establishments can become gang gathering places.

Any of these factors can make a property vulnerable to graffiti because they are part of gang presence. A manager who encourages or tolerates gang presence can expect his or her property to be hit.

Industrial areas often have the kind of broad, uninterrupted surfaces attractive to graffiti artists. Fences may stretch for a block or more with only one or two gates. Warehouses may have no windows breaking otherwise uniform, flat surfaces. Some industrial sites have a rough and ready look that makes cleanliness and other aesthetic qualities secondary. Seemingly impenetrable fences and walls may be the main form of off-hours security, meaning that human surveillance is deemed unnecessary. These factors combine to give graffiti artists the surfaces and time they need to practice their art. Industrial areas, however, are often places in which graffiti artists have no interest.

Public recreational areas have been particularly tempting targets for both taggers and gang graffiti artists. Like everyone else, gang members have a right to picnic in public parks, play on public ball fields and courts, and use other public recreational facilities. Problems get very serious when gangs take over public places as their own domain, intimidating and endangering other users of the public space. Graffiti are part of the intimidation of ordinary citizens. Guardians and managers of public recreational space are often not visible and therefore offer no deterrent to graffiti artists.

Private recreational spaces may be open to the public, including gang members, for a price. Their managers are usually visible and deter graffiti because tolerating graffiti could drive away paying customers by indicating that managers have lost control of their space.

Public spaces, other than recreational spaces, usually have visible guardians and managers. Schools are the most likely to have trouble with gang graffiti simply because gang members, like other youth, have a right to be in school as students. In other public spaces, such as courthouses and police stations, security is so obvious that gang members rarely have an opportunity to inflict harm.

Transitional spaces are spaces through which people and vehicles move on their way to someplace else. These spaces present a special problem for several reasons. They are open to everyone for lawful movement from one place to another. Vehicular traffic is regulated by State laws, city ordinances, traffic lights, street signs, and markings on the pavement. But pedestrian traffic is hardly regulated at all. People can and do gather on sidewalks and street corners.

Problems get very serious when gangs take over public places as their own domain, intimidating and endangering other users of the public space. Graffiti are part of the intimidation.

Traditional nuisance principles and contemporary zoning principles govern the impact a property has on its neighborhood, including the way it looks.

Matching problem properties with responsible people is most difficult with open public and transitional spaces—parks, streets, and street corners. An open park without a program (recreational, cultural, or the like) does not require the continuous or even frequent presence of public employees.

Control of graffiti in transitional spaces is particularly difficult. Graffiti are often seen on bridges, street and traffic signs, and billboards. Ordinary citizens who pass through these transitional spaces are not responsible for policing them. The managers of these spaces, employees of the government agencies responsible for maintaining them, are seldom present because maintenance does not require daily attention.

Under ordinary property concepts, owners are responsible for the condition of their property and what happens on it. Traditional nuisance principles and contemporary zoning principles govern the impact a property has on its neighborhood, including the way it looks. Thus, there are legal pressures that can be brought to bear on property owners who fail to keep their property free of graffiti.

A community group trying to cope with graffiti must ask why an owner tolerates graffiti on his or her property. If the owner lives on the property, is he or she intimidated by gang activity? Is there something a community task force can do to address that intimidation? Is the owner physically or financially capable of removing the graffiti? Can the community help, perhaps by volunteering assistance? Are there preventive steps the community can recommend to the owner?

As for absentee owners, community residents must find out who they are and tell them of the problem their property presents to the community. Again, the community must ask why the owner tolerates graffiti and how the absentee owner has chosen to manage his or her property. Is there someone close by to whom the community or public officials can turn for action? If owners do not live on or manage their own property, who is responsible for overseeing the property? That person is the manager in the gang-problem triangle.

What are the managers' powers over the property? How do they see their responsibilities to the owners and the community? Why do they tolerate graffiti? The managers in the gang-problem triangle are those with whom neighborhood task forces should be dealing to clean up property. They and the owners are the people against whom public officials can take action for maintaining a nuisance, violating zoning codes, or violating local graffiti ordinances.

Responses

The gang-problem triangle is useful in the analysis phase of problem solving. Once the problem solvers have performed that analysis, they can formulate responses. What responses can be effective in dealing with tagger and gang graffiti? Many responses are possible, including some discussed here.

Establishing a Graffiti Policy

It is important for a community to have an anti-graffiti policy. Establishment of such a policy may fall to the local government, businesses, community residents, or a combination of these stakeholders. A combination approach is most likely to succeed.

Will the community adopt a quick removal program? If so, who will carry out this program—city personnel, contract personnel, or volunteers? What approach will be used—removal or covering over graffiti?

Is a new local ordinance necessary? If so, at whom should it be directed—graffitists, property owners, or both? Can the local government provide more or better enforcement of existing laws?

It is equally important for a chronic corporate victim to have a graffiti policy. If corporate facilities—fences, buildings, and vehicles—are targets, can the corporation develop countermeasures that will decrease their vulnerability? Can security be increased at remote places to protect both structures and vehicles? Should surface textures be modified to make them easier to clean or harder to mark? Can different paints be used? Will the corporation try to remove or cover up graffiti? How quickly can the corporation respond? Will the corporation take legal action against graffiti writers, supporting their prosecution or bringing civil suits? Can the corporation participate in community anti-graffiti programs?

Reducing Availability of Graffiti Tools

The spray-paint can is the favored tool of both taggers and gang graffitists. Keeping this tool out of their hands is a highly effective countermeasure to graffiti. What can be done?

Graffitists do not invest heavily in their art. They prefer to shoplift rather than buy their spray-paint cans. So an effective first step is to encourage stores that sell spray paints to make them difficult to shoplift. Store managers should not put spray cans on open displays close to exits. Instead, they should store them behind counters or in storerooms closed to the public and have customers ask for them.

A Dutch importer has designed a modified spray valve system that can be used with only one kind of nozzle. When the nozzle is put in place, internal locking ridges make it impossible to remove without destroying the stem and spray head. The separation of the spray nozzle from the paint

Will the community adopt a quick removal program? Will city personnel, contract personnel, or volunteers carry it out?

Taggers may regard removal campaigns as a challenge—a game between them and the community—but even taggers ultimately tire of the game.

can means that the cans can be stocked on open store shelves, with the nozzles stored securely under the control of the store manager. Shoplifting the spray can without the spray nozzle is pointless. Legitimate buyers can buy the nozzle and put it on just one can. As noted above, taggers often are not sufficiently dedicated to their art to invest money in it.

Painting contractors must be encouraged to control disposition of partially used painting materials. In addition to complying with environmental safety regulations, they should consciously make it difficult for paints to be found and used by graffitiists.

Graffiti Removal Campaigns

Quick removal of graffiti is a standard anti-graffiti recommendation. The underlying idea is that graffitiists soon tire of having their work obliterated and give up. Taggers do not necessarily share that psychology. They regard graffiti removal, changing the texture of a surface, or erection of barriers as challenges to be met. Gang graffitiists throw up their graffiti to say something about themselves or their gangs. Taggers do their pieces for their own gratification and as part of an ongoing game they play with public officials. Increasing the degree of difficulty makes the game more fun.

Nevertheless, promptly removing graffiti has been successful in many communities. Disappearance of graffiti shortly after they appear discourages gang graffitiists, wannabes, and vandals. Removing them shows that the community will not tolerate them. Taggers may regard removal campaigns as a challenge—a game between them and the community—but even taggers ultimately tire of the game. The New York Transit System eventually won out, but at great expense, by developing techniques and chemicals for cleaning cars immediately after they had been tagged.

Target Hardening

The New York Transit System also took significant target-hardening steps. Taggers at one time roamed transit storage yards almost at will. Security at those yards was greatly increased, once again, at great expense. New York also studied the kinds of surfaces and fabrics that would best combine resistance to graffiti and ease of cleaning. As can be seen from Exhibit 21, that is not always an easy combination to find.

Dark surfaces can discourage graffiti. They simply are not as attractive to paint on as lighter surfaces. Rough surfaces make it more difficult for taggers to make good pictures, but they are also harder to clean.

All managers of places vulnerable to graffiti should study how to harden the target. Increased security, or increased visibility of security, may be the answer in some places.

Security can include making the tempting surface hard to reach. In the design of the Washington, D.C., Metro subway system, the architects took a

number of steps to separate people from the walls of the stations. In many stations, the passenger platform is in the middle, between the tracks carrying trains in opposite directions, with the tracks then lying between passengers and the walls. In other stations, passengers are kept a substantial distance from the main walls by short (4-foot) concrete walls. Anyone trying to reach the main wall has to lean or jump over the short wall, separating himself from and making himself highly visible to everyone else in the station. The main walls also consist of large, concave, rough concrete rectangles. They do not offer long stretches of flat, smooth surfaces favored by graffitiists. Washington Metro consciously planned its facilities and equipment to minimize the risk of graffiti and has had strong community support in that effort. Graffiti have never been a problem in the Washington Metro system in the 20 years of its operation.

The glass industry is working on materials that will reduce the damage done by graffiti etched in glass. A clear polyester film has been developed that protects the glass itself and absorbs the etching. Three or more layers reduce the likelihood of penetration to the glass. Film that has been damaged can be peeled and removed and then replaced in strips or patches. It is much cheaper to replace than glass. The film also makes the glass harder to break and less likely to shatter.

A clear polyester film has been developed that protects glass and absorbs etchings.

Discouraging Graffiti

It is possible to foresee and forestall offensive graffiti by covering a potential target surface with something else. Lafayette Park in Washington, D.C., is one of the Nation's best known public parks. Across from the White House, it has been the scene of many demonstrations through the years. In 1969, Lafayette Park was closed for extensive renovations. All sidewalks were torn up and replaced, and the landscaping was redone. The park, which was completely closed for several months, was surrounded by a solid wooden fence several feet high. Anticipating that an unadorned fence 4 blocks long would be a great temptation for freelance taggers, the National Park Service arranged with District of Columbia public schools to paint murals on the fence. School children designed, painted, and signed murals on segments of the fence assigned to their schools. Their colorful work remained up until the park renovation was finished.

A quarter of a century has passed since that successful effort to protect such a tempting surface. Taggers and gang graffitiists have become bolder about their own work and more contemptuous of other people's work. The ploy that worked then for Lafayette Park may not work today in other places.

Providing Alternatives to Taggers

One concept being tried in several communities is providing taggers alternative locations to do their graffiti. Either they are given walls on which to practice their art, or they are invited into classes where they can receive instruction and opportunity in art. It was such classes that drew the scorn of the London Transit Authority, as discussed earlier.

During the yearlong effort to get the local government's approval of a Hip-Hop Art Wall, graffiti complaints in Redmond dropped from an average of 60 a month to 4 a month.

Such approaches may work for some youthful wannabes, but they probably misinterpret the psychology of the true tagger. Gaining notoriety and defying authority are both important to the true tagger, neither of which can be achieved by joining a community program.

In Redmond, Washington, a law enforcement officer determined that taggers rather than gangs were responsible for a proliferation of graffiti. Analyzing the graffiti, he found that they primarily took the forms of initials, name writing, and murals and that they appeared mostly on public property, such as street signs and utility boxes. Few graffiti were found on privately owned fences, garages, cars, or other common graffiti targets.

Talking with teenage taggers, the officer identified a network of taggers. In a meeting with these groups, he laid out two options: either the taggers could work with the community to arrive at an acceptable solution, or the police could mount an all-out enforcement campaign against them. The teenagers suggested establishing an alternative place to paint in return for a tagging cease-fire.

Formulating a specific plan, the officer and the taggers persuaded the city council to authorize construction of a Hip-Hop Art Wall. They persuaded local businesses to donate materials for the wall, which was erected in May 1994. The taggers worked out a permit system for painting on the wall. During the yearlong effort to get the local government's approval of the wall, graffiti complaints in Redmond dropped from an average of 60 a month to 4 a month. It is important to recognize that this drop took place before the wall was built. The negotiations themselves had a very positive effect.

Encouraging Public Responsibility

Community groups planning anti-graffiti campaigns should understand that throwing up graffiti on other people's property is already illegal. State statutes or local ordinances, or both, usually include defacing other people's property under trespassing or malicious mischief concepts. Property owners also have the right to bring civil actions against graffitiists for trespass. The essential problem with both criminal and civil approaches is that graffitiists are hard to catch.

Sanctions for ordinance violations and misdemeanors are usually not severe, and the overcrowding of the criminal justice system with very serious offenders leads both prosecutors and courts to treat graffiti as a minor matter. Fines or community service may be imposed, but incarceration is unlikely. Light sanctions, coupled with little likelihood of being apprehended, have no deterrent effect.

One alternative to the sanctioning of offenders is the sanctioning of *victims* of graffiti offenses. Some ordinances require graffiti removal within a relatively short period of time, perhaps a few days. Fines are imposed on property owners who fail to clean up their property promptly. Unlike the graffitiists, the property owners are easy to find.

While this approach may seem to impose the penalties on the wrong party, the effect is intended to be twofold. First, the property owner, facing the prospect of being hit again, will be more likely to consider security measures to reduce his or her vulnerability. Second, prompt removal of graffiti is consistent with the policy of making the neighborhood appear graffiti free.

Lakewood, Colorado, set up a comprehensive anti-graffiti program. In a brochure distributed to its citizens, Lakewood states that the unsightly appearance of graffiti demands cooperative efforts between city agencies and citizens to document and remove graffiti.

Explaining the difference between gang and tagger graffiti, Lakewood asks citizens to report graffiti to the police before removing them so that the police can photograph them and write a report. This allows the police to develop patterns, gain intelligence, and build cases against offenders for prior acts. Apart from this reporting request, Lakewood stresses the importance of removing graffiti as quickly as possible. Left in place, graffiti add to the deterioration of a neighborhood and invite responses from rival gangs or taggers, all of which may lead to further criminal activity. When individuals or neighborhoods become involved in active, frequent graffiti removal, they make a clear statement that graffiti and other destructive activities will not be tolerated.

Lakewood's graffiti removal program is a coordinated effort between the city and citizens. Graduates of the Lakewood Citizens Academy, which is operated by the police department, take graffiti reports, photograph graffiti, and conduct low-level surveillance of sites vandalized by graffiti.

There are five steps in the Lakewood program:

- ❑ The police are notified of the graffiti.
- ❑ The police take a report and photograph the graffiti. They also notify the owner and deliver a graffiti-removal brochure.
- ❑ The property owner removes the graffiti. The owner may request that volunteers remove the graffiti by calling the Graffiti Hotline and filling out a consent/release form.
- ❑ If the graffiti have not been removed in 10 days after notification, community code enforcement officials again contact the property owner and try to remove the graffiti, using Graffiti Hotline volunteers.
- ❑ If the graffiti are still not removed in another 10 days, code enforcement staff may ask the Graffiti Hotline coordinator to contact the property owner and offer assistance in removing the graffiti. If the police determine the graffiti were put up by gang members, they may also enforce the gang graffiti ordinance, which requires removal of gang graffiti within 5 days.

In the consent/release form, the owner grants permission for organized volunteers to enter the property and paint over the graffiti. The owner may

Graduates of the Lakewood Citizens Academy, which is operated by the police department, take graffiti reports, photograph graffiti, and conduct low-level surveillance of sites vandalized by graffiti.

provide paint for the volunteers, accepting responsibility for matching paint colors. If the owner does not provide paint, the volunteers will try to match colors as closely as possible, but they will not be responsible for repainting if the matches are not exact. The volunteers provide all labor, materials, and equipment at no cost to the owner. They perform the work in a clean and orderly fashion and do the final cleanup. The City of Lakewood does not indemnify the volunteers, and all risks are incurred by the property owner.

Assessment

The final step of the problem-solving process is assessing the results of the responses that have been made. Have the responses been effective? In the case of graffiti, that can mean one of two things. Have graffiti completely disappeared from the community? Or have graffiti been so reduced in quantity and offensiveness that the community no longer regards them as a serious problem?

The assessment should also guide the community in deciding whether further responses are necessary. If so, what kind of change in response should be tried? To answer these questions, it will be important to make the distinctions that have been made throughout this chapter. What kind of graffiti still appear? Are they primarily tagger graffiti? In that case, it will be necessary to intensify programs and sanctions targeted to individual taggers. Or are they primarily gang graffiti? In that case, intensifying anti-gang programs would be the appropriate approach.

II. LEARNING ABOUT LOCAL GANGS

Needs Assessments for Gang Problems

Melanie Thompson was bewildered. As a lifelong resident of Austin, Texas, a manager with the local newspaper, and a longtime community services volunteer, Thompson had earned her appointment to the Mayor’s Task Force on Gangs, Crime, and Drugs. But the task force had already heard nearly two dozen witnesses that day—police officers, school principals, park directors, and former gang members—and the problem was becoming more and more confusing. Some saw gangs as a crime problem, others argued that gang members were mostly abused and neglected members of dysfunctional families, and still others stressed the poverty and chronic unemployment of gang-ridden neighborhoods. But with Austin just coming out of a long recession, resources were limited. The city could not possibly solve all of these problems. Where on earth should it start?

Citizens such as Ms. Thompson, police officers, teachers, and parks and recreation leaders all have a right to be bewildered. In many communities, gang crimes are only the tip of an iceberg that includes a dizzying array of symptoms, risk factors, and bad outcomes. What makes the problem worse is its diversity; white, black, Hispanic, and Pacific Asian gangs differ, even in the same city. Gangs are different in Los Angeles, Denver, and Philadelphia, even when they have the same names. The right approach to the problem in one city might bear no relationship whatsoever to the best approach somewhere else. Each community must make its own decisions as to what can be done with the resources available.

Needs assessments can help. Often the first step in planning a comprehensive solution to the “gang problem,” a needs assessment can help uncover hidden problems, set priorities, and (perhaps most important) help develop a communitywide consensus about what to do. This chapter discusses how to prepare for and conduct a needs assessment and how to use the results to develop a plan. First to be considered, however, is a needs assessment and how it can help a community begin dealing with its gang problem.

What Is a Needs Assessment?

Although there are many definitions of needs assessments, the following is simple and comprehensive. A needs assessment is a “systematic appraisal of type, depth, and scope of problems as perceived by study targets or their advocates” (Rossi and Friedman, 1993).

A breakdown of this definition reveals the most important characteristics of needs assessments:

- ❑ **Systematic.** A needs assessment is not conducted on a haphazard or convenience basis. Instead, it is guided by a set of procedures that can

A needs assessment can help uncover hidden problems, set priorities, and (perhaps most important) help develop a communitywide consensus about what to do.

The more complex the problem and the more heated the political environment, the more important systematic procedures are in gaining and maintaining support for the assessment and its findings.

be specified in detail. A good needs assessment is reproducible: If others follow the same procedures, they will come to equally useful conclusions. If the procedures are sound, the results will be comprehensive and will not be biased by the pet concerns or interests of the people using the procedures. The more complex the problem and the more heated the political environment, the more important systematic procedures are in gaining and maintaining support for the assessment and its findings.

- ❑ **Type of Problems.** A community may start a needs assessment to examine a gang problem, focusing on crimes of theft and violence among gangs. But while talking with gang-involved youth, their parents and teachers, and others with a stake in the problem, people are likely to find that other problems related to gang activity will also be important. Many gang members use alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs, so these drug problems may need to be investigated. Many gang members are not doing well in school, putting them at high risk of dropping out and eventually reducing their chances of getting a good job. Even if a youth can be persuaded to leave the gang, the community may just be trading in one problem (petty theft and an occasional driveby shooting) for another (drug addiction, chronic unemployment, and more frequent and serious criminal activity). By focusing all the attention on gang activity, the community may miss opportunities to solve problems downstream. It could even make matters worse. When people start looking at any social problem, they often examine just one thread in a complicated social fabric. If the needs assessment is to do justice to the real problem, people must be willing to follow the thread wherever it goes.
- ❑ **Depth and Scope of Problems.** Some problems affect everyone. For example, virtually all adolescents in American society are anxious about their self-worth and about being “good enough.” Such problems have enormous scope. Other problems affect only a few people but affect them very deeply. For example, relatively few youth are so anxious about their self-worth that they consider suicide. For such youth, the problem of anxiety is obviously very deep. Whether a community group focuses on the anxiety problem of broad scope or the suicide problem of great depth depends on many factors, including value judgments that are beyond the limits of the needs assessment itself. But by reliably measuring the scope and depth of each problem, a needs assessment can provide the basic data needed to make these judgments wisely.
- ❑ **Study Targets or Advocates.** Most needs assessments focus on potential clients—in this case, gang-involved youth. Community members can get a different and often broader perspective if they talk with parents, teachers, social service providers, and youth who are not involved with a gang. It is also a good idea to talk to advocates and others with an interest in helping kids.

Aren't Communities Already Doing This?

In one sense, every community that provides social services has already done a needs assessment. Decisions are made about funding, program development, and service delivery every day on the basis of what decisionmakers perceive to be the community's biggest needs. However, in most places these decisions are not based on comprehensive information, for these reasons:

- ❑ Policymakers get most of their information about needs from interest groups. Well-funded nonprofit corporations and well-organized neighborhood associations are adequately represented, but others are probably not. In many communities, the people with the smallest voice in policymaking have the greatest need.
- ❑ A lack of comprehensive data means that priorities are set on the basis of seat-of-the-pants judgments at best and politics at worst.
- ❑ There is often no consensus among policymakers and service providers about what must be done. There may be a consensus within some fields; for example, law enforcement or teen pregnancy prevention groups may have organized to identify their highest priorities. But there is probably little consensus about the relative importance of each field.

Needs assessments provide local policymakers with an alternative, unbiased source of information. This information is vital if policymakers and service providers are to spend their time and money where it will do the most good.

There are many kinds and methods of needs assessments, but all accomplish four objectives:

- ❑ They represent a complete picture of all needs, rather than a puzzle with missing pieces.
- ❑ They identify needs that policymakers do not already know about (or else verify that policymakers do know about all the relevant needs).
- ❑ They show which needs are being met and which are not, and which needs are most pressing. This allows decisionmakers to set priorities.
- ❑ They help to develop a consensus among stakeholders—people or groups who have some interest in the problem—about what must be done.

The consensus-building role of the needs assessment has proved especially useful in many places. All stakeholders are involved in deciding how the needs assessment will be conducted, conducting it, and analyzing the results. Although no needs assessment eliminates all conflict among stakeholders, this often reduces conflict dramatically. This, in turn, improves the potential for long-term strategic planning and for further coordination and consensus building in service delivery. Consensus building is especially important in a large city, where providers of different services (or providers in different neighborhoods) are unlikely to know one another.

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As long as funding for social programs remains scarce, communication, coordination, and cooperation among service providers is necessary to eliminate duplication and to ensure that the people with the greatest needs do not fall through the cracks.

As long as funding for social programs remains scarce, communication, coordination, and cooperation among service providers is necessary to eliminate duplication and to ensure that the people with the greatest needs do not fall through the cracks.

Although needs assessments are useful, there are some things they cannot do. They cannot by themselves tell policymakers and service providers how to spend their time and money. Consider the anxiety and suicide problem described above. Which is better: to help a lot of youth a little bit, perhaps through recreation programs that build self-esteem, or to help fewer, more troubled youth a lot, perhaps through a crisis intervention program? The answer probably depends on the details, including the extent to which low self-esteem leads to gang involvement, the current suicide rate among youth, and the effectiveness of recreation and crisis intervention programs. Sorting out all these details requires professional judgment, not just raw data.

Another limitation is that needs assessments only identify problems, not solutions. For example, a needs assessment may find that youth in the midteens need job training. Who should do the training? What should the youth be trained to do? How should they be trained? Such questions can be answered only by creative and understanding service providers working closely with thoughtful clients. The clients alone simply don't have the information needed to make such judgments.

What Is the Needs Assessment Looking For?

As every junior high school counselor knows, youth join gangs for many reasons. Some are lured by the potential to make money in the drug trade. Others were abused or neglected as children and join gangs as a substitute family. Some just want an opportunity to succeed that is denied them elsewhere because they are slow in school or not good at sports. If communities are to prevent youth from joining gangs, they need to deal with all these problems.

As every police officer knows, gangs cause a variety of problems. Many deal drugs. Most fight with rival gangs for turf or drug clientele, sometimes killing innocent bystanders. Some gang members gain status by getting their girlfriends pregnant. "Wannabes" too young to join the gang hope to impress gang members by spray-painting their "tags" throughout the neighborhood. Merchants or residents see a public gathering of gang members as menacing, even if the youth are not breaking any laws. If communities are to reduce the immediate costs of gang activity, they need to deal with all these problems.

As every social worker knows, gang members face problems beyond those posed by the gang itself. Most lack job skills and many cannot read and write very well. Few have the self-control needed to hold down a steady job, even if they qualify for one. With little prospect of a legitimate job and with a clear career track in crime, their criminal activity is likely to escalate.

If communities are to reduce the long-run costs of gang activity, they need to deal with these problems, too.

“Gangs are a community health problem,” says Billy Wilkening, former executive director of Tying Neighborhoods Together (TNT), a gang initiative in suburban Denver. “It’s like any other health problem. If you want to deal with heart disease, you need to think about surgery and intensive care. But you also need to eliminate, reduce, or buffer the risk factors that create heart disease in the first place.”

Marlene Fish, who took over for Wilkening in mid-1993, agrees that a broad-based approach is needed. As Fish puts it, “Gangs are a catalyst, not a focus of our program. They can get people started, but if we stop there it won’t work. Most of what we’re trying to do is get families to address their problems earlier.”

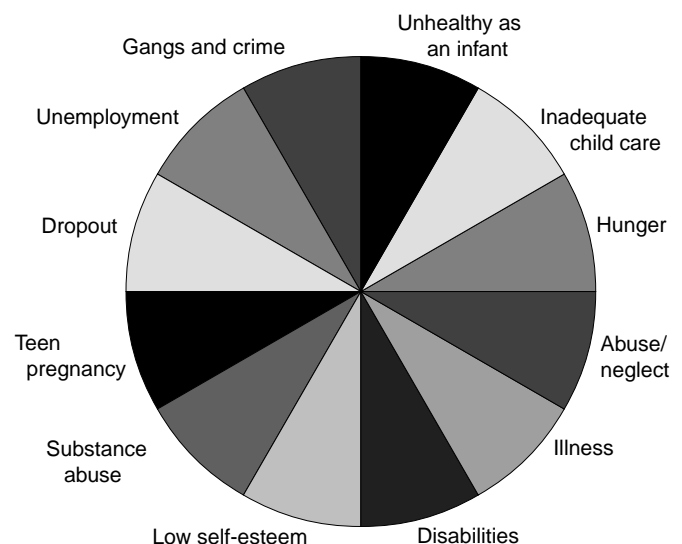
The variety of gang-related problems is captured by the “Wheel of Misfortune” shown in Exhibit 22, a cycle of misfortunes that may typify the lives of troubled youth. All gang members suffer from or create some of these problems, and a comprehensive attack on the gang problem requires that all be addressed to some extent. Thus, even a needs assessment narrowly focused on gangs must measure the scope and depth of all these bad outcomes. Because good needs assessments are broad based, time consuming, and expensive, most are conducted on a citywide or even regional basis. This is both good and bad. Such assessments are comprehensive enough, but they may fail to consider important differences among communities. For example, youth who were recent immigrants may join gangs for different reasons than those who were born in America; they may be involved in different activities while in the gang and face different problems when they leave the gang. If the needs assessment does not distinguish between first-generation and native-born youth, or youth of different races and ethnic groups, or those who live in different neighborhoods, all youth are assumed to have identical needs. Because this is rarely true, opportunities to tailor an approach to specific problems are missed, and relatively ineffective solutions are created. In general, then, communities must also look for differences in needs among youth of different ages, social classes, ethnic groups, and the like.

There are four steps to conducting a needs assessment. It is probably best if they are carried out in order.

- ❑ **Laying the Groundwork.** Assemble the team that will conduct the assessment and a planning group that will monitor the team’s

“Gangs are a catalyst, not a focus of our program. Most of what we’re trying to do is get families to address their problems earlier.”

Exhibit 22. Wheel of Misfortune



It is vital to get “buy in” from service providers and funding agencies at every major step.

work and make suggestions along the way. Make the major decisions about the scope of the effort and the methods to be used.

- ❑ **Identifying Current Activities.** Survey community service providers to identify all current programs and populations served and classify them on the basis of the primary needs they are attempting to fill. If possible, document the effectiveness of these programs.
- ❑ **Identifying and Setting Priorities Among Needs.** Survey the population affected and its advocates to measure the scale, scope, and type of unmet needs.
- ❑ **Developing a Consensus.** Present the findings to community service providers and appropriate policymakers. Work with them to develop a consensus about the priorities for program development and funding.

The next section considers the first step in conducting a needs assessment—laying the groundwork and making the major decisions about the scope and nature of the assessment itself.

Step 1: Laying the Groundwork

In all but the biggest cities, needs assessments can be conducted by a few hard-working individuals. In fact, it is preferable to assign responsibility for the serious work to a small group. This usually improves communication among the team members, improves the quality of the work they do, and shortens the time needed to conduct the assessment by reducing the need for meetings, memos, and progress reports.

On the other hand, needs assessments are of little use if the results are not accepted by service providers and funding agencies. Because providers and funders must ultimately agree to a plan for addressing and solving gang problems, it is vital that they be involved in the assessment from the beginning. In practice, this means that responsibility for big decisions must rest with a large, comprehensive group of “movers and shakers,” while responsibility for implementing the assessment stays with a small team. Although the assessment team must make many small decisions along the way, it is vital to get “buy in” from service providers and funding agencies at every major step. For simplicity, the large group is called the advisory board, and the small group is called the assessment team.

An advisory board need not be comprehensive to be successful. (In many cities, this would require literally hundreds of members.) Instead, it should include the most important service providers and funding agencies and be broadly representative of the rest. At a minimum, the board should include politicians or high-level administrators from the county, school district, and major area cities; any major community foundations and the United Way; and service providers, both large and small, with experience in dealing with a variety of youth problems. Whether the group should be formal or informal

depends on factors beyond the needs assessment itself. For example, if the needs assessment is the first step toward a comprehensive gang strategy, it may be necessary to create a formal board with bylaws and regular meetings. For purposes of the needs assessment alone, however, it is best if the group is informal and open. If it develops that major actors with different viewpoints have been inadvertently left out, it is easy to bring them in later.

Exhibit 23 shows the membership of a board established to oversee the Austin Project, which developed a youth needs assessment for Austin, Texas, in 1992. The board's job was to oversee the entire effort, develop a consensus on the basic methods to be used, and provide some of the personnel and data needed to complete the technical work. In addition, the prestige and political power of board members gave the entire effort legitimacy. This guaranteed access and assistance from service providers who were not directly represented.

The advisory board's most important role in this early stage of the program is to reinforce the importance of the problem, create the assessment team, and publicize the impending assessment effort among the service provider community. If the board is highly political, there will no doubt be some pressure to issue press releases and hold press conferences. Such mass media publicity can help keep the attention of political leaders and the public on the gang problem. The danger is that some advisory board members may use the publicity as an opportunity to argue for pet policies or programs in anticipation of the needs identified by the assessment. Such "jumping the gun" gives the wrong impression to the public and service providers and may make the needs assessment look like a whitewash. Thus, it is best to meet the press with caution at this stage.

Once the advisory board has been constituted and perhaps presented to the community, the focus shifts to the assessment team. Many small decisions need to be made at the first stages of the assessment process, and these decisions are best considered by a small group.

First Steps

With few exceptions, the assessment team's first step should be to find out whether anyone has ever conducted a youth needs assessment before. Gang-related needs assessments are rare, but assessments of other, related needs may be more common. When the Austin Project began, for example, the assessment team found that needs assessments had been conducted recently by the United Way (all social service needs focusing on children, youth, and the elderly); the Austin Police Department (youth service needs in one gang-ridden neighborhood); Planned Parenthood (needs for teenage pregnancy prevention services); and the Office of the City Auditor (needs regarding youth employment and child abuse prevention). Although none of these assessments were comprehensive, all helped guide the assessment team toward the most important sources of information.

The assessment team's first step should be to find out whether anyone has ever conducted a youth needs assessment before.

Exhibit 23. Austin Project Board of Directors

Bill Aleshire, Travis County Judge
Gonzalo Barrientos, Texas State Senator
Robert Berdahl, President, University of Texas at Austin
Sam Biscoe, Travis County Commissioner
Albert Black, Special Assistant for Community Development, Texas Education Agency
Barbara Carlson, Travis County Commissioner
Jerry Carlson, Site General Manager, IBM Corporation
Mina Clark, Attorney
Jim Coronado, Criminal Magistrate, Travis County
William Cunningham, Chancellor, University of Texas
Wilhelmina Delco, Texas State Representative
Ronald Earle, Travis County District Attorney
Gus Garcia, Member, Austin City Council
Pat Hayes, President, St. Edward's University
Gary Heersen, Vice President, AMD Corporation
William Hobby, former Lieutenant Governor of Texas and Professor,
LBJ School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin
Wayne Holtzman, Chief Counsel, Hogg Foundation
Gil Jester, Council IV Executive Director, Texas Affiliate, American Heart Association
Barbara Jordan, Professor, LBJ School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin
Manny Justiz, Dean, College of Education, University of Texas at Austin
Terry Keel, Travis County Sheriff
Ronald Kessler, Attorney
Roger Kintzel, Publisher, *Austin American-Statesman*
Rev. John Korcsmar, Dolores Catholic Church
Ronya Kozmetzky, Executive Director, RGK Foundation
Rev. Sterling Lands II, Greater Calvary Baptist Church
Lowell Lebermann, President, Centex Beverage Company
Ray Marshall, Professor, LBJ School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin
Joseph McMillan, Jr., President, Houston-Tillotson College
Rocky Medrano, Travis County Constable
Robert Mendoza, Teacher, Johnston High School
Della Mae Moore, Director of Communications, Texas Education Agency
William O'Brien, Systems Plant Manager, IBM Corporation
Elvia Ortiz-Castro, Quality Assurance Manager, Private Industry Council
J.J. "Jake" Pickle, Member, U.S. House of Representatives
William Renfro, Chief Executive Officer, Worthen National Bank of Texas
Carl Richie, Deputy Chief of Staff, Governor of Texas
Kathy Rider, President, Austin School Board
Gen. Hugh Robinson (ret.), U.S. Army
Walt W. Rostow, Professor Emeritus, Department of Economics, University of Texas at Austin
Max Sherman, Dean, LBJ School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin
Terral Smith, Attorney
Mary Teeples, Congress International Incorporated
Carol Thompson, Director, A+ Coalition
Bruce Todd, Mayor, City of Austin
Jeffrey Travillion, Executive Director, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
Emily Vargas-Adams, Executive Director, CEDEN
Elena Vela, Principal, Travis High School
Elizabeth Watson, Chief of Police, City of Austin
Ted Whatley, Trustee, Austin School Board

This exercise also helped the assessment team identify people who knew something about youth needs and how to assess them. For example, the United Way had developed standard procedures for conducting assessments that could be applied directly to the gang-related assessment. Austin police personnel knew where to get and analyze background data on neighborhoods. The city auditors knew how to analyze budgets and evaluate program effectiveness. By adding some people to the assessment team and “picking the brains” of others, the team significantly improved its assessment.

Scope and Focus

The next step is to make major decisions about the scope and focus of the assessment effort. Three questions, in particular, need to be answered at this stage. First, should the assessment focus on primary or secondary prevention? That is, what age groups should it consider: current gang members (in most places, 14- to 20-year-olds), wannabes (10- to 13-year-olds), or “could bes” (younger children at risk of joining gangs when they get older)? Focusing on younger children and their needs may be the most cost-effective approach in the long run, but it does little to solve the community’s immediate gang problem. On the other hand, focusing on current gang members may provide immediate but limited results. The Austin Project began by focusing on the youngest children (birth to 8 years) but shifted the focus to older youth when it became clear that the public could not wait 10 years for the program to take effect.

Second, should the assessment focus on all youth problems or only those very closely related to gangs? As TNT’s Fish suggests, for many jurisdictions gang problems are only the best-publicized and scariest side of a bigger problem—such as school dropouts or teen unemployment. In these communities, it makes sense to use the gang problem to maintain interest but to broaden the scope of the assessment to other problems that may affect more youth. In some communities, however, gangs are so widespread and virulent that other problems pale in comparison. Here, a narrow focus on gang prevention and amelioration is called for. In Austin, a wide range of service providers, including most law enforcement officials, argued for a broad-based approach. Accordingly, the assessment team considered a range of needs in its assessment.

Finally, should the assessment team consider all neighborhoods in the city or only those in greatest need? Many gang problems differ from one neighborhood to the next, and even from one block to the next. Thus, focusing on a limited number of gang-ridden neighborhoods may allow for a more careful assessment that contributes to better decisionmaking downstream. Such an approach may also be more realistic if resources are very limited. In some cities, however, gangs are geographically widespread, even when they are not obvious in particular areas. By concentrating on areas with obvious problems, the assessment team may be sending a message that other areas’ problems are less important. This can be particularly troublesome

By setting forth a long-range assessment agenda, the advisory board and assessment team can do much to defuse concerns that important pieces of the puzzle will not be considered.

when well-publicized gang activities take place in black and Hispanic neighborhoods, while well-established skinhead and Nazi gangs in white neighborhoods do not receive the same amount of attention. A focus on gang problems in minority neighborhoods, in effect, denies the existence of a white gang problem.

The best answer to these questions about scope and focus depends on several factors, including the following:

- ❑ **How Much Do You Know About the Problem?** If you know a lot (for example, if many needs assessments have been conducted before), a narrow assessment that refines previous knowledge is called for. When less is known, the needs assessment must be broader to put gang-related needs in context. In Austin, much was known about the breadth of youth needs, but little was known about the relative importance of each. Thus a broad assessment was called for to help develop a consensus around a set of priorities.
- ❑ **What Resources Are Available?** Broad studies require lots of people, expertise, and time; narrow studies do not. An inexperienced assessment team will need more time than an experienced one.
- ❑ **What Is the Political Climate?** In some cities, the severity of the gang problem makes it easy to focus on gang problems; in others, a lack of consensus will require a broader focus. In Austin, for example, influential interest groups demanded a focus on primary prevention of all youth problems in all neighborhoods of the city.

Only rarely will these factors all point in the same direction. For example, there may be a political consensus that the gang problem is severe in a few neighborhoods, but because little is known about other youth problems in these neighborhoods, a narrowly focused study may miss opportunities for effective prevention. Or even though the politics may be right for a broad study of youth problems, the resources may not be available. Thus, getting the right focus requires considerable judgment on the part of the advisory board and assessment team.

It may help to conduct the assessment in stages. For example, a city with limited knowledge and resources but a serious gang violence problem may start by assessing the potential for gang violence in each neighborhood, with the goal of increasing direct law enforcement efforts. Once the police, prosecutor, and probation agencies have a handle on where to focus their immediate efforts, the assessment team can turn its attention to primary prevention opportunities. Alternatively, a city with many neighborhood-based community associations and service providers may choose to examine youth problems in depth, one or two neighborhoods at a time. By setting forth a long-range assessment agenda, the advisory board and assessment team can do much to defuse concerns that important pieces of the puzzle will not be considered.

Getting the Advisory Board To Buy In

If an advisory board is to do any good, it must give advice. Rarely will it do so unless asked, however. The assessment team must seek the board's advice early and often. In particular, the board should be kept apprised of where the assessment team is at all stages of the process, when the principal milestones will be reached, and when the final product will be ready for distribution to the public.

The board should be asked to review all major decisions about the methods to be used. It is the assessment team's job to work out the details, but the advisory board should know about and have an opportunity to comment on the populations to be surveyed, the form of the survey itself, and the types of social indicators to be collected and analyzed. It is probably a good idea to hold a meeting at an early stage of the assessment to discuss data collection plans. Many board members may have been involved in such efforts before. If so, their expertise can be useful.

The advisory board will rarely need a full-blown report on the major findings of each stage of data collection. This would waste a lot of the assessment team's time and might prompt board members to jump to conclusions before all the facts are in. Still, it is probably a good idea to let them know the rough outlines as the study progresses. Periodic memos are probably sufficient. This has the added benefit of keeping board members engaged in the project, even though they do not have a direct role at this stage.

The board returns to the center stage when it is time to develop the final product of the assessment—priorities for program development and funding. Because this is a highly political task, it is best done in open discussion with the entire advisory board. Although the assessment team can and should offer a clear summary of the facts, the board must recognize that final recommendations are its job and not that of the assessment team.

Continually seeking the advisory board's advice may at first appear to be a waste of time. Decisions about methods and management are usually made more efficiently by the assessment team leader or the team itself, not by a large group. Nevertheless, letting the advisory board members in on the nuts and bolts will give them ownership of the project and improve the chances that they will accept the results. This will save time in the long run.

Dealing With Conflict

Many problems can be avoided if the assessment team works closely with the advisory board, seeking assistance and support at each step. Nevertheless, any task that sets priorities and recommends reallocation of resources is bound to create conflict among participants with differing interests. Identifying these conflicts and managing them well are vital to the assessment's success.

Although the assessment team can and should offer a clear summary of the facts, the board must recognize that final recommendations are its job and not that of the assessment team.

One key to managing conflict is to recognize that needs assessments are a way to identify problems, not solutions.

One common problem is differing goals. Organizations and their representatives have different goals and objectives and have developed different sets of expectations among their clients and constituents. For example, juvenile probation departments attempt to control crime by rehabilitating probationers, and police agencies focus on deterrence and incapacitation. These differences go beyond the agencies' functions: Many probation officers believe that juvenile gang members can be rehabilitated but not deterred, while many police officers believe just the opposite. These philosophical differences may make it difficult for the two to agree on priorities.

Another common problem is competition for finite resources. In part, the needs assessment is being conducted to help local governments set funding priorities. To some extent, every dollar that goes to juvenile probation is a dollar that cannot go to the police department. The feuding may be even worse when it involves comparable agencies that deliver similar services—two nonprofit corporations that provide youth counseling and leadership training, for example. Even when funding is not a “zero-sum game,” each member of the assessment team or advisory board is likely to feel a need to protect his or her organization's interests.

Although conflict among stakeholders may be uncomfortable, it can be useful. Well-managed discussion about the effectiveness and limits of youth recreation programs, for example, can contribute to the understanding of advisory board and assessment team members—many of whom have probably given the matter little thought. Good leaders will confine discussions to ideas and not personalities and prevent them from dragging on past the point of being useful.

One key to managing conflict is to recognize that needs assessments are a way to identify problems, not solutions. Suppose the assessment reveals that cocaine use is a serious problem. Police, drug treatment centers, and others will have an obvious role to play in solving the problem. But a variety of other approaches may be just as effective, including early childhood intervention, drug treatment for parents, and school-based programs. A variety of philosophical approaches may make sense; a variety of agencies can and should be involved. Although conflicts over solutions are inevitable, they are premature at this stage. By emphasizing problem identification rather than problem solving throughout the process, leaders of the advisory board and assessment team can avoid much needless conflict.

Another key is to separate facts from values and data from interpretation. Some of the results of a needs assessment are simply factual: For example, suppose 31 percent of youth surveyed chose “lack of jobs and job training” as their most pressing problem, a larger percentage than chose any other problem. This is a fact. The assessment team and its advisory board may interpret this fact to mean that job provision and training should be the highest priorities for program development and funding in the coming year. This is an interpretation, requiring the application of values. In practice,

conflict is both more likely and more helpful if it is focused on values, interpretation, and policy implications. Things will move more quickly and smoothly if these conflicts are left for the final stage of the assessment.

The assessment team and advisory board will always have their own ideas about what the primary problems are. The biggest reason for conducting a full-scale needs assessment is to give all involved a chance to be proved wrong. That is why it is so important to consult everyone with a stake in the issue, not just the people who are already known. In fact, it is most important to listen to the people who have not been in the decisionmaking loop.

Step 2: Identifying Current Activities

After laying the groundwork, the next step in conducting a needs assessment is to identify current services—the supply side of the unmet-needs equation. The survey has two immediate objectives. First, the assessment team needs to know what services are actually being delivered, where, to whom, and if possible with what effect. Sometimes this is enough to identify clear gaps in coverage. For example, a flourishing midnight basketball program for youth age 14 and older may suggest that police should develop early evening programs for younger kids. In tougher cases, of course, supply information must be combined with demand information to tell whether new programs are needed or whether more money should be spent on existing programs. Second, assessors need to know which agencies have a capacity to deliver certain kinds of services. For example, some agencies may have demonstrated the ability to provide recreational opportunities to preteens. Others may be delivering drug abuse counseling and could be persuaded to broaden their services to include alcohol abuse counseling. This kind of information can be invaluable when new services and changes in current services are planned.

The existing services survey can also achieve a variety of secondary objectives. Gathering information on existing services requires the needs assessors to contact, at a minimum, the principal social service providers in the community. These contacts are themselves important sources of information for the next step (identifying unmet needs). Because they typically have easy access to youth, service providers can be instrumental in setting up youth surveys. Contacting service providers also serves a public relations function; by informing them that a needs assessment is in progress and asking for their assistance, the assessors help to get service providers to buy in (and perhaps to give the assessors good advice) early in the process. Finally, the information gleaned from the survey of existing services can provide vital clues to what the community thinks are the most important needs and problems, helping the needs assessors to focus their efforts in the most pressing areas.

The assessment team needs to know what services are actually being delivered, where, to whom, and if possible with what effect.

Defining What Information To Collect

Especially in large jurisdictions, a survey of existing services can be extensive and time consuming. There are many service providers, each of which may provide a variety of services. The biggest service providers are easily identified, but others may be known to only a few because they provide unique services to small populations in unfamiliar neighborhoods. As a result, planning is essential if the survey is to be conducted efficiently. In particular, it is important to define early on exactly what data need to be collected. Exhibit 24 shows the most important questions. They are considered in more detail in the following section.

It is probably wise to exclude self-paid or insured services, focusing instead on services provided free or with a subsidy.

What Services Are Provided? As described above, it is best to look at a wide variety of services. To make the survey manageable, however, it may be practical to put some restrictions on what services are included. For example, it is probably wise to exclude self-paid or insured services, focusing instead on services provided free or with a subsidy. Although this eliminates some important services, such as privately funded medical care and private schools, these services are rarely available to youth at risk of gang involvement. Similarly, it is reasonable to exclude universal and safety net services. There is no sense in including the entire budget for public schools in the needs assessment, for example. It would, however, be appropriate to include special educational services for adjudicated delinquents, teen mothers, and others at risk.

Although the time required to collect good data can be a problem, communities need to consider the benefits of getting thorough information. Knowing that a nonprofit corporation provides drug abuse treatment services is only a starting point; it is better to know that it focuses on uppers and crack cocaine; it is even better to know that it uses a combination of behavior modification and group therapy and is in contact with its clients for an average of 2 hours a day, 2 days a week. The more details are available, the better judgments can be made later about what works and what is missing.

Where Are Services Located? A more precise way to ask the same question is, “What geographic areas are served by available services?” We need to ask this question for two reasons. First, many services are provided on a citywide, countywide, or even regional basis, not on a neighborhood basis. Thus, unless the net is cast widely—unless the assessors look at agencies with offices outside the neighborhood or city of interest—they might miss important services delivered in the area by agencies based outside it. This is especially true for health, mental health, and nutrition services, which are largely federally funded and State administered.

The second reason is that services are rarely available to all the people who need them and knowing the geographic allocation of services can help to identify people who have been overlooked. For example, the middle-class Austin neighborhood of Dove Springs began slipping into poverty in the early 1980s. By 1992, it was one of the poorer sections of the city, with especially high rates of gang activity, burglary, and auto theft. But because

Exhibit 24. What a Current Activities Survey Can Reveal

<p>1. What services are provided?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> What are the objectives of the services? <input type="checkbox"/> How are services delivered?
<p>2. Where are services located?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> What geographic areas are served? <input type="checkbox"/> What neighborhoods are conveniently served?
<p>3. To whom are services provided?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Age <input type="checkbox"/> Sex <input type="checkbox"/> Qualification requirements
<p>4. When are services provided?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Time of day <input type="checkbox"/> Day of week <input type="checkbox"/> Season
<p>5. What does it cost and who pays for it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Total direct and indirect costs <input type="checkbox"/> Sources of funding

few social service providers knew the neighborhood very well, Dove Springs residents had little help in solving their problems. Only after neighborhood residents spoke up and a needs assessment verified that residents had little access to services easily available elsewhere were services made available.

To Whom Are Services Provided? Geography is one part of this question, but there are others. Some agencies prefer to deal with preteens; others prefer older youth. Some provide services only to girls or to boys, not to mixed groups. Agencies with a religious affiliation may restrict services to members of their church. The importance of this information is obvious. For example, it is easy to imagine a wealth of recreational services in a neighborhood—all available only to boys aged 10 to 14.

Some agencies only deliver services to families and youth that meet special qualifications. For example, the housing authority may provide afterschool education programs for youth who live in housing developments. A non-profit corporation may provide drug treatment, but due to long waiting lists only juvenile offenders on probation receive treatment.

Agencies that commit a lot of resources to solving a problem probably have a bigger stake than others in solving it.

When Are Services Provided? Time of day and day of the week are important considerations. Assessors should not overlook seasonal services, such as summer youth employment programs, summer recreation programs, or Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) (available only during the school year).

What Does It Cost and Who Pays for It? Some services are more expensive than others, but funding levels still provide a rough estimate of the depth of the community's commitment to solving a problem. For example, Austin's survey of youth services revealed that local, State, Federal, and private sources spent \$1.9 million on prenatal care, infant health, and family education in 1992; the same sources spent \$15.6 million on responding to child abuse and neglect. If nothing else, this finding suggests a communitywide emphasis on reactive rather than proactive programs.

In addition, agencies that commit a lot of resources to solving a problem probably have a bigger stake than others in solving it. Thus, they are probably the most important agencies to involve in decisions about what to do next. For example, in 1992, the City of Austin contributed nearly half the money spent on prenatal care and family education in the city, and the Federal Government contributed almost all of the rest. But spending on teenage pregnancy prevention was split almost evenly among city, county, school district, State, Federal, and private sources. Clearly, the city is in the best position to develop further prenatal care and family education programs, but a broad-based coalition will be needed to develop further pregnancy prevention programs.

In addition to funding levels, it is helpful to know how many employees are involved in providing a service. For some agencies, this is the key to funding issues. A school district may spend \$1 billion on its services, but only a fraction of this is earmarked for at-risk youth. By counting the number of teachers, counselors, and others involved in the at-risk programs and dividing by the total number of people employed by the district, one can estimate the proportion of that \$1 billion that can be reasonably attributed to at-risk programs. The number of employees involved can also be useful background for a survey of service providers (described later).

It is tempting to ask each service provider for an annual budget, including details on both income received and expenditures made. For many service providers, this will be the best single source of information about what the provider is really doing. Budgeting protocols vary from one agency to the next, however, and for very large agencies (for example, the school district), the budget's size may make it indecipherable. Unless the assessment team has a lot of time or special expertise in financial management or auditing, it is probably best to save budget analysis for later.

Identifying Service Providers

Once it is clear what information on services must be collected, the next step is to develop a list of agencies providing these services. It is best to realize from the beginning that the task can never be completed. Funding levels, eligibility requirements, and program methods change. It is almost inevitable that 3 months into the assessment process some foundation director or grant monitor will look at the final draft of the survey findings and think of yet another nonprofit corporation or county program that must be added. Although frustrating, small changes probably don't matter much. Most youth service programs are small, but most of the services are provided by a few large programs. In Austin, for example, 10 percent of the major youth programs account for 81 percent of all youth spending. Thus, the value of the survey lies in getting a complete list of major programs, not in the details.

In practice, it is usually enough to implement what is sometimes called a "snowball sample." That is, the assessors interview knowledgeable members of the advisory board and review readily available documents to get a first-cut list of service providers. Then they interview the directors of these agencies to collect the necessary information and at the same time ask what other agencies that provide similar services should be added to the list. Thus the sample increases in size, like a snowball rolling down a hill. As long as the initial list is not severely limited, this assures the assessors of including at least the most important programs.

Once data have been collected for the final, presumably comprehensive list of programs, the assessors can be doubly sure of including all the major programs by sending out a summary of their findings (described later). Changes in old programs and a few new programs are sure to turn up during this final review. If data can be collected from the most important of these late additions, this will probably be sufficient.

Note that the snowball sampling method does not assume that all the service providers are aware of one another. In all but the smallest cities, they are not, and in fact many will find the final (or at least the most recent) list of service providers to be an important contribution in itself. This method does safely assume that all the major providers are known to at least a few of the other major providers and funding sources.

Collecting Information

Particularly in big cities with many social programs, it is tempting to collect service information through a mail survey. Mail surveys are fast, cheap, and easy. Unfortunately, they also have notoriously low response rates. Many busy service providers understandably put surveys at the bottom of their in boxes and leave them there, making a response rate of 50 percent hard to achieve. If even a few of the nonrespondents are major providers, this will seriously compromise the survey findings. In addition, consigning

Mail surveys are fast, cheap, and easy. Unfortunately, they also have notoriously low response rates.

If time permits, they should be prepared to turn the interview into a conversation, getting a feel for how the agency makes its decisions and why it provides the services it does.

data collection to the mail prevents the assessors from asking questions about the information they collect and getting “reality checks” that help ensure reliable data. Time consuming though it may be, there is no substitute for the individual interview, either by phone or in person. Phone interviews are probably sufficient for most relatively small service providers; directors of large programs need to be interviewed in person.

To make sure they remember to ask the right questions, assessors should make up a simple interview protocol. For example, the questions shown in Exhibit 24 or similar questions can be easily formatted in the form of a questionnaire. At a minimum, the assessors need to know what, where, and to whom services are provided, how much services cost, and who pays. If time permits, they should be prepared to turn the interview into a conversation, getting a feel for how the agency makes its decisions and why it provides the services it does. An interview schedule is particularly helpful for larger agencies with specialized staff. Often an accountant or controller will be the only source of budget data, program directors will understand their individual programs but not others, and only the executive director will have the big picture. Assessors must be prepared to shuttle back and forth from one office to the next, making several calls back to various people before they get a complete picture of the agency’s activities. As a result, in addition to collecting program data, it is vital that assessors get the names and telephone numbers of all the people providing information. This helps them to check conflicts and fill in the inevitable blanks. It also provides the basis for a network of service providers on which the assessors can rely later to analyze and solve the problems identified through the assessment.

Displaying Results

Another reason for using a protocol like that shown in Exhibit 24 is that it helps the assessors to keep track of the data they have collected. Because papers get lost and programs change, the assessment team should plan early on to convert the paper forms to a computerized filing system. A wide variety of filing programs, sometimes called database management systems, is available. A comprehensive review of these programs is beyond the scope of this chapter, but almost all of them will perform the basic functions needed: storing data, searching and sorting program records, and producing reports in various formats.

A database management system may be a good way to keep track of the data for internal purposes, but it is even more critical to display the results in a form that others can understand. One good way to display survey results is a matrix, such as that shown in Exhibit 25. This matrix groups together all programs aimed at solving an individual problem, such as child abuse or youth unemployment. Each program is then shown on a separate row. Basic data about each program are shown in a separate column. (Although this matrix focuses on funding information, the columns could just as easily refer to types of services delivered, geographic areas and ages of

Exhibit 25. Matrix Showing Survey Results: Funding Sources for Substance Abuse/ Addiction Service Providers

Service Providers	1992 Funding Sources and Dollars Opportunities for Youth Community Resources						
	City	County	Schools	State	Federal	Other	Total
Al-Anon/Alateen						\$0	\$0
Association for Retarded Citizens—Austin				\$3,269	\$15,959		19,228
Austin Independent School District			\$165,076		464,924		630,000
Austin Area Urban League				27,445	133,996		161,441
Austin Child Guidance Center				22,410	79,453		101,863
Austin Family House	\$13,530	\$9,314		21,318	75,580	11,748	131,490
Austin Rehabilitation Center				257,792	914,388		1,172,180
Austin Wilderness Counseling	17,745	33,175			313,295	99,496	463,711
Boys & Girls Club of Austin		161				7,903	8,064
Campfire, Inc./Balcones Council						40,000	40,000
Child and Family Service, Inc.						89,155	89,155
City Police Department	642,005				15,000	45,000	702,005
Counseling and Pastoral Care Services						2,280	2,280
County Juvenile Court		63,800			39,000		102,800
Cristo Vive Christian Counseling Center						100	100
Del Valle Independent School District					20,615		20,615
Eans Independent School District			144,000		9,812		153,812
Greater Austin Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse	11,088	39,456			73,495	15,076	139,115

Exhibit 25. Matrix Showing Survey Results: Funding Sources for Substance Abuse/ Addiction Service Providers (continued)

Service Providers	1992 Funding Sources and Dollars Opportunities for Youth Community Resources						
	City	County	Schools	State	Federal	Other	Total
Lake Travis Independent School District			\$66,165		\$7,192		\$73,357
Lone Star Girl Scouts						\$96,667	96,667
Manor Independent School District			14,017		983		15,000
Middle Earth Unlimited, Inc.		\$33,400			254,139	41,374	328,913
Parker Lane Methodist Church						1,250	1,250
Pflugerville Independent School District			70,578		29,422		100,000
State School for the Deaf					983		983
Youth Advocacy, Inc.	\$31,751	33,997		\$71,161	347,433	5,302	489,644
Total	\$716,119	\$213,303	\$459,836	\$403,395	\$2,795,669	\$455,351	\$5,043,673
Percent of funding from each source	14.20%	4.23%	9.12%	8%	55.43%	9.03%	100%
Percent of source's total funds	4.12%	4.17%	0.70%	1.11%	3.28%	2.78%	2.23%

youth served, sources of client referrals, or other factors.) The matrix format allows the reader to scan across the rows (to find out about each program) or down the columns (to find which programs and problems funding sources are involved in). The flexibility of the matrix is another argument for keeping records in a computerized file; a database management program can produce matrices like this one faster and more accurately than a person can.

The matrix display can lead to a useful first-cut analysis. In Austin, a matrix of child abuse programs by types of services delivered and sources of clients showed that virtually all programs provided a direct response to reported incidents of child abuse and ended with the conviction of the child abuser. However, important information was missing: Abused children who were not reported to the authorities received little attention, and little money was spent on prevention and helping abused children deal with the effects of their abuse. After a more complete analysis confirmed that these were important unmet needs, this finding led to a change in funding priorities and creation of several prevention and aftercare programs.

Reaping the Benefits of Surveying

Experienced problem solvers know that it is much easier to get the big picture on a problem than on the solution. When developing an appropriate response, it is vital to know what is currently being tried, where it is being tried, and with whom; it is just as important to know what is not being tried. Except in the smallest of cities, no one knows about all the services available. Thus, describing the existing service network is an invaluable part of solving the problem.

The existing services survey is valuable for another reason. Because it allows the assessment team to meet with all the service providers, the survey is often the first step in identifying who needs to be involved in analyzing specific problems and developing solutions. In big cities with big problems, little of value is likely to be accomplished until this network is in place.

Because it allows the assessment team to meet with all the service providers, the survey is often the first step in identifying who needs to be involved in analyzing specific problems and developing solutions.

Step 3: Identifying and Setting Priorities Among Needs

Once current services have been documented (or, perhaps, while the services survey is under way), it makes sense to consider the demand side of the unmet-needs equation. Although there are many ways to assess the demand for services, two methods are especially valuable: (1) surveys of people who need services and their advocates and (2) examination of social indicators.

Surveying Clients and Their Advocates

In most cases, a survey of youth, parents, service providers, and others is the centerpiece of the needs assessment—and the most important and difficult part. As with any public opinion poll, a series of steps is required to complete a needs survey (Babbie, 1992; Eck and La Vigne, 1993):

- Decide what to ask.
- Decide whom to survey and how.
- Frame the questions.
- Pretest the survey draft.
- Conduct the survey.
- Analyze and report the results.

Assessors can consider how these general methods apply to needs assessment surveys in particular.

Decide What To Ask. The survey will ask about the social service needs of gang-involved and at-risk youth. As described earlier, however, youth needs can be construed broadly or narrowly, including child abuse and hunger as well as drug abuse and crime. Decisions about what areas to address can be made by the advisory committee only after consulting with service providers

As long as older youth are not the focus of the assessment, a representative sample can probably be obtained by surveying youth in school alternatives or by mail.

and local decisionmakers. One effective method is to interview a wide variety of providers and decisionmakers outside the immediate planning committee, asking them what problems they see as most important. Once a long list has been gathered, it can be culled to keep the most important items.

Decide Whom To Survey. Useful results can be obtained from at least four separate groups:

- The at-risk and/or gang-involved youth themselves.
- Their parents.
- Service providers, including guidance counselors, employment trainers, public health nurses, and others.
- Community leaders, including presidents of neighborhood associations, elected officials, and business leaders.

Although all of these populations can be important, some are harder to survey than others. In addition, the best way to administer the survey differs from one population to the next.

Youth are especially hard to survey because some of them are hard to find. Youth under 16 are easiest to survey in public and private schools. Unfortunately, in most places the youth who cut classes often are most likely to become involved in gangs, so it may be necessary to follow up with mail surveys to their homes. With youth 16 and older, school dropouts become a major problem. Although the assessment team can find some dropouts in alternatives to public school (for example, GED programs and job training programs), most are working or unemployed. Many are no longer living at home, making mail surveys a problem.

Overall, the best solution is probably to focus on school-age youth through an in-school sample. As long as older youth are not the focus of the assessment, a representative sample can probably be obtained by also surveying youth in school alternatives or by mail. If older youth are the focus of the assessment, however, there may be no alternative to conducting a random sample of all households. Most households do not include young adults, so this is an expensive approach.

Parents are easier to identify. Parents' addresses can usually be identified through their children's schools; alternatively, surveys can be sent home with students. Because parents of older youth who are out of school are generally less important to the assessment, they can be eliminated from the sample entirely. If the advisory board and assessment team conclude that they should be included, it may be possible to obtain their addresses from old school records. In neighborhoods with transient populations, however, many will have moved since their children were last in school.

It is much easier to draw a sample of service providers. The assessment team will have made contact with service-providing organizations as part

of the current activities survey; it is relatively simple to go back and talk to their employees. It is usually important to get a mix of line employees and administrators. Because the administrators are often responsible for planning new services, working with other agencies, and writing funding proposals, they may have a broader view of youth problems. Line employees, however, usually deal more closely with the youth themselves and so may have a deeper knowledge.

If the figures are available, it makes most sense to collect a sample proportionate to the number of employees in the organization. (This is one reason for collecting employment information in the current activities survey.) For example, if the assessment team concluded that 1 in every 10 service providers should be included in the survey, it would send surveys to:

- Three employees from a large organization with 30 employees.
- One employee from a smaller organization with 10 employees.
- No employee from a very small organization with 3 employees.

If employment information is not available but good budget figures are, it is usually safe to set the sample proportionate to the size of the budget. Note that this will not apply to government agencies that hire few social workers but give away large amounts of food, housing, and other goods.

Although it is easy to survey community leaders once they are identified, it is often hard to identify them in advance. The problem is that “community leader” is a political term; the same person may be considered a selfless and responsible leader by some and a shameless rabble-rouser by others and remain completely unknown to still others. Fortunately, it is less important to use a scientific definition of a leader than it is to get a representative cross-section of viewpoints. One simple way to ensure that all viewpoints are represented is to conduct a snowball sample such as that described earlier. In this case, a few obvious leaders are identified and surveyed first. At the conclusion of the survey, each of them is asked to identify two other people:

- A community leader who can tell the assessment team more about conditions in his or her community.
- A second community leader with a different point of view from the first.

When the assessment team talks to the two newly identified leaders, it puts the same questions to them, and the process continues. Most people understand the need to include a variety of viewpoints and are willing to supply names of people who disagree with them. Unless the sample is very small, this ensures that all major viewpoints are taken into account.

Decide How To Survey. Most people think that the key to a useful survey is a large sample size. As with most truisms, this is not completely wrong. A sample of 20, 30, or even 100 youth is unlikely to be large enough to distinguish among the most important needs, especially when there are big

To ensure that all viewpoints are represented, conduct a snowball sample.

It is much better to get an 80 percent response rate from a randomly selected population of 200 . . . than to get a 16 percent response rate from a population of 1,000.

differences among age groups, ethnic groups, and neighborhoods. Unfortunately, the obvious way to obtain a large sample—blanket the city with surveys and hope a lot of people fill them out—is likely to do more harm than good.

The reason is response bias. Some people like to fill out surveys. They have the time to fill them out, the background to understand them, and the thoughtfulness to consider them important. Others do not. If the people who respond to a survey are consistently different from those who do not, the results will be different than they would be if everyone could be made to respond. Often, the youth and parents least likely to respond to surveys are the poorest and neediest—those at greatest risk of gang involvement.

The real key to a good survey is getting a representative sample, not merely a large one. In practice, the easiest way to ensure a representative sample is to draw a sample at random from throughout the population and get a high response rate. That is, of the people asked to complete a survey, the percentage who actually complete it should be as high as possible. Thus, it is much better to get an 80 percent response rate from a randomly selected population of 200 (yielding a fairly representative sample of 160) than to get a 16 percent response rate from a population of 1,000 (yielding an unrepresentative sample of the same size).

Sample size has implications for the best way to administer the survey. People rarely turn down interviewers who come to their door—response rates of 80 percent are fairly common, as long as the interviewers are moderately well trained. Telephone interviewers typically get lower response rates—60 to 80 percent, depending on the nature of the survey and how the sample is drawn. Mail surveys usually get the worst response rates, varying from 10 to 70 percent, depending on the survey and the sample. Unfortunately, mail surveys are much cheaper than telephone surveys, which are much cheaper than personal interviews. In survey research, you get what you pay for.

There are other advantages to in-person and telephone interviews. Because they are personal, they build more interest among respondents in the assessment and its results. As a result, interviewing is almost certainly the best method to use in surveys of community leaders and service providers who must accept and support the survey results when they are completed. In addition, interviews give respondents a chance to clarify the surveyors' questions and provide more complex answers, thus providing better data. This is especially helpful when respondents must assess the relative importance of various needs. As described below, this can be a tricky business.

For surveys of youth and parents, the safest course of action is to contract with a local university or market research firm to conduct in-person or telephone interviews. The assessment team should work with the advisory board to get a general idea of the questions that need to be answered and

then work with the contractor on the specific format and wording of the survey. Because universities and market researchers have experience in survey research and access to trained interviewers, they can often complete an effective survey within a month or two. If a college professor or market specialist can be persuaded to join the assessment team as a volunteer, it may be possible to get equally effective results nearly as quickly at less cost.

If the money and expertise are not readily available for personal or phone interviews, good results can still be obtained from mail surveys if they are very carefully constructed and administered. The assessment team should pay particular attention to the following considerations when designing and conducting a survey by mail (Babbie, 1990; Dillman, 1978):

- Length and Complexity of the Questionnaire.** The shorter and simpler the survey questionnaire, the more likely people are to fill it out and fill it out correctly.
- Initial Approach to Respondents.** The more personal the initial contact, the more likely it is that people will complete the survey. Writing a personal letter to each respondent, including a self-addressed stamped envelope, and giving the name and phone number of an assessment team member they can contact if they have questions will all improve response rates considerably. So will rewards for participation—even trinkets like pencils.
- Careful Monitoring and Followup.** Many people fail to respond to a questionnaire when they first receive it but will respond if they receive a followup letter and perhaps another questionnaire. Careful timing of followup mailings may double response rates.

Anything that can be done to make the survey easy to understand, easy to complete, and easy to return will improve response rates and the validity of the study.

Frame the Questions. Before considering how to frame the questions, the assessment team should first consider how not to frame them. Many needs assessments rely on Likert scaling to estimate the extent of needs. Likert-scale questions look like this:

For each health and human service listed below, please check the appropriate box to indicate how serious you think the need is at present:

Employment services (such as counseling, placement, training, rehabilitation, and GED).

- Not so serious
- Somewhat serious
- Serious
- Very serious
- Extremely serious

The shorter and simpler the survey questionnaire, the more likely people are to fill it out and fill it out correctly.

Since the basic problem is that decisionmakers must choose among competing needs, it is only fair to ask respondents to do the same.

Respondents show how strongly they feel about the question by selecting the adjective or phrase that most closely resembles their opinion. When analyzing Likert-scale responses, researchers typically code each one with a number (not so serious = 1, somewhat serious = 2, and so on). Then the average response or the percentage of people who chose the highest response is reported as an overall estimate of the importance of the problem or need. Another familiar way to ask similar questions uses a thermometer-like scale: “On a scale of 1 to 10, how serious is the demand for employment services?”

Although they are useful in many areas of opinion research, Likert scales are nearly useless for needs assessments because many problems are extremely serious (or at least will be regarded as such by the at-risk youth, parents, service providers, and community leaders surveyed). The Likert scale does not require respondents to choose among these needs, and so the assessor is typically left with a dozen or so “extremely serious” needs and no logical way to choose among them. Although Likert scales are conceivably useful in identifying which problems are relatively unimportant, needs assessors rarely need help with such a distinction.

Since the basic problem is that decisionmakers must choose among competing needs, it is only fair to ask respondents to do the same. There are several ways to do this.

The simplest way is to ask respondents to rank order a list of problems or needs from highest priority to lowest. The average ranking given a problem or need is an estimate of its overall importance. Ranking forces respondents to make a choice among competing needs. Ranking is easy in principle, but may be difficult in practice. Some respondents have difficulty judging among competing problems or needs. They may fail to answer the questions or may give all problems a rank of 1. Especially if the list of problems is long, some respondents get confused. Even when respondents are willing and able to make judgments, however, ranking may be inefficient because it does not measure an individual’s strength of belief. For example, one respondent may believe that lack of jobs is the biggest problem by far, dwarfing all others in significance. Another respondent may agree that lack of jobs is important but also believe that drug abuse, child abuse and neglect, and inadequate parenting skills are nearly as problematic. Nevertheless, the two respondents may rank problems in exactly the same order.

Because rank ordering is usually simple for both assessors and respondents, it is probably the best method to use. Nevertheless, if a pretest (described on page 94) shows that rank ordering will pose any of problems described above, the assessment team should consider one of several alternatives.

The first and most promising alternative, magnitude estimation, solves the problem of inefficiency. One of the needs, preferably one the assessment team thinks is of moderate importance, is given a value of 100. Then respondents rate each of the other needs in comparison to the standard. For example, the question might look something like this:

We want your help in identifying which health and human service problems affecting youth are most important in our community. Here are some problems that some people consider to be important. [Provide list here.]

Assume the problem of inadequate parenting is worth 100 “importance points.” Compare the other problems on this list to inadequate parenting and give it the number of importance points you think it deserves. For example, if you think that a problem is only half as important as inadequate parenting, give it 50 points. If you think a problem is twice as important as inadequate parenting, give it 200 points. If you don’t think one of the items on this list is a problem at all, give it zero points. There are no right and wrong answers; your opinion is what counts.

Thus if the average respondent rates employment training at 500, we know not only that it is more important than inadequate parenting but also that it is about 5 times as important. If employment training is rated at 120, it is only slightly more important. Results like these are obviously helpful in setting priorities.

There are other ways to examine the relative importance of needs. Instead of asking people to make mathematical calculations in their heads, all the needs can be written down on small, laminated cards. Then the citizens surveyed are asked to rank order the cards and place them on a scale that runs from 0 to 100. Although this only works for personal interviews, it probably produces more accurate results. Another alternative is to give people a series of choices about needs, two at a time, and ask them which of the two is more important. This method, called “comparative judgments,” is easy to use in a mail or telephone survey but difficult to set up and interpret. As a result, its use is probably best left to an expert.

Questions about the importance of various needs should form the bulk of the survey, but other questions may be needed as well. For example, the assessment team may suspect that sufficient drug treatment services are already available, but many people who need them do not know about them. In this case, it makes sense to ask youth and their parents whether they believe these services are available to them. If the team suspects that current gang prevention programs may be ineffective, it may ask service providers and community leaders for their opinions on those programs.

The assessment team should ask all respondents a few questions about their background. Comparing survey respondents to the entire population helps to ensure that the survey is in fact representative. In addition, the team can compare the needs of young men and women, different racial and ethnic groups, youth of different ages, and youth with different levels of involvement in gangs, drugs, and crime. The neighborhood in which the respondent

Comparing survey respondents to the entire population helps to ensure that the survey is in fact representative.

The best way to ensure that the questionnaire is effective is to test it on a small sample.

lives is of particular interest; in all but the smallest cities, respondents' ZIP codes will provide this information.

Regardless of how the assessment team structures the questionnaire, a few basic principles apply. The questionnaire must be short and to the point. It should take no more than 10 minutes for the average respondent to complete. Respondents must be told why they are being asked to complete the questionnaire and what the questions are for. The questions must be short, simple, and free of biases. In practice, the best way to ensure that the questionnaire is effective is to test it on a small sample—the next step in conducting the survey.

Pretest the Survey Draft. A pretest is simply a dress rehearsal. The sample has been drawn, the questionnaire constructed, and administration methods worked out. Now the assessment team should try the survey out on perhaps 25 respondents to be sure everything works as expected. If response rates are high and the pretest respondents appear to understand the questions, the assessment team can administer the questionnaire to the rest of the sample and simply add the pretest results to the rest. However, something will probably go wrong: Several pretest respondents will fail to answer one or two questions because they are confusing, biased questions will produce inconsistent results, or the questionnaires won't fit into the envelopes provided or require more postage than expected. A pretest allows the assessment team to solve these problems before sending the survey to the whole sample.

Conduct the Survey. Once the population has been identified, the sample drawn, and the questionnaire created and revised, it is time to conduct the survey. This is usually a straightforward administrative task and requires little consideration here. Nevertheless, the assessment team should recognize that while it is easy to administer a bad survey, good surveys require constant attention to detail. In particular, maintaining a high response rate requires watching return rates carefully and issuing followup letters or phone calls when needed. It is easy to be lulled into inactivity because nothing is going obviously wrong; by the time a low response rate becomes noticeable, it may be too late to do anything about it.

Responses should be coded and keyed into a computer as they are received. In addition to preventing a dull task from piling up, this allows the assessment team to identify and fix any problems that may crop up in the wording of questions or administration of the survey. Again, a local university can help by lending a copy of a suitable database management program or spreadsheet or by entering and analyzing the data.

At some point, it will be necessary to call a halt to the survey and begin analyzing the results. If the assessment team chooses to do three mailings (the initial survey and two followups), they will receive virtually all the surveys within 6 weeks of the initial mailing. A few will doubtless trickle in over the next month or two, but it is rare that there are enough of these

late respondents to make a difference. Either throw the late questionnaires away or include them in the analysis at the very end so that you can present the most complete figures.

Analyze and Report the Results. Sociologists, political scientists, and other academicians have done the survey research field a disservice by writing up their results in long, scientific-sounding articles. The principal results of a needs assessment survey can usually be presented in a few pages of text (perhaps six or eight) that summarizes the most important results and relationships and backs them up with a few simple tables. The assessment team should take its cue for report presentation from public opinion articles in the local newspaper or perhaps from those published in *The Gallup Report* (a monthly magazine available in college libraries and many public libraries).

The most important results are the simplest. As described above, there are two separate but related questions. One is the scope of a problem: How many people believe the problem is important enough to merit some attention? This involves counting the number of people who believe that a given need is “very important,” or (better) the number who gave it a high ranking (for example, in the top third of all problems). The second question is to measure the depth of a problem: How many people believe the problem is extremely important? This involves counting the number of people who give the problem the highest rank.

Note that neither of these two questions require information on average rankings or ratings. This is because averages are often misleading. A problem such as suicide may get a low average score for either of two reasons. First, it may be that everyone rates it as a minor problem, suggesting that it should be a low priority for further analysis and funding. Alternatively, a few may rate it as a very serious problem while most rate it as no problem at all. In this case, the proper response is probably to examine suicide rates and patterns carefully to determine the people for whom (and the places where) the limited funding will do the most good.

After these basic results have been obtained, they should be broken down by population group. If surveys have been received from youth, parents, service providers, and community leaders, it is important to know whether these groups differ in their assessments of youth needs. Subgroups may also be important. Among youth, for example, there may be differences among African Americans, Hispanics, Pacific Asians, and whites; those who are now gang members and those who are not; and those who are in school and those who have dropped out. If the sample is large enough, geographic comparisons may help identify where new programs are needed or existing programs should be expanded.

When different groups are being compared, it is especially important to recognize the effects of random chance on survey results. Simply put, unless surveyors talk to everyone in the population, there will be some inaccuracies in their estimates. For example, if 100 of 200 randomly selected youth

The principal results of a needs assessment survey can usually be presented in a few pages of text (perhaps six or eight) that summarizes the most important results and relationships and backs them up with a few simple tables.

Some apparent differences among groups may not be real—that is, they may be caused only by sampling inaccuracy.

surveyed say that jobs and job training programs are their most important needs, it can be assumed that about 50 percent of the entire population feels the same way. But the true figure may be slightly above or below 50 percent—48 percent, or even 55 percent. A range called a “confidence interval” can be put around all of the results; this means there is confidence that the population’s figures lie somewhere within that range. Confidence intervals are generated by mathematical formulas and depend on the sample size and the level of confidence desired. In the above example, the formulas indicate that a person can be 90 percent confident that the percentage of all youth who believe jobs and training are their greatest needs is between 45 and 55 percent, 95 percent confident that the true percentage is between 43 and 57, and 99 percent confident that the true percentage is between 41 and 59.

The practical implication of this is that some apparent differences among groups may not be real—that is, they may be caused only by sampling inaccuracy. Similarly, groups that appear the same may in fact be different. This is the meaning of the phrase “statistical significance,” which shows how likely it is that an apparent difference is due to sampling error. If it could easily be due to sampling error (for example, 48 percent of Hispanic youth and 51 percent of African-American youth cite jobs and training as their greatest needs), this “statistically insignificant” difference is typically ignored and the groups are considered to be about the same.

Testing for statistical significance is tricky. Fortunately, there is no shortage of experts. A market researcher, college teacher, or advanced graduate student should be able to run and interpret the proper tests. The Eck and La Vigne (1993) monograph referred to previously covers much of this material in an understandable way. The important thing is to recognize that survey research—unless the sample size is simply enormous—is a blunt instrument that usually cannot identify small differences. If small differences are important enough to affect policy, a finer instrument may be needed. In some cities, “social indicators” have proved to be exactly that.

Tracking and Comparing Social Indicators

A second approach to identifying the highest priorities requires collection of social indicators—basic statistics that show the extent of the bad outcomes described earlier. For example, the police department can supply the number of aggravated assaults in which the victim was under 20 years of age, which in many places is a good measure of gang violence. The school district can measure the number of fights in schools and the dropout rate for each school and grade. The State employment office can supply the youth unemployment rate. These statistics can then be used to track the size of the problem over time and to compare the size of one city’s or neighborhood’s problem to those in other cities and neighborhoods. These comparisons can help to identify serious or emerging problems.

Collecting Social Indicators. Most social indicators are produced by government agencies. Because responsibility for youth problems is usually

spread across many agencies, social indicators must be gleaned from a wide variety of sources. Exhibit 26 shows the social indicators used by the Austin Project, with the sources for each.

As emphasized previously, it is important to know how the size of a problem differs among neighborhoods and, for some problems, among different groups of people. The process used to determine this is called “cross-sectional analysis.” It is also important to know whether each problem is getting worse, better, or staying about the same—a process called “time-series analysis.” Thus social indicators need to be broken down both cross-sectionally and over time. Consistent collection and tracking of breakdowns is probably the hardest part of this approach.

The simplest cross-sectional analysis is geographic. Most government agencies collect indicators for areas smaller than a city, but different agencies use different methods to define neighborhoods. For example, in Austin, the basic geographic unit used to report crime data is the reporting area, which is typically 3 to 4 blocks square. But nationally, crime data are regularly reported for census tracts, which are larger units defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. In most cities, census tracts contain between 5,000 and 8,000 people and are drawn with rough neighborhood boundaries in mind. Like many police departments, the Austin Police Department can also produce crime statistics for much smaller geographic areas, including individual blocks, blockfaces, and even individual addresses. So a wide variety of geographic units are available for use in needs assessments.

In practice, the size of the unit considered depends on the nature of the assessment. For a citywide assessment, a relatively broad brush is needed. Data reported at the census-tract level (usually 5,000 to 10,000 residents) are probably sufficient. For assessments of individual neighborhoods, census tracts are too large; smaller units such as reporting areas are probably better. It is only rarely necessary to break social indicators down into smaller units than this, however. Smaller units may compromise the privacy of the people who live in those units and certainly increase the complexity of data collection.

Census tracts are standard units for collecting and reporting social indicators, but not all government agencies use them. Some rely instead on ZIP codes, which may contain as many as a dozen census tracts; others (police departments, in particular) rely on geographic areas they have constructed themselves. For these agencies, data can usually be broken down by census tract as well, but at considerable expense. A map of the city or neighborhood to be assessed, showing the boundaries used by each agency in reporting its social indicators, is indispensable for keeping track of these myriad boundaries.

Other cross-sections can be useful for pinpointing groups of youth who are most affected by problems. Many agencies collect problem data by the age or race of the people affected. Examples of data include school dropout (often available by race and grade level), poverty (available by race and broad

It is important to know whether each problem is getting worse, better, or staying about the same—a process called “time-series analysis.”

Exhibit 26. Social Indicators Available in Austin, Travis County, and State of Texas

Category	Social Indicator	Source
Crime	Injuries due to gang initiations	County Health Department
	Reported driveby shootings and deaths due to drivebys	City Police Department
	Juvenile arrests	County Juvenile Court
	Documented gang members	City Police Department, Gang Intelligence Unit
Substance Abuse	Juvenile arrests for drug possession and sales	City Police Department
	Average age of first use of alcohol/drugs	City Independent School District
	Waiting lists for substance abuse treatment programs	Various community programs
Education and Employment	School dropout rate	City Independent School District
	Percentage of adults with less than eighth-grade education	U.S. Bureau of the Census
	Percentage of high school students who are working	City Independent School District
	Youth unemployment rate	State Employment Agency
Poverty	Number of children in poverty	County Department of Human Services
	Percentage of homeless people belonging to families with children	County Department of Human Services
	Infant mortality rate	State Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics
Dysfunctional or Stressed Family	Number of child abuse and neglect calls	County Child Protective Services
	Waiting lists for guidance clinics and family counseling	Various community programs
	Number of working mothers with young children	State Employment Agency
	Number of single-parent families	U.S. Bureau of the Census

Exhibit 26. Social Indicators Available in Austin, Travis County, and State of Texas (continued)

Category	Social Indicator	Source
Health and Mental Health Problems	Number of children born with low birth weight	County Department of Health
	Number of children born HIV positive	State Department of Health, AIDS Surveillance Unit
	Number of children with preventable infectious diseases	County Department of Health
	Mortality rate by age group	State Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics
Teen Pregnancy	Percentage of teenage women who are sexually active	City Independent School District
	Percentage of teenage women who give birth	State Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics
	Percentage of pregnant teens who receive adequate prenatal care	County Department of Health

age categories), and infant mortality (available by race and age of the mother). For some problems, other cross-sections may be available, including education level, employment status and occupation, and income. Unfortunately, many agencies use different definitions or categories. Thus, it is imperative to get the exact definition of each category before drawing conclusions or making comparisons.

Some agencies report statistics each month; others report each quarter or year. A few use their own units of time; for example, some emergency service agencies break each year down into 13 periods of 4 weeks each to ensure that each period includes the same number of weekends. Unlike with geographic units, however, it rarely matters much whether different agencies use different time periods. The main concern is identifying which problems are increasing in scope and intensity, and any breakdown of 1 year or less is usually sufficient to check this. It is best to collect monthly data for the previous 5 years. This yields 60 data points (5 x 12 = 60), more than enough to separate long-run trends from random and seasonal fluctuations.

When data are available only on an annual basis, it is even more critical that several years be available. If only 2 years are available, for example, it is virtually impossible to tell whether the differences are due to a long-range trend, an individual fluctuation, or a change in reporting procedures.

One important set of indicators—that collected by the U.S. Bureau of the Census—is not available on a useful time-series basis. Although it is only collected every 10 years, the census includes a wide variety of social indicators for every block in the city. In addition to the number of people, the census provides breakdowns by age, race, and sex, as well as information on the number, type, value, and condition of all housing units. A much wider variety of indicators is available at the census-tract level, including data on education, income, employment, and occupation of residents. Census data are not generally useful for showing trends over time; too much can happen over a 10-year period. But they do provide a quick and effective way of identifying neighborhoods with many at-risk youth, and of “scoping out” neighborhoods that appear vulnerable on the basis of other indicators.

Exhibit 27 shows how some key social indicators are broken down in Austin and Travis County, Texas; different breakdowns may be readily available in other areas.

Analyzing Social Indicators. Just as social indicators are broken down by geographic area and by time, they should be analyzed by both area and time. Full details of statistical analysis are beyond the scope of this chapter; a few basic ideas will suffice.

The most direct way to analyze geographical breakdowns is by using maps. Exhibit 28 demonstrates that even a simple map can be useful in program planning decisions. Each square represents one birth to a mother aged 13 to 17 during 1989 and 1990. Note that births appear to be concentrated in three areas: a dense concentration east of Interstate Highway 35 and two somewhat looser concentrations west of I-35 to the north and the south of the dense concentration. The east side concentration came as no surprise to the

Exhibit 27. Breakdown of Key Social Indicators Available in Austin and Travis County, Texas

Indicator	Geography By . . .	Time By . . .	Demography By . . .
Driveby shootings	Address Report area Census tract	Month Year	Sex, age, race of victims and offenders
Average age of first use of alcohol/drugs	School	Year	Sex, age, grade level, race
Children in poverty	Census tract	Year	Race, number of children in family
Mortality rate	ZIP code	Year	Sex, age, race, cause of death
Teen mothers	ZIP code	Year	Age, race, number of previous children

Exhibit 28. Map Showing Geographical Breakdown: Births to Teen Mothers in Travis County, Texas, 1989 and 1990

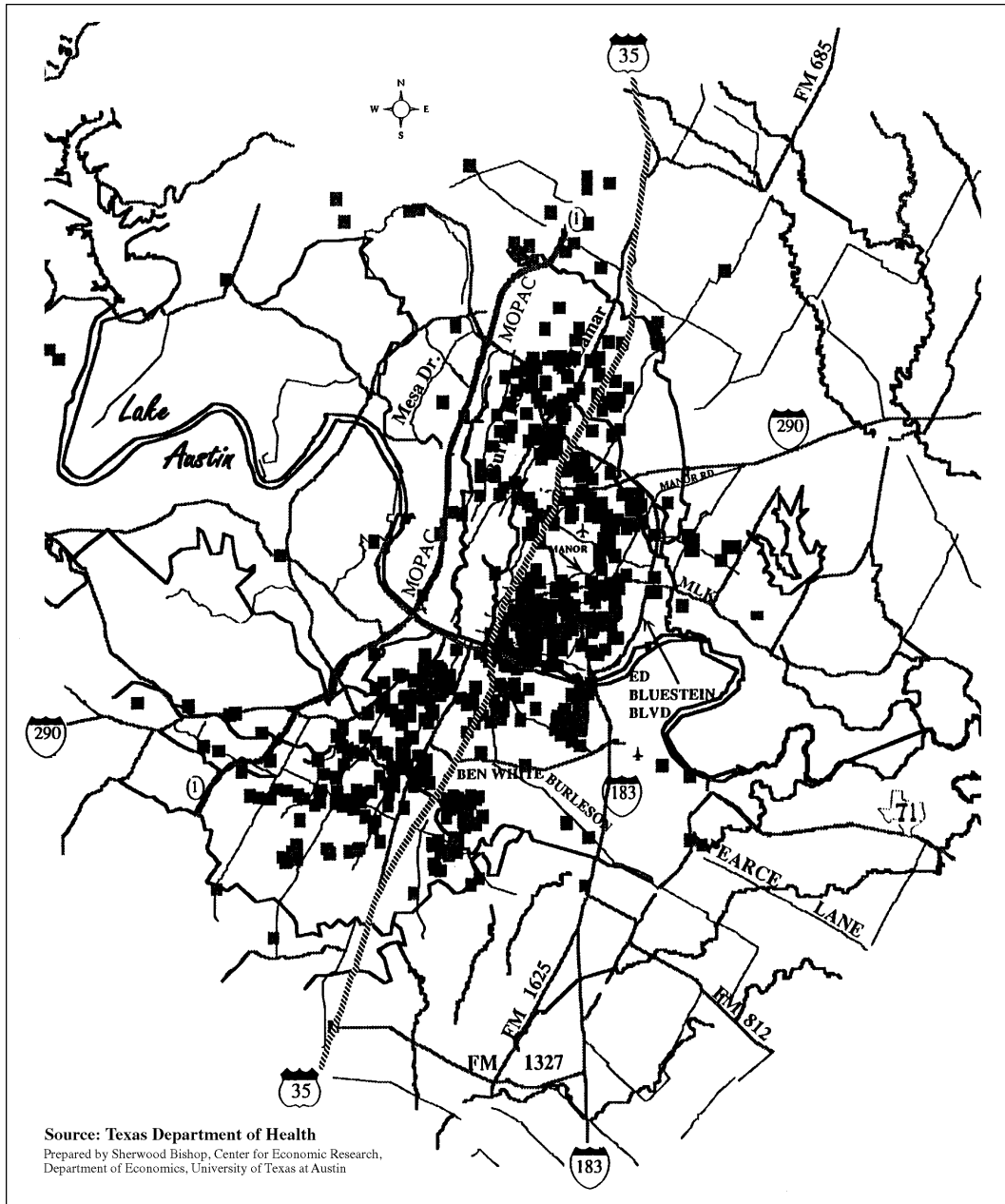
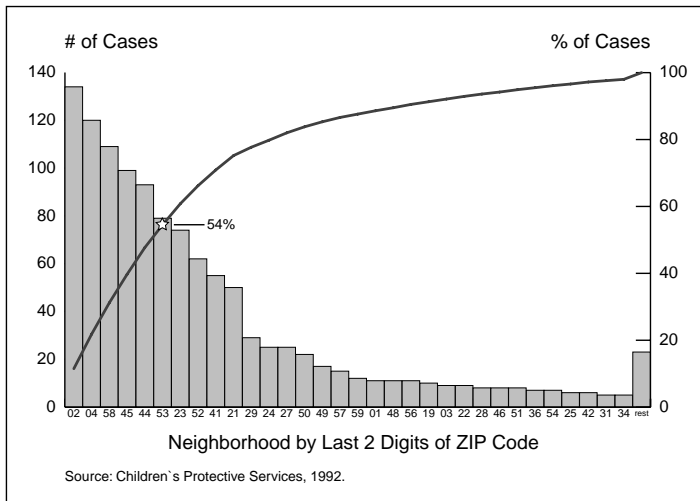


Exhibit 29. Pareto Chart Showing Geographical Data: Neighborhoods at Highest Risk, Child Abuse and Neglect Cases by ZIP Code in Austin, Texas, 1991



assessment team, but many were surprised by the size of the problem in North and South Austin. Teenage pregnancy was clearly more widespread than expected, suggesting that—for this problem, at least—a broad-based approach might be more effective than one focused on a few neighborhoods.

Pareto charts are another useful way to look at geographic data. A Pareto chart starts with a bar chart, or histogram, where each bar represents a different area. The bars are then arrayed from highest to lowest, as shown in Exhibit 29. The line (indexed on the right-hand vertical axis) shows the percentage of all incidents (here, confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect) accounted for by that area or areas with more incidents. As shown, of Austin's 59 ZIP codes, the 6 with the most abuse and neglect cases (10 percent of all ZIP codes) accounted for 634 cases (54 percent of all cases). This shows that child abuse and neglect, unlike teen pregnancy, is concentrated in a few neighborhoods. (This concentration is true for most other crimes, including robbery, rape, and homicide.)

A neighborhood-based strategy might be more appropriate for dealing with problems like these.

These methods of analysis compare neighborhoods or other cross-sectional units with one another. Another useful analytical approach is to compare the city (or areas within the city) to other cities or to the State and Nation as a whole. If one finds, as Austin did, that the violent crime rate is considerably lower than that of comparable cities and the statewide average, perhaps violent crime should be a relatively low priority because it may be very difficult to drive a low-level problem down even further. On the other hand, just because a problem is worse elsewhere doesn't mean it isn't worthy of attention.

Time-series graphs tell us whether a problem is emerging, diminishing, or stable over time. As with geographical analysis, the results are often surprising. For example, when the Austin needs assessment began in 1991, many believed that teenage pregnancy had become an out-of-control epidemic. Statistics verified that the birth rate among Travis County teens was higher than in the State as a whole. But when these statistics were examined over time, a somewhat different story emerged. Exhibit 30 shows the number of live births per 1,000 women aged 13 to 17 for each year between 1980 and 1990. Although the size of the problem increased slowly over the decade, the problem does not appear to be out of control. If it is an emergency now, it was an emergency that simply was not recognized earlier in the decade.

Exhibit 30 suggests another reason for looking at trends over time. If a problem is stable over time—even if it is stable at too high a rate for comfort—the conditions that create the problem are probably not changing. Whatever conditions caused Travis County 16-year-olds to become pregnant were probably about the same in 1990 as they were in 1980. Rather than look for the cause of the increase in some recent change, the program development team should focus attention on conditions that, like the problem, have slowly grown worse over time.

Exhibit 31 breaks down live birth rates over time into two age groups—13- to 15-year-olds and 16- to 17-year-olds. Note that pregnancy among Travis County 13- to 15-year-olds peaked in 1988. But it has continued to increase among 16- and 17-year-olds, especially in the last 2 years. Of course, it may be that the best way to prevent pregnancy among 16- and 17-year-olds is to work with 13- to 15-year-olds or even younger children. But the emerging problem appears to be among youth in their middle teens, and this should affect the focus of whatever solution is implemented.

Most of the indicators described here can be thought of as measurements of the quality of life. As it happens, many of the most effective methods for analyzing the quality of life are already used extensively to measure the quality of manufactured goods. These methods are the focus of the science of statistical quality control and the business practice of total quality management.

Step 4: Developing a Consensus

Developing a consensus around a set of priorities can be a slow process. Especially in large cities with many funding agencies, service providers, neighborhoods, and political constituencies, it may take years before the major actors agree on even the major points. Nevertheless, this process is vital to the long-term success of gang prevention and reduction efforts. In most

Exhibit 30. Time-Series Graph Showing Stability Over Time: Births to Teen Mothers in Travis County, Texas, 1980–1990

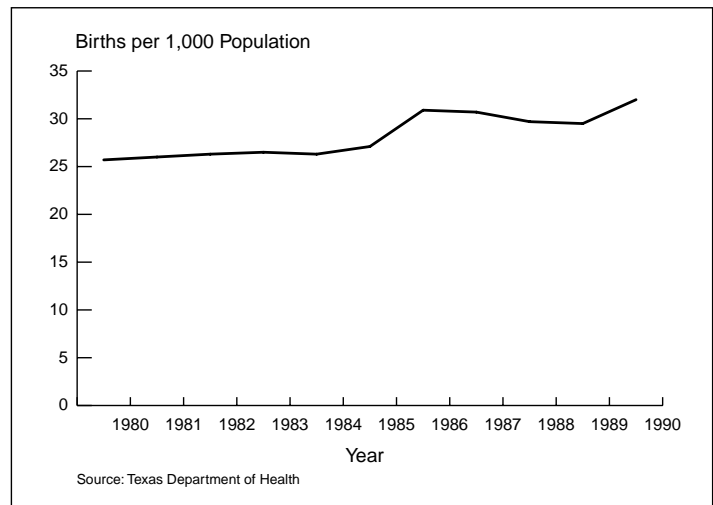
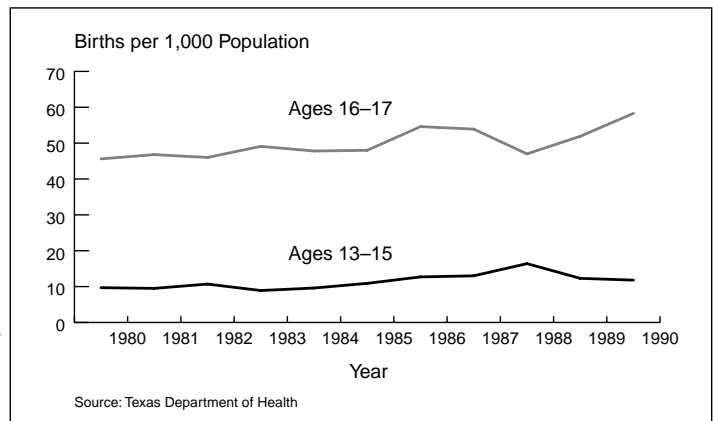


Exhibit 31. Time Chart: Teen Births Among Two Age Groups in Travis County, Texas, 1980–1990



places, it takes years for gang-related youth problems to develop; there is no reason to expect spectacular results from a quick fix. The solution will probably take continuous and concentrated effort over a long period, and a stable vision backed by widespread agreement is critical to success.

To develop a consensus among community stakeholders, it is first necessary to develop a consensus among assessment team and advisory board members. Only then does it make sense to take the issues to the public at large.

An all-day meeting or weekend retreat is the best setting for the task of developing priorities.

Presenting Results to the Advisory Board

The advisory board is the key player in getting the public to buy in. Its members are (or at least represent) the key players in funding and service provision agencies. They have participated throughout the process. They understand why an assessment is needed and more or less how it was conducted. If its members can agree on priorities for program development and funding, the advisory board can contribute much to broaden consensus throughout the community.

It is neither necessary nor especially helpful that the assessment team achieve a consensus of its own at this stage. The team must agree on the facts and on their limitations and the conflicts among them. Priority development, however, requires application of values to these facts. The assessment team can help, but this is primarily the advisory board's job. To avoid curtailing the discussion, an all-day meeting or weekend retreat is the best setting for the task of developing priorities.

Before the meeting, the advisory board needs a written report that describes the results of the assessment. Although the assessment team should open the meeting with a presentation of its report, a comprehensive oral report would take up the whole meeting. A written report is less ambiguous, more efficient, and lets the board focus its attention on the task at hand.

The executive summary is the most important part of the report. If the board has the right people in it, some of them simply will not have time to read the entire document. A well-written summary gives everyone a chance to participate in the discussion. As a rule, the executive summary should be short enough to be read carefully in 15 to 20 minutes. Even if the members of the assessment team feel they do not have the time to edit and produce a polished report, they should spend the time needed to produce a clear, error-free summary. This allows board members to focus on ideas and findings rather than language and typography.

The structure of the report itself depends in part on the assessment team's methods and findings, but a few guidelines apply.

- The purpose of the report is to help the board develop priorities. Thus, it makes sense to organize the report around the things to be prioritized—problems. Separate sections on violence, drug dealing and abuse, unemployment, and other problems will help focus the board's attention.

- ❑ Few board members will care about methodological details. The report should describe the basic methods used, but the details should be relegated to an appendix. Few will even glance at it.
- ❑ By the same token, it is rarely helpful to organize the results by the method used (for example, a section on youth surveys, another on statistical indicators, and so on). This focuses attention on what the assessment team did, not on what it found. Findings, of course, are what the report is all about.

The best organization meets the advisory board's needs. For example, the Austin Project's needs assessment report was organized by children's ages. Separate chapters were written on the problems of young children (birth to 8 years), adolescents (9 through 16 years), and young adults (17 years and older). This was done in response to the advisory board's agreement, expressed at an earlier meeting, that young children and their problems deserved the highest priority. Thus, an age breakdown was the best way to facilitate discussion.

Even the most thorough and comprehensive needs assessment will remain incomplete. There will always be conflicts in the data. For example, youth may say that jobs are the biggest problem while their parents and teachers are more worried about gang membership and violence. Other vital data may be simply unavailable. For example, the police department may not be able to estimate the number of gang-related assaults because the victims are unwilling to discuss their gang activities. Although the opinions and observations of service providers are not as accurate a basis for decisionmaking as hard facts and may even be self-serving, they may be the best data available. The assessment team should be upfront in describing the assessment's flaws.

How the meeting should be run is well beyond the scope of this chapter and probably differs greatly from one board to the next. Some groups will need clear, directive leadership; others will be most effective if given a longer leash. The important thing is that discussion does not wander but is focused to produce a priority scheme that everyone can live with.

The assessment team should not think that its work is over when the report is written. It is important to satisfy the board that all the important bases have been covered, and this may mean that parts of the assessment must be rewritten or even that further data must be collected. The willingness of the assessment team to satisfy the board's concerns and curiosity can be an important factor in developing a consensus around the findings, though doing so can be frustrating. It is better to hold several meetings to satisfy the board completely than to launch a major effort with stiff opposition.

Going Public

The final steps in getting agreement are likely to be different in every community. Advisory board members, particularly those with political connections and ties to the news media, may have their own ideas about how to

The willingness of the assessment team to satisfy the board's concerns and curiosity can be an important factor in developing a consensus around the findings, though doing so can be frustrating.

In Austin, the advisory board persuaded the local PBS television station to hold a series of town meetings to publicize the results and get the public's reaction.

take their case to the public. When developing a plan for disseminating the results of the needs assessment, however, it may be helpful to consider the following possibilities.

Meet the Press. If the advisory board includes members of the press, consult them about the best way to package and release the results. Press conferences, presentations to city councils and school boards, or community hearings can all be good ways to make a needs assessment news. Phone-in radio shows may give the public an opportunity to respond to the findings and make suggestions. In Austin, the advisory board persuaded the local PBS television station to hold a series of town meetings to publicize the results and get the public's reaction.

Make Presentations to Political Leaders. Even if the advisory board includes prominent politicians, it is important to publicize and discuss the results with all appropriate political bodies. Formal presentations to area city and county councils and school boards give political figures a chance to make suggestions and show their support. Discussions with political leaders may also alert the advisory board and assessment team to any political problems that the priority scheme may encounter. If possible, try to persuade local legislatures to adopt the findings and priorities as a matter of policy. Although this rarely locks the local government into following the priorities in funding decisions, it may send a persuasive message to city officials.

Hold Community Forums. In many cities, grassroots organizations such as neighborhood associations, political clubs, service organizations, and churches wield substantial political power. They can be of obvious assistance in persuading political figures to use assessment results in social service decisionmaking. They can also be invaluable in opening up discussion about how these problems can be solved.

Developing Solutions

The solution development process will undoubtedly begin even before the needs assessment process is complete. The problem-solving phase may require substantial personnel changes in the advisory board and the assessment team, or an entirely new group. Even if the same people are involved, however, it is important to separate the two processes. Most jurisdictions have found that it is easier to get agreement on the problems than the solutions. Without a consensus about what problems need solving, it is virtually impossible to develop and gain consensus on a plan for solving them. Fortunately, many communities have developed and implemented successful solutions to the gang- and youth-related problems they face.

Conclusion

“We’re starting to get consensus now,” claimed Anita Benavides, associate director of the Austin Project. “We’ve just completed our third community meeting, and a lot of the same ideas strike a chord, even in different sections of the city.” After laying the groundwork—setting up the advisory board and assessment team—the Austin Project identified current activities, tracked social indicators, and surveyed service providers from throughout the city. A mass survey of youth and families had just begun, but the outlines of a consensus were already coming into focus.

The current activities survey showed that a wide variety of services and programs were available, but it also showed that neither clients nor service providers were aware of most of them. Social indicators confirmed chronic unemployment on Austin’s East Side but also provided good news: Most job growth was coming from small, home-grown businesses that were prepared to hire local youth. Service providers emphasized that youthful offenders had trouble finding jobs when they returned to the community after incarceration. Many offenders who were willing to work but unable to find a job returned to old habits out of desperation.

In response, the city, county, and school district began to develop new programs and retool old ones. The county probation agency planned to improve and broaden its transition program for youth offenders. The city planned to launch a community development bank to offer startup assistance and capital for small businesses willing to hire local youth. Both governments were working with the State to develop a multiservice center, offering one-stop shopping for clients of all health and human services agencies.

This may be far afield from traditional gang prevention, but Benavides thinks it is the right way to solve the problem. “Gangs are a result and a side effect, not a cause of our problems,” she says. “In Austin, at least, most people are starting to agree that we need to stop concentrating on the results and start dealing with the causes.”

“Gangs are a result and a side effect, not a cause of our problems.”

Addressing Gang Problems Through Strategic Planning

In urban, suburban, and rural areas nationwide, youth gangs are being associated with increasingly violent, often random crimes, including homicides and assaults, as well as drug trafficking and other harmful activities. Although the presence of gangs has been reported in cities from coast to coast throughout the Nation's history, current accounts by practitioners, the media, and some researchers suggest that gangs are now posing more serious crime problems for communities than ever before (Spergel, 1990; Taylor, 1990; Conly, 1993).

This chapter is designed to assist communities with emerging or existing gang problems to plan, develop, and implement comprehensive, harm-specific responses that include a broad range of community-based components. Much has already been written about specific gang-prevention and intervention approaches. This chapter complements existing training and operations manuals by addressing the strategic planning process that allows these operational tasks to take place. The process is a problem-solving approach that includes establishing community coalitions based on common interests and goals and developing and implementing a step-by-step strategic plan that builds effective teamwork through cooperation, coordination, and, finally, collaboration.

This chapter provides a conceptual linkage among variations in gang formation and membership and outlines steps to building, implementing, and sustaining practical, productive coalitions for gang prevention and control. Described in detail is the strategic planning process that facilitates a coalition's setting clear, realistic goals and objectives and its reaching those goals and objectives within a specific timeframe. The final section of this chapter discusses specific strategies and processes that facilitate implementation of the strategic plan, including selecting appropriate implementation personnel, communication between the planning team and participating organizations, evaluation of the strategic plan, developing internal and external communication strategies, team building, generating ideas, and selecting options. Worksheets included in this chapter can assist in developing and implementing the strategic plan.

Using the Definition of Gang To Frame Community Responses

The diversity in perceptions and definitions of contemporary gang problems (discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 of this monograph), coupled with the widely varying characteristics of gangs, presents a significant challenge to communities that are preparing to confront their gang-related problems.

Only after the coalition reached consensus on the definition of gang did it develop a plan to include various interest groups, each with a mission and a set of objectives.

How each community defines gangs is a critical component to its overall response, influencing the types and extent of resources applied. The success or failure of communitywide attempts to address gangs is likely to rest in part on the consensus reached by the community about its specific gang situation and the best way to address it (Conly, 1993). The definition of the term “community” must also be considered. Community may be defined geographically, as in a bounded physical space, or nonspatially, as a collection of social institutions and sectors that function within a locality, such as an ethnic community (The Circle, Inc., 1991a). In the context of this discussion on strategic planning for local gang intervention, “community” is defined as geographic area.

For example, when the Fort Worth, Texas, City Council asked the Citizens Crime Commission of Tarrant County to develop a plan to address the increasing youth gang problems, a coalition was formed representing law enforcement, the judicial system, educators, and service providers to strategize the plan and to develop consensus on the definition of a gang (upon which the work of the Commission’s Gang Task Force is based). Only after the coalition reached consensus on the following definition did it develop a plan to include various interest groups, each with a mission and a set of objectives: “A gang is a number of individuals banded together as an independent entity who are recognized by the community as such, and as a result of said affiliation, participate in illegal activity collectively or individually” (Citizens Crime Commission of Tarrant County, 1991).

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 of this volume, gangs differ in their membership, activities, relationships to their communities, social contexts, and members’ reasons for joining. This highly varied, complex nature of gangs, which ranges from primarily social groups to those heavily involved in criminal activity, complicates the process of finding effective solutions to harmful gang activities. Understanding the processes and primary factors in gang formation and membership, both in general and specific to the targeted community, is a critical first step to local prevention and intervention efforts.

Factors in Gang Formation and Membership

In general, young people appear to join gangs for many reasons, such as the need for positive reinforcement lacking in the home or school, protection, or prestige. A youth who joins a gang may be motivated by the desire for a substitute family, a yearning for identity or recognition, a family history of gang membership, peer pressure, a lack of alternatives, or the desire/need for money, such as shared profits from drug trafficking and other activities.

Through interviews with local gang members and youth services providers, the Citizens Crime Commission of Tarrant County (1991) found that reasons for gang membership also often included too much unstructured,

unsupervised time; lack of religion, values, or ethics— including work ethics—within the home; lack of education or lack of success in school; and strength in numbers while perpetrating a crime.

Although there are still many unanswered questions about community factors in gang formation, research suggests that gangs emerge in communities that are struggling with problems of poverty, racism, and demographic changes; where residents are excluded from traditional institutions of social support; and where youth have few prospects for successful participation in conventional educational and economic activities (Conly, 1993).

An assessment of the gang problem in 45 cities by the National Youth Gang Suppression and Intervention Program for the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) (Spergel, Chance, and Curry, 1990) found that factors intrinsic to gang membership included social disorganization or failures of basic local institutions such as family, schools, and employment; poverty or lack of social opportunities; racism; particular cultural traditions; opportunities to commit crime; fragmented policy and programmatic approaches by criminal justice and social services agencies; and the existence of gangs in the community.

This study also found that influences contributing to gang membership seem to differ among specific ethnic and racial groups. For example, racism and poverty appear to be particularly potent factors in the development of drug-involved gang problems in certain African-American communities, while population movements and cultural traditions may be relatively more important to the growth of gangs in Hispanic communities. Among Chinese and other Asian communities, certain criminal traditions and social isolation may be significant factors, and in white communities, personal and family disorganization as well as the declining strength of local institutions may contribute to the development of cult and racially oriented gang patterns (Spergel, Chance, and Curry, 1990).

Centrality of a Comprehensive Problem-Solving Approach

The diversity in gang types and in causes of gang formation and membership involves a broad range of social, political, family, educational, health, and other community factors. Such diversity suggests that prevention, intervention, and suppression activities should be designed to accommodate individual communities' unique characteristics, needs, gang populations, and specific gang-related harm. No universal strategy works to address all gang problems.

This diversity among gangs suggests that gang problems are not the sole province of the police; no one agency working alone can address the gang problem effectively. Stopping the cycle of gang involvement and reducing harmful gang activities requires not only enforcement but also prevention

Racism and poverty appear to be particularly potent factors in the development of drug-involved gang problems in certain African-American communities, while population movements and cultural traditions may be relatively more important to the growth of gangs in Hispanic communities.

Effective coalitions can accomplish through collaboration what single individuals or organizations cannot.

at an early age and greater community participation (Spergel, Chance, and Curry, 1990; Conly, 1993; California Department of Justice, 1993; National Institute of Justice, 1993a, 1993b). Suggestions that community groups should communicate with one another, cooperate in planning and implementing activities, and coordinate service provisions are being heard with increasing frequency at local, State, and Federal levels (The Circle, Inc., 1991a).

The California Department of Justice (1993) reported that, while their police agencies are reacting to growing gang violence with increased enforcement tactics, they recognize that this strategy alone will not end the gang problem. The complexity of today's gangs suggests the need for a comprehensive, multifaceted effort that targets the reasons youth join gangs. Such an effort may involve three programmatic approaches:

- Develop strategies to discourage gang membership.
- Provide avenues for youth to drop out of gangs.
- Empower communities to solve problems associated with gangs through collaboration with law enforcement, parents, schools, youth, businesses, religious and social service organizations, local government officials, and other community groups in a comprehensive, systematic approach.

Nationwide, increasing numbers of communities are involved in coordinated, systematic approaches to gang problems as they create, implement, and sustain coalitions of individuals and organizations with common interests and shared visions that focus on discouraging gang membership and reducing harmful gang activities. However, community coalitions are often composed of individuals and organizations representing widely diverse interests, expertise, and racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, building and implementing an effective, efficient coalition around gang prevention and control requires detailed planning and organization.

Building and Sustaining Coalitions

Coalitions are dynamic, single-focused learning and task groups that evolve from the common purposes and needs of diverse organizations and individuals. Coalition members recognize that organizations and individuals can be more productive working together than separately. Coalitions are time limited, task oriented, and issue focused. Through commitment, compromise, and careful planning, they may often be capable of effecting great change in their member organizations and in the communities they serve. Each member's power and capacity to innovate are enhanced by cooperative effort and the pooling of resources (The Circle, Inc., 1991b).

Effective coalitions can:

- Accomplish through collaboration what single individuals or organizations cannot.

- ❑ Prevent duplication of individual or organizational intervention efforts, filling gaps in such efforts.
- ❑ Enhance the power of advocacy and resource development.
- ❑ Create more public recognition and visibility for efforts.
- ❑ Provide a more systematic, comprehensive approach to the problems.
- ❑ Provide more opportunities for new pilot projects (The Circle, Inc., 1991b).

Functions of Coalitions

Coalitions on gang prevention and control may focus on one or more of the following activities and services:

- ❑ **Information and Resource Sharing.** This type of coalition serves as an information clearinghouse, gathering and disseminating pertinent information to its members—thus creating a forum for discussion; developing a base for planning, education, and advocacy; recognizing group and individual work; and maximizing use of facilities, staff, and financial resources. Typical activities might include establishing a resource center, sponsoring conferences or seminars, and publishing a newsletter.
- ❑ **Training and Technical Assistance.** This type of coalition attempts to effect positive change among its members by encouraging the sharing of expertise or bringing in outside experts for training or technical assistance. Such a coalition may build grantsmanship; provide sensitivity training for its members to encourage respect for racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity; or provide training in leadership skills to increase member participation in community gang-prevention activities.
- ❑ **Resource Planning and Coordination.** This type of coalition, which is outwardly rather than inwardly focused, may assess needs for or inadequacies in services, plan future funding, or enlist more community participation. This coalition may experience more challenges in organization than other types; thus, mutually agreed-upon guidelines should be established early regarding issues of authority and use of funds.
- ❑ **Advocacy.** This type of coalition provides a unified voice in response to a specific situation or a general issue. This coalition, which requires a good communication system and strong leadership, may advocate more resources or more political clout, lobby on key funding sources, or launch a community awareness campaign.
- ❑ **Problem Solving.** A problem-solving coalition is involved in effective planning through identification and delineation of problems to be addressed, desired outcomes, methods to be used, activities and tasks required, the implementation timeline, assessment procedures, available resources, and the evaluation design (The Circle, Inc., 1991b; Join Together, 1993).

A coalition can prevent duplication of individual or organizational intervention efforts, filling gaps in such efforts.

The Escondido Gang Project . . . began with a series of six town meetings, in English and Spanish, during which people were asked, What can we do to create a unified and safe community?

Initiating the Coalition-Building Process

Coalitions may be established formally or informally. They generally begin through meetings and other forms of communication on common problems—or with one person or group contacting other members of a formal or informal network to discuss common needs and brainstorm for ideas to address those needs. For example, in Escondido, California, a broad coalition of parents, youth, schools, law enforcement officials, former gang members, social workers, church leaders, city officials, community groups, and professional agencies launched the Escondido Gang Project to devise and implement a strategic action plan to address the community’s escalating gang problems. This process began with a series of six town meetings, in English and Spanish, during which people were asked, What can we do to create a unified and safe community? (Medrano, 1993).

Tarrant County began its coalition-building process after the police chief expressed concern to the city council about increasing gang-related problems. The city council, in turn, approached the Citizens Crime Commission, which convened the meeting of community organizers (discussed above) who developed a strategic plan to address the activity and violence associated with youth gangs (Citizens Crime Commission of Tarrant County, 1991).

A successful coalition to implement a problem-solving, harm-specific approach to local gang prevention and control requires collaboration by a broad range of interested community organizations, agencies, and ethnic groups. It is essential to involve the formal leaders—elected officials, appointed leaders, agency heads, and ministers—*as well as* the informal leaders—people who influence others by their words and actions. Communities should actively involve all community components that have a potential interest in responding to gang problems, such as the following:

- Law enforcement.
- Prosecutors.
- Schools.
- Religious organizations.
- Courts.
- Youth service agencies.
- Youth peer groups.
- Former gang members.
- Elected officials.
- Ethnic and racial organizations.
- Parents.
- Business executives.
- Media.

- ❑ Senior citizen and other citizen groups.
- ❑ Civic groups.
- ❑ Parks and recreation departments.
- ❑ Merchants' associations.

Making Coalitions Work

Starting the working relationships that are inherent in a coalition means dealing with practical realities, defining group roles and individual relationships, and compromising—yet maintaining each member organization's integrity. Effective coalitions require a variety of structures and processes that allow for open communication and discussion of vested interests—the smaller and less formal the group, the less structure needed. Coalitions also need a decisionmaking procedure that is conducive to meeting goals—how decisions are made is often a major cause of members' confusion, frustration, and desire to leave the coalition (The Circle, Inc., 1991b).

The following have been identified as essential principles of successful coalitions:

- ❑ **A Common Sense of Purpose and Common Goals.** Two questions should be asked and answered each time the coalition meets: Who are we? and What do we want to do? When additional members join, the purpose may need to be redefined.
- ❑ **Joint Decisionmaking.** Coalition members may disagree on issues such as those involving power, turf, consensus, programs, funding/resources, and structure. Any decisions made on these and other important issues should involve representatives from all participating organizations.
- ❑ **Shared Power and Responsibility.** A coalition is the opposite of bureaucracy; persons who are normally very powerful (for example, the police chief) cannot maintain their normal level of power as members of the coalition.
- ❑ **Trust.** Trust, along with vision, keeps the group together to get the job done.
- ❑ **Personal Integrity and Flexibility.** Members should stick to their principles but avoid getting locked into their own personal interests.
- ❑ **Sticking to Goals.** If the coalition's goal is to raise \$250,000 for a community center, and the coalition reaches that goal, it is time to move on to other goals or to dissolve the coalition.
- ❑ **Open Communication.** Open communication that addresses problems and conflicts also builds trust and minimizes barriers and factionalism. Participants should plan to meet regularly and spend sufficient time to develop trust and open communication.

Any decisions made on . . . important issues should involve representatives from all participating organizations.

While it is not necessary for each person to work on each project, each person or group should be informed, feel included, and have a sense of ownership of all projects.

- Teamwork.** Responsibilities should be shared among members to build commitment and a sense of accomplishment. Regular, specific, and valuable responsibilities should be designated on an equal basis. One of the most positive aspects of a community coalition is that each person or group brings different skills, interests, and perspectives to the shared vision. While it is not necessary for each person to work on each project, each person or group should be informed, feel included, and have a sense of ownership of all projects.
- Sound Administration.** Administrative and financial arrangements should be handled during the formation period. A sound recordkeeping system should be developed that can survive staff and leadership changes and a timeline should be developed for the coalition so that members will know the time commitments they are making.
- Recruitment.** New members should be recruited based on commonality of goals and needs.
- Orientation.** New members should be oriented to the coalition's purposes, goals, and procedures and be reminded of these parameters frequently.
- Leadership.** Coalitions should be structured to allow power to remain with the members while operational authority is given to a strong leader who is loyal to the coalition (Gerharz, 1993; The Circle, Inc., 1991a, 1991b; Join Together, 1993).

Avoiding Pitfalls

Coalitions can be effective brainstorming centers and avenues for tapping diverse skills for innovative problem solving. However, as with other organizations, coalitions may have problems that can lead to lack of cohesion, ineffective actions, or collapse. These potential pitfalls include the following:

- Inadequately defined mission or purpose.
- Lack of leadership and organization.
- Failure to acknowledge individual member needs.
- Conflicting loyalties, vested interests, and fear of domination by one organization or individual.
- Inadequate funds for implementing goals.
- Unclear or unrealistic expectations about the coalition's roles and responsibilities or time required to establish and maintain them.
- Disparity among members' goals, values, histories, and missions.
- Failure to produce results equal to the time and effort expended.
- A focus on obstacles and current realities rather than on future possibilities.

- ❑ Lack of sensitivity to ethnic, racial, or cultural diversity among members, resulting in barriers to communication.
- ❑ Being seen as an outside threat to the community instead of working *with* the community.
- ❑ Unrealistic goals (taking on too large a project).
- ❑ Failure to focus on pragmatic issues and divide the workload into manageable portions so that short-term as well as long-term goals can be met.
- ❑ Insufficient numbers of persons/organizations involved in tasks, resulting in burnout of workers with no replacements readily available (The Circle, Inc., 1991b; Join Together, 1993).

The large number of these potential problems demonstrates that building a successful coalition requires much more than merely a decision to work together. At the first stage in the coalition-building process (during the communication of mutual concerns, goals, and objectives), involved organizations and individuals must recognize the need for a mechanism to help clarify their goals and to delineate the steps to achieve them. An effective strategic plan is such a mechanism. A comprehensive strategic plan can (1) ensure effective leadership and administration, (2) ensure clarity of purpose, (3) delineate proposed actions for implementation (steps for reaching the coalition's goals and objectives), and (4) facilitate compromise while maintaining each member's integrity, thus ensuring cooperation, coordination, and collaboration for a comprehensive, problem-solving approach to local gang-related harm.

Strategic Planning

Planning is an art that requires thought, research, organization, patience, and vision. Effective planning can promote team building, a sense of ownership, enthusiasm, and an environment that maximizes a coalition's chances for success (The Circle, Inc., 1991b).

Strategic planning is a problem-solving process that deals with the future in terms of strategies, long-term objectives, and integrated programs for accomplishing these objectives (Below, Morrissey, and Acomb, 1987). Specifically, strategic planning is the process by which an organization's guiding members envision the organization's future and develop the procedures and operations necessary to achieve that future. Strategic planning requires setting clear goals and objectives and reaching them within a specified timeframe (Goodstein, Nolan, and Pfeiffer, 1992). The strategic plan addresses critical issues facing the coalition in the future and is often viewed as planning in the face of obstacles or competition (Kaufman, 1992). Critical issues are defined as conditions or difficulties for which there are no agreed-upon responses and that have significant influence on an organization's functions or ability to achieve a desired future (Nutt and Backoff, 1992).

Strategic planning is the process by which an organization's guiding members envision the organization's future and develop the procedures and operations necessary to achieve that future.

Approaches to local gang problems that emphasize sharing resources and forming community coalitions are based on the premise that no single organization or individual can prevent the development of gangs or their harmful activities.

The strategic planning process for developing a comprehensive, community-based response to local gangs should enhance a coalition's ability to identify and achieve specific results by integrating information about its external environment, its internal capabilities, and its overall purpose and direction. The emphasis of this strategic planning approach is on the process itself, which is characterized by self-examination, setting direction and priorities, making difficult choices, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation (Ayres, 1993).

Strategic planning is critical to the coalition's success primarily because it provides all participants with a framework for action. Strategic planning sets the coalition's direction by clarifying its purpose and explaining how to assess strategic situations. It also helps in explaining how to identify and select options, decide on actions, and motivate participants. Thus, strategic planning can help law enforcement, community-based social services agencies, schools, citizens' groups, and other interested community components establish a common mission and common priorities and minimize parochial perspectives in favor of broader goals (Ayres, 1993). Strategic planning also helps the coalition develop, organize, and utilize a better understanding of both the environment in which it operates and its own capabilities and limitations (Goodstein, Nolan, and Pfeiffer, 1992).

Approaches to local gang problems that emphasize sharing resources and forming community coalitions are based on the premise that no single organization or individual can prevent the development of gangs or their harmful activities. The most effective community efforts use successive levels of networking—cooperation, coordination, and collaboration—to achieve the desired goals and objectives. Working toward collaboration requires that all participants be vested in the project's goals and work continually to create further opportunities for cooperation, coordination, and finally, collaboration—all of which begin with clear, open communication. Collaboration, in turn, can result in enhanced power that is a legitimate tool for social change (The Circle, Inc., 1991a).

The words cooperation, coordination, and collaboration are often used synonymously. However, in the context of forming a community coalition for local gang intervention, the terms should be distinguished.

Cooperation refers to the stage at which diverse organizations and individuals have opened the lines of communication and expressed willingness to work together, finding and cultivating a common ground and a common mission in planning their services and identifying or developing appropriate skills to implement these services. The next step, coordination, entails putting structure and organization to these cooperative efforts—organizing the coalition's resources and skills as well as strategies to avoid overlapping efforts and gaps in services. Collaboration, which may be reached only after the planning and groundwork phases are completed, is an ongoing process during which the coalition members work together

to provide a comprehensive, systemic approach to the community's gang problems. Inherent difficulties in reaching collaboration include issues of turf, competition, and philosophical differences. A coalition's progress from one level of networking to the next requires increasing degrees of time, trust, and commitment to the greater community vision. Strategic planning enables coalition members to develop the procedures necessary to achieve a shared vision through cooperation, coordination, and collaboration. These procedures include but are not limited to:

- ❑ Developing mechanisms for maintaining positive working relationships and fostering trust through regular communication, networking, and team building. This may require technical assistance or training from outside resources because community coalitions are frequently composed of people of diverse cultures and ethnicities. Team building as well as training in cultural and ethnic diversity and conflict resolution may be necessary to facilitate progress toward collaboration.
- ❑ Planning for barriers, such as turf issues and denial.
- ❑ Developing a means to identify roles and responsibilities formally and clearly.
- ❑ Encouraging the consolidation of shared resources to maximize them and decrease duplication of effort.
- ❑ Encouraging the communicating of a shared vision (The Circle, Inc., 1991a).

Creating a shared vision and a common framework for action that can harness all energies and focus them toward common goals is a critical step in moving a community beyond fragmentation toward an effective, comprehensive approach to its gang-related problems.

The primary responsibility for the strategic plan's development and implementation—deciding the coalition's purpose and future course—rests with the leaders of the agencies involved and should not be delegated. These leaders should view the planning process as important and be willing to invest their time and effort in a way that is visible to all coalition participants (Goodstein, Nolan, and Pfeiffer, 1992).

Therefore, the first and most critical aspect in formulating a strategic plan for a problem-solving approach to local gang prevention and control is a commitment from the leaders of all involved organizations. This commitment must be clearly communicated to all coalition members early in the process. It is vital to the coalition's success that all principal participating organizations be identified and committed to the coalition and the strategic planning process (Ayres, 1993).

With commitment from all participating organization heads, a strategic planning team should be created. Each participating organization head should identify and appoint an individual to the strategic planning team who can best represent the organization's various functions and interests.

Team building as well as training in cultural and ethnic diversity and conflict resolution may be necessary to facilitate progress toward collaboration.

Additional members of the strategic planning team may include key interested individuals, such as youth who may have valuable information about potential obstacles and ways to overcome them.

Thus, the planning team should include representatives of all participating organizations, such as law enforcement, schools, parks and recreation departments, religious organizations, elected officials, and citizens' groups. Additional members of the strategic planning team may include key interested individuals, such as youth who may have valuable information about potential obstacles and ways to overcome them. To produce a viable, comprehensive plan, the planning team's activities should include developing a mission statement that includes the coalition's values and purpose; delineating and coordinating the participating organizations' roles and responsibilities; assigning priority to needs; developing the strategic plan, including an action plan with timelines; instituting the plan's implementation; monitoring and assessing progress; and evaluating outcomes (Ayres, 1993; The Circle, Inc., 1991b). Developing a comprehensive mission statement to which all coalition members agree can serve as a team-building process, which establishes a group planning approach that will minimize power struggles and feelings of disenfranchisement.

The strategic planning team can also identify sources of funding and resources to be provided by each participating agency, designate a media relations liaison, plan internal and external communication strategies, identify community concerns about the coalition's operations, and garner support and facilitate open dialogue among all principal participants. These tasks will engender program "ownership" by all. The planning team should view its role as empowering and facilitating rather than controlling or directing (The Circle, Inc., 1991a).

The planning team should be directly accountable to the participating organizations' leaders and should submit periodic progress reports to them throughout the planning process, keeping them involved on a continual basis to assist them in providing direction and making key decisions. Only in this way can organization heads guide the planning process to ensure the creation of a coalition and a future course that meets their collective needs. All participants in the planning process should be reminded that the strategic plan's real purpose is to serve as a framework for future action by the coalition (Ayres, 1993).

Before and during the planning process, the strategic planning team should be vigilant to any changes or developments that may affect the plan. Often called an "environmental analysis," this effort involves data gathering and examination of a broad range of issues, including but not limited to relevant economic trends; social, technological, political, or demographic factors; State and local statutes and regulations; local school regulations; regulations at shopping malls or other locations where gang members tend to congregate; citizens' and merchants' complaints; and participating organizations' individual and collective strengths and weaknesses.

The environmental analysis identifies trends that are most significant for the coalition and assesses their likely implications but is not itself a phase of the strategic planning process. Rather, it is a continual function of the

strategic planning team that provides critical information during *all* strategic planning phases (Pfeiffer, Goodstein, and Nolan, 1985; Witham, 1990; Ayres, 1993). Exhibit 32 is a worksheet that provides a sample format for conducting an environmental analysis.

Strategic planning consists of five elements:

1. Mission Formulation.
2. Organizational Assessment.
3. Strategic Objectives Development.
4. Action Plan Development.
5. Implementation.

Each element is essential to the plan's successful development and implementation.

Element 1: Mission Formulation

The coalition's mission statement is the starting point for the strategic plan, from which all other strategic elements flow (Below, Morrissey, and Acomb, 1987). The mission statement should include a statement of philosophy (values and beliefs) as well as purpose to which all members should agree. Developing a mission statement that defines the coalition's values and purpose can be a difficult, time-consuming task. However, it is a critical component of the strategic planning process, clarifying and charting the coalition's future direction and facilitating efficient, productive decisionmaking during the strategic plan implementation (Goodstein, Nolan, and Pfeiffer, 1992).

Clarifying Values. Values are the beliefs that guide the coalition and the behavior of each individual involved. Typically, an organization's values are organized and codified into a philosophy of operations, which explains how the organization approaches its work, how it is managed internally, and how it relates to its external environment. Organizational values determine what both individuals and organizations consider to be appropriate and inappropriate behavior; thus, values influence administrative decisions as well as individual actions (Ayres, 1993).

The varying interests represented in the coalition necessitate clarification of the coalition's values—what is appropriate behavior in how members approach their work and relate to the community. Before defining and articulating the coalition's values, the strategic planning team members should examine their own values as well as those of the involved organizations and individuals, because they will often influence what the team identifies as the coalition's values. Once the individual values have been worked through, the values of the coalition and of the program as a whole should be delineated (Ayres, 1993).

Before defining and articulating the coalition's values, the strategic planning team members should examine their own values.

Exhibit 32. Environmental Analysis Worksheet

List the specific environmental developments and trends that you believe will have an impact on the coalition's functioning over the next 3 to 5 years. Consider a broad range of factors that may have strategic impact, including economic, social, technological, political, or demographic factors; local government regulations; local school regulations; and citizen and merchant complaints.

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Defining the Coalition’s Purpose. In addition to clarifying the coalition’s values, a clear mission statement:

- ❑ Defines the coalition’s purpose and intent.
- ❑ Allows all participating agencies to view themselves as part of a worthwhile enterprise.
- ❑ Enables participants to see how they can improve the community through their participation in the coalition.

The coalition’s success depends to a great extent on the clarity of the program’s purpose and whether it has incorporated all the reasons for its existence, including the reduction or elimination of harmful gang activities. The worksheet in Exhibit 33 provides a sample format for developing the coalition’s values and mission statement.

Element 2: Organizational Assessment

An important question facing the strategic planning team is whether the coalition has the ability to accomplish its mission—to intervene effectively in the community’s gang-related problems by developing and implementing a comprehensive, harm-specific response. The organizational assessment phase of the strategic planning approach involves collecting those data that will indicate the coalition’s capabilities. Failure to conduct an accurate, thorough organizational assessment could result in a false sense of security—a belief that the coalition is already capable of reaching its goals, when actually it may not be.

The organizational assessment should involve obtaining information on critical issues and ranking the coalition’s strengths, weaknesses, future opportunities, and threats.

Obtaining Information on Critical Issues. The planning team should obtain information on critical issues inside and outside the coalition that might affect the strategic plan. A critical issue can be almost any factor, such as funding, government statutes and regulations, participating agencies’ policies and procedures, the economy, politics, or community acceptance. The planning team should develop a critical issues agenda and prioritize issues they believe will have the most impact on the coalition’s goals and objectives in the next 3 to 5 years.

Obtaining information on critical issues may include, for example, analyzing the following types of issues:

- ❑ Community interest and support: Is the project recognized as a high priority in the community, or does it lack public and political support?
- ❑ Results of any previous gang intervention attempts: What efforts have already been made to suppress harmful gang activity, and what were the results? Is the number of local youth who are joining gangs increasing or decreasing?

Obtain information on critical issues inside and outside the coalition that might affect the strategic plan . . . such as funding, government statutes and regulations, participating agencies’ policies and procedures, the economy, politics, or community acceptance.

Exhibit 33. Mission Statement Worksheet

An organization's mission reflects its special purpose, its reason for being, and its commitment to the public it serves. Describe your coalition's mission, including its values and purpose.

Values	Mission Statement/Purpose

Ranking the Organization's Strengths, Weaknesses, Future Opportunities, and Threats. The planning team should identify and rank the coalition's strengths (skills, talents, advantages, and resources) that can be utilized in accomplishing the coalition's mission, and the weaknesses (lack of one or more skills, talents, advantages, or resources) that the coalition needs to manage or avoid as the strategic plan is formulated.

Identifying and ranking a coalition's strengths and weaknesses may include, for example, assessing the following types of internal elements:

- Resources: Does the coalition have adequate funding, facilities, equipment, and other resources to be effective in its mission?
- Participant competency/training: What are the participants' competence levels? Have participants already been trained, or do they need additional training?
- Cooperation level: Are participants committed to cooperating and spending the time necessary to build an effective coalition?
- Information level: Does the coalition have an adequate intelligence database, and can it update the database regularly?

The team should also examine the coalition's future opportunities (situations in which benefits are fairly clear and likely to be realized if certain actions are taken) and threats (potentially harmful events and outcomes if action is not taken in the immediate future), because much of its future may be dictated by external forces.

The following issues can be examined to identify the coalition's future opportunities and threats:

- School cooperation and interest: Are local schools interested in participating in gang intervention activities through education and outreach?
- Gang members' interest: Have local gang members expressed interest in alternatives to gang membership?
- Criminal activities: Are citizens being murdered or harmed with increasing frequency by gang activities such as driveby shootings or assaults?
- Degree of community fear: Are residents taking refuge in their homes, fearful of walking in their neighborhoods?

The worksheets in Exhibits 34 (Critical Issues Worksheet) and 35 (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Worksheet) may assist planners in conducting an organizational assessment.

Element 3: Strategic Objectives Development

At this phase in the strategic planning process, the planning team should assess participants' expectations from the coalition by asking: What do you want the coalition to accomplish?

Are local schools interested in participating in gang intervention activities through education and outreach?

Exhibit 34. Organizational Assessment—Critical Issues Worksheet

Certain **critical issues, conditions, or difficulties** may have a significant impact on the function of the coalition or its ability to achieve its desired future. List the critical issues that the coalition must manage to be successful in the future.

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Exhibit 35. Organizational Assessment—Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Worksheet

List the following:

- **Strengths:** skills, talents, advantages, resources that the coalition can use to accomplish its objectives.
- **Weaknesses:** lack of skills, talents, advantages, resources that the coalition needs to manage or avoid.
- **Opportunities:** situations in which benefits are fairly clear and likely to be realized if certain actions are taken that are available to the coalition.
- **Threats:** potentially harmful events and outcomes that currently confront the coalition if action is not taken in the immediate future.

Organizational Assessment				
Agency	Strength	Weakness	Opportunity	Threats

Examples of strategic objectives may be the reduction or elimination of specific gang-related harm in the community, or decreased levels of fear among neighborhood residents, merchants, or senior citizens.

How do you measure success or failure? The coalition's diverse interest groups may have varying expectations; however, it is essential that all participants share a common vision. All coalition members should be invited to participate in the development of objectives by exchanging ideas and setting priorities.

As the strategic planning team conceptualizes the coalition's future with input from all participants, it should identify specific means of measuring both success and failure in reaching that future. These measures, referred to as strategic objectives, are specific areas in which the coalition must be successful in order to accomplish its vision (Hines, 1991). These measures will also help guide the program's evaluation. Examples of strategic objectives may be the reduction or elimination of specific gang-related harm in the community, or decreased levels of fear among neighborhood residents, merchants, or senior citizens.

As in the mission formulation phase, the development of objectives can serve an important team-building function by ensuring that everyone contributes ideas and assists in prioritizing needs, defining goals, and deciding on methods. To assist in formulating strategic objectives, a community needs assessment should be conducted to determine citizens' understanding of issues; to identify and prioritize precise gang-related harm, current activities, and resources (as well as gaps in these resources); and to gather data necessary for future development and planning (The Circle, Inc., 1991a) (Also, see Chapter 5 for a full discussion of needs assessments for gang problems). The more details that are obtained about the community's gang-related problems, the more specific the strategic objectives and overall response can be. The types of questions in the community needs assessment may include the following:

- Do gangs exist in our community?
- How do we know they exist?
- How long have these gangs been in operation?
- Approximately how many youth are involved in these gangs?
- How are youth recruited into these gangs?
- What behaviors do these gangs engage in?
- What specific harm do these behaviors cause?
 - Is someone being injured?
 - Is something being stolen? If so, what?
 - Is property being damaged?
- Could serious social or economic costs result from these behaviors?
- Who carries out these behaviors?

- ❑ What efforts, if any, have already been made to control gang membership or harmful activities?
- ❑ Are specific individuals, businesses, or community groups complaining about gang activities? If so, what specific behaviors or activities are they reporting?
- ❑ Are these behaviors being carried out at certain times and places? (Stedman, 1993)

The details obtained through the needs assessment can provide valuable baseline data and should also serve as the initial phase of an ongoing evaluation.

After identifying strategic objectives, the planning team should compare the objectives with information gathered about the critical issues as well as the coalition's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. If substantial discrepancies exist between the coalition's strategic objectives and the potential to achieve them, the planning team should reevaluate the objectives and rework the plan until the gap is minimized. For example, an objective to eliminate all gang-related activity within a certain geographic area over a 3-month period may be unreasonable and impossible to achieve. Assessing the critical issues and the coalition's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats will enable the planning team to set a more realistic objective, such as reducing the number of specific gang-related activities or incidents in that area by a certain percentage over a given timeframe.

The team should also attempt to develop concrete actions to manage the critical issues by building on strengths, overcoming weaknesses, exploiting opportunities and blocking threats (Nutt and Backoff, 1992). The worksheets in Exhibits 36 (Strategic Objectives Issues Worksheet), 37 (Strategic Objectives Successes Worksheet), and 38 (Strategic Objectives Failures Worksheet) provide sample formats for developing strategic objectives.

Element 4: Action Plan Development

After the strategic objectives have been established (with defined target dates) and tested against the critical issues and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats defined, the planning team should identify ways in which the coalition might achieve these objectives. This procedure should include identifying the various routes by which each objective may be met, analyzing the costs and benefits of each, and selecting the different strategies that are most likely to achieve the objectives.

Each of the coalition's participating organizations should participate in the action planning phase by submitting to the planning team its ideas or plans for achieving the strategic objectives, along with a timetable for execution. The strategic planning team should check these various plans against the coalition's mission statement to determine whether the proposed actions and directions are consistent with the stated values and mission. Through each organization's representative on the strategic planning team, each

Exhibit 36. Strategic Objectives Issues Worksheet

“Strategic objectives” refer to areas in which the coalition must be successful in order to accomplish its mission. Considering your coalition’s mission, its current situation, and your aspirations for its future, identify the most important strategic issues by listing (prioritizing) current gang-related harms and activities that the coalition will target.

1.	(Example) Gang membership and related criminal activity in local schools.
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Exhibit 37. Strategic Objectives Successes Worksheet

List the results that will indicate success for the coalition.

1.	(Example) Reduction in the number of gang-related assaults within a particular school district over a 3-month period.
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Exhibit 38. Strategic Objectives Failures Worksheet

Now list the results that would indicate failure for the coalition.

1.	(Example) Continued increase in gang membership in schools; continued assaults on other students.
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plan should also be understood and agreed to by each of the participant organizations before it is incorporated into the overall plan (Ayres, 1993).

The planning team should next identify any gaps among the combined plans, determine how they can be minimized, and forecast what impact, if any, the gaps might have on the strategic plan's successful execution.

Action plans for a harm-specific response to local gangs will vary according to the nature of a community's problems, needs, targeted audiences, and finally, the identified strategic objectives. For example, the Community Reclamation Project, which targeted the Harbor area of Los Angeles County, had as a goal the development of a continuing, culturally specific program integrating child, parent, and teacher training to prevent youth involvement in drug abuse and gang activity. The objectives for this goal were met by planning and implementing a number of activities, including a school program that brought teachers and pupils together in a violence prevention curriculum, a second school program that helped at-risk youth acquire adult life skills, and a culturally specific parental competence and personal growth program. The Community Reclamation Project was originally funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office for Substance Abuse Prevention. The project was later funded with a grant from Los Angeles County's Fourth Supervisory District (Community Reclamation Project, 1990).

The Escondido Gang Project demonstrates how community responses or action plans are tailored to identified strategic objectives. This project had as its goal not preventing or eliminating gangs, but rather, making gang members feel more a part of the community to diminish the need for violence and drug-related activity. During an all-day, communitywide meeting to create a strategic plan of action, a vision for the future of Escondido youth was spelled out and three objectives were identified: (1) building awareness through communication and action, (2) breaking through the barriers, and (3) activating the community.

Specific actions were planned for each of these objectives, with three task forces designated to assume responsibility for implementing each area of activity. Among the activities planned and implemented were city council meetings at neighborhood levels; meetings among gang members' parents; meetings among parents of Hispanic school dropouts to collaborate on helping their children; formation of a "culture club," with youth members addressing cultural diversity problems and volunteering their time in community service; development of a boxing club that also helped youth to read and write; formation of a property owner/manager/renter association; and development of a video by community residents, targeting children and youth 10 to 19 years old, to encourage self-esteem and social responsibility through one's own accomplishments (Burbidge, 1993).

The Escondido Gang Project . . . had as its goal not preventing or eliminating gangs, but rather, making gang members feel more a part of the community to diminish the need for violence and drug-related activity.

It is now important for the organization heads to become visibly involved in the plan's implementation, publicly committing to it and demonstrating this commitment by dedicating the necessary resources and designating the appropriate personnel to ensure its success.

A coalition may select action plans that include particular methods for identifying current and potential gang members, facilitating conflict resolution among gangs or working toward graffiti abatement. Action plans for encouraging collaboration as well as for identifying gaps in services might include conducting a community resources assessment and publishing a manual that describes all organizations and contact people who may participate in or facilitate an effective approach to local gang-related harm. The worksheet in Exhibit 39 may be used to assist in developing action plans.

Element 5: Implementation

At its implementation phase, the strategic plan is delivered to participating organization heads for implementation. The true test of the plan's efficacy is whether these participants apply it to their decisionmaking.

At this point in the strategic planning process, the planning team has worked closely with the various participating organization heads and obtained their input and direction in formulating the coalition's mission. It is now important for the organization heads to become visibly involved in the plan's implementation, publicly committing to it and demonstrating this commitment by dedicating the necessary resources and designating the appropriate personnel to ensure its success (Ayres, 1993).

In addition to the participating agency heads' commitment, successful implementation of the strategic plan requires the collaborative efforts of a broad range of agencies, organizations, and individuals to ensure:

- Selection of appropriate implementation personnel.
- Communication between the planning team and the participating organization heads.
- Continuing strategic plan evaluation by the planning team.
- Development and implementation of comprehensive internal and external communication strategies.
- Team building.
- Generation of ideas and selection of options.

Each participating organization head should designate a person to carry out the organization's roles and responsibilities in implementing the identified action plans. The person selected to implement the plans should be:

- An action-oriented decisionmaker who has leadership and networking skills and the ability to gain the local support needed to launch and sustain the planned activities.
- A person who commands the respect of staff and managers and is knowledgeable about the local gang issues and the community's resources.
- A strong communicator who can articulate the program's incentives, goals, objectives, and mission; communicate the necessary operational

Exhibit 39. Action Plan Worksheet

List your top strategic objectives and identify the most significant action plans to be taken to resolve your top strategic objectives.

(Example)	
Objective #1: Define roles and responsibilities of each organization involved in the coalition.	
Activity (List in order of priority those most likely to achieve this objective.)	Cost/Benefit of Each Activity
(Example) Determine what expertise exists in each organization.	(Example) Reduces the replication of services and staff time.
(Example) Develop memorandums of understanding (MOUs) among organizations.	(Example) Clearly defines each organization's role and responsibilities during initial planning as well as during implementation.

It is likely that the most appropriate person to implement each organization's action plan is the organization's representative on the strategic planning team.

changes to ensure the program's success; and deliver briefings to the organization's managers and staff as well as to all principal program participants and other community components.

- A person who can identify and evaluate existing and emerging resources that may be of value to the program.
- A risk taker who is willing to assume a leadership role in addressing controversial issues.
- A problem solver who can identify barriers to program implementation and the means to overcome them.
- A coalition builder who can work and negotiate effectively among participating agencies' conflicting interests, bringing them together toward a common goal.

It is likely that the most appropriate person to implement each organization's action plan is the organization's representative on the strategic planning team, who has already demonstrated commitment to the plan and the relevant strengths.

During the strategic plan's implementation phase, communication is needed between the planning team and the participating organization heads. The planning team should make periodic reports to these managers about the coalition's overall progress as well as any developments affecting the group's ability to achieve the desired goals.

Strategic Plan Evaluation

The evaluation step in program development and implementation should not be overlooked. Program planners need to know how well the overall plan is working and how to improve it. The strategic planning team should conduct evaluations of the strategic plan during implementation and make any necessary changes to ensure the objectives are being met and the coalition's mission is being accomplished (Ayres, 1993). The team should also document the program's impact and identify barriers to its overall functioning, as well as methods to overcome those barriers. The following questions may be appropriate for a strategic plan and programmatic evaluation:

- What is being accomplished by each strategic action?
- What is success? Specifically, what will the community be like when the strategic plan is implemented effectively?
- What are the indicators that the strategic plan is moving in the desired direction?
- What specific attitudes and behaviors will change, and how, as a result of the strategic plan? (The Circle, Inc., 1991a).

(See Chapter 8 for a full discussion of evaluating anti-gang efforts.)

Internal and External Communication Strategies

A well-designed and well-executed communication strategy, targeting both the participating organizations and the community at large, can help ensure successful strategic plan implementation. As with any new program or effort, a community coalition on gang prevention and control needs to make the residents it serves aware of its existence. Therefore, communication should be viewed as a proactive part of the program, rather than as a series of reactive responses.

The communication strategy should address the development and delivery of messages concerning the coalition's goals, objectives, and activities, and it should delineate the content and timing of these messages, the appropriate people to implement them, and the target audiences.

The coalition's name, goals, and objectives should be publicized as quickly as possible to help the group establish and sustain a positive reputation in the community. These efforts may require skill building in public and media relations and in the development and dissemination of such tools as newsletters, press releases, and public service announcements. It is also important that all participants be well versed on the coalition's goals and activities to ensure accurate representation at public functions as well as with individual community members.

The internal communication strategy should include developing a series of training sessions for personnel involved in implementing the action plans. The external communication strategy should help to ensure community education and awareness of both the coalition's activities and the gang-related harm being targeted. Programs should be designed to acquaint the general public with warning signs of gang activity and steps that citizens should take if they observe such activity.

A media liaison should be selected who will clarify program goals and activities and ensure that the local press receives up-to-date, accurate information. Strong, positive relationships with the local media can substantially improve a local coalition's probability of success.

Importance of Diverse Strategies for Community Identity

The communication strategies used by the Community Reclamation Project in Los Angeles County exemplify the range of activities that may be implemented to create a "community identity"—to make the community aware of a program's existence and its specific goals and objectives.

These activities included a reception, where the project was introduced to community and regional leaders; a community newsletter, which presented information on project strategies and served as a useful tool at community

Communication should be viewed as a proactive part of the program, rather than as a series of reactive responses.

An experienced outside facilitator may need to help coalition members examine their own attitudes and personal philosophies and look for commonalities that can serve as a basis for collaboration.

forums; meetings with directors of community-based organizations and religious leaders; staff presentations at service club and other organizational meetings (e.g., Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions Club, the Chamber of Commerce, and neighborhood/homeowner associations); dissemination of press releases and other fact sheets to newspaper editors and reporters who cover community events; public service announcements for radio and television; and a video, “Gangs—A Matter of Choice” (Community Reclamation Project, 1990). The worksheet in Exhibit 40 may be used to assist in determining the nature of the communication, the messages to be disseminated, the intended audiences, and the methods of communication. The worksheet in Exhibit 41 provides a suggested format for developing a training plan.

Team Building

Team building, which should begin with the creation of the strategic planning team and continue throughout the implementation phase, involves the “deliberate working through of all barriers to progress until a working group becomes an effective team” (Francis and Young, 1979). Team building serves as a catalyst for the participating organizations’ effective interaction and interdependence that is critical to the coalition’s success. Thus, for members of a diverse group to work well together, time devoted to team building is crucial. The result of productive team building is effective teamwork, with responsibilities distributed among members to build commitment and a sense of accomplishment during the strategic plan’s implementation.

Effective team building requires that all groups participate in developing the mission statement; that all participants be given specified, meaningful, and fulfilling roles and responsibilities; that the potential mutual rewards of their efforts be delineated; that there be sensitivity to intragroup differences; and that open communication be maintained.

Team building promises much, but it also makes demands on each participant. Team building (often coupled with training in cultural and ethnic diversity and conflict resolution) takes on increasing importance for community coalitions comprising various cultural and ethnic groups.

Assistance From an Outside Facilitator

An experienced outside facilitator may need to help coalition members examine their own attitudes and personal philosophies and look for commonalities that can serve as a basis for collaboration. Experienced facilitators may be available through local colleges and universities as well as through professional management consulting firms that specialize in organizational training—in particular, training in team building that incorporates sensitivity and cultural diversity awareness. The local chamber of commerce may also be able to provide names of experienced facilitators.

Exhibit 40. Communication Strategy Worksheet

Audience	Communication/ Message Delivery	Mechanism	Timing
(Example) Teachers and staff.	(Example) Communicate suspected gang involvement and activity to administrators.	(Example) Newsletter.	(Example) Bimonthly.

Exhibit 41. Training Plan Worksheet

A training plan should be designed for each segment of the community participating in the coalition, such as school administrators, parents, and law enforcement. If interdisciplinary training is planned in which each of the principal agencies participates in a single training event, the training plan should encompass the goals of the interdisciplinary training.

Audience	Content	Timing	Costs Needed	Resources
(Example) School administrators.	(Example) Raising awareness of gang identifiers; handling gang members.	(Example) Within the next 3 months.	(Example) Staff time.	(Example) A trainer from a law enforcement agency.
(Example) Parents' groups.	(Example) Raising awareness of gang identifiers; serving as role models; communicating with children regarding gangs.	(Example) Within the next 6 months.	(Example) Staff time.	(Example) A trainer from the school youth gang unit.

In addition to working out any personal differences, coalition members must find strengths on which to build, and they must balance commitments to the coalition against the demands of their everyday jobs. Dealing with internal group needs that arise from these pressures is as important as the group's external task of developing a comprehensive, viable strategic plan. Even teams that grasp the importance of their planning task often underestimate the need for developing themselves as teams. When a team runs smoothly, members can concentrate on the primary goal. In contrast, a team that fails to build relationships among its members will waste time on struggles for control and endless discussions that lead nowhere (Scholtes, 1988).

Taking Time To Build the Team

All who participate in team building must be prepared to open their minds to new ideas and experiences. Only through each team member's willingness to work through old issues and build new relationships will the team approach work effectively. Team building requires working through several stages and allowing adequate time for completion of each and finding answers to questions that arise. Relevant questions include but are not limited to the following identified by Francis and Young (1979):

- What are we here to do?
- How shall we organize ourselves?
- Who is in charge?
- Who cares about our success?
- How do we work through problems?
- How do we fit in with other groups?
- What benefits do team members need from the team?

To build the group skills needed to achieve its goals, the team must start by understanding what lies behind most troubles—namely, the hidden concerns that, like undercurrents, pull team members away from their stated task. Such concerns include anxiety about being on the team, loyalty to their own organizations, and nervous anticipation about the team's success. If left unattended, these undercurrents can inhibit a group's chances of becoming an effective team. Scholtes (1988) contended that members of each group must therefore spend time on activities not directly related to the task at hand—activities that build understanding and support in the group and help to resolve issues related to the following:

- Personal Identity in the Team.** The most common worries are those associated with membership and inclusion (Do I feel like an insider or outsider? Do I belong? Do I want to belong? What can I do to fit in?); influence, control, and mutual trust (Who's calling the shots here? Who will have the most influence? Will I have influence? Will I be listened

All who participate in team building must be prepared to open their minds to new ideas and experiences.

The team should look for ways to use each member's strengths.

to? Will I be able or allowed to contribute?); and getting along and mutual loyalty (How will I get along with other team members? Will we be able to develop any cooperative spirit?).

- ❑ **Relationships Among Team Members.** How will members of different ranks interact? Will we be friendly and informal or will it be strictly business? Will we be guarded in what we say? Will we argue and disagree all the time, or will we be able to work together? Will people like or dislike me?
- ❑ **Identity With the Organization.** Team members usually identify strongly with their own organizations, and they will need to know how membership in the team will affect their normal organizational roles and responsibilities. Will my loyalty to the team conflict with my loyalty to my own job and coworkers? Will my responsibilities as a team member conflict with my everyday duties?

Just as the team members must maintain ties with their own organizations, the team as a whole must build relationships with all participating organizations. Finding influential people to champion the team and its goals can make a big difference in the support the team receives from participating organizations.

Initial Team-Building Goals

Scholtes (1988) suggested that teams work toward the following goals during their first few meetings:

- ❑ **Getting To Know Each Other.** Team members should take time to learn each other's backgrounds and skills, discover each other's preferences, and find out how each learns and works best. The team will be most effective when members can compliment each other without embarrassment and disagree without fear; however, this may not be accomplished in the first few meetings.
- ❑ **Learning To Work as a Team.** The team should look for ways to use each member's strengths.
- ❑ **Working Out Decisionmaking Issues.** Too often, decisions just "happen" in a team; members go along with what they think the group wants. Teams should discuss how they will make decisions, particularly when diversity of expertise and responsibility are represented. Major decisions belong to the entire team, and all members should approve decisions that affect the team's direction.
- ❑ **Determining Support Services.** Access to typing and copying services and meeting supplies should be determined.
- ❑ **Setting Meeting Ground Rules.** These rules, which usually prevent misunderstandings and disagreements, should apply to how meetings will be run, how team members will interact, and what kind of behavior is accepted.

Stages of Team Growth

As a team matures, members gradually learn to cope with the emotional and group pressures they face. Scholtes (1988) describes the normal stages of team growth as follows:

- ❑ **Stage 1: Forming.** At this stage of transition from individual to member status, members attempt to define the team’s task and decide how it will be accomplished, attempt to determine acceptable group behavior and how to deal with group problems, discuss symptoms or problems not relevant to the task, have difficulty in identifying relevant problems, and complain about the coalition and barriers to the task.
- ❑ **Stage 2: Storming.** This is the most difficult stage for team members as they begin to realize the task is more difficult than they had imagined. They may become testy or overzealous, blaming others. Impatient about the lack of progress, but still too inexperienced to know much about decisionmaking, members argue about the actions the team should take. They feel resistance to the task; argue even when they agree on the real issue; establish unrealistic goals; develop a perceived “pecking order,” disunity, increased tension, and jealousy; and try to rely solely on their personal and professional experience, resisting any collaboration with other team members.
- ❑ **Stage 3: Norming.** Members reconcile competing loyalties and responsibilities. They accept the team ground rules or norms, their roles on the team, and the individuality of fellow members. Emotional conflict is reduced as previously competitive relationships become more cooperative. Members develop a new ability to express criticism constructively; attempt to achieve harmony by avoiding conflict; become friendlier, confiding in each other and sharing personal problems; and develop a sense of team cohesion. As they begin to work out their differences, they have more time and energy to spend on team goals.
- ❑ **Stage 4: Performing.** The team members have settled their relationships and expectations; they have discovered and accepted each other’s strengths and weaknesses, and learned their own roles. They can now begin performing—diagnosing and solving problems. The team is now an effective, cohesive unit. It is apparent when a team has reached this stage because it starts getting a lot of work done.

The duration and intensity of these stages vary from team to team. Occasionally, Stage 4 is achieved in a meeting or two; in other cases it may take months. Understanding these stages of growth will keep the strategic planning team members from overreacting to normal problems and setting unrealistic expectations that only add to frustration. Exhibit 42 provides a worksheet for planning a team-building strategy.

The normal stages of team growth . . . include forming, storming, norming, and performing.

Exhibit 42. Team-Building Worksheet

<p>(Example) Objective: The development of a cohesive, productive strategic planning team, composed of culturally and ethnically diverse members.</p>	
<p>Activity (List in order of priority those most likely to achieve this objective.)</p>	<p>Cost/Benefit of Each Activity</p>
<p>(Example) Training sessions in ethnic and cultural sensitivity to assist coalition members in examining their own attitudes and in looking for commonalities that can serve as a basis for cooperation, coordination, and collaboration.</p>	<p>(Example) Coalition members learn to examine their own attitudes and develop sensitivity to and understanding toward ethnically and culturally diverse populations.</p>

Generating Ideas and Selecting Options

Formal and informal tools exist to help teams generate and explore ideas and options and make decisions—that is, to reach consensus. Among the more structured tools are brainstorming, multivoting, and nominal group technique, which are discussed in the following paragraphs. Scholtes (1988) describes these tools as among the most helpful methods of exploring ideas and making decisions from among all the possibilities generated. Other, less formal methods also exist; a team may explore them as members become more relaxed with each other.

Brainstorming. Before team members can make decisions, they need to examine as broad a range of options as possible. One of the easiest ways to generate a list of ideas is to brainstorm. The objective of brainstorming sessions is to collect ideas from all participants without criticism or judgment. A successful brainstorm lets people be as creative as possible, does not restrict their ideas in any way, equalizes involvement, and can generate excitement in the group.

During a brainstorming session, everyone should be encouraged to offer all ideas, even if they seem silly at the time. There should be no discussion (that will come later); no judgment (no one is allowed to criticize another's ideas); people should be allowed to “hitchhike”—build on other ideas generated; and all ideas should be written on a flip chart so the whole group can easily study them (Scholtes, 1988).

Multivoting. Multivoting, which often follows a brainstorming session, is a way to conduct a straw poll or vote to select the most important or popular items from a list, usually the one created during the brainstorming. This is accomplished through a series of votes, each cutting the list in half, so that even a list of 30 to 50 items can be reduced to a workable number in 4 or 5 votes. A multivote is conducted in the following manner: A list of numbered items is generated. Similar items are combined, if the group agrees that they are the same, and all items are renumbered, if necessary. All members select and silently write down the numbers of the items they want to discuss, with each person allowed to choose at least one-third of the total number of items. Votes are tallied, and items with the fewest votes are eliminated (Scholtes, 1988).

Nominal Group Technique. The nominal group technique (NGT) is a more structured approach than either brainstorming or multivoting for generating a list of options and then narrowing down these options. This technique is called nominal because during the session the group does not engage in the usual amount of interaction typical of a real team. NGT is an effective tool when all or some group members are new to each other. NGT is also effective for highly controversial issues or when a team is in disagreement. NGT is summarized as follows:

A successful brainstorm lets people be as creative as possible, does not restrict their ideas in any way, equalizes involvement, and can generate excitement in the group.

The list of options can be reduced to 50 or fewer items by using one or two rounds of multivoting or encouraging members to withdraw the items about which they feel the least serious.

□ **Generating Ideas**

- The task is defined in the form of a question (often before the team meeting), as would be done for brainstorming.
- At the meeting, the question is read aloud and written on a chalkboard or flip chart or on handouts for participants.
- Team members generate ideas (this is the most important step), writing down their answers in silence with no distractions.
- Moving round-robin, each person reads one idea on his or her list. All are written on a flip chart and this process is continued until all ideas are presented or until time runs out (30 minutes is suggested). No discussion is allowed.
- The team clarifies and discusses the ideas, condensing the list as much as possible.

□ **Making the Selection.** This part of NGT is much like multivoting, but more formal. This is useful for narrowing the list of options and selecting the team's preferred choice or choices.

- The list should be reduced to 50 or fewer items. This can be accomplished by using one or two rounds of multivoting or encouraging members to withdraw the items about which they feel the least serious. No member is allowed to remove an item that originated with another member, unless the originator agrees.
- Each participant receives 4 to 8 cards, depending on the number of items still on the list (4 cards apiece for up to 20 items, 6 cards for 20 to 35 items, 8 cards for 35 to 50 items).
- Members individually make their selections from the list, writing down one item per card.
- Members assign a point value to each item based on their preferences. The value depends on the number of items selected (four, six, or eight).
- Cards are collected and the votes tallied. It is easiest to mark the flip chart page with the original list, noting the value of each vote an item has received, then adding up these values. The item that receives the highest point total is the group's selection.
- The group reviews the results and discusses the reaction. If there are surprises or objections, team members may wish to lobby for or against certain items and ask for another vote. If members agree on the importance of the highest scoring item, the NGT can end the discussion, and the team decides the next step. If members do not agree, the team can focus its efforts on investigating two or three other items that have received high scores (Scholtes, 1988).

Conclusion

As growing numbers of urban, suburban, and rural communities nationwide experience emerging or accelerating gang problems, they are placing increasing emphasis on the formation of broad-based, local coalitions to address the complex issues presented by these problems. These coalitions are composed of individuals and organizations with common interests and shared visions that focus on discouraging gang membership and reducing harmful gang activities.

Often involving law enforcement, parents, schools, youth, businesses, religious and social service organizations, local government officials, and other interested groups, coalitions represent widely diverse experiences, expertise, and ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, building and implementing an effective, efficient coalition around gang prevention and control involve more than merely a decision to work together. Such efforts require detailed planning and organization to facilitate successive levels of networking—cooperation, coordination and, finally, collaboration.

To ensure productive planning and organization and thus increase its chances for success in initiating and moving through these levels of networking, a coalition should be guided by a comprehensive strategic plan. A strategic plan provides a framework and a catalyst for action for all participants and sets the coalition's direction by clarifying its purpose and identifying specific actions to achieve this purpose. Through the process of strategic planning, the coalition's members envision the future and develop the procedures necessary to achieve the vision through cooperation, coordination, and collaboration.

III. RESPONDING TO LOCAL GANG PROBLEMS

Civil Remedies for Gang-Related Harm

What worries neighborhoods most about street gangs? Driveby shootings, robberies, and drug dealing probably top the list. These crimes endanger everybody. Even children at play or babies in cribs can be killed by bullets sprayed from a passing car. People with little money can be robbed and beaten, sometimes beaten worse because they have too little money. Open drug markets can bring crime and violence into a neighborhood.

Because driveby shootings, robberies, and drug dealing are crimes, it is natural to think first of criminal law enforcement solutions to the problems that street gangs present. But there are several other legal actions that communities can take against street gangs—either through their local governments or as private citizens, groups, or individuals.

For good reasons, especially to maintain civil order, the State has monopolized enforcement of criminal law. That monopoly has caused people to forget that virtually every crime is also a tort—that is, a civil wrong against people, businesses, or the community for which the perpetrator is civilly liable in damages, subject to court injunction, or both.

Gang activity in a community is also likely to violate several civil ordinances, and gang members can be held responsible for the harm they create by these violations. Furthermore, civil remedies can reach other people who make it easier for gangs to operate by their failure to comply with local ordinances or commercial regulations.

This chapter describes several alternatives to criminal law enforcement and makes suggestions about private actions that individuals or groups can take.

Analytical Models

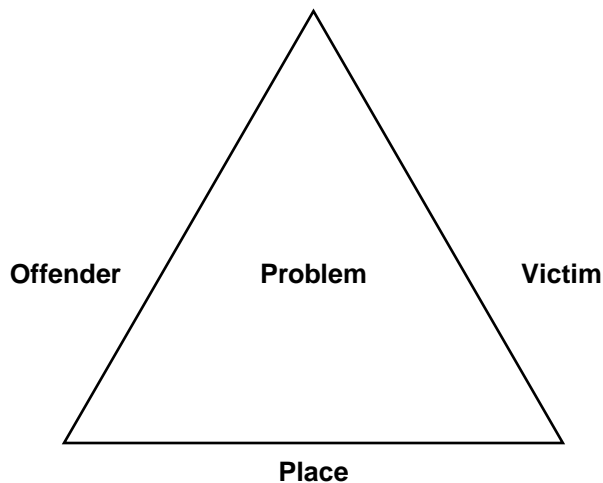
This monograph strongly advocates concentration on gang-related harm and small wins. Arguments may rage over why street gangs exist and how to eliminate them in the long run. But in the short run, there are many ways to reduce specific problems caused by street gangs if communities are willing to work for and accept small wins rather than seek a silver-bullet, once-and-for-all solution to street-gang problems.

This chapter uses two analytical models—the gang-problem triangle and a problem-solving model (discussed in the Introduction of this monograph)—to address street-gang problems. Analysis is simply breaking a problem down into its parts. An analytical model works by making relationships among parts of the real world easier to see and understand.

A model is a simplified representation of reality, not reality itself. People look at a map to see where they are going, but they cannot walk or drive

Gang activity in a community is likely to violate several civil ordinances, and gang members can be held responsible for the harm they create by these violations.

Exhibit 43. Gang-Problem Triangle



on the map; they must use the ground or the street. Furthermore, they cannot reshape the world to fit these models. In short, models can be useful in understanding problems but should not be used beyond their limits.

Gang-Problem Triangle

The gang-problem triangle is an analytical model used to understand the nature of gang-related problems. The triangle separates any gang problem into three components (see Exhibit 43): (1) the offender who causes the harm, (2) the victim who is harmed, and (3) the place where the harm occurs. The model proposes that removing one of the elements of the triangle—the offender, victim, or place—can disrupt the cycle and prevent future harm. Reducing gang-related harm involves identifying the elements that are easiest to remove and taking action to remove them.

Law enforcement usually concentrates on gang members—the “offender” side of the gang-problem triangle. This chapter concentrates on the places where gangs inflict harm on the community and on third parties—controllers, guardians, and managers—who are responsible for managing and maintaining these places. Two things can be achieved by concentrating on problem places. Particular places can be changed so that gang members no longer see them as good places for gang activities. And actions can be taken to keep gang members and potential victims from being together at particular places at times when the victims are especially vulnerable.

While there is no focus on the “victim” side of the triangle as such, victims can use the civil remedies discussed here to reduce their chances of being victimized by changing the characteristics of the places where they come into contact with gang members.

Problem-Solving Model

The second analytical model, shown in Exhibit 44, is a problem-solving model called SARA, an acronym for the four steps involved in the process—scanning, analysis, response, and assessment.

Scanning asks what gang activities are repeatedly causing harm in the community. Some, but not all, harm inflicted by gangs is criminal. Some other kinds of harm violate local ordinances. Still other kinds violate the personal and property rights of neighborhood residents. Finally, some types of harm, while not illegal, diminish the quality of life in the neighborhood. For the most part, this chapter bypasses serious criminal offenses—felonies such

as murder, rape, and burglary and misdemeanors such as simple assault, criminal mischief, and harassment. Instead, the chapter focuses on code and ordinance violations and civil torts, which are not discussed as frequently. Exhibit 45 illustrates types of harm that gangs can cause.

The second step of the problem-solving model is analysis, breaking the problem into parts. The gang-problem triangle is a useful analytical tool in identifying the elements—the offenders, victims, and places—that are present when gang-related harm occurs. The problem-solving model also requires that responsible third parties—controllers, guardians, and managers—be identified and their roles analyzed.

Having identified and analyzed the types of harm, the community must then formulate a response to them. This chapter presents several responses outside direct criminal prosecution of gang members. It proposes nuisance abatement, code enforcement, and license revocations to protect public and private rights.

The final stage of the problem-solving process assesses the effectiveness of the response. The assessment can be used to change the response, improve the analysis, or even redefine the problem.

Problem Places

Where do gangs inflict their harm on the community? The places in a community can be separated into broad categories, which are then subdivided into more narrowly defined categories, according to the groupings that will improve the identification of, analysis of, and response to problems. Exhibit 46 is a comprehensive list of places by type. Local communities can use it as a checklist to identify (1) what kind of problem places they have and (2) what people and agencies are most likely to be involved in solving gang-related problems.

Exhibit 46 is set up according to the gang-problem triangle. For every place, boxes are provided to identify the offenders and controllers, the victims and their guardians, the managers responsible for the site, and the regulatory agency responsible for law or code enforcement at the site. A regulatory agency may be the local police department, the liquor control board, the health department, or the parks and recreation department—any local or State agency with

Exhibit 44. SARA Model

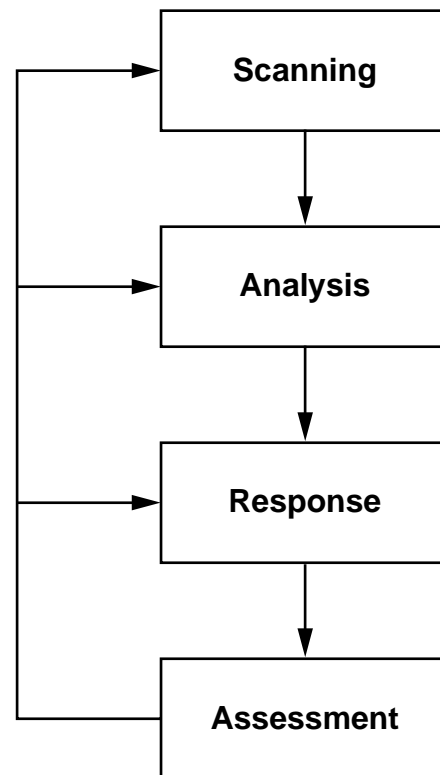


Exhibit 45. Types of Harm Caused by Gangs

Criminal Offenses	Ordinance Violations
Felonies	Traffic
Murder	Parking
Aggravated assault	Littering
Rape	Vandalism
Robbery	Malicious mischief
Armed	Graffiti
Strong-arm	Noise
Arson	Disorderly conduct
Burglary	Public drunkenness
Larceny or theft	Obstruction of public passageway
Auto theft	
Criminal intimidation	
Witnesses	Juvenile Offenses
Victims	Truancy
Jurors	Runaway
Misdemeanors	Beyond control of parents
Simple assault	Curfew
Reckless endangerment	
Petit larceny	Civil Matters
Criminal trespass	Code violations
Criminal mischief	Fire
Harassment	Safety
	Health
	Torts
	Trespass
	Nuisance
	Waste

regulatory power over something that is done at the site. The broad categories of sites in Exhibit 46 are fairly obvious:

- Residential.
- Commercial.
- Recreational.
- Public.
- Transitional.

There is some overlap among these broad categories, but the distinctions among categories help to identify people who may be responsible for places particularly vulnerable to gang-inflicted harm.

Residential Sites

Residences are at greatest risk of becoming problem properties under the following circumstances:

- Gang members live there. The presence of gang members creates problems no matter what the condition of the property is.
- The property has deteriorated to the point where restoring it and maintaining it are beyond the owner's financial means.
- Residents have little stake or interest in maintaining the property because:
 - They do not own it.
 - They are transients and will not stay long.

Exhibit 46. Gang-Related Problem Places Checklist

Problem Place	Offender/ Controller	Victim/ Guardian	Manager	Regulatory Agency
Municipal government service center				
Post office				
Church				
Club or lodge				
Street or highway				
Street corner				
Alley				
Park				
Vacant lot				

Guardians and managers of public recreational areas often are not visible or may not have adequate tools to deal with gang problems.

- They can afford to live on the property only because of its bad condition.
- The cost of restoring the property exceeds the economic benefit of restoring it.
- Neighborhood conditions are such that:
 - Deterioration of any given property is not seen as a problem.
 - Rehabilitation of a property will not attract better clientele.

Commercial Sites

Commercial sites most at risk are those where people congregate for substantial periods of time—taverns, restaurants, bowling alleys, pool halls, amusement arcades, and parks. Some service facilities such as laundromats, barber shops, and garages require that people wait around for service to be finished. Other commercial sites can become gang hangouts if the managers allow it. Gangs may find parking lots to be suitable gathering places, regardless of the type of establishment.

Recreational Areas

Public recreational areas such as baseball fields, tennis and basketball courts, and parks are prime hangouts for street gangs. As others do, gang members have a right to enjoy these areas. Problems begin when gang members do harm in public areas, particularly when they claim public areas as their turf. Other users of these public places may feel intimidated or threatened by the presence and activities of gang members. Guardians and managers of public recreational areas often are not visible or may not have adequate tools to deal with gang problems.

Private recreational areas can also provide gathering places for gang members, if they are willing to pay for membership. Managers of these private areas, although interested in attracting paying customers, may risk losing control of their areas if they allow gang members to join.

Public Places

Public facilities usually have visible controllers, guardians, and managers and are thus less likely to be the site of gang problems. For example, tight security in public places such as courthouses and police stations make them less inviting to gang members. However, schools tend to be vulnerable to gangs since gang members have the right to be in school as students. As public schools relate to the gang-problem triangle, school administrators and teachers are responsible as controllers and guardians of student offenders and as managers of the school.

Transitional Places

Transitional places are places through which people and vehicles move on their way to somewhere else. Streets and sidewalks that ease vehicular and pedestrian traffic are also sites of harmful gang activities such as driveby shootings and open-air drug dealing. The type and layout of streets may also help gang members evade police.

Transitional places are difficult to control and maintain because they are open to everyone for lawful movement from one place to another and are protected by few controllers, guardians, or managers. Although vehicular traffic is regulated by State law and city ordinances, traffic lights, street signs, and pavement markings, pedestrian traffic is hardly regulated.

Responsible People

When a problem place is identified, the person or people responsible for the place can also be identified. When these people are identified, the tactics most likely to make them act to reduce or eliminate the gang-related harm can be decided.

Someone is responsible for every site, because he or she owns it, manages it, lives there, or works there. Even vacant land has an owner somewhere. The keys to clearing up the harm that a problem place presents are to identify (1) the people responsible for the problem, (2) the people responsible for the place, and (3) the pressures that can be brought to bear on those responsible to remedy the problem and remove the harm.

Exhibit 47 is a tool for identifying the kinds of people who may be related to a problem place. Like Exhibit 46, it is set up according to the gang-problem triangle.

The relationship between a person and a place can take many forms. The person may live or work at the place, may have an economic interest in it, or may visit it. In the scanning phase of the problem-solving model, the offenders are almost always identified by type, if not by name. Exhibit 47 helps to establish the relationship between offenders and a problem place. Are the offenders residents, owners, or managers of the problem place? Are they visitors or trespassers? Street-gang members are frequently residents of problem places but rarely owners or managers of them. If the offenders are only residents, then persuading the owners and managers to ask the offenders to leave may solve the problem.

Residents can be offenders, controllers, victims, guardians, or managers. When offenders reside at a particular place, responses must be designed to make them either stop their harmful behavior or leave. Or, their controllers must be persuaded, empowered, or enabled to control their harmful behavior.

The most difficult problems arise when the offending gang members are the owners' relatives and can either cajole or intimidate the owners to keep them from taking effective action. The worst-case scenarios involve younger

The most difficult problems arise when the offending gang members are the owners' relatives and can either cajole or intimidate the owners to keep them from taking effective action.

Exhibit 47. Persons Responsible for Problem Places

Person Responsible	Offender/ Controller	Victim/ Guardian	Manager	Regulatory Agency
Resident				
Resident as offender				
Resident as victim				
Resident as manager				
Owner				
Resident owner				
Absentee owner				
Individual				
Family				
Investor				
Partnership				
Corporation				
Bank				
Mortgage company				
Developer				
Public agency				
Property manager				
Owner manager				
Resident manager				
Nonresident manager				
Property management company				
Access controller				
Security guard				
Receptionist				
Visitor				
Trespasser				

gang members who intimidate their elders. For example, gang members in their teens and early twenties may use the houses of their grandparents or great-grandparents for gang activity, ignoring their relatives' wishes and rights. It is difficult to frame a solution to such a problem that does not injure the innocent elders more than the gang members who have created the problem.

Offenders who reside where they are creating problems have something to lose—their home. If gang members are property owners, they also have economic interests on which pressures can be brought to bear. If they are property managers, the owners can fire them. However, gang members do not usually own or manage property.

Resident owners of problem places have two important interests to protect. The first is their home, the place they live. The second is a major economic concern for most people—their property's value. Even if the property is not highly valuable, it is theirs, and ordinarily they are willing to take whatever steps are necessary to protect it. Some value is better than none. More difficult are absentee owners, whose interests are primarily, if not exclusively, economic. While loss of property value may not cost them their homes, it will cost them their investment.

Why is an absentee owner absent? Does he or she live too far away to visit the property? How did the owner get title to the property? By purchase, in which case he or she would regard it as an investment to be protected? By inheritance, but without the money necessary to maintain it in good condition? Is the owner an investor, an individual, a partnership, or a corporation? Is the gang-related harm threatening the investment, and if so, does the owner know? Has the absentee owner taken steps to manage the property?

Can the property manager be identified (using “manager” in its gang-problem triangle sense)? The manager is the person responsible for keeping the site safe from offenders, such as a security guard or a receptionist who screens all visitors to a building.

Identifying the guardians and managers of transitional places is not particularly difficult, but bringing pressure to bear on them is. The local police department is usually responsible for public safety on streets and highways and in public parks. But police resources are often spread thin, so the question is how to increase their effectiveness in particularly dangerous places. Sometimes this can be done by changing the nature of the transitional places, for example, by severely restricting parking, limiting a thoroughfare to one-way traffic, or turning a thoroughfare into a cul-de-sac.

Civil Remedies

Once the people responsible for particular places are identified, what can be done about them? How can they be influenced to deal with gang-related harm? Methods other than criminal law enforcement can be used to address

Change the nature of the transitional places, for example, by severely restricting parking, limiting a thoroughfare to one-way traffic, or turning a thoroughfare into a cul-de-sac.

gang-related harm; they fall into two general categories: civil suits for nuisance or trespass and civil code enforcement.

Filing lawsuits is neither easy nor inexpensive. But often the threat of a lawsuit is enough to motivate a person or corporation to solve the problem rather than go to court. Civil code enforcement includes strict enforcement of all State and local code requirements, including licensing provisions, applicable to a problem place.

Civil or Criminal or Both?

Civil lawsuits ordinarily seek to collect damages for injuries to the plaintiff or the plaintiff's property, or to prohibit the defendants from engaging in some kind of conduct. Private citizens, including private organizations, and public officials can both file civil lawsuits. On the other hand, only public officials can bring criminal prosecutions. Typically, State prosecutors (district attorneys or States' attorneys) handle felonies and serious misdemeanors. County or city attorneys handle less serious misdemeanors and local ordinance violations. They also usually handle local code violations.

On the "place" side of the gang-problem triangle, the usually sharp distinction between civil and criminal proceedings gets somewhat blurred. Private citizens and public officials can unite to deal with harm caused by street gangs. For example, gang activity can be both a private and public nuisance, or both a civil and criminal trespass. The best way to proceed depends on the circumstances of each case, but collaboration between private citizens and public law enforcement personnel often is the best way to go. In other words, using both civil and criminal processes often proves successful.

Injunction or Damages

An injunctive suit seeks a court order to stop a present harm or prevent future harm. A damage suit seeks money for injuries that have already been inflicted.

Injunctions originated in the English court of equity or chancery, the "court of the King's conscience," to give relief when none was available from the King's common-law courts, which awarded money damages. A court of equity issues decrees or orders, but unlike a court of law, an equity court has no jury trials and does not award money damages. Equity courts have historically had broad power to shape remedies to solve particular problems.

In the United States, the powers exercised in separate English courts have been merged in unified court systems. The typical American court of general jurisdiction has the powers of both English court systems—law and equity—and can therefore entertain suits both for money damages and for injunctions. But American courts still follow the general principles of the original English courts, such as using juries to determine money damages but not to determine whether injunctions should be issued.

Gang activity can be both a private and public nuisance, or both a civil and criminal trespass.

An injunction is the most powerful of the equity decrees. Violation of an injunction is contempt of court and can be punished by fine or jail or both.

Although injunctions can be very useful against gang-inflicted harm, are damage suits of much value, particularly when most gangs and gang members have few assets? Damages may not be worth pursuing in simple cases, but damage suits should not be immediately dismissed. If trespassing gang members cause serious damage to property, they are civilly liable. For example, if gang members set fire to a house, they can be sued for damages as well as prosecuted for arson. Gang members may have no assets at the time of their offense, but civil judgments against them can be renewed for long periods of time, as much as 40 years in many States. Whatever they acquire in the future is subject to attachment to pay the judgment.

Nuisance Abatement and Zoning Laws

Nuisance is a legal concept that goes back to the Middle Ages. Briefly defined, it requires landowners to use their property so as not to injure their neighbors' use of their properties. The concept applies to physically damaging neighboring property, reducing its value, or reducing its enjoyment. Nuisance also takes into account the neighborhood's general nature. What is inappropriate in one place may be quite acceptable in another. Raising pigs in the city is certain to rile the neighbors; raising pigs on a farm is expected.

It is noted that nuisance pertains to the use of property, not to personal conduct. Every person has the right to reasonable use of his or her own property, but no right to interfere with others' reasonable use of their properties. The maxim "use your own so that you do no harm to another" is frequently quoted in private nuisance cases. This focus on the use of property has several implications relevant to solving gang-related problems.

Even if an owner and tenants have not themselves committed any specific crimes or offenses, they remain responsible for how their property is used and what happens there. Therefore, legal action can be directed at owners, tenants, or both to compel lawful use of the property, even though they have done nothing illegal.

Nuisance refers to continuing abuses rather than isolated incidents, which is important for three reasons. Problem-solving techniques are useful for solving chronic problems, but individual crimes are best solved by ordinary investigative techniques. Second, proof of nuisance differs from proof of crimes, in which specific criminal acts rather than an ongoing condition must ordinarily be proved. Third, evidence of reputation, which inevitably contains a large measure of hearsay, is admissible under many nuisance statutes. Older nuisance statutes use terms like common fame and ill fame. Such evidence is not admissible to prove ordinary crimes.

There are both private nuisances and public nuisances. The difference is that the harm that a public nuisance creates does not affect just one or two

Even if an owner and tenants have not themselves committed any specific crimes or offenses, they remain responsible for how their property is used and what happens there.

neighbors; rather, it affects the general public. For example, odors emanating from a slaughterhouse affect everyone in the neighborhood. Public nuisances such as prostitution or crack houses are more relevant to this discussion because they have a negative impact on every property in the vicinity.

Public nuisances, usually defined by statute or local ordinance, offend public order or decency or encroach on public rights. Houses of prostitution offend public order. An illegal wharf infringes on the public's right to use a navigable stream. The differences between a prostitution house and a wharf suggest the range of problems that nuisance law can address. As nuisance law has developed through the centuries, private nuisance has remained an interference with land, but public nuisance has become a much broader group of wrongs—a catchall of criminal and civil offenses.

In effect, the breadth of public nuisance means that problems can be attacked in different ways by different people. Both public officials and private citizens can bring legal proceedings against nuisances. State nuisance statutes and municipal ordinances usually contain provisions for suits by private citizens. Ordinarily, private citizens have to demonstrate some harm to themselves or their own property, as distinguished from the public interest, to succeed in private nuisance suits. A private nuisance is a use of property that annoys immediate neighbors. Such a use does not have to be illegal, but only inappropriate to the surroundings.

A nuisance suit is a civil, not a criminal, proceeding. For that reason, public nuisance suits are usually filed by the local official responsible for civil litigation, such as the city or county attorney, rather than by the State prosecutor. A local gang task force should not be surprised if a prosecutor sends them off to another local official to file a nuisance suit.

Nuisance statutes, ordinances, and cases usually refer to “nuisance abatement.” Abatement is a flexible legal term. Essentially, it means getting rid of the nuisance, doing whatever is required to bring the problem to an end. Sometimes abatement can be achieved by the property owner's simply stopping whatever constitutes the nuisance—for example, removing abandoned cars from a vacant lot. More often, abatement will also include cleaning up a site, such as removing abandoned cars and mowing grass on an overgrown lot.

Abatement has included razing the buildings on a site, boarding up houses, closing hotels and restaurants, seizing and selling personal property, and barring named individuals from a property. Abatement orders have imposed specific conditions for continuing to operate a property, including establishing a system for screening tenants and installing security systems to keep gang members off a property. Abatement can be an invaluable remedy to gang-related harms.

Examples of nuisances subject to abatement include drug trafficking, prostitution, gambling, trafficking in stolen goods, illegal liquor sales, public drunkenness, harassment of passers-by, loud noise, and excessive littering.

Abatement orders have imposed specific conditions for continuing to operate a property, including establishing a system for screening tenants and installing security systems to keep gang members off a property.

In the United States, nuisance law was the forerunner of zoning law. In the first half of the 20th century, American cities began to regulate land use through zoning, and by the second half of the century, comprehensive zoning was almost universal in American cities. Today, Houston is the only major American city without it.

When early zoning ordinances were challenged as depriving landowners of their property without due process of law or as taking property without just compensation, the U.S. Supreme Court turned to nuisance principles and cases as precedents for upholding zoning ordinances. The connection between public nuisance law and zoning is that both rest on the police power of the State—that is, the State’s basic power to regulate property and commerce for the general health, safety, and welfare.

Nuisance suits target problems *as they arise* at particular places. They do not *anticipate* problems. Nor do they have a general effect beyond a problem site and its immediate vicinity. Zoning codes, on the other hand, try to keep problems from arising by stating what will and will not be permitted not only at particular places, but also throughout general areas or zones. Because they provide a clear and direct means of stating what can and cannot be done throughout a zone and because the local government directly enforces them, zoning codes have reduced the need for nuisance suits. But nuisance law has not changed, and it is still available as a valuable legal tool for both public and private use.

A zone is usually described by what uses are permitted within it. All other uses are prohibited. For example, a basic residential zone may allow only single-family dwellings on lots no smaller than a designated size, for example, 20,000 square feet. Other uses allowed include churches, schools, parks, and public utility easements. Zones also regulate minimum frontage on the street, minimum setback of structures from a street, minimum size of side yards, and building height.

It is common in residential zones to regulate how many people can live in a residence, at least in terms of a family. A family may be defined as any number of people related by blood or marriage, or not more than four unrelated people. Questions about the number of unrelated people who can live in a residence have commonly arisen in neighborhoods where a large number of people temporarily live in rented quarters, such as students near a college. When gangs take over a house, they often violate these occupancy limits.

Trespass

Historically, trespass is a broad legal concept that refers to any offense that injures someone’s person, health, reputation, or property. In this chapter, trespass is used in its more familiar and more limited meaning of an invasion of someone’s property, either by entering onto it without the owner’s permission or by staying on it after being asked to leave.

Examples of nuisances subject to abatement include drug trafficking, prostitution, gambling, trafficking in stolen goods, illegal liquor sales, public drunkenness, harassment of passers-by, loud noise, and excessive littering.

Trespass is different from nuisance in at least two ways. First, trespass refers to an owner's right to exclusive possession of his or her property. Nuisance refers to a person's right to use and enjoyment of his or her property; it does not require interference with possession. Second, trespass involves coming onto another's property. Nuisance does not require a direct invasion of another's property. The person who creates the nuisance does so on his or her own property, but the nuisance has an impact on nearby landowners. Of course, there are many circumstances in which conduct can be both a trespass and a nuisance.

Ordinarily, trespass must be an intentional rather than a negligent or inadvertent invasion of someone else's property. But there are important exceptions involving street gangs. Conduct that is reckless or extremely dangerous can be a trespass even though the perpetrator did not specifically intend to invade the victim's property. Driveby shootings certainly fall into the category of reckless conduct.

What can a property owner do about trespass? There are several civil remedies: a suit for damages and an injunction or a suit to oust the trespasser. The property owner can also ask local authorities for criminal enforcement, which will be discussed shortly. Damages can take at least two different forms: the cost of the physical damage or the fair rental value of the property for the length of time it is in the trespasser's possession.

Abandoning a car, dumping trash, or going into a building without permission is a trespass.

Historically, common law treated every person's land as enclosed, whether or not it actually was. Unauthorized entry onto the land "broke the closure" and was a trespass. Unauthorized entry is still the essence of modern trespass, but it includes injury to, use of, or entry onto real estate without the owner's permission. A continuing trespass consists of staying on land or leaving something on land without permission. Abandoning a car or dumping trash is a continuing trespass.

Going into a building without permission is a trespass. This is true whether the building is a residence, business, or factory. However, there is a major exception to this general rule. A business that is open to the public, such as a retail store or a mall, has in effect invited people to come into its public or common space; they are not trespassers. A business can withdraw its invitation to specific individuals on the basis of their conduct but not on the basis of personal characteristics protected by civil rights laws, such as race, gender, religion, or national origin.

A request for injunction for a continuing trespass must state why damages are not sufficient to cure the wrongs done the landowner. Good reasons include the following:

- The defendant continues, or threatens to continue, the trespass.
- The injury to the landowner is irreparable.
- The defendant's destruction of or injury to the land amounts to virtual dispossession.

- ❑ The defendant is not financially solvent or responsible, a condition that applies to most gang members.
- ❑ Damages are impossible or difficult to determine.

Criminal trespass puts the law enforcement authority of the State or local government behind the private right to exclude people from one's premises. Criminal trespass is an offense created by State statute or local ordinance or both. The legislative purpose behind criminal trespass laws is to prevent violence and threats of violence by either a landowner or a trespasser. A trespass is not a criminal trespass unless it is a breach of the peace. The trespasser must intend to violate the rights of the landowner, and the trespass must carry with it at least some implicit intimidation or threat of a breach of the peace. The kinds of gang harm discussed in this chapter certainly meet these requirements.

While precise wording may vary, criminal trespass statutes usually forbid going on, attempting to go on, or remaining on the property of another without authority or after being forbidden to do so. Notice against trespass can be either written or oral and can be given in several ways, including personal communication, posting the property, or fencing the property.

Prohibiting trespass by specific people becomes more complicated when a place is open to the general public. Parts of public places can be cut off from the general public area by signs prohibiting unauthorized people, but special notice must be provided to individuals who are being barred from the public areas.

Who can give the required notice to a trespasser? Obviously, the property owner can. Tenants can also give notice or warning regarding those parts of the property they are leasing or renting. Someone renting a house has a right to exclusive possession of the house and surrounding land. A tenant in an apartment building has an exclusive right only to the apartment, not to common areas such as hallways or the lobby.

The owner can designate agents to give notice to trespassers. Most important here, owners can select police officers as their agents to warn trespassers that they are trespassing and ask them to leave. Refusal to leave the premises after notice is a criminal trespass. Because it is a criminal offense, officers can make an immediate arrest or seek an arrest warrant allowing them to make an arrest later.

The right to designate police officers as agents has been of great value when the owner is not likely to be on the premises most of the time or when action must be taken. For example, a public agency such as a public housing authority may not have an employee on site at all times. But if the local police department has been authorized to act for the agency in issuing trespass warnings, then action can be taken when it will be most effective.

Refusal to leave the premises after notice is a criminal trespass . . . police officers can make an immediate arrest or seek an arrest warrant allowing them to make an arrest later.

“Waste” is the destruction, misuse, alteration, or neglect of property by someone lawfully in possession to the detriment of another party who holds an interest in the property.

Waste

The right to live or work in a place is not the right to destroy it. Obviously, a renter cannot destroy a house, an apartment, or a business that belongs to someone else. But even someone who owns a house or a business cannot destroy it if someone else has a security interest in it. A mortgage company that has made a loan secured by real estate, including improvements, can protect its interest by seeking an injunction against a careless or destructive landowner. If the right to protect the property is not spelled out in the contract, the mortgage holder can sue under the common-law doctrine known as “waste.” Waste is the destruction, misuse, alteration, or neglect of property by someone lawfully in possession to the detriment of another party who holds an interest in the property.

The issue of waste arises when gang members are rightfully in possession of property but put the property at risk by their conduct. A house rendered uninhabitable by its residents no longer serves as security to the mortgage holder.

The problem can become particularly acute when a person holds a secondary interest and the primary interest holder takes no action. For example, if a seller takes back a second mortgage to assist a buyer in making a purchase, then the seller may be second in line behind a mortgage company that is paying no attention to what is happening on the property. A suit to prevent waste can protect the secondary interest.

Civil Code Enforcement and Business Licensing

Scarcely any aspect of living in a modern American city is untouched by the city’s regulatory power. Virtually all commercial enterprises providing goods and services to the general public, or even to small specialized markets, must be licensed by the city, the State, or both. But even noncommercial aspects of our lives, such as the places we live, are regulated to some degree.

This power to regulate business stems from the city’s responsibility to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens. To be sure, many licensing requirements are primarily designed to raise revenue. But that does not mean that the city is not also exercising its regulatory powers at the same time.

It is important to understand how many ways our cities can and do regulate the places in which people live, work, visit, shop, or travel. When street gangs affect those places, it is helpful to know what powers the city can apply to remedy and remove the gang-related problems. When a particular place in the community becomes a problem because of gangs, the community wants to know two things:

- Who is responsible for the place; who is its manager? That person may be the owner, a tenant, a business manager, or a lender.
- What local regulatory agency can make that manager deal with the gang-related problem?

Exhibits 46 and 47 include a column titled “Regulatory Agency” for identifying the government agency most likely to have enforcement responsibility for a particular place.

How can people find out what is regulated or what licenses are required? They can look in the telephone book under city government and see what is listed. They can go to city hall and look at the directory of offices. They can ask at the information booth. They can ask for a guide to city government. They can read the city code.

City regulations appear in the city code, which is enforced through a system of permits and licenses. It is illegal to begin many projects, such as building or rehabilitating a building, without the required city permits. It is illegal to start most businesses without the required city license. Once people obtain permits and licenses, they must comply with their terms. City regulation is a continuing, not a one-time, activity. The city can suspend or revoke permits and licenses of people who fail to comply with their conditions. For more serious violations, the city can impose fines, initiate prosecutions, seek injunctions, or seek to have certain activities or conditions declared public nuisances.

As already discussed, zoning codes regulate how property can be used and the way it looks. The first question to ask about any use of land is whether it complies with the zone. Businesses cannot operate in zones where they are not permitted.

Beyond the zoning code, what other codes apply to land, buildings, and businesses? Different cities organize their regulatory codes in slightly different ways, but in any city there are building, fire, health and sanitation, and business-licensing codes. In practice, these codes frequently overlap. A restaurant, for example, must comply with all the above codes.

Building Codes. Building codes govern how a structure is built and what standards of construction must be met and maintained. They also require building permits for substantial renovations or repairs. Building codes govern plumbing and mechanical and electrical equipment in a building. Even the simplest of structures in which humans work or live must meet minimum standards. The greater the number of people who use a building and the more complex the structure and uses, the more standards apply to it.

For residences, a building code prescribes the number of square feet per resident; the number of outside windows; the number of exits; the quality of flooring, walls, and roofing; and other conditions. For multifamily buildings, the requirements get more elaborate, prescribing hand railings for stairs, the number of exits, exit lights, security provisions, and other items.

Street gangs do not usually construct or rehabilitate buildings, so they do not violate building codes in the construction process. But when gangs occupy or dominate buildings, they often damage them in ways that violate

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A fire escape that is down rather than in its retracted position may show that gang members are using it to get in and out of a building.

building codes. They may block exits, overload electrical circuits, clog plumbing, or destroy security devices.

Fire Codes. All structures must meet minimum standards of fire resistance. Requirements for fire prevention and alarm systems become more elaborate as the number of uses and occupants of a structure increases. For example, smoke detectors may be required in all rental properties, but fire suppression systems may be required in buildings above a certain height. Fire doors must be provided, as well as fire escape or fire stair systems.

What should someone look for in neighborhoods with gang problems? A fire escape that is down rather than in its retracted position may show that gang members are using it to get in and out of a building. Open windows and smoke coming from a building may show that people are cooking with open fires because there is no gas or electric service in the building. Such activity clearly violates fire codes. Smoke may also violate air pollution standards.

Health and Sanitation Codes. Storm and sanitation sewers must be separate and working. Standing water outside a building indicates lack of proper drainage, which can be both a private and public nuisance. Standing water inside a building indicates the sewage systems are not working—also a nuisance.

The presence of human waste, whether indoors or outdoors, indicates that the sanitary sewage system is not working—a code violation and a nuisance. It may also show that people are living in an apparently unoccupied or abandoned building. Rats and other vermin, inside or outside a building, are code violations and a nuisance.

Business Licenses. Localities may require business licenses of professionals such as doctors, lawyers, engineers, and architects. These licenses are primarily to raise revenue, with the regulation of the professions left to the State and State-recognized professional organizations.

Cities require licenses of other businesses for more clearly regulatory purposes. This is particularly true of businesses offering personal services, such as barber shops, beauty shops, Turkish baths, and massage parlors.

If cities allow pawnbrokers, they usually subject them to heavy regulation. For example, pawnbrokers may be required to obtain two forms of identification from every customer from whom they purchase goods, record the identification information, and daily submit a list of purchases to the police department. The purpose is to discourage pawnbrokers from receiving stolen goods.

Food and food-handling establishments are subject to a comprehensive set of regulations. City health departments enforce these regulations when a business is established and, by frequent inspection, throughout the life of the business. Violations can subject a business to suspension until the violations are corrected.

All States regulate the sale of liquor at wholesale, retail, and consumption levels. Violating State liquor laws is a criminal act, but jeopardy to the liquor license is a far more serious threat to its owner than criminal prosecution for single illegal acts.

In addition to State regulation, most cities have their own regulations on the sale of alcoholic beverages. Localities may be particularly concerned with sales to underage individuals and people who are drunk. Another problem is the sale of single cans of beer at convenience stores, which sometimes leads to gang members congregating in the parking lots.

Many places of amusement can also become centers of gang activity, such as:

- Arcades.
- Poolrooms.
- Bowling alleys.
- Movie theaters.
- Dance halls.
- Carnivals, festivals.

In addition to complying with their basic business licenses, all these sites must comply with fire, health and sanitation, and food service codes. Those that serve alcohol must also have liquor or wine and beer licenses and must comply, for example, with minimum drinking-age statutes.

Residential Rental Properties

Many gang-related problems arise on rental properties, which are usually subject to intensive local regulation. Rental properties include houses, multiunit dwellings, rooming and boarding establishments, campsites, trailer parks, tourist homes, and hotels and motels.

Rental property must meet minimum standards. For example, rental houses or apartments may be required to have a kitchen sink, bathroom with toilet and sink, shower or tub, stove, refrigerator, hot and cold running water, windows in outside rooms, heat, and adequate ventilation. The code usually requires a minimum space per occupant. The foundation, floors, walls, ceiling, and roof must be watertight, weathertight, and rodentproof. A multi-unit building must have exit lights, burglary-prevention devices, and fire escapes. Fire exits must not be blocked, and stairs must have handrails.

Rental properties that have fallen under the control of gangs are frequently in violation of several code provisions. City authorities can take action against both tenants and owners to remedy the problems.

Localities may be particularly concerned with sales to underage individuals and people who are drunk and . . . the sale of single cans of beer at convenience stores.

Vacant Buildings and Vacant Lots

Not even vacant buildings and lots escape regulation. Weeds on lots must be kept trimmed. Lots themselves must be free of litter. City codes also require that unoccupied buildings be secured against unauthorized users and vandals. Neighbors can call on code enforcement to make sure that owners meet these obligations.

Overcoming Barriers to Civil Remedies

None of the proposals discussed so far is a new idea. Nuisance and trespass principles have long been established in English and American law. Every city code has included enforcement provisions. Why, then, have these alternative methods not been put to better use? There are at least three major reasons for this failure: fear of retaliation, difficulty of getting public officials to cooperate, and congestion in the courts.

City codes require that unoccupied buildings be secured against unauthorized users and vandals.

Retaliation Against Individuals

The fear of retaliation in gang-dominated neighborhoods is the greatest obstacle to getting neighborhood cooperation in confronting problems created by gang-related harm. Whether this fear is justified by experience is a question best answered in particular localities. Street gangs certainly are an intimidating presence, but whether they actually retaliate against people outside gangs is another question.

Assuming that retaliation is a real possibility, does coping with gangs require great personal courage on the part of a few individuals? That may be the case, if neighbors refuse to join together to act on their own behalf. Lack of neighborhood cohesion may be one of the reasons gangs can operate in the first place.

The first step may be to get the neighbors to unite—to seek safety in numbers. Community leaders must foster unity in resisting gangs. Who are the leaders in the community? Political figures, merchants, church leaders, school principals, and teachers may all play leadership roles and should step forward.

City officials should act whenever citizens bring problems to their attention. Public officials should not leave risky confrontations to private individuals or groups. They should use public powers and resources to assist citizens with their problems. If citizens are afraid to come forth, then public officials should provide means for them to communicate their concerns without exposing themselves to gang retaliation.

Getting Public Officials To Cooperate

There are several obstacles to getting public officials to cooperate with individual citizens or citizen groups. Government agencies are set up to enforce particular laws, provide particular kinds of service, or serve a particular

clientele. Each agency focuses on its own mission and pursues its own goals. Some agencies may regard other agencies with related missions as competitors for scarce city resources, not as collaborators in achieving a common goal.

What is often missing is a structure for interagency cooperation. Interagency task forces, rather than permanent institutions for continuing collaboration, may be created to accomplish some short-term mission. Someone with a broader view of all the city's problems and responsibilities—someone above the agencies such as the mayor, the city manager, or the city council—has to take the lead in designing systems for interagency cooperation and making sure that they work.

A second obstacle to getting cooperation from city officials is getting them to shift their focus from traditional approaches to approaches more likely to work with contemporary problems.

A third obstacle is the reluctance of public officials to get involved in potentially dangerous enforcement. It is one thing to enforce building or health codes at a retirement home but quite another to enforce these codes where the property's occupants are armed gang members.

Still another obstacle is the lack of political influence in neighborhoods plagued by street gangs. The people most in need of law enforcement and other city services often lack the political power to compel public officials to respond to their needs. All of these are political problems with political solutions. Political leaders must respond to the needs of their communities' recurring problems.

Delay on Civil Dockets

Many of the remedies proposed in this chapter are legal remedies to be sought through the courts. But the courts in most big cities are burdened with heavy caseloads, and it is important that citizens wanting to use the courts for legal redress be aware of the problems they are likely to encounter.

Most of the remedies discussed in this chapter are civil remedies. As a general rule, courts give their criminal dockets priority over civil dockets. This is appropriate for two reasons. First, it is in the public interest to remove criminals from the street as quickly as possible. In addition, criminal defendants have a constitutional right to a speedy trial.

But the congestion problem is likely to be quite different in different kinds of courts. State court systems distinguish among three kinds of courts:

- ❑ **Courts of Limited Jurisdiction** handle less serious civil and criminal matters. They generally proceed without elaborate formality, without written briefs or typed manuscripts, and without jury trials. They are designed to move swiftly. Many have a specialized jurisdiction, such as traffic or juvenile cases.

The mayor, the city manager, or the city council has to take the lead in designing systems for interagency cooperation and making sure that they work.

Courts of limited jurisdiction . . . are accustomed to moving large numbers of cases and deciding them quickly, often at the end of the hearing while the parties are still in the courtroom.

- ❑ **Courts of General Jurisdiction** handle serious civil and criminal cases in full-blown, formal fashion. They use written briefs and transcribed records and have jury trials.
- ❑ **Appellate Courts** hear appeals from courts of general jurisdiction on the records made in the lower courts and on the briefs and arguments presented by the lawyers.

The best chance of getting swift action is to bring matters into the courts of limited jurisdiction. These courts are accustomed to moving large numbers of cases and deciding them quickly, often at the end of the hearing while the parties are still in the courtroom. In deciding how to proceed, parties should look for ways to keep within the jurisdiction of these faster moving courts.

Most of these courts have a monetary ceiling on their civil jurisdiction, perhaps \$2,000 or \$5,000. For this reason, they are often referred to as “small claims” courts. These courts allow the disputing parties to try their cases without lawyers and have simplified procedures and relaxed rules of evidence. The point is to encourage and allow people to reach quick and inexpensive resolution to their disputes.

Most code violations and less serious criminal offenses come before courts of limited jurisdiction—the faster courts—and can be disposed of promptly. Landlord-tenant courts are often special divisions that can also handle cases promptly. Many of the gang-related problems discussed in this chapter are essentially landlord-tenant problems that can be taken to those special divisions.

Complicated nuisance suits may end up in courts of general jurisdiction, where it may take a long time for them to be resolved. But if plaintiffs are seeking injunctions rather than damages, they can often get their cases expedited because of the irreparable injuries they suffer by delay.

Florida has authorized its cities and counties to establish nuisance abatement boards, which in effect are specialized courts dealing only with nuisances. These boards give localities a way to attack nuisances without going through the more elaborate procedures of the courts of general jurisdiction and without waiting for openings on those courts’ congested calendars.

Case Examples of Civil Remedies

To conclude this chapter, examples are offered of how civil remedies have been used to deal with gang and drug situations in three different places: San Diego, California; Joliet, Illinois; and Berkeley, California.

5081 La Paz Drive, San Diego, California

In 1988 and 1989, the Syndo Pirus, a subset of the Crips, used a house at 5081 La Paz Drive in San Diego as its headquarters. The house was owned by a widow whose children and grandchildren used it as a crack house and

a crack distribution center. Unable to control their activities, the woman spent her nights locked in her bedroom in terror. Strangers would come and go as they pleased, often staying in the house to smoke crack. The house was in deplorable physical condition, but it was the widow's only worldly asset.

Neighbors frequently complained to the police about activities at the house. The San Diego Police Department executed three search warrants based on controlled buys at the site. Police department records show that between January 1, 1988, and August 31, 1989, the house was the site of 70 arrests and 106 calls for police service. Sixty of those arrests were for narcotics offenses, including 46 for being under the influence of a controlled substance and 14 more for possession of a controlled substance or counterfeit narcotics. The other 10 arrests were for a variety of offenses, including murder, burglary, assault with a deadly weapon, and escape. Of the calls for police service, 57 were citizen calls, 33 of them related to narcotics. Other citizen calls included eight for disturbances and two for gunshots. The police themselves initiated 49 calls at the address—20 for citizen contacts or field interviews, 18 requesting a cover unit or meeting another police officer, 4 for stolen vehicle recoveries, and 7 for miscellaneous reasons.

In 1972, California had enacted the Drug Abatement Law, which was based on the Red Light Abatement Law of 1913. The earlier law had declared gambling and prostitution houses both public and private nuisances. The later law declared drug houses to be public and private nuisances as well. Following the language of the Drug Abatement Law, the San Diego city attorney filed legal action against the owner of 5081 La Paz Drive and obtained an injunction against using the premises for “unlawfully selling, serving, storing, keeping, or giving away controlled substances or their precursors.” The injunction also specifically named several individuals and barred them from going on the property. Despite this provision, some of these people returned to the property, subjecting themselves to arrest for contempt of court.

The city attorney's office sought the support of the municipal court to ensure that people violating the drug abatement order would receive appropriate attention, and if found guilty, appropriate sentences. The city criminally prosecuted several people who violated the court order, obtaining jail sentences for some of them. A permanent injunction was filed in February 1991 that prohibited all narcotic activity. A temporary restraining order, lasting for 1 year and subject to modification, was also obtained.

The drug abatement order did not solve the problems of the property owner, who was left with a barely habitable house. In 1991, she applied for a rehabilitation loan for the property. A granddaughter who had not participated in the problems at the house planned to move in with her and work to change the environment. The city attorney's office and the local housing commission both supported her plan in community meetings, as did many members of the community. The police department opposed her application, preferring to have the house demolished.

In 1972, the California Drug Abatement Law (based on the Red Light Abatement Law of 1913, which had declared gambling and prostitution houses both public and private nuisances) declared drug houses to be public and private nuisances as well.

In January 1993, [the Joliet, Illinois, police] met with the city manager to discuss difficulties they had encountered in getting cooperation and support from other city agencies . . . an interagency committee composed of representatives from all city departments, was set up.

With her granddaughter as a cosigner, the property owner received the loan and rehabilitated the house. As of early 1994, the injunctions against problem members of the family were still in force. There have been no further incidents at the house. The San Diego city attorney's office regards the case as one of its success stories.

609 East Benton, Joliet, Illinois

In 1991, the 600 block of East Benton in Joliet, Illinois, was characterized by a high volume of calls for police service. Citizens complained about drug dealing, loud music, street robberies, criminal damage to property, and intimidation. The block is in a 10-block neighborhood in which the Joliet Neighborhood-Oriented Policing Team (NOPT) has concentrated its effort.

Approximately 40 Vice Lords, 6 Black Peace Stone Rangers, and 30 Latin Kings controlled the area. Every day, 10 to 30 gang members congregated at 609 East Benton, a 4-unit apartment building used for drug sales and other criminal activity. The gang members intimidated community residents by both their presence and their open threats. Neighbors were virtually prisoners in their homes, afraid to let children outside because of driveby shootings and random gunfire.

When police responded to calls, they often could not act because gang members were on private property and no one was willing to sign a complaint—or gang members were on public property doing nothing. When officers responded to criminal complaints, the people they sought easily found refuge in one of the apartments at 609 East Benton.

NOPT decided to attack both the gangs and the environment supporting them. Bad street lighting was one problem. NOPT approached the electric utility with a proposal to improve street lighting, but nothing was done until the deputy city manager got involved 7 months later. The proposal then was approved, but 15 months later it still had not been implemented.

In December 1992, police officers began recording license numbers of vehicles coming to 609 East Benton. As a car pulled up in front where gang members were standing, a gang member would approach the car, and then the car would leave. If police were present, gang members would direct the car to the rear, where the driver would leave the car, go inside for a few minutes, then come out and drive away. In 1 month, police recorded 102 different vehicles at 609 East Benton, with an average stay of no more than 2 minutes.

In January 1993, NOPT met with the city manager to discuss difficulties they had encountered in getting cooperation and support from other city agencies. For example, requests for assistance or no-parking-stopping-standing signs were either disapproved or given low priority. The Cooperative Team, an interagency committee composed of representatives from all city departments, was set up. All agencies were to give NOPT requests top priority.

On January 15, 1993, the Joliet Police Department and the owner of 609 East Benton signed a trespass agreement granting the city the power to keep nonresidents from entering and remaining on the property. The agreement also granted the city the power to sign complaints against nonresidents.

In February 1993, NOPT sent the property owner a letter detailing incidents at 609 East Benton and proposing possible solutions to recurring problems. The list of problems included:

- Nonresidents living with residents (subleasing).
- Drug-related offenses.
- Weapons offenses.
- Garbage (for example, bottles strewn around the property).
- Other criminal activity.
- Tenants failing to report criminal activity.
- Tenants leaving doors unsecured.
- No use of current lighting and the need for additional lighting.

NOPT informed the owner that 609 East Benton had the highest number of reported incidents of all Section 8 housing in Joliet. NOPT proposed the following:

- Regular inspection to ensure that units were in decent, safe and sanitary condition and that the owner was providing services, maintenance, and utilities.
- Termination of housing assistance.
- Contracts between the owner and the tenants providing strict guidelines on guests, cleanliness, and so forth, with violations resulting in eviction.
- A contract between the owner and the local towing company allowing any unauthorized vehicles to be towed.
- Action by community groups to bring civil suits against property owners and tenants.

NOPT personnel believed that evicting and replacing all the tenants would alleviate the problems, but they did not think they could achieve that at that time. Instead, NOPT drew up a draft owner-tenant contract including the following provisions:

- The tenant will not allow any nonresident, other than authorized family members listed below, on the premises.
- All adult nonresident family members visiting must have a picture ID on their person.
- All visitors must be in the company of the resident.

The police department proposed contracts between the owner and the tenants providing strict guidelines on guests, cleanliness, and so forth, with violations resulting in eviction.

The contract also . . . stated that the leases of tenants participating in (or allowing) any criminal activity on the property would be immediately terminated.

- The tenant will be responsible for the conduct of his or her visitors while on the premises.

The contract also required tenants to maintain the property in a clean and sanitary condition and to report all damages and criminal activity. In addition, the contract stated that the leases of tenants participating in (or allowing) any criminal activity on the property would be immediately terminated.

NOPT officers then met with the four tenants at 609 East Benton, explaining their concerns and the steps that would have to be taken to resolve the problems. NOPT also met with the Section 8 coordinator of the Joliet housing authority, who agreed to meet with the landlord and tenants to ensure their commitment to resolving the problems. On March 9, 1993, all four tenants signed the owner-tenant agreement.

The owner remained ambivalent about dealing with the problems at 609 East Benton. He pledged cooperation with the police department, but at the same time he told the tenants that they need not worry. Part of his ambivalence stemmed from his feeling that the tenants and their relatives and friends had grown up in deprived circumstances and perhaps needed some help. He also received \$2,400 a month in income from the building.

On March 16, 1993, the police department made a controlled buy and executed a search warrant on an apartment in the building rented by a woman. The police found no drugs but did find several handguns and arrested her. She claimed that nearly everyone at 609 East Benton was either selling or using drugs.

NOPT informed the owner about the search warrant. The property owner decided to evict this tenant and to send the other three letters asking them to vacate. However, a week later, he still had not acted to have the tenants evicted or disqualified for Section 8. He had given them verbal warnings. In addition, the owner had placed a sign at the rear of the property stating that all unauthorized vehicles would be towed at the expense of the vehicle owners. This finalized the agreement with the towing company, requested well over a month earlier.

On April 25, at the request of NOPT, the city put up no-parking-stopping-standing signs in the 600 block of East Benton. Activity dropped dramatically after the signs were posted. Gang members tried to tear the signs down several times and at one point threw them all into a nearby creek. However, the signs were replaced and secured to existing poles and trees, higher off the ground.

About a week later, NOPT observed two known gang members on the property. Upon seeing the officers, the two fled into the apartment that had been searched in March. The officers wrote an incident report for criminal trespass, signed complaints, and requested issuance of warrants. NOPT preferred using warrants for several reasons. Warrants enable officers to pick up gang members when it is convenient for the officers, rather than

when the gang members appear on the property; the use of a warrant eliminates any question about the validity of a search incident to arrest; and a person arrested on a warrant is more likely to be required to make bond than to be released on recognizance. The next day, police arrested both subjects and took them to the county jail, where they remained because of their inability to post a \$100 cash bond.

Police officers observed another man with a vehicle behind the apartment building the day after the arrests. They gave him a verbal warning to remove his car and stay off the property. When the officers returned 5 minutes later and found the man still on the property, they had the car towed.

NOPT asked the city manager to revoke the certificate of inspection for 609 East Benton on May 15. Police efforts to deal with problems outside the building were being defeated by tenants inside the building. Tenants had removed the no-trespassing signs, and activity was once again on the rise. Furthermore, the owner still had not evicted anyone.

On June 6, NOPT spoke with city inspectors to expedite revocation of the certificate of inspection. At a meeting on the following day, the Cooperative Team decided to conduct a comprehensive inspection of the property, based on a complaint about standing water (possibly sewage) in the basement. All inspectors and police were to meet at the same time at 609 East Benton. The police chief's office also sent a warning letter to the owner, citing the drug activity occurring on his property. The letter warned that his property was subject to seizure if he was aware of drug activity on the property and took no action to stop it.

The property inspection revealed numerous minor violations of the building code, allowing officials to shut the building down and revoke the occupational permit. All tenants were directed to vacate the property that afternoon. A .380 semiautomatic handgun was found in the oven during the inspection of one apartment, and police later arrested the tenant. Because of her drug and weapons violations, the tenant was evicted and lost her right to Section 8 housing assistance. The other three tenants decided to move elsewhere.

Aware that gang members had threatened to burn the building down, NOPT officers believed that no attempt would be made until after another tenant, whose boyfriend was a high-ranking Southend Vice Lord gang member, had removed her things from her apartment. On June 8, NOPT officers signed a criminal trespass complaint against an Eastside Vice Lord seen on the property during a surveillance to prevent arson.

The last of the tenants' belongings were removed the next day; that evening, a fire was reported at the property. The fire's origin was believed to be electrical, and smoke and water caused most of the damage.

The police department contacted the owner on June 13 to tell him that all the previously boarded-up windows and doors were open. The owner said

The property inspection revealed numerous minor violations of the building code, allowing officials to shut the building down and revoke the occupational permit.

The local police advocated and obtained a city agreement to have the block turned into a cul-de-sac, which was accomplished by erecting parking blocks and traffic direction signs across an intersection.

that it would have to wait until the next day. At 3:42 a.m., fire engulfed the building and totally destroyed the second floor. The fire was ruled an arson, with the origin being an incendiary device. On June 14, the residence was still not boarded up as of 11 p.m. At 11:40 p.m., another fire completely gutted the structure.

On June 18, a city contractor demolished the burnt-out structure. The site is now a vacant lot, with no activity since the demolition. Against the recommendations of the Joliet Police Department arson squad, the insurance company that carried the policy on 609 East Benton paid the owner \$130,000 for his loss.

The destruction of the apartment building did not end NOPT's interest in the 600 block of East Benton. NOPT advocated and obtained a city agreement to have the block turned into a cul-de-sac, which was accomplished by erecting parking blocks and traffic direction signs across an intersection. The no-parking-stopping-standing signs in the 600 block have been maintained. Despite promises, the utility company has improved only one street light in the block, replacing a broken one. NOPT is waiting until spring to see if anyone reappears to establish a drug market.

1615–1617 Russell Street, Berkeley, California

In August 1991, neighbors of the Melrose Apartments, a 36-unit complex at 1615–1617 Russell Street in Berkeley, California, filed suit against its owners in small claims court. The neighbors of Melrose Apartments alleged that the owners allowed illegal drug activities to take place on their property, causing the neighbors great emotional and physical distress. Alleging that the owners were maintaining a nuisance, the neighbors sought money damages in small claims court and won.

The owners appealed to the superior court, where they received a new trial but lost again. Then they asked a California court of appeals to order the superior court to set aside its order (*Lew v. Superior Court*, 1993). They lost again. The court of appeals upheld judgments against the owners totaling \$218,325.

In this trial, which consolidated the complaints of 75 neighbors, a police sergeant testified that he had worked in the area for 4 years, first as a narcotics undercover officer and later as a patrol sergeant. In that time, he estimated that he had been to the Melrose Apartments more than 250 times on crime-related matters. He testified that the property was a center of drug activity in the neighborhood and a place of "shelter and safety from the police." He had made two dozen arrests at the building, and he testified that, despite the fact that none of the dealers lived there, they had easy access to the building and used that access to thwart police efforts to apprehend them.

An assistant city manager testified that he had known about the drug problem at the location for several years. He described the drug operation as sophisticated and the building “like a fortress” for drug sales. The property was so well known for drug activity that people from other areas would take cabs to Melrose Apartments to buy drugs. He also testified that it was possible to clean up drug centers through aggressive management.

The superior court found that the owners could have taken several steps—none of them extraordinary—to deal with drug problems at the apartment complex. These steps included employing a live-in manager and installing more secure fencing and a keycard gate. The owners had taken none of these measures.

Several of the neighbors testified and others submitted affidavits. Many of them submitted a signed statement making the following allegations:

I have been confronted by the drug dealers, drug customers and/or prostitutes that frequent and work around 1615–1617 Russell Street. On numerous occasions, I have reported to the police the drug activity and other illegal activity coming from this property.

Weekly, I have lost many hours of sleep from the cars that burn rubber after each drug buy in the middle of the night, people fighting and yelling, sounds of gun shots, and the fear that grips me night and day for myself and my family’s safety.

Numerous times I have been confronted by dealers or buyers, and I am now afraid to walk near this property and down my street. In fact, I often fear for my life day and night. This fear had permeated my home, my life and my soul.

I request your Honor award me \$5,000 plus court costs for the suffering this property has caused me.

Some plaintiffs added personal accounts. For example, one added the following to the form:

Because of this illegal activity, my child is unable to use our front yard, and I even have to check the backyard, since it has been intruded upon from time to time by people running from the police. He is learning to count by how many gunshots he hears and can’t understand why he can’t even enjoy our rose garden

The basic theory of the lawsuits was that the apartment owners were maintaining a nuisance, to the detriment of the individual neighbors. In their defense, the owners claimed that the drug dealers, customers, and objectionable third parties were not their tenants. They argued that they could not be held responsible for crimes committed by nonresidents.

The superior court found that the owners could have taken several steps—employing a live-in manager and installing more secure fencing and a keycard gate—to deal with drug problems at the apartment complex.

Individual neighbors could recover damages for the adverse effect of the drug-related activities on the use and enjoyment of their own properties. They could also be compensated under the nuisance theory for mental suffering.

The superior court found from the evidence that the building was being used as a center for drug sales and distribution. Under California's drug house law, the Drug Abatement Law, a property used for these purposes is a public nuisance. The statute does not require that the unlawful activity that makes the building a nuisance be conducted by the owner, a tenant, or someone lawfully entering it.

The owners argued that their only responsibility to the neighbors was to clean up the property, not to monetarily compensate them. The court of appeals disagreed, saying that there was nothing in the nuisance statute precluding private lawsuits for damages. Although a judgment on the neighbors' consolidated claims would be beyond the individual limits of a small claims judgment, tenants seeking damages could use small claims court.

While the statute made the use of the property a public nuisance, it also made the use of the property a private nuisance in its effect on individual neighbors. They could recover damages for the adverse effect of the drug-related activities on the use and enjoyment of their own properties. They could also be compensated under the nuisance theory for mental suffering, including fear for themselves and their families.

Gang-Problem Triangle Applied

The preceding three cases can be viewed through the perspective of the gang-problem triangle. In the San Diego case, the owner of the house was a victim with no effective guardian. Her ownership of the house did not make her its manager because her grandchildren took it away from her. The city attacked the problem in several ways. First, as is evident from the arrests and calls for police service, it used criminal law enforcement. Second, it proceeded against the house as a public nuisance. Third, it proceeded against several gang members for violation of court orders in the nuisance case. Fourth, the city attorney worked with other city agencies to solve the property owner's problem, assisting her in getting a rehabilitation loan. Finally, the city supported the efforts of a guardian (in gang-problem triangle terms)—the owner's granddaughter.

In Joliet, gang members presented the immediate problem, and the police department attacked them by traditional law enforcement means. It also took several steps to deal with 609 East Benton as a problem place. These included obtaining the power to treat all nonresidents as trespassers and getting towaway rights for vehicles parked behind the building.

The apartment owner, failing to fulfill his responsibilities as an owner and manager, was a significant part of the problem. While he cooperated with the police by delegating to them the right to remove trespassers and tow away visiting cars, he never evicted the problem tenants. Instead, police turned to code enforcement to deal with the building and its problems. City inspectors found several code violations, and the city revoked the certificate of inspection. All tenants were forced to leave the building.

Police also obtained the cooperation of another person responsible for the property, the public housing authority's Section 8 coordinator. In the gang-problem triangle model, the coordinator is a controller of problem tenants, a guardian of victim tenants, and a manager of the problem place.

NOPT officers also addressed the transitional place—the street. Their department had responsibility as a manager of this transitional place. Although NOPT officers failed to have the street lighting improved, they succeeded in banning parking or standing along the street. They also persuaded the city to turn the street into a cul-de-sac.

The owner may have won with one last dereliction of duty. He failed to board up the building to protect it from arson, and it was burned. Despite police department protests, he collected insurance on the building.

The police department did succeed in cleaning up the site, which is now a vacant lot with no activity. The neighborhood is safer, at least for a time.

The Melrose Apartment case in Berkeley is another example of the failure of owners to meet their obligations as managers of a problem site. Although the police department and the city attempted to get the owners to control the problems on their property, the neighbors of the apartment complex took the most effective action. They filed nuisance suits in small claims court to assert their rights. They were vindicated by judgments totaling over \$200,000.

Conclusion

This chapter presents two models—the gang-problem triangle and a problem-solving model—as ways of thinking about street-gang problems. It also encourages concentration on the specific harm that gangs cause rather than pursuit of a silver-bullet solution to street gang problems. Small wins are much more valuable than large failures.

The gang-problem triangle enables community leaders to break complex problems into smaller parts, making it easier to identify the people responsible for specific problems and the people who can correct them. The problem-solving model also starts with the problem rather than the solution. What is the problem people are trying to solve? What are its components? What response is most likely to be effective? Does the response work?

This chapter concentrates on problem places—places where gang activity is causing specific, identifiable harm. Exhibit 46 provides a convenient means for identifying problem places by general and specific type and for identifying the people who have specific relationships to those places. Exhibit 47 more specifically addresses the question of who the responsible people are. Who are the offenders and victims at problem places? Who are the controllers, guardians, and managers of those places?

Criminal law enforcement must be employed against the most serious gang harm—felonies committed by gang members. Community citizens also have several civil remedies they can use to protect their personal safety, their property, and their quality of life. Legal tools such as nuisance abatement are available to both local governments and private citizens. Strict code enforcement can alleviate much gang-related harm.

To be sure, there are obstacles to overcome—the risk of retaliation, the lack of official cooperation, and the congestion of the courts. By working together and starting with the problem rather than the solution, community leaders and ordinary citizens have a variety of civil and minor criminal remedies that they can use to address gang-related harm.

Evaluating Anti-Gang Efforts

As the story in Genesis goes, on the seventh day God rested and assessed the universe he had created. He called for his angels to join him and as they all gazed upon this wondrous creation God declared, "I have created the universe and all that is in it; it is good."

Just as God was making this statement, Lucifer, an angel who was habitually late for meetings, joined the group. Upon hearing God's statement, Lucifer asked, "God, how do you know it is good? What criteria are you using? What measures did you use and how did you collect your data?"

No one in the group stirred and, after a thoughtful silence, God stated, "Lucifer, go to hell." (Patton, 1981)

Program evaluation is a process many policymakers talk about but often avoid because they are unfamiliar with evaluation methods, don't know what to evaluate, have no guidance, or believe that an evaluation will miss the core of a program and fail to capture its positive aspects. Nevertheless, evaluations are necessary for many reasons: they provide information for decisionmakers who must decide how to use resources, document the program so it may be replicated elsewhere, and enable public agencies who are accountable to political officials and the public to justify the expenditure of resources. Moreover, part of operating a program is to monitor operations to measure effectiveness. If the goal of a gang intervention project is to reduce harm associated with gang activity, the only way to know whether it is reaching that goal is through program evaluation.

The decision whether to use agency staff or hire external personnel to conduct evaluations depends on many considerations, including budget, time frame, independence, and expertise. Even if an agency hires an external evaluator, program staff are not relieved of evaluation responsibilities. Good evaluations are cooperative and collaborative, so evaluation-related tasks will inevitably fall to program staff and supervisors.

An evaluation can be done for two primary reasons. The first is to specify, document, and analyze a program's processes. This is a "process evaluation," which focuses on the internal characteristics of a program. Those characteristics include the structure (for example, policies and procedures) that guides the program's operation, the resources necessary to support the program, the program's goals and objectives, the target group or area, and the approaches and strategies that represent the program's core elements. The second reason is to identify the effects of the program. That is achieved through an "impact evaluation," which examines the program's target to detect whether the program's desired effects are evident in the targeted population or geographic area.

Even if an agency hires an external evaluator . . . good evaluations are cooperative and collaborative, so evaluation-related tasks will inevitably fall to program staff and supervisors.

Confronting evaluation questions early on helps an evaluation and improves the likelihood that useful results will emerge.

It is never too early in the life of a project to begin thinking about how to carry out the evaluation. Confronting evaluation questions early on helps an evaluation and improves the likelihood that useful results will emerge. Starting an evaluation simultaneously with the program means that those designing and operating the program must specify strategies and activities associated with the program and then monitor the application of those program elements. In turn, this means that useful information is generated for those overseeing and executing the program. An evaluation closely related to the program in this way links the program's processes with outcomes, improving the ability of evaluators to link observed results to specific strategies.

This chapter builds on basic evaluation steps for determining the effectiveness of anti-gang efforts that focus on the harm created by gangs. In brief, evaluation steps include:

- ❑ Specifying goals and objectives related to the reduction of harm associated with gang problems.
- ❑ Specifying the target population and time during which the program will operate.
- ❑ Describing the program's activities in detail and directly linking activities with program objectives, since the objectives represent the reasons for doing the activities.
- ❑ Constructing a logic diagram of the program that represents the cause-and-effect relationships between activities and accomplishments.
- ❑ Examining success by developing comparisons that will show whether the program had the intended effects on the target population.
- ❑ Specifying other factors that might account for changes in the target population. For example, other programs, such as a new jobs program, might account for changes in the target population.
- ❑ Designing data collection instruments.
- ❑ Developing and analyzing comparisons, which is the data analysis portion of the evaluation.
- ❑ Drawing conclusions.

This chapter is divided into two major sections. The first focuses on process evaluations. Discussion centers on the formative and managerial functions of a process evaluation, the need to specify program elements, how to identify the evaluation's emphases and fine-tune the evaluation, and how to identify appropriate data. The second section concentrates on impact evaluations and describes how to use questions as guides for the impact evaluation. It also reviews several evaluation design issues such as the unit of analysis, levels and types of effects, determination of appropriate measures, sources and procedures for obtaining data, and quasi-experimental analyses. The chapter concludes with a summary of key elements in an evaluation and a list of suggested references.

Process Evaluations

A process evaluation is concerned with the elements that characterize the operations and functions of a program, such as organizational structure, policies and procedures, human and technical resources, goals and objectives, and activities. The process evaluation disassembles an entire program into its constituent parts as much as possible so that the details of the program's operation are readily apparent. This is a valuable exercise even for people who are well acquainted with a program. Most programs are complex, containing many pieces that interact continually. Staff members often do not focus on the various parts of a program because of the demands associated with their particular responsibilities. Program managers are often unable to concentrate on the entire picture since modern management is often characterized as "putting out a series of fires." An evaluation is a good tool for taking stock of a program in its entirety.

Evaluation, like other research efforts, involves a series of questions that need answers. Listed below are several general questions that serve as a guide for conducting a process evaluation (Herman, Morris, and Fitz-Gibbon, 1987):

- What are the program's goals and objectives? Are the goals and objectives linked?
- What are the program's major characteristics (for example, resources, activities, participants, and administrative structure)?
- How do program activities contribute to attaining the objectives? (This is one area where a logic diagram of the program can be helpful. This question focuses on the conceptual and operational links between a program's activities and its objectives.)
- How are program activities carried out? (The operation of program activities often departs from original plans. Be sure to focus on how tasks are actually performed as well as how they were intended to be done. The issue has two sides. One is that the actual activities can be compared with intended activities. That enables those in the program to assess whether plans are being implemented properly. On the other hand, there may be good reasons why the plan cannot be carried out as originally envisioned. This is important for an evaluation. Effects must be attributed to activities, not plans.)
- Are program activities moving toward the objectives? (This refers to the need for interim measures or milestones that track the project's development.)
- What adjustments in the program might lead to a better attainment of objectives? (Adjustments include such items as staffing levels, types of staff best suited for the program, training, additional participants, fewer participants, incentives, and management and support.)

A logic diagram of the program . . . focuses on the conceptual and operational links between a program's activities and its objectives.

A gang project would not target an educational campaign to prevent gang recruitment to young adults because most recruits are youth.

- What measures could be appropriate for evaluating impact? (Even at this early stage, evaluators are concerned about appropriate measures of success. This illustrates the close link between the process and impact evaluations.)

Process evaluations have many uses, including helping to shape the program. From the earliest stages of program design, decisions are made about how best to construct the program so that it is efficient, effective, and appropriate for its context. As any good manager knows, those are not static concerns to be forgotten once a program is set up. By requiring program staff and managers to make adjustments in design and operation, the program evolves in both predictable and unpredictable ways. Asking the questions listed above during program design closely links the evaluation to the program's structure, and an ongoing process evaluation enables program managers to make midcourse corrections if necessary. A program is a dynamic enterprise that must be managed and evaluated accordingly.

Process evaluations also establish links between objectives and strategies. As mentioned earlier, a clear connection is needed between the program's objectives, its strategies, and its activities. If no link exists between objectives and strategies, positive effects cannot be expected. For example, a gang project would not target an educational campaign to prevent gang recruitment to young adults because most recruits are youth. Evaluators and program administrators must ask whether the program activities are sensible given the nature of the problem being addressed. A logical relationship must exist among the strategies, the objectives they intend to address, and appropriate measures of success. That relationship is important because it is the first step in linking activities to outcomes.

A third use of process evaluations concerns replication. If a gang initiative begins as a pilot project, the intent may be to expand the program if evidence suggests that it is effective. A process evaluation will aid this expansion by documenting the structures and main activities that constitute the program. The written evaluation is part of the institutional memory that spreads knowledge within the organization. That information also is helpful to other communities interested in building on a particular gang initiative in the future.

A fourth use of process evaluations is to garner support for the program from participants and others in the community. Receiving accurate information about the results of their efforts is important to staff members so that they know the effects of their actions. In addition, some residents and community leaders will look for evidence of success before fully committing to a new project.

The issues discussed and questions raised thus far provide general guidance for a process evaluation. The remainder of this section presents a series of steps that are essential to that evaluation.

Specifying the Program Elements

Begin by articulating the goals and objectives that represent the general direction of an anti-gang program. For example, a program's goal might be to eliminate gang-related driveby shootings in a neighborhood or prevent graffiti from appearing on the walls of city schools.

Objectives are more specific than goals and show what will be done to attain the stated goal. For example, objectives associated with the first goal statement could be the initiation of public education activities in gang neighborhoods, the implementation of selective crackdowns, and the sponsorship of negotiations and conflict resolution between rival gangs. Objectives related to the goal of keeping graffiti off school walls may include establishing a liaison officer in schools, raising awareness of parents and guardians, organizing afterschool programs for otherwise unsupervised youth, and restricting the availability of spray paint. In both examples, objectives are consistent with the program's goal statement, and because they are more specific than the goals, they say something about how the goals will be reached.

Another dimension of specifying the program's elements is to describe the major features that define the project—that is, the programmatic details that flow from the established objectives. For example, if an objective is to establish a liaison officer in elementary schools, the specifics of how to accomplish it define the program. The major features of such a program would include the number of officers, the number and locations of the schools, descriptions of the target area and population, officers' activities and responsibilities, and policies that guide the program. While the goals establish program direction and the objectives map out a route toward those goals, the program activities describe the vehicles the program will use to meet goals and objectives.

A logic diagram can be a valuable tool. As mentioned before, a logic diagram traces a program's elements from the goals to the specific activities. By presenting a graphic illustration of a program's logical structure, this diagram aids the evaluation process, helps managers implement and operate the program, and spells out activities. In addition, this exercise points toward potential measures of effectiveness, as indicated by the accompanying logic diagram in Exhibit 48.

The Purposes of the Evaluation

As mentioned earlier, part of the rationale for conducting an ongoing process evaluation is to improve the program as it evolves and to prepare for an impact evaluation, making the program more responsive to changes and strengthening it.

Four common purposes for this portion of the evaluation are listed on the next page with a brief description. Keep in mind that multiple purposes can be served simultaneously.

Objectives related to the goal of keeping graffiti off school walls may include establishing a liaison officer in schools, raising awareness of parents and guardians, organizing afterschool programs for otherwise unsupervised youth, and restricting the availability of spray paint.

- ❑ **Identify Strengths and Weaknesses of the Program.** This refers to the operation of the overall program and each component. Common questions to address here include: What is known about the problem to be addressed? Which parts of the program are in operation? Are resources available? Are objectives associated with each goal? Does each objective have corresponding activities? What are key activities of the program? Are adjustments in management or operation needed?
- ❑ **Identify Barriers to Implementation.** Those barriers can be internal or external to the program or agency. Common questions include: Are all needed personnel and agencies involved? Do delays or problems confront program staff? What causes them? What are possible solutions or responses to problems?
- ❑ **Identify Obstacles to Program Effectiveness.** As in the item above, impeding factors can be internal or external to the program. Some typical questions are: Do we know enough about the problem to craft a response? Do activities reflect what is known about the problem? Have resources been committed to the program? Are other ongoing programs addressing the same issue in a different way? What developments within gangs affect the program?
- ❑ **Identify Potential Effects.** This includes both positive and negative effects. The observed links between objectives and activities suggest areas that the program is striving to affect. Sample questions are: Who is the target population? What is the target area? What about the target is the program intending to change?

Focusing the Evaluation

The focus for an evaluation is based on earlier work that described the program fully, including its key activities, targets, and emphases. As in the last

Exhibit 48. Sample Logic Diagram

Goal	Objective	Activity	Effect
Eliminate gang-related driveby shootings in the Eastwood neighborhood.	1. Public education.	1a. Presentations at neighborhood association meetings. 1b. Presentations at schools. 1c. Media campaign.	1. Increased awareness among residents. 2. Increased participation by residents. 3. Gang issues settled through negotiation.
	2. Conflict resolution training.	2a. Gang summits. 2b. Special curriculum for schools.	4. Reduced frequency of shootings.

section, focusing an evaluation can be envisioned or planned by presenting a series of key questions including the following:

- ❑ **Are Certain Program Components Key to Program Success?** For example, a key element for an in-school primary prevention effort would likely be the characteristics of educational materials and presentations.
- ❑ **What Program Elements Are Likely To Be Ineffective? Why?** Considering this question is not casting doubt upon the program. Rather, it is directing attention toward weaknesses or problems. Possible sources of failure include weaknesses in the program design (for example, the strategy is inappropriate for the stated objective), incomplete knowledge of the problem, or the intractable nature of the problem.
- ❑ **Are Pieces Missing From the Program as Planned That Might Be Important for Success?** For example, if the anti-gang initiative plans to deliver coordinated human services to the target population, then cooperative arrangements with other agencies and community groups are necessary.
- ❑ **Which Expected Outcomes Will Be the Easiest To Accomplish?** This could relate to the nature of the problem being addressed or the characteristics of the program.
- ❑ **What Might Be the Program's Unintended Effects?** These can be negative or positive. For example, afterschool activities might expose children to increased risk because of the scheduling and location of the activities. Alternatively, such activities intended to prevent gang membership may, if effective, reduce truancy because they provide an incentive for attending school.

Seeking answers to these questions is a valuable procedure because it can aid program development and focus evaluation by uncovering correctable program weaknesses, anticipating problems, and identifying areas affected by the program.

Collecting Data

Data needs will vary with each program's focus, activities, and specific strategies. Process evaluations use both quantitative and qualitative data, with emphasis usually on the latter. Questions that focus on characteristics such as program emphasis and possible barriers to implementation often require a detailed knowledge of the program and its target. This is best accomplished with qualitative data that allow the evaluator to glean program insights. Open-ended interviews are useful tools because they provide flexibility for the respondent to elaborate and for the interviewer to explore.

Some types of quantitative data are appropriate for assessing program growth and development. Interim process measures, such as the number of youth reached in programs and the number and type of arrests, tell the evaluator and program staff whether the project's process objectives are

Open-ended interviews are useful tools because they provide flexibility for the respondent to elaborate and for the interviewer to explore.

Knowing the number of in-school presentations or the number of arrests for gang-related offenses does not tell how effective those tactics are at keeping youth from joining gangs or reducing gang-related violence.

being met and whether the program is moving in the intended direction. It is important to emphasize that this type of information is not a direct measure of impact. The program's impact relates to goals and objectives (the program's intended accomplishments), not the steps taken to achieve those accomplishments.

For example, a gang project includes mediation training to reduce violence among teenagers, and documents the number of young people who complete training. Although this information is useful, it says nothing about the training's effectiveness, even if the numbers were unusually high. A tool to measure gang violence after mediation training is needed to answer that question. Questions about effects relate to fulfilling objectives, not applying program activities. Knowing the number of in-school presentations or the number of arrests for gang-related offenses does not tell how effective those tactics are at keeping youth from joining gangs or reducing gang-related violence. However, the numbers do indicate whether the program is operating as intended and moving toward the stated objectives.

Primary sources for appropriate process data include program documents, program staff and supervisors, and program participants. Participants include program staff, other agency personnel who are involved, personnel from other organizations, residents and business people in the target area, and the intended beneficiaries of the program.

Several methods are available for gathering process data. The choice of methods depends on the information sought. Quantitative process information might be collected with a data collection sheet that is part of the program's regular reporting procedures. In this way, generation of evaluation data is part of the program's routine operation. Other information will require using an open-ended interview guide during personal interviews with key people. Observation is another potential method, depending on the information sought. For example, direct observation will provide data about interactions between program staff and those targeted by the program.

Taken as a whole, a process evaluation conducted as described here serves two purposes: to guide program development and to help it remain on track.

Impact Evaluations

All research is guided by questions, and program evaluation is no different. Just as process evaluations need a focus, so do impact evaluations. Questions that need answers provide direction. For program evaluation, the questions come from knowledge of the program being evaluated. This is the link between process and impact evaluation. The first general question in the mind of an evaluator is: What is this program trying to accomplish, change, or improve? Without knowing that, even considering an evaluation is impossible since no one knows what kind of effects to expect or where to find them. To answer that question, evaluators can draw on their familiarity with

the program’s structure, strategies, and operation. The determination of impact is the last step in the logical chain that begins with specifying goals and objectives. The objectives guide the selection of strategies and activities, and the target of strategies is where effects will be found. The substance of the strategies explains what the program is trying to change.

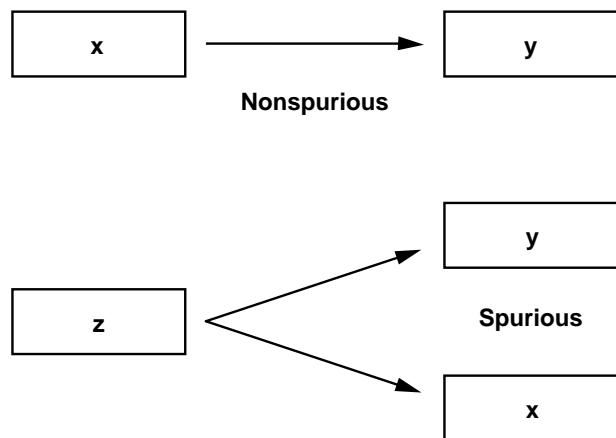
Evaluation of the effects of a program involves several design issues that decide the scope and focus of the impact evaluation. These issues include causality, the proper unit of analysis, the various levels of effects expected, the selection of appropriate data, the basics of data collection, and quasi-experimental designs.

Causal Conclusions

Program officials, researchers, political leaders, and funding agencies are all interested in learning whether the project under study caused the observed effects. Attributing cause may be considered the ideal, but it is a difficult issue philosophically and methodologically, with many disagreements over the concept’s meaning and applicability. Despite this difficult issue, considering questions of causality in program evaluation is helpful. To make the inference that activity X caused effect Y, three basic conditions must be met. Each is listed below with a brief explanation:

- ❑ **X Must Precede Y in Time.** That is obvious unless we do not rule out the possibility of reverse causation. In program evaluation, the program’s strategies must be operating before effects take place if we are to attribute cause to the program.
- ❑ **X and Y Must Be Related.** Correlation between the two variables must exist. That is, they must co-vary in some way showing they are connected. If the two variables act independently (that is, have no relationship), they vary in ways unconnected to each other.
- ❑ **Nonspuriousness.** Assuming a relationship between two variables (X and Y), we must learn whether a third variable (Z) causes the changes in them. We can detect spuriousness statistically by controlling for Z. If the relationship between X and Y disappears when controlling for Z, the relationship is said to be spurious. That is, our original observation that X and Y are related is mistaken. They seemed related because of their mutual relationship to Z. (See Exhibit 49 for an illustration of spurious and nonspurious relationships.)

Exhibit 49. Types of Relationships



To find neighborhood-level change attributable to a program that sought to improve the parenting skills of young mothers would be unlikely.

Unit of Analysis

The overall evaluation design, including the appropriate unit for analysis, is guided by the nature and focus of the gang initiative. The two models discussed in the introduction of this monograph and in Chapter 7—the gang-problem triangle and the problem-solving model—are important tools for understanding the nature of gang problems. The first is the gang triangle (see Exhibit 43) that separates any gang problem into three components: (1) a place where the problem is concentrated, (2) the victim who is affected by the problem, and (3) the motivated offender who is responsible for criminal activity. The second tool is the problem-solving model SARA (scanning, analysis, response, assessment) as shown in Exhibit 44. These two parts of the gang initiative work together in this way: The problem-solving activity is directed at one or more of the three elements that make up the gang triangle. A specific problem-solving activity (for example, painting over gang-related graffiti) suggests the method to accomplish something and focuses on the place of the activity. The implementation manual states clearly that the thrust of gang initiatives is to concentrate on specific behaviors and harm associated with gang activity.

Evaluating the effectiveness of a paintout means that the assessment must first look for changes in the target area’s physical surroundings and know which objective the paintout is trying to meet. If the objective of the paintout is to disrupt gang communications and activity in the area, an appropriate place to look for effects is in changes in the nature of gang activity (for example, its frequency and intensity) at the target location. In contrast, if the objective of the paintout is to reduce fear among residents, residents’ attitudes and beliefs can be examined to measure effects.

The unit of analysis for an impact evaluation corresponds to the focus of program activities. If the action being taken aims at individual-level change (for example, improving parenting skills of teenage mothers), an impact assessment must focus on the individual level of their parenting behaviors. On the other hand, if the focus of project activity is to reduce fear of gangs among residents in an area, the neighborhood is the proper unit of analysis. In both examples, the unit of analysis represents where evidence of program impact might be found. This is significant because the analysis could mistakenly be focused at a level higher than the activity being assessed. For example, to find neighborhood-level change attributable to a program that sought to improve the parenting skills of young mothers would be unlikely.

Levels and Types of Effects

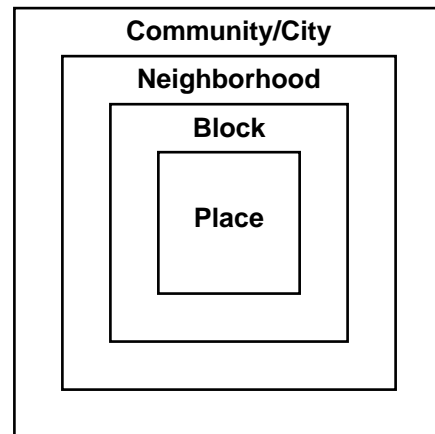
Levels of effects are determined by the boundaries of the problem and the specific actions taken to improve the situation. Of course, this does not mean that there cannot be multiple levels of effects. The following discussion reviews the major levels and types of effects that may be the subject of an impact evaluation.

Place. This refers to the immediate location of a certain problem. For example, gang members often congregate in locations where they disturb the peace and perhaps commit serious crimes. The most immediate effect that can be expected from a problem-solving response is whether the group changes in some way: leaves the area, reduces in size, gathers less frequently, or becomes less disruptive. If a change occurs, the first level of effect would be on the immediate surroundings. If, for example, the police began issuing loitering citations to those who were gathering, asking whether such actions dispersed the crowd would be appropriate.

Area Effects. The next level of effects is on the surrounding area. The area's size will vary according to the program, strategies, and desires of those carrying out the project. The area can be defined to include the block or street in front of the place or immediate location of the problem (see Exhibit 50). Natural boundaries, such as rivers, can also help define an effective operating area for the program, as can manufactured landmarks such as shopping centers and apartment complexes. From that point, an area's boundaries could logically be extended outward to encompass the neighborhood, beat, patrol division, or entire community. Key ingredients in deciding the appropriate geographic area for detecting effects are the problem's definition, the objectives sought by carrying out an intervention, and the strategy's characteristics. Expectations of success are tied to the substance of the project.

Time Period. An initial question is whether the strategy was effective in the short term. In the example above concerning loiterers, positive effects would be expected to appear shortly after the intervention if it were effective. If short-term effects are evident, the next question is whether the improvement lasts for some specified time. That varies according to the program and the intentions of those carrying out the response. A reasonable time period also depends on the nature of the problem and the strategies used. If the desired change is to reduce fear of crime in a neighborhood, immediate effects would not be expected. After obtaining a baseline measure of fear, evaluators must wait for a relatively lengthy period before expecting to observe change. One must, however, take practical considerations into account. Often, programs have deadlines for reporting results, especially when they are funded by outside entities, such as the Federal or a State government or a foundation. Obviously, that must be considered when determining how much time to allow for emergence of results.

Exhibit 50. Levels and Types of Effects



Impact evaluations often stress quantitative data. For example, do fewer youths hold favorable attitudes toward joining gangs now than before the project or have gang-related shootings declined during the past year?

Interim Outcomes. Besides examining the impact of the project’s activities on the target population, evaluators should consider assessing interim accomplishments connected to the project. The Comprehensive Gang Initiative notes many tasks that require implementation before interventions can begin. For example, the initiative specifically calls for police and other human service organizations in the jurisdiction to form partnerships to deliver a coordinated program aimed at reducing harm associated with gangs. Before carrying out an intervention, representatives from the various agencies must form a team to design and carry out a comprehensive set of services and activities—or perhaps develop a plan. The formation of an effective group may be seen as an interim outcome. Such a group is necessary for the program to operate and represents a qualitative change in the way public service agencies typically function. The formation of an interagency task force may be viewed as a positive accomplishment emanating from the program. However, an important caution is not to construe the formation of this kind of group as evidence of the strategy’s effectiveness. The group may be quite effective in marshaling resources from their respective agencies for the planned intervention, only to learn later that the intervention they carried out was not effective in reaching the program goal. The benefits of cooperation may go beyond the specific project and extend to future efforts. One could also consider the development of new working relationships among city agencies is also good for its own sake; benefits flow from doing things better.

Appropriate Measures and Data

As with other aspects of evaluation, decisions about appropriate measures depend on project objectives and activities. One of the most basic issues about any measure is its validity: Does it measure what we need measured? Data needs depend on the type of change sought by the intervention. If the project seeks to alter gang members’ behavior (for example, stop loitering), an appropriate measure would be one that reflects behavioral changes. On the other hand, if the project’s objective is to change attitudes among youth about gang membership, an appropriate measure would be one that gauges shifts in attitudes. Clearly, a measure not linked conceptually with the substantive nature of the intervention cannot be a valid measure of that intervention’s effectiveness. If, for example, the gang initiative includes steps to eliminate the gathering of gang members in certain areas through enforcement and the provision of alternative activities, the effectiveness of those program activities would not be assessed with a survey that measured young people’s attitudes toward gangs in the neighborhood.

While qualitative data are emphasized in process evaluations, impact evaluations often stress quantitative data. This is largely a function of the way programs are defined and activities designed. Efforts to change attitudes among groups or reduce the frequency of violent confrontations among gangs invite numerical comparisons. For example, do fewer youths hold favorable attitudes toward joining gangs now than before the project or have gang-related shootings declined during the past year?

That does not mean, however, that qualitative measures are inappropriate for evaluating effects. As with quantitative measures, appropriate use of qualitative data depends on the nature of the program and interventions. Some programs could conceivably aim toward effects that are best measured qualitatively, such as using conflict resolution training in inner-city schools as a way of introducing students to less violent ways to settle disagreements. Field observations that focus on student interactions might be one way of determining the training's effectiveness. In the earlier example of eliminating graffiti at schools, a valuable way of documenting effects is through photographs. They are direct evidence that is clear to the observer no matter what the outcome.

Combining quantitative and qualitative data as a way of enriching understanding of program effects is also valuable. Although these two kinds of data differ considerably, they are complementary in some ways. Quantitative data allow the researcher to obtain information across a broad spectrum. For example, the results of a properly conducted citizen survey can provide information representative of many people. This breadth of information contrasts with a greater depth of information from qualitative methods.

Consider a brief evaluation example that illustrates how these two types of data can illuminate different aspects of program effects. If the objective of an anti-gang intervention is to reduce calls for service to police from a specific location, an obviously appropriate procedure is to track calls for service. If fewer calls result, that will not necessarily suggest why the effects took place. One way to get this type of information is through structured focus groups of key people in the community. Their knowledge of the community could easily shed light on community reactions and perceptions that underlie a reduction in calls for service. Qualitative information can add texture to the broad picture provided by quantitative measures.

Data Collection

Whatever kind or combination of data is appropriate, it must be collected systematically and uniformly throughout the evaluation. The instruments or protocols needed will vary depending on the design and the kind of data sought. Most people are familiar with questionnaires that have a series of close-ended questions administered to a sample of the target population. Another kind of instrument is an interview protocol that is a guide for a personal interview. A third kind of instrument is a form designed to direct data collection from past files (for example, files of all gang-related homicides). A fourth example is a check sheet for use by someone making observations of certain kinds of behavior. The type of instrument depends on the kind of data being collected and the form in which it is available.

Many potential sources exist for needed evaluation data. The appropriate source depends on the kind of data being sought. Listed below are several common sources of data that can be useful for evaluating a gang initiative project:

In the example of eliminating graffiti at schools, a valuable way of documenting effects is through photographs.

- ❑ **Official Records.** They include criminal incident reports, call-for-service logs, arrest reports, census records, school disciplinary records, hospital records, and tax records.
- ❑ **Surveys.** They can take many forms—mail, phone, and face-to-face.
- ❑ **Program Files.** Records and descriptions of program activities usually contain not only process information but also information related to effects.
- ❑ **Crime Analysis.** This can be a valuable source of information depending on the degree of flexibility and extent of automated information.
- ❑ **Communications.** Computer-aided dispatching systems are potential sources of information on calls for service or response times.
- ❑ **Key Informants.** They should include a wide spectrum of people, including staff from all levels of the project, representatives from outside agencies, volunteers, and members of the target population.
- ❑ **Focus Groups.** Group discussions led by a facilitator probe the group's knowledge of the program. The facilitator guides the discussion through questions or statements that elicit the group's views. Focus group discussions can concentrate on single issues or cover a range of program-related issues.
- ❑ **Focused Interviews.** These are conducted with key people inside and outside the program.
- ❑ **Observations.** They include direct observations by evaluators of the target area and project activities. In addition, photographs may be appropriate.

Design and Analysis

This section presents basic information on quasi-experimental approaches that detect whether observed effects are attributable to the program.

The most powerful design for determining cause and effect is the true control-group approach. Using random assignment, this design analyzes post-intervention differences between the target population and a control group not exposed to the intervention. Random assignment means that people exposed to a program are selected randomly, as are control-group members who do not receive the intervention. This permits direct causal inferences about the effects of the program.

This design is widely used in other fields but notoriously difficult to implement in applied research settings such as gang intervention projects. People's daily lives are not subject to laboratory manipulation. However, alternative designs are available and enable evaluators to detect effects.

Time-series analysis is a common approach used by researchers when using a control group is not possible. Time series is a statistical modeling approach

that can distinguish program effects from other sources of variation in longitudinal data. A time-series design can focus on only one study group (the target group) or be used in conjunction with a comparison group. In the single-group design, a series of multiple measurements is made before, during, and after the intervention to assess the program's impact. Furthermore, the measurements must be made with the same instrument.

This type of analysis works well when appropriate data for finding effects are collected routinely over a long period. Calls for service and hospital admission records are good examples. They are collected as part of the agencies' normal organizational routines and can be arranged into time intervals (for example, daily, weekly, or monthly) most applicable to the research.

Time-series analysis also can be used with a nonequivalent control group—a group that is similar to (but not the same as) the target group and that is not selected through random assignment. One example is a situation in which the gang initiative targets one part of a city but not another area where gangs also are active. After researchers take into account the differences between the two sections of the community, this design can reveal the nature of program effects.

With certain kinds of data, the results observed for the program's target area can be compared with those for other sections of the same city. For example, decreases in calls for service or reported crime in the target area can be compared to what occurred in the surrounding area to determine if the activity has been displaced from the target area. In addition, the target area's trends can be compared to citywide trends. This type of comparison is an improvement over pretest and posttest analyses solely of program results. A pre-post analysis with no comparison focuses on documenting changes that occur only within the target area and does not provide persuasive evidence of program effects. Making comparisons with other sections of the same jurisdiction can suggest whether the changes observed in the target area are typical or atypical for the community. In this example, a reduction in calls for service from the target area while calls are increasing elsewhere suggests that the project is having an effect.

Decreases in calls for service or reported crime in the target area can be compared to what occurred in the surrounding area. In addition, the target area's trends can be compared to citywide trends.

Overview of Process and Impact Evaluations

As discussed throughout this chapter, the process and impact portions of an evaluation are linked and work together. The evaluation elements that have been outlined guide the management of a program and the assessment of its results. Exhibit 51 shows the relationship between the two segments of an evaluation. The upper left cell indicates that the process evaluation determined that the program was implemented well and that the impact assessment documented that the program had the desired effects. Here, the program is judged to be a success. The lower left cell suggests a situation where no or limited effects resulted, even though the program was

Exhibit 51. Relationship Between Process and Impact Evaluation

		Process Evaluation	
		Program Implemented Well	Not Implemented Well
Impact Evaluation	High	Success	Unexplained success
	Low	Program ineffective	Implementation failure

implemented properly. Here, the program is judged to be ineffective with respect to the impact measures. The upper right cell indicates the program was not implemented well, but positive effects were measured nevertheless. Here, the positive effects cannot be attributed to the program. The last cell suggests an implementation failure, and no judgment can be made regarding the program's effectiveness.

Obviously, the ideal is a well-implemented program that has a high level of success, but that is not always possible. Whatever the outcome, a well-conceived evaluation in which the process and impact portions are linked enables evaluators to make an informed assessment.

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Sources for Further Information

For more information on the Comprehensive Gang Initiative, contact:

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Contact: John Stedman

For more information on community efforts to combat gang activity, contact:

Department of Justice Response Center

1-800-421-6770

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General Information

Callers may contact the U.S. Department of Justice Response Center for general information or specific needs, such as assistance in submitting grants applications and information on training. To contact the Response Center, call 1-800-421-6770 or write to 1100 Vermont Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20005.

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