

A Proactive Approach to Combating Youth Gangs

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Abstract

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Statement of the Problem

Since the height of the youth gang epidemic in the 1990s youth gangs in the United States have continued to thrive and expand. They are no longer isolated to the large cities but have spread to all communities across the United States. Between the years 2002 and 2009 the number of communities with emerging gangs and gang problems increased by 20 percent (Egley & Howell, 2011). Gangs are also no longer isolated to the male juvenile population. As gangs progressed over the years so has female gang involvement. The National Youth Gang Survey reported in 2000 that female gang members were identified in 84 percent of communities with gang problems (Egley, Howell, & Major, 2006). It is important to combat the spread and involvement of youth in gangs due to individual and societal impacts that gangs have.

Gang involvement has shown to increase the rates of juvenile delinquency and violent crimes. According to the Rochester study youth involved in gangs committed four times the amount of crimes than non-gang members (Howell, 2006). Studies have also shown that gang members commit seven times the amount of violent crimes than non-gang members (Egley et al., 2006). Since gang membership has been shown to increase criminal behavior and violence efforts to combat the issues associated youth gang involvement have focused on intervention and suppression tactics.

The significance of this paper is to provide support for a proactive approach to combating youth gangs. A proactive approach relies on prevention and early intervention through social

programs. To combat youth gang involvement through this approach an understanding of juvenile risk factors and how they propel individuals to join gangs must be examined through criminological theories. This allows for effective program implementation and program outcomes in reducing juvenile gang involvement.

Method of Approach

Secondary data is used to review empirical and theoretical research funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice (OJJDP) and Delinquency Prevention and the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). Specifically, secondary data is comprised from the National Youth Gang Center that was created by the OJJDP in 1995 and the National Gang Center created in 2003 by the BJA. Note that in 2009 these two agencies merged to form one entity under the National Gang Center (Egley & Howell, 2011). The research and evaluations from these agencies are used to analyze the youth gang problem along with local and federal efforts made to combat youth gangs. Peer-reviewed journals and scholarly texts are used to examine criminological theories relating to juvenile delinquency and gang involvement. Criminological theories are used to build on the significance of protective factors in youth to understand the important foundations of effective prevention and early intervention programs.

Results of the Study

Program evaluations and empirical studies show evidence that prevention and early intervention of at-risk youths does prevent and delay the onset of gang involvement. To create effective programs protective factors against youth gang involvement must be understood. For programs to be effective communities must identify the extent of juvenile delinquency and gang problems in their community. Effective programs must follow the OJJDP's National Gang Model for effective creation and implementation of programs.

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Section I: Introduction

A Proactive Approach to Combat Youth Gangs

Since 2002 youth gang disbursement in the United States has increased and spread across communities including suburban and rural areas by twenty percent (Egley & Howell, 2011). Every community now experiences some form of youth gang problem. As a result of increased disbursement across communities youth gangs have risen anywhere from 13 percent to 22 percent across the nation (Howell, 2010). The increase in youth gang involvement and their disbursement to a wider range of communities is troubling because youth gangs continue to be increasingly violent.

Juveniles learn behavior through peer association. When they are involved in gangs they learn new criminal behaviors and that behavior is reinforced by peers. As a result of peer learning and reinforcement juvenile gang members commit more crimes than non-gang members. In the city of Rochester survey studies reported that juvenile gang members committed 68 percent of all violent offenses (Howell, 2006). Beginning in the 1980s weapons became more readily available to juveniles resulting in an increase in violent offenses (Howell, Egley, Tita, & Griffiths, 2011). In the 1998 National Youth Gang Survey 84 percent of all communities surveyed reported that firearms were used often or sometimes by gang members during assaults (Howell, Egley, & Gleason, 2002). Gang related homicides have also increased as a result of weapon availability. From 1996 to 2004 one in five homicides was associated to gangs (Howell, et al., 2011). The gang violence that has escalated over the past few decades has brought increased concerns and awareness to combating youth gangs.

Many strategies have been implemented to combat the youth gang problem in the United States. The most recognized strategies are gang intervention and suppression efforts. These are

the most familiar strategies to the public because they are federal government policy implications or largely government funded intervention or suppression programs. These programs attack already established gangs and active gang members. They seek to reduce violence and criminal gang activity through incapacitation of youth gang members. Programs such as these can be effective in the short term but in reducing youth gang membership and future gang crimes they fail. These programs are ineffective because they only suppress gang members for a short period of time. When gang members return back to the streets after incarceration they quickly resort to delinquent behavior. In the 2001 National Youth Gang Survey 63 percent of communities surveyed reported that recently released incarcerated gang members contributed to an increase in their community's gang violence (Howell, 2006). Efforts to suppress youth gangs through incarceration are ultimately ineffective in the long run. The purpose of this study is to show that the best approach to combating youth gangs is through effective prevention and early intervention. The ultimate goal in the end is to reduce youth gang involvement.

This paper is comprised of secondary data including empirical and theoretical research done by the National Youth Gang Center supported by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) since 1995 and National Gang Center supported by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) since 2003. Agency publications and bulletins from these agencies were also used along with peer-reviewed journals and scholarly texts.

This paper is an educational tool for communities to provide them with an understanding of how social culture, families, schools and communities affect youth by increasing risk factors and the impact that risk factors have on increasing a youth's likelihood of joining a gang. The importance of protective factors in youth will be expressed through an explanation of criminological theories. Examples of past and current preventative and early intervention

programs that apply the core concepts of criminological theories are provided as examples on how communities can increase protective factors in youth. This paper will also provide communities with a model on how to effectively create and implement preventative programs. Through this model communities will learn the importance in identifying their gang problem and that it takes an entire community effort to effectively implement an anti-gang program. If communities can understand the causes of youth gang involvement and openly accept the problem in their community they can effectively implement programs that will in the long run decrease juvenile gangs and crime.

While reading about the programs explained in this paper communities should not be discouraged by the success rate of some of the programs. Programs have been difficult to accurately evaluate as some juvenile gang prevention and early intervention programs have ceased to exist. Programs may end early or after only a few years of implementation due to exhaustion of funding and inability to financially sustain the program long-term, or program failure due to inadequate program implementation by communities. When communities and stakeholders are in denial of their youth gang problem this causes poor budgeting and program implementation. Programs that have been unsuccessful due to lack of commitment and implementation by community leaders make it difficult to evaluate the program structure. It is difficult to evaluate if the program was truly ineffective or if it had simply been implemented poorly and would have been successful if it had supportive stakeholders involved.

Communities should also not be deterred in supporting the implementation of preventative and early intervention programs due to the lack of long-term empirical support. There have been few studies that have measured the lifelong impact of youth gang programs on juveniles. Many evaluations have centered on a year to a few years of evaluation while juveniles

are still in the program. These evaluations have shown promising and supportive results for program effectiveness but there still remains a lack of longitudinal studies on the effectiveness of youth gang programs in preventing youths from ever joining a gang in their lifetime.

Section II: Literature Review

History

Youth gangs in the United States have existed almost as far back as the birth of the nation. The earliest record of youth gangs existing is 1783 in the Northeast (Howell & Moore, 2010). These first gangs were comprised of young teenagers and young adults. These gangs were far from the street gangs we see today. Unlike today's criminal youth gangs the first youth gangs' activities centered on fighting over territory or 'turf' (Howell & Moore, 2010). In studying the history of youth gang development in the United States the emergence of gangs are centered on immigration and population shifts. It is logical that the first gangs originated on the Northeast, primarily in New York as a result of being the center of immigration into the United States. As immigration spread to other regions of the United States and as populations shifted gang emergence soon began to appear in the Midwest, West and lastly the South. The four main regions of the United States saw the emergence of gangs at different times and in different ways. As a country the United States saw peak gang activity and membership growth during the 1800s, 1920s, 1960s and 1990s (Howell, 1998).

To understand the development of youth gangs the history of immigration in the United States has to be understood through its social impact. The first wave of immigration was after the Revolutionary War to 1860 (Howell & Moore, 2010). These immigrants were from Northern and Western Europe, Germany, Great Britain and Scandinavia (Howell & Moore, 2010). The second wave of immigration overlapped the first wave and began in 1820 and lasted a hundred years (Howell & Moore, 2010). These immigrants were primarily Italians, Irish, Jews and Polish (Howell & Moore, 2010). The floods of immigration into the United States led to rapid population growth especially in the major cities. Cities such as New York became overwhelmed

with housing issues and social disorganization. Social disorganization was fueled by the discrimination of new immigrants by American born individuals for not being born in the United States (Howell & Moore, 2010). During this time many immigrants were faced to live in slum neighborhoods and communities. The result of these conditions bonded groups of people together to protect each other and their territory. Violence was a way of life for many of the individuals living in these conditions and gangs grew out of this violence (Howell & Moore, 2010). Although violence was a normal condition to life for these early gangs many of the gang members were hard laborers and did not engage in other criminal activities (Howell & Moore, 2010). It would not be until the nineteenth century that the first serious gangs often referred to as the first 'true' juvenile gangs appeared in the United States primarily in New York and Chicago (Franzese, Covey, & Menard, 2006).

Prior to the 1820s gangs primarily fought over turf. Eventually gangs would get more violent and choose other criminal enterprises. By 1840 gangs were no longer primarily fighting over territory instead ethnic unity was most important to the youth gangs (Howell & Moore, 2010). During this period of gang growth the most influential gangs such as The Five Points Gang with influential members like Alphonse Capone would emerge in the United States (Howell & Moore, 2010). These gangs formed on street corners and became more organized in structure. Criminal enterprises soon began to grow larger as more immigrants came into the country. To adjust to the rapid population growth tenement housing was created. People were overcrowded in these living conditions and they soon began to resemble degraded slum neighborhoods. The deterioration of the neighborhoods caused a lack of community cohesiveness and formal social controls. As a result of the social disorganization, lack of police interaction and increasing youth population gang crime increased.

The gangs of the early 19th century were comprised of many juveniles but backed by strong leadership from mafia organizations. The Chinese gangs were one such group of people who in 1860s New York and for years after profited from illegal opium distribution and gambling (Howell & Moore, 2010). During this same period is the first record of Chicago gangs emerging. It would take to the 1880s that the street gangs would fully emerge in the Midwest and primarily in Chicago (Howell & Moore, 2010). The emergence of the Chicago gangs followed the same development of those in earlier New York. By the 1870s the Irish gangs were the largest and terrorized the area for twenty years (Howell & Moore, 2010). Many of the violent conflicts were between gang members.

The second period of gang growth occurred during the roaring twenties. The gangs of this time were predominately white and criminal activities included political corruption, business endeavors and violence between rival gangs (Howell & Moore, 2010). This era of gangs was led by the infamous Al Capone who moved to Chicago in 1919 (Howell & Moore, 2010). The youth of Chicago followed the steps of their larger gangs setting up street gangs throughout the city. Eventually the organized and glorified gangs of the twenties would dissolve as families moved out of the crime ridden cities into better neighborhoods. Unlike contemporary gang members as families moved out of the city they did not take their gangs with them (Howell & Moore, 2010). Gangs remained within the city as populations shifted once again. This is when the first black gangs appeared in Chicago. Although these new gangs appeared in the 1920s they had a small impact on Chicago (Howell & Moore, 2010). It was not until the 1940s that black communities grew and by 1950 they nearly doubled to a population of half a million (Howell & Moore, 2010). New York also saw large migrations of black populations along with Latino populations during the 1950s and 1960s and by the 1960s more than two thirds of New York gangs were Puerto

Rican or black (Howell & Moore, 2010). As blacks moved into these cities during the first few decades of the century they faced segregation and discrimination. Like many other ethnic groups who immigrated or migrated throughout the country they faced poverty and poor living conditions. This inevitably led to youth delinquency and the creation of youth cohesion in forming gangs. This was not only seen in Chicago but also in the West as blacks from the south moved north and west for a better life. Los Angeles began to face its own black gangs at this time but also dealt with other population shifts.

The West saw its first real emergence of street gangs at this time. Not only were blacks forming street gangs but so too were other ethnic minorities. In an attempt to hold onto their Mexican culture second generation Mexican-Americans created their own street gangs. The early street gangs were made up of adolescent playgroups. This would change as populations grew. From 1940 to 1964 four million Mexicans migrated into the United States with the largest proportion settling in the West (Howell & Moore, 2010). As with other population shifts in history more gangs began to emerge. Unlike other regions in the United States Los Angeles saw its first emergence of prison gangs as a result of prosecution and criminal sentencing of Mexican gang members for murder. American-Mexicans perceived these actions by the state as being prejudice and the result united the Mexican community in and out of prison. Their reaction led to the first formation of Mexican prison gangs that would soon bleed into the surrounding communities.

The 1960s were another turning point for youth gangs in the United States. With the tensions in the United States during this period gangs were for the first time fighting for political interests and civil rights. Chicago at this time would see the creation of the Latin Kings and Devils Disciples (Gangster Disciples, Black Gangster Disciples and Gangster Disciples). A

decade later the People and Folk Nation would be created as alliances for similar gangs in the Midwest (Howell & Moore, 2010). At this time street gangs would first appear in the south. Prior to this there was little existence of street youth gangs in the south due to the lack of a central large city (Howell & Moore, 2010). As a result immigrants were settled over a greater distance of land and did not face the harsh realities of discrimination and poverty that other immigrants across the country faced. As street gangs were first appearing in the South the Bloods and the Crips would emerge in the West. They would become the largest black gangs in Los Angeles (Howell & Moore, 2010). By the 1990s these gangs would become bitter rivals in and branch out into other regions. The People and Folk Nation in the Midwest would do the same. The result for modern day has been an uprising of youth street gangs that have existed for decades.

Statistics

Youth gangs in the United States would eventually be unable to exist unnoticed by law enforcement and government officials. During the 1970s only 19 states acknowledged a gang problem and by the twenty first century all 50 states including the District of Columbia reported having a gang problem (Howell, 2010). By the time all 50 states acknowledged the issue of youth gangs gang levels had already peaked to their highest level in history. The height of the gang epidemic in the mid 1990s led to the creation of the National Youth Gang Center in 1995 (Howell et al., 2011). Under the direction of the National Youth Gang Center the Federal Government began the first National Youth Gang Survey in 1996. The survey has continued each year to measure youth gang levels and expansion throughout the United States.

When the National Youth Gang Survey began measuring youth gangs in 1996 gang levels had already begun to decline. Gang involvement would continue to decline steadily across

the United States until 2001 (Howell, 2010). In 1996 it was estimated that there were 31,000 youth gangs in the United States with a total membership of 846,000 (Moore & Terrett, 1998). After the height of youth gangs they started to decline and by 2001 youth gangs had reached a new low. After this low gangs slowly began to increase. In 2002 gangs increased by five percent but remained low compared to 1996 with only 731,500 youth involvement in the now remaining 21,600 different gangs established in the United States (Egley et al., 2006). This would be the start of a slow increase of gang membership and expansion in the United States until 2005. By 2005 gangs measurements would stay consistent for the remainder of the decade. Although in 2009 gang membership was at 731,000 the average number of gang members during this period remained at 750,000 (Egley & Howell, 2011). Concerns have now been redirected from gang membership to the emergence and expansion of gangs across the United States.

Over the past decade the establishment of gangs and the violence attached to them has been increasing and spreading faster to rural and suburban communities. Since 2002 the number of communities affected by youth gangs has increased by 20 percent (Egley & Howell, 2011). Juvenile gang problems have also increased across all parts of the United States. Historically youth gangs have predominately existed in large cities but they have recently spread out to suburban counties and smaller cities. In 2008 compared to 2002 gang problems increased to more jurisdictions including smaller cities by 15 percent, suburban counties by 22 percent, rural counties by 16 percent and larger cities by 13 percent (Egley et al., 2010). New gangs emerged and membership also increased along with gang movement in these areas. Most significantly smaller cities saw the greatest increase in gang membership (15%) and actual number of gangs (35%) during this time (Egley et al., 2010). It can be speculated that the expansion of large city

youth gangs to surrounding communities is a result of family migrations to the suburbs for a better life. The result of this is a growing mix of ethnicities to outlining areas of major cities.

Since the 1990s there has been a disproportionate growth in minority groups (Egley et al., 2006). As followed through the history of youth gangs they originate partially out of the need to unify ethnic and cultural bonds. As a result there has been an increase in Hispanic/Latino gang members. It is no surprise then that in 2008 only 11 percent of gang members were Caucasian while Hispanics/Latinos made up 50 percent of memberships followed by blacks with 32 percent gang membership affiliations (Howell, 2010). Not only have the dynamics of race changed in youth gang membership but so has gender participation.

Youth gangs have always been thought of to be prominently male groups. Although females have associated with gangs their involvement has been hard to measure. Surveys show that there seems to be an increase in female gang membership. Surveys conducted on police identification of female gang members in 1996 estimated that females made up 11 percent of gang memberships (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). On the other hand self-reported surveys of female youth gang involvement provide a different perspective. Over the years in jurisdictions across the United States researchers have found that roughly 9 percent to 22 percent of females reported gang membership (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). It has been difficult to measure female gang affiliation since the proportions of male and female gang membership vary across regions and city size in the United States. According to the National Gang Center (2009) youth gangs in rural counties have roughly 50 percent female members compared to large cities with roughly 23 percent. The trend age of gang members follows the same trend of gang participation as females.

Youth gang involvement varies based on region. Surprisingly in larger cities juveniles only make up roughly 40 percent of gang membership compared to smaller cities where juvenile

gang membership is at an estimated 62 percent (National Gang Center, 2009). Although the numbers of juveniles in these gangs is disproportionate an explanation could be that in larger cities juveniles who become adults remain in gangs throughout their adulthood. At the same token in smaller cities once a juvenile reaches adulthood they may choose to leave the gang leaving the remaining composition of the gang primarily youth. Typically it is not until a juvenile is around 13 to 15 years old that they join a gang but they are exposed to and start interacting with gangs prior to this age (Howell, 2010). In order to prevent youth gang membership and the development of new gangs an understanding of youth risk factors needs to be identified.

Risk Factors & Anti-Gang Efforts

Youth join gangs for several different reasons. What makes a juvenile more likely to join a gang against their peers has to do with the amount of risk factors exhibited for that individual. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) have identified specific areas where risk factors are present that contribute to juvenile delinquency and gang involvement. The areas where risk factors are identified are within the individual, family, community, school and peer relationships (Howell, 2010). To examine how influential all of the risk factors are alone and combined along with why juveniles join gangs the OJJDP conducted three youth studies in Seattle, Pittsburgh and Rochester. Each of these studies was a longitudinal study that began between 1985-1986 and examined risk factors exhibited by youth between the ages of 10 to 12 and their future delinquency and gang involvement until age 18.

The Pittsburgh Youth Study focused more on individual risk factors in relation to the youth's school, community and family. In general individual risk factors refer to mental health issues, personality, drug and alcohol use, childhood abuse etc. (Howell, 2010). The Pittsburgh

study found that personality traits such as impulsivity and lack of feeling remorse were the greatest predictors of future delinquency and gang involvement (Browning & Loeber, 1999). Other individual factors that contribute are low IQ and mental health disorders like attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Browning & Loeber, 1999). The Seattle study focused on different types of individual childhood risk factors and rated them on the likelihood of a child possessing these traits and joining a gang between the ages of 13 and 18. In this study the most influential individual trait was early marijuana use a 3.7 odds ratio for gang involvement followed by early violence a 3.1 odds ratio compared to other youth their age who did not exhibit these traits (Hill, Lui & Hawkins, 2001). So what causes certain youth to possess certain individual risk factors? Sometimes it is a matter of family and neighborhood dynamics.

Neighborhoods are influential because a person's perception of their neighborhood and community can influence their own behavior. For instance if there is a lack of collective efficacy youth will not feel attached to their neighborhood or influenced by social controls. As stated before gang involvement increases when youth smoke marijuana. The same is true when youth live in a neighborhood with a greater availability of marijuana; this increases a juvenile's risk of joining a gang by over 3.5 times (Hill, Lui & Hawkins, 2001). Although the neighborhood dynamics are an important influence in reducing protective factors in youth it is not as important as family cohesion. If a family has strong bonds and values than they can overcome the neighborhood influences.

Family dynamics can create several different risk factors for a child. Children who have individual signs of early violence may have learned this from family members who exhibit this behavior or condone it. In families like this the Seattle study found that children were 2.3 times more likely to join a gang (Hill, Lui & Hawkins, 2001). The same can be said for drug and

alcohol use. Family structure is important in influencing the strength of child parental attachment. This is because family stressors allow for outside influences that decrease parental attachment to children. The influence of stressors is most influential in single parent households than in two parent households. In a single parent household there is greater financial stress and lack of parental guidance for a child. The Seattle study found that children with only one parent were 2.4 times at a greater risk of gang involvement and this increased to 3 times a greater risk for single parent households with other influencing adults (Hill, Lui & Hawkins, 2001). Part of the increase in risk with an outside adult in a single parent household is the lack of attachment with this other adult. Family dynamics can predict future juvenile delinquency when there is a lack of attachment and family bonds. The Pittsburgh study found that children who were in a household where there was a lack of parental supervision had an estimated three times greater risk of joining a gang compared to their counter parts (Browning & Loeber, 1999). When there is a lack of parental supervision there is often times a lack of involvement between the parent and the child. The Rochester study affirmed this with their findings asserting that children with strong parental involvement and attachment were less likely to join gangs (Browning, Thornberry, & Porter, 1999). Parental attachment is significant during the developmental years for children but as they become teens their peers begin to take precedent over their parent's influences. When youth reach high school which is often the age of 15 their life is focused on school and their friends. Interestingly this is also the age at which the risk for juvenile gang membership is at its highest (Hill, Lui & Hawkins, 2001).

Schools can increase a youth's tendency to join gangs if an individual has low academic achievement, a low perception of school experience and frequently gets punished through detentions, suspensions or expulsion for troublesome behavior (Howell, 2010). Poor academic

achievement increased the risk of gang membership in Seattle by three times and poor school attachment which relates to a youth's school experience doubled the individual's risk (Hill, Lui & Hawkins, 2001). School is also a place where youth align with certain peers and peer groups. Of all the risks that influence a youth's choice to join a gang the most influential are peer relationships (Howell, 2010). This is because juveniles who engage with delinquent youth or young gang members double their likelihood of joining a gang (Hill, Lui & Hawkins, 2001). Youth who associate with other delinquent youths learn new criminal behaviors. The Rochester study found that peer relationships not only teach youth criminal behavior but they reinforce the bad behavior (Browning & Loeber, 1999). It is no surprise that this is the greatest influence among juvenile delinquency. While there are many factors that increase ones risk for joining a gang possessing one risk factor does not mean that a youth will join a gang. Rather it is when multiple risk factors are combined that the likelihood of youth gang involvement increases.

To assess just how influential the numbers of risks are to a youth and their likelihood of joining a gang the Seattle study measured the risks present at age 10 to 12. In combining all of the risks that the OJJDP measures the study found that when youth possess two to three risks their likelihood increases to three times; four to six risk factors increases a youths likelihood to five times and if a youth posses seven or more risk factors their odds of joining a gang increases by 15 times more than the average juvenile (Hill, Lui & Hawkins, 2001). So why do risk factors increase gang membership? The risk factors that an individual holds must contribute to a reason as to why they would join a gang.

Many youth do not join gangs out of force but out of the appeal and benefits that gangs provide (Howell, 2010). The appeal of gangs is greater when a juvenile has numerous risk factors because gangs substitute what is missing in that youth's life. Like the first gangs that

existed in the United States the main force driving youth to form gangs was economic hardship and discrimination. For both males and females these forces still drive gang membership today. Gangs are attractive to minorities for the protection that they provide to the young members (Howell, 2010). For a young minority male or female in a disadvantaged neighborhood the benefit gained from joining a gang is security and a second family where they feel accepted and can escape feelings of rejection caused by schools and family. Children growing up with a hard lifestyle or disadvantaged community also find gang membership appealing for the opportunity to make money by selling drugs or through other illegitimate means. For females who have dealt with the reform of the welfare system and loss of economic stability the ability to make money through a gang is appealing (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). For those who are younger and do not have to survive on their own these children may see gang members in their neighborhood wearing expensive clothes and driving expensive cars; this visual of a gang member living a glamorous lifestyle is appealing to the young children. It is not only seeing gang members who are living the glamorous life but the popular media that has portrayed this lifestyle as glamorous. Over the years gang life has been popularized by culture and gangsta rap. The media portrayal and music videos of this lifestyle show fast cars, money, and women. It is not surprising too that gangs can become appealing because of the social scene they provide. Females who join gangs are influenced by their boyfriends or friends who are in gangs (Howell, 2010). Gangs also provide females with self-affirmation and an increase in self-esteem by the attention they receive from their male counterparts (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). Not only do females seek this attention from male gang members but females join gangs for protection just like males. Females are victimized at home more so than males and they cope with the abuse by running away and seeking protection through gangs (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). In today's world there

are also less cultural restraints on females to conform to traditional family roles. With a lack of cultural and social class restraints females are joining gangs more frequently (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). Today many females join gangs for roughly the same reasons as men. To prevent youth gang involvement it is important to understand the influences surrounding why youths join gangs and how risk factors influence the appeal of joining gangs and why it is important to reduce youth gang membership.

Over the years gangs have become increasingly violent. The violence has had a toll on communities not only physically but financially. During the 1990s in Los Angeles County alone gang violence cost the county over \$1 billion a year (Howell, 2006). On a national level it is estimated that the entire cost of one firearm related assault costs \$1 million (Howell, 2006). Youth gang violence is not only expensive for society but increasingly damaging with the availability of lethal weapons making it is easier for youths to commit more violent crimes (Howell et al., 2011).

In the 1998 National Youth Gang Survey 53 percent of police departments reported that firearms were used often and sometimes during the crime of assault by youth gang members (Howell et al., 2002). The increased use of firearms by gang members has led to increased homicide rates. In 10 cities with population sizes greater than 100,000 eight of them regularly reported gang homicides during 1996 to 2004 (Howell et al., 2011). Although at-youth risk not involved in gangs may exhibit the same risk factors as gang members they do not commit as many crimes in frequency or severity as individuals who are actively involved in gangs. Gang members in the Rochester study committed four times the amount of crimes as non-gang members (Howell, 2006). Not only are there an increase in youth crimes when there is gang membership but violent crime also increases by seven times (Howell, 2006). It is important to

reduce youth gang membership because the rates of crime continue to stay higher after they have left a gang (Howell, 2006). If youth gang membership can be reduced than the frequency and intensity of crimes for the youth will also decrease.

In an effort to reduce gang involvement government entities have increased police efforts, municipal ordinances on juveniles and legislation to increase criminal penalties for gang crimes. Communities have established curfew laws and anti-loitering laws to deter juvenile gangs from receiving criminal sanctions for hanging out in the streets and menacing at night. Efforts include zero tolerance for juvenile delinquency and police efforts to catch criminal youth have been propelled by policy makers. At the legislative level efforts to reduce youth gangs has remained focused on deterrence methods. In 2005 the federal government passed anti-gang legislation that required mandatory minimum sentences for gang crimes. Additional legislation efforts include The Gang Abatement and Prevention Act of 2007. This act was established to increase law enforcement efforts, investigation and prosecution of violent gangs with the purpose to punish offenders and deter future criminals (Cannata, 2009). Each of these policies has failed to deter youth gang involvement. The approach to solve the youth gang problem through deterrence is reactive to the problem. Harsher criminal sanctions and increased police efforts focus on juveniles after they are involved in gangs. Instead of solving the gang problem after the fact efforts need to be made to prevent youth from ever joining gangs.

After understanding the risk factors that increase the likelihood that a juvenile will join a gang, prevention efforts need to be made on understanding these risks and redirecting gang reduction towards membership prevention. Risk factors can be addressed through family, schools and the communities. All entities need to recognize the issue and risk factors. It is important for school to recognize gang problems because schools are a main source of peer

relationships and behavioral learning. There is a clear lack of understanding on the importance of gang prevention in schools when only 18 percent of principals in the top 10 percent of schools with the highest juvenile delinquency and gang problems in the United States recognize that there is a problem in their schools (Howell, 2010). Because risk factors are so dynamic and cause juveniles to join gangs for different reasons there is no one prevention program established to prevent youth gangs from being created (Howell, 2010). Rather, prevention programs are established to address the different risk factors. For instance programs work on addressing individual risk factors, strengthening families, improving collective efficacy of communities that includes community and parental supervision of youth and improving parental and school handling of disruptive juveniles (Howell, 2010). Programs that have been implemented include Gang Resistance Education And Training that provides gang awareness at the school level, grass-roots efforts at the local community level including mentoring at-risk youth to increase protective factors. Programs have also begun to focus on a comprehensive approach to combat youth gangs through multiple programs within an anti-gang program. In order to have an effective program there has to be an understanding youth risk factors that contribute to youth gang involvement and an understanding of criminological theories that describe social factors that contribute to individual risk factors associated with delinquent youth.

Section II: Theoretical Framework

Social Control Theories

Social control theories believe that humans will naturally break the law and seek gratification (Cullen & Agnew, 2006). Social controls come in the form of internal and external influences that ultimately restrict deviant behavior (Siegel, 2004). External influences are part of formal social controls. These are the laws that govern society and the criminal sanctions imposed on law violating behavior. These are the obvious deterrents to criminal behavior. Not so obvious forms of control that deter individuals from deviant acts are informal social controls. Informal social controls are the influences of other individuals and an individual's conformity to conventional values. Other people influence our behavior because they provide disapproval, anger towards individual behavior and reinforce social stigmas about deviant behavior that enable individuals to conform to conventional norms. In 1969 Travis Hirschi expanded on the notion of social controls in *Causes of Delinquency* where he describes the importance of social bonds. This has come to be known as the social bond theory. In his theory Hirschi describes that individual's break the law when they have weak bonds to societal influences (Cullen & Agnew, 2006). The bonds Hirschi (1969) described as strengthening resistance to crime are attachment, commitment, involvement and belief. It is theorized that if these bonds are strong and present in an individual especially juveniles then they will be less likely to deviate from society.

The social bond attachment refers to a person's sensitivity or attachments with others such as parents, guardians, teachers and authority. Commitment is a bond associated with a person's time and effort towards conventional values. For juveniles this is often associated with ones level of commitment to school and religious institutions. The phrase "idle hands are the

devil's workshop," is often recognized with the involvement bond (Siegel, 2004). An individual who is involved in school, the community or extracurricular activities will have less time to deviate from society. Lastly, the fourth social bond of Hirschi's (1969) theory is belief. This bond is someone's belief in the conventional norms or morals of society. All of these bonds together and individually if absent can result in potentially deviant behavior and juvenile gang involvement.

Hirschi's (1969) four social bonds play a large role in forming the informal social controls or sanctions placed on individuals. For instance a strong attachment to others restrains individual negative behavior because individuals don't want to disappoint those they are close to. When peers, parents, teachers and authority view an individual negatively based on their behavior there is an informal control that takes place. This prevents them from deviating from society. If this attachment is void than there is little restraint towards criminal behavior. This is why attachment to parents is one of the most important social bonds in this theory and for social control (Siegel, 2004).

Parental attachment is said to be the most important social bond because it is the most influential during early childhood and development (Cullen & Agnew, 2006). Positive parental attachment creates positive psychosocial behaviors in children and early adolescents. For instance, temperance is developed by a child's upbringing and influenced by parents. Parental attachment also influences youth decision making for certain behavior. Research by Douglas, Colwell, Cruise, Fernandez, Guy, & McCoy, (2008) proved that the better self-control that a juvenile has the less likely they are to commit a delinquent act. Attachment to parents, teachers and authority also influences a person's level of commitment and belief system.

Commitment is sometimes measured through school and religious involvement. Children who have poor achievements or behavior in school are more likely to deviate from society (Ryan, Testa, & Zhai, 2008). Glueck and Glueck (1950) suggest that temperament and intellectual differences make up their delinquent behavior in school. They are less focused and committed to school providing opportunities for misbehavior and delinquency. The bond of commitment is important because a strong sense of commitment leads to conformity. If a child is committed to school they will more than likely conform to conventional norms like: attending college, pursuing a career and becoming productive members of society. Having this commitment towards their future goals prevents juvenile engagement in delinquent behavior because doing so would sacrifice their commitment towards societal goals.

Attachment and commitment influence an individual's belief system. As a result there are informal controls that conforms individuals to societal standards. With the absence of Hirschi's (1969) social bond theory there is an absence of informal social controls. The bonds keep the pressure of informal controls on an individual. It is significant to an individual who has strong attachments and commitments to moral values to not break these bonds. Doing so will result in labeling and stigmatization by the people they care about. On the other hand it is significant to recognize when there is an absence of these bonds because it can result in informal sanctions being less effective leading to delinquency, and ultimately resulting in formal controls being possibly the only prevention to future criminal behavior.

Acknowledging the importance of attachment and its influences on individual self-control Hirschi and Gottfredson joined together in 1990 to write *A General Theory of Crime* (Cullen & Agnew, 2006). Instead of focusing on societal influences of social control Hirschi and Gottfredson (1990) focused on the individual's self-control. The higher self-control an

individual has the less likely they will be to engage in criminal behavior and vice versa. The theory explains criminality as the propensity to commit crimes (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

The theory is founded on the concept that individuals learn self-control through parental guidance and attachments. Ineffective child-rearing fails to teach children self-control skills by not instilling proper discipline and concepts of consequences to inappropriate behavior.

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) describe three conditions for proper child-rearing; 1) monitoring child's behavior, 2) recognizing deviant behavior and 3) punishing this behavior. Children who are not raised with the proper concept of inappropriate behavior and punishments lack self-control and exhibit certain deviant behaviors. They pursue risks and thrills, immediate gratification, and do not weigh the immediate benefits of the criminal behavior with long-term benefits (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

Social Disorganization Theory

Social bonds are often weakened in communities that are disorganized and lack cohesive conventional norms. In *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas* Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay (1942) theorized that it is the disorganization of communities that leads to juvenile delinquency. This theory is based off of their research during the early 1920s analyzing Chicago neighborhood transitions and disorder (Siegel, 2004). Their findings showed that when communities are disorganized through the shifting of populations there is less interest in family, community and social norms and values resulting in higher crime rates (Siegel, 2004). When families migrate out of disorganized neighborhoods existing residents and new residents do not have a cohesive bond that would be established in an organized neighborhood. Collective efficacy begins to deteriorate in the community which is part of what bonds the community together. Collective efficacy is the cohesion of families, institutions, and schools to maintain

social and moral order (Siegel, 2004). When this is lost between families due to migration it creates a loss of informal social controls as a deterrent creating a greater opportunity for crime to flourish. In changing family neighborhoods individuals are less likely to know their neighbors or identify strangers. There also might be moral and cultural differences that block the bond between families. Delinquent behavior and crime are able to flourish in these neighborhoods because families are unaware of who their neighbors are and are less likely to identify strangers in the area. When there is a lack of bond between families in neighborhoods there is also a decreased need to protect your neighbors.

Even if parents instill strong morals in a child the neighborhood dynamics of crime and the influences of gangs over power the parental influences on the child (Shaw & McKay, 1942). Without consistent values and informal social controls success is obtained and accepted through illegitimate means. As a result juveniles are surrounded by visual affects of success such as luxury cars and jewelry. Each provides an incentive for young boys and girls to become criminals. Individuals who have success even through illegitimate means are viewed highly upon in the material world. Young boys and girls view this on a daily basis in disorganized communities and begin to learn the behavior to obtain success. For juveniles living in low economic areas crime is sometimes the only means to gaining success that they know of.

In any community the goal of individuals is to obtain success. In a disorganized community the means to success for juveniles is often obtained through gang membership. Gangs reinforce criminal behavior and peer acceptance in a community that already reinforces the illegal behavior (Ridgeway & Tita, 2007). It is also easier for juveniles to commit crimes in gangs compared to individual offending. By stealing and committing other crimes to gain respect and money juveniles become successful in the neighborhood in which they live and to

outsiders they also look successful by the material items they possess. Juvenile delinquency and gang relations are viable in disorganized communities through adult interactions and tolerance. Adults who buy stolen merchandise from a juvenile or tolerate open drug dealing in the community enable juvenile delinquency to flourish (Ridgeway & Tita, 2007). Not only is deviant behavior tolerated it is also learned by juveniles. When a community is so disorganized traditional informal social controls are not in place and formal controls by police are not a deterrent to delinquent behavior. In disorganized communities juvenile delinquency must first be combated by changing what makes the community disorganized in the first place.

Anomie & Strain Theories

Anomie and strain theories are grounded on the belief that the inability to legitimately achieve culturally accepted and societal norms produces strains that can lead to criminality or deviant behavior. Robert Merton (1938) associated causation for criminal behavior to culture. He believed that cultures provide accepted goals such as success and means for obtaining success through institutions (Merton, 1938). When there is conformity in both cultural goals and the means to obtain them there is stability in society (Merton, 1938). Merton believed that crime occurs when there is an over emphasis placed on the cultural goals and a disparity from institutions in obtaining these goals. When this occurs there is a strain placed on individuals to either reject the goals or the means (Merton, 1938). Merton (1938) stated that there is also mental conflict that occurs when an individual cannot obtain the means for the culturally accepted goals and when they are denied legitimate means to obtain the goals they resort to illegitimate measures. Merton (1938) is one of the few individuals that provided a definite motive for engaging in criminal behavior and that is to relieve the experience of strain. The motive to achieve cultural goals or success through illegitimate means is only present when the

institutional means are unavailable (Merton, 1938). The motive for criminal behavior is the end result. The end is success, wealth, and material goods. Society ultimately creates this motive encouraging crime to occur. For this reason Merton does not explain poverty as a motive or cause to crime. Poverty as noted by Merton (1938) is a result of limited opportunity but does not produce high crime rates; rather the cultural emphasis for individuals to compete for success induces criminal behavior. To provide proof of this Merton (1938) described how poverty in southeastern Europe compared to the United States does not evoke crime. Poverty is only associated with crime in the United States as a result of the cultural goals, use of competition and means to achieve these goals (Merton, 1938).

Anomie theories like Merton's led to the development of additional strain theories. The social disorganization described through Merton's anomie in explaining crime rates provides insight into social strain. Merton explained strain in an anomic society through the strain individuals receive from the social emphasis on cultural goals and availability of institutional means to achieve these goals. Anomie theories set out to understand why crime occurs. They are different than strain theories in that strain theories explain why individuals engage in crime.

Unlike Merton's theory Agnew's general strain theory adds more than just institutional strains on individuals. His theory describes the negative relationships that individuals have and how this relates to stress or strain. Negative relationships with others can lead to different types of situations that lead to strain; perceived influence or threat of others that reduces positive stimuli to conventional goals, and the perceived inability to achieve culturally accepted goals (Agnew, 2001). Further Agnew (2006) described three specific scenarios that lead to delinquent behavior 1) the loss of something 2) mistreatment by others 3) inability to achieve goals. The loss of something can include money, material goods, relationship break-ups and death of a

loved one. Being mistreated by someone can include verbal insults, physical abuse or disrespect. Lastly the inability to achieve goals are related to a person's desires such as money or prestige through the use of conventional norms. Each of these strains is a negative relationship that an individual has with others. The theory goes so far as to include experienced, vicarious and anticipated strains (Agnew, 2006). As a result of the emotions that are evoked from strain and stress whether the event is direct or indirect on the individual the experience and emotion can increase future resistance to self-control (Agnew, 2006). How an individual internalizes and reacts to these different perceived strains depends on their social constraints obtained through friends, family, belief systems and conformity to societal norms and values. When these are lacking individuals cope with strain by resorting to delinquent behavior and crime. Strain therefore increases the likelihood of individuals forming criminal groups. Individuals are then able to cope with strain by associating with others that perceive stress the same way. Criminal groups not only reduce perceived strains but they increase the social learning of crime (Agnew, 2006).

Theory of Differential Association & Social Learning

The theory of differential association conceived by Edward Sutherland during the 1930s provides an alternative explanation. Prior to his theory explanations for why people deviate from society were explained through socioeconomic status, attachment to parents and schools, and the disorganization of the community in which an individual lived in. The theory of differential association is grounded on the premise that criminal behavior is learned through peer intimate groups (Cullen, & Agnew, 2006). Sutherland believed that learning criminal behavior was no different than learning any other type of human behavior (Paternoster, & Bachman, 2001). An individual specifically juveniles learn criminal behavior by associating with other delinquent

youth. In these groups individuals learn the techniques, motives and rationalized attitudes to commit crimes (Cullen, & Agnew, 2006). Most importantly individuals learn definitions that are favorable to crime. Eventually individuals learn to rationalize their behavior and find the benefits of delinquent behavior more favorable than obeying the law. Sutherland's work was the first examination relating the cause of criminal behavior to being learned. Based on his theory he believed that any person can learn to be a criminal and therefore criminality is not an intrinsic characteristic of a criminal (Paternoster, & Bachman, 2001).

The theory of differential association was later expanded on by Robert Burgess and Ronald Akers in 1966 to explain how reinforcing behavior is a form of learning that leads to delinquency (Paternoster & Bachman, 2001). Akers would go on to create the social learning theory. In his theory he kept differential association and differential reinforcements from earlier theories but included imitation and definitions (Cullen, & Agnew, 2006). Like the earlier theories the social learning theory asserts that individuals learn from their groups or what he calls the subculture. Group association is defined as a subculture because the groups have their own set of morals and definitions that describes their behavior (Cullen & Agnew, 2006). A form of learning in these groups is through imitation. This is when behavior is learned through observation of delinquent peers. Another form of learning is through definitions. Definitions are the beliefs and attitudes attached to a person's behavior (Cullen & Agnew, 2006). Definitions are used to evaluate the benefits of certain behavior. Conventional definitions are the morals of larger society. Those who follow these definitions of behavior are less likely to become delinquent because conventional definitions are not favorable to crime (Cullen & Agnew, 2006). In this case these definitions are negative. Likewise, positive definitions are those that favor criminal behavior due to moral beliefs about certain behavior (Cullen & Agnew, 2006). The last

explanations for behavior are neutralized definitions. Neutralization excuses, justifies behavior or explains why participating in certain lawbreaking behavior is more beneficial than conventional norms (Paternoster & Bachman, 2001). All of these definitions are reinforced through peer associations.

Differential reinforcements are the anticipated benefit of behavior whether negative or positive. Depending on how consequences of a behavior are perceived by the doer whether positive or negative this determines their likelihood of repeating the behavior (Cullen & Agnew, 2006). Behavior can be reinforced by peers through positive reactions and prestige. Other times behavior is reinforced through material goods and money. The greater the perceived reward the larger the impact of reinforcement has on the behavior and this will increase future delinquency (Cullen & Agnew, 2006).

Gangs and juvenile crimes flourish from learning and reinforcing criminal behavior. In low economic communities illegitimate means to success flourish within the adult community. In early life behavior is learned from parents. If a juvenile comes from a dysfunctional family or even has close ties with relatives or family and friends who conduct criminal behavior that juvenile is being taught acceptance of the crime. As a child ages he no longer looks to his parents for learning behaviors but relies on peer relationships. The social learning theories of peer relationships state that there are powerful influences and pressures from peers to conform to the groups values (Siegel, 2004). For juveniles many individuals would not commit certain crimes on their own or in the severity or intensity if it wasn't for the peer pressure from gangs and the learning of the crime.

Gang Theories

Frederick Thrasher was the first prominent researcher to study gangs in the United States. He studied roughly 1,313 gangs in Chicago during the 1920s and plotted their territory throughout the city to create what he called the “gangland” (Howell & Moore, 2010). The gangland as he described were areas that were “interstitial” because they were gaps or cracks within society that were in between the inner city and the outlying neighborhoods that people sought after for a better life (Howell & Moore, 2010; Franzese et. al., 2006). Due to the transitional nature of these areas the conditions often resembled those of slums. After Thrasher’s research he defined a gang in his 1927 publication *The Gang: A Study of 1313 Gangs in Chicago*. He stated that gangs were individual males without conventional attitudes that randomly formed groups in interstitial areas (Howell & Moore, 2010). Thrasher was a pioneer in gang theories as he was the first to propose a theory of gang formation by studying social disorganization and its effects. His work influenced the work of Shaw and McKay and their theory of social disorganization. Not only was he influential to them but future research on gangs and the development of theories on delinquency can be traced back to his original study.

Following the study of gangs Albert Cohen was the first theorist to coin a delinquent subculture and define its emergence. His publication *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang* (1955) he attempts to explain the emergence and persistence of delinquent subculture (Franzes et al., 2006). Cohen believed that gangs are centralized to lower-class males and slum conditions. Individuals in this class experience a different type of socialization. The parental bonds and values instilled in these boys are different than those of the middle-class; partially due to economic and educational restraints. The commonality between both social classes is the pursuit of the American Dream. America’s culture has been built on the ‘American Dream’ that if you

work hard you will achieve success. This cultural goal in our society produces a strain on individuals who are unable to achieve success through legitimate means. Those in the lower-class are at a disadvantage because they must compete against the middle-class to achieve success. Cohen termed this the *middle-class measuring rod* which is a set of standards that authority figures including teachers use to evaluate lower-class youth (Siegel, 2004). As a result of these measuring rods the lower-class youth feel constant failure because they cannot live up to the expectations of the middle-class. This perception of failure affects their pursuit of the American Dream and creates a status frustration for lower-class boys. As a reaction to status frustration juvenile subculture groups are formed that reject middle-class values. Under Cohen's theory a lower-class boy will join one of three types of deviant subcultures: the corner boy, the college boy, or the delinquent boy (Siegel, 2004). The corner boy is a lower-class male who has accepted his lower-class status and has stopped striving for the middle-class standards of the American Dream (Empey, Stafford, & Hay, 1999). They may engage in petty crimes or status offenses but stay loyal to their peer groups and adopt their value systems (Siegel, 2004). By accepting their social class they remain in their community, obtain blue collar jobs and often marry and have a family. The second type of subculture that a lower-class male adopts is the college boy. This individual although lower-class adopts the values of the middle-class and strives for those in his life (Empey et al., 1999). The third adaptation for a lower-class boy in conflict with middle-class measuring rods is the delinquent boy. The delinquent boy joins a delinquent subculture that has the complete opposite values of the middle-class. They find subcultures such as gangs and members who exhibit the same behaviors and beliefs as themselves that reject middle-class culture. These individuals behave maliciously and negatively to spite the values of the middle-class (Empey et al., 1999). Cohen theorized that individuals in

the lower-class who adapt to the delinquent boy subculture often join gangs because of the common beliefs and hatred towards the middle-class (Empey et al., 1999). His theory helps explain how status frustration creates the emergence of gangs. Cohen further theorized that gangs will persist as long as the needs of the members specifically the lower-class are met through the delinquent subculture (Franzese et al., 2006)

Other theorists that believe that gangs are predominately found in the lower-class are Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin. Cloward and Ohlin theorized in *Delinquency and Opportunity* (1960) that social strain and social disorganization contribute to youth gangs (Siegel, 2004). Like Cohen, Cloward and Ohlin believed that all people share the common goal for the American Dream but the lower-class are disadvantaged when trying to achieve this success; they defined this as differential opportunity (Siegel, 2004). Cohen believed that lower-class boys retreat to delinquent behavior as a result of rejecting middle-class standards and goals Cloward and Ohlin however believed differently. They believed that the lower-class do not reject middle-class values rather they are frustrated by the inability or lack of means to achieve this success; as a result they resort to illegitimate means that are often found through delinquent subcultures (Empey et al., 1999). The subculture that a lower-class individual joins is dependent on the community in which they live and the people that face similar frustrations. For individuals that believe that they have no chance of obtaining success through legitimate means they may join the subculture of a gang to be alongside other individuals that feel the same emotions and frustrations as themselves. Cloward and Ohlin believed that the result of differential opportunity enables lower-class individuals to join one of three types of gangs; criminal gang, conflict gang or retreatist gang (Siegel, 2004). Criminal gangs offer members a way to achieve success through illegitimate means. This subculture teaches young members the

skills they need to become criminals in order to obtain success (Siegel, 2004). Where illegitimate opportunities for success are not available conflict gangs emerge. Conflict gangs are those that lack legitimate and illegitimate means for success (Siegel, 2004). These types of gangs are less organized and do not provide the training needed to gain success in a lower-class subculture. Instead the disorganized gang resorts to violence as a means to gain respect and notoriety (Siegel, 2004). While they may not be able to obtain financial success they are able to gain social respect through fear and intimidation. Lastly, retreatist gangs are comprised of members who are unable to or have given up on obtaining success through legitimate and illegitimate means and retreat to substance abuse (Empey et al., 1999). The behaviors of these individuals are validated by their peers. They join gangs of like-minded individuals that isolate themselves from conventional norms and retreat to drug use and engage in petty crimes, conning other individuals and selling drugs to support their lifestyle (Siegel, 2004). Each of the gang subcultures that Cloward and Ohlin (1960) describe are a result of goal blockage and inability to obtain success through conventional norms.

While previous gang theories explained deviant behavior through social disorganization and strain Walter Miller (1958) went further to theorize that delinquency is a result of common lower-class values. In *Lower Class Culture as a generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency* Walter Miller (1958) studied the lawbreaking behavior committed by gang members. His studies led him to theorize that the lower-class holds a unified culture that is distinct from the middle-class. The lower-class culture is driven by focal concerns that promote deviant behavior and gang membership. Miller (1958) theorized that there are six focal concerns that are held as a whole by the lower-class culture: trouble, toughness, smartness, excitement, fate and autonomy.

The focal concern 'trouble' is important for the lower-class because it is a measurement for status (Miller, 1958). Unlike the middle-class that measures status based on personal achievements; the lower-class measures status by one's ability to stay in or out of trouble (Miller, 1958). This behavior is a choice, but the choice is influenced by the lower-class subcultures. For instance, those who are in a gang and choose to get into trouble are offered prestige and respect (Miller, 1958). For these individuals the choice to break the law offers benefits and approval from their peer gang members. Like the prestige and respect that can be awarded through getting into trouble 'toughness' offers the same benefits. Toughness for lower-class individuals offers recognition of individual physical strength (Siegel, 2004). This perception of toughness provides a reputation for fighting ability or perceived physical threat of the individual by others.

The focal concern 'smartness' has a different meaning in the lower-class culture than the middle-class. Where the middle-class views smartness in formal educational standards the lower-class views it as the ability to be street smart (Miller, 1958). To survive in the lower-class subculture children learn how to outwit and con other individuals in order for themselves to get ahead. According to Miller (1958) in the gang subculture proving one's level of street smarts, ability to outsmart police and other individuals gives them prestige and leadership roles in gangs. Smartness in the lower-class term is an important dimension for the lower-class culture because it is a way of survival and a means to achieve success under lower-class standards.

Another feature of the lower-class culture is the pursuit for excitement. 'Excitement' is sought after by lower-class youth as a way to escape a mundane life. Excitement is often referred to as thrill seeking and for the lower-class this is achieved through gambling, alcohol, drugs, group parties, and sexual promiscuity (Miller, 1958). Miller (1958) found that this

behavior offered lower-class individuals different rewards; they were able to obtain sexual rewards by picking up females, offered a chance to show toughness through fights and lawbreaking behavior, and able to display their smartness in these social scenes through gambling. Gambling is not only used as a form of excitement but an opportunity to get lucky.

Fate is often referred to as an act that is out of human control. Miller (1958) observed that many individuals in the lower-class believe that their fate involves being lucky or unlucky. The daily life of these individuals revolves around a fantasy that they will get lucky without having to make any effort of their own towards success (Miller, 1958). It is the belief that one lucky win or good fortune will provide future good fortune. The act of gambling thrives in this culture because it offers not just good fortune but excitement and depending on the type of gambling an opportunity to exhibit toughness and smartness (Miller, 1958).

The last focal concern under Miller's (1958) theory is autonomy. Autonomy has to do with social controls and the lower-class reaction to the different types of controls. In the lower-class culture autonomy is referred to as the inability for individuals or authority to restrict behavior (Miller, 1958). For these individuals it is a sign of weakness when teachers, parents or authority figures are able to have some control over that individual's behavior (Siegel, 2004). In the lower-class culture individuals are independent and view themselves as the only ones in control of their own behavior. Miller's 1958 theory asserted that these individuals are likely to use expressions that have disregard for authority and clarify their independence, "I can take care of myself," "You can't make me do anything," are some of the phrases used by these individuals. Although individuals in this lower-class view control negatively and seek independence and view it as a form of prominence they are often caught in situations where they have no control. Through seeking excitement and toughness these individuals often find themselves under the

rules of the law and in correctional institutions. In these instances they are under complete control of higher authority; this is the opposite of what they seek. Miller (1958) asserted that when lower-class individuals are under situations of other's complete control the moment they are no longer bound by this control they seek more independence and freedom resulting in increased or continued reckless behavior. It is almost as if a cycle of behavior occurs as a result of autonomy conflict within the lower-class.

The focal concerns of the lower-class are formed and flourished due to the construct of families and the culture. The family structure consists of a working father and a mother that is the primary caretaker. Street corner gangs flourish in this environment because the first real male role model is observed through peer groups or street corner gangs (Miller, 1958). In a culture where the mother primarily raises the boy the only opportunity for the boy to gain smartness and toughness is through the gang culture. Miller (1958) found that lower-class adolescent males bond with the street corner gangs because they offer a sense of belonging and in a way are a new type of family. This gang subculture teaches young boys the role of being a male and how to gain status in lower-class life.

Each of the gang theories described were established by focusing on specific social factors. Terence Thornberry saw flaws in these gang theories in that they are one dimensional and did not describe initial delinquency, continued delinquency and desistance from delinquent behavior (Thornberry, 1987). Observing the setbacks of social control and learning theories Thornberry (1987) elaborated on them and integrated them together to form the interactional theory. To understand the importance of social control and learning theories Thornberry (1987) acknowledged that social structure specifically social class shapes the direction and impact of these theories. The main premise of Thornberry's (1987) interactional theory of delinquency is

that behavior occurs through interactions and a delinquent individual seeks others with the same belief systems and behaviors as themselves; delinquency is a reciprocal process.

To understand this process Thornberry (1987) examined how conventional beliefs and behaviors are weakened to create a deviant individual. He first examined the importance of social bonds. The three most important social bonds that break behavioral constraints if weakened are attachment to parents, commitment to school and belief in conventional norms (Thornberry, 1987). The weakness in each of these bonds is prominent in lower-class culture. The reason for this is that lower-class individuals typically live in disorganized communities. Such communities lack middle-class conventional norms in regards to these bonds and instead adopt their own culture and belief systems. For Thornberry (1987) this alone is not a cause for delinquency rather a weakness in these bonds enables a vast variety of childhood and juvenile behaviors. The chances of delinquency are propelled when bonds are weakened along with association with delinquent peer groups. This is where Thornberry (1987) believed that behavior was interactional. Law abiding individuals do not just join gangs and delinquent subcultures. Unlike other theories Thornberry (1987) proposed that individuals are already deviant and seek out likeminded individuals. Once associations are formed Thornberry (1987) applies the learning theories in that individuals will learn additional delinquent behavior and belief systems which are reinforced by peers. The interactional theory does not stop here.

The theory goes on to explain how at different ages the social bonds and learning theories affect individuals and their cycle of delinquency. In early childhood the most important social bond is parental attachment. Between the ages of 11 and 13 if the parental bonds that shape a child's commitment level to school and their belief in conventional values are not established they are more apt to deviate from society (Thornberry, 1987). By this age the parental bonds

become less important and peer influences take over. This is the beginning of deviant behavior. According to Thornberry (1987) this is when social learning takes place. Juveniles will begin to associate with likeminded peers who validate their beliefs and teach them new deviant behaviors. The result of this is deterioration in conventional middle-class norms. Juvenile delinquency reaches its height between the ages 15 to 16 as juveniles continue to learn and validate behavior and join gangs (Thornberry, 1987). Their cycle of learning and validating behavior will continue for the youth until they encounter a new set of values. Thornberry (1987) suggests that desistance in delinquent behavior begins between the ages of 18 and 20; this is when life circumstances change. As a young adult individuals begin to think about getting married or having a family and supporting that family through getting a legitimate job (Thornberry, 1987). This change into adulthood and life circumstances encourages the once delinquent juvenile to adopt conventional norms. Thornberry (1987) acknowledges that this is not the case in all circumstances and that sometimes when the bonds are too weak to begin with that desistance from delinquent behavior is too difficult to break. What he does offer is an explanation for why desistance from delinquent behavior and gang involvement does occur.

Each theory of juvenile delinquency has its own set of flaws. When they are integrated together as Thornberry (1987) has done they become more comprehensive in explaining juvenile delinquency and gang involvement. Thornberry (1987) was able to enhance Hirschi's social control theory to emphasize the greater importance of certain social bonds and how they change over the life course of an individual. Hirschi's (1969) original theory did not specify the level of importance of each bond or how they change over time. Other theories like social disorganization have shown strong empirical support for how lack of collective efficacy breeds

criminal subgroups and delinquent behavior (Siegel, 2004). These theories stop there only focusing on ecological factors and not other social factors that contribute to delinquency.

An important note to make is that while all of the theories each contribute to explaining juvenile delinquency in some way they have only focused on male delinquency. Female delinquency must be looked at differently than males because they react to social factors differently. The general strain theory provides that strain causes delinquency. It is valid that females also experience strain but the theory fails to explain how females perceive and cope with strain differently than males (Siegel, 2004). As the rate of female delinquency increases more attention is being paid towards females and whether the same delinquency theories developed around males can be applied to females.

Feminist Theories

Feminist theories of delinquency have been developed to understand and explain female behavior in relation to social and cultural contexts. The ways in which females perceive life events, make choices and behave are different than their male counterparts. Due to the patriarch that still exists for females and the different circumstances that shape female lives it is critical that criminologists are cognizant of the male and female differences when analyzing female criminality (Chesney-Lind, 1989).

Both males and females experience strain from society. As a result of the patriarch of females they experience different types of strains than males. As part of culture females are perceived as the weaker of two sexes and as a result experience physical and sexual abuse at a greater rate than males. To cope with the strain of abuse females resort to deviant behavior such as running away or sexual promiscuity and prostitution (Chesney-Lind, 1989). Chesney-Lind (1989) found that juvenile females that runaway or are abused often have weak attachments to

parents. Once on the streets females are inclined to the same social influences that lead to male delinquent behavior. Females will attach to individuals with the same strain and will learn additional delinquent behaviors to cope with that strain. The difference between males and females may be their motivation for delinquency. For males it is a rejection of societal norms and frustration at the inability to achieve societal goals. Females on the other hand retreat to delinquent subgroups and delinquent behavior as a means for survival (Chesney-Lind, 1989). This feminist theory was not the first to associate the cultural influences and sexual differences to female delinquency.

In *Sisters in Crime* Freda Adler (1975) asserted that it is the culture that defines social roles and expectations between sexes and as these changed over time female delinquency increased. The feminist movement in the United States changed the expectations of females and allowed for increased freedoms. The freedoms that females experience are pregnancy prevention, advances in technology that have limited the need of house work and women to stay home (Adler, 1975). Due to these new freedoms the expectations of women and their role in society changed. Females are now able to pursue the same goals as men. Adler (1975) asserted that these new freedoms increased female delinquency because females now live and behave more similarly to males. Although there are clear biological differences between males and females technology has reduced the importance of these differences. For instance, criminal violence was often associated with males due to their physique and toughness. With advances in technology females do not have to be physically tough in order to instill fear to commit delinquent acts; they have the ability to use weapons and guns that do this for them (Adler, 1975). Since physical and biological barriers have seemed to become less important in

delinquency Adler (1975) believed that females become delinquent and commit criminal acts for the same reasons that men do; cultural pressures and socialization.

Feminist theories towards juvenile delinquency and gang involvement remain obsolete compared to male centered theories. There have been few theories that integrate the well known male models with a new feminist outlook. Through the few theories created and studies that have been conducted on female delinquency there is evidence that female gender roles need to be applied or evaluated against the traditional male theories (Cullen & Agnew, 2006). The traditional male centered theories of juvenile delinquency can certainly be applied to female delinquency in the broad sense. In order to fully apply these theories an understanding of the differences between biological make-up, social and cultural factors that influence females needs to be understood when applying these theories.

Section IV: Prevention and Programs

Males vs. Females Program Approaches

In the United States there are three methods used to combat youth gang involvement; prevention, intervention and suppression (Howell, 2010). It is argued that the best way to combat youth gang involvement is through a proactive approach instead of a reactive approach to youth gang membership. In order to do so the risk factors for male and female juveniles need to be identified. Once identified the risk factors need to be understood through theoretical constructs. Understanding the social factors that contribute to increased risk factors for males and females leads to proper prevention programs. In the past and still today prevention programs have primarily been tailored around male risk factors. Many of the risks for female delinquency are the same as male delinquency but there are additional risk factors that females are prone to versus males that must be understood when implementing programs (Zahn et al., 2010).

All of the theoretical constructs for juvenile delinquency can be applied to females. Like males females need strong attachment and social bonds. Specific to these bonds risks for female delinquency increase when they have critical mothers but are the same as males who experience harsh parental discipline, unstable families and lack of parental supervision (Zahn et al., 2010). Both sexes also experience social strain and stress to achieve conventional norms towards success. School attachment is also important to both males and females. Though important to both sexes they each perceive attachment to school differently. For females risk factors from low school attachment increase with low school involvement and academic success whereas male levels of school attachment are a result of perceived just or unjust school discipline (Zahn et al., 2010). All prevention programs should focus on these risk factors for males and females but keep in mind the additional risks that females face more of than males.

Female juveniles face physical, emotional and sexual abuse more than male juveniles. Although males do face abuse females who experience abuse are at a greater risk for future delinquency (Zahn et al., 2010). There has been little research on female abuse and delinquency but statistics show that this issue cannot be ignored. A 1998 study on female juveniles in California found that 92 percent of females in the juvenile justice system reported some kind of physical, emotional or sexual abuse prior to incarceration (National Criminal Justice Reference Service , 2011). In studying the effects of abuse on juvenile females Goodkind, S. Ng, I & Sarri, R. (2006) found that females who experience sexual abuse perceive more barriers and increased problems in mental health, school performance, substance abuse, delinquency and risky sexual behavior compared to other juvenile females who have not been abused. The results of their study support the conception that females who are abused have altered perceptions of themselves, others and their social environment. They are not likely to seek out proper treatment for the abuse due to fear and mistrust of others. Instead many females resort to coping with their past through self-medicating and delinquent behavior (Goodkind et al., 2006). To prevent this from occurring juvenile delinquency prevention programs should focus on therapeutic, mental health and treatment approaches (Goodkind et al., 2006). These approaches can be incorporated into already existing juvenile delinquency prevention programs. This can be done by creating a trusting and safe environment for females separate from their male counterparts where they can address gender specific issues and encourage self-esteem (Bloom et al., 2004). Prevention efforts do not begin just with juveniles but within the community. For males and females alike the risk factors that lead to juvenile delinquency have to be recognized by everyone who has an interest in the lives of juveniles and preventing youth gang involvement.

Strategies

One of the most cost effective and successful strategies for combating youth gang involvement is through early intervention and prevention. Efforts must begin at early childhood and continue into early adolescents. They include programs that focus on preventing individual deviant behavior through strengthening families, schools and community involvement (Howell, 2010). Prevention programs are categorized into two groups, primary prevention and secondary prevention. Primary prevention programs are those that focus on the entire community including parents and non-delinquent children (Howell, 2010). Secondary prevention programs on the other hand focus on youth that already exhibit delinquent behavior (Howell, 2010). Both types of prevention programs are important in preventing juvenile delinquency but the secondary prevention programs are the most important in preventing future gang involvement (Howell, 2010). The purpose of prevention programs is to recognize risk factors and increase protective factors that reduce gang involvement. In order to do so theoretical constructs must be applied to increase the protective factors for youths. In reviewing current and past implemented programs it is important to remember how these programs can be tailored towards male and female delinquency prevention.

Strengthening families.

Many theories assert that strong parental bonds are important in shaping the development of children's psychosocial behaviors and attitudes. Protective factors against delinquency and future gang involvement are developed within this social factor. Prevention programs that focus on family support and training increase attachment bonds and work to reduce future juvenile delinquency. Family training programs can begin before the child is born and continue until early teenage years. The programs strengthen parent and child attachment bonds by teaching

skills towards positive behavior through individual training and combined parent and child training (Small, Reynolds, O'Connor, & Cooney, 2005). Training programs specific to parents include home visitation programs. These programs work in the homes of first time mothers and train them on effective parenting techniques. Although there are many different types of home visitation programs they are all established under the beliefs that it is most effective to reach out to parents and provide parental training as early as possible because positive parenting is crucial to producing protective factors in children (Small et al., 2005). The goals of home visitation programs are to increase effective parenting by reducing parental stress which helps reduce child maltreatment and negative child development (Small et al., 2005). While these programs were not originally established to reduce youth gang involvement they provide long-term benefits in preventing juvenile delinquency through reducing risk factors in children. Like many programs there are different implementations of this program type and not all of them are as effective as one another. One of the most effective home visitation program has been the Nurse Family Partnership program (NFP) (Small, et al., 2005).

The NFP is designed to train low-income first time single mothers on proper prenatal health, child development and parental bonds with the child and change the life course of the mother through pregnancy planning, education and vocational training (Olds, 2007). To implement training for new mothers nurses make home visits changing in frequency for a two year period, beginning before the child is born up to two years of age. A study on NFP showed that children who had mothers in the program faced less child abuse and neglect than those who had parents not in the program (Olds, 2007). The most significant findings of the study showed that children from the program had stronger protective factors because they had less substance abuse problems, less delinquent behavior and juvenile arrests than children born into single

mother low-income families who were not part of the program (Olds, 2007). The program continues to be a positive prevention tool for future juvenile delinquency because it begins implementing protective factors before the child is born.

Due to the success of NFP many communities across the United States have implemented home visitation programs. Not all programs are as successful as NFP because NFP uses trained nurses as staff whereas other similar programs use volunteers or other professionals that are not as knowledgeable about prenatal and early child development (Small et al., 2005). The downfall of NFP programs is that they can become expensive because of the trained nursing staff and commuting to home visit sites. Other family training programs have been established to work with parents and children that are of early adolescent age. One primary prevention program that does this and has been proven to be effective is Strengthening Families Program: For Parents and Youth 10 to 14 (SPF 10-14).

SPF 10-14 is a primary prevention program because it addresses all youths between the ages of 10 and 14 along with their parents. The goals of the program are to provide youth and parents with proper skills to increase protective factors for delinquent behavior and build stronger families and support systems for youth (Molgaard & Spoth, 2001). The program is implemented through seven two hour sessions with four booster sessions after the course has ended. Each session consists of the first hour with the parents and youth separated where the parents learn positive parenting techniques and the youth learn the importance of pursuing goals and how to deal with stress, emotions and respecting their parents (Molgaard & Spoth, 2001). During the second hour of each session the parents and youth interact together using the skills they have learned. This works to increase parental and youth bonds. To achieve the goals of the program training techniques include video instruction, learning games and activities for youths

and parents, and separate and combined group discussions with parents and children (Molgaard & Spoth, 2001). Evaluation studies of the program have shown that youth who have participated in the program had decreased problems with substance abuse, better social and peer relationships, and less delinquent behavior (Small et al., 2005). Since SPF 10-14 is available to all youth within the age range and all families it is focused on primary prevention. The design of the program has been enhanced for other programs to address secondary prevention efforts for youth that already exhibit delinquent behaviors.

Secondary programs such as Strengthening Families and Family Effectiveness Training (FET) work to target dysfunctional families and already delinquent youth. Strengthening families is very similar to SPF 10-14 except that it involves more intense family sessions and for a longer period of time (Small et al., 2005). The added intensity of this program is used to address the already apparent risk factors and delinquent behavior of youth. Another similar program that is more focused is FET. This program addresses children age's six to twelve in Hispanic families that present conflict or dysfunction (Small et al., 2005). Unlike the multifamily training approach that strengthening families uses FET works directly with family members to increase protective factors. The program is implemented through a 13 week program where a therapist works with the family together to address conflict issues and promote positive relationships (Small et al., 2005). Although there has not been much research on the long-term effectiveness of this program its short-term effects are promising. A study on families six months after completion of the program showed that youth had less conduct problems, better attitudes and relationships with family members than nonparticipating FET families (Small et al., 2005). Family support and training programs are important in creating effective social bonds and protective factors in youth. Although there have not been longitudinal studies on the

effectiveness of these programs through the course of a juveniles life the programs are a stepping stone to reducing juvenile delinquency and juvenile gang involvement.

School-based efforts.

When families are unable to obtain proper resources or unwilling to prevent juvenile delinquency many schools take their place. Schools not only educate children but provide them with the proper social skills and behaviors that are acceptable in society. School-based prevention programs not only address elementary and middle school students but include preschool programs that provide emotional and intellectual education to toddlers. At the older age level prevention programs in school focus on educating youth on acceptable behavior and preventing future delinquency and gang involvement. Programs are achieved through school policies that provide safety and control, providing a positive school experience and working closely with communities as a referral source for community-based programs (Howell, 2000). Since schools service the general population of youth the programs are typically focused on primary prevention. There are some school-based programs that identify early deviant behavior and focus on preventing gang involvement but most times schools refer these students to community-based programs.

To be effective in preventing youth gang involvement schools must recognize that there is a gang problem and approach the problem with multiple strategies. Schools can prevent present school gang members from influencing other students and increase school experience through strict policies. Policies include strict dress codes, not allowing gang graffiti or symbols in the schools, and through clearly defining behavior expectations for all students (Arciaga, Sakamoto, & Fearbry-Jones, 2010). This allows non-gang involved students to feel safe through visual effects. When implementing procedures teachers should treat all students the same

regardless of gang affiliation. A negative attachment towards school can lead to future juvenile delinquency and gang involvement so it is important that school personnel increase all student experiences positively. When implementing anti-gang and behavioral policies many schools have approached these issues with zero tolerance. Schools must be careful when implementing zero tolerance policies because they can significantly decrease a student's school experience significantly setting them up for failure (Arciaga et al., 2010). This is because most zero tolerance policies implement the most severe penalties such as suspension or expulsion for delinquent or gang related behavior. Instead of zero tolerance policies focusing on strict consequences schools can find alternative consequences to breaking school policies. For instance, schools can make sure that students who break the dress code have a second set of appropriate clothes at school or access to a parent who can bring them a change of clothes (Arciaga et al., 2010). By implementing softer penalties while still being strict on enforcing school policies all students are given a chance to succeed and not be labeled. Schools that have identified a gang problem not only implement policies but provide education and awareness on gang prevention.

One of the most recognized school-based primary prevention programs is Gang Resistance Education And Training (G.R.E.A.T.). The goal of this program is to prevent delinquent behavior and gang involvement through teaching life skills, the consequences of gang involvement and to increase positive attitudes towards police (Institute for Intergovernmental Research (IIT), 2012). The program originated as a result of gang problems in the Phoenix area. It was created in 1991 by Phoenix police officers that were already trained in the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program (Esbensen, Peterson, Taylor, Freng, Osgood, Carson, & Matsuda, 2011). The program eventually spread across the United States with the support and

funding from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) (Esbensen et al., 2011). The program now exists in all 50 states and is taught by trained police officers. The core program consists of nine lessons that are taught at the middle school level which is the age when most youth face the greatest risks for gang involvement. Variations of the curriculum are also offered to elementary school students and summer programs.

Evaluations of the program's effectiveness in reducing gang membership have been mixed. Through funding by the National Institute of Justice a national evaluation of the program was conducted. The evaluations took place between the years 1994 to 2001 in several cities using cross-sectional and longitudinal studies (Esbensen et al., 2011). The cross-sectional study consisted of self-report tests completed by 6,000 eighth graders in 11 different cities (Esbensen et al., 2011). The longitudinal study was comprised of pretests, posttests and four follow-up surveys for 2,000 middle school students in six cities (Esbensen et al., 2011). The results of the study showed that there was no change in youth gang involvement or delinquent behavior. Although the program did not change the behavioral outcome of delinquent youth and gang involvement it did change the attitudes of juveniles. The study found that participants in G.R.E.A.T. had a different attitude about gangs, positive attitudes about police and decreased victimization (Esbensen et al., 2011). Due to these positive affects the program was not deemed a total failure and it was revised to address specific risk factors that are associated with youth delinquency and gang involvement.

The revised G.R.E.A.T. program was fully implemented in 2003 and now consists of 13 weeks of curriculum (Esbensen et al., 2011). Instead of just lecturing youth like the previous program did the new curriculum is taught through interactions with students. The teachings are now strength and skill based to focus on building positive skills to manage anger and conflict

resolution. It was also assessed that in order to strengthen the core middle school program it is important to partner with other community programs such as the Boys and Girls Club of America and to have an elementary level program, summer program and family training program (Esbensen et al., 2011). The elementary school program offers a precursor to the core middle school program and the summer and family training programs are supplements to the middle school program. At the elementary school level students between fourth and fifth grade get a glimpse of age appropriate core program elements through six weeks of lessons and are given material to take home and discuss with their parents (IIT, 2012). The summer program's goal is to provide positive lessons and activities to students during the summer as alternatives to deviant behavior (IIT, 2012). The program provides lessons to reduce gang involvement and field trips and activities for youth. The family training program is similar to other family support programs in the primary prevention level like SPF 10-14 in that they focus on building behavioral skills and interaction with family members. The revised G.R.E.A.T. program looks promising for achieving its goals of reducing juvenile delinquency, gang involvement and strengthening relationships with law enforcement (Esbensen et al., 2011).

In 2006 a national study of the revised G.R.E.A.T. program was funded to evaluate the effectiveness of the program over time from 2006 to 2012 in relation to the changes that have been made to the program (Esbensen et al., 2011). The goal of the study is to measure the long-term effects of the revised G.R.E.A.T. program. It is important to acknowledge that the effectiveness of the program is based on students who go through the program and their deterrence towards delinquent behavior and gang involvement. The program does not directly prevent other youth in the community from becoming delinquent or involved in gangs if they do not participate in the program. In the short-term the revised G.R.E.A.T. program seems to be

effective. After a one year post study of the revised program, researchers found a 54 percent reduction in the odds of juveniles joining gangs (Esbensen et al., 2011). Although this was only a one year post study of participants in the program it gives hope to the promising future for the long-term effects of the program. Schools that implement the G.R.E.A.T program have already recognized a concern for gang membership in their schools and community. With this there are students who are more at risk of joining a gang and sometimes awareness efforts are not always the most effective in this stage of the child's behavior. To prevent a deviant child from joining a gang schools may work closely with community-based programs to further prevent juvenile gang involvement.

A popular after school program that schools work with is the Gang Prevention Through Targeted Outreach (GPTTO) program offered by the Boys and Girls Club of America. This is a secondary prevention program targeting at-risk youth from joining gangs. Schools work to advertise this program throughout their school and to parents with at-risk youth. They also refer at-risk students to this program when their school does not have an equivalent prevention program. The program functions through community mobilization, recruitment efforts, targeted programs and case management (Howell, 2000). The purpose of the program is to provide youth with life skills that include problem solving techniques and increased decision making abilities (Esbensen, 2000). There are five program types within GPTTO that youth participate in based on their needs assessment and interests: 1) Character & leadership development; 2) Education and career development; 3) Health and life skills; 4) Art programs; 5) Sports and recreational activities (Howell, 2000). Part of the GPTTO's success is attributed to the case management approach to preventing youth gang involvement. This approach works closely with schools to document academic performance and trancies. Case managers also document youths'

involvement in program participation, involvement with the criminal justice system and families (Howell, 2000). Through documenting the youths' progress case managers are able to set achievable goals for the youth and reward them for their achievements.

In 1997 the OJJDP provided funding for the evaluation of GPTTO. The evaluation consisted of 932 youth that were recruited during a 10 month period to 21 different Boys and Girls Clubs of America (Arbreton & McClanahan, 2002). Youth participants remained involved in the GPTTO program for a year and were evaluated at the beginning of their involvement and again one year later. Almost half of program participants (48 percent) were over the age of 13 and half of all participants partook in club activities and programs several days a week (Arbreton & McClanahan, 2002). Although program involvement was only a year 73 percent of youth continued to participate in the program beyond a year (Arbreton & McClanahan, 2002). The impact of the program on individual perceptions was very positive. Over half of program participants (64%) felt as though they were a part of the club and 59 percent of youth thought the clubs activities were engaging and fun (Arbreton & McClanahan, 2002). The approach that the GPTTO uses with multiple program opportunities may be part of the overall success in keeping youth engaged and preventing opportunities for deviant behavior. Not only are productive activities important in preventing youth from engaging in delinquent behavior but so are strong social bonds. The GPTTO has been proven to provide protective factors in creating strong bonds between the youth and their families and staff members. Youth surveys reported that 96 percent of participants received adult support and guidance while they were in the program and 79 percent of participants felt support from the Boys and Girls Club of America staff (Arbreton & McClanahan, 2002). With positive evaluations in these aspects of the program it is unfortunate that the program has not been evaluated for success in long-term gang involvement prevention.

It beneficial to note that while official gang involvement has not been evaluated in relation to the GPTTO program the program has shown to delay onset of gang involvement (during program participation), increase social bonds, and increase school achievements (Howell, 2000).

Community mobilization.

Criminological theories on communities and society offer important insight into how disorganized communities and social strain create risk factors in youth that lead to gang involvement and juvenile delinquency. For this reason the subject of communities cannot be ignored when offering preventative programs towards youth gang involvement. When community members realize that there is disorganization in their neighborhood and an increase of youth deviant behavior they create efforts to prevent delinquency. Community programs that have been successful in preventing juvenile delinquency and gang involvement are those that start at the grass-roots. One such group that began by recognizing the disorganization and youth violence in their neighborhood is Men Against Destruction-Defending Against Drugs and Social Disorder (MAD DADS) Inc. MAD DADS originated in 1989 in Omaha, Nebraska by community members especially parents who were concerned about the gang violence in their neighborhood (Howell & Curry, 2009). The organization is successful in preventing youth gang involvement because they have recognized the protective factors that youth in the neighborhood lack due to social disorganization, broken families and criminal influences. To improve protective factors that resist youth from joining gangs MAD DADS conducts counseling and mentoring services to youth, education tutoring along with job training and community activities for youth involvement (Howell & Curry, 2009). Not only does MAD DADS improve opportunities and skills for youth to not be involved in gangs but they reinforce informal social controls. A technique that members of MAD DADS use to enforce informal social controls is

through what they call ‘street patrol’. This is implemented through program members patrolling their neighborhoods to make sure that there is no youth deviancy taking place. This method of preventing gang involvement is one strategy of MAD DADS that is implemented in every chapter. This requirement is made because the strategy is influential in social controls. As part of their patrolling they report delinquent or criminal behavior to authorities. Not only do they show presence through street patrols but they make themselves known to neighborhood residence and juveniles by painting over graffiti and by wearing black, green and white colors (Howell & Curry, 2009). By showing their presence to the community they are instilling informal social controls on the young juveniles so that they have a greater incentive towards pro-social behavior. From what originated as a grass-roots effort has now become a national organization with chapters throughout the country and internationally. There are now over 60 chapters in 17 different states (MAD DADS, n.d.). One of the goals of MAD DADS (n.d.) is to have chapters or their programs implemented in all fifty states by the year 2015.

While MAD DADS focuses primarily on adolescent males that exhibit many risk factors for joining gangs a more comprehensive community program has been The Community Reclamation Project. This program began in 1988 as an anti-gang and anti-drug program (Los Angeles County Probation Department, 1991). It was implemented in four cities in Los Angeles County, California that were at risk or observing an increased activity of drug use and gang involvement (Howell & Curry, 2009). The purpose of this program is to prevent gang involvement and drug use. The Community Reclamation Project is more extensive than MAD DADS because it utilizes the whole community. Instead of one specific entity like MAD DADS preventing youth gang involvement The Community Reclamation Project uses the entire community to combat juvenile gang involvement. Concerned neighbors work with law

enforcement, specific community programs, schools and churches to cohesively increase protective factors in youth (Howell & Curry, 2009). The program is significant because its implementation can be applied universally to any community.

This program is effective because it recognizes the importance of collective efficacy. It is known that in disorganized communities the institutions and residences of the neighborhood are not cohesive in enforcing social controls. By utilizing all of the institutions in the community the Community Reclamation Project when implemented was able to strengthen collective efficacy through common goals and initiatives. One of the ways the program did this was by evaluating current independent prevention programs and their prevention strategies and then discussing them with other community institutions such as schools, local businesses and churches (Howell & Curry, 2009). By doing this the programs were evaluated to ensure there was not an over abundance of one type of program in the community or lack of another. It created a common goal between all of the community institutions. Additionally, to enhance collective efficacy in neighborhoods the Community Reclamation Project provided neighborhood meetings to discuss community concerns, gang awareness and prevention strategies with local residence (Howell & Curry, 2009). This allowed for residence to get to know one another and have a common bond in preventing juvenile gang involvement in their neighborhoods. Programs were then offered to children and parents to work together to increase protective factors. Education programs further spread to the school setting where youth were taught a curriculum on gang prevention and awareness (Howell & Curry, 2009). The Community Reclamation Project recognized the importance of involvement by all individuals in the community in order to increase collective efficacy and protective factors against juvenile delinquency and gang involvement. To incorporate youth into collective efficacy efforts youth

in Los Angeles participated in community provided recreational activities and helped to clean up graffiti in their community along with distributing gang awareness and prevention materials to local businesses to display (Howell & Curry, 2009). Ultimately the Community Reclamation Project has effective because of the utilization of community organizations and institutions. The program became so effective in the four cities in Los Angeles that it continued to receive funding to promote its sustainability (Los Angeles County Probation Department, 1991). This program is important in studying prevention programs through community mobilization because it has been one of the most successful and led to further community mobilization projects. Comprehensive programs like this lead to models or blueprints for developing effective programs to prevent and combat youth delinquency and gangs.

Blueprint for Creating Programs

In the efforts to combat youth gangs there have been several different programs that focus on prevention, intervention and suppression strategies. It was not until the research of Dr. Irving Spergel that there was a strategic universal model established for reducing juvenile gangs. Spergel's research was a result of a 1987 OJJDP funded Juvenile Gang Suppression and Intervention Research and Development Program (National Gang Center, 2010). His research began with a national assessment of gang programs. To assess the gang programs Spergel collected information through surveys and interviews to understand the extent of the gang problem in each community, the program strategies imposed to combat the gangs and their effectiveness (Howell & Curry, 2009). He found that 44 percent of communities used suppression efforts to combat youth gangs followed by 31 percent using social intervention (Howell, 2000). This is not surprising because these two efforts are the most popular in combating gangs yet they are not the most effective. Community organization (mobilization) is

the most effective in communities with emerging gang problems but only when social opportunities are provided (Howell, 2000). Sadly only nine percent of communities assessed used community mobilization to combat gangs (Howell, 2000). The other communities used organizational change and development (11%) and provisional opportunities that included education and social opportunities (5%) (Howell, 2000). This assessment led Spergel to comprise a list of five program strategies commonly used by communities to combat gangs; community mobilization, social services delivery, opportunity provision, organizational change and suppression (Howell & Curry, 2009). Spergel used these strategies to create a blueprint for communities on how to implement these strategies to have effective anti-gang programs. The final product was Spergel's Comprehensive, Community- Wide Gang Program Model also known as the Spergel Model.

Spergel's Model describes steps that communities must take in order for them successfully combat youth gangs. To begin, the community must recognize that there is a gang problem in their community. Communities must work collectively with individuals, families, community-based programs, businesses and government institutions to understand the extent and specifics of juvenile delinquency and gang involvement in their community. After the extent of the problem is understood Spergel states that communities need to research and evaluate the most effective strategies to combat the issue in their community and understand what implications might come about with each strategy (National Gang Center, 2010). It is important that all entities in the community work collectively to organize and implement community mobilization efforts and offer juveniles with risky behavior the opportunity to change. To do this programs need to have defined goals and objectives and properly use individual community programs with trained staff who will address the specific youth deviant behavior and gang

involvement (National Gang Center, 2010). After Spergel applied his model to implement a community gang program in Chicago in 1993 the OJJDP adopted his model (Howell, 2000). The OJJDP refers to the model as the Comprehensive Gang Model. In adopting Spergel's model the OJJDP added academic, economic and social opportunities to the provisional opportunities and simplified the steps that communities must take to ensure program implementation and success: 1) Community members and leaders must acknowledge the youth gang problem; 2) Community assessment of the problem; 3) Steering committee sets goals and objectives; 4) Steering committee makes available programs; 5) Steering committee evaluates effectiveness (National Gang Center, 2010).

The OJJDP believes that communities should implement gang programs that utilize multiple techniques that are guided by a local gang task force (Howell, 2000). It is also important to recognize the community's importance in implementing social controls. There are many social controls within community institutions and social structures that provide protective factors for juveniles. Every part of the community including individuals, families, schools, police, local businesses, and organizations needs to understand that they have a role in implementing protective factors and condemning juvenile deviant behavior (Howell, 2000). For communities to be effective in implementing social controls the entities that make up the community have to work cohesively for the common goal of preventing juvenile delinquency and gang involvement. The OJJDP stresses the importance of a steering committee when implementing programs. In a sense they are the glue that holds the program together. The committee is important because they are the individuals that know of institutional resources, programs and opportunities that can be implemented into the community. They lead the implementation of opportunities and programs by working with community and government

agencies to gain the support for programs at all levels including grass-roots, schools, law enforcement and federal agencies (National Gang Center, 2010). The steering committee influences and strengthens collective efficacy in the community by allowing all levels of the community to form and continue bonds for the common goal of reducing youth gang involvement.

Through implementation of the Comprehensive Gang Model the OJJDP has researched the importance of strong leadership and steering committees in implementing programs and sustaining programs in communities. The OJJDP has used the Comprehensive Gang Model three times to implement gang programs. The most recent program funded was the Gang Reduction Program (GRP) implemented in 2003 to reduce gang crimes and violence in Los Angeles, CA; Milwaukee, WI; North Miami Beach, FL; and Richmond, VA (Cahill & Hayeslip, 2010). The OJJDP provided \$2.5 million to each of these cities to sustain the program for five years (Cahill & Hayeslip, 2010). The GRP was a form of the Comprehensive Gang Model so communities needed to utilize this model in order to be successful in combating youth gangs. Each site went through the steps that Spertzel created in implementing gang programs. Before the cities could implement the GRP they had to identify and assess their gang problem. Los Angeles was the only city that had previously identified their gang problem and knew of available community resources and programs to combat youth gangs (Cahill & Hayeslip, 2010). On the other hand the other three cities had a more difficult time identifying their gang problem because they were dealing with newly emerging gangs in their area (Cahill & Hayeslip, 2010). To help facilitate the implementation of programs, leaders in all of the cities created steering committees. The steering committees were comprised of local community members in law enforcement, social programs, businesses and others who had a stake in preventing the spread of

gang membership in their community. The role of the steering committees was to manage the OJJDP program funds and make decisions regarding program implementation (Cahill & Hayeslip, 2010). Program leaders and steering committees worked together to help identify the gang problem and the best strategies and local resources to use for program implementation. In the end the most successful program implementations were in cities that had strong leadership and coordination with steering committees (Cahill & Hayeslip, 2010).

The results of the GRP showed that three of the four cities were successful in implementing and sustaining their gang program (Cahill & Hayeslip, 2010). This was because steering committees had a common goal and stake in the program along with clear expectations and responsibilities. The steering committees were also able to work directly with the program leader. All cities were able to implement short-term programs and only Milwaukee was unable to sustain a long-term program because they ran out of OJJDP funds by 2007 (Cahill & Hayeslip, 2010). The reason for this failure was in part due to the lack of leadership by the program leader. Unlike the other cities Milwaukee's program leader worked with other government agencies and policy makers to lead the steering committee. This left individuals in the steering committee confused on the primary goals and objectives, program direction and who they were to report to (Cahill & Hayeslip, 2010). Other complications came when the program leader in Milwaukee left the position and was never replaced. Without a continuing leadership role in Milwaukee the goals to sustain the GRP in the city beyond OJJDP funding ceased (Cahill & Hayeslip, 2010). It is important to take note of how Milwaukee was unable to fully implement the GRP and sustain it because it supports the OJJDP's belief that programs need a strong leader and steering committee. These entities are important in identifying, creating, implementing and sustaining program efforts. Without a common goal between community agencies program efforts begin to

fall apart. It is also important to note that the most successful program implementation was in Los Angeles and this was primarily due to the acknowledgement of a gang problem in the community. This promoted continuity through goals and program efforts whereas cities that lacked cohesive agreement between community agencies were unable to clearly identify the extent and dynamics of their gang problem. The GRP evaluation has shown that the Comprehensive Gang Model when fully applied is the best blueprint to use when beginning to combat youth gangs through prevention, intervention or suppression efforts.

Section v: Summary, Conclusion & Recommendations

There once was a time when youth gangs were comprised of neighborhood youth play groups. By the early nineteenth century this image would cease due to the increased violence and nature of the juvenile gangs (Howell et al., 2011). Early youth gangs were a result of rapid population growth which increased slum conditions in early immigrant neighborhoods (Howell & Moore, 2010). Young boys bonded together to form juvenile gangs in order to overcome discrimination and suppression. This has been a common theme in the emergence of juvenile gangs throughout the history of the country. As the country continued to evolve and minority populations shifted throughout the country new gangs were formed. These gangs were formed out of cultural and ethnic bonds (Howell & Moore, 2010). Through the use of violence juvenile gangs offered members protection against discrimination and rival gangs. By the mid 1990s youth gang emergence and violence reached an all time high coinciding with an increase in disproportionate minority groups (Egley et al., 2006). At the height of the gang problem in 1996 gangs affected 4,824 cities in the United States (Moore & Terrett, 1998). The federal government took notice of what was happening during this time and as a response the OJJDP in 1995 funded the National Youth Gang Center. This organization was created to track youth gangs and their activities and did so through the first National Youth Gang Survey in 1996 (Howell et al., 2011).

Although the federal government began to take notice of the juvenile gang problem in the 1990s it was not until the 21st century that every state including the District of Columbia acknowledged their own juvenile gang problem (Howell, 2010). By this time gang memberships had begun to decline but youth gangs had already spread to communities all across the nation. In 2009 there were 28,100 different gangs in the United States with a total of 731,000 members

(Egley & Howell, 2011). These members were not only comprised of male juveniles but also females. In 2000 84 percent of communities surveyed reported a presence of female gang members (Egley et al., 2006). The composition of male and female gang members varies in gangs across the country. Depending on the community and areas surveyed self-report studies show females comprising of 9 percent to 22 percent of total gang membership (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). Other studies by the National Gang Center (2009) report female gang membership as high as 50 percent. Gang membership for males and females is a growing concern because of the intensity of criminal behavior.

Gangs are increasingly more violent than they once were. Between 1996 and 2009 the National Youth Gang Survey reported that between 20 percent and 40 percent of homicides in cities of populations over 100,000 were related to gangs (Howell, et al., 2011). To combat the youth gang problem the United States government and local communities have focused on intervention and suppression programs. These programs do not show long-term success. If they did youth gang involvement would not have stayed steady with an average of 750,000 members from 2002 to 2009 (Egley & Howell, 2001). In order to combat youth gangs focus has to be made on prevention and early intervention that prevents juveniles from joining gangs to begin with.

Before effective prevention and early intervention programs can be addressed an understanding of juvenile delinquency and gang theories needs to be understood. It is important to understand the theories that explain delinquent behavior and subgroups because they allow for risk factors to be addressed. We now know that attachment, social disorganization, anomie and strain, and association with delinquent peers all contribute to delinquency and gang involvement. Criminological theories have shown that these social factors all contribute to creating risk factors

in juveniles. The greater number of risk factors a juvenile possesses the greater their chances of delinquency and joining a gang are. Prevention programs and early intervention programs are used to address these risk factors and create protective factors in juveniles.

The success of prevention and early intervention programs are dependent on their participants' needs and program implementation (Howell, 2000). The Spergel Model or the Comprehensive Gang Model is the best approach to identifying and creating youth prevention and early intervention programs. This program provides a set of guidelines for communities to follow to ensure effective program implementation and outcomes. First, all stakeholders within the community must recognize that they have a juvenile gang problem. Sometimes it can be difficult for communities to identify the extent of their problem because not all youth gangs function or behave the same. It is equally difficult for communities to assess their gang problem if youth delinquency and juvenile gang emergence is new to their community. In these instances it is beneficial for communities to seek the knowledge of gang experts in assessing their youth gangs (Howell, 2000).

After communities have acknowledged their community problem they need to assess the gangs in terms of characteristics of juveniles involved and the crimes being committed (Howell, 2000). It is important to assess the characteristics of juveniles and their delinquent behavior so that their needs for protective factors can be obtained and risk factors reduced through effective programs. Youth gangs are not all the same and a one size fits all program approach does not work. Different institutions within the community need to work collectively to determine the resources and programs that already exist in their community. Before programs can be implemented the existing or new strategies and programs must be evaluated in terms of the juveniles' needs, effectiveness in combating youth gangs and the implications that will be

associated with each strategy (National Gang Center, OJJDP, 2010). The next step for proper program implementation is dependent on community stakeholders and their involvement in combating youth gangs. Each part of the community must be dedicated to preventing youth gang involvement before it starts.

The pursuit to combat youth gangs can fail in communities for several reasons. The most significant reason why programs in prevention, intervention and suppression fail is due to denial by community leaders that there is a youth gang problem in their community (Howell, 2000). Communities should not be ashamed to acknowledge their issue of youth gangs because this is the only way they can effectively combat them. At the same time communities cannot be over zealous about their gang problem. An overreaction to youth gangs through suppression and intervention efforts by law enforcement and criminal sanctions can prove to be ineffective in combating youth gangs (Howell, 2000). As a result of these efforts gangs can become stronger and disburse to other communities (Howell, 2000). Community members must also recognize that gangs are not a law enforcement problem (Howell, 2000). Effective strategies for combating youth gangs happen when community members, institutions, and government agencies work together to solve the problem. The only long-term effective way to prevent the spread and intensity of youth gangs is through a proactive approach to stop juvenile involvement before it begins. Through an understanding youth risk factors and theories that explain what causes juveniles to be at-risk of joining gangs effective programs can be implemented. Ultimately there has to be a collective effort by everyone in society to prevent and stop the spread of youth gangs.

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