Combating Youth Gangs: A Threat Assessment Model for the Year 2000

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Abstract

An every increasing concern to law enforcement officials is the threat of youth gangs. Membership in youth gangs continues to grow at an every increasing rate. Gangs are not geographically isolated to the inner city. Gang activity can be found in all sections of the United States from the bustling cities to the small rural communities that in the past felt that they were immune from big city problems. A 1995 report estimated there to be more than 650,000 gang members nationwide and this estimate continues to rise with time.

Law enforcement needs to be prepared to tackle and arrest gang activity once it migrates into their respective jurisdiction. However, without a planned systematic assessment process law enforcement officials can quickly lose focus of their mission and failure can result. Presented here is an assessment model that any agency facing an emerging or chronic youth gang problem can adopt. Additionally, through a gang survey of high school students and a case study of a local Florida municipality, the assessment process is examined for its practicality.

Introduction

The purpose of this research project is to give law enforcement agencies an assessment model to control youth gangs. Youth gangs flourish through misunderstanding. However, by identifying, developing, and implementing strategies to deal with gangs, law enforcement can fulfill their primary objectives.

This research paper is divided into four areas. This first section deals with the history of gangs. The section takes a quick look back at the beginning of gangs so that an investigator will have an understanding of the gang beliefs and mentality.

The second section concerns recognizing gang problems so that law enforcement can make an assessment. Often law enforcement does not want to admit that there is a potential problem beginning in their jurisdiction. Here a research survey is used to analyze the assessment model and to learn from high school students the most current gang symbols and signs.

Section three will establish solutions that communities can follow to help them deal with the gang related problems. Many gangs develop from a young person's need to belong. Social conditioning can become a major factor in the intense fight to stop the creation of many gangs. Through a cooperative effort comprising the public and private sector, many gangs can be stopped before they have a hold on a community.

The final section will deal with the long term maintenance of a gang initiative. Once a program serves its purposes and removes the offenders from the affected area, a program must be put in place so that the problems do not recur. Once law enforcement lets down their guard after the initial push to remove the gangs, it is possible that the gangs will again try to reorganize. This is where the community will need a long term maintenance program. Simple programs need to be put into use that identify any attempt by a gang organization to recommence.

The History of Gangs

Gangs have been recorded in history dating back to the eighteenth century. In the mid-1900's, gangs became more prominent and started to become involved in the drug market (Nawojczyk 1995). With this arrival, many law enforcement agencies began developing strategies to contend with the problems that now face them. The Department of Justice initiated The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to help control the gang conditions. Recognizing a growing problem OJJDP defined a youth gang as:

> a youth gang is commonly thought of as a self-formed association of peers having the following characteristics: a gang name and recognizable symbols, identifiable leadership, a geographic territory, a regular meeting pattern, and collective actions to carry out illegal activities (Howell 1997).

A 1997 study reported by the OJJDP shows a sharp increase of gang activity. Since 1980, the number of cities reporting youth gang problems has increased from an estimated 286 jurisdictions with more than 2000 gangs with 100,000 members to about 2000 jurisdictions with more than 23,000 gangs and more than 650,000 members in 1995 (Howell, 1997).

In the early part of the century gang members were mostly second-generation white immigrants from eastern and southern Europe. Additionally, African-Americans who had recently immigrated to northern cities were involved in gang activity. A 1992 gang migration study of 1,100 U.S. cities found that most youth gangs are "homegrown." A recent law enforcement analysis found that 48% of gang members are black, 43% are Hispanic, 4% are Asian, and are 5% whites (Howell 1997).

While gang activity has been in existence for many decades, only certain urban areas, such as Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York, felt their consequence. Yet a disturbing trend has been seen over the last couple of decades. The emergence of gang activity is spreading to all areas of the United States. Gang problems are no longer isolated to the inner cities. In 1995, all states and most large cities reported youth gang problems. Fifty-eight percent of all the responding jurisdictions including 50% of cities and towns with populations less than 25,000 reported youth gang activity (Howell 1997).

Violent street gangs primarily developed in southern Los Angeles during the 1960's. Two of the best-known gangs are the Crips and the Bloods. Their racial make-up is mostly black and Hispanic and both genders are included. The Crips and Bloods are highly active in the illegal drug trade and members of both groups have been identified in many other cities around the United States (Florida Dept. of Corrections).

Both the Crips and the Bloods have a distinctly structured hierarchy within their organizations. At the head of the organization is the First Superior. The responsibility of the First Superior is to oversee the gang and act as the disciplinarian. As the rank structure flows downward, the lowest member of the gang is the principal soldier. Much like the structure of a military organization, the soldier fights with other gangs and takes orders from the higher members of the organization (Florida Dept. of Corrections).

The gangs of the Folk and People Nation Alliance are traced back to having their beginnings in the Chicago area during the 1960's (Florida Dept. of Corrections). Smaller groups developed for several years, then during the 1980's from within the

Illinois prison system the idea of alliance began (Florida Dept. of Corrections). The many smaller groups came under two distinct confederations. Besides the alliance names, hand signs, symbols, colors, and other identifiers were adopted to help members with immediate recognition of other gang members (Florida Dept. of Corrections).

While the Bloods and the Crips are some of the most widely known gangs, many other groups fall under the gang definition. Hate groups such as the Klu Klux Klan organizes in the street gang fashion. This type of organization has an internal hierarchy and engages in violent behavior. The Klu Klux Klan is characterized by communal or symbolic beliefs and often pursues economic considerations to promote its beliefs. Another commonly known hate group is the Neo-Nazis. Frequently associated with the Klu Klux Klan, the Neo-Nazis preach racial separatist platform and use German Nazi symbols and uniforms as tools of intimidation (Florida Dept. of Corrections).

Both the Klu Klux Klan and the Neo-Nazis subscribe to the white supremacy ideology. These two groups believe that a conspiratorial cabal of nonwhites or Jews controls the United States government. They advocate changing this "Zionist Occupational Government" through terror or violence (Florida Dept. of Corrections). Although the Klan and the Neo-Nazis are not your traditional street gangs, they operate and recruit their membership in a very similar manner to the youth gangs.

Assessing Gang Problems

The process of assessing the threat of street gangs in a community is the most important step that can be taken by a governmental organization. The purpose of the assessment is to identify the specific components of the problem, analyze their causes, and determine the resources available when the plan takes affect. The assessment phase is the beginning for the development of the goals of the project, the strategies that will be employed, and the setting of the objectives intended to be met. Additionally, community participation will be identified and other governmental entities will need to be discussed for what participation they might have. Training needs for the participants will need to be determined and a monitoring program will need to be established. Finally, an evaluation system will need to be developed so that the overall effectiveness can be asserted.

Identifying the Problem

Identifying the fact that a gang problem exists in a community is a beginning. However, it must be perceived and expressed as a problem so that a basis for dealing with it can be initiated. The problem can take on two separate singularities: emerging or chronic.

Emerging Gang Problem

An emerging gang problem can be characterized as a gang that has less than a well-organized foundation. However, the problem can be continual at times to form a well-rounded gang association. The tendency toward violence and drug trafficking can gather public concern and usually has not been present for five years or less. With emerging gangs, the threat of development and spread normally comes from gang

members moving into the community. These newcomers come from other areas where chronic gangs have plagued an area and they have moved on to ply their trade (Spergel 1991).

Chronic Gang Problem

Persistent or periodic crisis characterizes an area that suffers from the chronic gang problem of major gang membership violence. A high incident rate of drug trafficking, gang violence illustrated by drive-by shootings and retaliatory homicides, are elements of a strong gang presence. The duration associated with a chronic gang problem is normally five to ten years or more. These youth gangs are highly organized and are often in older, larger cities. This type of gang is likely to be found in impoverished, ghetto, or transitional areas or ports of entry of inner cities, although they are increasingly found in smaller cities and suburban communities (Spergel 1991).

The distinction between the ideas of chronic and emerging gang problems are not abrupt. Indicators related to the onset of the problem, its duration, degree of gang organization severity of gang violence and related gang member drug trafficking, and the appropriate responses to the problem are not neatly categorized by the terms "chronic" and "emerging." However, emerging gang problems may grow into a chronic problem based on many variables. Some of these variables include but are not limited to law enforcement presence, rival gang activity, and the viability of the community. Conjunctive to this, a chronic gang problem will go through periods of sharp declines of diminished activity before the problem will reemerge. Different parts of the community can see different stages of activity to various degrees. There may be no set level of uniform gang activity equalized throughout the community (Spergel 1991).

Types of Gangs

Besides a gang incidence rate classification, the categories of activity that a gang participates in can also be classified.   A study by Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin (1960) identified three types of youth gang classification: criminal, conflict, or retreatist. Criminal gangs are likely to exist in stable low-income areas where there are close relationships between adolescents and adult criminals (Bureau of Justice Assistance 1998). Conflict gangs develop in communities with dilapidated conditions and transient populations. When criminal opportunities do not exist, conflict gangs fight to gain social status and protect their integrity and honor. Retreatist gangs do not possess the skills to be considered criminal gangs. They retreat into a role on the fringe of society that usually involves heavy drug use and withdrawal from social interaction (Bureau of Justice Assistance 1998). A number of other gangs do not fit neatly into Cloward and Ohlin's categorization. For example, some gangs engage in serious criminal activity, but many if not most gangs have few organizational or economic goals. Although these gangs may not pose a serious threat to a community, lesser threats do remain. Tagger crews consist of youths banded together to create graffiti. The main reason for tagging, which is a form of vandalism, is to gain respect from fellow artists and more important, from members of other tagger crews (Bureau of Justice Assistance 1998). For communities to effectively remove the gang threat, they must recognize and analyze the type of gangs that inhabits their jurisdiction.

<u>Gang Identifiers</u>

Gangs often have symbols or clothing unique to their organization to distinguish themselves from other rival gangs. However, these identifiers can evolve quickly, partially in response to direct factors. Prevention, intervention, and suppression efforts by law enforcement can cause a shift in gang behavior. Additionally, demographic shifts, economic conditions, and influences from the media are modifiers that can cause a reaction from a gang (Bureau of Justice Assistance 1997).

Many gang symbols are time tested, such as hand signs and distinct clothing. To update this knowledge the author conducted a survey of 188 high school children currently attending the ninth and twelfth grades in two Cape Coral high schools located in Cape Coral, Florida. By splitting the survey between the two grades the data comes from students who have been in the high school for several years and it gathers data from students who had just left the middle school grades. Parts of the survey focused on what students believe are symbols of gang members. Table 1 contains the results.

Table1

Are hats gang symbols?	Yes - 49	No - 139
Are baggy jeans gang symbols?	Yes - 19	No - 169
Are hand symbols used by gangs?	Yes - 89	No - 99
Are tattoos symbols of gangs?	Yes - 101	No - 87

Additionally, the students surveyed were asked to provide other indicators used by gangs. Of the seventy-seven students that provided a response, table 2 contains the most common results.

Table 2

24 surveys stated a combination of hand signs, gestures, or movements.
13 surveys stated colors, either worn or items carried.

Other items characterizing gang members included, eyebrows shaved in strips, pants worn with one leg rolled up, bandanas of various colors. and body piercing.

Gangs not only have visual indicators, the activity they participate in identifies some gangs. Drugs, violence, and vandalism, ranked in the top activities from the surveyed students. Of the 188 students that elected to answer the survey questions, 149 gave a response. Table 3 gives the results.

Table 3

62 responses stated that violence of some type gangs participate in either, robbery, fights, or shootings.
18 responses stated that gang members partake in vandalism

As Cloward and Ohlin pointed out in1960, a conclusion still relevant today in highly organized communities with many illegal opportunities, entrepreneurial gangs may emerge. In disorganized communities where there are few illegal opportunities and criminal role models to regulate illegal behavior, "fighting" gangs highly competitive and violent drug-selling organizations may emerge. Finally, in areas where gang members have failed to succeed in the legitimate market and also the illegitimate one, retreatist gangs may emerge. These gangs rarely engage in violence and are perhaps the least harmful to a community since their activities pose little threats to the social order of a neighborhood.

Community Assessment & Indicators

Assessing the communities' threat from youth gangs is a very complex and a politically sensitive issue. They must perceive and talk the threat. Otherwise, there is insufficient basis for dealing with the issue. The presence of a youth gang problem must be recognized before anything purposeful can be done about it.

Many indicators may be gathered from the many social and law enforcement agencies that will determine a level of the threats. The threat must be recognized by an influential and respected member from the area. Among the many possibilities are: the head law enforcement officer, a minister from the local house of worship, a school principal, a public housing director, or a grassroots organization.

Evidence of violent acts or threats of violence must be clearly recorded, described, communicated, and emphasized, along with articulations of a need for action. The news media must report the event or threat in accurate terms so that the community can clearly understand the transformation their community is taking. The gang event must be considered a danger to citizens' lives, property, or public well-being.

Establishing a preliminary structure to deal with a community's gang assessment can be accomplished through several possibilities. The effort can be coordinated through the local law enforcement agency, the local prosecutor's office, or through any of the community groups of an already existing association of agencies. This assessment board should look for ways to understand effectively and begin to deal with an ensuing gang problem in some collaborative terms. Discussions should show the adequate concern about the problem along with sufficient knowledge about the scope of the gang problem and what to do about it.

Resources

A key to any operational plan is to decide the resources available to combat a problem. For dealing with youth gangs, resources include governmental and private organizations that offer services that can be used to reach the desired goal.   Through

the accessible resources many facets of the problems can be maligned at once.

Law Enforcement

The law enforcement community takes a very centered role when dealing with youth gangs. Many gang programs feature the suppression as a key principle. This principle is based on the primary role of law enforcement to protect the area it serves from dangerous and evil entities such as gangs that threaten the well being of the community members. Gang members, especially their leaders are serious offenders and pose a serious threat.

Law enforcement's role in gang suppression can be seen as coordinator, recorder, and monitor. An agency that decides to take a lead role in a community based gang program will be instrumental in coordinating the agencies' needs to confront the street gangs. This agency may find itself recording the actions taken for future review and could find itself monitoring the results so that the problems do not recur.

Prosecutor's Office

Another source in the fight against youth gangs is the local prosecutor's office. Their primary role is the prosecution and conviction plus the incarceration of youthful offenders. Prosecutors' offices are just recently beginning to specialize in this type of prosecution. Becoming accustomed to the gang ideology and behaviors, can help the attorneys in bolstering their cases when it is time to go to trial with this special type of offender.

The prosecutor's office can be very beneficial in researching and proposing new or enhanced laws directed toward gang activity. Many jurisdictions are proposing legislation that targets certain behaviors that are inherit with gang activity. Such as enhanced weapon laws or laws that target graffiti activity, give officers another tool to make gang enterprise unappealing.

Judiciary

The court system must be included in dealing with gang activity. This is the resource that has the authority to emphasize a tough strategy and remove the offender from society. Many judges are including the social services in an attempt to reform the gang members and turn them into productive members of the community. Through a community oriented approach in which a variety of community, school, family, and justice system organizations can be brought together to concentrate efforts to address the special needs of the youth gang member.

Probation / Parole

The local offices of probation and parole need to be involved in gang suppression. Through closer supervision for gang offenders, programs such as group counseling, remedial education, alternative school arrangement and job placement can be mandated and monitored. These specialized programs can emphasize suppression in collaboration with law enforcement.

Corrections

Including the correction official in a gang suppression program provides for long

term coordination. Additionally, an increase in institutional social opportunities for positive development of inmates, including employment training and work programs. Supplemental intelligence information can be gathered through a better communication dialog between correction officers and inmates.

Schools

Schools are potentially the best community resource for prevention and early intervention into youth gang problems. This is the youth's environment where a connection can be made and the youth will feel comfortable talking.

School resource officers are able to become very knowledgeable about the local gang situation. Through daily contact and discussion with the students, valuable intelligence can be gathered that would take a normal street officer days to accumulate.

Between the 5th and 8th grades a student is the most vulnerable to gang recruitment (Spergel, Curry, Chance, Kane, Ross, Alexander, Simmons, Oh 1994). These are the primary grades where gang prevention should be focused. The high school grade levels, nine through twelve, are the grades where a combination of prevention and suppression should be centered.

Community Organizations

Local community efforts have formed in the past several years specifically to deal with youth gang problems. Some of these efforts are variations of more general citizen crime control and prevention programs. These programs sometimes combine the guidance of law enforcement with the resources of social services.

Assessment Approach

The presence of a youth gang problem must be recognized before anything meaningful can be done to address it. Identification of manifested and underlying factors contributing to the problem is also important. Those with responsibility for addressing the problem are representatives of criminal justice and community agencies, grassroots organizations, schools, churches, local businesses. Even gangs should participate in describing the nature of gang problems and causes they can also recommend appropriate solutions.

The approach to the assessment model comprises three distinct areas. The develop of the goals must first be defined. Then strategies can be planned for and an analysis can be done of the problem. The final segment of the assessment approach is setting objectives. During the final period problem locations are identified and operations are set into action.

Develop Goals

Deciding which issues must be addressed is the first step of developing a plan. Setting the goals of the project gives the assessor a clear and direct path for where the plan will head. For dealing with a potential youth gang problem, information from a variety of sources is critical. This data can come from many sources. Reports on the scope of the youth gang problem should be gathered from criminal justice agencies, as well as schools, community-based youth agencies and other social organizations. A

formal or informal survey of community opinion can be conducted. In very extreme circumstances, a set of public hearings could be held on the problem. From a wide range of witnesses, information concerning a description of the problem, recommendation for programs of suppression, intervention and prevention, should be collected and studied to provide a clear course that should be taken.

Long term comprehensive strategies, including remedial education, training, and jobs plus short-term suppression and outreach services for targeted youth, must be provided. A balance should be established between strategies that focus on individual or family change and those that emphasize system change and development or the provision of additional resources, such as the creation of a local youth conservation corps. Long term sustained efforts that target the most vulnerable and hardcore youth gang members are must be sought.

Develop Strategies

In the earliest stages of planning and analysis for a gang suppression effort, law enforcement officials must articulate the nature and scope of the community's gang problem. In many communities particularly those that have little experience with gangs the first reason for conducting a thorough assessment of the problem are to overcome the commonly encountered
denial that criminal gangs even exist. Questions to ask to decide gang presence include the following: Are buildings covered with the graffiti from roving loose-knit bands of mischievous but otherwise non-criminal youth? Is the increase in shootings a statistical aberration? Is the local market for drugs and weapons controlled by a handful of independent operators? In answering these questions, is it shown that a real gang threat exists? Once gang presence has been determined, questioning can become more directed. For example, investigating questions such as what gangs exist and are the most violent, how large they are, how they are organized, who the leaders are. What territories they claim will help yield a clearer picture of the type of gang problem that exists. Finding the answers to these and other questions about the nature and extent of gang presence is an essential step that leads to establishing realistic strategies.

A wide range of witnesses, including those in direct contact with the problem, e.g., criminal justice, youth agency, and community representatives including parents, as well as former gang members and gang members to provide descriptions of the problem, analyses or explanations, and recommendations for programs of suppression, intervention, and prevention. Expert witnesses and program operators from outside and inside the community should be asked to provide an analysis of the local or of a relevant comparable gang problem in another community or city, and recommend approaches for dealing with it. Special attention must be directed to the development of a clear and precise use of gang terms, gang memberships, and especially gang incidents, with preference for a gang-motivated or functional membership definition. The presence of groups of youth involved in illegal acts that may not be gang motivated does not automatically mean that a gang problem exists.

Set Objectives

The foremost objective is to stop the gang activity that may be taking place.

However, there may be many subcategories related to the primary objective that needs to be dealt with through this task. In locales with chronic youth gang activity, this means establishing local councils or statutory commissions (possibly by State statute) to set policy, and to coordinate programs resulting from such policy. Each council or commission should establish special committees on law enforcement, education, employment, and rehabilitation. A full range of strategies, prevention, intervention, and suppression must be planned, but they must be appropriately ordered and ranked. In areas with an emerging problem, less formal or inclusive structural arrangements may be required, but schools and youth agencies must give special emphasis to efforts to reach out to certain high-risk youth and their families through a variety of prevention and early intervention programs.

Some problems may not be readily recognizable at the beginning of the planing period. By applying one of the following objectives, a desirable analysis can be accomplished.

❑ Totally eliminating the problem.
❑ Substantially reducing the problem.
❑ Reducing the harm created by the problem.
❑ More effectively dealing with the problem.

The information gathered during the strategic stage can be used to decide which problems need to be addressed first. Problems that pose an immediate threat to the citizenry obviously will need to be given a higher priority over nuisance problems such as graffiti complaints.

Survey Application / Case Study
To evaluate the gang assessment model explained here, it will be applied to the current youth gang circumstance in the City of Cape Coral, Florida. Cape Coral currently has a population of 93,017 full time residents. The median age for the population is 42 and the median income is $41,442 per year (City of Cape Coral Department of Community Development 1998). The city covers 114 square miles in southwest Florida and has 400 mile of fresh and saltwater canals traversing throughout it (Cape Coral Police 1997 Annual Report).
The Cape Coral Police Department currently employs 141 sworn full time officers. Within the City of Cape Coral, calls for service continue to outpace the increase in the population. Table 4 below shows that between 1993 and 1997 calls for service outpaced the population growth by 22%.

Table 4

Year	Calls for Service	Population
1993	41,420	82,629
1994	46,067	85,305
1995	49,213	87,576
1996	52,787	89,845
1997	60,890	91,560

Source: Cape Coral Police 1997 Annual Report

With the increase in calls for service, the crime rate within Cape Coral has shown a continual decrease since 1993 except 1996 when an increase took place.

Table 5

Year	Total Index Crime	Percent of Change
1993	4,161	-0.5%
1994	3,988	-4.2%
1995	3,487	-12.6%
1996	3,690	5.8%
1997	3,629	-1.7%

Source: Cape Coral Police 1997 Annual Report

In 1994, the Cape Coral Police Department under the direction of the newly appointed Chief, Arnold Gibbs, began a concentrated effort of stopping juvenile crime and curtailing an emerging youth gang problem. Beginning this effort meant that new goals had to be established and a plan had to be developed to deal with these issues. Long term comprehensive strategies for dealing with the gang situation had to be made. Among these issues were new programs to deal with the juveniles along with funding to support the effort.

Currently, several programs are in place that deal directly with juveniles. The

Youth Crime Intervention Officer program has officers dealing directly with troubled youth. This program also has these officers working with the State Department of Juvenile Justice ensuring that juveniles assigned to home detention comply with their contract. Youth Crime officers personally enroll the juveniles in the program and check them during their detention period. Any of the enrollees that violate their program terms are immediately taken into custody.

Another duty of the Youth Crime Officer is to make a visible presence on the street gathering information about youth gang activity. The officers circulate throughout different locations within their jurisdiction where local teenagers congregate to gather updated gang information. Areas such as local mall parking lots and high school sporting events, prove to provide a wealth of information on the current gang activities.

The final piece of this gang assessment model deals with setting objectives. At the Cape Coral Police Department part of the objective is developing a self worth in the community's youth. A program targeting students at all levels within the local schools named, Do The Right Thing, provides recognition for students that show good citizenship and leadership. Monthly, the police department recognizes students nominated from throughout the community that have done some exceptional act. The gesture can be as simple as returning lost property or may entail an act of kindness. In either event, the purpose of the program is to reward the student and provide recognition for something that would normally go unnoticed. Through this recognition their peers will hopefully develop and replicate a sense of positive attitude.

Model Application

To describe the three strategies that have been previously explained, a survey was conducted at the two high schools within the city of Cape Coral. The survey instrument (Appendix 1) asked three closed answered questions concerning gang membership:

- ➢ Have you ever been approached by anyone to join a gang?
- ➢ Do you know anyone who is or says they are a gang member?
- ➢ How many people do you know who are gang members?

From these three questions the following responses were gathered.

Table 6

Have you ever been approached by anyone to join a gang?	40 Yes	146 No

Table 7

Do you know anyone who is or says they are a gang member?	118 Yes	29 No

Table 8

How many people do you know who are gang members?	Total was 1456 31 student didn't respond 59 students stated zero 3 gave numbers over 100

The first question, "Have you ever been approached by anyone to join a gang?", shows that only 22% of the students surveyed reported being approached about being in a gang. This is an indicator of the lack of gang activity in Cape Coral. The second question "Do you know anyone who is or says they are a gang member?" had a much higher rate of positive response. Eighty percent of the respondents reported knowing someone who claims to be a gang member. There was no way in the survey of knowing if multiple respondents are claiming to know the same gang member. The question does suggest that students claiming to be associated with youth gangs are well known by their fellow students. For the third and final question, "How many people do you know who are gang members?", the answers had to be separated for clarity. Thirty-one or 16% of the respondents elected not to answer this question, their lack of an answer must be assumed to mean that they do not know any or they did not try to think of a number. Thirty-two percent of the respondents stated that they did not know many gang members, this finding directly correlated with question number two knowing any gang members. The finding in this question was that three respondents gave numbers over one-hundred. These three answers must be questioned as truthful answers since the other 129 respondents gave answers less than fifty.

Solutions

Controls for today's gang problems come in a variety of methods. There is directed patrol by local law enforcement that focuses its resources very definitively, or a multi-agency task force that can be formed bringing together local officials with federal agencies. However, many of these policies have a short termed solutions to a long term problem.

With the current national focus being on community policing, the following solutions offered here will have a community based concept. Not all solutions will be favorable to all locales, and some of the solutions will need to be redesigned to meet any unforeseen circumstances that may arise.

The community policing philosophy emphasizes identification and resolution of problems and conditions that cause crime, rather than focusing exclusively on individual incidents. As a neighborhood-based approach, community-oriented policing stresses close interaction and cooperation between citizens and uniformed patrol officers, who are frequently based at neighborhood substations. Ideally, neighborhood residents and police jointly define the problems, select the targets, and share in developing appropriate strategies. Solutions to underlying problems or conditions that contribute to neighborhood crime include removing abandoned cars, improving street lighting, converting pay phones to function on a call-out basis only, securing advance permission from business owners for police to enter private property (for example, parking lots and

exterior stairs), and arresting and investigating gang members or other loitering individuals.

Another excellent enforcement tool for combating gangs is the use of local ordinances and codes. Compliance with health, building, and zoning codes, as well as nuisance abatement ordinances, may be enforced to close crack houses, clandestine laboratories, and other gang locations; to evict gang members from apartments used for drug-related purposes; and to otherwise control gang activity.

At Cape Coral Police Department programs such as Neighborhood Resource Program (N.R.O.), works toward actively removing gangs. The N.R.O. program addresses quality of life issues such as abandoned buildings, animal and noise nuisances, and other code type violations which are conditions that cultivate crime in neighborhoods.

Another program at the Cape Coral Police Department that is an important segment of the crime fighting model is the Clean and Safe Environment (C.A.S.E.) program. The goal of C.A.S.E. is to get everyone to adopt that attitude of a clean and safe environment; to convince residents to hold their neighbors accountable for the condition of their property; and to encourage compliance with all city ordinances, through the police department's Code Enforcement Section and Neighborhood Resource Officers.

The C.A.S.E. program is practiced at four separate levels:

- Regular Code Enforcement Sweeps targeting property owners who fail to comply with city ordinances governing vegetation growth, outdoor storage, abandoned vehicles, construction without permits, "for sale" vehicles parked on vacant lots, parked commercial trucks, and other similar situations.

- Neighborhood Clean-Ups, coordinated the four geographically defined (northeast, northwest, southeast and southwest) Neighborhood Sub-Councils and Neighborhood Resource Officers.

- Letters to Residents who have allowed their properties to fall into disrepair. This phase of C.A.S.E. is also coordinated through the Neighborhood Sub-Councils, part of the "neighbors holding neighbors accountable" philosophy.

- The final component of C.A.S.E. is the creation of a Nuisance Abatement Board to hear the more serious complaints and take action against those who refuse to correct their violations. A city ordinance establishing such a board has been drafted and is expected to come before the Cape Coral City Council shortly.

Source: Cape Coral Police Web Page

Long Term Maintenance

Long term maintenance of a gang problem can only be accomplished with identifying and resolving the underlying issues that allowed the problem to be manufactured. By applying a systematic problem solving model that evaluates the available data, a youth gang problem can be eliminated.

The SARA (scanning, analysis, response, and assessment) model (Goldstein 1990) provides the investigating officer a useful tool by clearly recognizing the various

sources of information to investigate a gang related problem. Applications of the SARA model leads investigators away form short term reactive style responses and provides them with a clear vision of the problem and an answer to it.

Scanning

During the scanning stage everyone involved in this comprehensive approach is responsible for supplying various data. Potential sources for investigative data include: police reports, street intelligence, calls for service, data from various government agencies including schools, information from the judicial system, and local surveys. Data must be gathered on all aspects and persons involved in the problem that is being examined.

Analysis

The analysis process consists of developing a thorough understanding of the data collected. A problem is a group of incidents created by the interaction of the participants (Bureau of Justice Assistance 1997). To learn as much as possible about a problem is important and to understand the incident that makes up the problem requires an understanding of the participants. Additionally, understanding the problem also requires the knowledge of the immediate results and the reactions of the community.

Response

During the response stage the investigator should focus on three different objectives: the developing of options for the response, selecting an appropriate course of action, and implementing a plan.   When developing responses, the investigator should keep all the options open. Do not discount any alternative since portions of the many opportunities may be selected and combined into one. The many responses could include:

➢   Concentrating on a particular group of subjects that are causing the gang problems.

➢   Mobilizing a community action group.

➢   Altering the physical environment to control loitering and places of seclusion.

➢   The use of the law such as the RICO act to break up the gangs resources.

➢   Regulation through statutes and ordinances to control certain conditions.

Source: Bureau of Justice Assistance 1997

Selection of a Response

During the selection process the investigator will need to examine the list of possibilities thoroughly and consider the most appropriate course of action. Consideration must be give to the resources available, and information from community leaders should be appraised.   In choosing a response, the one with the highest likelihood of a positive outcome is the regarded the best. Some factors that should be examined include:

- The effect on the problem's most serious features, such as drug sales or violence.

- The availability of legal authority.

- The lawfulness and civility of the response.

- The ease of implementing the response.

- The impact of the surrounding area where the response is executed.
  Source: Bureau of Justice Assistance 1997

Assessment

The assessment stage is the final stage to the SARA problem solving model. During this stage useful feedback is analyzed to determine the long term effects of the action taken. The assessment should focus on the problem statement and link together the response with the problem so that it thoroughly defines the complete process.

During the assessment there are four desired outcomes: is there better management of the problem, was there a reduction in the problem, has there been a reduction in the harm that was caused by the problem, or has a complete elimination taken place (Bureau of Justice Assistance 1997). A proven impact of the applied response can be evaluated by its effect of the harm that was previously endured.

Lieutenant Bill Scott is a long time member of the Cape Coral Police Department

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Appendix A

The purpose of this survey is to determine how much street gang activity exists in Cape Coral.   Please answer truthfully so that this survey can be accurate.

6.   Have you ever been approached by anyone to join a gang?
        Yes_____ No _____

7.   Do you know anyone who is or says they are a gang member?
        Yes_____ No _____

8.   How many people do you know who are gang members?
        Total_____

9.   What do you consider to be symbols of gang members?
        Check all that apply.
        _____ a. Hats
        _____ b. Baggy jeans
        _____ c. Handkerchiefs
        _____ d. Tattoos
        _____ e. Other (please describe) _____

10.   What kinds of activity do you believe gangs participate in?
        _____

        _____

11.   Do you think the Cape Coral Police Department is stopping gang activity in our school?
        Yes_____ No _____
        a. If yes, what are they doing?
        _____

        _____

        b. If no, what can the police do better?
        _____

        _____

12.   What do you think our school administrators/teachers can or should do to stop gang activity in our school?
        _____