

Gangs 101: A Primer



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- ◆ Gangs: “Two or more persons engaged in anti-social behavior and who form an allegiance for a common criminal purpose and who individually are creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation within a community.”
- ◆ Gang Free Zones 1991



Addendum

- ◆ The majority of youth based street gangs will form or “gravitate” together predominantly for “social” purposes and/or to satisfy basic adolescent needs first. Any criminal activities usually come about after the formation and as a result of other dynamics that occur within, or because of the formation of the group.

Structure of a Gang

◆ “New Jacks”

“OG’s”



“Wannabes are
Gonnabes”



Gangs in my community?!

- ◆ 3 basic looks at the level of gang issues:
- ◆ **Gang CONCERNS:** graffiti, “named” social groups, incidents of low level offenses
- ◆ **Gang PRESENCE:** identifiers, increased graffiti, cross-outs, intensified criminal activity, (particularly assaults)
- ◆ **Gang PROBLEM:** rival gang incidents, firearms, drug activity (sales), homicides

Scavenger

➤ Control is loosely held

➤ Leaders frequently change

➤ Certain agreed upon behavior
Both legal and illegal



Territorial(Turf)

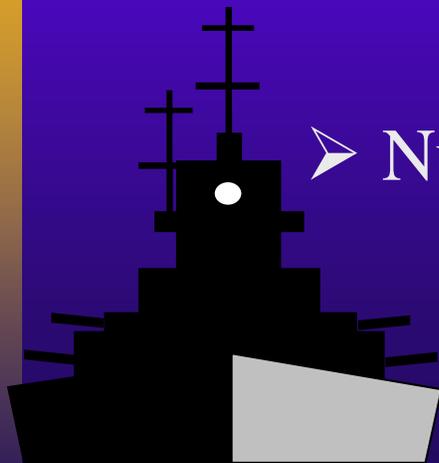
- Defined by claiming a geographic area
 - Claimed for territory
- Claimed because of a behavior (economics)
(a street, a block, a school, a playground)



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Organized

- A Clearly defined leader
- Often adopt a military structure
- A strong hierarchy
- Strong roles of discipline, boundaries
- Nurturing, supportive parent figures





Gang Involvement Motivational Factors (Basic Human/Adolescent Needs)

- Sense of identity
- Sense of competence
- Sense of belonging

These needs are commonly met
through illegal or immoral behaviors

- Sense of family (structure/guidance)
 - Loyalty
- Support system (discipline)

Motivational Factors

➤ Protection

Physical safety (from actual events)

Psychological safety (perceived threats or fears)

➤ Peer pressure

Probably one of the most dangerous levels of recruitment (most utilized method is intimidation)

➤ Generational

(relatives are gang members; or there exists a culture of gang involvement)





Motives of a gang crime

- ◆ **REPRESENTING:** The physical act of identifying oneself as a gang member and showing an alliance with a particular gang. This activity may involve all or some identifying actions.
- ◆ **RECRUITMENT:** The recruiting of members to a gang. This is the lifeline of any gang. Power in numbers theory.



Motives of a gang crime

- ◆ **PRESTIGE:** Crimes committed by gang members or potential members in an effort to glorify or elevate their own status or that of the gangs'. Also done to gain rank.
- ◆ **TURF VIOLATION:** The defacing of another gangs' turf and/or graffiti. Simply being present on rival gang turf can be a violation. This kind of “disrespect” often leads to violence.



- ◆ **PERSONAL CONFLICT:** This often occurs when there is a leadership void or when a gang member violates a gang “law”. Violations are punishable with beatings, banishment, and even death.

Gang Identifiers: "the red flags"



IMPORTANT!!! All gang members do not necessarily wear “gang type” clothing and not all “gang type” clothing indicates gang involvement.

- Graffiti
- Clothing
- Hand Signs
- Tattoos
- Vocabulary
- Territory
- Color
- Photos



The Significance of Graffiti

- ✓ The “AT&T” of gangs
- ✓ Very often the first sign of gang activity
 - ✓ A method of communications
 - ✓ Represents power, pride, recognition
- ✓ Creates a breeding ground for fear and crime
 - ✓ Gang activity increases

Graffiti continued



- ✓ To show dominance or control over a particular area;
to establish “turf”
 - ✓ To show opposition to a rival gang
 - ✓ Individual “tags” may accompany gang tags
 - ✓ Inverted symbols or letters show disrespect
 - ✓ Numeric codes & symbols may be used
- !! All graffiti should be photographed !!
and removed as soon as possible**



PREVENTION CURRICULUM

- Strong, data driven academic instruction
- Brief, frequent monitoring (progress reports)
- Clear behavior expectations & consequences, (both positive & negative)
- Individualized behavioral & academic plans
 (“CHOOSE NOT TO LOSE”)



FOCUS OF THE GANG PROBLEM PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

- Prevention strategies attempt to prevent gang behavior & problems before they start
- Intervention strategies, which are used in emerging & chronic gang situations, attempt to prevent an existing problem from getting worse
- Suppression strategies, which tend to deal with gang problems swiftly & efficiently, are excellent short-term strategies



Step 1: Gang Task Force

- Place an agenda item on gangs
- Evaluate the need for members experienced in working with gangs
- Determine whether gang issues are a concern, a presence, or a problem
 - Develop & collect data on gang issues
- Draft a report with policy recommendations



Working With Communities: Three Steps

- Step 1: Involve key community leaders

 - Create a Community safety Board

 - Formulate common goals & objectives

 - Design a community assessment study

- Step 2: Form a Gang Task Force

 - Choose members with various expertise

 - Create a diverse community representation

 - Schedule and maintain regular meetings

- Step 3: Conduct a community survey

 - This should be used to develop policy

 - Address Risk Factors: Community, Family,
School, Individual & Peer



Program Models

- Project “Safe Streets”
- “Streetworkers”
- John Hope/Tides “Re-entry Program”
- “Choose Not to Lose”
- Gangs 101



Inservice Training Issues

- Self-defense
- Safe fight intervention
- De-Escalating Verbal Conflicts
- Gang Awareness
 - **Verbal Indicators**
 - Challenges, Gang/Slang verbiage
 - **Non-Verbal Indicators**
 - Tattoos, hand-signs, attire
- Conflict Resolution
- Diversity Training



Gang Intervention Steps

- Legal Consequences
- Behaviors
- Positive Alternatives
- Strategies
- Physical Consequences
- Psychological Consequences
- Social Consequences



Operation Great CHOICE

- “Hang-Out” Visits
- Juvenile Pick-Ups
- Diverse Law Enforcers
- Home Visits
- Family Discussions
- Consent To Searches
- Resource Referrals