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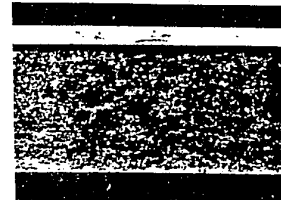
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No. 1

RESPONSE STRATEGIES TO YOUTH GANG ACTIVITY

by

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INTRODUCTION

Youth gangs and appropriate law enforcement response strategies toward youth gangs have been the focus of recently revived interest by the general public and Federal, State, and local government agencies. These groups expressed concern that youth gangs are a major contributing factor in U.S. crime, particularly those crimes classified "Index," by the FBI Uniform Crime Reports.[1]

Previous social science research has concentrated on description and analysis of youth gang structure and type of activity[2] with little information available on law enforcement response to the youth gang phenomenon. "How serious is the youth gang problem? Is there a problem? If so, how do police departments respond to law-violating youth gangs? Where are youth gangs located?" To answer these and other questions, the National Institute for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention requested that the Center for the Assessment of the Juvenile Justice System review existing literature and conduct a nationwide police department sample survey.

A 60-department representative sample, stratified by region and city size, was surveyed in late 1981 to determine how police departments were organized to meet the challenge of youth gang crime. Twenty-seven of the 60 departments surveyed reported youth gang problems. The full report, "Police Handling of Youth Gangs," has been submitted to NIJJDP.[3]

According to this survey, youth gangs and law-violating youth groups are a major problem to many police departments. Youth gang activity, as well as juvenile crime, should be considered within the context of total law enforcement resource management. Police responses are best measured against the situation's perceived magnitude (defined locally) and the degree to which manpower can be allocated to handle a targeted problem.

SERIOUSNESS OF THE PROBLEM

The U.S. Attorney General's Task Force on Violent Crime, citing Harvard University Professor Walter B. Miller's draft report, "Crime by Youth Gangs and Groups in the United States," has estimated "...that about 71 percent of all serious crimes by youths are a product of law-violating youth groups."[4] This assertion is tempered by Miller's earlier, more cautious approach: "[R]eporting that one's city has problems with crime by gangs or groups does not necessarily mean that such problems are considered to be serious."[5]

Measuring the seriousness of youth gang criminal activity is complicated by a number of factors. University of Chicago Professor Franklin Zimring pointedly comments that the crime rate, measured by the number of juvenile arrests, is confounded by the use of aggregate data that do not take into account jurisdictional differences in age classifications and diversity of criminal behavior.[6] Both Zimring[7] and Miller[8] emphasize the inherent problems of estimating "group" vs. "individual" crime rates from statistical tabulations that report each offender, rather than each event, as a separate offense. Counting the number of crimes in this manner over-emphasizes the individual as the statistical unit. The result, claims Miller, is a "...reluctance to exploit

systematically the collective nature of youth crime...and to play down both the amount and significance of serious youth crime which involves multiple offenders acting in concert."[9]

Other factors inhibit interpretation. In estimating the juvenile crime rate, it is not unusual to select a particular database to support a point of view. Simply put, the increase or decrease of the denominator in the crime rate equation (number of crimes/number of units in the base population) inversely affects the rate. For instance, 789,648 juvenile Part I (Index) crimes were reported in 1980.[10] Measured as a proportion of total juvenile crime (2,025,713), the rate is 39.0 percent. Calculated as a proportion of total Part I crime, adult and juvenile (2,198,077 arrests), the rate is 35.9 percent. However, the crime "rate," computed as a proportion of total arrests reported by police departments in 1980 (9,703,181 arrests), falls to 8.1 percent as a function of the enormous increase in the denominator.

Comparable statistics for Part I (Violent) crime are just as dramatic. As a proportion of adult and juvenile violent crime (446,373 arrests), the juvenile arrests for violent crime (86,220) represent 19.3 percent of the total. However, as a proportion of total juvenile crime (2,025,713 arrests), or as a proportion of total Part I (Index) arrests (2,198,077), the statistics drop to 4.3 and 3.9 percent respectively. More startling is the revelation that the number of juveniles arrested for violent crime in the United States for 1980 is only 0.8 percent of the total number of arrests reported by police during that year (9,703,181).

The Assessment Center's survey of police responses to youth gang crime asked departmental spokespersons to estimate the problem's seriousness by listing, in order of their prevalence, the types of offenses attributable to youth gangs (see Table 1, p. 3). Thirteen of 26 departments (50 percent) listed Part I offenses (FBI Index crimes) as the most serious problem encountered when dealing with youth gang activity. Under Part I offenses, violent crimes (i.e., robberies, aggravated assaults and muggings, gang vs. gang, and gang vs. citizen violence) were considered most serious by 10 (38.5 percent) of the departments. Three departments (11.5 percent) listed other Part I (property) crimes such as burglary, larceny, and auto theft.

Additionally, 13 departments (50 percent) reported Part II offenses (FBI non-Index crimes) the most serious problem encountered. Youth gang-related criminal activities cited were criminal mischief and vandalism, purse and chain (jewelry) snatching, school disturbances, and harassment/intimidation.

WHERE ARE THE GANGS?

Youth gangs are no longer unique to large urban areas. Twenty-seven of 60 police departments report youth gang problems. Although the expected relationship of city size and youth gangs was confirmed—five of six (83.3 percent) large population centers of one million or more persons host youth gangs and four of 11 (36.4 percent) in the 500,000 to 999,999 population base report gangs—the survey also found that six of 12 cities (50 percent) with populations of 250,000 to 499,999 report youth gang presence. In cities of 100,000 to 249,999 persons, 12 of 31 (38.7 percent) report youth gangs as a law enforcement problem (see Figure 1, p. 4).

Table 1
POLICE DEPARTMENT RANKING OF YOUTH GANG CRIMES CONSIDERED THE MOST SERIOUS PROBLEMS

	%	(N)
Part I Offenses		
Violent	38.5	(10)
Property	11.5	(3)
Part II Offenses	50.0	(13)
	100.0	(26)*

* One City missing

Table constructed by the CENTER FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM (Sacramento, Calif.: American Justice Institute, 1982):

These statistics generate uncertainty about prior assumptions that one can account for most U.S. youth gang activity by concentrating on large population centers. Only nine of the 27 police departments reporting youth gang problems are in urban areas of 500,000 or more persons. The remainder (two-thirds) are in cities with population bases of less than one-half million.

Regional differences are even more striking: 87.5 percent (14 of 16) of the Western cities sampled acknowledged youth gang problems as compared to 40 percent (four of 10) of the Northeastern cities, 26.7 percent (four of 15) of the North Central region, and 26.3 percent (five of 19) of the South (see Figure 2, p. 5).

California is a major contributor to the national youth gang problem. Of the 14 Western police departments, the eight California departments constitute 57.1 percent of the total. This figure, computed as a proportion of the total police departments reporting youth gang activity, accounts for about one-third (29.6 percent) of the cities reporting youth gang problems.

ORGANIZATION FOR GANG CONTROL

Three specialized organizational forms characterize the 27 police departments reporting youth gang or youth group problems. In ascending order of specialization they are:

The Youth Service Program: Traditional police unit personnel, most commonly the youth section or bureau, are assigned gang control responsibility. Personnel are not assigned exclusively nor principally to gang control work.

Figure 1
POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORTS OF YOUTH GANG PROBLEMS BY CITY SIZE
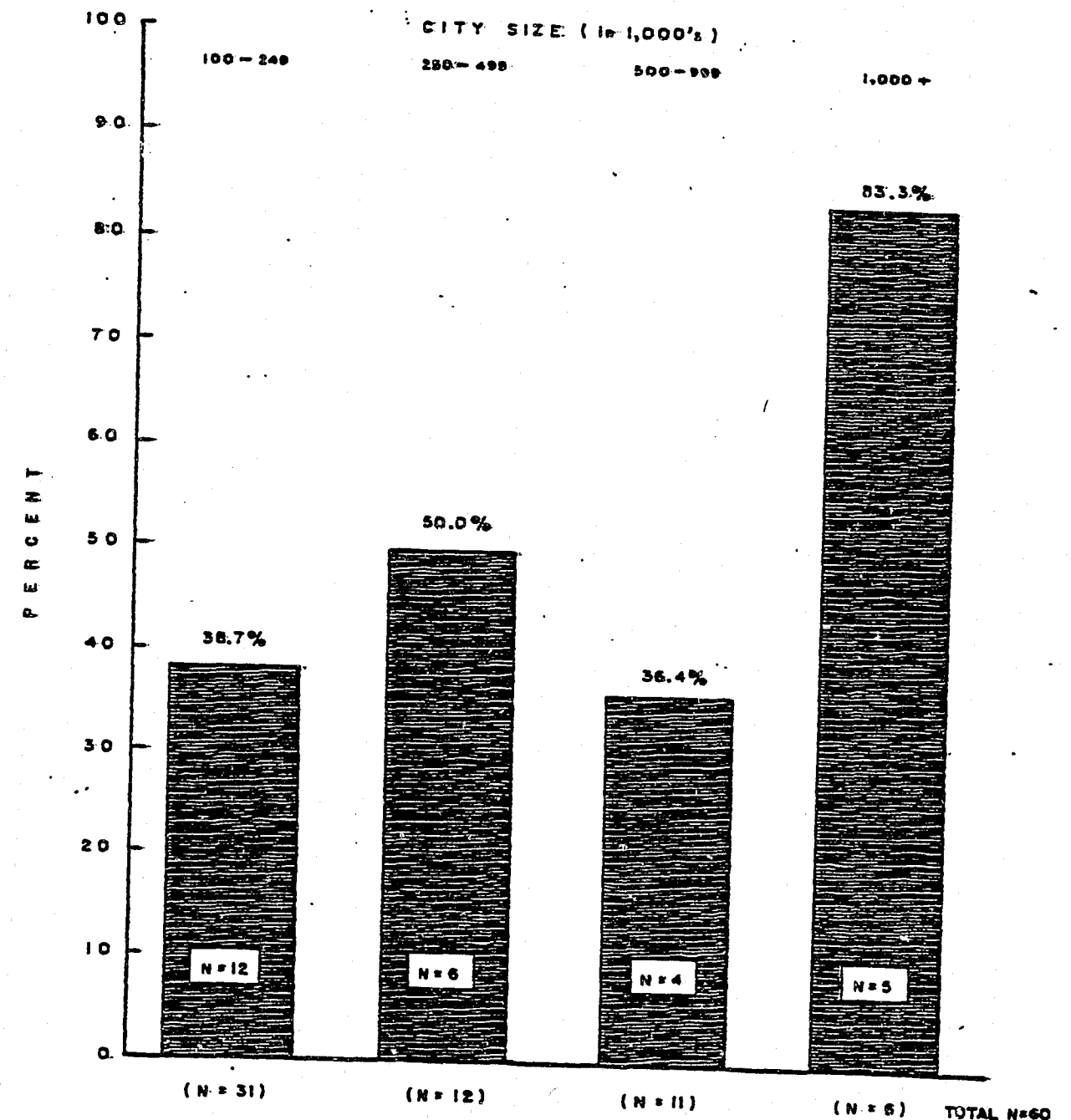

Table constructed by the CENTER FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM (Sacramento, Calif.: American Justice Institute, 1982).

Figure 2
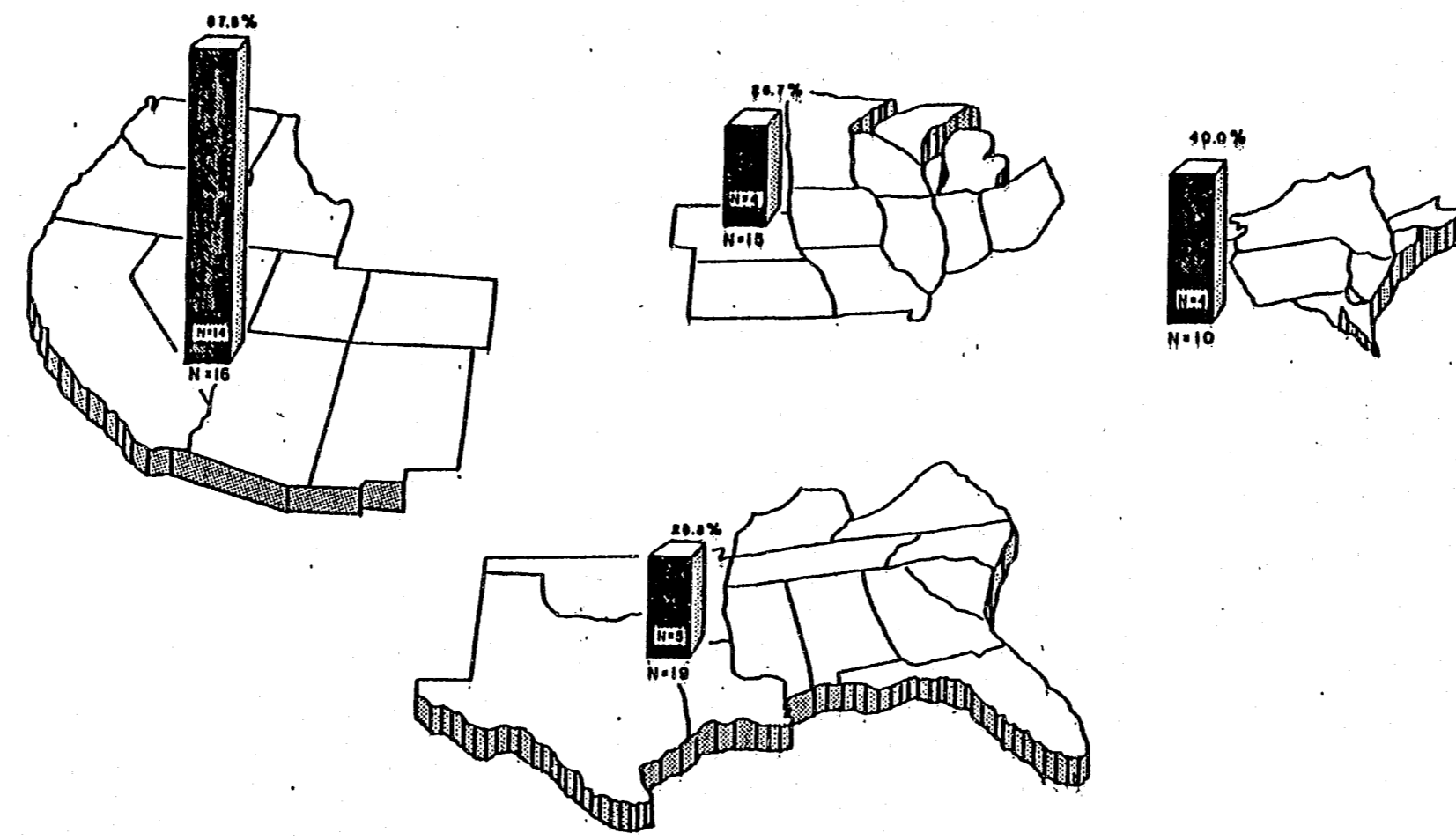## POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORTS OF YOUTH GANG PROBLEM BY REGION

<u>The Gang Detail</u>: One or more officers of a traditional police unit, most commonly youth or detective units, are assigned responsibility for the control of gang problems. Officers are typically assigned exclusively to gang control work.

<u>The Gang Unit</u>: A police unit is established solely to deal with gang problems. The gang unit typically encompasses a comprehensive intelligence function, and personnel are assigned exclusively to gang control work.

Traditional police department units (patrol, investigations, community relations, and crime prevention) either share gang control responsibilities or support the organizational unit that has primary responsibility.

A department's organizational form appears positively related to three factors:

<u>Gang population</u>—the larger the population, the more specialized the form. The average reported number of gangs in cities employing the youth service approach (the least specialized) is 5.78, while the average number of gang members is 16.25. The gang detail and gang unit's comparable figures are consistently higher in each category. In gang detail cities, the average number of gangs reported is 11.5; the average number of gang members is 22.3. In gang unit cities, the average number of gangs reported is 46.1; the average number of members is 36.9.

<u>Seriousness of the gang problem</u>—the survey results indicate gang problems are perceived more seriously by respondents in departments with established gang details (e.g., perceived seriousness is strongly associated with degree of specialization). Respondents in nine of 12 departments employing the youth service program classify their gang problems as minor. (One respondent labeled his city's problem moderate. Two respondents viewed their gang problems as major.)

In comparison, four of seven respondents in gang detail cities labeled their problems as minor. The relationship between organizational specialization and seriousness of crime emerges with more clarity in cities with gang units. Five of the eight departments where gang problems are perceived to be serious have established gang units, the most specialized organizational level. (Respondents in two of the remaining three gang unit cities classified problems as moderate; one department classified the problem as minor.)

<u>Police department size</u>—the survey data indicate size is associated with organizational level—specialization is principally a characteristic of larger departments. In departments with gang units, the average number of sworn personnel is 7,600. In comparison, cities with gang details have an average of 885 sworn personnel, and cities using the youth service approach have an average of 344 sworn personnel.

The relative significance of each of these factors is not known precisely, and although questions remain regarding the relationship of organizational types and factors believed associated with them, the scope of the present research precludes definitive statements about such relationships (i.e., in some cities with gang units, gang population is smaller than in several cities where the

youth service program model is used). Although department size appears associated with organizational form, several large departments do not have gang units. Finally, the relationship between the problem's perceived seriousness and organizational type is not yet understood and merits further research.

THE YOUTH GANG CONTROL FUNCTION

The youth gang control function encompasses four classes of activities.

<u>Information processing</u>—involves gathering, filing, retrieving, and sometimes, analyzing youth gang and youth gang member information. Arrest reports, field interrogation reports, investigation reports, informants, gang member associates, and gang members themselves, are principal information sources.

<u>Prevention</u>—includes deterrence and suppression activities and programs targeted directly at gang members and gang activities, such as school information programs, and police mediation efforts in controlling intergang violence.

<u>Enforcement</u>—includes traditional arrest-oriented police practices such as visible patrol, random or directed surveillance, and task force use.

<u>Follow-up investigation</u>—includes apprehension of gang members who have or are alleged to have committed crimes.

Unexpectedly, the survey results demonstrate the gang control function in the 27 cities is diffused. Despite existence of specialized organizational forms in many departments, gang control activities are conducted by some or all personnel in several units in every department.

GANG CONTROL PROGRAMMING

Programming in reporting departments is characterized by application of combined strategies to: (1) prevent crime by youth gang members, and (2) apprehend and incapacitate youth gang members who do commit crimes.

The most popular prevention programs are recreational and include police athletic leagues, along with neighborhood and parent councils to help identify, counsel, and refer troubled youth; school-based programs that involve counseling and crime prevention work; building better police-youth relations; informing students about employment and social service opportunities. Preventive patrol and other suppression activities are common. In many departments, especially those that have specialized gang personnel, classical social service "streetwork," oriented to suppression as well as prevention, is in evidence.

Respondents in 14 of the 27 departments reporting gang problems stated they did not conduct programs directed exclusively to youth gangs or gang members, but use the same program repertoire directed at youth in general. The majority of these cities employ the youth service program approach.

Thirteen responding departments have established special programs employing the same set of strategies used to deal with other juvenile offenders, potential juvenile offenders, and adult offenders.

In many cities, gang control programming has an extra-departmental dimension. Police departments join with other local police agencies, State and local government agencies, and community agencies for cooperative responses to gang problems. Information exchange concerning gang activity and gang members among law enforcement agencies, police participation in the activities of city-level human relations and social services planning, advisory groups, and study groups are popular forms of extra-departmental programming.

While extra-departmental alliances present favorable conditions for formulating innovative gang control programs, this opportunity has not been fully exploited. Only 14 of the 27 police departments reporting youth gang problems participate in extra-departmental gang-oriented activity. Exchanging information on gangs and gang members seems to be the most prevalent kind of extra-departmental activity, yet seldom occurs within the framework of formal information systems. Rather, it is in the shape of informal requests from one agency to another, and informal review and information exchanges among gang officers on an unscheduled basis.

The strategies most frequently employed to apprehend youth gang members who have, or are alleged to have, committed crimes include standard patrol tactics such as rapid response during or just after the commission of crimes, immediate follow-up investigation by patrol officers, youth officers, or specialized gang personnel, and more traditional follow-up investigation by personnel from a variety of units. Apprehension, when successful, is generally followed by application of the most appropriate of the standard trilogy of alternatives that police use to deal with juvenile offenders—counsel and release, station adjustment, referral to juvenile court and, where statutorily permissible, referral to adult court. In some cities, selection of the "most appropriate" alternatives is influenced by a deliberately conceived gang control strategy known as gang-breaking.

GANG-BREAKING AS A SPECIAL EMPHASIS PROGRAM

Gang-breaking is a method whereby police personnel work to incapacitate gang leaders and the most visible gang members, making the gang itself less cohesive as an organization. This strategy is innovative, non-traditional, and unique because it is directed toward the phenomenon of the gang itself and not at gang members exclusively.

Practices used in this approach include making youth gangs aware that police have them under surveillance, getting community members to introduce police to youth gangs, and getting youth gang members to communicate with the police regarding their problems, both internal and external. Respondents in five departments mentioned success with gang-breaking. The gang-breaking concept consists of four elements which are illustrated in Figure 3 (p. 9), and discussed below.

Figure 3
A GANG CONTROL PROGRAM CONCEPT

I. PREVENTION STRATEGIES

SOCIAL SERVICES
- GOVERNMENT – EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, DEVELOPMENT, RECREATION, HEALTH CARE
- COMMUNITY
- PRIVATE SECTOR

POLICE
- GENERAL SERVICES
  PREVENTIVE PATROL
  COMMUNITY CRIME PREVENTION
  COMMUNITY RELATIONS
- YOUTH ORIENTED
  RECREATION
  SCHOOL EDUCATION
  COUNSELING
- YOUTH GANG SPECIFIC
  STREETWORK
  COUNSELING
  REMOVING LEADERS
  MEDIATION

2. STRATEGIES FOR FOLLOWERS

CONTROL
- COUNSEL AND RELEASE
- STATION ADJUST
- REFER TO JUVENILE COURT
- REFER TO ADULT COURT

REMEDIAL RESPONSES
- EDUCATION
- EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT
- RECREATION
- HEALTH CARE
- JUVENILE COURT
- COUNSELING

3. STRATEGIES FOR LEADERS

CONTROL
- INCARCERATION
  REFER TO JUVENILE COURT
  REFER TO ADULT COURT
- AGGRESSIVE PROSECUTION
  ASSIST PROSECUTOR
  WORK WITH COURT TO CONVICT
- STIFF SENTENCING
  SANCTIONS
  PROBATION

RESEARCH REPROGRAMMING

RESEARCH

4. EVALUATION
- POLICE DEPARTMENTS
- SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES
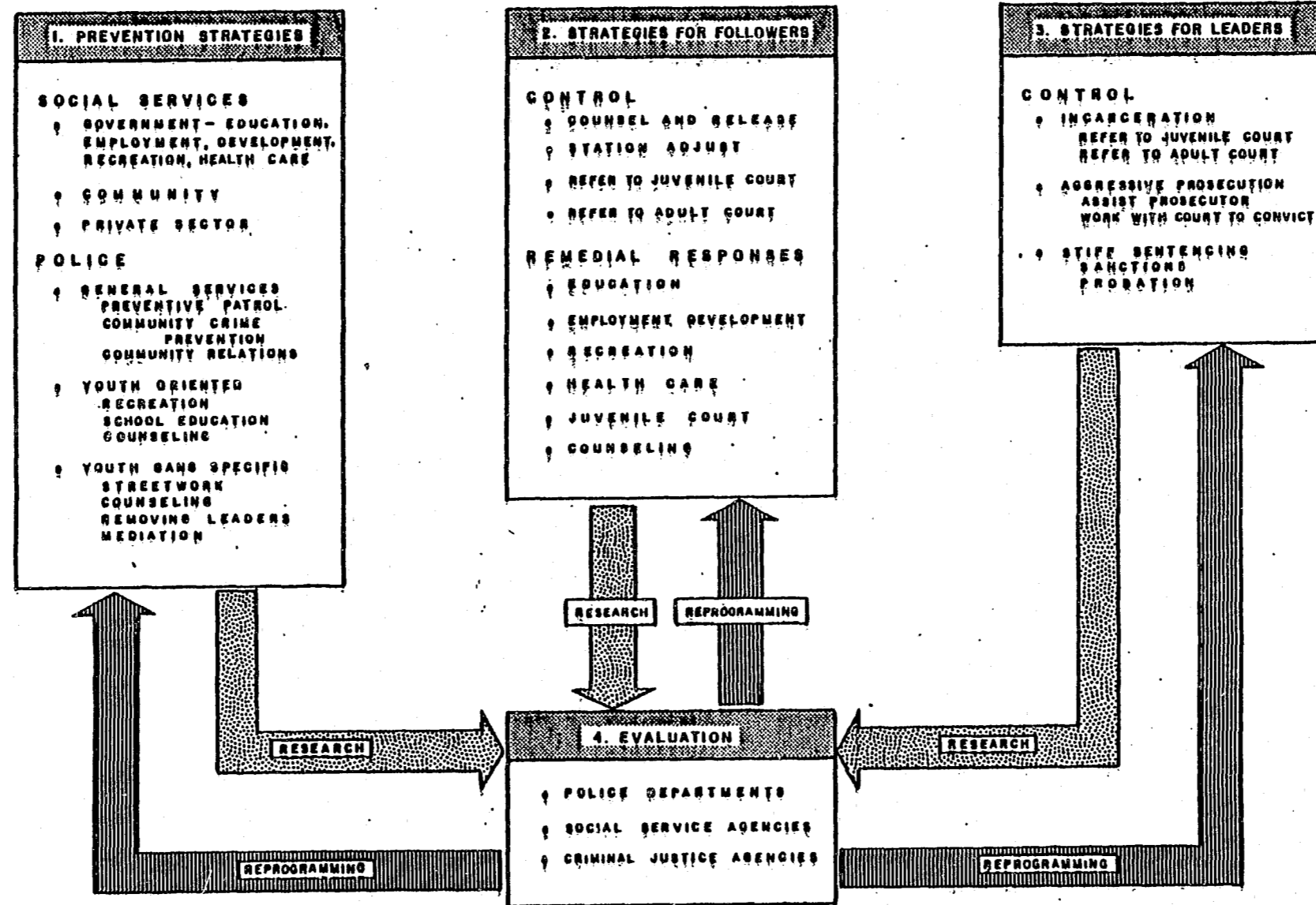- CRIMINAL JUSTICE AGENCIES

REPROGRAMMING   REPROGRAMMING   RESEARCH

FIGURE CONSTRUCTED BY THE CENTER FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM (SACRAMENTO, CALIF.)
AMERICAN JUSTICE INSTITUTE, 1982).

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Prevention Strategies

Prevention, a community endeavor consisting of social service agency, police, community, and private sector interaction, is believed the best approach for controlling youth gang crime. This preventive role is reflected in Box 1 of Figure 3. The community's social service system, with any assistance it receives from citizen and private sector organizations, is responsible for treating conditions assumed to breed criminality in young people—poverty, inadequate housing, poor health, inadequate health care, unemployment, and inadequate education. These social service programs are not targeted directly toward gang members, but rather are administered broadly and for the welfare of all.

A strong police department prevention program can augment and operate within the framework of community prevention services. The police program can coordinate strategies with services in three directions: general services for youths and adults; services for youths alone; and youth gang-specific strategies. General prevention services directed toward adults and youths can include those normally encompassed within the typical departmental crime prevention program: patrol, random or directed; community crime prevention techniques such as neighborhood watches and crime prevention education; and community relations programs. Usually, these prevention services are delivered by units other than those responsible for youth and gangs. Youth-oriented prevention services can include any or all of the strategies, techniques, and practices mentioned by survey respondents. Prevention services targeted directly at gang members complete the repertoire of prevention services. These can include having youth workers interact directly with gang leaders; having leaders of competing gangs talk and mediate problems; having police and gang leaders mediate problems; and "removing," through arrest and prosecution, gang leaders. This latter recommendation is not only a control technique, but a preventive measure as well (i.e., police feel that removing leaders impairs the gang's functional ability, if only temporarily, and impresses members with the "vulnerability" of gangs).

Strategies for Followers

When prevention fails and crimes are committed, police identify those believed responsible and apprehend them. A critical element of the gang-breaking concept begins once gang members have been apprehended. Gang members who have, or are alleged to have committed criminal acts should be treated programmatically through existing procedures for handling youth who become involved with police. As depicted in Box 2 of Figure 3 (p. 9), depending on the incident's nature and circumstances and the individual's history and characteristics, police should select the most suitable alternative: counsel and release or informal adjustment at the station. Followers who are counseled and released or station adjusted can be diverted in many instances (i.e., encouraged or required to participate in remedial social service programs administered by the social service agencies of a community and/or by the police department). These actions are consistent with the traditional public and police intent to rehabilitate or protect youth involved with the justice system. Should the gang member in question be beyond the juvenile age, an entirely different set of disposition alternatives begins, principally referral to the criminal justice system.

Strategies for Leaders

Gang leaders or hardcore members require special programmatic handling. These special control strategies are illustrated in Box 3 of Figure 3 (p. 9). Gang leaders or hardcore members who violate the law and are of legal juvenile age are referred to juvenile court, and those beyond the legal juvenile age are prosecuted in adult court. Prosecutors and judges in either jurisdiction have obligations in this conceptual scheme. Prosecutors are expected to gain convictions, while judges and probation officers are expected to recommend and impose stiff sanctions, including prison terms when possible and appropriate. Other options should be elected when appropriate, but emphasis should be on punishment and incapacitation rather than on re-direction and release. Police are expected to aid in successful prosecution and convince courts that incarceration is justified.[11] However, respondents did not volunteer information about how aggressive and proactive police should be in eliminating leaders from gangs or on the legal techniques useful for so doing.

Evaluation

The final element of the gang-breaking concept is evaluation (see Box 4 of Figure 3, p. 9). Evaluation can be comprehensive and encompass all agency programming; police departments and social service agencies can evaluate prevention, control, and remedial strategy effectiveness. Additionally, agencies can use the evaluation results to direct efforts toward research and reprogramming. The present survey did not uncover any systematic or methodologically sound evaluation strategies.

A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY GANG CONTROL PROGRAM

A comprehensive community gang control program is the preferred method in dealing with youth gang crime problems. This concept is a structural approach designed to direct the activities of all relevant organizations toward common goals without materially impairing the autonomy of participating agencies. Every organization concerned with the welfare of gang members or potential gang members should be involved in the program. Countywide organization is preferable since it enables county and municipal agencies and institutions to participate. It is essential that police agencies in cities where gang problems are centered participate. Participation of social service agencies, prosecutors, judges, probation and parole agencies is also recommended for effective program function.

Each community's key policy and administrative officials can organize the program to reflect the community's serious commitment to managing its gang problems. The program should be given formal status, and be governed by the representatives of participating agencies. Public members and other governmental agencies can be added to the board if deemed essential. A budget and a staff should be provided.

Though variations will occur among communities, the governing body and its staff can perform a series of operations designed to overcome two major programming flaws; fragmentation, and absence of fixed responsibility. These operations are:

- Determine the extent of a community's gang problem: determine how many gangs there are, how many members are in the gangs, and the criminal history of gangs and gang members.

- Analyze the gang population: describe the economic, social, health, educational, ethnic, sex, and age characteristics of members.

- Establish objectives: define what the community and each agency should strive to accomplish with respect to the behavior of gangs and gang members.

- Formulate programmatic responses: identify strategies that participating agencies should administer both individually and cooperatively to achieve the objectives set forth.

- Mobilize the necessary resources to employ the strategies selected: gather resources and services from government agencies, the community, and the private sector to administer selected strategies.

- Evaluate program results: gather, process, and interpret the data required to determine whether program strategies are producing desired program results.

- Training program participants: develop and administer training programs for personnel of all participating agencies. Training programs should cover the nature of comprehensive community gang control programs, the roles of participants in them, and substantive matters pertaining to prevention and control of gang crime. The very act of establishing a comprehensive community gang control program will be a major step toward unifying the many agencies that now administer gang programming independently. Establishing objectives, identifying strategies, coordinating current programs, and mobilizing community resources can eliminate the fragmentation that currently exists. Accountability is established by setting specific goals, formulating programs, and implementing evaluation procedures.

The comprehensive community gang control program structure may transcend its expected value for gang control; such a program could become a mechanism to integrate a community's juvenile justice system in its entirety and provide a forum for addressing and implementing recommendations of study groups, task forces, and agencies concerned with juvenile justice planning.

THE POLICE ROLE IN ESTABLISHING COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY GANG CONTROL PROGRAMS

There is reason to expect police to react favorably, if cautiously, to the comprehensive community gang control program concept. This optimistic expectation is rooted in the belief that many practitioners are not only persuaded of the value and need for integrated community programming, but have already begun to establish integrated programs.

Many of the gang control personnel surveyed underscored the need for more integrated organizations of gang control programming and resources. Those who called for "greater liaison with the Board of Education," and an intensified "attack on social causes of problems," those who noted that the solution lies in "more social programming," and the entire cadre of individuals who called for greater mobilization of community resources and programs, seemed to be calling for more effective mobilization and integration of community resources and programs, if only implicitly. Other practitioners have gone beyond expressing their beliefs in the wisdom of joint attack on gang problems by actually establishing integrated agency programs. The most prominent example is the Safe Streets Project (OJARS, 1981),[12] a joint effort of law enforcement, prosecutorial, and probation agencies. The Probation and Police Suppression of Youth Gang Activity Project (Attorney General's Youth Gang Task Force, 1981),[13] which seeks to develop more productive police-probation department relationships, is another. A third model, the Juvenile Gang Reduction Specialist Project (Attorney General's Youth Gang Task Force, 1981),[14] seeks to coordinate more effective police and juvenile court action on gangs. These actions not only substantiate the favorable disposition of the police and the rest of the criminal justice community toward integrated programming, but also point to the formation of such programs. Thus, comprehensive community programming represents less a dramatic departure from the current programming style than a mechanism for accelerating a movement that has already begun. The favorable disposition of police toward this movement places them in a prime position to exert leadership in the development of comprehensive community gang control programs. Police are urged to assume such leadership positions since other agencies are expected to respond favorably to these initiatives.

MANAGEMENT OF GANG CONTROL PROGRAMMING

The gang control program management analysis revealed three areas needing improvement: coordination, training, and evaluation. The following improvement recommendations apply to police departments irrespective of size, organizational gang control form, or gang problem severity.

Coordination

The survey results indicate the gang control function is a collaborative endeavor with as many as four units involved in gang control. Goal, policy, and operation coordination is important in such environments. Inconsistent and conflicting administration of gang control activities creates and maintains problems in program delivery.

A variety of mechanisms are used to coordinate diffused police functions; the most effective involves centralizing responsibility for goal setting, planning, operations, and monitoring in one unit. Such units have formal authority over all other units with respect to the activities in question. Centralized authority is formalized through written policies and procedures which carefully delineate roles, powers, and responsibilities of the several units that participate in or influence the various functions and are issued to all personnel involved in the coordinated functions. Measures ensuring compliance with these policies and procedures are implemented.

The present survey data indicate that neither centralized responsibility nor written policies and procedures are being used widely. The information gathered shows a widespread absence of written policies and procedures; only four of the 27 departments have them. Unless agencies maintain coordination in other ways, such as frequent and effective oral communication in either

formal or informal settings, gang control program coordination in many agencies is probably less than adequate.

Training

Gang specialists and non-specialists must master important concepts to function properly. These may be conveyed on-the-job, but are taught most effectively in formal training settings. Important training issues include the nature, structure, and history of gangs, departmental goals and policies, and useful strategies for prevention and control of youth gang problems. Subjects of interest and relevance to gang control personnel often emerge more freely in formal training settings (which are usually less threatening than on-the-job situations), perhaps because free exchange is encouraged and often rewarded.

Gang control personnel in 17 of the 27 departments have not had formal gang control training. If these officers have not been trained, it is a virtual certainty that members of other units that share the gang control function are untrained as well. Agencies that currently do not provide training for those involved in gang control programs, or that only provide occasional opportunities, can take steps to alter the situation. Without formal training, officers and their superiors must discuss concepts, policies, and individual needs on-the-job, an approach usually viewed in the police world as an adjunct to and continuation of formal training—not a substitute for it. It is essential that gang units, gang details, and all other personnel who deal with youth gangs (i.e., patrol officers, investigators, youth officers, and community relations personnel) receive training.

Two problems may hamper police efforts to implement training programs. First, departments have limited funding resources for training. Most agencies are expected to accept the recommendation to train all personnel who deal with youth gangs; however, many cannot afford broad-based training programs. Cost limitations can be circumvented by adopting a technique used to maximize training investments. This method involves sending one or two individuals to available training courses; those individuals then return to their own departments to train personnel. In order to conduct in-house training, a course must be developed. Therefore, departments considering this strategy should send both program members and instructors to training courses. The instructors could then develop more effective in-service courses. Systematic evaluations of this technique for dealing with funding limitations have not been conducted.

Second, gang control training technology is not readily available to police departments. Few public or private organizations offer gang training courses. Training materials such as model curricula, participant work materials, and audio and visual presentation materials are either scarce or unavailable. This technology gap notwithstanding, most agencies have no alternative for the immediate future other than the development and delivery of their own training.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness is the degree to which objectives (goals) are successfully achieved. Clear and precise articulation of goals and valid measures of them are prerequisites for calibrating effectiveness. Discussion with respondents in the 27 cities that report youth gang problems produced no evidence that the police departments have systematically employed valid and reliable effectiveness measures. Judgments about the value of current programming, whether traditional or innovative, can only be properly based on evaluative research. The absence of evaluation information impaired the ability to identify effective or promising gang control strategies.

Respondents in one-third of the departments were willing to provide subjective appraisals of their gang control program's effectiveness and to state the criteria by which they reached these conclusions. All but one of those responding declared their department's efforts as successful. The appraisals range from "dramatically successful" to "successful to a degree." Respondents derived their appraisals in diverse ways. Some based their conclusions on criteria typically considered to be objective (e.g., arrest rates, clearance rates, conviction rates, and program placements). While such measures might be valid appraisals of success, the reliability of the statistics provided is questionable. The respondents' general inability to supply quantitative statistical data on other subjects covered by the survey (i.e., "What proportion of crime is committed by gang members?" "What proportion of juvenile crime is committed by gang members?") strongly suggests that conclusions provided about favorable arrest, clearance, and conviction rates are more likely based on unsystematic evaluation efforts than on statistical information. Other respondents used more subjective criteria (e.g., requests for assistance and positive responses from the public). Some respondents used no criteria at all, preferring instead to comment on police potential in managing or eliminating gang problems (e.g., responses such as "can't eliminate gangs, can reduce violence," and "problem is manageable but can't be eliminated").

Evaluation

The ability to measure program effectiveness, defined as the degree to which program goals and objectives are achieved successfully, is the paramount requirement for managing and improving any police program. Measuring effectiveness enables police executives to perform a wide range of critical management functions in a systematic and formal manner. Critical management functions include evaluating the impact of new programs, allocating new resources, trading off current resources, and budgeting. Failure to measure the degree to which goals and objectives are achieved precludes insightful and, in some cases, even minimally effective conduct of these functions.

Unsubstantiated evidence suggests police agencies are unable to measure gang control program effectiveness, although this has not been demonstrated conclusively. Few departments could respond authoritatively to effectiveness queries. None of the departments surveyed had systematic quantitative success indicators available. Few departments gave evidence of having program objectives; one of the tools or prerequisites for measurement.

Police departments that are unprepared to adequately measure effectiveness should rectify the situation (departments should begin developing the systems and information needed to gauge their total program effectiveness, and of the individual strategies that are employed within it). Departmental efforts will be impaired, again, by a shortage of readily available technology and funding. In addition to the development of measurable objectives and reliable standards, evaluation efforts should concentrate on (1) acquainting police

departments with the standards, and (2) on the types of information necessary to implement them. Few of these tools are available now. Neither the telephone survey nor the literature yielded much that is of use for measuring effectiveness. Police departments are faced, therefore, with the formidable task of developing their own evaluation tools. Procedurally, goals and objectives must be developed prior to establishing evaluation tools.

CONCLUSION

This report indicates police are attempting to prevent and control youth gang problems in a system characterized by substantial fragmentation. This is the result of the myriad of public, private, and law enforcement agencies' association with youth gangs and youth gang members. Although many agencies influence gang members, no organization is "in charge" of gang programming—none are accountable for effective prevention and control of youth gangs and youth gang crime. The data on inter-agency relationships suggest agencies function independently and without formal communication.

The consequences of fragmentation and absence of accountability have not been subject to systematic inquiry. However, they are probably similar to those of other programming areas studied (i.e., police and other agencies working with gang members are often at cross-purposes because of general inconsistency and lack of coordination). Where this is the case, the organizational and financial resources committed to prevention and control of gangs are poorly invested. Often, jurisdictional resources are not being applied productively. Perhaps worse, the gang member becomes frustrated and angered by the barrage of inconsistent advice, guidance, and direction. Fragmentation impairs effectiveness.

The juvenile justice system should be able to prevent and control gang problems in an environment where all agencies involved in the gang control function have clearly delineated roles. The comprehensive community gang control program model is a departure from the currently dominant style of gang control program organization, but not a dramatic one. Agencies that wish to strengthen or create new gang control programs may consider this an alternate approach. Whether this program can actually produce better results than current programs is not known. The program, as it has been described in this brief report, suggests ways that departments and agencies may effectively measure the success or failure of their gang control strategies.

FOOTNOTES

1. Standard UCR crime classifications for Part I (Index) crimes are defined as: Violent crimes are offenses of murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Property crimes are offenses of burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft. Since 1979, the UCR reports arson as an Index property crime. U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (U.S. FBI), Uniform Crime Reports (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1970-1981).

2. Richard H. Cloward and Lloyd E. Ohlin, Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1960); Albert K. Cohen, Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1955); Malcolm W. Klein, Juvenile Gangs in Context (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1969); Walter B. Miller, "Gangs, Groups and Serious Youth Crime." In D. Schicher and D. Kelly, Critical Issues in Juvenile Delinquency (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Co., Lexington Books, 1980); Irving Spergle, Street Gang Work: Theory and Practice (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1966); Frederick Thrasher, The Gang (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927); William Foote Whyte, Street Corner Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973); Lewis Yablonski, The Violent Gang (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1963).

3. Wm Vaughan Stapleton and Jerome A. Needle, "Police Handling of Youth Gangs." Center for the Assessment of the Juvenile Justice System. (Sacramento, Calif.: American Justice Institute, May 1982).

4. U.S. Attorney General's Task Force on Violent Crime, Final Report. U.S. Department of Justice. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1981), p. 84.

5. Miller, op. cit., p. 128.

6. Franklin E. Zimring, "Kids, Groups and Crime: Some Implications of a Well-Known Secret." Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology 72,3:874 (1981).

7. Ibid.

8. Miller, op. cit., p. 115.

9. Ibid.

10. Uniform Crime Reports, op. cit., 1981.

11. This strategy should be viewed with caution. There are potential consequences; e.g., enhancement of a gang member's image, or the recruitment of a gang member into gang-affiliated groups within custodial institutions. Strict prosecution and incarceration should be reserved for only the most violent and serious offenders.

12. Stapleton and Needle, op. cit., p. 48.

13. Stapleton and Needle, op. cit., p. 42.

14. Ibid.

END