Gang activity in San Bernardino, California: A needs assessment for Operation Phoenix

Mario Leone Rogers

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GANG ACTIVITY IN SAN BERNARDINO, CALIFORNIA:
A NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR OPERATION PHOENIX

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Mario Leone Rogers
June 2008
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ABSTRACT

American society has been greatly impacted by gang activity over the past several decades. The numerous implications of gangs and gang activity underscore the need for gang intervention strategies that are effective in preventing involvement in gangs and reducing violent crimes. A review of the literature on gang intervention strategies proposes that a holistic approach consisting of prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies is most effective at reducing the implications of gangs. This research study examined an innovative gang approach in the city of San Bernardino called Operation Phoenix. The purpose of this study was to perform an assessment of the comprehensive gang approach and to examine the effect of Operation Phoenix on gang activity. The results of the study were inconclusive; however, a number of significant needs were identified that could potentially enhance the effectiveness of the comprehensive strategy in the target area. This research study of Operation Phoenix discusses the complex nature of factors unique to San Bernardino, and the affect of these factors on the research findings.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, American society has been greatly impacted by gang activity. Gangs have increasingly become more organized, more violent, and adolescent involvement in gangs has increased considerably throughout many parts of the nation. However, the emergence of gangs is not new in civilized society. Gangs first appeared in Europe, Mexico, and in early American history. The earliest recording of their emergence in the new world was documented around 1783, near the end of the American Revolution (Howell, 2004). Street gangs also emerged in the Southwest after the Mexican Revolution and in New England during the early 1800s as the Industrial Revolution advanced through many of the major cities in the United States (Howell, 2004). Gangs flourished in larger cities in early American society and became more visible as well as more violent.

Throughout the early to middle twentieth century, street gangs became more dangerous with greater access to automobiles and more harmful weapons. In the modern era, gangs began to utilize more lethal means of fighting and
protecting their neighborhoods from so-called "outsiders." Gang fights that previously involved sticks and knives were now being fought with handguns and assault rifles. During the 1980s and 1990s, with the development of the crack cocaine epidemic, street gangs became more organized, territorial, and more violent, resulting in the emergence of "drive-by" shootings (Howell, 2004).

Problem Statement

Modern American society has been greatly impacted as the result of gang activity. Gangs are increasingly engaging in criminal activities such as committing killings with the use of deadly weapons, developing and maintaining criminal enterprises in the neighborhoods in which they reside, and terrorizing the local residents who live within those communities. Contemporary American gangs engage in a host of other criminal activities as well. Consequently, many lives are lost and devastated daily as a result of gang activity.

Current research indicates that gangs are responsible for a significant proportion of the violent crimes committed in many cities throughout the United
States. As an illustration, nearly one-fourth of all homicides committed in 171 major cities in the U.S., with the exception of Los Angeles and Chicago, were found to be related to street gangs (NYGC, 2006). Furthermore, over half of all homicides committed in Los Angeles and Chicago were found to be the result of street gang violence (NYGC, 2006). The proliferation of street gang violence has brought public attention to the gang problem and has made it an important social policy issue.

Despite progress made over the past decade in preventing involvement in street gangs during early adolescence, the gang problem continues to grow in American society. Research shows that in 2005, street gangs were active in over 2,300 major cities across America with over 30,000 gangs and over 800,000 gang members (NYGC, 2006). Similar statistics show that in the city of San Bernardino and the surrounding area, there are close to 700 gangs with nearly 13,000 gang members (NYGC, 2006). The number of gangs and the number of individuals involved in street gangs continues to grow in many communities across the country, with a substantial increase in the number of gang-related community problems.
The increasing public safety threat created by street gangs and the increasingly destructive impact that gangs continue to have on families, youth, and communities should concern Federal, State, and local lawmakers, law enforcement officials, medical professionals social workers, educators, neighborhoods and communities, parents, and children, among others. Involvement in gangs creates a heavy burden on government and state budgets, school and community resources, family relations and household homeostasis; adolescent development, life-course experiences, and life outcomes. However, preventing and diverting potential members from joining gangs is a challenging task.

Purpose of the Study

The numerous implications of gangs underscore the need for gang intervention strategies that are effective in preventing and reducing involvement in gangs and reducing violent crime. It is important to understand the street gang problem more in depth in order to identify particular risk and protective factors that significantly influence involvement in street gangs. By better understanding the risk factors and protective factors
that correlate with gang involvement, and identifying the most effective strategies that minimize the effects of risk factors and strengthen the effects of protective factors, social work practitioners and social work practice will have a greater awareness of the gang problem and be better able to implement strategies that can significantly impact the negative effects that result from street gang activity in this country.

The purpose of this study was to conduct a needs assessment for Operation Phoenix. This qualitative and quantitative study examined how effective Operation Phoenix was in the prevention, intervention, and suppression of gang activity in the city of San Bernardino, in addition, assessed the unique needs of this comprehensive gang program. This research study utilized the purposive sampling method. The advantage of using the purposive sampling method was that it enabled the most knowledgeable people with insight about the effectiveness of Operation Phoenix to be interviewed.

The independent variable in this research study was the comprehensive Operation Phoenix gang prevention, intervention, and suppression program. The dependent variables in this study were the increase or decrease of
gang activity in the community, problems that gangs present in the community, and feelings of safety in the community. The quantitative data was collected over a six week period by going door-to-door in the 20-block target area of Operation Phoenix in the city of San Bernardino. A total of 108 household residents in the area were contacted. Forty-seven residents, over the age of 18, participated in the study. The qualitative data was collected over an eight-week period by two graduate student researchers through face-to-face interviews. A total of fifteen interviews were conducted for the research study.

Survey questionnaires were administered to local members of the community, and residents of the target community. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with individuals knowledgeable about local gang issues in the area, such as gang experts, youth outreach workers, criminal justice employees, clergy, and other community leaders in the city of San Bernardino. The reason that different methods of data collection were utilized was to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the ecology of the gang problem and to lend more credibility to the research study.
Face-to-face interviews with gang experts were the primary method of data collection that was utilized in the qualitative portion of the research study. Experts who were knowledgeable about the gang problem in the San Bernardino area as well as the surrounding areas, such as law enforcement officials, gang program administrators, and community leaders, were interviewed. The advantages of face-to-face personal interviews were that they allowed interviewers to clarify terms that were unclear and to elucidate respondents' answers that were ambiguous.

Survey questionnaires were the secondary data collection method that was utilized in the research study. The survey instrument that was used for the research study was a tool used by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to assess community gang problems throughout the nation and was an appropriate data collection instrument to assess the gang problems targeted by Operation Phoenix in the city of San Bernardino. Survey questionnaires were useful in describing the characteristics of the target population, made large samples feasible, made it possible to ask questions on many topics, and enabled respondents to
comfortably reply to sensitive question about gang problems in the local community.

Significance of the Project for Social Work Practice

Prevailing gang research indicates that the over reliance on one particular strategy is unlikely to fundamentally change a community’s gang problem (Ramsey et al., 2003; Howell & Egley, 2005). In fact, research studies suggest that single strategy interventions such as the Gang Resistance and Education Training (GREAT) Program, the Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP), and Gang Prevention Through Targeted Outreach (GPTTO) and Gang Intervention Through Targeted Outreach (GITTO) programs, show great promise as interventions for youth at-risk for joining gangs, however, did not effectively impact gang participation (Ramsey et al., 2003; Howell & Egley, 2005). There is no single cause for gang involvement, and therefore, the gang problem is resistant to any single strategy.

Although current research on gang intervention programs that have proven to be most effective at preventing involvement in gangs is very limited, comprehensive risk-based models that utilize a
combination of strategies in a collaborative effort are likely to be most effective. Many contemporary researchers advocate for comprehensive approaches to gang prevention that involve multi-agency collaborative efforts. Recent longitudinal studies have identified the key risk factors for gang membership that are the most important. Research findings show that the individual, family, school, peer group, and community are all major risk factor domains that greatly impact gang involvement and most likely amenable to change by comprehensive gang prevention strategies (Wyrick & Howell, 2004; Howell & Egley, 2005).

Furthermore, recent gang research studies show that risk factors in the five domains stated earlier have a cumulative effect. Meaning that the more risk factors that an individual is exposed to, the greater the likelihood that an individual will become involved in gangs (Howell & Egley, 2005). Given the multitude of risk factors in multiple domains, interventions that target risk factors in a single domain are unlikely to successfully impact the gang problem. Thus, a comprehensive, risk-based model that utilizes a combination of strategies is needed in order to
effectively reduce and prevent involvement in street gangs.

Comprehensive gang prevention models have proven to be effective at deterring gang involvement at the individual level and reducing gang violence and related offenses in communities in Chicago, Illinois; Mesa, Arizona; and Riverside, California, when it is well implemented (Spergel, Wa, & Sosa, 2004). In 2006, the city of San Bernardino launched a comprehensive and collaborative gang approach, called Operation Phoenix, in order to address its gang problem. An evaluation of Operation Phoenix conducted by the Criminal Justice Department at California State University, San Bernardino, showed that the comprehensive gang model had a significant impact on the city’s gang problem, even outside of the 20-block high-crime target area.

The magnitude and complexity of the juvenile gang problem prevents any easy solution. Without a clear understanding of the effectiveness of gang intervention programs, preventing street gang involvement and resulting gang-related crimes is a difficult task. The lack of understanding of the effectiveness of particular gang intervention programs can impede efforts to divert
individuals from gangs and disrupt existing gangs and gang activity. This research study is an important component in gaining a better understanding of the effectiveness of holistic prevention, intervention, and suppression gang approaches.

Data collected from this research study can provide policy makers and service providers such as social workers and social work practice with research based information on which resources can be utilized to do the most good in addressing gang problems. This evaluation and assessment of Operation Phoenix will help to identify the interventions that are having the greatest impact on gang activity, and help to identify the resources that are needed most to have a greater impact on the gang problem. The results of this study will thereby provide important information for the planning and implementation phases of the Generalist Model.

Research Question

To what extent is Operation Phoenix effective at reducing gang activity in the city of San Bernardino?
What resources are needed to enhance the effectiveness of Operation Phoenix at reducing gang activity in the city of San Bernardino?
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Recent research indicates that gang involvement and violent behaviors are more likely to occur when children and adolescents experience a multitude of risk factors. Longitudinal studies on gangs have identified five domains of risk factors that increase the likelihood of gang membership. Additionally, gang research studies reveal that these risk factors have a cumulative effect; the more risk factors that an individual is exposed to, the more likely are the involvement in gangs. Gang research studies have also shown that strategies targeting risk factors in any single domain are unlikely to have a serious impact on gang membership, given the presence of numerous risk factors in multiple domains. Therefore, a comprehensive gang approach is needed that uses a combination of strategies to effectively reduce gang involvement and violent behaviors. This literature review, although not exhaustive, seeks to identify the prevailing theories and key risk factors for gang membership, and to identify the strategies that have the
potential to significantly impact gang involvement and related activities.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

Klemp-North (2007) attempts to help explain gang membership by focusing on the risk factors identified in previous research using Agnew’s Strain Theory, Hirschi’s Social Bond Theory, and Sutherland’s Differential Association Theory. According to Klemp-North (2007), based upon Agnew’s General Strain Theory, the strain of an individual’s inability to achieve goals valued by society stimulates motivation to join delinquent peer groups. Agnew’s General Strain Theory suggests that gang membership results in response to an individual’s inability to achieve positive goals that are highly valued in mainstream society (Klemp-North, 2007). When confronted by barriers to important economic opportunities, such as access to employment that pays an income above poverty levels, individuals conform to delinquent behaviors, delinquent peer groups, and to the expectations of delinquent peer groups, such as gangs (Klemp-North, 2007).
According to Hirschi’s Social Bond Theory, individuals who fail to achieve emotional connections to people who model normative behavior, such as parents, results in delinquent behavior and conformity to delinquent peer groups, including gangs (Klemp-North, 2007). In contrast, according to Sutherland’s Differential Association Theory, individuals learn behavior from people with whom they have close and regular interaction. Individuals who are exposed to the delinquent behavior of others on a regular basis increases the likelihood of developing and adopting similar delinquent behavior (Klemp-North, 2007).

The importance of this article is that it focuses on some of the significant risk factors to gang membership, such as the individual, family, and peers, and applies theories that help to better explain the development of delinquent behavior, attachment to delinquent peers, and the commitment to delinquent peer groups. In addition, these theories help to explain that delinquent behavior, attachment to delinquent peer groups, and the commitment to delinquent peer groups are behaviors that are learned through the socialization process from one’s environment.
In comparison, Stretesky and Pogrebin (2007) conducted a qualitative study that examined the issue of socialization as the mechanism for gang membership. The authors argue that the socialization process is an important concept because it helps shape members' identity and one's sense of self (Stretesky & Pogrebin, 2007). They suggest that gangs help to socialize members to adhere to and internalize norms and behaviors, while at the same time other important social institutions such as schools and families play a lesser role (Stretesky & Pogrebin, 2007). Gang membership plays an important role in the lives of people who are socially and economically marginalized because membership provides a means for members to create a "within group identity" (Stretesky & Pogrebin, 2007, p. 88). Stretesky and Pogrebin (2007) contend that gang members see the gang as a primary group that is central to their lives, identity and personality.

The study found that social interaction was important to the process of socialization because it helped gang members to create an identity and sense of self, and to internalize behaviors and act in ways that were consistent with one's sense of self (Stretesky & Pogrebin, 2007). The self-perceptions and identity of the
gang members in the study changed from what they previously were before joining gangs (Stretesky & Pogrebin, 2007). The study also found that gangs fulfilled needs for its members that other social institutions in disadvantaged neighborhoods failed to provide.

This article is important to gang research because it helps to explain how the socialization process is critical to the development of gang identity and why gang identity is so deeply rooted in gang members and the perceived benefits of gang membership. This research study suggests that any approach to reducing gang activity needs to take gang socialization into account, and that the re-socialization of gang members should be a part of gang policies and intervention strategies as well as efforts to improve the social and economic climates from which gang members emerge.

In contrast, Regoli and Hewitt (2006) focus on attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief, and suggest that children become delinquents if "obstacles are not thrown in their path" (Regoli & Hewitt, 2006, p. 197). Social Bond Theory argues that obstacles, attitudes learned from caregivers, are implanted early in
childhood development and supported in a nurturing and validating environment, and leads to the development of strong ties to society (Regoli & Hewitt, 2006). Children without these obstacles develop weak social bonds and are more likely to develop delinquent behavior (Regoli & Hewitt, 2006). Research shows that delinquent behavior is frequently a precursor to gang affiliation. In contrast, the subsequent articles focus on attachment theory as an explanation for gang membership.

In Malcolm Payne’s (2005) book, *Modern Social Work Theory*, he introduces Howe’s Attachment Theory. This theory proffers that early attachment to a parent or parents determines the foundation of later “social competence” (p. 81). Infants and small children intuitively recognize strong, nurturing, and intimate attachments but if children do not attach successfully to the care-givers and learn positive self-regard, the child will seek attachments to peers that may not be beneficial to their potential as human beings (Payne, 2005).

This article is important to gang research because it offers a contextual framework in which gang affiliation can be understood. If young children and adolescence do not attach to strong role models within
the family system, they will attach to peers. Quite often found in the culture of poverty are single parent families that struggle to access basic resources such as food, clothing, and shelter, thus living in a “survival mode” rather than a nurturing and stable environment. In this state of un-equilibrium, the family structure suffers and successful attachment to loved-ones is strained as survival becomes paramount. It is for this reason that children attach to peers and seek acceptance outside the family structure.

In comparison, Shorey (2001) postulates that all children and adolescents have an inherent need for attachments with significant others in their social environments, and when the attachment process is interfered with they come to seek unhealthy attachments such as gangs. The author claims that children and adolescents that lack healthy attachments eventually perceive their social environment as threatening and unreliable, so they detach emotionally from individuals and their social environments and devalue the norms of society (Shorey, 2001). Furthermore, Shorey (2001) suggests that those adolescents with unhealthy attachment patterns seek out unhealthy attachments associated with
problem behaviors, for example, youth gangs. The author reasons that interventions and treatment approaches based on attachment theory can teach gang youth to form healthy attachments and can prevent other children and adolescents from joining gangs and perpetrating more serious crimes (Shorey, 2001). Shorey (2001) emphasizes the need for professionals who are in contact with juvenile delinquents and youth with antisocial behaviors to identify unhealthy attachment patterns in order to reintegrate delinquent adolescents back into society.

This article is important to gang research because it helps to explain and better understand the development of delinquent and early antisocial behaviors among children and adolescents. In addition, the article provides several suggestions on how attachment theory could be utilized by professionals in treatment approaches to form healthy relationships and attachments between emotionally detached youth and individuals in their surrounding environment. Moreover, this article is useful to gang research because it makes several suggestions on how attachment theory could be utilize as a gang prevention and intervention strategy. In contrast, the following article emphasizes the importance of social
learning theory to help better explain and understand gang membership.

In Albert Bandura’s Social Learning Theory, he introduces a process called behavior modeling. In his famous Bobo doll experiment, children learned and acted out aggression they observed in their parents because of the rewards gained (Isom, 1998). These rewards include reduction of tension and increase in self-esteem, or gaining the admiration from others (Isom, 1998). Bandura believes that children are not inherently violent, but they learn these behaviors from parents, observing others, and the media (Bandura, 1976). Bandura explicates that if aggression is diagnosed and treated in early childhood, children would reframe from continued aggressive behavior.

The following article is of particular interest to gang research because it studies the effect of media upon violent behavior, and contrasting theories of media and violent behavior are introduced. According to some researchers and theorists, children release aggression by identifying with the characters that exhibit violent behavior, making them less prone to violent behavior through a process called the Catharsis effect (Isom, _).
On the contrary, Bandura's theory suggests that media provide positive role models for children to model in order to reduce the possibility of violence. In contrast to theories that help to understand and explain gang involvement, the following references focus on the risk factors associated with gang membership.

Sommers and Baskin (2006) analyze the relationship between methamphetamine use and violence by interviewing 205 respondents and found that although methamphetamine clearly heightens the risk for violent behavior, it is not the inevitable outcome for even chronic users. Statistical analysis was gathered from participants in a drug treatment program and more that 52% were found to be active methamphetamine users (Sommers & Baskin, 2006). All respondents participating in the study reported that there was the potential for violence when they were under the influence of methamphetamine (Sommers & Baskin, 2006). A large proportion of the respondents were Hispanic, male, high school graduates; 20% had attended college and 86% had a legitimate job (Sommers & Baskin, 2006, p. 9). In addition, 53% of respondents had carried weapons at some point, 17% had been involved in attempted murder, and 5% had committed murder. Only 8.6% were gang
related violence (Sommers & Baskin, 2006). This study is important to understand the correlation between methamphetamine use and the potential for violence; however, it does not provide a comprehensive view of methamphetamine use or the distribution of methamphetamine as a source of income with regard to modern gang culture and violence.

Although this research is useful in understanding the propensity toward violence among methamphetamine users, it does not offer a clear picture of gang activity and the use of meth. Of the 205 respondents in the study, 86% had a legitimate occupation and many completed high school and some college; that is usually not the case among the gang culture (Sommers & Baskin, 2006). In addition, because 53% of the educated population carried weapons, 17% had attempted murder, and 5% had murdered, these statistics would pale in light of gang activity (Sommers & Baskin, 2006). In comparison, the subsequent article focuses on research-based risk factors fused with variables in interactional theory, as a developmental theory of youth gang involvement.

Howell and Egley (2005), researchers from the National Youth Gang Center, in their review on
prospective longitudinal quantitative studies, focus on the risk factors shown to predict gang membership in longitudinal research studies of gang involvement such as the Denver Youth Survey, the Rochester Youth Development Study, the Pittsburgh Youth Study, and the Seattle Social Development Project. The researchers hypothesize that concentrated disadvantage and the lack of "social capital" combined with certain family and child characteristics increases the odds of disruptive behavior by the time of school entry, subsequent delinquency in childhood, and gang membership in adolescence (Howell & Egley, 2005, p. 341). Their theoretical model identifies the risk factors for gang membership, coupled with the developmental stages that increase the probability of childhood delinquency and gang involvement in adolescence. Four developmental stages: preschool, school entry, childhood, and adolescence; and four risk factors: community, family, school, peer, and individual, were identified by longitudinal studies to be associated with increased likelihood of gang involvement in adolescence (Howell & Egley, 2005). Howell and Egley (2005) provide a developmental model of gang involvement that expands upon Thornberry and colleagues' interactional theory of gang
membership, which suggests that current behavior is influenced by antecedent risk variables, from birth through adolescence.

This article is important to policy and practice because research-based prevention programs have demonstrated positive results when they are risk-focused. By focusing on the risk factors for gang membership, gang prevention programs can potentially have a significant impact on a community's gang problem. The developmental model of gang membership presented in this article can be utilized in practice and to strengthen other research-based gang approaches. In contrast, the following article acknowledges the role of risk factors such as deviant peer groups in the development of delinquent behaviors and focuses on the effect that school adaptation has with regard to gang involvement during early adolescence.

A longitudinal study conducted by Dishion, Nelson, and Yasui (2005) examined the role of middle school adaptation to affiliation with gangs by the last year of middle school. The study focused mainly on peer relations, academic grades, and antisocial behavior in relation to early adolescent gang involvement. The study
participants consisted of a diverse sample with regard to the gender and ethnicity of adolescents and their families, from three middle schools in a metropolitan community in the Northwest region of the United States (Dishion et al., 2005). The researchers theorize that youth who perform poorly in public schools adapt by aggregating into peer groups that have deviant value systems such as gangs (Dishion et al., 2005). Dishion et al., (2005) argue that antisocial youth seek out others who are similarly inclined and school settings provide the opportunity for antisocial youth to coalesce into deviant social networks and friendships.

The study revealed evidence that low academic performance in public middle school and antisocial behavior as a youth both predicted later gang involvement (Dishion et al., 2005). The study also found that peer rejection was associated with deviant peer and gang involvement (Dishion et al., 2005). The authors insist that the data support their hypothesis that schools with higher rates of low academic performance and deviant peers “serve as breeding grounds for deviant peer groups [and] gang involvement” (Dishion et al., 2005, p. 70). Dishion et al., (2005) propose the idea that through a
process of selection, adolescents interact with peers who share similar attitudes, values, and behaviors.

It is important to understand the development and ecology of the formation of gangs among high-risk adolescents. Further, interventions that are designed to prevent adolescent membership in gangs need to take into consideration the many risk factors embedded in the school ecology and within these settings focus on the patterns of school adaptation in order to prevent early adolescent gang involvement. This article is important because it points out that programs designed to reduce gang involvement and gang activities should target youths who are problematic in school and associate with deviant peer groups. In comparison to the preceding articles that focused on the risk factors for gang involvement, the following articles focus on various approaches to gang membership.

In their book, *The Will to Kill: Making Sense of Senseless Murder*, Fox, Levin, and Quinet (2005), attempt to explain why people commit murder. During 1993 and 1994, gang activity and murder were at its highest point when crack wars were erupting throughout the United States. Although recently there has been a lower
incidence of violence and murder among young adults and older gang members, teenagers are more apt to commit violence and murder because of easy access to guns, and the fact that teenagers are inpatient, often acting impulsively before considering the consequences of their behavior (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2005).

To address the issue of violence, New York City took an aggressive approach to criminal activity by incorporating zero-tolerance stop-and-frisk tactics (Fox, Levin, & Quinet, 2005, p. 84). This approach worked in New York and a similar approach was adopted by the City of San Bernardino who now employ such tactics on individuals suspected of gang affiliation. This is important to gang research because recent literature indicates that the current youth gang problem is distinctly different in demographic characteristics and patterns of criminal behavior than a decade ago. In contrast, the following article evaluates a comprehensive community-wide approach to gang prevention, intervention, and suppression, and emphasizes the importance of patterns of services and service worker contacts in gang prevention programs.
Spergel, Wa, and Sosa (2005) evaluated comprehensive, community-wide gang prevention, intervention, and suppression programs in five cities around the country: Bloomington-Normal, Illinois; San Antonio, Texas; Mesa, Arizona; Tucson, Arizona; and Riverside, California. This article presents the results from an evaluation of the Riverside project. The evaluation examined the extent to which the Riverside program reduce youth gang crime at the individual level, and the extent to which the program contributed to change in gang crime at the community level. The researchers' hypothesis is that certain patterns of services and service worker contacts are key to reducing delinquency or crime, and to chance life-courses of youth, which contributes to a change or reduction in their gang involvement (Spergel et al., 2005). The evaluation compared 100 youth in the program and 100 comparison youth who were identified by law enforcement as gang members or at risk of gang involvement between the ages of 12 and 20 years, mainly African American and Latino, White, Asian, and Native American to a lesser degree, predominantly male with a substantial number of females (Spergel et al., 2005). The primary individual-level data...
collection instrument was an individual gang member survey, consisting of two hour-long interviews, which were administered approximately one year apart (Spergel et al., 2005).

Evidence from the evaluation suggested that the Riverside project did not reduce the program youths’ membership and involvement in gangs, and the project did not decrease the size of gang membership in the program areas (Spergel et al., 2005). Furthermore, the evidence suggested that the Riverside project had a less positive effect on youth from more economically marginalized areas with higher rates of crime than any other areas. There was evidence that serious violence, less-serious violence, and property offenses substantially declined across all program areas (Spergel et al., 2005). The evidenced suggested that particular patterns of services and service worker contacts, such as individual counseling, family counseling, group services, school-related services, and job services; as well as suppression services such as arrest, probation violation, and detention, contributed to reductions in serious violence and less-serious violence offenses (Spergel et al., 2005).
This article is important to gang research because it points out the greater need for social and economic support and outreach in order for comprehensive gang approaches to be more effective in reducing the level of involvement and membership in gangs and gang-related crimes. In contrast, the subsequent article focuses on a strategic risk-based response to gangs.

Wyrick and Howell (2004) argue that growing evidence shows that comprehensive approaches to gangs that are a collaboration of prevention, intervention, and suppression efforts are the ideal community-level response to gang problems and the most likely to have the greatest impact on local gang problems. However, they insist that this approach may not be a practical option given that it is a long-term effort and important community agencies such as local government and police departments may be unwilling to dedicate the necessary resources needed to respond to gangs or unable to make it a priority (Wyrick & Howell, 2004). As an alternative, these researchers suggest a strategic risk-based response to gangs. Wyrick and Howell (2004) point out in this article that the strategic risk-based response is not a particular program, but a response to gangs that combines
a general understanding of gangs with in-depth knowledge of local gang problems, and an understanding of how various risk factors relate to the origins and persistence of local gang activity. The researchers assert that a general knowledge about gangs should be enhanced with information gathered by an assessment of a community's local gang problem, including law enforcement information about how gangs operate locally, the youth involved in gangs, and how residents and community leaders perceive the local gang problem (Wyrick & Howell, 2004).

This article is important to gang research for several reasons. First, it recognizes the value of a comprehensive, collaborative approach to gangs. Moreover, it acknowledges the importance of the risk factors that greatly contribute to gang membership and of the importance of planning to address a multitude of major risk factors when developing and implementing gang programs. Further, this article is important because it points out the significance of a thorough assessment of a community's gang problem and the importance of evaluating and measuring a program's performance after it has been implemented, in order to determine if the program was
delivered as it was designed and to determine the impact of the program on the local gang problem.

In contrast, a study conducted by Loeber, Farrington, and Petechuk (2003), through the U. S. Department of Justice on *Child Delinquency: Early Intervention and Prevention*, offers a comprehensive analysis of youthful offenders and the propensity towards serious, violent, and chronic careers than older onset delinquents (Loeber et al., 2003). The study reveals that the number of youth referred to juvenile court before the ages of 7 and 12 has increased 33 percent over the last decade (Loeber et al., 2003). This is an important statistic for gang research and the social work profession because youthful offenders are 2 to 3 times more likely to end up career criminals. This study cites various contributing factors to child delinquency, for example, delayed language development, low attachment to caregivers, difficult temperament, poor parental supervision and academic performance (Loeber et al., 2003). Furthermore, peer rejection influences children to become involved with deviant peer groups such as gangs, in which children participate in criminal and violent activity in order to be accepted (Loeber et al., 2003).
This study concludes that early intervention will significantly reduce criminal activity. Early intervention should include addressing persistent disruptive behavior, prevention of child delinquency, and prevention of serious and violent behavior among young children (Loeber et al., 2003). Loeber et al. (2003), suggest interventions such as: classroom behavior management, multi-component classroom-based programs, social competence curriculums, conflict resolution curriculums, bullying prevention, after school recreation programs, mentoring programs and community interventions.

This study is important to gang research in several ways. First, it points out that early intervention is paramount in reducing career criminal activity, including gang participation. Second, it suggests that intervention programs that do not offer early intervention will inherently fail to address problems at critical stages of child development such as acquiring social competence and scholastic achievement. The inability to acquire social competence and scholastic achievement adversely affects the life course of impressionable youth. As a comparison, the following article presents findings from a study that evaluated a school-based program that targets two
domains: the individual and school, to determine if the prevention program effectively changed participants' attitudes and behaviors with regard to gangs.

Ramsey, Rust, and Sobel (2003) conducted a study to evaluate a Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) program from an urban middle school in Tennessee. The participants of the study consisted of 274 students who participated in the GREAT program and 148 students from the same school who did not participate in the program. The purpose of the study was to determine whether participation in the program changed participants' feelings and attitudes towards gangs and gang-related activities (Ramsey et al., 2003). The GREAT program was modeled after the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program, and teaches participants in a nine-lesson program about the negative aspects of gang involvement, as well as problem resolution skills and cultural sensitivity (Ramsey et al., 2003). The participants of the study completed the GREAT Student Questionnaire before the program and after its conclusion, which was designed to measure impulsivity, risk seeking behavior, attitudes toward police, attitudes toward deviant behavior, impulsivity, ideas about the benefits of gang
membership, ideas about the punishments for gang membership (Ramsey et al., 2003).

The results of the study found that attitudes after the conclusion of the GREAT program reflected greater resistance toward gangs, and did find significant improvements in attitudes towards gang-related activities for both groups of participants (Ramsey et al., 2003). Ramsey et al., (2003) concluded that there were virtually no differences in changes of attitudes for the experimental and control groups, thus, there was no evidence to support the GREAT program's effectiveness. This article is important because the results of the study were expected to show a significant change in students' attitudes towards gangs and their attitudes towards gang-related activities after participation in the GREAT program. Extensive evaluation of gang prevention is important because financial resources to support gang programs are substantially limited. Thus, it is important to gang research and practice to identify which strategies are effective and not effective at preventing gang involvement so that these limited resources can be utilized in the most effective and efficient manner.
In contrast to school-based interventions to prevent gang membership, Spergel and Grossman (1997) employ a longitudinal study of The Little Village Project in Chicago, Illinois to study a community-based approach to gang reduction. The study sample results consist of 125 youth from two gangs: the Latin Kings and the Two Six. This project studied the rivalry between these two gangs which accounted for about 70 percent of the serious gang violence in Little Village (Spergel & Grossman, 1997, p. 5). The Latin Kings were the more established gang and consisted of older members and were more violent and more involved in criminal activity than the Two Six gang. The Two Six gang consisted of younger members who are more involved in property crimes.

The Little Village Project utilized a gang strategy based upon community mobilization, social intervention, suppression, opportunities provision, organizational development, and targeting (Spergel & Grossman, 1997, p. 2). Furthermore, interagency collaboration, community participation, and ex-gang member participation was incorporated into this comprehensive program. Included in this study are the negative effects of other programs that resulted in assisting in the development of the
largest two criminal gangs in Illinois; the El Rukns and the Black Gangster Disciples (Spergel & Grossman, 1997, p. 2-3). Possible contributing factors to this negative result are interagency conflict, fragmentation of program and policy, and lack of cooperation among community members to mention a few (Spergel & Grossman, 1997, p. 3).

This research study is important to gang literature because interorganizational and community mobilization are effective in addressing widespread gang problems. The Little Village Project is a cross-disciplinary effort that incorporates social work values and utilizes several theoretical approaches to address the gang problem. This reference is important to this research study because it emphasizes the importance of collaboration.

Summary

A review of the literature indicates numerous risk factors that significantly influence involvement in gangs and in gang activity. The numerous implications of gangs underscore the need for intervention strategies that are effective in preventing and reducing gang involvement and resulting crimes. The literature points out the
importance of utilizing comprehensive, integrated gang interventions strategies to mediate the particular risk factors that greatly impact gang involvement. Gaining a better understanding of the risk factors that correlate with gang involvement and identifying the intervention strategies that are most effective at minimizing the effects of risk factors will better enable social workers, law enforcement agents, as well as others, to develop and implement gang interventions that can effectively impact gang involvement and the negative effects that result from gang activity.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

This research study sought to examine how effective the comprehensive, community-wide program called, Operation Phoenix, is at reducing gang activity in the city of San Bernardino. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to assess the effectiveness of the Operation Phoenix program, and to assess the needs of this program. Survey questionnaires were administered to members of the target community to gather data on their perceptions of the effectiveness of the program. In addition, face-to-face interviews were conducted with local gang experts that were knowledgeable about the local gang problem to gather data on their perceptions of the effectiveness of this prevention, intervention, and suppression approach to gangs, and to identify the strategies and interventions that are not being employed that could be utilized to better meet the needs of the community targeted by the Operation Phoenix program.
Study Design

The purpose of this research study was to determine the effectiveness of Operation Phoenix in reducing gang activity in the targeted area of San Bernardino. The target area consists of a 20-block area and the target population is comprised of 47% residential families and 53% single families (53%), and of the 852 residential units in the neighborhood, 58% are rental properties.

The research study utilized qualitative and quantitative research methods in order to better understand the effectiveness of Operation Phoenix at reducing gang activity. The research data was gathered by conducting interviews with gang experts and community leaders in the San Bernardino area, and administering survey questionnaires to members of the community and residents of the target area. The reason that different methods of data collection were utilized was to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the ecology of the local gang problem and of the effectiveness of Operation Phoenix to reduce the problem.

The use of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection enhanced the clarification of the many different perspectives with regard to the effectiveness
of Operation Phoenix in reducing gang activity. In addition to measuring the perspectives of participants, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection provided a comprehensive understanding of gaps in services and resources that could be used to improve the effectiveness of the program at reducing gang activity in the targeted area of San Bernardino.

Sampling

The purposive sampling method was used for this research study. The advantage of using the purposive sampling method was that the most knowledgeable people with insights about the effectiveness of the Operation Phoenix program were selected to be surveyed and interviewed. The sample consisted of community members residing within the target area of Operation Phoenix, community leaders, and gang experts that were familiar with the Operation Phoenix program. Fifteen face-to-face interviews were conducted and forty-seven surveys were administered. Access to the sample was gained by contacting potential participants in advance, and reserving a convenient time and accessible location in order to allow for sufficient time to meet with
participants and to conduct the interviews. Conversely, survey data was collected by going door-to-door in the 20-block target area of Operation Phoenix and asking residents, over the age of 18, to participate in the research study.

Data Collection and Instruments

The independent variable in this research study was the Operation Phoenix prevention, intervention, and suppression gang program. The dependent variables in this study were: feeling safer in the community than 2 years ago, the existence of gangs in the community, child involvement in a gang or risk of being involved in a gang, the increase or decrease of gang activity, and the problems that gangs present in the community.

Two types of data collection methods were utilized for this research study: personal interviews and survey questionnaires. Face-to-face personal interviews were the qualitative method of data collection that was utilized in the study. The interview instrument that was used for the study was a tool from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Comprehensive Gang Model, used to assess community gang problems (refer to
Appendix A). Interviews were conducted with local experts who were knowledgeable about the gang problem in the San Bernardino. The reason face-to-face interviews were employed was because they are the clearest expression of the thoughts and beliefs of local experts such as law enforcement officials and community leaders. The strengths of face-to-face interviews are that they allow researchers to capture personal depth with regard to the gang problem, and enable researchers to clarify respondents' terms and answers that are ambiguous. On the other hand, the weakness of personal interviews is that it is difficult to objectively interpret qualitative data. Some of the questions that were utilized for the research study through personal interviews are as follows:

1. Please pick the top 3 problems that gangs present in the community.

2. How has your community responded to gang activity?

3. How satisfied are you with the current response to gang activity?
These particular questions were selected because they were consistently asked during personal interviews, based on a review of the literature.

Survey questionnaires were the quantitative method of data collection that was utilized in this research study. The survey instrument that was used for the study was a tool used by the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model that is used to assess residents' perceptions of community gang problems and what residents think should be done about gang problems (refer to Appendix B). Some of the questions that will be included in the self-administered surveys that will be used for our research study are as follows:

1. Do you feel safer in your community than you did 2 years ago?
2. In the past year, has gang activity in your community: Increased, Decreased, or Remained the same?
3. Please pick the top 3 reasons you believe gang activity exists in your community.

These particular questions were selected for the research survey questionnaires because they were consistently
asked in gang assessment surveys, based on a review of the literature.

Both community leader interviews and resident surveys from OJJDP's Comprehensive Gang Model were incorporated into this research study; however, the validity and reliability of these instruments are unknown. The limitations of utilizing the data collection instruments was mediated by conducting a comparative analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data collected. A comparative analysis was made of the different issues and needs identified through face-to-face interviews and compared to those identified through survey questionnaires. Comparative analysis provided greater breadth of information and enabled a better analysis of the needs and effectiveness of Operation Phoenix.

Procedures

In order to examine the effectiveness of Operation Phoenix at reducing gang activity, face-to-face interviews and surveys were administered. The data for the study was gathered by two graduate students beginning the third week of February 2008 and ending the final week
possible risks involved. Participants were required to place an "X" on the consent form in order to further protect confidentiality and anonymity, and to indicate that they were aware of the risks and were willing to participate in the research study. In addition, a debriefing statement form was provided to all respondents following their participation so that any problems generated by the research study could be addressed and corrected (refer to Appendix D).

Data Analysis

For quantitative analysis, the research data collected from the survey questionnaires was quantified and converted into numerical data, and analyzed by using the SPSS computer program. The data was analyzed by conducting univariate, bivariate, and multivariate statistical tests. Data analysis was accomplished by assigning numerical representations to variables from the study. The variables in the research study were feeling safer in the community, the existence of gangs in the community, child involvement or risk of being involved in a gang, the increase or decrease of gang activity in the
community, and problems that gangs present in the community.

Descriptive analysis was used to illustrate frequency distributions and demographics such as feeling safer in the community, the presence of gangs in the community, gang activity in the community; and gender ethnicity, marital status, and level of education; for example, to describe the number of males participating in the research study or the average education level of the study participants. Bivariate analysis was used to determine correlations between the variables of the research study; for example, whether there was a correlation between feeling safer in the community than two years ago and whether gang activity has increased, decreased, or remained about the same in the past year.

For qualitative analysis, the data collected from personal interviews will be analyzed using ATLAS.ti computer software. This was accomplished by segmenting passages and patterns in quotations from the data collected from interviews, which were then coded by the Auto-coding feature of Atlas.ti. Segments of quotations, repetitive phrases and words were identified and compared through Atlas.ti to uncover relationships in the data.
that were important and of interest to the research study. As an example, phrases such as "decrease in gang activity" and "more resources are needed" emerged from the interview data.

Summary

Because of the complex nature of gang activity in the city of San Bernardino, there is a great need for a comprehensive gang intervention strategy to reduce gang activity in the area. This research study was essential in assessing the effectiveness of Operation Phoenix at reducing gang activity in the city and critical to identifying the resources needed to better address problems in the target area. The information gathered will be useful to the Mayor of San Bernardino, the police department, legislators, and the community in which they serve. Although there were several limitations with using the data collection tools from OJJDP's Comprehensive Gang Model, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis provided more validity and credibility to the research study.
The aim of this research study was to answer two interrelated questions: 1) to what extent is Operation Phoenix effective at reducing gang activity in the city of San Bernardino?, and 2) what resources are needed to enhance the effectiveness of Operation Phoenix at reducing gang activity in the city of San Bernardino? The study sought to answer these questions using interviews and survey questionnaires. The data collected in this research study were analyzed utilizing SPSS (Version 13.0) and Microsoft Excel to compile and analyze the results. Data analysis included compilation of the number and percent of respondents that selected each response category.

Presentation of the Findings

In order to participate in this study, the population of interest needed to be over the age of 18. A total of 123 people were sampled for this study of which 47 participated with survey questionnaires and 15 participated with interviews, 61 people chose not to participate in this study. The final response rate was
50.4% or 62/123. According to univariate statistical analyses, the sample of people surveyed for this study appears to be representative of the target population of people over the age of 18. Of the total sample of 62 people, only the 47 survey participants were asked questions about their demographic information, with regard to ethnicity, gender, marital status, and education. Of the 47 survey participants, 23.4% of the respondents were male and 76.6% were female (this is shown below in Table 1).

Table 1. Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid male</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seven ethnic categories were included in the survey with the distribution as follows: 21.3% were Black/African-American, 73.3% were Hispanic/Spanish, 6.4% were Asian; and 0 participants reported White/Caucasian,
American Indian, Native American/American Indian, or other (this is shown below in Table 2).

Table 2. Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Spanish</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>93.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five marital status categories were incorporated into the study. Of the 47 respondents, 38% were never married, 36.2% were married, 17% were separated, 8.5% were divorced, and 0 participants responded to widowed (this shown below in Table 3).
Table 3. Current Marital Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Marital Status</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid never married</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>married</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>74.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>separated</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>91.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>divorced</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seven categories of education level were included in the study with the distribution as follows: 4.3% complete grade school or less, 40.4% completed some high school, 31.9% completed high school, 17% complete some college, 2.1% graduated college, and 0 participants responded to vocational or technical training (this is shown below in Table 4).
To answer the question to what extent is Operation Phoenix effective at reducing gang activity in the target area of the city of San Bernardino, respondents were asked the following questions: 1) In the past year, has gang activity in the community: increased, decreased, remained about the same?, 2) Do you feel safer in your community than you did 2 years ago?, and 3) Please pick the top 3 problems, if any, that gangs present in the community? The first question was used to explore if gang activity had changed in the past year. The second question was used to determine if residents felt safer in the community than two years ago. The third question was

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest level of schooling completed</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid completed grade school or less</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some high school</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>44.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>completed high school</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>76.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some college</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>93.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>graduate or professional school after college</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>95.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N Valid | 47
Missing | 0
included to identify the problems that gangs currently present in the community.

Of the 47 respondents who were asked "In the past year, has gang activity in the community: increased, decreased, or remained about the same?", 17% of respondents reported that gang activity had increased, 31.9% reported that gang activity had decreased, and 51.1% reported that gang activity had remained about the same (this is shown below in Table 5).

Table 5. Gang Activity in the Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid increased</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decreased</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stayed the same</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the participants who were asked "Do you feel safer in your community than you did 2 years ago?, 59.6% felt safer in the community than two years ago, 36.2% did not feel safer in the community than two years ago, and 2.1% of respondents were not sure if they felt safer in
the community than a year ago (this is shown below in Table 6).

Table 6. Feel Safer in the Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Missing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Feel safer in the community than 2 years ago

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid yes</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>59.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>95.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not sure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>97.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of those 47 participants who were asked "Please pick the top 3 problems, if any, that gangs present in the community", 12.7% reported that gangs are not a problem in their community, 46.8% reported the increase in violent crime, 65.9% reported the increase in drug crimes, 27.6% reported the increase in weapon crimes, 51% reported the increase fear for safety, 23.4% reported fighting, 6.3% reported school disruption, 17% reported public nuisance, and 6.3% reported family disruption (this is shown below in Table 7). The reason that the
percentages do not total 100% is due to each respondent providing three different responses to the question.

Table 7. Problems Gangs Present in the Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Problems gangs present in the community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems gangs present in the community</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid gangs not a problem</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increase in violent crimes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>46.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increase in drug crimes</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increase in weapon crimes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increase fear for safety</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fighting</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school disruption</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public nuisance</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family disruption</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no response</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>141</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To answer the question what resources are needed to enhance the effectiveness of Operation Phoenix at reducing gang activity in the city of San Bernardino, respondents were asked the following questions: 1) Please pick the top 3 concerns that you have about your community, if any, 2) Please pick the top 3 reasons you believe gang activity exists in your community, and
3) Please pick the top 3 things you believe should be done about gangs and gang activity in your community. The first question was used to identify the major concerns residents have about the community. The second question was included in the study to explore the reasons that community members believe gang activity continues to exist in the community. The final question was included in the study to assess the perceptions of community members about the actions that should be taken to deal with gangs and gang activity in the community.

Of the 47 respondents who were asked “Please pick the top 3 concerns that you have about your community, if any”, 31.9% of respondents reported unemployment, 8.5% reported homicide, 27.6% reported gang activity, 10.6% reported loud music, 14.8% reported unkempt property, 44.6% reported drug dealing, 25.5% reported burglary or robbery, 40.4% reported graffiti, 6.3% reported truancy, 19.1% reported vandalism, 2.1% reported domestic violence, 23.4% reported insufficient street lighting, and 10.6% reported low police activity (this is shown below in Table 8).
Table 8. Concerns about Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concerns about community</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid unemployment</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>homicide</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gang activity</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loud music</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unkempt property</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drug dealing</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>44.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>burglary or robbery</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>graffiti</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>truancy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vandalism</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>domestic violence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insufficient street lighting</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low police activity</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no response</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>141</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of those 47 participants who were asked "Please pick the top 3 reasons you believe gang activity exists in your community", 2.1% of respondents reported that gangs are not a problem, 25.5% reported school problems, 44.6% reported lack of activities, 34% reported family and friends in gangs, 12.7% reported police labeling, 42.5% reported gang members move from other areas, 12.7%
reported to feel love and/or a sense of belonging, 25.5% reported boredom, 23.4% reported poverty, 17% reported power, 23.4% reported protection, and 14.8% reported family problems (this is shown below in Table 9).

Table 9. Reasons Gang Activity Exists in Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons gang activity exists in community</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid gangs are not a problem</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school problems</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of activities</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>44.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family/friends in gangs</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>police labeling</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gang members move from other areas</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to feel love/sense of belonging</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boredom</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poverty</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>power</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protection</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family problems</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no response</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>141</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the participants who were asked "Please pick the top 3 things you believe should be done about gangs and gang activity in your community", 2.1% reported that
gangs are not a problem, 68% reported more police protection, 76.5% reported job provision and job training, 80.8% reported programs and recreation, 36.1% reported mentoring, 19.1% reported tutoring (this is shown below in Table 10).

Table 10. Things that Should be Done About Gangs in Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things that should be done about gangs in community</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid gangs are not a problem</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more police protection</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>68.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jobs provision &amp; job training</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>76.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>programs/recreation</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>80.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentoring</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tutoring</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no response</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>141</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In comparison, face-to-face interviews were also used to examine the extent to which Operation Phoenix is effective at reducing gang activity in the city of San Bernardino and to identify the resources that are needed to further enhance its effectiveness at reducing gang
activity in the city. To answer the question to what extent is Operation Phoenix effective at reducing gang activity in the target area of the city of San Bernardino, 15 community leaders were asked the following questions: 1) what kinds of problems do gangs present in the community?, 2) what is the general community response to gangs by law enforcement, parents, educators, other community leaders, etc.?, and 3) Are you satisfied with the current response to gangs by law enforcement, social service agencies, schools, etc.? The first question was used to assess the problems that community leaders believe gangs present in the community. The second question was employed to examine community leaders' perceptions of the response to gangs by law enforcement, other community leaders, etc. The third question was used to explore community leader's satisfaction with the current response to gangs.

Of the 15 participants who were asked “What kinds of problems do gangs present in the community?”, 46.6% reported increase in vandalism/graffiti, 33.3% reported increased fear in the community, 40% reported increase in drug crimes, 20% reported public nuisance, 60% reported increase in violent crime against person, 46.6% reported
increase in weapon crimes, 46.6% reported increase fear for safety (this is shown below in Table 11). The reason that the percentages do not total 100% is due to each respondent providing three different responses to the questions.

Table 11. Problems Gangs Present in Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>45</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Problems gangs present in community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid increase in vandalism/graffiti</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increase fear in community</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increase in drug crimes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public nuisance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increase in violent crime</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>against person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increase in weapon crimes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increase fear for safety</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the community leaders who were asked "What is the general community response to gangs by law enforcement, parents, educators, other community leaders, etc.?", many community leaders (n = 5, 33.3%) reported that the community response to gangs was a "collaborative effort"
in which the city is "building alliances" with communities and reducing violent crime and gang violence through "partnerships with county and city resources". Further, many community leaders (n = 6, 40%) reported that a "prevention, intervention, and suppression" strategy was being utilized by the city, law enforcement, and parole and probation.

Of the community leaders who were asked "Are you satisfied with the current response to gangs by law enforcement, social service agencies, schools, etc.?", most reported that the suppression, prevention, and intervention strategy employed by Operation Phoenix was an effective strategy. A common sentiment among many of these leaders and experts was that collaboration between law enforcement, social service agencies, faith-based organizations, and community-based organizations was necessary to support long-term change in the community. A participant explained:

What we are talking about here is an interagency coalition effort including city and county agencies, and faith-based and grass-roots organizations. In talking about the gang issue in a meaningful way, establishing community trust is important.
Interagency coalition is the most effective way to promote that trust and free communities of gang violence. Participants often reported that providing community services, programs, and activities was not enough; promoting community involvement, improving communications between residents and police, and fostering closer relations with the community were brought up numerous times as an essential response to the gang problem. One participant reported:

By building alliances with crime-ridden communities, the innovative prevention, intervention, and suppression strategy will yield better results towards reducing violent crime and gang violence. In addition, many community leaders and gang experts pointed out that it is important to provide services to children when they are students, a critical time when youth start engaging in criminal activity and affiliating with gangs. As an illustration, one community leader stated:

Early childhood intervention is needed in the community and at school to stop problems at home and address school problems. There are not enough
programs to promote stable home environments and not enough after school activities and job training programs to protect them from becoming victims of violence and involved in gangs.

Overall, a majority of the participants were satisfied with the current suppression, prevention, and intervention response to gangs by the mayor’s office, law enforcement and social service agencies. The lack of community involvement and inadequate early intervention programs for at-risk youth in the schools were frequently cited issues.

To answer the question what resources are needed to enhance the effectiveness of Operation Phoenix at reducing gang activity in the city of San Bernardino, community leaders were asked the following questions: 1) why do you believe there is gang activity in the community?, and 2) what should be done to reduce the gang problem in the community? The first question was used to examine community leaders’ perceptions about why current gang activity exists in the community. The second question was used to assess community leaders’ opinions about what needs to be done to reduce gang problems in the community.
Of the 15 community leaders who answered the question "Why do you believe there is gang activity in the community?", 46.6% reported poverty, 40% reported school problems, 20% reported gang members move to community from other places, 6.6% reported boredom, 53.3% reported family problems, 6.6% reported protection, 40% reported lack of activities, and 80% reported family/friends in gangs (this is shown below in Table 12).

Table 12. Why There is Gang Activity in the Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why there is gang activity in the community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid poverty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school problems</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gang members move to</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community from other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>places</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boredom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family problems</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protection</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of activities</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family/friends in gang</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the 15 community leaders who answered the question "What should be done to reduce the gang problem in the community?", 60% reported jobs and job training, 26.6% reported mentoring, 33.3% reported recreation programs, 40% reported school programs, 20% reported more police presence, 40% reported more parental involvement, and 33.3% reported new laws/ordinances (this is shown below in Table 13).

Table 13. What Should be Done to Reduce the Gang Problem in Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid jobs &amp; job training</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation programs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School programs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More police presence</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More parental involvement</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New laws/ordinances</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, more community involvement and early child intervention programs are needs that were
repeatedly identified by respondents. Furthermore, a recurrent response provided by respondents was the need for more resources. Of the community leaders who were interviewed, many reported that resources such as educational and vocational programs, after school programs, substance abuse, parenting classes, and recreation programs, were needed to enhance the effect of Operation Phoenix. One participant stated:

I think the first steps need to be taken at home, with children at an early age, to have a positive impact on their lives and to promote alternatives to joining gangs.

Participants often reported that community recreation centers, youth job training programs and resource centers, and job training facilities would be beneficial to communities deeply entrenched in poverty. For example, a respondent explained:

I believe resources need to be allocated to provide employment opportunities for young people 17 to 25 years old. My sense is that providing job training combined with recreation programs can strengthen healthier choices among the city's youth, provide a
clearer path, and make a big difference in their lives.

A common sentiment among community leaders was that resources are needed to enhance family stability such as better employment opportunities and job training, and access to family counseling services and mental health and substance abuse services. In addition, many community leaders reported that programs needed to be developed and implemented to enhance unhealthy individual characteristics among youth. The provision of life-skills and job training, and afterschool mentoring and tutoring programs were frequently identified by participants as the key resources needed to steer young people away from gangs.

Summary

To summarize, the data collected for this research study was examined utilizing univariate statistical analyses, utilizing SPSS to analyze and Microsoft Excel to compile the data. Although a total of 123 people were sampled for this study, only 62 people participated in this research study: 47 people participated with survey questionnaires and 15 people with interviews. The sample
consisted of mostly Hispanic females who were not married at the time of the study, above the age of 18, with at least some high school education. Respondents frequently reported gangs and gang activity continues to exist in the community.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

An analysis of the research findings appears to provide answers to the research questions and seemingly supports the key hypotheses of the study. This chapter discusses the results of the data analyzed, how the results of the data analyzed answers the research questions, and identifies unanticipated results and possible explanations. In addition, limitations of the study will be presented and suggestions will be discussed for further research. Furthermore, conclusions will be presented and the implications of the study for gang research and gang prevention will be discussed.

Discussion

According to an analysis of the research findings, there are a few inconsistencies between the perceptions of community residents and community leaders with regard to the effectiveness of Operation Phoenix at reducing gang activity in the Central area of the city of San Bernardino. However, there appears to be agreement between the perceptions of community residents and
community leaders with regard to the resources needed to enhance the effectiveness of Operation Phoenix at reducing gang activity in the target area of the city. The general hypothesis of the study was that comprehensive approaches to gang problems that are risk-based (i.e., individual, family, school, peer, and community risk factor domains) and which involve multi-agency collaborative prevention, suppression, and intervention efforts are likely to be most effective. An analysis of the research findings suggests that Operation Phoenix has had an effect on community residents' feelings of safety in the community: (n = 28, 59%) feel safer in the community than they did 2 years ago.

However, the research findings do not suggest that gang activity has effectively been reduced in the target area of the city. For example, many community residents reported that gang activity had remained about the same (n = 24, 51.1%), and some reported that gang activity had increased (n = 8, 17%) in the past year. In addition, community residents reported that gangs continue to present an drug crimes (n = 31, 65.9%), fear for safety (n = 24, 51%), and violent crimes (n = 22, 46.8%), in the community. Similarly, many community leaders reported
that gangs present violent crime against person \((n = 9, 60\%)\), fear for safety \((n = 7, 46.6\%)\), and weapon crime \((n = 7, 46.6\%)\), in the community.

These research findings were unanticipated and fail to support research studies from the gang literature that suggest comprehensive gang strategies significantly impact gang activity (Spergel, Wa, & Sosa, 2004; Wyrick & Howell, 2004; Howell & Egley, 2005). Findings from the survey questionnaires are also inconsistent with findings from the face-to-face interviews from this study. As an example, most of the community leaders who participated in the study perceived the comprehensive, suppression, prevention and intervention strategy used by Operation Phoenix as being an effective approach at reducing gang activity in the city of San Bernardino \((n = 9, 60\%)\). In contrast, many community residents reported that gang activity had not changed \((n = 24, 51.1\%)\) or had increased \((n = 8, 17\%)\) in the past year. Another discrepancy in the research findings that needs to be acknowledged is the incongruity between residents’ reports of feeling safer in the community. Nearly 60% of community residents \((n = 28)\) reported feeling safer in the community than they did two years prior. However, over 50% of community
residents (n = 24) reported that the increase fear for safety was a leading problem that gangs presented in the community.

One possible explanation for the unanticipated research findings is that the project was repeatedly defined as being purely for academic purposes to those cooperating with the research study. Most people have an ideal conception regarding their views about their community. Self-report is not always the best way to accurately gather information about changes in significant problems in the community. Personal observation combined with referencing police, probation, school, county prosecutor, and youth agency records, would probably provide a more accurate report of changes in gang activity in the target community. In addition, the term "gang activity" is vague and was not clearly defined in the survey questionnaire. Violent crimes such as physical violence and weapons-related crimes may not necessarily be tied to gangs in the community, and might have been misinterpreted as gang activity in residents' views; consequently, many may have perceived gang activity as remaining the same or increasing in the past year.
According to the research findings, there appears to be agreement between the perceptions of community residents and community leaders with regard to the resources that are needed to enhance the effectiveness of Operation Phoenix at reducing gang activity in the target area of the city. To illustrate, most community residents believe that more programs/recreation (n = 38, 80.8%), job provision and training (n = 36, 76.5%), and police protection (n = 32, 68%) is needed to reduce gang activity in the community. Similarly, many community leaders believe jobs and job training (n = 9, 60%), more school programs (n = 6, 40%), and recreation programs (n = 5, 33.3%) are needed to reduce the gang problem in the community. Furthermore, many community leaders reported that life-skills and mentoring programs, early school interventions, family counseling services, and substance abuse counseling, was needed to impact gang activity and to promote alternatives to joining gangs.

Limitations

The most significant limitation of this research study is the sample size. The small sample size is a limitation because it prevents the findings of the study
from being generalizable to the larger target population. The low response rate of 50.4% or 62/123 could be attributed to a number of reasons. Language differences could have been a significant factor in the low response rate. Many of those approached were bilingual but were completely unwilling to be interviewed by an English-only speaking researcher. Some participated only after friends and neighbors participated in the study. Others simply declined to participate. However, code-switching form English to Spanish allowed another researcher to read the questions to participants and to walk participants through the survey questionnaires. Code-switching created a more comfortable and casual survey procedure with participants, eliminated the risk of embarrassing participants, and assured more complete responses.

Another limitation of the study is that a random sampling method was not used for this research study. As an alternative, purposeful sampling method was used. This type of selection of respondents can be expected to produce samples that are reasonably representative of the target population. However, there were some refusals by selected individuals and this may serve to bias the sample in ways that are not readily evident.
In addition, a limitation of the study is the information collected in the study was of a self-report nature which, depending on the subject areas being queried, may be prone to some inaccuracy as a result of less than correct recall, lack of information, or discomfort with self-disclosure.

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

Prevailing research indicates that the reliance on one particular strategy is unlikely to fundamentally change a community’s gang problem. Research studies suggest that single strategy interventions do not effectively impact gang involvement. There is no single cause for gang involvement, and therefore, the gang problem is resistant to any single strategy. Given the many risk factors in multiple domains, interventions that target risk factors in a single domain are also unlikely to successfully impact the gang problem. Thus, a comprehensive, risk-based model that utilizes a combination of strategies is needed in order to effectively reduce and prevent involvement in gangs.

Comprehensive gang prevention strategies have proven to be effective at deterring gang involvement at the
individual level and reducing gang violence and related offenses in communities throughout the nation, when they are well implemented. The magnitude and complexity of community gang problems prevents any easy solution. Without an unambiguous understanding of the effectiveness of gang intervention programs, preventing gang involvement and resulting gang-related activities is a difficult task. The lack of understanding of the effectiveness of particular gang intervention programs can impede efforts to divert individuals from gangs, and impede efforts to disrupt existing gangs and gang activity. This research study is an important component in gaining a better understanding of the effectiveness of holistic prevention, intervention, and suppression approaches to gangs.

Data collected from this research study can provide policy makers and service providers such as social workers, as well as the social work practice with research based information on the resources that can be utilized to do the most good in addressing gang problems. This evaluation and assessment of Operation Phoenix will help to identify the interventions that have the greatest impact on gang activity, and will help to identify the
resources that are needed most to have the greatest impact on community gang problems. The results of this study will thereby provide important information for future gang strategy planning and implementation.

Conclusions

Although an analysis of the research findings appears to be inconclusive with regard to whether or not Operation Phoenix is effective at reducing gang activity in the Central area of the city of San Bernardino, there appears to be consistency between the perceptions of community residents and those of community leaders with regard to the resources that are needed to enhance the effectiveness of Operation Phoenix at reducing gang activity in the target area of the city. Nevertheless, comprehensive gang prevention strategies have proven to effectively reduce and deter gang activity in various communities throughout the nation when they are well implemented. The findings of this research study are important in gaining greater knowledge of the complex nature of gang activities, and provides a better understanding of the effectiveness of holistic prevention, intervention, and suppression approaches to
gangs. Even though the results of this study were somewhat inconclusive, Operation Phoenix is a viable means to reduce gang-related problems and gang activity in the city of San Bernardino.
APPENDIX A

COMMUNITY LEADER INTERVIEW
Exhibit 9.1

Community Leader Interview

1. Do you believe gangs are a problem in your community?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Do Not Know
   - No Response

If so, what kinds of problems do gangs present in your community? Please choose your top three problems.

   - Increase in property crime
   - Increase in vandalism/graffiti
   - Increased fear in community
   - School disruption
   - Increase in drug crimes
   - Public nuisance
   - Family disruption
   - Increase in violent crime against persons
   - Increase in weapon crimes
   - Increased fear for safety
   - Other, please specify

2. Why do you believe there is gang activity in your community? Please choose your top three reasons.
   - Poverty
   - School problems
   - Police labeling
   - Gang members move to community from other places
   - Boredom
   - Family problems
   - Power
   - Protection
   - Lack of activities
   - Prejudice
   - Family/friends in gangs
   - To feel loved/sense of belonging
   - Other, please specify

3. What is the general community response to gangs by (law enforcement, parents, educators, other community leaders, etc.)?

4. What should be done to reduce the gang problem in the community? Please choose your top three choices.
   - Jobs and job training
   - Tutoring
   - Mentoring
   - Recreation programs
   - School programs
   - More police presence
   - More parental involvement
   - New laws/ordinances
   - Other, please specify

5. Are you satisfied with the current response to gangs by law enforcement, social service agencies, schools, etc.?

6. Have you had any personal experiences with a gang member? Please specify.

7. How can you help to improve the community's response to gangs?

8. Community Perceptions of Gang Crime

APPENDIX B

COMMUNITY RESIDENT SURVEY
Exhibit 9.2

Community Resident Survey

1. Are you:
   - Female
   - Male

2. What race/ethnicity do you consider yourself to be?
   - White/Caucasian
   - Black/African American
   - American Indian
   - Hispanic/Spanish
   - Asian
   - Native American/American Indian
   - Other: ______________________

3. What is your current marital status?
   - Never married
   - Married
   - Widowed
   - Separated
   - Divorced

4. What is the intersection (cross streets) nearest your place of residence?

5. Do you feel safer in your community than you did 2 years ago?
   - NO
   - YES
   Please explain: ______________________

6. Please pick the top 3 concerns that you have about your community, if any.
   - Unemployment
   - Homicide
   - Gang activity
   - Loud music
   - Unkept property
   - Drug dealing
   - Burglary or robbery
   - Other: ______________________

7. Do you think there are gangs in your community?
   - NO
   - YES

8. Do you think your child(ren) is in a gang or at risk of being in a gang?
   - NO
   - YES

9. In the past year, has gang activity in your community:
   - Increased
   - Decreased
   - Remained about the same

10. Please pick the top 3 problems, if any, that gangs present in the community:
    - Gangs are not a problem here
    - Fighting
    - School disruption
    - Increase in violent crime
    - Public nuisance
    - Increase in drug crimes
    - Family disruption
    - Increase in weapon crimes
    - Other: ______________________

11. Please pick the top 3 reasons you believe gang activity exists in your community:
    - Gangs are not a problem here
    - Boredom
    - School problems
    - Poverty
    - Lack of activities
    - Power
    - Family/friends in gangs
    - Protection
    - Police labeling
    - Family problems
    - Gang members move from other areas
    - To feel love/sense of belonging
    - Other: ______________________

12. Please pick the top 3 things you believe should be done about gangs and gang activity in your community:
    - Gangs are not a problem here
    - Programs/recreation
    - More police protection
    - Mentoring
    - Jobs provision & Job training
    - Tutoring
    - Other: ______________________

Continue to back page
13. Please rank the following organizations from most responsible (1) for dealing with gangs and gang activity to least responsible (12) for dealing with gangs and gang activity:
- Police
- Church
- Court/Criminal Justice System
- Family
- Service Providers
- Neighborhood Association
- School
- Housing Authority
- Office of Juvenile Affairs
- Treatment Providers
- Community Residents
- Office of Youth & Family Services

14. How satisfied are you with the current response to gang activity?

15. How has your community responded to gang activity?

16. What are you willing to do, if anything, to help deal with gangs and gang activity in your community? (Please check all that apply):
- Nothing
- Neighborhood outreach
- Become a youth group leader
- Tutor
- Form sports leagues/teams
- Mentor
- Teach skills (i.e., auto mechanics, crafts, music, computerskills, electronics, etc.)
- Other: ____________________________

17. What is the highest level of schooling you have completed?
- Completed grade school or less
- Some high school
- Completed high school
- Some college
- Completed college
- Graduate or professional school after college
- Vocational or technical training

Thank you for your participation.
Your opinions and comments are appreciated.

If you would like to leave any additional comments for us, please use this area or attach another sheet of paper.
APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT
INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate the effectiveness of the Operation Phoenix program. This study is being conducted by Jay Tena and Mario Rogers under the supervision of Dr. Tom Davis, Department of Social Work. This study has been approved by the Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review Board of California State University, San Bernardino.

In this study you will be asked to respond to 20 questions about gang activity in the local community. The survey should take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete. All of your responses will be held in the strictest of confidence by the researchers. Your name will not be reported with your responses. All data will be reported in group form only. You may receive the group results of this study upon completion on June 7, 2008 at the Pfau Library, California State University, San Bernardino, 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, California.

Your participation in this survey is totally voluntary. You are free not to answer any questions and withdraw at any time during this study without penalty. When you have completed the survey you will receive a debriefing statement describing the study in more detail. Participation in this survey will help to assess the effectiveness of the Operation Phoenix program at reducing gang activity in the community, and to help identify the ways in which the Operation Phoenix program can better address problems within the community related to gang activity. There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Tom Davis at (909) 537 - 3839.

By placing a check mark in the box below, I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and that I understand the nature and purpose of this study and I freely consent to participate. I also acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age.

Place a check here □

Today's date: ____________

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO
SOCIAL WORK INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE
APPROVED 10/27/98 AFTER 11/29/97

909.537.5501
5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393
APPENDIX D

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT
Study of Operation Phoenix
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

The survey you have just completed was designed to investigate the Operation Phoenix program. In this study the effectiveness of the program and the needs of the program were assessed. The study questions provide an understanding of the effectiveness of the Operation Phoenix at reducing gang activity and related harms in the target area from the viewpoints of community members and leaders. In addition, the study questions provide information on how the Operation Phoenix program can better address problems in the local community related to gang activity. We are particularly interested in how community members view the effectiveness of Operation Phoenix and the ways in which the program can better meet the needs of the community.

Thank you for your participation in this study. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Dr. Tom Davis at (909) 537-3839. If you would like to obtain a copy of the group results of this study, please contact the Pfau Library, California State University, San Bernardino, 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, California, at the end of the Spring quarter of 2008.

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REFERENCES


