



132
693
THS



This is to certify that the
thesis entitled

**A Descriptive Profile of Youth Gang
Members in the Lansing School District**

presented by
Michelle May

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for
M.S. degree in Criminal Justice

Kenneth E. Christian
Major professor

Date 3/98



PLACE IN RETURN BOX
to remove this checkout from your record.
TO AVOID FINES return on or before date due.

DATE DUE	DATE DUE	DATE DUE
1215001 MAR 11 2001		

A DESCRIPTIVE PROFILE OF YOUTH GANG MEMBER
CHARACTERISTICS IN THE LANSING PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

By

Michelle Elizabeth May

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

School of Criminal Justice

1998

ABSTRACT

A DESCRIPTIVE PROFILE OF YOUTH GANG MEMBER CHARACTERISTICS IN THE LANSING PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

By

Michelle Elizabeth May

Despite decades of research and vast amounts of literature, little insight is offered regarding gang membership characteristics. Rather, much of the literature focuses on theories of why adolescents join and participate in gang activities.

This research was undertaken in an attempt to discover if identified gang members have common characteristics. Demographic and behavioral data was analyzed on 105 students identified as gang members, a profile of common factors was created, and professional literature published on gangs was referenced to validate the findings.

Questions this research attempted to answer were: 1) Are there similar characteristics in the majority of known or identified gang members in the Lansing School District? 2) Do these characteristics parallel those characteristics noted in published literature? 3) If similarities exist, can a profile be developed to be used as an assessment tool to identify at-risk youth? The research found that common characteristics exist in the identified gang members, and the literature confirmed the characteristics to be valid.

Dedicated to my Family

Dad, Mom, Mike,

Grandma and Grandpa

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My deepest and sincerest thank you to my thesis advisor, Dr. Kenneth Christian. Without his guidance, encouragement, criticism, persistence, and patience, I would not have finished this project. He challenged me to reach my goals.

I would also like to thank Dr. Sheila Maxwell for the time and effort she gave to this project. Thank you to Vince Hoffman for his input. Thank you to John Grant and Lee Mason, Lansing School District, for allowing me to undertake the project and providing me with the data needed.

Many thanks to my parents and twin brother. Their support and encouragement were paramount in the completion of this project and throughout the entire process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	vii
CHAPTER ONE-INTRODUCTION	
Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	3
Purpose	4
Need for the Study	4
Research Questions	5
Summary and Overview	5
CHAPTER TWO-REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	
Introduction	7
Definition	8
Youth Gangs: An Overview	12
Summary of the Literature	18
CHAPTER THREE-METHODOLOGY	
Introduction	20
Method	21
Strength of Gang Affiliation	23
Limitations	25
Analysis	26
Confidentiality	26
Summary	27
CHAPTER FOUR-RESULTS AND ANALYSIS	
Introduction	28
Variable Tabulations	29
Comparison to Literature Published	34
Profile Review	42
Conclusion	42
CHAPTER FIVE-SUMMARY OF RESEARCH	
Introduction	44
Conclusion	45

Recommendations for Further Study	4 5
Implications for Practice	4 6
APPENDICES	
Appendix A - Letter from Lee Mason	4 8
Appendix B - Subject Profile	4 9
Appendix C - Letter from David E. Wright, Ph.D.....	5 2
BIBLIOGRAPHY	5 3

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 - Gender by Ethnicity.....	2 9
Table 4.2 - Gang-Affiliated Individuals Projected Ages At the Beginning of the Study.....	3 0
Table 4.3 - Projected Graduation.....	3 2
Table 4.4 - Incident Reports Per Offense.....	3 3

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

School and community officials have become increasingly aware of the growing youth gang population as more adolescents become members of gangs and as more gang activity is seen on and around school grounds. Due to the increase in youth gang activity, gangs within the school system have become an important issue for our nation's schools. Kay McKinney (cited in Gaustad, 1990) wrote: "Although youth gangs have existed in the cities of the United States almost as long as the nation itself, trends during the last two decades have alarmed school and community officials." Although many entities such as parents, schools, churches, police, to name a few, are concerned about the phenomenon of youth gangs, little research has been initiated investigating the connection between demographic and behavioral characteristics and gang involvement. Do gang members have common background characteristics? What factors do gang members have in common?

Data released in 1991, by the United States Department of Justice, revealed that students attending schools with gangs were more likely to avoid restrooms or hallways and other areas inside the school, than areas outside the building. Students attending

schools with gangs were also twice as likely as students from schools without gangs to be afraid of being attacked, both at school and on the way to or from school (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1991).

In 1991, the National School Safety Center News Service reported that schools have been concerned about youth gangs for several reasons, the most significant being that schools are a prime recruiting ground. Since younger gang members and most potential gang members attend schools, they provide the opportunity for interaction and possible recruitment of new members.

In the 1994 Gallup Poll Survey conducted for Phi Delta Kappa International, a professional education fraternity, of the 1,326 adults polled, 18% named the growth of fighting, violence, and gangs as their main concern. More non-whites than others were concerned about fighting, violence, and gangs with 31% listing them a top problem.

Therefore, a critical issue confronting school officials today is the need to develop gang education programming for staff, students, and parents. In order to develop prevention and intervention education, more must be known about the type of students who are joining gangs and those students at risk of recruitment and membership. This research attempts to answer these questions. Data on identified gang members and profiles on their characteristics will be compared with the available research to answer the questions: Are there similar characteristics present in the majority of known or identified gang members in the Lansing School District? Do these characteristics parallel those characteristics noted in the

literature published? If there are similarities, can a profile be developed to be used as an assessment tool to identify at-risk youth?

Being involved in a gang is not a crime, but research has significantly demonstrated that youth affiliated with a gang show higher levels of delinquent activity and drug involvement than other youth (Fagan, 1990; Esbensen et al., 1993). Crimes stemming from gang activity include drug abuse and trafficking, theft, vandalism, and murder.

The school bears a strong responsibility to curb the gang situation that presents itself in order to uphold the purpose of the institution and the safety of staff and students. In Michigan, the law requires children to attend school until their sixteenth birthday. Youth spend up to eight hours a day in school, not only making school grounds a prime recruiting center for gang membership, but also opening the door for gang education programs.

Statement of the Problem

Although gang research is abundant, minimal information is available concerning characteristics of youth involved in gangs. Recent efforts have been made to discriminate between gang and non-gang youth (Esbensen et al., 1993). As a result of limited research in this area, many questions arise. This research attempts to answer the question, do individual gang members have similar characteristics?

The primary focus of this research was to utilize demographic and behavioral data provided by the Lansing Public School District -- personal characteristics, family characteristics, school behavior, and geographic location -- and compare that data, once compiled, to

available research on gang characteristics. Can the characteristics found in identified gang members in the Lansing School District be validated by available research?

Purpose

Youth gang activity has become a major issue permeating all facets of our communities and more importantly our institutions of learning. Throughout the past decades, many studies have concentrated their efforts on adolescent gangs. Despite the mass of gang literature, few researchers have focused their efforts on gang members' characteristics. The abundance of literature focuses its concern on gangs as a group. The present research analyzes individuals and characteristics they exhibit. The fact that this topic has not been extensively explored makes this study relevant in broadening our understanding of the type of child at risk of gang recruitment or membership.

This research is three-fold: 1) Compile data collected on 105 students in the Lansing Public School District identified as gang members; 2) develop a descriptive profile of common factors seen in these 105 cases; and 3) review available research in an attempt to validate the characteristics profiled.

Need for the Study

There is a need to develop a profile on youths known to be involved in gang activity. Gang presence in school has raised questions of safety and control and has established feelings of fear among students and staff. To address this problem, an attempt has been made to determine the factors which these gang-involved youth have in common. School personnel are in need of such

information on the common characteristics of gang-involved youth in order to successfully develop programs to reduce the number of youths entering gangs. By reducing the number of gang-involved youth, schools are hoping to diminish many of the problems caused by the presence of gangs.

Anyone can be recruited to join a gang. Demographic and behavioral data on known gang members will provide school officials with an ethnography of characteristics seen in gang members within the Lansing School District.

Research Questions

The questions this research attempts to answer are: 1) Are there similar characteristics present in the majority of known or identified gang members in the Lansing School District? 2) Do these characteristics parallel those characteristics noted in the literature published? 3) If there are similarities, can a profile be developed to be used as an assessment tool to identify at-risk youth?

Summary and Overview

This chapter has laid the groundwork for the study. A review of the literature on gangs, which has been an area of interest since the beginning of the century, will be provided in Chapter Two. The confusion surrounding the definition of the term gang will be highlighted. The methodology as well as the limitations faced during the collection of data will be presented in Chapter Three. The results and analysis of the comparison and collection of data will be presented in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five, the study will be summarized, and implications and recommendations for further study will be provided.

In summary, the purpose of this research is to: develop a profile using data collected on 105 students previously identified as gang involved; compile literature published on youth gang member characteristics; and, compare the research to the profile to validate the findings. This information will provide an assessment tool for educators as a beginning step in addressing the gang situation in the schools. This information will be used to educate staff, parents, and students for development of prevention and intervention programs.

Programs of this nature are desired due to the increased threat these gangs bring to society and the impact these threats have within the educational setting. "Students cannot learn if they do not feel safe. No matter how you define safety, emotional or physical, it is a necessity in both the school and the classroom" (Burke, 1991). Gangs do not only threaten the safety of students, but the staff are victims of fear as well. Stover (1987) stated that gang members are disruptive and their presence is intimidating to both teachers and students. This poses a threat to the ability to maintain order and security.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

“Today’s violent delinquent is a displaced person, suspicious, fearful, and not willing or able to establish a concrete human relationship. The formation of the violent gang, with its impermanence, its possibilities for hollow glory, its limited expectations of any responsibility on the part of its members, is all-inviting to youths who have difficulty fitting into a more integrated and clearly defined world” (Yablonsky, 1962).

Despite decades of study, juvenile gangs are still far from being an understood phenomenon. Criminal justice, psychological, and sociological literature contain numerous studies of the youth gang dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century (Thrasher, 1927) when it became the primary focus of the Chicago School Sociologists in the 1920s. Nearly a century has passed and perhaps the most relevant issue that can be derived from the literature is the lack of research pertaining to gang member characteristics. Are there factors, demographic, behavioral, and geographic, that predispose an adolescent to be at-risk of becoming involved with or recruited by a gang?

Definition

Before reviewing the research, it is beneficial to establish a clear definition of the term "gang." A perusal of available research reveals a plethora of definitions. Richard Ball and G. David Curry (1995) examined how "various researchers and theorists have fallen into various errors of logic in use of these methods and how gang research and theory might make more consistent progress through clarification of the definitional issues." They conclude that gang research and theory would benefit and progress if the term was consistently defined and the logic of definition was examined.

Researchers, social institutions, as well as law enforcement personnel have yet to reach a consensus and every organization that comes in contact with "gangs" creates an operational definition to suit its purpose. This lack of definitional consistency has hindered the ability to generalize from one study to the next, while making it difficult to assess the impact of youth gangs. "Historically, it is difficult to document the extent and seriousness of gang delinquency on a national level. The definition of a gang or gang activity varies not only among sociologists but also among police and youth workers" (Bookin-Weiner & Horowitz, 1983).

Frederick Thrasher (1927) was one of the first to attempt to define the adolescent gang. He defined a gang as a group that originally formed spontaneously, but became cohesive when conflict occurred. He characterized gang behavior by confrontations occurring face-to-face, milling, moving together as a unit, conflict, and planning (Bartollas, 1993).

Arnold P. Goldstein and Ronald Huff, editors of *The Gang Intervention Handbook* (1993), state that a youth gang is: “a collectivity consisting of adolescents and young adults who, a) interact frequently with one another; b) are frequently involved in illegal activities; c) share a common collective identity that is usually, but not always, expressed through a gang name; and, d) typically express that identity by adopting certain symbols and/or claiming control over certain ‘turf’ (persons, things, or economic markets).”

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (1994) cites the following list as being used in defining a gang for research purposes. The group must exhibit: 1) formal organization, 2) identifiable leadership, 3) identified territory, 4) recurrent interaction, and 5) engage in serious delinquent behavior.

The National Crime Prevention Council (1994) states that experts have compiled a number of characteristics that make a youth vulnerable to gang membership. Gang members often:

- are male, although females are also recruited;
- have other family members or friends involved with gangs;
- have seen excessive use of alcohol or other drugs in the home;
- live with a single parent or grandparents;
- have poor academic performance;
- see poor to non-existent job prospects;
- are known for fighting and general aggressiveness in early adolescence, or have chronic delinquency problems;
- experience poor living conditions or poverty;
- have experienced social deprivation or isolation; and,
- have needs that have been neglected or unable to be fulfilled.

In an attempt to develop a consistent definition, some jurisdictions in the state of Florida have defined gang members by statute. One particular statute declares a youth or street gang as a

group, formal or informal, that consists of two or three persons who have a common name, signs, colors, and symbols and have members who individually associate in youth and street gang activity (Cromwell, Taylor, & Palcios, 1992).

The popular 1950's musical, *West Side Story* (1958), brought the term gang into a different light. The two noted gangs, the Sharks and the Jets, were groups of rebellious teenage boys out to defend their turf through fighting and violence, although weapon use was not present at this time.

Lewis Yablonsky (1959) saw the gang as a "near-group structure" which consisted of three levels of membership. The core contained the leaders who needed and wanted the gang and provided the gang with cohesion. The second level consisted of youth who were not consistently part of the gang, meaning they belonged and participated in activities when they chose. The youth at the third level rarely identified themselves as gang members but often participated in gang activity.

F.J. O'Hagan (1975) had similar thoughts but claimed that gangs had four levels of membership. First were the "top men" who were the leaders of the gang. These men were highly respected and well-known within the gang as well as outside the gang. Second were the "committed members" who related closely with the leaders. Third were the "fringe" members who would partake in gang activities but felt no type of commitment toward the gang. Last were members termed "drifters." These members differ from the fringe members in that they are at times completely apathetic to all gang activity.

Carl Taylor (1990) has made an impressive and significant impact on gang research with his recent research on gangs in the Detroit area. Taylor has classified gangs into three categories: scavenger, territorial, and corporate. Scavenger gangs lack a purpose other than their impulsive behavior and their need to belong. They have no particular goals, no purpose, no substantial camaraderies. The majority of members come from the lower and the underclass. Territorial gangs claim territory as being the gang's and their objective is to protect their turf from outsiders. When scavenger gangs become serious about organizing, with specific goals in mind, they enter the territorial stage. The corporate/organized gang revolves around illegal means of making money.

Although many definitions are available, the Lansing Public School District recognizes the definition employed by the National School Safety Center (1992). This organization defines a youth gang as a group of three or more people with a unique name, categorical marks or symbols, who claim territory or turf, who associate on a regular basis, and who take part in criminal or antisocial behavior. This will be the operational definition for the purposes of this research.

Our nation's gang problem continues to worsen, which emphasizes the need to block the cycle of youth becoming involved. Movies such as *Boyz in the Hood* (1991) and *New Jack City* (1991) detail gangs in a far more violent manner where drugs and weapons are paramount. They glamorize the gang life. *Monster* (Scott, 1993), a book written by a former gang member about his gang life as well

as his life in and out of the criminal justice system, is a first of the books telling today's youth the "real" story behind gang life.

Youth Gang Research: An Overview

Dale Hardman (1967) identified five overlapping periods in gang research: the pioneer studies (1900-1930), the depression studies (1930-1943), the war years: the factor studies, (1940-1950), the descriptive studies (1942-1962), and the decade of theory (1950-1960). Chicago School sociologist, Frederick Thrasher, initiated a study of the youth gang in 1927, entitled *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago*. According to Thrasher, adolescent boys were born into play groups which were natural occurrences for those who lived in the same neighborhood and attended the same school. Thrasher also saw these gangs as being organized in three concentric circles with the inside circle being the leader and his lieutenants, the middle circle the full-time members, and the outside circle consisting of those who were occasional members. The depression studies developed focus on social factors with studies by Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay (1942). Hardman describes the war years and the "decade of factor studies: the why of gangs." Glueck and Glueck's (1950) study found delinquency to be "highly correlated with ganging." The descriptive studies, the how of ganging, focused on gang dynamics. William Foote Whyte's research (1943) during this time studied gangs over a three year period, resulting in the conclusion that formation occurs gradually and that the leader of the gang was held in high regard and importance. During the decade, gang research was explained in numerous ways by a variety of

researchers. To understand this era, theories will be addressed in more depth.

During the 1950's and 1960's, social theories emerged. Albert Cohen's perspective was detailed in his book *Delinquent Boys* (1955). His theory stated that delinquency is an end result, a "reaction formation," of frustration individuals feel when they cannot reach the goals or the societal norms they desire. Cohen based his theory of delinquent subcultures on the belief that lower class adolescents experience frustration or strain when they cannot obtain middle class culture goals; therefore, their membership in a gang provides status for them.

Another highly regarded theory of that period was Shaw and McKay's "Social Disorganization Theory" which saw gangs as groups of adolescents who were socially deprived. Therefore, delinquent behavior and gang involvement was a reaction to the slum and lower class conditions around them. They proscribed the sequence of events as follows: living in a socially deprived neighborhood leads to failure of informal controls, which leads to increased gang activity, which results in cultural transmission of delinquent traditions, which ends in increased delinquent activity (1969).

Other theorists who supported the lower class subculture theory were Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin (1960). They contended that gang membership results when adolescents, who are lower class, cannot upgrade their economic standing and, therefore, join one of three gang subcultures: criminal, conflict or retreatist. The criminal subculture bases its action around criminal values, and being involved in illegal activity is accepted in order to gain

economic success. The conflict subculture features violence where members gain reputation or achieve status by forceful action or threats of force. The retreatists are mainly involved in drug activity. These three subcultures help the lower class youth obtain illegally what they cannot gain legally.

In 1967, Malcolm Klein, took gang theory in a different direction. He based his theory on the idea that adolescents go through turmoil during the transition from childhood to adulthood. Therefore, gang membership satisfied needs during this developmental stage. Following the same line of thought, James Short (1968) felt that gangs were an occurrence for adolescent males who were of the lower socioeconomic class. It was during the period termed "adolescence" that males needed to bond with peers of the same sex and gangs met that need.

Travis Hirschi's Social Bond Theory (1969) connected delinquent activity to the quality of bond that the adolescent holds with society. If this bond is weakened or broken, delinquent behavior results. His theory was based on four elements: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. The stronger the attachment is to others, the stronger the bond will be which, in turn, weakens the bond to any delinquent thought. If the individual is committed to himself or herself and is willing to put forth effort into appropriate activities, he or she will refrain from delinquent behavior. If these youth are spending time committing themselves to appropriate activities, they will have little time to consider deviant events. In conclusion, delinquency is the result of a lack of belief that the child has in the values of laws and the legal system.

If at any time, one of these bonds to society weakens or breaks, delinquent behavior is more likely to occur.

Walter Miller (1975) agreed with Cloward and Ohlin (1960) in that gang membership is an issue of the lower class. Miller argues that lower-class individuals face a challenge of staying out of trouble. Miller's theory revolves around six focal concerns of the lower class: trouble, physical prowess, smartness, excitement, fate, and autonomy. These focal concerns can be interpreted for gang behavior. Gangs usually establish norms which often include illegal activity. Toughness is also desired by those gangs who fight to defend their turf. If a gang member has the ability to outsmart another, this is valued in the gang's attempt to gain material possessions. Gangs are often involved in "exciting" and fast-paced activity which provides the adolescent with thrill, danger, and risk. By conforming to the belief that fate controls life events, youth believe that luck will help them escape lower class life. Therefore, gang members may gamble on activities, illegal or legal, because they feel they will be lucky. Lastly, by joining a gang, adolescents may feel that they are expressing their independence from such controls as the school and the family.

When looking for research in the 1970s, the abundance was not apparent as it had been for previous decades. "By the 1970s, however, interest in gangs had become passé and some wondered if gangs had met their demise" (Bookin-Weiner and Horowitz, 1983 as cited in Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993). Gangs in the 1970s and 1980s expanded and encompassed more violent activities. Gang members tended to be male, fall between the ages of ten to twenty-one, and

come from low income communities. These individuals were also predominately African-American and Hispanic. The 1980s brought forth crack cocaine which led the gangs to compete for the drug market (Bartollas, 1993).

C. Jack Friedman and colleagues (1975) produced a study entitled "A Profile of Juvenile Street Gang Members." The study was designed to profile Philadelphia gang youth. It contained 536 subjects with 49% reporting they had been gang members and 48% stating they were currently gang-involved. Due to this study's relative proximity to the present research, it will be examined in more depth in Chapter IV.

James B. Sibley (1989) examined gang violence and the response of the criminal justice system, the "current nature and scope of gang activity and the frustration of police and prosecutors in coping with the rise of gang violence." He also explored the California Criminal Justice System and its response.

During the same decade, research continued to grow on the response by the courts to this growing dilemma. Maxson and company (1985) reported on the differences between gang and nongang homicide. Conclusions revealed measurable differences in ethnicity, age, number of participants, and relationship between participants.

Merry Morash (1983) found that "the level of peer group organization was not a sufficient condition to stimulate delinquency among members." She also stated that gang members were only slightly more involved in criminal activity than other youth not

involved with a gang but who were also characterized as "high rate serious offenders."

Johnstone (1983) indicated that delinquent involvement is a precursor to gang membership. He also stated that members and recruits had a significantly higher score for serious delinquency than did the non-gang involved youths. This was also documented ten years later (1993) in Esbensen and Huizinga's research involving the Denver Youth Study.

Gangs in the 1990s continue to change. Today, the nation is seeing a rise in the number of urban street gangs, gangs in small communities, and female participation as well as female gangs (Bartollas, 1993). Critical research in the 1990's has been conducted by Esbensen, Huizinga, and Weiher (1993) concentrating on the differences between youth who are involved in gang activity and youth who are not. This research has been done with data collected from the Denver Youth Study which is a longitudinal study examining families. Research found that differences do exist between gang and non-gang youth. "Compared to gang members and street offenders, non-offenders can be described as reporting: lower levels of commitment to delinquent peers; higher commitment to positive peers; lower level of normlessness in three different contexts (family, peer group, and school); and less negative labeling by teachers and lower tolerance to deviance."

As of August 1994, "in 110 jurisdictions reporting gangs, the survey found that over the previous 12-month period there were: 249,324 gang members, 4,881 gangs, 46,359 gang related crimes, and 1,072 gang-related homicides (Curry et al., 1994).

Other research of the decade focuses on gangs and delinquent behavior (Thornberry et al., 1993), gang and drugs (Klein et al., 1991, Fagan, 1989 and Hagedorn, 1994), and gang involvement among ethnic groups (Curry & Spergel, 1992).

Summary of the Literature

Despite the abundance of material written on youth gangs and gang behavior, research is lacking in the area of identification of gang member characteristics. Researchers continue exploring the etiology of gang involvement, but the urgency seems to focus on who is joining or is susceptible of recruitment.

Early theory supported a lower class culture premise basing gang membership on low social economic status; it considered gang involvement to be a male experience and saw minorities as being more apt to be gang-involved. Recent research has shed light on differences between gang and non-gang youth, and theory supports an integrated approach stating gang membership is caused by a number of contributing factors: family, school, and economic status. Most agree that gang activity is not only rapidly increasing and spreading to smaller cities, but is also becoming more violent. As more youth become susceptible to this lifestyle, school personnel must seize the opportunity to reach the at-risk population. Los Angeles District Attorney, Ira Reiner, stated, "Simply put, we have to get kids before they get into gangs. . . . Once they are caught up in the violent world of gang culture, they are, for the most part, lost forever" (1989).

Despite the fact that the field is lacking research on gang membership, studies exist which provide direction. Primary

research conducted in this area was done by John Johnstone (1983) and more recently by Esbensen et al. (1993). Johnstone (1983) addressed the issue of gang recruitment which examined how gangs recruit and how those adolescents who are recruited differ from those who are not. He noted that gang recruitment was impacted by three factors: community characteristics (geographic location); social and institutional attachments; and definitions of self. Esbensen's study in 1993, which centered around the Denver Youth Study, explored differences between gang and non-gang youth.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

School officials have become increasingly aware of the growing youth gang population as more adolescents are lured into gang membership. This research will explore the possibility that gang members have common characteristics. The questions that were the premise of the study are as follows: 1) Are there similar characteristics present in the majority of known or identified gang members in the Lansing School District? 2) Do these characteristics parallel those characteristics noted in the literature published? 3) If there are similarities, can a profile be developed to be used as an assessment tool to identify at-risk youth?

This research examines existing demographic and behavioral data made available by the Lansing Public School District Department of Public Safety. The study was broken down into three components. First, data on 105 gang-involved students was collected according to the four variables chosen by the researcher. The 105 students were chosen based on the Department of Public Safety's records on students whom they had identified as gang-involved. Second, that data was examined for commonalities or patterns from which a profile was devised. Lastly, the researcher turned to professional

literature to compare the profile with published gang research. It is presumed that the conclusions can be used to develop gang prevention and intervention programs.

Method

The researcher chose to examine the following characteristics in order to determine if commonalities existed in the 105 subjects:

1) Personal Characteristics

a) sex

1) female

2) male

b) age

c) race

1) Caucasian

2) African-American

3) Asian

4) Latino/Hispanic

5) other

2) Family Background

a) parental status

1) single parent family

a) living with mother

b) living with father

2) living with two parents

a) natural parents

b) one natural parent and one stepparent

3) living with a guardian

4) other

b) parental occupation

1) unemployed

2) unskilled labor

3) skilled labor

4) homemaker

5) unknown

c) parental education

1) completed elementary school

2) completed middle school

3) attended high school

4) graduated from high school

5) attended college

6) graduated from college

- 7) post graduate
- 8) unknown
- d) sibling gang involvement
- 3) School History
 - a) school incident reports
 - b) school status
 - 1) still enrolled
 - 2) dropped out
 - 3) graduated
 - 4) transferred
 - a) in from another district
 - b) out to another district
- 4) Geographic Location

The existing data consists of student records of individuals who were and are currently enrolled in the Lansing Public School District who have been identified by the Lansing School District Department of Public Safety to be gang-involved. To be identified as gang-involved, the student must exhibit at least two of the following characteristics:

- having gang tattoos;
- wearing gang garb including clothing of a certain color, types of clothing, head coverings or specific methods of grooming;
- displaying gang symbols or markings on personal property;
- possessing literature that indicates gang membership;
- admitting gang membership;
- being arrested with known gang members;
- attending gang functions or gang sponsored functions;
- identification of a youth as a gang member by a reliable informant;
- identification of a youth as a gang member by another law enforcement agency;
- exhibiting behavior fitting police profiles of gang related drug dealing;
- being stopped and identified by police while in the company of known gang members;
- loitering, riding or meeting with known gang members;

- selling or distributing drugs for a known gang member; and/or
- helping a known gang member commit a crime.

Strength of Gang Affiliation

A youth possessing one of these characteristics is known to the staff as a gang “wanna be.” These youths typically engage in “gang activity” in an attempt to be identified as a gang member but are not associated with any formally organized gang. A student who exhibits two to four characteristics is classified as an “associate/affiliate” member, meaning he is known to be a gang member and a strong likelihood exists that he will engage in illegal activity. If five or more characteristics are identified, the individual is then described as a hard-core gang member. The hard-core member is completely engulfed in the gang and may even be a leader.

This list of characteristics and the strength of gang affiliation are well-established criteria. These criteria have been used by the San Diego Sheriff’s Department for the past decade. The Lansing School District acknowledged this list of identifiers when they began their gang identification process less than a decade ago.

Once a school staff member has identified that a youth has exhibited at least two of the above-named characteristics, that student’s name is given to the Lansing School District’s Department of Public Safety (DPS). This begins a process of investigation to prove or disprove the suspicion of gang involvement. When the investigation ceases and there is enough information to determine that the student is gang-involved, his name is placed on a list of “identified gang members.”

Variables on personal characteristics, and the family characteristics, of identified gang-affiliated individuals were accessed through the Lansing Public School District DPS computer system. The information is provided by self report by each student at the beginning of each year. The information is coded and appears on one screen except for the sibling information. To obtain this additional information, to ascertain whether or not siblings had been involved in gang activity, it was necessary to look at the addresses and cross-check them to see if there were any matches. If matches existed and siblings were identified, background checks were done to determine if the sibling(s) had been identified as gang-involved while in school.

Variables on school history were collected in various stages. The school incident reports were retrieved using the DPS computer. Variables on school incident reports were collected through the Lansing School District's Student Services records. These records are stored downtown and are not computerized. The process consisted of going through each individual file and recording the information manually.

To evaluate the geographic location, addresses of the youth involved were collected and mapped on a Lansing city map.

In order to compare the profile that the researcher established to professional data, literature was reviewed extensively. In researching gang member characteristics or gang member profiles, little specific research was found. The researcher utilized articles written on the general topic of youth gangs starting in 1970 until 1996.

Limitations

The researcher was confronted with several limitations and obstacles with collecting original data. First, all records requested at the beginning of the study were not provided. Records included delinquent and criminal records, attendance records, and grades. Further information on disciplinary referrals was also requested but never received. Second, the study was limited by the fact that no records or any type of documentation are kept on the gang characteristics which lead to the students being "labeled" as gang members. Students must exhibit at least two of the fourteen above-named characteristics to be identified as a gang member, but, once school personnel ascertain that a student exhibits at least two of these above-named characteristics, those characteristics are not noted.

The student's name is given to the Lansing School District's Department of Public Safety so an investigation can be done to either prove or disprove the claim of the student's gang affiliation. The Department of Public Safety does not keep records of the characteristics the school security staff has identified the student as having which resulted in their name being put on a list to be investigated. Because of this, neither the researcher nor the Department of Public Safety can assess the strength of the student's gang affiliation. So, although the Department of Public Safety is defining strength of gang affiliation, it serves no purpose without proper documentation being kept or used.

Third, incident reports kept between the years 1989-1993 are recorded on microfiche, but the specific type of violation is not.

Therefore, the researcher can identify how many incidents the student was involved in, but cannot identify the behavior that occurred. Disciplinary reports requested were also not retrieved. These reports differ from incident reports in that these are addressed within the building where they occurred and the DPS does not become involved.

Lastly, the study was limited due to the fact that there was no comparison group. Only gang-identified cases were examined. Therefore, the only conclusions that can be made from the research are that the gang-identified youth do have common characteristics. But the question arises, do non-gang youth also possess these characteristics or are they exclusive to youth involved in gang activity?

The limitations encountered during this research hindered the wholeness of the study. The effects of these will be discussed further in Chapter Five under the section entitled Recommendations for Further Study.

Analysis

The data was analyzed by tabulating basic descriptive statistics. The choice was made to run descriptive statistics to demonstrate a summary of all of the demographic and behavioral data. By manipulating the data in this way, the researcher was able to draw conclusions that most accurately portray the ideas and purposes behind the research.

Confidentiality

Individual students' names were used for the purpose of collecting the data for all variable sets. After the data had been

recorded, the individuals' names were deleted from all records and case numbers 1-105 were assigned. The researcher never had contact with the individuals whose records were being used. The addresses of the individuals were also deleted when the mapping procedure had been completed. The map was not included as to not show where the location of the gang-involved youth.

Summary

This chapter contained an introduction to the collection methods used as well as the statistics to be used. The research question was restated so as to connect the purpose with the methods and the tabulation process. The results of this research are presented in Chapter IV: Results and Analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

Because of the emergence in gang activity within the school system, this research was designed to begin the process of identifying students who are gang members or at-risk of gang involvement or recruitment. The research was undertaken with three purposes: 1) to compile demographic and behavioral data on 105 students whom the Lansing School District Department of Public Safety had identified as gang involved; 2) to develop a profile of common characteristics found in the 105 cases; and 3) to review available research in an attempt to compare and validate this study's findings. The Lansing School District began this study in 1994 in an effort to begin prevention and intervention education programs.

The questions this research attempts to answer are: 1) Are there similar characteristics present in the majority of known or identified gang members in the Lansing School District? 2) Do these characteristics parallel those characteristics noted in literature published? 3) If there are similarities, can a profile be developed to be used as an assessment tool to identify at-risk youth?

The research will be organized by variable in simple tables. Each variable will be described and the created profile will be shown

and explained. From this the researcher will examine literature published on the subject to compare the results of this study to what has been found on a larger scale.

Variable Tabulations

Variable One- Personal Characteristics

The researcher found that of the 105 students, 89% were male and 11% were female. Of the 89% males, 15% were Caucasian, 69% were African-American, 14% were Hispanic/Latino, and 1% were Asian. Of the females, 92% were African-American and 8% were Hispanic/Latino. (Table 4.1).

As to ethnicity, 71% (75) were African-American, 13% (14) were Caucasian, 13% (14) were Hispanic/Latino, and 1% (1) were Asian, and 1% (1) were other.

Table 4.1 - Gender by Ethnicity

<u>Ethnicity</u>	Gender	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
White	15%	0%
Black	69%	91%
Asian	1%	0%
Hispanic/Latino	14%	8%
Other	1%	0%

At the time the study was initiated, the age of each student was calculated. Table 4.2 illustrates that 23% were 19, 20% were 20, 13% were 18, 15% were 21, 10% were 17, 7% were 16, 6% were 22, 6% were 23, and 1% were 15. Because no records were kept at the time gang-involvement was recognized, the age of possible initial involvement cannot be estimated.

Table 4.2 - Gang-Affiliated Individuals Projected Ages At the Beginning of the Study

<u>Age</u>	<u>Number of Cases</u>
15	1%
16	7%
17	10%
18	13%
19	23%
20	20%
21	15%
22	6%
23	6%

Variable Two- Family Background

When tabulating data on familial background, it was found that of the 105 cases, 66 cases came from a single parent family with 6 cases living with the father and 60 cases living with the mother. Seven cases lived with a guardian, 17 lived with both parents, and 7 with the mother and a step parent father.

Of the 60 single mothers, 33.3% graduated from high school, 28.3% attended high school but did not graduate, 18.3% attended college, 11.6% completed middle school, 1.6% completed elementary school, and 6.66% of the information was unavailable.

Thirty-three percent of the single parent fathers attended college, 33.3% graduated from high school, and 33.3% attended high school but did not graduate.

Of the youth who reported living with both parents, the research found that of the 17 families, 47% of mothers attended high school, 29% were high school graduates, 12% had attended college, 6% has completed elementary school, and 6% has post graduate education. Of the fathers, 41% were high school graduates, 24% had

attended high school, 12% had attended college, 12% was unknown, 6% had completed elementary school, and 6% had graduated from college.

Of the seven cases who lived with the mother and a step parent father, 57% of the mothers had graduated from high school, 14.3% had attended college, 14.3% has post graduate education, and 14.28% were unknown. Of the step parent fathers, 42.9% had graduated from high school, 42.9% were unknown, and 14.3% had attended high school.

Parental occupation was also explored. Of the 60 single parent mothers, 19 were homemakers, 15 were unemployed, 11 were nonskilled laborers, 1 was a skilled laborer, and 14 were unknown. Three single parent fathers were nonskilled laborers, 2 were skilled laborers, and the occupation of 1 was not known.

In two-parent families, 53% of the mothers were homemakers, 12% were nonskilled laborers, 6% were unemployed, and there were 29% of the cases where the mother's occupation was not known. Of the fathers in two-parent families, 29% were nonskilled laborers, 18% were skilled laborers, 12% were unemployed, and for 41% of the cases the information on the father's occupation was not available.

Almost 43% of the single parent mothers living with a step parent father were homemakers whereas, 29% were nonskilled laborers, 14% were unemployed, and information was not available for 14%. Occupations for the step parent father was as follows: 29% were involved with nonskilled labor, 14.3% were unemployed, and 57.1% of the step parent father's information was not available.

Sibling involvement in gangs was found to be prevalent in 25 of the 105 cases.

School History

At the time the study began, which was 1994, the school status on the 105 cases was as follows:

Still Enrolled	56	Dropped Out	24
Graduated	20	Transferred	5

Of the 24 students who dropped out, 3 were female and 21 were male. Of the 56 students who were still enrolled, 11 were involved in a jail program, 2 attended school through the Camp Highfields program, and 2 were court-ordered. Sixty-nine of the 105 students were enrolled in adult education and 12 attended the regular high school, while the rest were considered dropouts.

Using this data at the beginning of the study, it is projected that the students would graduate in the following years:

Table 4.3 - Table of Projected Graduation

<u>Year of Graduation</u>	<u>Number of Cases</u>
1990	3
1991	5
1992	13
1993	12
1994	26
1995	17
1996	16
1997	6
1998	7

Incident reports that were recorded on computer released the following results:

Table 4.4 - Incident Reports Per Offense

OFFENSE	NUMBER OF INCIDENTS
Weapon Firearm	5
Trespassing	13 with 1 student having 2 offenses
Simple Assault	12
Insubordination	1
Controlled Substance- Marijuana	3 with 1 student having 2 offenses
Possession of a Pager	3
Suspicious Activity	5
Assault and Battery	10 with 2 students having 2 offenses
Indecent Exposure	2 with 1 student having 2 offenses
Criminal Sexual Conduct	1
Felonious Assault with a Weapon	4
Traffic Accident	1
Fighting	1
Traffic Problems	1
Breaking and Entering- Building	1
Malicious Destruction of Property-Structures/Equipment	3
Disorderly Conduct	4
Injury to a Student	1
Malicious Destruction of Property-Glass	2 with 1 student with 2 offenses
Weapon Possession-Knife	2
Larceny over \$100	1
Larceny from an auto	1
Aggravated Assault	2
Abusive Language	1
Weapon Possession-Other	1
Recovery	1
Other	5
Not Available	25

Fifty-two of these incidents occurred on the grounds of a high school, 14 occurred on an alternative school ground such as the alternative education center, the service center, or the vocational building, 21 of the incidents occurred at a middle school, and 5 incidents occurred at an elementary school.

Of the incident reports that were collected from the microfiche, 121 incidents occurred in 1989-1990, 80 incidents in 1990-1991, 96 incidents 1991-1992, and 59 incidents in 1992-1993.

With this information, a profile of the most common characteristics was formulated. To be considered a factor, the characteristic must appear in more than 75% of the cases within that category. The following list is the result.

- 1) Male
- 2) African-American
- 3) Living with a Single Parent Mother
- 4) Has at least 2 school incidents
- 5) Parent is a High School Graduate or Less
- 6) Single Parent Mother is a Homemaker
- 7) Geographic Location is not significant

Comparison to Literature Published

Personal Characteristics

Sex

As with many of the early studies, (Thrasher, 1927; Cohen, 1957) females were excluded from gang research and focus was placed on the male adolescent groups. Today's literature provides a

much different content and scope as researchers reveal that females are in fact gang participants.

Klein was one of the first in his period to state that females do partake in gang activity. He stated that female gangs start off with members who are sisters or girlfriends of male gang members (1971). Fagan's (1990) study revealed that thirty-three percent of gang membership was female. One year later in 1991, Campbell's research also reported that approximately ten percent of gang members in New York City were female and that female membership could be as high as thirty-three percent in one gang. The Denver Youth Study in its fourth year, 1991, claimed female gang population made up twenty percent of the gang population. The study also concluded that for the entire four years of the study, female gang membership constituted between twenty and forty-six percent of membership. According to the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention (1994), male gang members outnumbered females by twenty to one but half or more of these gangs may have female affiliates.

Female gang affiliation was not a factor in the 105 cases studied. Only 12 (11%) of the gang-identified youth were female. The majority, 89%, were male.

A g e

James R. Lasley (1992), whose research explored the extent to which street gangs are the domain of youth or adulthood, stated that research has been done on the relationship between age and crime but little has been conducted on the connection between age and gang membership. The study found the "all things considered, the

final conclusion that must be drawn here is that street gangs are still very much youth gangs." Data from the Denver Youth Study acknowledges that youth gang membership does appear to be connected to age. Results reveal that among the gang members in year four, 1991, nine percent were twelve years old, thirty-five percent were fourteen years old, thirty-one percent were sixteen years old, and twenty-six percent were eighteen years old (Esbensen, Huizinga, & Weiher, 1993). Klein (1971) found that youth enter gangs in their post-pubescent stage and withdrawal from gang activity as they approach the age of eighteen. Miller's research in 1982 had comparable results stating that gang members ranged from ages ten to twenty-one but that the peak age was approximately seventeen.

Age was difficult to access in this study. Age was determined at the beginning of the study but, due to lack of information on initial gang involvement or identification, it could not be determined if age was a relevant factor.

Ethnicity

Gangs appear to be spread across all cultural and ethnic categories: African-American, Caucasian, Latino/Hispanic, and Asian. When gangs were changing in the 1970s, ethnic composition was changing as well. It was reported that four-fifths of all gang members were either African-American or Hispanic, but during this time, there was a rise in Asian gangs (Miller, 1982). Curry and Spergel (1992), state that gang involvement and delinquency among Hispanic adolescents may be associated with intrapersonal factors such as self-esteem and educational frustration. Whereas, they claim

that African-American youth gang involvement is related to social and interpersonal variables such as exposure to gang members in the school or at home. Curry and colleagues also revealed, in research published in 1993, that among twenty-six large city police jurisdictions, gang membership had the following composition: four percent were Caucasian, forty-seven percent were African-American, forty-three percent were Hispanic, and six percent were Asian. Data also documented a growth of sixty-two percent of Caucasian gang members between the years of 1990 and 1991.

The literature validates the fact that a variety of ethnic backgrounds are represented in gang identified youth. African-American descent had the highest percentage in both males and females in this study.

Family Background

Parental Status

"Family structure descriptions have generated the largest amount of research on correlates of delinquency" (Wells & Rankin, 1991). These studies have included variables such as family size, economic status, and neighborhood. Today, the search for a correlation continues. "Statistics suggest that in the United States, boys in families headed by women are at risk for delinquency and criminal behavior, but far less information is available on girls" (Steinberg as cited in Earls & Reiss, 1994).

Every year since the second World War, large numbers of women have joined the work force, which has had important implication for the organization and management of the family.

Bowker & Klein's 1983 research found, although the correlations were low, that when compared with nongang members, gang involved youth came from larger families, lived with a single parent, and the breadwinner was neither a father nor a step father. The parents of gang members were also less likely to have completed a formal education.

Many research efforts have made the connection between gang membership and parental status. Johnstone (1983) found that in the cases where the father was present in the youth's life, there were significantly more uninvolved youth who were gang members. He also found that the female-headed households were much more likely to be targets of gang recruiting activity. Comparable results from the Denver Youth Study found that 47% of gang members come from homes headed by single parents (Esbensen, 1993). Burke (1991) cited a Chicago Tribune article (1990) which stated that children living in homes headed by single parents or in families which included one step parent were two to three times more likely to have behavioral and emotional problems. Alvin Wang's (1994) regression analysis showed that the best indicator for gang membership was the absence of parental or teacher role models. The Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency prevention (1994) stated that family disorganization, including single-parent families or conflict existing between parents, does not as such predict gang membership. It is necessary to have a variety of other variables accompanying weak family structure to impact gang activity within the youth. The OJJDP further acknowledges that adolescents reared in homes where conditions are high for social deprivation are drawn to gangs because

the gang is seen as an extension of the family. The National Youth Survey and the National Longitudinal Survey of youth look at Sibling gang activity and include youth aged 11-17 and 14-21, respectively. The Arizona Sibling Study's data looks at pairs of birth-order adjacent adolescent siblings ages 10 to 16. These studies report an overall finding suggesting sibling involvement and delinquency to be correlated (cited in Lauritsen, 1993).

Of the 105 cases studied, 66 cases came from a single parent family with 60 of those cases living with the mother. Of those single parent mothers, only 33% had a high school diploma. Sibling gang involvement was not a relevant factor.

School History

Gangs and school history has not been extensively studied. The studies which do entertain the notion that gang behavior and school history is related agree on common premises.

Johnstone (1983) found that gang members exhibit a considerably lower level of school adjustment than youths not involved in a gang. This was shown again in Wang's research in 1994. The research stated that both African-American and White gang members possessed lower levels of self-esteem when compared to their classmates. These findings support Kaplan's (cited in Wang, 1994) theory of self-esteem motivation which states that individuals with negative self attitudes are prompted to engage in negative or deviant behavior patterns. Finally, the OJJDP (1994) states that a gang member is more likely to have done poorly in school and has little if any identification with school staff. In Klein's study of gangs in California, he found that most members were either school

dropouts, had been kicked out, or were truant. On an observational basis, he found that research differed between Mexican and African-American gang members in terms of school attendance. Observation showed that the dropout rate was higher among the Mexican students (1971). Bowker and Klein, in 1983, found that gang members were less likely to complete high school or to attend college.

This study showed, at the time the study began, that a majority (56) of the gang-identified youth were currently enrolled. Also at that time, 24 youth had dropped out. School behavior indicated that, on the average, each student had two incident reports on file.

Violence within the School

With gang members attending school, violence within the school is an issue that is bound to be apparent. Research conducted by Phi Delta Kappa (1994) revealed in a Gallup Poll Survey that 18% of those surveyed considered fighting/violence/gangs to be the major problem within the schools. This percentage was up five percent from the previous year, had increased 11% since 1992, and had increased a full 15% since the survey had been conducted in 1991. Seventy-two percent of those persons surveyed stated that the cause for the increase in violence was due to growth of gangs second only to the 78% who responded that the increase in the use of drugs and alcohol was the main cause of violence among school-age children. Seventy-two percent also stated that the increase in violence was due to the availability of weapons. Burke (1991) revealed that in a Bay area high school near San Francisco, school officials found 62 guns during a locker search.

Contrary to this, the OJJDP (1994) suggests that gang violence does not occur in schools, although, gangs do recruit and may plan gang activities which may occur on school property after school is dismissed. The National Institute of Justice funded a study entitled, *Weapon-Related Victimization in Selected Inner-City High School Samples*. The study reported that "one in five inner-city students surveyed (1 of 3 males) had been shot at, stabbed, or otherwise injured with a weapon at or in the transit to or from school." Within the school, two-thirds knew of someone who carried a weapon while in school. Another two-thirds said they knew someone who had been stabbed, shot at, or assaulted in another manner while in school (1995). Douglas Clay and Frank Aquila attest that "school administrators, teachers, parents, and police officers may in fact be overreacting to the gang problem." Their nonresearch article suggests that the gang problem may just be a "1990's version of the hula hoop or the pet rock" and that "we should avoid confusing pop culture with criminal intent (1994).

Geographic Location

John Hagedorn, in his book, *People and Folks*, (1988) which is based on his research of Milwaukee gangs, reveals that there is a relationship between gangs and neighborhood and neighborhoods and ethnicity. Johnstone (1983) agrees stating that to be recruited by a street gang, the youth must live in the same locale where the gang exists. He also states that opportunities for gang membership are higher in urban communities that are socially as well as economically depressed. Klein's 1967 research said the structure of

the gang can be traced back to age, residence, patterns, common school attendance, and proximity to accepted hang-outs.

After mapping each address on a Lansing city map, it was found that no conclusive results could be drawn regarding geographic location.

Profile Review

Of the few research articles or handouts that discuss gang members, few have profiled gang characteristics. Two that do are compared. The Department of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms attests that a member will be male, a poor student, in trouble with the police, from a single parent family, maybe a victim of abuse or neglect, have negative role models, be street wise, aggressive and hostile and be interested in power, and not fit into other groups.

In research done in 1975, Friedman and associates found that the most powerful characteristic was a "high proclivity for violence." Other factors included, more arrests, truancy, alcohol abuse, and lack of connection to their mother.

In comparison, this research found members to: be predominantly male and of African-American descent, come from single parent homes reared by mothers with little education, and have school-related problems.

Conclusion

Upon comparing this study's results to published literature on the preceding pages, it was identified that gang characteristics were similar. Therefore, this study's findings were validated when compared on a larger scale. The fact that an adolescent exhibits gang characteristics does not necessarily signify gang membership or

possible recruitment. This profile of characteristics is an attempt to identify possible risk factors associated with gang membership to aid school officials in their overall attempt to understand which youth are most vulnerable to gang membership or recruitment. This information is helpful in planning educational prevention and intervention programs for students, staff, and parents.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

Introduction

As the youth gang population continues to rise, it is imperative that schools become involved in the prevention and intervention process. This research was undertaken in conjunction with the Lansing School District Department of Public Safety. The purpose behind this study was to develop a profile of characteristics of known gang members in an attempt to clarify more accurately those variables common in identified gang members. Questions answered included: By examining demographic and behavioral data on identified gang members, could there be common characteristics? Do gang involved youth come from similar family backgrounds? Do gang members live in a particular area of the city? Do gang-involved youth have similar scholastic issues?

After collecting demographic and behavioral data on 105 gang identified youth, the researcher examined the data for commonalities. The following characteristics were found to be common in a majority of the cases. Almost 90% were male, 71% were of African-American decent, 63% lived with a single parent with 57% living with a single parent mother.

From this profile, the researcher compared professional literature concerning youth gangs with what the researcher found. The comparison resulted in a validation of what the researcher found in this study.

Conclusions

Published research revealed many different perceptions of youth gangs in terms of definition, concept, and theory. Much emphasis is placed on gangs as a group with little research concentrating on gang members as individuals. Historically, gangs have been studied as a group phenomenon; but the whole is only the sum of its parts, meaning we need to examine individual gang members. Therefore, gangs need to be broken down in an attempt to understand what youth are most susceptible to gang recruitment and involvement. It was concluded that similarities do exist in identified gang members.

Recommendations for Further Study

Research of this type, looking at gang members as individuals, is pertinent to further our understanding of the youth gang phenomenon. For future studies, it is necessary to examine demographic and behavioral data more intently. Much of the data requested for this study was not made available. It would be beneficial to collect attendance records, grades, as well as delinquent and criminal records. This information could provide the profile with more specific behavioral data. This would be beneficial to school staff when preparing intervention and prevention programs.

It would also be necessary to compare gang-identified youth to youth not identified as gang involved. This study only looked at 105

cases which were previously identified as being gang involved. There was no group to compare this group to which limited the study. Therefore, in order to pinpoint characteristics of gang-involved youth, it would be vital to differentiate between gang and non-gang youth.

To aid further research within the Lansing School District concerning gang members, record keeping by the Department of Public Safety must be systematically kept. Much of the information, such as strength of gang affiliation and classification, is not recorded. This severely limits research. If the school district is intent on making gang prevention and intervention programs a priority, records must be kept in an organized manner.

Implications for Practice

This research is only the first step in a process to profile gang involved youth. This profile needs to be used by the school district as a starting point in developing prevention and intervention programs as well as developing a system which can identify youth who may be at-risk. At this time, the profile is vague but provides the beginning to a long process. A more in-depth examination into the similarities seen in gang-identified youth would be critical in order to further this research and give the profile dimension. What the research currently provides is an answer to the question: Do gang-involved youth have common characteristics? The answer is, yes.

Education plays a vital role. School officials must take the opportunity to reach the youth of today early and educate them on the many facets involved with gangs. Prevention and intervention

programs must reach all students, teachers, and parents in order to begin combating the gang problem that continues to rise.

“The expansion of gang influence in our schools has reached a point where it threatens the educational mission. With rival gangs adopting school property as “turf”, commentators have compared the territorialization within schools to that which occurs in prison courtyard” (Janens as cited in Maloney, 1991).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A



February 10, 1995

Michelle May
School of Criminal Justice
Baker Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824

Dear Ms May:

This letter will authorize you to conduct a research project in conjunction with the Lansing School District's Department of Public Safety regarding youth gang activity within the Lansing School District. I understand that this research is a part of your graduate degree program and will result in a thesis on this topic. I request that you provide a final copy of your thesis to the Department of Public Safety.

This letter will also authorize the release of confidential information to you in connection with your research project. Any and all identities of students or their records must be kept as confidential. In addition, no students may be identified by name in your final thesis.

Your contact person for this research project will be John Grant, Public Safety Supervisor. He will assist you in accessing any records needed for your research.

Good luck with your endeavors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Lee Mason'.

Lee Mason
Deputy Superintendent for Support Services

Deputy Superintendent for Support Services
519 West Kalamazoo Street
Lansing, MI 48933

An Equal Opportunity District

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

SUBJECT PROFILE

CASE	RACE	AGE	GENDER	YEAR GRAD	PARENT STATUS	PARENT OCCUP	PARENT EDUCATION
A	AA	17	F	98	FATHER	NSLABOR	AC
B	AA	18	M	96	MOM	UNEM	HS
C	AA	17	F	96	BOTH	F=N/A M=HM	F=HSG M=HS
D	AA	18	M	94	MOM	UNEM	HS
E	AA	21	M	92	MOM	UNEM	HSG
F	AA	20	F	92	MOM	N/A	AC
G	AA	18	M	96	MOM	N/A	HSG
H	AA	23	M	91	N/A	N/A	N/A
I	AA	19	M	94	BOTH	F=NSL M=HM	F=HSG M=HSG
J	AA	23	M	90	N/A	N/A	N/A
K	AA	21	M	94	STF	STF=UME M=NSL	STF=HS M=HSG
L	AA	19	M	96	MOM	UNEM	ELEM
M	AA	17	M	96	STF	STF=N/A M=HM	STF=HSG M=PSTG
N	C	20	M	93	MOM	UNEM	AC
O	C	23	M	93	N/A	N/A	N/A
P	C	16	M	97	MOM	SL	AC
Q	L/H	20	M	94	MOM	UNEM	HS
R	AA	20	M	94	MOM	UNEM	HSG
S	L/H	20	M	94	FATHER	NSL	HS
T	C	18	M	96	MOM	NSL	HSG
U	AA	20	M	92	MOM	N/A	AC
V	L/H	19	M	94	N/A	N/A	N/A
W	AA	20	M	94	MOM	UNEM	HS
X	AA	21	M	92	MOM	UNEM	AC
Y	AA	18	M	95	MOM	HM	HSG
Z	C	21	M	92	MOM	N/A	AC
A1	AA	16	F	98	MOM	NSL	HSG
B1	AA	19	M	93	GUARDIAN	MS	NSL
C1	AA	19	M	93	MOM	N/A	HSG
D1	AA	18	M	96	BOTH	F=UNEM M=UNEM	F=HS M=HS
E1	AA	20	M	92	MOM	N/A	N/A
F1	AA	21	M	93	MOM	NSL	HSG
G1	AA	16	M	98	MOM	UNEM	HS
H1	AA	19	M	95	MOM	UNEM	HS
I1	AA	22	M	91	BOTH	F=SL M=HM	F=HS M=AC
J1	AA	18	F	95	MOM	NSL	HS
K1	L/H	20	M	94	BOTH	F=NSL M=HM	F=HSG M=HS
L1	L/H	16	M	98	BOTH	F=NSL M=HM	F=HSG M=HS
M1	L/H	21	M	94	MOM	NSL	HS

APPENDIX B

CASE	RACE	AGE	GENDER	YEAR GRAD	PARENT STATUS	PARENT OCCUP	PARENT EDUCATION
N1	A	20	M	95	BOTH	F=N/A M=N/A	F=HS M=HS
O1	AA	16	F	97	BOTH	F=SL M=HM	F=HSG M=HS
P1	AA	20	M	94	STF	STF=NSL M=HM	STF=HSG M=HSG
Q1	AA	21	M	93	MOM	N/A	MS
R1	AA	17	M	97	MOM	N/A	HSG
S1	AA	19	M	95	MOM	HM	MS
T1	AA	18	M	95	MOM	HM	MS
U1	AA	19	M	94	MOM	HM	HSG
V1	C	21	M	93	MOM	UNEM	HSG
W1	AA	23	M	90	MOM	N/A	N/A
X1	L/H	19	M	95	GUARDIAN	N/A	N/A
Y1	C	18	M	96	BOTH	F= NSL M=NSL	F=CG M=AC
Z1	AA	19	M	95	MOM	HM	HS
A2	AA	17	F	97	MOM	HM	AC
B2	AA	20	M	94	MOM	UNEM	HS
C2	AA	23	M	92	MOM	HM	AC
D2	AA	19	M	96	N/A	N/A	N/A
E1	C	19	M	96	BOTH	F=NSL M=HM	F=HSG M=HSG
F2	AA	21	M	92	N/A	N/A	N/A
G2	AA	23	M	90	BOTH	N/A	F=HS M=HS
H2	AA	19	M	94	MOM	HM	HSG
I2	C	20	M	93	BOTH	F=N/A M=N/A	F=N/A M=HSG
J2	AA	19	M	95	BOTH	F=N/A M=N/A	F=AC M=PSTG
K2	AA	21	M	94	MOM	HM	AC
L2	L/H	20	M	93	MOM	HM	HS
M2	L/H	20	M	94	STF	STF=N/A M=N/A	STF=N/A M=N/A
N2	L/H	19	M	94	BOTH	F= NSL M=HM	F= ELEM M=ELEM
O2	AA	20	M	94	MOM	HM	MS
P2	AA	15	F	98	GUARDIAN	N/A	N/A
Q2	AA	17	M	97	MOM	HM	HSG
R2	AA	19	M	94	GUARDIAN	SL	AC
S2	AA	21	M	92	FATHER	SL	HS
T2	AA	16	F	97	MOM	N/A	N/A
U2	C	18	M	96	BOTH	F= UNEM M=NSL	F=HSG M=HSG
V2	AA	19	M	95	BOTH	F= N/A M=HM	F= N/A M=HS
W2	AA	22	M	91	N/A	N/A	N/A
X2	C	22	M	92	N/A	N/A	N/A
Y2	AA	21	M	91	MOM	N/A	HS
Z2	AA	20	M	95	GUARDIAN	HM	HS
A3	C	18	M	95	FATHER	NSL	HSG

APPENDIX B

CASE	RACE	AGE	GENDER	YEAR GRAD	PARENT STATUS	PARENT OCCUP	PARENT EDUCATION
B3	L/H	22	M	93	MOM	UNEM	HS
C3	L/H	20	M	94	MOM	NSL	MS
D3	AA	17	M	96	MOM	NSL	HSG
E3	C	19	M	95	FATHER	SL	AC
F3	AA	17	M	96	MOM	NSL	HSG
G3	AA	18	F	96	MOM	UNEM	HS
H3	AA	16	F	98	MOM	UNEM	HS
I3	AA	19	M	94	MOM	HM	AC
J3	AA	21	M	93	MOM	N/A	HS
K3	AA	17	M	96	MOM	N/A	N/A
L3	AA	19	M	95	MOM	HM	HSG
M3	C	18	M	95	BOTH	F= N/A M=N/A	F=AC M=HSG
N3	AA	22	M	94	MOM	N/A	MS
O3	AA	19	M	94	GUARDIAN	SL	AC
P3	AA	20	M	94	MOM	NSL	HSG
Q3	AA	19	M	95	STF	STF=N/A M=HM	STF=N/A M=HSG
R3	AA	21	M	93	STF	STF=NSL M=NSL	STF=HSG M=HSG
S3	L/H	18	M	96	GUARDIAN	SL	AC
T3	AA	21	M	91	FATHER	N/A	HSG
U3	AA	21	M	94	MOM	HM	HS
V3	AA	20	M	92	MOM	NSL	AC
W3	AA	16	M	98	MOM	HM	HS
X3	AA	19	M	93	STF	STF=N/A M=UNEM	STF= N/A M=AC
Y3	L/H	20	F	95	MOM	HM	HSG
Z3	AA	19	M	94	MOM	HM	MS
A3	NA	22	M	92	MOM	NSL	HS

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

November 15, 1995

TO: Michelle May
560 Baker Hall

RE: IRB#: 95-586
TITLE: A DESCRIPTIVE PROFILE OF YOUTH GANG MEMBERS IN
THE LANSING SCHOOL SYSTEM
REVISION REQUESTED: N/A
CATEGORY: 2-H
APPROVAL DATE: 11/15/95

The University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects' (UCRIHS) review of this project is complete. I am pleased to advise that the rights and welfare of the human subjects appear to be adequately protected and methods to obtain informed consent are appropriate. Therefore, the UCRIHS approved this project and any revisions listed above.

RENEWAL: UCRIHS approval is valid for one calendar year, beginning with the approval date shown above. Investigators planning to continue a project beyond one year must use the green renewal form (enclosed with the original approval letter or when a project is renewed) to seek updated certification. There is a maximum of four such expedited renewals possible. Investigators wishing to continue a project beyond that time need to submit it again for complete review.

REVISIONS: UCRIHS must review any changes in procedures involving human subjects, prior to initiation of the change. If this is done at the time of renewal, please use the green renewal form. To revise an approved protocol at any other time during the year, send your written request to the UCRIHS Chair, requesting revised approval and referencing the project's IRB # and title. Include in your request a description of the change and any revised instruments, consent forms or advertisements that are applicable.



**OFFICE OF
RESEARCH
AND
GRADUATE
STUDIES**

**University Committee on
Research Involving
Human Subjects
(UCRIHS)**

Michigan State University
232 Administration Building
East Lansing, Michigan
48824-1046

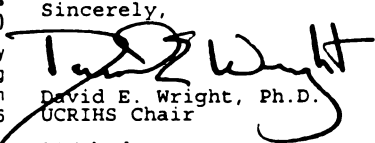
517/355-2180
FAX 517/432-1171

**PROBLEMS/
CHANGES:**

Should either of the following arise during the course of the work, investigators must notify UCRIHS promptly: (1) problems (unexpected side effects, complaints, etc.) involving human subjects or (2) changes in the research environment or new information indicating greater risk to the human subjects than existed when the protocol was previously reviewed and approved.

If we can be of any future help, please do not hesitate to contact us at (517)355-2180 or FAX (517)432-1171.

Sincerely,


David E. Wright, Ph.D.
UCRIHS Chair

DEW:bed

cc: Kenneth E. Christian

*The Michigan State University
IDEA is institutional Diversity.
Excellence in Action*

*MSU is an affirmative-action,
equal-opportunity institution*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bibliography

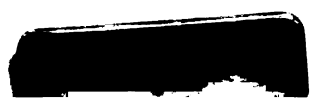
- Ball, R.A., & Curry, G.D. (1995). The logic of definition in criminology: purposes & methods for defining gangs. *Criminology*, 33(2), 225-245.
- Bartollas, C. (1993). *Juvenile Delinquency* (3rd ed.) New York: The MacMillan Company.
- Bastian, L.D., & Taylor, B.M. (1991). *School crime: a national crime victimization survey report*. (NCJ-131645). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice.
- Bookin-Weiner, H., & Horowitz, R. (1983). The end of the youth gang. *Criminology*, 21(4), 585-602.
- Bowker, L.H., & Klein, M.W. (1983). The etiology of female juvenile delinquency and gang membership: a test of psychological and social structural explanations. *Adolescence*, 18(72), 739-751.
- Bryant, D. (1989). *Community responses crucial for dealing with youth gangs*. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Burke, J. (1991). Teenagers, clothes, and gang violence. *Educational Leadership*, 49, 11-13.
- Callahan, P. (1995, March 31). Beliefs on divorce challenged in study: breakups blamed for kids' social ills. *Chicago Tribune*, p.6.
- Clay, D., & Aquila F. (1994). Spitting the lit'-fact or fad? gangs and America's schools. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 65-68.
- Cloward, R.A., & Ohlin, L.E. (1960). *Delinquency & Opportunity: A theory of delinquent gangs*. Glencoe: Free Press.
- Cohen, A. (1955). *The culture of the gang*. Glencoe: Free Press.

- Cromwell, P., Taylor, D., & Palacios, W. (1992). Youth gangs: a 1990s perspective. *Juvenile & Family Court Journal*, 43(3), 25-31.
- Curry, G.D., & Spergel, I.A. (1992). Gang involvement & delinquency among hispanic & African-American adolescent males. *Journal of Research in Crime & Delinquency*, 29(3), 273-291.
- Curry, G.D., Ball, R.A., & Fox, R.J. (1994). *Gang crime and law enforcement recordkeeping*. National Institute of Justice,. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice.
- Earls & Reiss (1994)
- Elam, S.M., Lowell, C.R., & Gallup, A.M. (Eds.). (September, 1994). Gallup poll of the public's attitudes toward the public schools. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 42-56.
- Esbensen, F., & Huizinga, D. (1993). Gangs, drugs, and delinquency in a survey of urban youth. *Criminology*, 31(4), 565-587.
- Esbensen, F., Huizinga, D., & Weiher, A.W. (1993). Gang and non-gang youth: differences in explanatory factors. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 9(2), 94-109.
- Fagan, J. (1990). *Social processes of delinquency and drug use among urban gangs*. In C. Ronald Huff (ed.), *Gangs in America*. Newbury Park, California: Sage.
- Fagan, J. (1989). The social organization of drug use & drug dealing among urban gangs. *Criminology*, 27 (4), 633-667.
- Friedman, C.J., Mann, F., Friedman, A.S. (1975). A profile of juvenile street gang members. *Adolescence*, 10(40), 561-606.
- Gaustad, J. (1990). *Gangs*. Eric Digest Series, (No. EA 52).)
- Goldstein, A.P., & Huff, R. (1993). *The gang intervention handbook*. Champaign: Research Press.
- Hagedorn, J. (1988). *People and Folks: Gangs, crime & the underclass in a rustbelt city*. Chicago: Lakeview Press.

- Hardman, D. (1967). Historical perspectives on gang research. *Journal of Reserach in Crime & Delinquency*, 4, 5-27.
- Hirschi, T. (1969). *Causes of delinquency*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Howell, J.C. (1994). Recent gang research: program policy implications. *Crime and Delinquency*, 40(4), 495-515.
- Howell, J.C. (1994). *Gangs*. Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention. Fact Sheet #12.
- Johnstone, J.W. (1983). Recruitment to a youth gang. *Youth and Society*, 14(3), 281-300.
- Klein, M.W. (1967). Factors related to juvenile gang membership patterns. *Sociology & Social Research*, 51, 49-62.
- Klein, M., & Crawford L.Y. (1967). Groups, gangs & cohesiveness. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 4, 63-75.
- Klein, M.W., Maxson, C.L., and Cunningham, L.C. (1991). "Crack, street gangs and violence. *Criminology*, 29(4), 623-649.
- Lasley, J.R. (1992). Age, social context, and street gang membership: are "youth" gangs becoming "adult" gangs? *Youth & Society*, 23(4), 434-451.
- Lauritsen, J.L. (1993). Sibling resemblance in juvenile delinquency: findings from the national youth survey. *Criminology*, 31(3), 387-408.
- Maloney, J.A. (1991). Constitutional problems surrounding implementation of "anti-gang" regulations in the public schools. *Marquette Law Review*, 75(179), 179-205.
- Maxson, C.L., Gordon, M.A., Klein, M.W. (1985). Differences between gang and nongang homicides. *Criminology*, 3, 209-222.
- McHenry, D., & Jackson, G. (Producers), & Van Peebles, M. (Director). (1991). *New Jack City* [Film]. Warner Brothers.

- Morash, M. (1983). Gangs, groups and delinquency. *British Journal of Criminology*, 23(3), 309-335.
- National Crime Prevention Council (1993). *Building gang prevention bridges to parents & families*, Washington, D.C.
- National School Safety Center News Service (1991). *School Safety Update: Gang membership crosses cultural, geographic bounds*, 1-3.
- Nicolaides, S. (Producer), & Singleton, J. (Director). (1991). *Boyz in the Hood* [Film]. Columbia Tri-Star.
- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (1994). *Gang suppression & intervention: problem & response research summary*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice.
- O'Hagan, F.J. (1975). Gang Characteristics: An Empirical Study. *Journal of Child Psychologists and Psychiatrists*, 17, 305-314.
- Shakur, S. (1993). *Monster*. New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press.
- Shaw C.R., & McKay, H.D. (1942). *Juvenile delinquency & urban areas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Short, J. (1968). *Gang delinquency & delinquent subcultures*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Sibley, J.B. (1989). Gang violence: response of the criminal justice system to the growing threat. *Criminal Justice Journal*, 11, 403-422.
- Stover, D. (1987). Dealing with youth gangs in the schools. *The Education Digest*, 30-33.
- Taylor, C.S. (1990). *Dangerous Society*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press.
- Thornberry, T.P., Krohn, M.D., Lizotte, A.J., Chard-Wierschern, D. (1993). The role of juvenile gangs in facilitating delinquent behavior. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 30(1), 55-87.

- Thrasher, F. (1927). *The gang: a study of 1,313 gangs in Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Department of the Treasury, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms (1992). *Gangs, guns, drugs...had enough?*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Wang, A. (1994). Pride & prejudice in high school gang members. *Adolescence*, 29(114), 279-291.
- Wells, L.E., & Rankin, J.H. (1991). Families & delinquency: a meta-analysis of the impact of broken homes. *Social Problems*, 38(1), 71-89.
- West Side Story (Producer) & Wise, R., & Robbins, J. (Directors). (1958.) [Film]. United Artists Corporation. Voyager Company.
- Whyte, W.F. (1943). *Street Corner Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Yablonsky, L. (1962). *The Violent Gang*. New York: The MacMillan Company.
- Yablonsky, L. (1959). The Delinquent Gangs as a Near-Group. *Social Problems*, 7, 108-117.



MICHIGAN STATE UNIV. LIBRARIES



31293017074265