

**Community Organization.**

This strategy refers to efforts to enhance, modify, or change relationships among different groups and organizations within a city to better cope with various problems. The researchers found that respondents in the areas surveyed used such terms as *networking* to refer to this specific strategy. Essentially, such a strategy involves cooperation among the community organizations, to take advantage of the various skills and knowledge such groups have and to try to avoid duplication of services. It is an attempt to combine all available resources to solve a community problem involving all citizens, not just those directly affected.

Spergel and Curry identified such specific strategies as mobilizing the community, building community trust, educating the community, involving the schools, and involving parent groups in community programs.

**Social Intervention.**

Within this category are some very common methods that have been used for many years to deal with youth and related problems. They include the very popular (and, incidentally, not very successful) strategies of youth outreach and street-work counseling. This general strategy has been defined as follows: "It is the systematic effort of an agency worker, through social work or treatment techniques within the neighborhood context, to help a group of young people who are described as delinquent or potentially delinquent to achieve a conventional adaptation" (Spergel and Curry, 1990: 295).

Social intervention is much broader in scope than the traditional youth outreach efforts. Among the more common strategies identified by the respondents to the survey by Spergel and Curry included the following: crisis intervention, providing role models for youths, inter-gang mediation, referrals for services, counseling of gang members, drug-use prevention and treatment, helping members leave the gang, and more general diversion and outreach activities. The general goal of social intervention is "to change the values of youths in such a way as to make gang involvement less likely" (Spergel and Curry, 1990: 296).

**Opportunities Provision.**

This strategy is an attempt to provide jobs, job training, and education, particularly for the most at-risk youths. Within this category, Spergel and Curry found "efforts to stimulate the development of new and improved schools, special training, job programs, and business and industry involvement in the social and economic advancement of people, including and targeting gang youth" (Spergel and Curry, 1990: 297). More-specific strategies include helping prepare youths to enter the job market (e.g., teaching interviewing skills and how to write a resume), job training, placement of youths in jobs (e.g., via a youth employment agency), and assisting youths with school problems (e.g., special tutors and alternative schooling).

**Suppression.** The term *suppression* is used by Spergel and Curry to describe a variety of strictly law-enforcement strategies, including special patrols by police gang units, special prosecution efforts within the district attorney's office, legislation that targets gang activities, and development and implementation of information systems (e.g., the GREAT program, which stands for Gang Reporting, Evaluation, and Tracking).

However, *Vigil* does present a number of promising programs to deal with gangs. Later in this chapter, we will bring together a collection of general recommendations on the national level that address some of the issues raised by Miller. As has been noted at several junctures throughout this book, the problem of gangs cannot be addressed without dealing with much larger social issues facing American society. Before dealing with these more general issues, an overview will be presented of the varied gang-intervention strategies that have been offered historically.

**TYPES OF INTERVENTION STRATEGIES**

The discussion of intervention strategies will be divided into two sections. The first section begins with a general overview of several major categories of responses to the gang problem. The first typology to be discussed is based on the research conducted by Spergel and Curry during the 1980s. Following the outline of Spergel and Curry's typology, community-based responses—or what Spergel and Curry call community organization, social intervention, and opportunities provisions—will be reviewed. The previous chapter dealt with the legal response to the gang problem—or what Spergel and Curry call suppression efforts.

**Spergel and Curry's Typology of Interventions**

During the late 1980s, University of Chicago researchers surveyed 254 agencies (criminal justice and community agencies, along with schools) in 45 cities (Spergel and Curry, 1990). In this survey, they identified two major types of cities, based on the extent of the gang problem in the area. One type they called **chronic gang problem cities**, and the other they called **emerging gang problem cities**. As suggested by these terms, the former are those cities (e.g., Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York) that have had gang problems for many years, while the latter apply to cities (e.g., Milwaukee, Phoenix, and Atlanta) that have experienced such problems only in recent years (although not included in their survey, Las Vegas would be classified as an emerging gang problem city). The distinction between these two types of cities becomes important when considering the effectiveness of the various strategies used to deal with the current gang problem.

In their survey, Spergel and Curry found that the strategies used in these areas to deal with the problem of gangs could be grouped into four broad areas, which they labeled as 1) community organization, 2) social intervention, 3) opportunities provision, and 4) suppression or law-enforcement efforts.

These four strategies were found to be the most commonly used in the cities surveyed. In fact, they represent virtually every known type of method that has been tried in the past, is currently being used, and will likely be used in the future. It is within these broad areas that the risk factors noted previously can be reduced and the protective factors enhanced.