

### The Perceived Effectiveness of These Strategies

The respondents in the survey conducted by Spergel and Curry and their colleagues were asked to rank each of these strategies according to which was most often used and which they perceived to be the most effective. The effectiveness of these strategies is based on the opinions or perceptions of those responding to Spergel and Curry's survey, rather than on empirical evidence. The effectiveness varied according to whether the respondents lived in a chronic gang problem city or an emerging gang problem city. In emerging gang problem cities, the perception was that the most effective strategies were the various efforts classified as community organization. Ranked second in effectiveness was that of opportunities provision, with social intervention and suppression ranked third and fourth, respectively. From a statistical standpoint (based on the method used in this survey—analysis of covariance), only community organization was found to be statistically significant.

In chronic gang problem cities, the most effective methods were found within opportunities provision, with community organization ranked second. Ranked third and fourth were suppression and social intervention, respectively. From a statistical standpoint, only opportunities provision was statistically significant.

This survey shows that if communities rely solely on suppression efforts, the gang problem will not be reduced to any significant degree, regardless of whether the area is a chronic or an emerging gang problem city. Organizing communities and providing opportunities to at-risk youths appear to be the most promising strategies.

What is important to stress is that various components of each of these major strategies should be used in combination. This is because it is erroneous to assume from the data presented by Spergel and Curry that an *entire category* of various strategies will not work. Each specific type of strategy needs to be examined within each broad category to see which one is most effective.

This type of research has not been done as yet. It may be found, for example, that certain specific kinds of law-enforcement procedures are more effective than others (e.g., various forms of community policing may be more effective than traditional police procedures) or that certain specific types of social intervention may be more effective than traditional youth outreach (e.g., providing role models or inter-gang mediation may be very effective).

Each community needs to study in detail each kind of strategy in use to see which is most effective (see the discussion of the risk-focused approach in a later section of this chapter). The effectiveness of a specific strategy may vary according to the type of community where it is used (e.g., providing role models may be more effective than gang mediation in Las Vegas, but the opposite may be true in Phoenix). Such a research effort must necessarily arise from a strong mobilization effort to organize a community and combine both human and non-human resources.

Note that the preceding section originally appeared in the first edition of this book, published in 1997. Most of the research that went into the first edition

culminated around 1995, so it has been 17 years since the section was written. Since this time, the bulk of the "programs" have fallen either into the "suppression" category or have had a law-enforcement presence. Unfortunately, as Klein and Maxson review six major gang control programs across the country, they find little to be positive about. We will briefly review their assessment shortly.

### Other Intervention Typologies

One of the most comprehensive overviews of delinquency-prevention programs is the text by Dryfoos (1990). In this book, she addresses four interrelated problems: delinquency, teen pregnancy, drug abuse, and school failure.

Although not aimed specifically at gangs, these problems and program typologies can nevertheless be easily adapted to the gang problem. Her review of the research found that the majority of prevention programs fall into one of three broad categories: 1) early childhood and family interventions, 2) school-based interventions, and 3) community-based and/or multicomponent interventions (Dryfoos, 1990: 116). Programs that fall within the early childhood and family intervention category include two major types: 1) preschool/Head Start programs and 2) parent training/support programs. Programs found within the school-based intervention category include three main types: 1) curricula, 2) organization of the school (teacher training, school team, and alternative schools), and 3) special services (counseling and mentoring programs, health services, and volunteer work). Community-based interventions include three main types: 1) school-community collaboration programs, 2) community education, and 3) multicomponent comprehensive programs.

Several recent studies have confirmed the success of early intervention programs such as Head Start and similar preschool programs. A follow-up of the original participants in the Ypsilanti Head Start program to the age of 40 found continued success for the treatment group, including higher income and lower involvement in the criminal justice system (Belfield et al., 2006; Schweinhart et al., 2005). For instance, a longitudinal study of a preschool intervention program in Chicago of more than 1,500 low-income youths (93% of whom were black) found that there were significant reductions in not only the incidence of delinquency but its frequency and severity, by age 18 (Mann and Reynolds, 2006). The most comprehensive was a meta-analysis of 123 comparative studies of early childhood interventions. Positive effects were found for children who attend a preschool program prior to entering kindergarten. The most significant impact was on the children's cognitive behaviors, social skills, and school progress—all of which are correlated with reduced rates of delinquency (Camilli et al., 2010).

Often overlooked partners in combating gang problems are social service agencies, which are often the only point of contact with troubled youth. These agencies, including state and local juvenile justice agencies, continue to target males for programmatic services as their numbers demand attention. Although, unfortunately, for many females social service agencies provide scant aid, the