



Boston's Youth Violence Prevention Program

A Comprehensive Community-Wide Approach

JACK MCDEVITT

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

ANTHONY A. BRAGA

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

DANA NURGE

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

MICHAEL BUERGER

BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

This chapter examines patterns and developments in gang activity and youth violence in the years following "the Boston miracle," a dramatic decrease in youth violence resulting from a coordinated, citywide, comprehensive violence reduction initiative. The chapter first summarizes the prior history of research into Boston gangs, then focuses on the period of the 1990s when gang violence sent the homicide rate skyrocketing. It briefly notes the wide range of isolated programs created by individual entities to address the violence, and then documents the endeavors of the Boston Police Department and the Boston Gun Project Working Group to knit those varied components into a comprehensive plan to reduce violence. The development and impact of Operation Ceasefire is described, and its long-term effects examined. New developments in gang patterns and activities are explored as a prelude to discussion of the need for even more coordinated efforts and resources to prevent the cyclical return of youth and gang-related violence when new generations arise to follow in the footsteps of their predecessors.

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY SITE

Boston is a city with approximately 575,000 residents, and is marked by small, ethnically/racially identified neighborhoods (for example, South Boston, Roxbury, and the North End) that have long and rich histories. Those histories have been largely preserved even as the demographics of many neighborhoods have changed over time. Currently the city's residents are approximately 59 percent non-Hispanic White, 24 percent non-Hispanic Black, 11 percent Hispanic, and 5 percent Asian/Pacific Islander; less than 0.5 percent are of any other race (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). The reported unemployment rate citywide in 1990 was 8.3 percent, with the neighborhoods of Roxbury and Dorchester exhibiting the highest unemployment (14.3 percent and 11.5 percent, respectively). An estimated 19 percent of all Boston residents and 28 percent of Boston's children under 18 were living below the poverty line in 1990, with the highest proportion of poor children (51 percent) residing in Roxbury (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). Historically Boston has had a low violent crime rate relative to cities of similar size. For example, the city of Boston averaged 95 homicides per year for the 25-year period from 1965 to 1990. This equates to an average homicide rate of 17.2 per 100,000 residents over this period.

A SHORT HISTORY OF GANGS IN BOSTON

Although not publicly acknowledged by local officials until around 1990, Boston has a relatively long history of gangs. William F. Whyte's (1943) and Walter Miller's (1958) research describe Boston's gangs in the 1930s through 1950s, but there was minimal research on, or public discussion about, gangs again until the 1990s. Whyte's classic ethnographic study (1943) of street-corner groups in Boston's North End, described gangs (corner groups/clubs) of young men in the 1930s. Given the documented presence of immigrant gangs in other eastern seaboard cities during the 1800s (such as New York; see Asbury, 1927), it is likely that such groups also existed in Boston during the early 1900s, prior to Whyte's study (Puffer, 1912).

In contrast to the Chicago School's research (Shaw and McKay, 1942), which focused on the "social disorganization" of slum/ghetto neighborhoods during that era, Whyte's research revealed a community that was marked by a complex system of interpersonal relations and reciprocal obligations among various community members. Through extended fieldwork, Whyte examined the nature of the relationship between the local gangs, politics, and the community. In addition to providing a rich account of community dynamics, *Street Corner Society* was one of the earliest studies to provide a thorough analysis of the structure, leadership, relationships, and day-to-day activities of various corner groups.

arked by small,
n Boston, Rox-
e histories have
borhoods have
tely 59 percent
t Hispanic, and
any other race
nt rate citywide
and Dorchester
percent, respec-
percent of Bos-
1990, with the
bury (U.S. Bu-
violent crime
oston averaged
0. This equates
this period.

und 1990, Bos-
943) and Walter
ough 1950s, but
s again until the
rner groups in
f young men in
in other eastern
1927), it is likely
rior to Whyte's

McKay, 1942),
neighborhoods
was marked by
ligations among
Whyte examined
s, and the com-
dynamics, *Street*
ough analysis of
s of various cor-

Miller's studies of gang intervention programs in Boston document the continued existence of delinquent street-corner groups through the 1940s and 1950s (Miller, 1957, 1959, 1973). Miller conducted evaluation research on the "detached group worker" or "area worker" approach, through which social workers were assigned to work intensively with corner groups in an effort to "redirect the energies of group members into constructive channels" (Miller, 1957: 392). Over a three-year period, seven social workers regularly spent time with seven corner groups, and sporadically spent time with seven others. Of the seven groups receiving the most intense attention, three were black and four were white (predominantly Irish). Although only one of the groups was considered to be highly delinquent, most groups engaged in occasional acts of fighting, theft, truancy, and vandalism (Miller, 1957). The gangs studied were neighborhood-based groups composed of approximately 50 to 70 youths, ranging in age from 12 to 20. This early research documented the territorial nature of Boston gangs, which for the most part continues today. These groups had clearly defined enemies and allies, and the issue of honor or respect was then, as now, a common cause of conflict: "The various neighborhood corner groups could be seen as forming a network of fighting units, each of which was committed to defend its honor and maintain its 'rep'" (Miller, 1957: 7). Although the detached group worker approach met with mixed results, some of its components—such as intensive outreach, recreational opportunities, and gang mediation—came to play an important role in Boston's recent gang intervention strategy.

Whyte's and Miller's research provided a basis for understanding corner group/gang dynamics, but there was very little research on such groups during the subsequent 30-year period (1960s–1990s). The 1980s saw a couple of exceptions: Jankowski (1991) undertook participant observation of the organization and activities of four Irish-American gangs in Boston as part of his three-city study of 37 gangs, and Jay MacLeod (1987) provided an ethnographic account of 1980s housing project gangs in the neighboring city of Cambridge. Jankowski's gang study painted a more formal, organized picture of gangs than that previously and currently depicted by most researchers. He described the Boston Irish gangs as providing a traditional link from childhood friendship groups to adult Irish-American social clubs. As such, the gangs were made up of working-class Irish American neighborhood youth, but were linked to these older social/political clubs. The youths' gang membership reflected both community and ethnic pride and loyalty, and the desire to establish connections with adults who could provide employment opportunities (largely through local political networks). MacLeod's study in Cambridge described two groups of marginalized teens that were struggling with school and employment. His follow-up study (1995) revealed the ongoing difficulties of these young men; although they were now adults, they were still struggling between "makin' it" in the legitimate labor market and the cocaine economy of the streets (1995). More recently, Jenkins provided a study of three local Boston gangs and revealed similar themes of marginalization and informal gang structure. He described the

gangs as loosely organized, neighborhood-based, street-corner groups, with an undefined leadership and unclear hierarchy. Although they regularly participated in drug sales, other forms of criminality or violence were relatively rare (Jenkins, 1995).

CONTEMPORARY BOSTON GANG PROBLEMS

Since 1990, and especially during the mid-1990s, Boston's gangs have received renewed interest from academics, practitioners, and policymakers (Corbett, Fitzgerald, and Jordan, 1998; Kennedy, 1998; Kennedy and Braga, 1998; Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga, 1996; Kennedy, Braga, and Piehl, 2001). Like governmental authorities in many cities, officials in Boston in the 1980s were reluctant to admit the existence, emergence, and/or proliferation of gangs (Klein, 1995). Boston officials did not use the term "gang" or publicly admit to having a "gang problem" during the 1980s, despite the increasingly lethal consequences of gang conflicts. The mayor and police commissioner at the time decided against acknowledging the existence of gangs, fearing it would hurt the city's image and create publicity that might inadvertently stimulate additional gang development. It became an informal but explicit policy of the police and city officials to deny that gangs were involved in any criminal incidents.

In the summer of 1988, a crossfire exchange between two rival gangs killed a twelve-year-old girl named Tiffany Moore, who was perched on top of a mailbox talking to friends. Public outcry over this incident spurred the demand that police and public officials acknowledge and begin to seriously address the growing youth violence problem. The Moore shooting was a catalyst, the most horrifying of several high-profile gang-related homicides and incidents of violence in the late 1980s that made it increasingly difficult for public officials to deny Boston's gang problem.

Although school security officials and some law enforcement personnel began discussing the presence of gangs in Boston public schools during the mid-1980s, it was not until mid-1988 that the ranking members of the Boston Police Department met to develop a strategy for responding to the "emerging gang problem" (Corbett, Fitzgerald, and Jordan, 1998). Like their peers in other cities, senior police officials were concerned that using the term "gang" would confer a perverse legitimacy on such groups, and exacerbate their proliferation. They thought it best to take a wait-and-see attitude toward the groups of youth that were increasingly organizing and fighting in both schools and neighborhoods (Corbett, Fitzgerald, and Jordan, 1998).

In early 1989, hard on the heels of the Tiffany Moore shooting, Boston officials began to see a dramatic increase in youth crime, particularly violent youth crime ("youth" was defined as age 24 and younger). For years, the annual number of youth homicides in Boston had been remarkably flat, averaging about 30 per year between 1976 and 1987 (Figure 3.1). In 1989, however, youth ho-

ner groups, with an
ey regularly partici-
e were relatively rare

N

's gangs have received
licymakers (Corbett,
nd Braga, 1998; Ken-
, 2001). Like govern-
: 1980s were reluctant
f gangs (Klein, 1995).
limit to having a "gang
consequences of gang
e decided against ac-
t the city's image and
ditional gang develop-
police and city officials
its.

two rival gangs killed
ched on top of a mail-
arred the demand that
usly address the grow-
catalyst, the most hor-
d incidents of violence
ublic officials to deny

rcement personnel be-
hools during the mid-
ers of the Boston Po-
to the "emerging gang
eir peers in other cities,
1 "gang" would confer
eir proliferation. They
e groups of youth that
ols and neighborhoods

shooting, Boston offi-
ticularly violent youth
years, the annual num-
y flat, averaging about
9, however, youth ho-

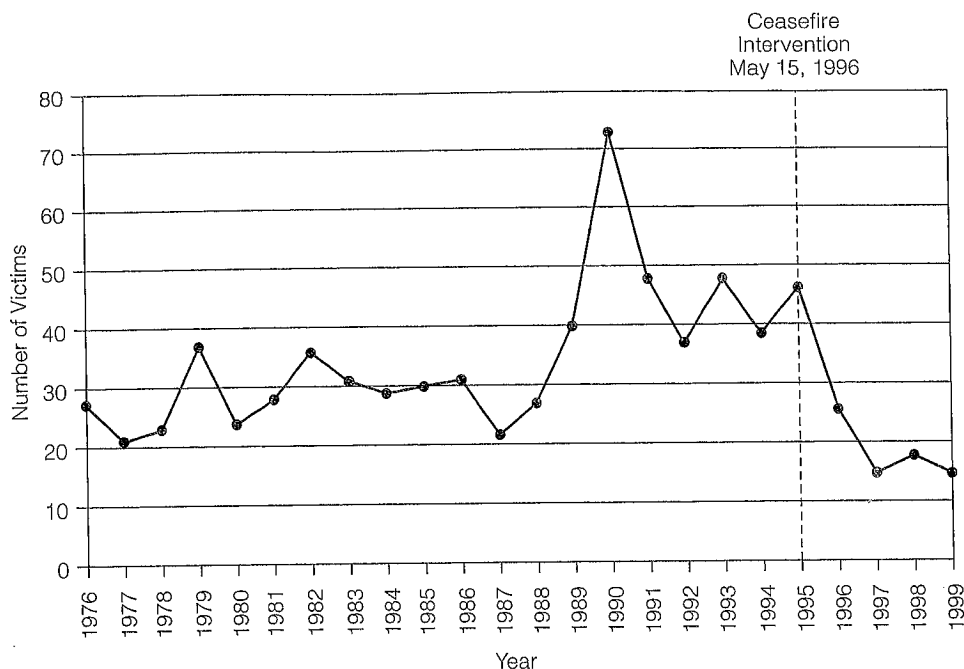


FIGURE 3.1 City of Boston Homicide Victims, Age 24 and Under

micides climbed to 40, and in 1990 peaked at 73. From 1991 through 1995, the number of youths dying by criminal homicide hovered around 45 incidents a year. Yearly counts of juvenile homicide victims (ages 17 and younger) followed the same general pattern; however, most homicide victimization was among those aged 18 to 24 (Kennedy and Braga, 1998).

Research conducted by the Boston Police Department and Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government indicated that youth homicide victims in Boston were overwhelmingly minority males, especially black males (Corbett, Fitzgerald, and Jordan, 1998; Kennedy and Braga, 1998; Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga, 1996). Of the 391 youth killed between 1988 and 1995, 87 percent were male and 78 percent were black (Kennedy and Braga, 1998). Of the 156 known youth homicide offenders between 1988 and 1995, 95 percent were male and 85 percent were black (Kennedy and Braga, 1998). Youth homicide was largely concentrated within Boston's poor minority neighborhoods of Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan (Kennedy, Braga, and Piehl, 1997).

The sudden increase in Boston youth homicide was strongly associated with firearms. Of the youth victims killed between 1988 and 1995, 74 percent were killed with firearms (Kennedy and Braga, 1998). In the high-risk neighborhoods of Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan, 88 percent of youth homicide victims were killed with firearms (Kennedy and Braga, 1998). Yearly numbers of Boston Police Department "shots fired" calls for service and gun assault arrests for

black males age 24 and under followed a pattern that was broadly similar to yearly counts of youth homicide victims, increasing steadily from 1986 through 1991 and then falling off through 1995 (Kennedy and Braga, 1998).

The year 1990 was a turning point in the city's efforts to combat youth violence. As the homicides mounted to record numbers, the community was transfixed by the violence: many residents viewed Boston as a city out of control. The *Boston Herald*, one of the two major daily newspapers in the city, began to carry a "body count" on its front page; after November, each additional homicide set a new record.

This record level of violence and the publicity that followed increased fear among residents and those who came into the city to work and socialize. In response to the sudden upswing in youth violence, a large number of broad-based but relatively uncoordinated policy initiatives and programs designed to prevent youth violence sprang up throughout the city (see Buntin, 1998 for a complete discussion).

BOSTON POLICY INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS TO REDUCE YOUTH VIOLENCE

Some of Boston's violence prevention programs predated the epidemic of youth violence. From the mid-1980s through the 1990s, the city was the site of a number of public health interventions aimed at reducing youth violence. Although supported by public officials, these efforts were largely initiated by groups outside of, and operating independently of, city government. The interventions included the Violence Prevention Program that prepared and delivered violence prevention curriculums in Boston public schools, hospital-based programs that taught violence prevention skills to young families, and a program to intervene with youth admitted to hospitals with gunshot and knife wounds (see, for example, Prothrow-Stith, 1992).

The situation demanded a comprehensive effort to deal with youth violence. As the crisis intensified, it became clear that no single agency could solve the problems and that police efforts alone would not end the bloodshed. The scope of the problem was commonly understood, and there was a feeling of shared responsibility and recognition that the efforts of many different groups would be necessary before the rising tide of violence could be reversed. The mayor's office began to look for options to deal with the violence, and most importantly many neighborhoods began to ask what they could do to protect "their kids."

While there was a large reservoir of interest in helping to reduce youth violence, most of the initial efforts were relatively unfocused. The independent violence reduction efforts that had been implemented—by the school department, the city of Boston, various community groups, and local service organizations such as the Boys and Girls Clubs and the YMCA—were not coordinated, and so often offered duplicate services to similar at-risk groups. The coordinated

as broadly similar to
y from 1986 through
iga, 1998).

o combat youth vio-
community was trans-
city out of control.
in the city, began to
ach additional homi-

llowed increased fear
and socialize. In re-
mber of broad-based
s designed to prevent
1998 for a complete

ES CE

he epidemic of youth
was the site of a num-
1 violence. Although
tiated by groups out-
The interventions in-
id delivered violence
-based programs that
program to intervene
wounds (see, for ex-

with youth violence.
ency could solve the
loodshed. The scope
as a feeling of shared
fferent groups would
eversed. The mayor's
and most importantly
protect "their kids."
to reduce youth vio-
The independent vio-
ie school department,
service organizations
not coordinated, and
ips. The coordinated

approach agreed upon was not the normal way of doing business in Boston; it was more of a reaction to the shared feeling that the city was on the brink of a youth violence disaster.

Commissioner Paul Evans and the leadership of Boston Police Department recognized the need for coordination among the various youth agencies, and in early 1990 took a leadership role to serve as the coordinating agency for all youth violence prevention activities in the city. Convening meetings with a wide variety of the groups attempting to deal with youth violence, the police department began the process of creating a comprehensive strategy. For its part of the strategy, the Boston Police Department created a special youth violence prevention unit composed of top Boston police patrol officers and detectives. Although its primary mission was suppression of gang activity and violence, staffing the unit with top-flight experienced detectives created an environment where suppression efforts pushed gang youth toward the complementary social intervention and social opportunities initiatives of the overall strategy.

Initially known as the Anti-Gang Violence Unit, the unit was later renamed the Youth Violence Strike Force (YVSF); both unit designations were symbolically important to the city and to the officers involved in the unit. By establishing the Anti-Gang Violence Unit, the police department publicly acknowledged the existence of gangs in Boston. By assigning an elite unit of experienced officers to address the problem, the department made a commitment to both the community and the department's own officers to take the problem seriously. When the unit's name was subsequently changed to the Youth Violence Strike Force, the designation reflected a maturing understanding of the true nature of the problem. It sent the message that the unit would deal with the broader category of youth violence, particularly gun violence, not simply those youth who had been previously identified as gang members.

The YVSF officers and detectives worked closely with street-level practitioners from other federal, state, and local criminal justice agencies. Initially, they were directed toward suppression, an arrest-based strategy aimed at incarcerating gang members (Buntin, 1998; Suh, 1993). However, the YVSF was equally committed to more classic prevention activities, and brokered connections between at-risk youth and social service agencies (Kennedy, Braga, and Piehl, 2001). Recognizing the important role of firearms in youth violence, the YVSF developed innovative relationships with agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms to prevent gun trafficking and to disrupt the illegal firearms markets serving Boston's youth.

In 1992, an informal partnership developed between officers of the Boston Police Department and probation officers working for the Boston courts. The probation officers had many gang members on their caseloads and were acquiring their own intelligence about gang activities in the city, but there was no mechanism for sharing information with police officers who were dealing with the same youth (Kennedy, Braga, and Piehl, 2001). Based on personal relationships initially, Dorchester Court probation officers and YVSF officers began patrolling together in the gang-intense areas of Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan, and the effectiveness of joint enforcement of probation conditions of

high-risk offenders quickly became evident. This program grew out of a single incident in which probation officers who lived in the area of a shooting were able to supply additional intelligence to the investigating police officers that eventually led to arrests and convictions. According to those involved, this sharing of information was possible because these police officers and probation officers had grown up in the same neighborhood and had known each other most of their lives. A trust had already been established.

As this program developed, police learned that probation officers had a current knowledge not only of who was on probation, but what they were and were not allowed to do (curfews and area restrictions, for instance). This information was previously unknown to the police. Probation officers could conduct spot checks of home conditions, and curfew violations could be dealt with immediately, not just reported back to the courts for action some weeks later. The police presence added an "instant arrest" capacity, an on-the-spot sanction that made it more difficult for gang members to ignore probation conditions (Corbett, Fitzgerald, and Jordan, 1998).

The effectiveness of combining the two forms of legal authority caught the attention of supervisors and administrators in both agencies, and Operation Night Light was officially inaugurated. Employing conditions of probation such as curfews and geographic area restrictions, Operation Night Light stiffened the sentence of probation, keeping high-risk kids out of trouble by keeping them inside at night and out of the rival gang areas (Corbett, Fitzgerald, and Jordan, 1998). Building on the success of Operation Night Light, YVSF officers also developed similar relationships with juvenile corrections caseworkers of the Department of Youth Services (DYS) to control high-risk juveniles.

Criminal justice agencies and the public health practitioners were not the only local institutions and professionals to implement noteworthy responses to the youth violence problem. The mayor established the Boston Streetworker program in 1991, and placed twelve streetworkers in "high risk" neighborhoods and schools. The program's streetworkers—essentially social workers with expertise in youth conflict, street life, and conflict mediation—worked primarily on the streets, but also out of schools and community centers, to try to connect with, and provide services for, high-risk youth and their families (Boston Community Centers, 1997).

The streetworkers were charged with identifying at-risk youth in Boston's neighborhoods and providing them with services such as job skills training, substance abuse counseling, and special education. Beyond their important roles as social service providers, streetworkers attempted to prevent outbreaks of violence by mediating disputes between gangs. Streetworkers also ran programs intended to keep gang-involved youth occupied (and under supervision), as well as to bring them into contact with one another in ways that might breed tolerance. Those efforts included a Peace League of gang-on-gang basketball games held at neutral, controlled sites (Braga, Piehl, and Kennedy, 1999).

In 1992, a key partnership developed between the Boston Police Department and members of the city's black clergy. A loosely allied group of activist black clergy formed the Ten Point Coalition after a gang invasion of the Morn-

in grew out of a single
area of a shooting were
ing police officers that
o those involved, this
officers and probation
ad known each other

tion officers had a cur-
it what they were and
r instance). This infor-
on officers could con-
ons could be dealt with
tion some weeks later.
n on-the-spot sanction
e probation conditions

legal authority caught
gencies, and Operation
tions of probation such
light Light stiffened the
uble by keeping them
Fitzgerald, and Jordan,
, YVSF officers also de-
caseworkers of the De-
juveniles.

ctioners were not the
oteworthy responses to
e Boston Streetworker
gh risk" neighborhoods
social workers with ex-
on—worked primarily
centers, to try to con-
d their families (Boston

t-risk youth in Boston's
s job skills training, sub-
their important roles as
event outbreaks of vio-
ers also ran programs in-
der supervision), as well
that might breed toler-
n-gang basketball games
nedy, 1999).

Boston Police Depart-
y allied group of activist
g invasion of the Morn-

ingstar Baptist Church. During a memorial for a slain gang member, mourn-
ers were attacked with knives and guns by a rival gang (Kennedy, Braga, and
Piehl, 2001; Winship and Berrien, 1999). In the wake of that outrage, the Ten
Point Coalition expanded their existing ministries to include all at-risk youth
in the Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan sections of Boston. The ministers
decided they should attempt to prevent the youth in their communities from
joining gangs, and also that they needed to send an antiviolence message to all
youth, whether gang involved or not.

To do this, the clergy had to make two adjustments to their normal minis-
try. First, they had to define all youth as their responsibility regardless of the par-
ish the youth lived in or her/his denominational affiliation. Previously, young
people who did not participate in church activities were not viewed as part of
the ministry's mission; henceforth, the protection of these young people would
be the primary mission of many churches.

The second adjustment involved taking the ministry to the streets. It was
clear that if the ministers wanted to get involved with the community's youth,
they could not wait in their churches for the youth to come to them. They had
to go "where the kids were." This meant that the clergy had to spend time
on the streets at night, getting to know the kids they were attempting to pro-
tect. This was a very different and often frightening new approach to providing
ministry services, but they found the Boston streetworkers were natural allies.
Quickly the streetworkers and the Ten Point clergy came to work closely to-
gether to provide at-risk youth with alternatives to gang violence.

Working with the Boston Police Department as well, the Ten Point
Coalition provided another important dimension to the development of this
community-wide antiviolence strategy: credibility for the Boston Police De-
partment with the communities of color in Boston. In Boston, as in many other
cities, communities of color have had a lengthy history of tension with the
police.

Distrust of the police by the minority communities was exacerbated after
the 1989 killing of Carol Stuart. Based on Stuart's husband's identification of a
black man as the couple's assailant, some members of the Boston police targeted
young black males for aggressive stops and searches. After the husband was sub-
sequently identified as the real killer, the media revealed a string of discrepan-
cies in his statement, which were ignored by all but a few dedicated investiga-
tors. The revelations were a focal point in subsequent dialogues, in which the
minority community expressed dismay at the role they felt widely held racial
stereotypes had played in the conduct of the investigation.

Over time, the Ten Point Coalition was able to send a credible message to
the minority community that the focused gang suppression was not a reflection
of the racial stereotypes suspected of influencing the investigation of the Carol
Stuart case, and that the Boston police were legitimately trying to help the youth
of the community. Although the Ten Point Coalition had initially been very
critical of the Boston Police Department, they eventually forged a strong work-
ing relationship with the YVSF (Winship and Berrien, 1999). Ten Point clergy
and others involved in the faith-based organization accompanied YVSF police

officers on home visits to the families of troubled youth, and also acted as advocates for youth in the criminal justice system. The presence of former adversaries working together toward a common goal dramatically enhanced the legitimacy of the entire effort.

By 1994, Boston had an extensive network of frontline practitioners with a broad mix of capacities who were well informed about the potential for local outbreaks of youth violence on the streets. Although youth violence remained high, the network of practitioners, coordinated by the Boston Police Department and often led by the YVSF, became more adept at quelling specific outbreaks of violence.

For example, beginning in late 1994 and continuing into early 1995, the YVSF coordinated a multiagency crackdown on a violent gang on Dorchester's Wendover Street (see Kennedy, Braga, and Piehl, 2001), preventing gang-involved youth from engaging in gun violence. Known as Operation Scrap Iron, the initiative was a suppression effort that saturated the area with police officers, probation officers, and DYS caseworkers, increasing official surveillance and the likelihood of apprehension. Streetworkers were mobilized to provide opportunities to gang members who wanted to step away from the violence, adding a social intervention element to the operation.

Operation Scrap Iron also focused on disrupting the supply of guns to gang-involved youth in the Wendover Street area. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) agents and YVSF officers identified and arrested a gun trafficker who was illegally selling firearms to Wendover youth; many of these trafficked firearms had been recovered in violent crimes or found in the possession of gang members. This coordinated effort caused the violence in the Wendover Street area to stop.

Despite this promising portfolio of interventions, overall Boston youth homicide numbers remained unacceptably high: in 1995, there were 46 youth homicides. Though the early intervention efforts had kept youth violence from exploding, it remained at unacceptably high levels. Youths' easy access to firearms was considered the core of this problem, and a narrower focus on that specific element was called for.

The Boston Gun Project and Operation Ceasefire

Sponsored by the U.S. National Institute of Justice, the Boston Police Department and researchers from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government formed a partnership to design, implement, and evaluate an innovative problem-oriented policing intervention to reduce youth violence. This enterprise was known as the Boston Gun Project and proceeded by (1) assembling an interagency working group of primarily line-level criminal justice practitioners; (2) using quantitative and qualitative research techniques to assess the nature of, and dynamics driving, youth violence in Boston; (3) developing an intervention designed to have a substantial, near-term impact on youth homicide; (4) implementing and adapting the intervention; and (5) evaluating the intervention's impact (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, and Piehl, 2001). The project

., and also acted as advocate of former adversaries. This enhanced the legitimacy of the intervention.

outline practitioners with the potential for local youth violence remained. The Boston Police Department was at quelling specific outbreaks.

ing into early 1995, the street gang on Dorchester's (D-101), preventing gang violence as Operation Scrap Iron, an area with police officers, increased surveillance and the need to provide opportunities to the violence, adding a

a supply of guns to gang members. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms arrested a gun trafficker. Many of these trafficked guns were in the possession of youth in the Wendover

overall Boston youth homicide. There were 46 youth homicides from 1990 to 1994. The narrow focus on that

in Ceasefire

ie Boston Police Department, the F. Kennedy School of Public Policy, and evaluate an intervention to reduce youth violence. This was preceded by (1) assembling criminal justice practitioners; (2) developing techniques to assess the problem in Boston; (3) developing an intervention; (4) evaluating its impact on youth homicide; and (5) evaluating the project (Piehl, 2001). The project

began in early 1995 and implemented the intervention now known as Operation Ceasefire in the late spring of 1996, ahead of the anticipated violence of the summer.

Core participating agencies (defined by regular participation in the Boston Gun Project Working Group over the duration of the project) included the Boston Police Department; the Massachusetts Department of Parole; the Dorchester Court's probation services; the Office of the Suffolk County District Attorney; the Office of the U.S. Attorney; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms; the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services (juvenile corrections); Boston School Police; and gang outreach and prevention "streetworkers" attached to the Boston Community Centers program. Other important participants, either as regular partners later in the process or episodically, have included the Ten Point Coalition, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Massachusetts State Police, and the Office of the Massachusetts Attorney General (Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga, 1996).

The research activities of the Boston Gun Project led to a clearer understanding of the city's youth violence problem: firearms associated with youth, especially with gang youth, tended to be semiautomatic pistols. These weapons were often new and apparently recently diverted from retail (Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga, 1996). Many of these guns were first sold retail in Massachusetts; others were smuggled in from out of state (Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga, 1996). The problem of youth homicide was concentrated among a small number of chronically offending gang-involved youth.

In the summer of 1995, Boston had 61 gangs made up of only about 1,300 gang members—less than 1 percent of their age group citywide, and less than 3 percent of their age group in Boston neighborhoods with gang turf (Kennedy, Braga, and Piehl, 1997). Although there were relatively few gang-involved youth in Boston, these 61 gangs were responsible for at least 60 percent of all the youth homicide in the city (Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga, 1996). The gangs were well known to the authorities and streetworkers; many individual gang members also were well known, and tended to have extensive criminal records (Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga, 1996). Chronic disputes, or "beefs," among gangs were the primary driving force behind the gang violence in Boston (Braga, Piehl, and Kennedy, 1999).

The research findings and the working-group process led to the development of the Operation Ceasefire intervention. Operation Ceasefire included two main elements: (1) a direct law-enforcement attack on illicit firearms traffickers supplying youth with guns, and (2) an attempt to generate a strong deterrent to gang violence (Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga, 1996). The working group framed a set of activities to address systematically the patterns of firearms trafficking identified by the research (Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga, 1996). These included focusing enforcement attention on intrastate gun trafficking, on traffickers of the types of guns most used by gang members, and on guns most likely to be trafficked (for example, new guns and guns with obliterated serial numbers). These enforcement priorities were supported by the Boston Police Department's comprehensive tracing of crime guns, and by developing leads through

systematic debriefing of persons involved with gangs and/or involved in violent crime, especially arrestees (Braga et al., 2001).

The second element of Operation Ceasefire was known as the "pulling levers" focused-deterrence strategy. This approach deterred violent behavior by chronic gang offenders by talking directly to gangs, saying explicitly that violence would no longer be tolerated, and backing that message by "pulling every lever" legally available when violence occurred (Kennedy, 1997, 1998). Boston gangs were not subjected to increased law enforcement attention arbitrarily; nor did the working group develop a "hit list" of gangs. Rather, enforcement actions by the working group were triggered by outbreaks of gang violence. Boston gangs selected themselves for focused law enforcement attention by engaging in violence.

When gang violence occurred, police officers, probation officers, and DYS caseworkers immediately flooded the offending gang's turf, communicating to gang members face-to-face that the officers' presence was due to the violence, and that the gangs were "under the microscope" because of their violent behavior (Braga et al., 2001). Streetworkers and members of the Ten Point Coalition walked the streets, explaining that they wanted the violence to stop and that they supported the efforts of their law enforcement counterparts to end the violence. Streetworkers and members of the Ten Point Coalition also made offers of services and opportunities to gang members.

The working group recognized that gang members were vulnerable to a variety of criminal justice sanctions, and that targeted enforcement actions could be used to good effect in controlling their violent behavior (Kennedy, 1997). The enforcement levers were tailored to particular gangs, and often included a wide range of actions such as probation home visits, changes in community supervision conditions, enforcing outstanding arrest warrants, special prosecutorial attention to crimes committed by violent gang members, increased disorder enforcement, and the disruption of street-level drug markets.

A basic premise of the "pulling levers" approach was to take advantage of the chronic-offending behaviors of gang members. The enforcement actions selected by the working group were only as harsh as necessary to stop a particular gang from engaging in violence. For many gang members, heightened levels of police, probation, and DYS enforcement were sufficient to quell the violence. For certain hardcore members, it was necessary to involve the enhanced enforcement capabilities of the federal authorities to stop the violence.

While enforcement actions were carried out, the members of the working group continued communications with violent gang members on the topic of cause and effect. Working-group members delivered a direct and explicit message to violent gangs that their violent behavior would no longer be tolerated, and that the working group would use whatever means were legally available to stop the violence (Kennedy, 1998). This crucial message was communicated to other gangs not engaged in violence, so they would understand what was happening to the violent gang, and more importantly why it was happening.

In addition to the working group talking to gang members on the street, the

and/or involved in vio-

known as the "pulling leverred violent behavior by saying explicitly that violence by "pulling every edy, 1997, 1998). Boston lent attention arbitrarily; ngs. Rather, enforcement tbreaks of gang violence. rcement attention by en-

obation officers, and DYS 's turf, communicating to : was due to the violence, cause of their violent be- rs of the Ten Point Coali- . the violence to stop and nt counterparts to end the at Coalition also made of-

rs were vulnerable to a va- nforcement actions could ehavior (Kennedy, 1997). gangs, and often included ts, changes in community warrants, special prosecu- g members, increased dis- l drug markets.

1 was to take advantage of The enforcement actions necessary to stop a particu- members, heightened lev- sufficient to quell the vio- rry to involve the enhanced o stop the violence.

e members of the working g members on the topic of d a direct and explicit mes- uld no longer be tolerated, ans were legally available to ssage was communicated to l understand what was hap- why it was happening.

; members on the street, the iers explaining the enforce-

ment actions and through forums with gang members (Kennedy 1997, 1998). Forums were usually held in a public facility such as a courthouse or community recreational center. Gang members under criminal justice system supervision (for example, those on probation, or under commitment to the DYS) were required to attend the forum by their probation or parole officers; gang-involved juveniles under DYS community supervision were required to attend by their caseworkers. Streetworkers and members of the Ten Point Coalition were able to bring other gang members to the forum by persuading them that it was in their best interest to attend.

Representatives of the different law enforcement agencies involved in Operation Ceasefire explained their actions to the gang members in attendance. Streetworkers and the Ten Point clergy voiced their support of the law enforcement actions, asked the youth to stop the violence, and reiterated their offers of services and opportunities. At the end of the presentation, gang members were encouraged to engage the members of the working group with any questions on the antiviolence campaign. While this process did not generate many questions, a few gang members asked about the details of the strategy and how their group could avoid coming under scrutiny.

➔ One important element of this strategy was the fact that those at the meetings lost their anonymity. Many youth felt they were invisible to most law enforcement officials in the city, and thus insulated from detection and consequences. YVSF officers and some local police officers might know them, but many officers did not. At forum meetings, it became clear that they had been targeted because of their affiliation and activity with a gang. All youths now understood that their gang activities were known to a broad range of police and probation officers, who would all become involved if violence erupted. Whatever anonymity they had enjoyed previously was gone, and they would quickly become suspects in any future acts of violence.

The role of the U.S. Attorney's Office as a partner in the working group proved to be important in an unanticipated way. In Boston, as in most other areas of the country, the prosecution of gang crime was a local issue. The local district attorney prosecuted incidents of gang violence, and sentences were served in state or county institutions. This was seen as an important part of the community prosecution efforts that were being established across the city. It was believed that assigning a prosecutor to investigate cases from a local geographic area would make the prosecutor more familiar with the needs of the area, and that would lead to prosecutions that supported community-based initiatives.

Community prosecution relied upon community resources, however, and as the saying goes, familiarity breeds contempt. Many gang members had served some prison time already, and were familiar with the Massachusetts correctional institutions. In many cases these institutions housed friends and, sometimes, family members of the gang members under indictment. While they did not look forward to time in prison, neither did gang members fear incarceration in these institutions.

➔ The U.S. Attorney's Office brought to the table additional prosecutorial tools not available to the local district attorney. The option of federal sentences

meant the possibility of much longer incarceration for selected offenders whose persistent violent behavior created increased risk to the community. Hardcore gang members identified by the working group as ringleaders, or as persons responsible for inducting new members into violent activities, could be removed from the scene with greater effect. They would be farther away from their families, and communication with gang members "on the outside" could be disrupted or diminished.

Federal prosecution of the members of the locally infamous Intervale gang sent shock waves across the community: the length of the sentences, and more importantly the location of the incarceration, announced to all concerned that the penalties for gang violence were going to get much tougher (Kennedy, 1997). When members of the Intervale gang began serving federal time in locations far from Massachusetts, in institutions where they knew no one, it engendered fear in local gang members.

Federal prosecution also brought with it the potential threat of Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act sanctions, and raised the stakes of gang participation. The community prosecution model at the state level was built on individual accountability; RICO imposed collective responsibility and risk on the gangs as organizations. Under the terms of RICO, all members of a criminal enterprise or network can be subject to prosecution for the acts of other members. Individual culpability is no longer required; the actions of the group, or other group members, create criminal liability for individual members. That definition is capable of encompassing street gangs, and had already been deployed against them in New York City (Purdy, 1994). Although RICO prosecutions were not undertaken in Boston, they remained a credible threat and were an implicit part of the suppression efforts.

Another important component of the comprehensive antiviolence strategy was the prevention activities and support services offered to the youth involved in violence. The Boston Police Department and its partners recognized that if they were to demand that youths change their lifestyles and turn away from violence, they would need to provide some significant support services to make another lifestyle possible. Many gang youth had left school, were unemployed, and were largely unemployable; if they were to have any realistic chance at taking a new path, a social service provision was necessary to address their needs concurrently with addressing their violent behavior.

In the early days of the Anti-Gang Violence Unit, police officers who got to know some of the at-risk youth used local contacts and friendships in heroic attempts to locate jobs for young people the officers recognized were ready to begin to turn their lives around. The police department was not organized to provide jobs for at-risk kids; this was something individual officers attempted to do through their own personal contacts and networks. When collaborations developed as part of the comprehensive strategy, members of the police department could take advantage of employment opportunities offered by the probation department and by the city of Boston. Both groups had lists of employers experienced in dealing with high-risk youth and who had jobs available.

on for selected offenders whose
to the community. Hardcore
is ringleaders, or as persons re-
at activities, could be removed
e farther away from their fam-
on the outside” could be dis-

ocally infamous Intervale gang
gth of the sentences, and more
nounced to all concerned that
get much tougher (Kennedy,
gan serving federal time in lo-
here they knew no one, it en-

otential threat of Racketeer In-
sanctions, and raised the stakes
on model at the state level was
d collective responsibility and
ms of RICO, all members of a
rosecution for the acts of other
ired; the actions of the group,
for individual members. That
gs, and had already been de-
.994). Although RICO prose-
ained a credible threat and

ehensive antiviolence strategy
ffered to the youth involved
its partners recognized that if
lifestyles and turn away from
icant support services to make
eft school, were unemployed,
ave any realistic chance at tak-
ecessary to address their needs
ior.

Unit, police officers who got
tacts and friendships in heroic
ers recognized were ready to
artment was not organized to
individual officers attempted
etworks. When collaborations
members of the police depart-
tunities offered by the proba-
groups had lists of employers
who had jobs available.

In addition, acting through the Boston streetworkers, the city offered gang youth many avenues to return to school, including the opportunity to enroll in alternative education programs operated by the city. Combining the anti-violence message with legitimate offers of support for youth provided a degree of legitimacy for the working group's efforts that had been missing from earlier, less-coordinated approaches.

This model of problem-oriented policing, addressing crime-related problems by developing an extensive network of partnerships, became the basis of Boston's entire community-policing approach. The Boston Police Department, in direct contrast with much of its history, developed a community-policing program, called Neighborhood Policing, that used a strategic-planning approach to develop collaborative partnerships with a broad range of criminal justice and community agencies. The department developed a decentralized approach to community policing that stressed partnerships, including the Youth Service Providers Network and the Alternative To Incarceration Network.

**THE IMPACT OF OPERATION CEASEFIRE
ON YOUTH VIOLENCE IN BOSTON**

Youth homicide numbers in Boston dropped dramatically after the inauguration of Operation Ceasefire in mid-1996. The number of Boston youth homicides decreased to 26 for the entire year, and further dropped to 15 youth homicides in 1997. The low level of youth homicides has continued through 1998 and 1999 (see Figure 3.1).

Although these numbers document the sudden large decrease in Boston youth homicide, they do not themselves verify Operation Ceasefire as the reason for the decrease. With the support of the National Institute of Justice, Kennedy School of Government researchers conducted an evaluation of the effects of Operation Ceasefire on youth violence in Boston (Braga et al., 2001). Using carefully constructed time-series analysis models that controlled for trends and seasonal variations, the Kennedy School evaluation team found that the implementation of Operation Ceasefire was associated with a 63 percent decrease in monthly number of Boston youth homicides, a 32 percent decrease in monthly number of Boston shots-fired calls, a 25 percent decrease in monthly number of Boston gun assaults, and a 44 percent decrease in monthly number of youth gun assault incidents in one high-risk district (Braga et al., 2001).

The reductions in youth homicide and gun violence associated with the Operation Ceasefire intervention could have been caused or meaningfully influenced by other causal factors. Therefore, the evaluation team added control variables to the time-series models, including changes in the unemployment rate, changes in Boston's youth population, changes in citywide violent index crimes, changes in older homicide victimization, and changes in street-level drug activity as measured by BPD arrest data (Braga et al., 2001). The addition

of these control variables did not substantively change the findings. Operation Ceasefire was still associated with significant decreases in the monthly number of youth homicides and other indicators of nonfatal serious violence.

The within-Boston analyses supported the conclusion that a large reduction in youth homicide and gun violence was associated with the Operation Ceasefire intervention. Because many major cities in the United States have enjoyed noteworthy reductions in homicide and nonfatal serious violence, the Kennedy School research team also distinguished youth homicide trends in Boston from national and regional trends in youth homicide. Using Supplementary Homicide Report data, the monthly counts of the number of homicide victims ages 24 and under were analyzed for 29 major New England cities and 39 major U.S. cities (for a complete methodological description, see Braga et al., 2001). The time-series analyses suggested that the significant youth homicide reduction associated with Operation Ceasefire in Boston was distinct when compared to youth homicide trends in most major New England and U.S. cities.

The key elements of this new problem-solving process pioneered in Boston—the convening of an interagency working group, the close partnership between academics and practitioners, and the “pulling levers” focused-deterrence strategy—have informed the U.S. Department of Justice’s Strategic Alternatives to Community Safety Initiative (SACSI) now operating in Indianapolis; New Haven, Connecticut; Winston-Salem, North Carolina; Memphis; and Portland, Oregon (Coleman et al., 1999). Several other cities have begun to experiment with these new frameworks and have experienced some encouraging initial results. These cities include Baltimore; Los Angeles; Lowell, Massachusetts; Minneapolis; and Stockton, California (Braga, Kennedy, and Tita, 2001).

The model of problem solving that was developed in Boston recognizes that police efforts alone cannot solve most crime-related problems; an approach that stresses a broad set of partnerships is more likely to effect a comprehensive solution than the isolated efforts of key actors. The approach developed by the Boston Police Department with the assistance of researchers from Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government applied solid social science research to define the scope of the problem and then brought all stakeholders to the table to design and implement a comprehensive set of strategies. The approach then stressed that each stakeholder participate in the problem-solving effort. In many other communities partners are called on to help identify the problem, but the police are the only actors involved in addressing the problem (Cardarelli, McDevitt, and Baum, 1998).

In their recent review of similar gang and group-involved violence prevention programs, Braga, Kennedy, and Tita (2001) suggest that there was nothing particularly unique about either the implementation or the impact of Operation Ceasefire in Boston. They conclude that the fundamental pulling-levers framework behind Operation Ceasefire can be successfully applied in other jurisdictions, with other sets of partners, with different specific activities, and in the context of different basic types of gangs and groups (for example, see Mc-

Garrell and Chermak, this volume, and Tita, Riley, and Greenwood, this volume). Implementing a successful violence prevention program based on the "Boston model" requires participating agencies to engage the problem-solving process to develop an interagency, comprehensive intervention that fits both the nature of the city's youth violence problem and the available array of the city's operational capacities. Simply importing interesting tactics from Boston without engaging the problem-solving process is unlikely to have a powerful effect on youth violence.

THE CHANGING FACE OF GANGS IN BOSTON

Although the Operation Ceasefire initiative successfully targeted several of the traditional neighborhood-based gangs and is credited with reducing the level of youth gang violence, the key actors involved in the suppression and intervention efforts (including practitioners and academics) do not claim to have eliminated gangs. While some gangs were, for all intents and purposes, dismantled when core members were incarcerated, the majority remained intact and continue to exist in some form. Operation Ceasefire working-group members and other local practitioners began witnessing and discussing changes in Boston's youth violence and gang behavior beginning in 1995. Those changes became more prominent around 1998 (Radin and Vasquez, 1998) and have continued to date.

Even as Boston was enjoying remarkable success with its violence reduction strategy, the cyclic nature of gang involvement added a new dimension to the gang violence problem in Boston. As this chapter was in its final stages of preparation, a 12-year-old girl named Lasonia Williams was wounded by gunfire in an incident both eerily reminiscent of, and yet distinct from, the Tiffany Moore shooting. Sitting on a stoop with cousins and friends, Williams was wounded by a shot fired by a 15-year-old boy who had a months-old beef with her brother. To some, it represented a haunting vision for the future: "younger teenagers, with easier access to guns, seeking to protect themselves or settle schoolyard scores" (Latour, 2000b: B1, B6). Then, on the morning of Sunday, July 30, 2000, a 16-year-old Cape Verdean youth died in "a hail of bullets" in Dorchester, the first juvenile to die from gunfire since October 13, 1998 (Helman, 2000).

Although traditional gangs still exist in Boston and occasional outbreaks of violence still occur, these groups have been fairly quiet in the past few years. (There is some speculation that that will change, because gang members who were incarcerated in the mid-1990s are now being released from prison.) However, there have been some noteworthy changes in the nature of gang and youth violence in the city, and policymakers are in the process of developing appropriate responses to these variations. Two new groups of young people appear to

have become more involved in gang violence in Boston: females, and younger adolescent males who identify themselves with national gangs.

Female Gangs

Although female gangs have existed in Boston for some time, anecdotal evidence suggests that their members may be becoming more violent (Ford, 1998). Given the lack of official data on female gangs/gang crime or previous research on female gang membership, claims of increasing violence are unsubstantiated, but recent research on female gangs in Boston confirms their existence and reveals that at least some of these groups' members are involved in gang-related crime and violence (Nurge, 2000a).

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, as the male gang problem was increasingly recognized and targeted through prevention, intervention, and suppression approaches, female gang membership was considered less problematic and remained largely unaddressed (Nurge, 1999a, 2000a). Since female gang members were rarely—if ever—involved in shootings, they did not command the same sort of attention (essentially crisis response) that male gang members did. Although some of the programs and outreach services aimed at high-risk males sometimes included females, most were not designed or implemented with females as a target population.¹

In the early phases of Operation Ceasefire (1995–1996), some of the working-group practitioners expressed concerns about what they perceived to be a growing female gangs problem and noted the existence of two large (numbering over 50 members), independent female gangs who were “terrorizing” two high schools (Nurge, 2000a). These early discussions prompted research into the nature and extent of female gangs in Boston. Using streetworkers and other youth workers (mostly former gang members) as initial referral sources, Nurge snowball sampled and interviewed 68 young women, aged 13 to 24, who were self-defined gang or clique members. These young women represented 25 different groups from 15 different neighborhoods across Boston. Approximately two-thirds of the young women were African American, another third were Latina, and the remainder were of mixed racial/ethnic heritage (Nurge, 2000a).

Based on females' definitions—and subsequent descriptions—of their groups, cliques and gangs emerged as two distinct types of female peer groups. While both types of groups fulfilled the same general functions for their members (providing protection, sisterhood, and opportunities to achieve status), and the members of each were similar in terms of age, socioeconomic status, family backgrounds, victimization experiences, neighborhoods, fighting behavior, and school experiences, there were significant differences between cliques and gangs. Clique members described their groups as friends who “have each other's backs” and “are down for each other” should trouble find them. (They adamantly asserted that cliques, unlike gangs, did not seek trouble.) Although most cliques had names, they were less formally structured than gangs; they lacked leadership, initiations, meetings, rules, or sanctions, and there were few explicit or implicit obligations to the group. By contrast, gangs were sig-

n: females, and younger
al gangs.

ne time, anecdotal evi-
ore violent (Ford, 1998).
me or previous research
nce are unsubstantiated,
s their existence and re-
nvolved in gang-related

ng problem was increas-
ervention, and suppress-
ed less problematic and
ince female gang mem-
7 did not command the
ale gang members did.
imed at high-risk males
r implemented with fe-

96), some of the work-
they perceived to be a
of two large (number-
were "terrorizing" two
rompted research into
streetworkers and other
referral sources, Nurge
ed 13 to 24, who were
en represented 25 dif-
Boston. Approximately
an, another third were
eritage (Nurge, 2000a).
descriptions—of their
of female peer groups.
ctions for their mem-
to achieve status), and
economic status, fam-
ods, fighting behavior,
as between cliques and
who "have each oth-
ible find them. (They
ek trouble.) Although
ured than gangs; they
as, and there were few
trast, gangs were sig-

nificantly larger groups, displaying all or most of the features noted to be lack-
ing in cliques, and demonstrating a variety of structures and levels of orga-
nization. Despite the distinctions between cliques and gangs, there was also
fluidity among such groups: some cliques developed into larger, more orga-
nized gangs, and some gangs disintegrated into smaller, more loosely structured
cliques (Nurge, 2000a).

The majority of "female" cliques and gangs studied were mixed-gender
groups (either coed, auxiliary, or female groups with loose attachments to male
groups), but approximately 25 percent were independent/all-female groups.
Like Boston's traditional male gangs, the female groups were largely territorial
in nature, though a few citywide groups with no particular neighborhood alle-
giances existed (such groups typically formed in schools). These citywide groups
appear to be part of an emerging local trend of male and female youth forming
gangs that mimic the names and styles of popular gangs found elsewhere (that
is, the Crips, Bloods, and Folk) (Nurge, 2000a).

Female clique and gang members exhibited similar rates of arrest (about
50 percent of all members of both groups had been arrested at least once), but
gang delinquency/criminality tended to be more group oriented and seri-
ous (for example, crimes committed with—or for—the group, including rob-
bery, car theft, assault with a deadly weapon, drug sales, and attempted mur-
der). Clique members' arrests were primarily for individual fights. Fighting was
extremely common among all the females interviewed; most of the fights were
related to perceived acts of disrespect toward either the individual, the group,
or both. Although many of the female gang and clique members interviewed
admitted to regularly carrying, and sometimes using, various weapons (includ-
ing knives, shanks, razors, and bleach spray bottles), the vast majority did not
own, carry, or use firearms (Nurge, 1999b, 2000b).

In the years since the inception of Operation Ceasefire, there has been in-
creased attention and resource allocation to girls' needs, with several new lo-
cal programs being implemented. The Boston School Police created a program
(Women in Transition) through which female officers have discussion sessions
with groups of high-risk adolescent girls in middle schools; several local com-
munity centers now have Girls' Programming coordinators; the Ten Point Co-
alition and clergy have extended outreach efforts to girls and have created a
committee focused specifically on girls' resources; and the Dorchester Youth
Collaborative, a drop-in program focused on gang prevention/intervention has
implemented a program (Our Turn) to serve at-risk Vietnamese girls (Nurge,
1999a, 2000a).

Crips, Bloods, and Imitators

The gangs of the 1980s and early 1990s, targeted through Operation Cease-
fire, were primarily small, intraracial, neighborhood-based groups composed of
older teens and young adults, and centered around drug sales. Recently—and
for the first time in Boston's history—practitioners have been documenting the
emergence of multiethnic/racial citywide gangs adopting the names, symbols,

rituals, and lore of nationally recognized gangs such as the Crips, Bloods, and Folk (Boston School Police, 1999).

While these new gangs have no known connection to the national or Los Angeles-based Bloods and Crips or Chicago-based Folk, they mimic their symbols and style. In contrast to Boston's traditional gangs, these groups' members are younger and do not yet have extensive criminal profiles. Whereas most of the "old" gangs were involved in drug sales and territorial disputes, these gangs appear to have minimal involvement in drugs and have "beefs" that stem more from affiliation than from neighborhood. According to practitioner accounts, these newer groups are composed of younger members (ages 12–17) and are active within Boston schools (notably middle schools). Although some of the gangs are clustered in specific neighborhoods, and some are composed primarily of one race/ethnicity, they are much more geographically and racially/ethnically diverse than ever before, including African American, Latino, Asian, and white youth (Radin and Vasquez, 1998; Nurge, 2000a). As with Crips, Bloods, and Folk elsewhere, various factions or "sets" of each group appear to be developing in Boston. Anecdotal accounts and Nurge's research document the presence and activity of girls in these groups.

Although Boston's overall youth homicide rate currently remains much lower than it was during the height of violent gang activity in the early 1990s, the Boston School Police have documented recent increases in school assaults and violence, and there have been several high-profile stabbings and other weapon attacks (hammers, machetes, cleavers) attributed to groups calling themselves Crips and Bloods (Radin and Vasquez, 1998). Local practitioners who have witnessed the growth and development of youth violence and gangs in previous eras suspect that the current trends in school violence and weapons-related offenses will eventually spread into neighborhoods and become more lethal, if left unaddressed.

Practitioners and community members are also voicing concerns about increasing violence between various local Vietnamese gangs, some of whom are aligned with the new Crips/Bloods/Folk groups and others with more traditional groups that have existed within the city for several years (Latour, 2000a). Several incidents during the year 2000 have prompted renewed efforts to extend both outreach and suppression efforts to Vietnamese youth. At the same time, the city's Cape Verdean youth gangs have also raised concerns (Robertson, 2000; Walker, 2000). Although Cape Verdean gangs have been active in Boston for several years, in 2000 violence appeared to be on the rise: on July 30, 2000, a 16-year-old Cape Verdean boy was the first juvenile to be killed by gunfire in nearly two years (Latour, 2000c).

It remains an open question as to why gang activity has evolved in Boston. Violence among the gang members targeted by the original Operation Ceasefire initiative has remained low, but Boston has experienced a growth of gang involvement among new (and some existing but nontargeted) groups of young males and females. Operation Ceasefire took effect against a backdrop of more sweeping enforcement attempts against gangs elsewhere, most famously the "street sweeps" of Los Angeles, which were soundly rejected by the courts. The

the Crips, Bloods, and

to the national or Los
Folk, they mimic their
ings, these groups' mem-
profiles. Whereas most
ritorial disputes, these
have "beefs" that stem
ling to practitioner ac-
mbers (ages 12-17) and
ols). Although some of
ome are composed pri-
raphically and racially/
merican, Latino, Asian,
000a). As with Crips,
f each group appear to
e's research document

rently remains much
ity in the early 1990s,
ases in school assaults
e stabbings and other
o groups calling them-
cal practitioners who
violence and gangs in
olence and weapons-
ds and become more

ig concerns about in-
s, some of whom are
iers with more tradi-
ears (Latour, 2000a).
newed efforts to ex-
e youth. At the same
d concerns (Robert-
have been active in
the rise: on July 30,
e to be killed by gun-

s evolved in Boston.
al Operation Cease-
ed a growth of gang
ed) groups of young
a backdrop of more
most famously the
d by the courts. The

Boston working group and its allies crafted a strategy that would protect the civil rights of everyone concerned at the same time that it contained and curbed the violent behavior of its targets. The focus on individual behavior, probable cause, and proportional targeted response was, in effect, primarily a suppression strategy in spite of its attendant social interventions and support elements. Most of the strategy was directed at proximate causes, with some attention directed toward fundamental causes.

More robust (and sustained) general prevention efforts must accompany the suppression efforts, and survive them. Comprehensive attempts to address fundamental causes are difficult to mount, more difficult to maintain without some visible evidence of their need, and rarely have such vivid measures of their success as a reduction in body count. There is considerable resistance to initiatives like general school-based anger management programs, for instance, or other measures that seek to teach children in disadvantaged areas the tools of good citizenship that others absorb through family and neighborhood examples. Programs that seek to divert the most trouble-prone youth are resented by some adults as "rewards for bad behavior," providing delinquents with perceived advantages that should instead go to already-conforming youth. The lesson from Operation Ceasefire is that when these broader-based prevention efforts are combined with suppression efforts and advocated by criminal justice professionals, there seems to be the potential for broader-based public support.

Although Operation Ceasefire was intended to halt violent behavior by Boston gangs, the interventions that composed the original strategy were intended to influence the behavior of a relatively small group of gang-involved chronic offenders. Since the mid-1990s, the nature of the youth violence problem and the characteristics of Boston gangs have evolved. The violent gangs of the mid-1990s still exist in Boston, and Operation Ceasefire remains an important response to their violent behavior. However, Operation Ceasefire was not specifically designed to deal with the younger, less criminally active Bloods, Crips, and Folk gangs. Consistent with the problem-solving approach of the original effort, new problem analysis of this emerging problem will be necessary to inform an appropriate response.

CONCLUSION

Operation Ceasefire was a problem-solving initiative designed to address a very specific problem arising from a very specific group. The broad-based approach to a focused problem, youth gun violence, seems to have produced a significant reduction in this type of violence. Although the tactics of Operation Ceasefire were appropriate to control violence among traditional gangs, they may not be as effective in dealing with the emerging gang problems. In response to the changing nature of gangs, the collaborative gang initiative has had to rethink the intervention approach. Although a full empirical analysis of the "new" gangs has yet to be done, it is apparent that their composition, structure, and activities are notably different from the traditional neighborhood-based gangs.

The Operation Ceasefire partners have recently renewed their strategy sessions to devise new responses to the shifting nature of the youth groups and their activities. Police officers, clergy, probation officers, and community volunteers have teamed up to make home visits to the parents and families of those youth who have been identified by teachers and school officials as involved in—or at risk of involvement in—these groups. The Operation Ceasefire team has conducted forums among middle and high school youth, efforts are in place to improve preventive services within the schools, and several local agencies have been involved in mediating disputes as they arise.

There are no easy answers, but the shifting nature of youth violence brings with it a clarion message: conflict will be cyclical, victories may be short-lived, and the task will be repetitive. A consistent, comprehensive prevention effort that starts before the onset of violence is an expensive, politically difficult, but ultimately a necessary complement to even the most successful suppression efforts. Programs such as DARE and GREAT enjoy great cachet politically, and are well received by parents and administrators alike because of the positive contact between police officers and schoolchildren. They are essentially proximate-cause tactics, not comprehensive strategies, and because they depend on existing and essentially didactic scripts, they ultimately do not address fundamental causes. The lesson of Operation Ceasefire is that an approach to violence that is inclusive and incorporates both suppression and prevention activities can reduce violence. But as we implement this type of approach elsewhere, we realize that each implementation must be flexible and tailored to the specific problems and cultures of each jurisdiction.

NOTE

1. Project FORCE (Females Obtaining Resources and Cultural Enrichment), a female gang prevention program initiated through the Boston Housing Authority in 1992, was an exception. Boston was one of seven female gang-programming sites funded through the Family Youth Service Bureau under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Operated out of a few different Boston housing project youth centers, this program was holistic in nature, providing academic

support, recreation, substance abuse education, sex education, cultural enrichment programming and employment training. Although it appears to have served a relatively small number of girls and was short-lived due to a lack of ongoing funding, anecdotal reports from several practitioners and former female gang members interviewed for Nurge's female gang study suggest this program was successful in preventing gang membership among girls in the program sites (Nurge, 2000a).

REFERENCES

Asbury, Herbert. 1927. *The Gangs of New York: An Informal History of the Underworld*. Garden City, N.Y.: Garden City Publishing Company.

Boston Community Centers. 1997. *Streetworkers: Program Plan*. Boston: Boston Community Centers.