

# Gang Suppression Through Saturation Patrol, Aggressive Curfew, and Truancy Enforcement: A Quasi-Experimental Test of the Dallas Anti-Gang Initiative

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*In 1996, the Dallas Police Department began an anti-gang initiative that was designed to reduce gang violence. Five defined target areas that were home to seven of the city's most violent gangs received overtime-funded officers to implement several different enforcement strategies. The strategies included saturation patrol and aggressive curfew and truancy enforcement. Control areas were selected, and preintervention and postintervention measures of gang violence and offenses that were reported to the police were analyzed. The findings indicated that aggressive curfew and truancy enforcement led to significant reductions in gang violence, whereas simple saturation patrol did not. In addition, there were no significant reductions in offenses reported to the police. The significance of these findings and policy implications is discussed.*

For years, police agencies have pursued tactics designed to deal with the proliferation of gangs and gang violence. According to the National Youth Gang Survey, the primary strategy in many jurisdictions is suppression (Spergel and Curry 1990). Suppression tactics include tactical patrols by law enforcement, vertical prosecution by district attorneys, and intensive supervision by probation departments. Generally, suppression involves the arrest, prosecution, and incarceration of gang members. Although suppression is the primary strategy in many jurisdictions, it is also frequently viewed as the least effective (Spergel and Curry 1990).

In 1996, the Dallas Police Department received an anti-gang initiative grant from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services to combat violent gang activity. The grant period lasted from June 1, 1996, through

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May 31, 1997. In 1996, the city of Dallas had 79 gangs with 6,145 documented gang members. In addition, there were 1,332 gang-related incidents recorded in 1996. The Dallas Police Department targeted five areas, made up of a varying number of patrol beats, which were home to seven of the most violent gangs in Dallas. In the year preceding the grant, the targeted gangs accounted for 18 percent of the known gang members in Dallas and were responsible for approximately 35 percent of the gang-related violent crimes.

The primary objective of the grant was to fund overtime enforcement in the five targeted areas in hopes of significantly decreasing violent gang activity through suppression. Gang Unit officers teamed with Interactive Community Policing (ICP) officers to develop innovative enforcement strategies for each of the targeted areas. Subsequently, teams of six to eight officers were assembled and received overtime pay to implement the developed strategy. These officers were freed from calls for service and instead spent their time implementing and carrying out the particular enforcement strategy. Although tactics such as “buy-bust” operations and warrant service were employed during the grant period, the vast majority of overtime funds were spent on three suppression tactics: aggressive curfew enforcement—juvenile curfew ordinances were strictly enforced whenever suspected gang members were encountered;<sup>1</sup> aggressive truancy enforcement—officers worked closely with local school districts in enforcing truancy laws;<sup>2</sup> and saturation patrol—officers conducted high-visibility patrols in target areas, stopping and frisking suspected gang members or other suspicious persons that they observed and making arrests when appropriate. The research reported in this article assessed the effectiveness of these strategies in reducing gang-related violence and gang-related offenses reported to the police.

#### *LITERATURE REVIEW*

##### *The Police Role in Dealing With Gangs*

Several authors, while noting that gangs per se probably cannot be eradicated, believe that the police can manage and, in effect, suppress the more negative aspects of gang activity (Huff and McBride 1993; Owens and Wells 1993; Rush 1996). The various strategies adopted by law enforcement to deal with gangs have been well documented (Dart 1992; Huff and McBride 1993; Jackson and McBride 1996; Johnson, Webster, Connors, and Saenz 1995; Klein 1993, 1995; Knox 1994; Spergel 1995; Weston 1993). Some have advocated the use of specialized patrols, especially foot patrol (Wilson and Kelling 1989); others have embraced a philosophy best represented by the

GREAT program, which integrates schools and law enforcement and teaches resistance (Howell 1996); and still others have advocated traditional and non-traditional law enforcement suppression techniques (Houston 1996; Johnson et al. 1995; Needle and Stapleton 1983; Rush 1996). However, empirical evaluations of the prescribed strategies have been few in number.

Gang suppression by law enforcement has also often included a broad range of tactics that frequently have taken the form of crackdowns. Crackdowns typically have involved "a sharp increase in law enforcement resources applied to the previously under-enforced laws, with a clear goal of enhancing general deterrence of the misconduct" (Sherman 1990b, p. 2). Most often, crackdowns have been effective initially, have had a short residual deterrent effect, and have been followed by an eventual return to preintervention levels of crime (Sherman 1990b). Generally, greater successes have been found in strategies focusing on specific offenses, offenders, and places than by simply increasing presence (Sherman 1990b). Although Sherman (1990b) has provided an extensive review of police crackdowns, including those emphasizing suppression of drug sales, drunk driving, prostitution, subway crime, and various other serious and nonserious crimes, no gang-specific crackdowns were examined or discussed in his review.

Gang crackdowns have not been evaluated systematically (Klein 1995). Some authors have dismissed the use of the crackdown entirely. "In the case of youth gang interdiction, this tactic is analogous to an attempt to put out a forest fire with a water bucket" (Shelden, Tracy, and Brown 1997, p. 212). However, a crackdown can be, and often is, a coordinated effort by a law enforcement agency to stop a certain type of crime or an offender using more than simple police presence. Indeed, the role of crime analysis in directing and supporting police crackdowns is growing; however, to date, very little empirical research examining well-coordinated crackdowns directed by crime analysis has been conducted. The studies that have been done have shown dramatic results, as was the case in the Minneapolis "hot-spots" research (Sherman 1990b) and the Kansas City Gun Experiment (Sherman, Shaw, and Rogan 1995).

Gang problems and behaviors vary widely from city to city as well as within cities (Weisel and Painter 1997). In accordance, it is doubtful that one strategy will be effective across and within all jurisdictions. Some law enforcement agencies have adopted a philosophy of total suppression, in which any gang member or wanna-be has been targeted, such as in the Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD) Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums (CRASH) (Freed 1986; Klein 1993). Others, such as the Los Angeles Sheriff's Operation Safe Streets (OSS), have adopted a philosophy of target suppression, in which the police have only targeted hard-core gang

members (Freed 1986; Klein 1993). Still others, such as the Oxnard, California, Police Department's Gang-Oriented Comprehensive Action Program (GOCAP) and the Westminster, California, Tri-Agency Resource Gang Enforcement Team (TARGET), have focused on information sharing and intelligence gathering to identify, arrest, and successfully prosecute gang members (Kent and Smith 1994; Owens and Wells 1993).

Most of the current prescriptive literature has focused on community-oriented tactics. Some have recommended that the police stop trying to eradicate gangs and that they communicate with gang youths in such a way as to demonstrate respect, acceptance, and concern for gang youths (Spergel 1995). The literature has also concluded that law enforcement alone cannot solve the gang problem—in fact, the typical police organization is ill-equipped and poorly structured to deal with gangs (Rush 1996). Dealing with gangs requires a comprehensive approach that involves all members of the criminal justice community, schools, community leaders, and the like (Owens and Wells 1993; Rush 1996). A fundamental problem with all of the aforementioned strategies, but especially the latter, has been the lack of reliable, well-documented, well-designed, empirical evaluations of the strategies and tactics employed (Klein 1993, 1995; Knox 1994; Spergel 1995).<sup>3</sup> In fact, some of the evaluations of the tactics have been gleaned from newspapers (Freed 1986).

A recent review of several gang efforts has questioned the efficacy of police responses in dealing with the problem (Weisel and Painter 1997). In describing the gang enforcement tactics in five major cities in the United States, Weisel and Painter (1997) noted that “none of the agencies engaged in any identifiable long-term planning process or conducted research to monitor the changing nature of the problem. None . . . engaged in meaningful evaluations of effectiveness of specialized or other departmental efforts related exclusively to gang enforcement” (p. 83). In fact, some evaluative statements have been based on hunches because of the lack of empirical data. For example, Klein (1993) has said, “my informed hunch is that suppression programs, left to their own devices, may deter a few members but also increase the internal cohesiveness of the group” (p. 312). Indeed, much of the current literature has concluded that traditional law enforcement tactics alone will have little effect on reducing, managing, or suppressing gangs (Huff and McBride 1993; Rush 1996; Shelden et al. 1997; Spergel 1995).

#### *Empirical Evaluations of the Effect of Police on Gang Activity*

Spergel (1995) has concluded that the strategy of targeting gangs and gang members only for suppression purposes is flawed. However, in evaluating the

effectiveness of suppression, Spergel also noted that “We have no systematic or reliable assessments of the effectiveness of a gang suppression strategy by criminal justice agencies, particularly law enforcement” (p. 198). Indeed, his analysis of the literature assessing the effectiveness of gang suppression by law enforcement consisted of a series of anecdotal comments from newspaper articles—hardly a scientific source. Klein (1995) reviewed several sweep programs that were undertaken in California. Operation Hammer, which was conducted by the LAPD, was a preannounced, media-covered gang sweep of Los Angeles that resulted in 1,453 juveniles being arrested; however, 1,350 were released without formal charges being filed. In the end, the operation was characterized by Klein and some LAPD officials as “all show” that was only for public relations. However, Klein also reported that when he rode along with Los Angeles County Sheriff’s officials on a gang sweep that was not announced, not covered, and that was coordinated among several different targeted areas, the results were much different. Whereas Operation Hammer provided serious gang members with good laughing material, the Sheriff’s sweep produced no humor among the arrestees that night.

Evaluations of community-based gang prevention programs are increasing. However, many of these have been qualitative and did not measure the impact of the program on crime in general or even on gang-related crime. For example, Thurman, Giacomazzi, Reisig, and Mueller (1996) evaluated a community-based gang prevention program implemented in Mountlake Terrace, Washington. Their evaluation included direct observation, focus group interviews, and official crime statistics. The program purported to provide an alternative outlet in which youths at risk or already involved in a gang could spend their time (Thurman et al. 1996). The official crime statistics used in the study were general calls for service to the police, with no breakdown given between gang-related calls for service and regular calls for service. Although Thurman et al. concluded that the intervention “appears to be a cost-effective gang prevention and intervention program” (p. 292), no data on crime; effect on the number of gang members, gang-related crimes, or gang-related calls for service; or other statistical evidence were offered to support this conclusion. Furthermore, the extent and scope of the gang problem in the area, the demographic characteristics of the community, and the crime statistics for the community were not discussed. The authors concluded that the program “offers an effective alternative to traditional law enforcement approaches which typically rely on police crackdowns and curfews to regulate gang activity” (Thurman et al. 1996, p. 279), yet no evidence was offered to show that these latter techniques were ineffective or have not been effective in the past—either nationally or in Mountlake Terrace.

Palumbo, Eskay, and Hallett (1992) evaluated three gang prevention programs, including Arizona New Turf, GREAT, and Community Reliance Resource Effort (CARE). They found that although all of the programs were well implemented, there was no effect on the gang problem, even though police officers, students, and members of the community felt positively about the programs. Indeed, the majority of the community-based programs may fall victim to a common criticism—they sound good, feel good, look good, but do not work good. Many of the evaluations of these community programs have relied on qualitative data that typically show that everyone surveyed or interviewed thought the program was effective and useful, but no quantitative empirical support has been offered to indicate the impact on the gang problem, gang-related crime, or the gang members served by the program.

Much of the current literature has been dismissive, perhaps prematurely, of the ability of the police to suppress gang activity in that there are virtually no empirical studies that support such a claim. As Klein (1993) noted,

The message is not so much that suppression does or does not “work”: evidence one way or the other is sorely lacking. *There are logical, as well as experiential, reasons to believe that suppression programs can have deterrent effects and thus, by our reasoning, can contribute substantially to gang and drug activity prevention.* (P. 308; emphasis in original)

#### *Curfew and Truancy Enforcement*

The literature assessing curfew and truancy enforcement is still in its infancy; most existing studies have focused on tactics, descriptions of programs, and legal issues (Friend 1994; Garrett and Brewster 1994; “Juvenile Curfews” 1994; Ruefle and Reynolds 1995; Watzman 1994). Curfews have received attention recently because of their perceived effectiveness in reducing juvenile crime and juvenile victimization. Much anecdotal reference about their effectiveness has appeared in the popular media (LeBoeuf 1996; Ruefle and Reynolds 1995), but the existing academic literature on curfew and truancy enforcement has been limited to a few articles on the number of arrests and the various types of ordinances that have been enacted.

Hunt and Weiner (1977) studied a Detroit curfew that was specifically designed to reduce criminal gang activity by youths. They used before and after comparisons of crime rates and criminal temporal activity and concluded that the curfew enforcement seemed to effectively reduce or suppress the relative level of crime during curfew hours, although they also found evidence of temporal displacement (i.e., gang-related crime increased during noncurfew hours). Ruefle and Reynolds (1995) surveyed metropolitan police departments serving populations of more than 200,000 and found that cur-

fewer in one form or another existed in 59 (77 percent) of the 77 largest American cities. The Dallas Police Department's internal analysis revealed that following adoption of its aggressive curfew enforcement program, juvenile victimization during curfew hours dropped 17.7 percent and juvenile arrests dropped 14.6 percent from the previous year (Click 1994). Statistics from Phoenix, Arizona, revealed that 21 percent of all curfew violators were gang members. Furthermore, a 10 percent decrease in juvenile arrests for violent crimes occurred following implementation of an aggressive curfew program (LeBoeuf 1996). Decreases in various other juvenile crimes occurred in several other metropolitan areas (Chicago, Denver, Jacksonville, New Orleans, North Little Rock) that employed curfew programs (LeBoeuf 1996).

Truancy has been linked to a variety of negative consequences for youths (e.g., drug use, delinquency, unemployment) and for society (i.e., daytime crime, auto theft, vandalism) (Garry 1996; J. R. Martin, Schulze, and Valdez 1988; Rohrman 1993). However, the impact of aggressive truancy enforcement on crime rates remains essentially unevaluated. One evaluated program used a small squad of officers to enforce truancy laws; although numerous arrests were made, the impact on felonies and misdemeanors in the area was nominal (J. R. Martin et al. 1988). However, the study did not control for whether the crimes under study were committed by adults or by juveniles.

#### *METHODOLOGY*

A quasi-experimental design was used for the evaluation reported in this article. The main objective of the initiative was to decrease gang-related violence in the five targeted areas. The five areas were composed of patrol beats and were selected on the basis of two criteria.<sup>4</sup> First, the areas had experienced a large amount of gang violence in the preceding year. Second, they overlapped some of the defined Enterprise Zones and Renaissance Areas in Dallas. Enterprise Zones are designated by the city to encourage economic development in an area, and businesses receive tax breaks for locating in the Zones. A Renaissance Zone is an area in which neighborhood organizations use federal funds to design and implement programs to reduce crime and disorder.

To estimate the impact of the enforcement strategies on crime, it was important to select control areas for comparison purposes. Four control areas were selected based on a two-stage selection process. First, the number of violent gang-related offenses from June 1, 1995, through May 31, 1996, for each patrol beat in the same patrol division as the corresponding target area was determined from data provided by the Dallas Police Department Gang

Unit. Second, the beats with the largest number of violent gang-related offenses during the time period were matched with a corresponding target area and served as control areas.<sup>5</sup> The target and control areas were sufficiently similar to allow comparison and estimation of the efficacy of the gang suppression effort.

Two data sets were used to measure the anti-gang initiative's impact on crime. First, offenses reported to the police from June 1, 1995, through May 31, 1997, were obtained from the Crime Analysis Unit of the police department. Murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, auto theft, theft, arson, other assault, criminal mischief, drug offenses, and weapon offenses were analyzed. The last two offenses were measured by number of arrests rather than reported offenses. Second, data from the Gang Unit on all of the gang-related offenses reported to the police from June 1, 1995, through May 31, 1997, were collected. Several offenses were aggregated into the category of violent gang-related offenses.<sup>6</sup>

Because of the small sample size, gang-related property crimes were not analyzed. Final determination of whether an offense was gang related was made by Gang Unit detectives after a follow-up investigation based on police department criteria for gang-related crime.<sup>7</sup> Report formats clearly indicated that the offense was gang related by both a checked box and a narrative. Annual precomparisons and postcomparisons of crime in general and gang-related violence in particular were analyzed for each target and control area to determine the anti-gang initiative's impact on crime. For each comparison, a paired samples *t* test was computed to determine statistically significant differences between the mean values over two time periods. In instances in which statistically significant differences existed, efforts were made to determine the particular strategy employed during the time period (curfew enforcement, truancy enforcement, or saturation patrol).

### *Limitations*

Determining the generalizability of any evaluation of a gang suppression strategy is at best difficult; at worst, it is impossible. One specific problem with gang intervention strategy evaluation is the fact that police, prosecutor, and legislative definitions of gangs, gang-related crime, and gang members differ widely (Caeti, Fritsch, and Hemmens 1995; Curry, Ball, and Decker 1996). A second problem occurs when there is wholesale adoption of any gang intervention strategy without looking carefully at evaluations of the strategy and its assumptions, especially suppression strategies. This practice is ill-advised and could in fact be destructive (Klein 1995). Therefore, results must be interpreted with caution and replicated across and within several



TABLE 1: Mean Number of Violent Gang-Related Offenses per Month by Area

Area	Target Area			Control Area		
	Time 1	Time 2	t Test	Time 1	Time 2	t Test
Area 1	6.8	1.8	3.69*	2.9	2.6	0.46
Area 2	5.1	3.8	1.03	10.2	5.7	2.31*
Area 3	2.0	1.0	1.65	7.6	3.8	3.06*
Area 4	3.5	1.0	4.33*	1.9	2.3	-0.53
Area 5	3.5	1.3	3.04*	1.9	2.3	-0.53
All areas combined	20.9	8.9	7.21*	22.6	14.3	3.76*

NOTE: Time 1 = Year 1 (June 1995 through May 1996); Time 2 = Year 2 (June 1996 through May 1997).

\* $p < .05$ .

jurisdictions before broad and definitive conclusions can be drawn about the overall usefulness of a particular strategy. The fact that definitions of gang-related crime vary makes this caution all the more salient.

## FINDINGS

### *Gang Violence*

Table 1 compares the mean number of violent gang-related offenses in the five target areas per month with those in the four control areas. Overall, there was a statistically significant decrease (57 percent) in gang-related violence in the target areas during the grant period. Statistically significant decreases in gang violence were observed during the anti-gang initiative in the control areas as well, but the overall decrease was less substantial than in the target areas—37 percent in the control areas in comparison to 57 percent in the target areas.

Compared with the year prior to the anti-gang initiative (June 1, 1995, through May 31, 1996), there were statistically significant reductions in violent gang-related offenses in Target Areas 1, 4, and 5 during the grant period (June 1, 1996, through May 31, 1997). There was approximately a 73 percent reduction in violent gang-related activity in Target Areas 1 and 4 and a 64 percent reduction in Target Area 5. Little change in gang violence occurred in the control areas for these beats; indeed, Control Areas 4 and 5 experienced a 22 percent increase in gang violence during the grant year.

This increase in Control Areas 4 and 5 could be due to displacement of gang activity by the initiative. That is, increased police activity in a targeted

area may have forced gang members into areas of the city with a lesser law enforcement presence. Gang violence may have moved to another area instead of being eradicated. To investigate the possibility of displacement, the number of violent gang-related offenses for the 33 nontarget beats, contiguous to target beats, was determined and comparisons were examined. The sample size for each beat was small, which precluded the use of a paired samples *t* test; therefore, the raw frequencies were analyzed. Of the 33 beats contiguous to target beats, 15 experienced a decrease in gang violence during the grant period, whereas 10 experienced an increase and 8 experienced no change. Although the anti-gang initiative may have displaced some gang violence to other beats, the extent of displacement appears to have been minimal.

Further analysis was conducted to identify the strategies employed in Target Areas 1, 4, and 5 to determine which of them might be responsible for the significant decrease in gang violence. The strategies were obtained from weekly and monthly reports written by the sergeants responsible for a target area; they documented the overtime-funded enforcement strategies that were employed in the area during the study period. Of the strategies used in each area, the vast majority of overtime hours were spent on curfew enforcement in Target Area 1 (80 percent of overtime hours) and truancy enforcement in Target Areas 4 and 5 (89 percent of overtime hours). Therefore, concentrated efforts to enforce truancy and curfew laws had a positive impact on reducing gang violence.

In addition, there was also a 46 percent reduction in gang violence in Target Area 3 during the grant period and a 25 percent reduction in Target Area 2, but these reductions were not statistically significant. Differently, there were statistically significant decreases in gang violence in Control Areas 2 and 3, even though these areas did not receive overtime-funded enforcement strategies. There was a 44 percent reduction in violence in Control Area 2 and a 50 percent reduction in Control Area 3. However, these control areas may have received extra attention from the Gang Unit during on-duty hours. Because enforcement strategies in the five target areas were overtime funded, more on-duty time may have been spent in the control areas that did not have any overtime funds. Unfortunately, quantitative data to support this statement were unavailable.

It is important to recognize that the main strategies employed in Target Areas 2 and 3 differed from those in the other areas. Of the documented strategies in each area, the vast majority of overtime hours was spent on undirected saturation patrol. Officers in Target Areas 2 and 3 also employed other suppression strategies, such as truancy and curfew enforcement, but to a much lesser degree than did officers in Target Areas 1, 4, and 5. Therefore,

saturation patrol to increase police presence alone was not effective in decreasing the level of gang violence in these areas.

#### *Offenses Reported to the Police*

Data were collected on index violent and property crimes reported to the police. In addition, data were obtained on other assaults, criminal mischief, drug offenses, and weapon offenses. The following two hypotheses were tested:

*Hypothesis 1:* Increased officer presence led to decreases in reported offenses, especially for suppressible crimes such as robbery, auto theft, burglary, and criminal mischief.

*Hypothesis 2:* Freedom from responding to calls for service led to greater officer-initiated activity, which resulted in more arrests for drug and weapon offenses.

Table 2 compares the mean number of offenses reported to the Dallas Police Department per month during the grant year with the number of offenses reported per month during the prior year. As shown in Table 2, there were statistically significant increases in reported robberies (23.8 percent increase) and auto thefts (15.4 percent increase) in the target areas during the grant period. In addition, there were statistically significant decreases in reports of criminal mischief (15 percent decrease) and arrests for weapons violations (30 percent decrease) in the target areas. The statistically significant decrease in criminal mischief was also observed in the control areas during the grant period, despite the lack of overtime-funded enforcement strategies; thus, the decrease cannot be attributed to activities generated by the overtime funding in the target areas.

Neither of the two hypotheses were supported by the data. In fact, the direct opposite effect was noted in a few instances. For example, statistically significant increases in robbery and auto theft were observed in the target areas, perhaps because increased police presence encouraged the reporting of offenses due to the increased availability and presence of officers, but no data relevant to this explanation were available. Also, there was a statistically significant decrease, rather than the hypothesized increase, in arrests for weapons violations, which may be due to the deterrent effect of the increased presence of officers in these areas. Indeed, it is plausible that the strategies deterred gang members from visible criminal mischief and from carrying weapons once the word got out that the police were being more active. However, data were not available to support or refute this explanation.

**TABLE 2: Mean Number of Offenses Reported to Dallas Police Department per Month**

Offense	Target Area			Control Area		
	Time 1	Time 2	t Test	Time 1	Time 2	t Test
Index violent						
Aggravated assault	92.3	90.4	0.30	65.6	74.9	-0.99
Murder	3.7	2.6	1.26	2.8	1.3	2.16
Rape	5.5	5.3	0.16	6.3	7.0	-0.60
Robbery	61.0	75.5	-2.42*	47.1	44.5	1.15
Index property						
Arson	2.3	2.3	0.00	3.4	3.6	-0.24
Auto theft	142.6	164.6	-2.66*	160.4	174.3	-1.34
Burglary	129.3	141.5	-1.76	154.1	168.5	-1.40
Theft	349.8	366.9	-1.69	348.6	388.2	-2.73*
Part II offenses						
Assault	181.6	239.3	-1.55	148.3	211.1	-1.81
Criminal mischief	181.9	154.7	2.56*	208.3	181.7	3.19*
Drug offense <sup>a</sup>	86.4	107.1	-1.84	53.1	57.5	-0.62
Weapon offense <sup>a</sup>	19.5	13.8	3.25*	10.7	10.3	0.21

NOTE: Time 1 = Year 1 (June 1995 through May 1996); Time 2 = Year 2 (June 1996 through May 1997).

a. Based on the number of arrests.

\* $p < .05$ .

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study found that, consistent with previous research, undirected saturation patrol has little affect on reducing crime (Sherman 1990b). In short, simply adding more police officers without direction was not effective. Unfortunately, this conclusion has been overgeneralized to mean that policing and patrol does not work. Fortunately, other research has shown that directed patrol (whether directed toward offenders, places, victims, or offenses) was effective in varying degrees (Abrahamse, Ebener, Greenwood, Fitzgerald, and Kosin 1991; S. E. Martin 1986; S. E. Martin and Sherman 1986; Sherman, 1990a, 1990b, 1992; Sherman et al. 1995). The research reported in this article provides support for the latter statement because the aggressive enforcement of truancy and curfew laws was effective in reducing gang-related violence in target areas. This finding needs replication, particularly in a true experimental design.

Enforcement of curfew and truancy is frequently a low-priority task of officers, but it can have an impact on gang violence and may potentially have an even greater impact on juvenile victimization. For example, the number of homicides in Dallas (citywide) that involved a juvenile victim (excluding child abuse deaths) dropped from 18 during the year prior to the anti-gang initiative to 7 during the initiative. Furthermore, the number of gang-related juvenile homicide victims dropped from 6 during the first time period to 2 during the second (Caeti 1997).

We also found little effect on the number of offenses reported to the police. Increased officer presence did not lead to a decrease in offenses reported to the police. Sherman (1990b, 1992) reported that both increases and decreases in calls for service have been noted as the result of a crackdown. Thus, the validity of using calls for service as a measure of effectiveness must be questioned. In addition, freeing officers from responding to calls for service did not lead to greater officer-initiated activity, such as drug and weapons arrests. The question "What do officers do with their time?" needs greater empirical attention. Furthermore, suppressible crime was not affected greatly by the initiative overall. Perhaps this was because the enforcement activities that relied on curfew and truancy enforcement only had appreciable effects on the crimes that juvenile offenders commit. Indeed, criminal mischief and weapons offenses decreased dramatically in the targeted areas. Individuals who commit robberies and other serious felonies may be unaffected by curfew or truancy enforcement because they may be adults and/or not in the school system.

Many police scholars have concluded that traditional police activities and goals (preventive patrol, rapid response, investigations, etc.) have failed to achieve crime reduction and have increased problems of police-citizen alienation (Kelling 1978). However, more recently, Kelling (1996), in discussing how to define the bottom line in policing, noted the following:

A basic purpose of police is crime prevention. The idea that police cannot do anything about crime and that they stand helpless in the face of demographics, drugs, gangs, or whatever is unacceptable—often . . . a "cop-out" that covers lack of strategic commitment and absence of planning and implementation. (P. 31)

Police gang suppression activity may not affect gang membership or the conditions that create gangs. However, it is possible that those activities affect the nefarious effects of gangs—crime and violence.

Would we really care if kids joined gangs if gangs did not engage in criminal activity? Probably not; in fact, some positive gang values (group cohe-

siveness, loyalty, respect, discipline, etc.) are encouraged to a large extent in legitimate activities, such as youth sports, clubs, and various other groups. In any case, the gang suppression activities of law enforcement probably cannot and perhaps should not be concerned with the “whys” of gangs. As Spergel (1995) noted,

The police cannot be held responsible for basic failures of youth socialization; lack of social and economic achievement by families, deficiencies of schools, decreased employment opportunities for African-American youth, the extensive street presence and accessibility of sophisticated weaponry, and the extensive racism and social isolation that appear to be highly correlated with the gang problem in some low-income minority communities. (P. 191)

The police should, however, concern themselves with a more narrow mission of developing effective strategies to address the crime problems that gangs create. The idea that the police can change the underlying socioeconomic conditions that give rise to gangs or to the infinite reasons why kids join gangs is naive and unrealistic. This is not to say that other community agencies should not focus on such endeavors. The simple fact of the matter is that the police are designed, organized, staffed, and trained to deal with crime, not social services.

Although strategies that use offender-, place-, and crime-specific techniques are in their infancy and require greater empirical attention, much of the recent literature that has evaluated such strategies is promising (Sherman 1990b, 1992). For example, when overtime-funded officers were freed from calls for service in Houston, substantial reductions in suppressible crimes soon followed (Hoover and Caeti 1994). The philosophy is that

police agencies can impact the level of crime and disorder in a community. The police *do* make a difference. Saying that crime and disorder are a product of social and economic forces the police cannot and should not affect is rejected. (Hoover and Caeti 1994, p. 1)

The police should coordinate with other public agencies in their efforts to deal with gangs, and these efforts should be focused on the criminal problems that gangs create. Interagency cooperation and information-sharing models provide promise as well, especially the ability to successfully prosecute serious and habitual offenders (Owens and Wells 1993). Recent technological advances in the areas of computer mapping, object-oriented databases, management information systems, and offender identification and tracking all bode well for the ability of the police to increase their effectiveness in managing crime, particularly gang crime. More empirical evaluation research is

needed concerning which law enforcement strategies can lead to reductions in gang violence and victimization through gang violence.

### NOTES

1. Dallas has a nocturnal curfew ordinance that requires individuals (not accompanied by their parent or guardian) younger than age 17 to be in their residence between the hours of 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. on weeknights (Sunday through Thursday) and between the hours of 12 a.m. and 6 a.m. on weekends (Friday and Saturday).

2. The State of Texas truancy law requires juveniles between the ages of 7 and 16 to be enrolled in and attending school. Enforcement activity was conducted between the hours of 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. weekdays, concentrating on the gang-ridden target areas.

3. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has developed a comprehensive gang suppression and intervention strategy based on community models (Spergel, Curry, Chance, Kane, Ross, Alexander, Simmons, and Oh 1994). The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) (1997) has also published a monograph on *Urban Street Gang Enforcement*, which is a comprehensive overview of the various tactics employed by all agencies who come into contact with gangs. These works are very extensive, yet they are completely prescriptive—there is little mention or review of any empirical studies that evaluate the police role in dealing with gangs.

4. The target areas were composed of the following patrol beats: Target Area 1—Beats 513, 514, and 515; Target Area 2—Beats 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, and 419; Target Area 3—Beats 311, 312, 314, and 316; Target Area 4—Beats 112, 113, 115, 154, and 156; and Target Area 5—Beats 141, 143, 144, 145, 146, and 152.

5. The following beats comprise the control areas, which did not receive the overtime-funded enforcement strategies under the anti-gang initiative: Control Area 1—Beats 552, 553, and 555; Control Area 2—Beats 423, 425, 426, 427, 445, 448, and 456; Control Area 3—Beats 325, 326, 327, and 328; Control Areas 4 and 5—Beats 114, 116, 131, 134, and 135. Because Target Areas 4 and 5 were in the same patrol division, the same control area was used for both.

6. Capital murder ( $n = 2$ ); murder ( $n = 19$ ); attempted murder ( $n = 5$ ); aggravated assault ( $n = 415$ ); misdemeanor assault ( $n = 167$ ); sexual assault ( $n = 1$ ); deadly conduct ( $n = 64$ ); aggravated robbery ( $n = 56$ ); robbery ( $n = 46$ ); injury to a child ( $n = 5$ ); terrorist threats ( $n = 16$ ); retaliation ( $n = 4$ ); and cruelty to animals ( $n = 1$ ).

7. According to Dallas Police Department policy, an incident should be considered gang-related activity when participants, acting individually or collectively, are known to be gang members or gang associates and the criminal activity engaged in is aggravated assault, assault, robbery, homicide, possession for sale of narcotics, shooting at house and/or car, arson, retaliation/witness tampering, auto theft, criminal mischief (graffiti), sexual assault, kidnapping, or burglary. Officers may also consider an incident as street gang activity when (1) the participants are identified as gang members or associates who are acting individually or collectively to further any criminal purpose of the gang; (2) a reliable informant identifies an incident as gang activity or a participant as a gang member; (3) an informant of previously untested reliability identifies an incident as a gang activity and it is corroborated by other existing circumstances or independent information; (4) there are strong indications that an incident is gang related, such as the nature of the offense (i.e., drive-by shooting) or the fact that the participants were wearing/using common identifying signs, symbols, or colors; or (5) gang members or associates are identified through existing police gang intelligence files.

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