

**GANG TASK FORCES:  
FORMATION, NETWORK STRUCTURE, AND EFFECTIVENESS**

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**JULIE S. BARROWS**

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## **DEDICATION**

To my husband, Anthony, and our three beautiful daughters,  
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To my parents, Michael and Sandra Hollenhorst, and Jane Anderson.

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Desmond Tutu said, “you don’t choose your family.” But I would have chosen mine.

## **ABSTRACT**

Gang task forces are multi-agency collaborations that seek to address and quell gang problems in the communities they serve. From a sociological perspective, gang task forces offer a rich topic ripe for study. Why do gang task forces form? Are certain demographic and political environments more conducive to gang task force implementation? Which agencies participate in gang task forces? What relationships exist between gang task force participants and non-participants? Are gang task forces effective in combating real or perceived gang problems? This study is the first attempt to answer these important questions by examining every gang task force in operation in the United States today.

Using a mixed methods approach, this study compares original survey data collected from 197 of the 249 gang task forces in current operation to secondary data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS-USA), and the FBI's Uniform Crime Report to examine whether certain metropolitan areas are more likely to implement a gang task force and whether gang task forces are successful in curbing youth violence. After describing survey responses about gang task force formation and presenting a life table of the survival and hazard rate of gang task formation, the results of the Cox regression analyses suggest that gang task forces are likely to form in politically liberal areas of relative affluence with high juvenile crime rates. Further, and again after describing survey responses about gang task force effectiveness, the results of the fixed effects models suggest that gang task forces may indeed lower official juvenile crime rates while controlling for geographic region, race, socio-economic status, and political affiliation.

To complement the national study of gang task force formation, structure and effectiveness, a case study of one particular gang task force, the Metro Gang Strike Force in Minnesota (MGSF) is presented. After describing the organizational structure and network of relationships that exist in gang task forces according to national survey respondents, the case study provides a closer look into the structure of and relationships in the MGSF. A social network analysis examines the network positions of 27 of the 34 MGSF participants, and provides a visual depiction of their relationships.

Overall, this national study of gang task forces and case study of the MGSF offers the first 1) attempt to explain why such multi-agency collaborations form, 2) glimpse inside the network of a gang task force, and 3) evaluation of the success of gang task forces. As the first study of its kind, results are preliminary and subject to the limitations of the available data and evaluation research. However, this comprehensive analysis can be extended to studies of other private and public sector initiatives, and paves the way for much needed future research on gang task forces specifically.

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**CHAPTER 1:**  
**INTRODUCTION TO GANGS AND GANG TASK FORCES**

McCorkle and Miethe (1998; 2002) claim that media attention, fueled by police, centered on gangs creates a “moral panic,” whereby the public becomes overly fearful of gang members, who are often portrayed as devilish gun-toting, side-ways hat and baggie pants clad youth. Support for their hypothesis is found not only in daily newspapers, popular culture, and on the nightly news, but also in recent statements by our country’s leaders. During his fifth state of the union address, President Bush (2005) stated,

Tonight I propose a three-year initiative to help organizations keep young people out of gangs, and show young men an ideal of manhood that respects women and rejects violence.

Following these remarks, then newly appointed Attorney General Alberto Gonzales (2005) stated,

It’s clear that gangs have become an increasingly deadly threat to our neighborhoods. That’s why, just last month, I announced to all the country’s U.S. Attorneys several steps to strengthen our Nation’s efforts to combat gang violence and reduce crime.

These statements serve to first alarm the public of the dangers of gangs and second to calm these fears by suggesting that the problem will be solved. Yet, what is the solution to the gang problem?

Perhaps representing a paradigm shift, not just in terms of political leanings but in the approach to crime control, Attorney General Eric Holder (2009) postulates that the country must “get smart on crime” by following five principles: “1. Innovate. 2. Devise evidence-based strategies. 3. Show Results. 4. Learn from peers. 5. Collaborate.” He then

highlights several anti-gang programs that exemplify these principles, one of which is Los Angeles' Summer Night Lights program, a unique program run by the mayor's office but relying heavily on community partnerships to keep parks in high-risk areas open and well-lit until midnight.

In recent years, particularly since 2002 (National Youth Gang Center 2007), actual or perceived crime problems have given rise to an unprecedented number of anti-gang programs, each varying in mission, duration, participation, operation, and success. One set of such programs is the multi-agency gang task force- typically comprised of law enforcement agencies that partner with other law enforcement agencies, probation and parole agencies, prosecuting attorneys, courts, schools, or concerned community groups. As it will be shown, the composition and purposes of multi-agency task forces may be quite varied. Task forces are driven by the idea that combining efforts across levels of law enforcement, social service agencies, and other concerned groups can maximize the resources needed to accomplish a common goal, such as responding effectively to gang problems. This study represents a comprehensive analysis of such multi-agency gang task forces which has yet to be undertaken empirically until now.

### **Direction of Research**

This research seeks to answer three questions: 1) why do particular jurisdictions implement a gang task force; 2) once formed, what is the structure of gang task forces; and 3) are gang task forces effective? In addressing these questions, this study contributes to sociological literature in the following ways. First, the research focuses on the gang task force as an organization- distinct from police gang units- worthy of study. Second, each gang task currently operating in the United States is identified and data about each

are compiled and analyzed. Third, geographic areas with and without a gang task force are compared, to explore which areas are more conducive to adopting the task force approach. Fourth, this research applies a theoretical framework with which to understand the implementation and structure of gang task forces. Fifth, network concepts and tools are employed to examine such interagency collaborations. Finally, this research systematically evaluates the effectiveness of the task force approach in reducing youth violence. Before unpacking further the contributions of the current research, I turn now to an overview of the literature on gangs and police responses to gangs.

## **Gang Definitions, Involvement in Crime, and Police Strategies**

### The Concept of Gang

If there is one universal truth about the study of gangs, it is that there is no agreement on the definition of the term “gang.” This lack of consensus creates debate and causes confusion among researchers, policy-makers, and the general public; which, in turn, has serious implications for effective law enforcement and standardized research capabilities. Most authors immediately acknowledge the lack of consensus (see Short and Hughes 2006; Knox 2002; Howell 2000; Maxson 1998; Howell and Gleason 1999; Klein 1995; Klein et al. 1986; Curry et al. 1994) and formally address the question of “what is a gang?” Most answers to this question are derivative of Frederic Thrasher’s (1927) definition of “gang” in his pioneering study of 1,313 gangs in Chicago.

A gang is an interstitial group originally formed spontaneously, and then integrated through conflict. It is characterized by the following types of behavior: meeting face to face, milling, movement through space as a unit, conflict, and planning. The result of this collective behavior is the development of tradition, unreflective internal structure, *esprit de corps*, solidarity, morale, group awareness, and attachment to a local territory.

Thrasher's definition highlights the collective nature and structural elements of a gang but does not include members' criminal tendencies. The statements "integrated through conflict" and "attachment to a local territory" are somewhat foreboding but could also be completely benign. Therefore, in Thrasher's conceptualization, a gang might include a football team or a church group, among other organizations. A football team, for example, meets face to face, is united in its attempt to defeat rivals, plans each play and strives to defend its home turf.

Almost fifty years later, Miller (1975) presented a definition that expanded Thrasher's definition. Something in the nature of gangs or in the perception of gangs must have changed between 1927 and 1975 such that a mention of criminal tendencies was necessary in the definition.

A self-formed association of peers, bound together by mutual interests, with identifiable leadership, well-developed lines of authority, and other organizational features, who act in concert to achieve a specific purpose or purposes which generally include the conduct of illegal activity and control over a particular territory, facility, or type of enterprise (Miller 1975).

Miller's definition describes the collective nature and organizational structure that Thrasher indicated, but broadens the definition to include criminal behavior. The inclusion of the criminal nature of gangs squarely places gang activity into the law enforcement realm. In his publication sponsored by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Howell (2000) uses Miller's definition as a basis for understanding various gang programs and strategies implemented by law enforcement agencies across the nation.

However, Ball and Curry (1995), in their analysis of the differing types of definitions, argue that Miller's definition focuses too heavily on the criminal nature of gangs without acknowledging it as a correlate of gang membership. Ball and Curry (1995: 240) present the following definition:

The gang is a spontaneous, semisecret, interstitial, integrated but mutable social system whose members share common interests and that functions with relatively little regard for legality but regulates interaction among its members and features a leadership structure with processes of organizational maintenance and membership services and adaptive mechanisms for dealing with other significant social systems in its environment.

Ball and Curry's definition is reminiscent of Thrasher's in that they consider a gang to be "spontaneous" and "interstitial." It also points to criminal intent but in a more relaxed manner than that of Miller. "Little regard for legality" implies that gang members act on their own accord regardless of normative values, whereas "conduct of illegal activity" seems more purposeful in the acting out against normative values. Aside from this distinction, criminal involvement is present in Ball and Curry's definition of a gang, unlike Thrasher's earlier definition.

Criminal involvement in the definition of a gang has implications for law enforcement officials as well as scholars. Maxson (1998) notes that researchers often favor a broad definition of the term "gang," while law enforcement agencies typically employ a definition that facilitates quick categorization. For example, Meehan (2000) observed law enforcement officials categorizing a group of troublemakers as a gang. The Chicago Police Department more rigidly defines a gang as

an association of individuals who exhibit the following characteristics in varying degrees: a gang name and recognizable symbols, a geographic

territory, a regular meeting pattern, and an organized, continuous course of criminality (Block and Block 1993: 3).

While not lacking in details, the Chicago Police Department's definition is much simpler than that of the three scholars cited above.

Indeed, in their study of gang definitions and databases, Barrows and Huff (2009) found that, if defined at all in legislation, there is a wide disparity in how all fifty states define gangs and gang members. The concept of gang ranges from a group with at least one individual who engages in a specified criminal activity, as in Arizona's definition, to a group of at least five individuals with a hierarchy and a common alliance or understanding who commit a pattern of specified criminal activity, as in Kentucky's definition. Yet, despite the disparities, it is clear that in practice law enforcement gang definitions are simpler than those historically offered by scholars. However, a recent definition utilized by Klein (2006) may be the key to bridging the definitional ambiguities and allowing for comparative study. This definition (Klein 2006: 129) reads,

a street gang is any durable, street-oriented youth group whose own identity includes involvement in illegal activity.

Yet until this definition is employed both in practice and in theory, researchers will continue to struggle with disparate definitions.

#### Consequences of the Conceptual Ambiguity

The lack of consensus on the definition of "gang" has two major consequences. First, policy-makers enact different, sometimes inefficient, laws regarding gangs in different jurisdictions which "induces confusion in formulating policy responses to the gang problem" (Knox 2002: 64). Second, and as an outgrowth of the first, researchers

have difficulty communicating about and obtaining data on gangs and gang-related crime (Branch 1999).

Examples of such inefficiency in policy-making include the 1992 Chicago loitering ordinance, struck down in 1995 by the Illinois Supreme Court as too vague, which permitted a police officer to disperse a crowd based on that officer's identification of a "gang member" (Roberts 1999; Regini 1998). Such conflicting conceptualizations of gang have created wide policy disparities. For example, the murder of a store clerk by a gang member would be characterized as a gang-related murder in Los Angeles, but not necessarily in Chicago or Philadelphia (Klein et al. 1986).

The inability of policy-makers to agree on a definition also has serious implications for researchers. It is widely noted that gang-related data are difficult to obtain (Curry et al. 1996; Smith and Zahn, eds 1999; Howell 1998). Curry et al. (1994) note that gang-related crime has never been included in the FBI's Uniform Crime Rate (UCR). As a result, it is tempting to use any number of measures (e.g. youth homicide) as an indicator of gang-related crime. However, there are three problems with this. First, not all youth homicides are gang-related. Second, there are other gang-related offenses besides youth homicides. Third, McCleary et al. (1982: 362) note that UCR rates are non-comparable across jurisdictions. These researchers argue, "the official crime rate in a jurisdiction is a function of the organizational structure of the crime processing agency, that is, the local police department." They conclude that crime data should be obtained directly from the law enforcement agency. This may be effective for measuring crime in a particular locale but researchers must have some method to compare crime across

localities. At present, the compilation of crime data from law enforcement agencies in the FBI's UCR is deficient, but remains the best method available.

Due to the lack of consensus on the definition of "gang," data on gang crime still do not exist separately in the UCR. To complicate matters, from an empirical standpoint, sociologists often exclude motorcycle, hate, prison, and adult gangs (OJJDP 1996; Spergel and Curry 1993; Howell 2003), while law enforcement agencies do not. Thus, discrepancies in the conceptualization of "gangs" lead researchers to question the validity of gang-related data (Klein et al. 1986).

In summary of these definitional and data issues, and to provide direction to the subsequent discussion, Sullivan's (2006: 15) statements are most illustrative.

Everyone knows what gangs are. They are violent and they are bad. That is why we study them and take steps to control them and prevent young people from joining them. Perhaps there is something mistaken in all this. In this chapter, I raise the possibility that this focus on gangs as objects of study and official action is, in some fundamental ways, a flawed enterprise. Not because gangs do not exist, but because the label is too vague and the focus on gangs distracts us from an object of study that is broader and more intrinsically problematic. That object is youth violence.

These statements highlight the juxtaposition of the definitional issues surrounding the term "gang" with the embedded notion of what a gang member is, and the moral panic that results from this embedded notion. Overall, conceptual clarification of the term "gang" may be so difficult because those interested in gangs may have differing interests. Consider the differing interests of law enforcement, human service agencies, and scholars, for example. Perhaps a vague concept of "gang" satisfies the interests of individuals across this spectrum. Sullivan's (2006) statements serve to frame the gang problem more generally as a youth violence problem, and this is precisely what my

research attempts to do. As it will be discussed in Chapter 3, this research uses the juvenile violent crime rates from the UCR in its evaluation of gang task force formation and effectiveness.

### Gang Involvement and Crime

A single gunman acting alone in a robbery, simply put, differs from a crime resulting from a gang. The gang implies something that the lone criminal offender does not have: some sense of organizational capability. The gang also implies a continuing or persisting threat over time that can increase (Knox 1994: 4).

Knox's focus on "organizational capability" is significant. Some crimes are committed solely in the interests of the gang. For example, many gangs have an initiation ritual whereby a prospective member must commit a crime to be admitted (Branch 1999). This crime may not have been committed if not for the gang. By this token, the threat posed by a gang is greater than the sum of its individual members.<sup>1</sup>

Because gangs are, in Durkheim's (1982) words, "social facts," there is cause for them to be a subject studied by sociologists. Constitutive criminology provides the framework that helps us understand how the term "gang" takes on a special meaning to different individuals at different times.

Constitutive criminological theory perceives the human subject as an active creator of his or her social environment. At the same time, this social environment, as it has or is being collectively constituted by all social agents through discursive mediums, simultaneously produces those who have created it (Bak 1999: 21).

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<sup>1</sup> See Wheeler and Rothman (1982) to see how this argument also applies in the context of organizational crime.

Especially through the vehicle of the media, the word “gang” has become highly loaded. In the discourse surrounding gangs, people have attached meaning and value to the term “gang” that may not be supported empirically. For example, movies often portray gang members as young, inner city black men who shoot their gun side-ways. This ridiculous stereotype certainly does not reflect all gang members. Yet, through discourse, human subjects have embedded notions of what it means to be a gang member.

There are two consequences to this embedded notion of a gang member. First, in line with labeling theory (Lemert 1967), individuals participating in a gang may internalize the stigma of being a gang member and, in turn, their identity as a gang member is perpetuated and their criminal behavior is exacerbated. Klein and Crawford (1968: 259) argue that “gang cohesiveness derives from and is perpetuated by sources primarily external to the group.” Second, and more central to this discussion, embedded notions of the general public are in conflict with the daily reality faced by law enforcement officials and with the empirical evidence found by researchers, thus compounding the confusion surrounding the word “gang.”

Two interrelated components of the concept of gang that make gangs a viable threat to society are the organization of the gangs’ members and their criminality. Howell (1998: 3) describes a continuum upon which varying levels of gang organization may be placed:

from youth groups who hang out together in shopping malls and other places; to criminal groups, small clusters of friends who band together to commit crimes such as fencing operations; to street gangs composed of groups of adolescents and young adults who form a semistructured operation and engage in delinquent and criminal behavior; to adult criminal organizations that engage in criminal activity primarily for economic reasons.

Most researchers agree that organizational structure has a positive relationship with criminality; as the level of organization increases, so does the level of criminality (Warr 1996). In her network analysis of delinquent peer groups, of which gangs are a subset, Haynie (2001) finds that delinquency increases with increased network centrality, density and popularity.

Klein (1995: 24) admits that early in his gang studies he “became convinced that the very process of being accepted into a street gang led members to increased rates of delinquency.” Klein reached this conclusion after analyzing data from Los Angeles showing correlations between group cohesiveness and criminality.

Battin-Pearson et al. (1998) analyze the difference in criminality between gang members and youths simply associating with delinquent peers. In two vastly different project areas, Seattle and Rochester, the researchers reach the same conclusion: “being a member of a gang increases the rate of involvement in a variety of deviant behaviors over and above the impact of having delinquent peers” (p. 8).

At the other end of the continuum, Gleason and Howell (1999) analyze street gang involvement in drug trafficking. In their analysis of data collected in the 1996 National Youth Gang Survey (OJJDP 1999), drug gangs rather than street gangs are responsible for controlling most of the drug distribution in the 3,024 jurisdictions under study. Although this may provide marginal support for the argument that increased organization leads to increased criminality, more research on adult criminal organizations is needed.

However, the relationship between organization and criminality may not be linear. Klein (1995) finds that gang members engage in a “cafeteria-style” of offending; gang members commit widely varying offenses. Gleason and Howell (1999: 8) agree by stating “as gang member involvement in drug sales increased, the degree of gang member involvement in robbery, larceny/theft, burglary/breaking and entering, and motor vehicle theft increased significantly.” Thus, although drug gangs are more cohesive than street gangs (Klein 1995; Gleason and Howell 1999), it is unclear whether drug gangs commit more criminal acts than street gangs.

Further, it has been argued that the “cafeteria-style” of offending by street gang members is a greater threat to public safety than more organized criminal groups. “You are safer from crime in a drug gang territory (of which there are fewer, in any case) than in a street gang territory. There is less violence and less property damage” (Klein 1995: 130). Thus, regardless of the amount of crime drug gang members commit versus street gang members, street gang members are a greater threat to the general public.

In light of this discussion, it seems that there is something in the very nature of street gangs, as opposed to other delinquent youth groups or more organized criminal groups, which creates a sense of danger in the minds of the public. Researchers would argue that this sense of danger is not unfounded- street gangs really are dangerous. In a comparison of gang and non-gang youth involved in the Rochester Youth Development Study (RYDS), Thornberry and Burch (1997: 3) conclude that “while representing only one-third of the respondents in RYDS, gang members account for 86 percent of the serious delinquent acts, 69 percent of the violent delinquent acts, and 70 percent of the drug sales.” After an extensive review of the literature available on the topic, Howell and

Decker (1999) also agree that gang members commit more criminal acts than non-gang youth. Exacerbating this problem in regard to public safety is the fact that gangs are less organized or contained than the general public may think.

In support of Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) claim that gangs lack the level of organization necessary to control the actions of their members, Decker and Curry (2002) find that gangs in St. Louis were responsible for a disproportionate number of homicides and that the homicides were not committed in a patterned manner. Moreover, gang members often killed members of their own gang rather than members of rival gangs. Decker and Curry (2002: 350) also note that "gang members were more likely than others to have access to the means of inflicting lethal violence, motives for doing so, and the opportunities to commit homicides."

In their analysis of gang members in St. Louis, Decker and Van Winkle (1996) find that 81 percent of gang members owned guns and the mean number of guns owned was four. Further, most of the gang members reported using their guns at least once. Decker et al. (1997) interviewed arrested juveniles involved in the Drug Use Forecasting study. "One-third of gang members said it was okay to shoot someone who disrespected them" (Howell and Decker 1999: 6).

These findings show that street gangs pose a serious threat to society. In perhaps the most telling statement of all, Thornberry et al. (2003:1) state that

Indeed, the observation that gang members, as compared with other youths, are more extensively involved in delinquency – especially serious and violent delinquency – is perhaps the most robust and consistent observation in criminological research. This observation has been made across time, geographical and national boundaries, and methods of data collection.

More recently, Hall et al. (2006: 47) maintain this opinion, stating “gang members have exceptionally high levels of involvement in criminal behavior, especially more serious and violent types of offending.”

In light of this, the question remains how best to deal with youth involved in gangs. A review of how agencies respond to street gangs follows.

### Responding To Gangs

Media representations of the gang lifestyle and highly publicized gang-related offenses can lead to heightened perceptions that gang crime can infringe on the lives of the general public. Whether responses to the gang problem are driven by a real or perceived threat is a question that will be addressed in Chapter 4, yet historically most researchers agree that law enforcement responses originate from political pressure. In his ethnographic study of “Junction City’s” gang unit (an *intra*-agency response), Katz (2001) argues that “powerful elements” in the community drove the creation of the unit. More recently, in their evaluation of the formation and operation of the gang unit in four different police departments, Katz and Webb (2006) find that, although a very real gang problem exists within the jurisdiction of the police departments, it is actually institutional pressure that spawned the creation of the gang unit. Maxson (1998) and Esbensen and Osgood (1999) have also argued that law enforcement is vulnerable to political pressure. Albeit anecdotal, compelling evidence of this interplay is the creation of a gang task force in New York. The task force, officially named “The Task Force on Juvenile Gangs,” is more commonly known as the “Governor’s Task Force” since it was created by Governor Mario M. Cuomo (Glick 1992).

Another related view is that law enforcement responses are initiated when resources are allocated for the purpose of combating gang crime. Quinn and Downs (1993) noted that the competition for resources serves as a catalyst for law enforcement agencies to promote exaggerated perceptions of a gang problem. Increased awareness of gang problems (real or perceived) could lead to increased funding for the law enforcement agency. Katz et al. (2002) also find support for the resource dependency theory in their study of specialized gang units. “Police organizations receiving external funding for gang control functions were significantly more likely to have established specialized gang units” (Katz et al. 2002: 494).

The mechanisms driving implementation of an organized law enforcement response will be further discussed in Chapter 4. However, it is important to note that responses to the gang problem comprise a myriad of forms. In addition to specialized gang units and collaborative task forces, responses to a gang problem can include shared information systems, new or enhanced legislation governing gang-related crime, vertical and/or aggressive prosecution, increased victim/witness services, and community efforts, such as graffiti clean-up or job training, among other programs.

To aid in understanding different types of responses, Spergel and Curry (1993) created a typology. They identified five types of gang programs: (1) suppression, (2) social intervention, (3) social opportunities, (4) community mobilization, and (5) organizational change. Suppression efforts attempt to reduce gang crime through increased enforcement and prosecution. Social intervention programs provide immediate social services to at-risk youth, gang members, and their families in crisis situations. Social opportunity approaches focus on education, job training and placement to “expand

social capital and create new values among gang members by integrating them into legitimate social institutions” (Decker and Curry 2000: 132). The community mobilization strategy focuses on creating collaborative efforts to meet the needs of gang members. Finally, and most significant for this paper, “strategies that concentrate on organizational change require the creation of a broad consensus about gang problems and typically occurs through the formation of task forces” (Decker and Curry 2000: 132).

Although these five categories are useful for understanding the differing approaches to gang problems, it is important to point out that the categories are far from mutually exclusive. Rather, approaches to gang problems are often combined or even overlap in a complex, dynamic process. This paper is most concerned with task forces, which usually focus on suppression of gang crime; yet, aspects of all five approaches will be visible in many examples. Before turning to task forces specifically, many collaborative task forces begin with changes in legislation. These changes, by themselves, can be seen as suppression efforts in the strictest sense of Spergel and Curry’s (1993) typology; yet, collaboration was required to induce the change.

Cameron and Skipper (1997) describe a civil injunction granted in Redondo Beach, California that prohibits 28 defendants named in the order from doing things that are otherwise legal. For example, law enforcement officers noticed and neighborhood residents complained about members of the North Side Redondo (NSR) gang congregating in the park. The civil injunction listed numerous activities, such as violating a midnight curfew or littering, for which the gang members could now be arrested. Cameron and Skipper (1997) note that restricting the activities of these gang members led to a 38.5 percent decrease in gang-related crime. This would not have been possible

without the coordination of the neighborhood residents, police department, and prosecuting attorneys.

The examples of collaboration required to initiate changes in legislation often lead to the creation of task forces. In 1997, the Minnesota Legislature enacted enhanced penalties for gang members who commit crime in the interest of the gang. At the same time, agencies united to create the Minnesota Gang Strike Force, a collaborative task force comprised of local, state, and federal law enforcement officials as well as community groups and the state attorney general's office. The task force, mainly focused on suppression of gang crime, also utilized other aspects of Spergel and Curry's (1993) typology, yet the changes in legislation gave the task force its power. The enhanced penalty created was the "Crime Committed for Benefit of a Gang" statute and its overall purpose is to incapacitate individuals convicted of criminal gang activity.

**Minnesota 609.229. Crime committed for benefit of a gang**

**Subd. 2. Crimes.**

A person who commits a crime for the benefit of, at the direction of, in association with, or motivated by involvement with a criminal gang, with the intent to promote, further, or assist in criminal conduct by gang members is guilty of a crime and may be sentenced as provided in subdivision 3.

**Subd. 3. Penalty.**

- (a) If the crime committed in violation of subdivision 2 is a felony, the statutory maximum for the crime is five years longer than the statutory maximum for the underlying crime.
- (b) If the crime committed in violation of subdivision 2 is a misdemeanor, the person is guilty of a gross misdemeanor.
- (c) If the crime committed in violation of subdivision 2 is a gross misdemeanor, the person is guilty of a felony and may be sentenced to imprisonment for not more than three years or to payment of a fine of not more than \$15,000, or both.

However, Klein (1995) is pessimistic about such changes in legislation and aggressive prosecution. In his overview of the Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention (STEP) Act, a sentence enhancement enacted in California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, and Louisiana (Gramckow and Tompkins 1999), he questions whether gang members will receive the intended deterrent message. “Deterrence is far trickier than to be much affected by crack-down provisions” (Klein 1995: 180). Further, Klein (1995) and Quinn and Downs (1993) argue that responses to gang problems often lead to increased media attention to gangs, which, in turn, has an adverse affect by attracting youths to join gangs.

#### Specialized Gang Units or Task Forces

Fundamentally different than *inter*-agency task forces, gang units represent *intra*-agency responses to gang problems in a particular jurisdiction. Single police departments often assign officers to a specialized unit within the department to target a particular type of crime. The Minneapolis Police Department, for example, has a homicide unit, a narcotics unit, a sex crimes unit and a gang unit. Specialized gang units do not require collaborative relationships among members with other agencies. Hence, gang units are not as interesting as task forces to study from a network perspective. That said, the literature surrounding task forces and gang units, although scarce, is often interchangeable. For example, Langston (1998) offers insight on effective gang units, which includes collaborating with schools, corrections and community groups. More recently, Watkins and Ashby (2007) review three gang units in California that partner with other agencies in what appear to be more of a task force model.

Organized law enforcement responses adopt differing strategies for dealing with gang problems. Although these strategies vary widely, they generally include one or more

of three types: (1) *Prevention* efforts focus on educating youth about the negative aspects of gang membership; (2) *Intervention* efforts attempt to “rescue” gang members from gangs; and, (3) *Suppression* efforts seek to reduce gang-related crime through law enforcement.

Many prevention efforts can be traced to the influential Chicago Area Project (CAP) begun in the 1930s by sociologist Clifford R. Shaw. CAP focuses on prevention and intervention techniques designed to redirect gang members to become successful members of the community (Sorrentino and Whittaker, 1994). Although this effort is touted as effective, as exemplified by CAP’s statewide expansion and present-day operation, no actual data are presented for confirmation.

Focused specifically on prevention, the Gang Resistance, Education and Training Program (G.R.E.A.T) began in Phoenix, Arizona in 1991 (Humphrey and Baker 1994) and is a coordinated effort between the Phoenix Police Department, school system, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) to educate middle school youth on the dangers of gang membership. In an empirical analysis of the effectiveness of G.R.E.A.T, Esbensen and Osgood (1999) compare students who participate in G.R.E.A.T with those who do not. Their results show that students who participate have significantly more prosocial behaviors and attitudes. However, Esbensen and Osgood (1999) are careful to note that the findings are not generalizable because the sample was not random, and non-randomness presents real challenges to validity (Singleton et al. 1988).

Suppression efforts are more likely to tout their effectiveness by presenting statistics showing a reduction in gang crime. In 1990, the police department in Cleveland, Ohio created a gang unit and, later, the school system also created a gang unit (Torok and

Trump 1994). These units coordinated a suppression effort to reduce gang-related crime in the community and schools. As a measure of effectiveness, the police department pointed to a 15% decrease in juvenile court filings and schools noticed a 39% reduction in gang-related incidents compared to the previous year. Similarly, Operation REACT, which formed in Chicago in 1994 as an alliance between the Chicago Police Department and the FBI in response to an escalation of gang-related violence, pointed to the 417 arrests, recovery of 157 firearms and a 13% reduction in shootings compared to the previous year as measures of effectiveness (Rodriguez and Branon 1996).

As further evidence that task forces take on a multitude of forms, the Safe Streets Task Force (SSTF), the Tri-City Task Force, and the Boston Gun Project combine all three strategies while the National Major Gang Task Force cannot be categorized as a prevention, intervention, or suppression effort. The SSTF was launched by the FBI in 1992 and unites federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies in its comprehensive mission. Shur (1995) notes that the New Jersey branch of the SSTF had a 24% reduction in violent crime and a 17% reduction in crime overall.

Officials from city police departments, public and private school systems, and the shared Metropark system in three suburbs of Cleveland collaborated to create the Tri-City Task Force in 1992 (Huff and Trump 1996). In an effort to prevent youth from joining gangs, the task force expanded the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E) program and piloted the G.R.E.A.T program in cooperation with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) field office in Cleveland. Intervention efforts included private meetings with at-risk youth and their families as well as the creation of a Teen Court where first offenders were sent for diversion. In order to suppress gang crime, the task

force placed two security staff in the schools to investigate disruptive and delinquent behavior. As measures of success, in two surveys of students conducted in 1994 and 1995, Huff and Trump (1996) point to decreases in gang involvement and carrying weapons to school and increases in feelings of safety. Also, task force personnel conducted 121 investigations, participated in 59 interventions and provided 130 presentations to 10,641 students, staff, parents, community members, criminal justice personnel, and other youth service providers.

The Boston Gun Project, created in response to escalated gang violence and murder in the early 1990s, also combines prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies (Gramckow and Tompkins 1999). The program combines the efforts of the ATF, the U.S. Attorney's Office, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the FBI, and the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office to target the distribution of guns. As measures of success, Gramckow and Tompkins (1999) cite that the youth homicide was 80 percent lower in 1995 than in 1990, no juveniles were victims of homicide by firearms in 1996, and the violent crime rate dropped over 20 percent in schools in the 1995-1996 school year.

In 1993, the Federal Bureau of Prisons formed the National Major Gang Task Force, a task force consisting of 39 participants involved in corrections, public safety, the sheriff's office, probation and parole, and a local university (Welling 1994). This task force cannot be easily categorized as a prevention, intervention, or suppression strategy; the focus was simply to gather gang intelligence and share it among the group via a national database. No data were provided on the effectiveness of this task force.

More recently, Spergel et al. (2006) describe and evaluate the comprehensive, community-wide gang program model, known as the Little Village program in Chicago. This program spawned similar efforts in the 1990s in five other localities: Mesa, Arizona; Riverside, California; Bloomington-Normal, Illinois; San Antonio, Texas; and Tucson, Arizona. All six program areas integrated the efforts and resources of criminal justice agencies and social service agencies into a comprehensive strategy to prevent, intervene in, and suppress gang activity and membership. While Spergel et al. (2006) outline the successes and failures of the model, mainly in terms of changes in arrest rates, they remain optimistic about the model while Klein and Maxson (2006) are more critical.

In a prepared statement to the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security of the Committee on the Judiciary House of Representatives, the mayor of Richmond, Virginia, John Buckovich (2008), describes the Gang Reduction and Intervention Program (GRIP), the Cooperative Violence Reduction Partnership (CVRP), and the Violent Crime Impact Teams (VCIT). These three collaborative strategies focus on prevention, intervention, and suppression of gang activity and membership. Buckovich (2008) points to decreases in violent crime as evidence of the success of these programs.

In the same hearing, Kevin O'Connor (2008), the Associate Attorney General of the Department of Justice, also provides an overview of several anti-gang programs at the federal level. O'Connor (2008: 25) concludes that,

the best way to reduce violent crime is to employ an overarching strategy that includes all participants in the criminal justice system, along with educators, community organizers and leaders of faith-based institutions who can help spread the word and counsel people who otherwise might be tempted to commit crimes.

These brief examples are by no means inclusive of every gang task force in the United States.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the efforts described above lead to some key observations. First, the overall mission of gang task forces is to decrease gang involvement and crime. Second, gang task forces carry out their mission in vastly different ways, often with collaboration but with great variation in collaborators. Third, many gang task forces do not attempt to measure their effectiveness although, when they do, the findings are relevant only on a local or state, rather than national, level. Indeed, the findings reviewed above are based on the evaluation of a single program, after its implementation, and do not employ an experimental design to consider or exclude the impact of other potential variables that may affect crime rates or other outcomes. Furthermore, the changes noted after implementation of the effort, such as a decrease in arrests, could be influenced by the desire of key stakeholders to see a positive outcome of their efforts.

We now have a broad view of the landscape of gangs, gang crime, and efforts to deal with gang problems. It is time now to turn more specifically to the study of the formation, structure, and effectiveness of gang task forces.

### **Research Questions**

As stated above, this research seeks to answer three questions: 1) why do particular jurisdictions implement a gang task force; 2) once formed, what is the structure of gang task forces; and 3) are gang task forces effective? While a daunting endeavor in scope, this research has important sociological as well as policy implications. Regarding formation, sociologists will be able to predict which jurisdictions are more likely to

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<sup>2</sup> See Howell (2000) or the Bureau of Justice Assistance (1997) for more comprehensive discussions.

implement a gang task force as a response to criminal gang activity. Regarding network structure, analysts will be able to dissect open lines of communication, as well as barriers, between actors within the law enforcement field-net, an arena untouched in network literature. Finally, a study of the effectiveness of gang task forces will yield perhaps the greatest advances in sociology and public policy. Are gang task forces an effective method of social control? Should policy-makers promote the creation of gang task forces? Or do gang task forces hold more symbolic importance rather than actually effect decreases in youth violence?

### **Chapter Outline**

These questions will be addressed in the following sections. This chapter provides an overview of the concept of gang, the impact of gang involvement on crime, and a discussion of police strategies to combat criminal gang activity. Chapter 2 explores theories of formation of gang task forces, including rationalization, social control, diffusion, and neo-institutionalism. Further, this section reviews literature on networks and program evaluation. Chapter 3 poses research questions and hypotheses on the formation, structure, and effectiveness of gang task forces, and outlines the research plan. Chapters 4 through 6 provide the results of the mail survey, case study, and secondary data analyses regarding task force formation, structure, and effectiveness, respectively. Finally, Chapter 7 summarizes the key findings of this project and discusses the implications for theory and criminal justice.

## **CHAPTER 2:**

### **THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

This overview of responses to gang problems leads to the question- why do jurisdictions initiate a gang task force? Are there certain political and demographic similarities between jurisdictions implementing such efforts? Is the motivation to combat an actual gang problem or is it more of a symbolic effort to alleviate the fears of the public? This section will frame these important questions in sociological theory.

#### Formal versus Substantive Rationalization

Of importance in the study of gang task forces is the mechanism behind the formation of such organizations. Are gang task forces formed to maintain public order? Collins (1994: 84) describes Weber's (1978) rationalization as a "two-sided sword, simultaneously an increase in formal procedures *and* an undermining of substantive human capability for consciously achieving one's goals."

Savelsberg (1992) elaborates on this distinction in his analysis of sentencing guidelines. According to him, early criminal law, with its focus on formal rationalization, sought to treat individuals equally in punitive measures. Since individuals are equally capable of committing crime, individuals should be punished equally. This idea negates the fact that all individuals are not equally likely to engage in criminal activity due to the different social conditions under which they act (Savelsberg 2000).

The realization that social inequalities result from formal rationalization spawned substantive rationalization. Beginning in the 1870s, law favored rehabilitation over

punishment (Savelsberg 1992: 1351). “Crime was no longer perceived as the act of freely and rationally acting individuals but as the act of persons restricted by social and psychological conditions” (Savelsberg 1992: 1353). This trend, while seemingly more humane and just, also has its problems. Savelsberg (1992) highlights the consequences of substantive rationalization that can be summarized as follows: substantive rationalization leads to diversity in opinion, focus and values which, in turn, renders law indefinable and outcomes disparate.

An example of the negative consequences of substantive rationalization is discrepancies in sentencing. Judges had been permitted so much discretion in determining sentences for convicted offenders that sentences for similar crimes varied widely. In reaction to sentencing disparities, sentencing guidelines were created. Using Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines as a case study, Savelsberg (1992) describes a rigid set of rules judges must follow in determining sentences- an example of a neoclassical return to formal rationalization.

However, Savelsberg (1992) contends that there are contradictions in guideline procedures that limit the neoclassical goal of equal punishment. First, in the construction of the Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Act, conflicting opinions were considered. For example, some elements of the Act suggest that the history of the defendant and sociological conditions surrounding the crime should be weighed in the determination of sentence. Second, depending on the commission, judges comprise the majority of commissioners selected to oversee the project. Many judges are not in favor of the guidelines because they limit a judge’s decision-making capabilities, and thus, their power and authority. Third, the commission listened to and attempted to satisfy many

diverse groups in the drafting of the guidelines. This led the project away from its original neoclassical intentions.

Like sentencing guidelines, traditional efforts to reduce gang crime, such as increased policing and legislation, may exemplify formal rationalization through a means-end calculation of regulation and strict enforcement. Media attention surrounding a highly publicized gang-related crime, for example, can produce knowledge<sup>3</sup> among the general public that gang crime could equally affect any individual, even innocent bystanders. Elite politicians, struggling for power or to meet personal careers interests, create anti-gang efforts or enact additional legislation as a proactive stance against gang crime. State legislatures have instituted new statutes outlawing gang behavior, such as the Crime Committed for Benefit of a Gang legislation highlighted previously. The focus on strict law enforcement and prosecution may then represent formal rationality.

Gang task forces, however, in their collaborative design, may rather exemplify substantive rationality. Gang task forces are often comprised of law enforcement officials, some of whom hold politically appointed positions. These officials must be sensitive to the changing demands of the public. More important, these officials may be influenced by their connections to individuals representing diverse community groups. By their very nature, these community groups stress concerns over the differentiation of communities. Members of these community groups may want the gang task force to be sympathetic to the environment in which youth are socialized.

Furthermore, a common mission of gang task forces is to provide training and education to teachers and parents. This mission is an effort to be active within diverse

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<sup>3</sup> See Savelsberg (1994).

communities. The purpose of these efforts is not only to teach the warning signs of gang membership, but also to highlight options for youth to remove themselves from gang membership.

Finally, the law enforcement officers and prosecutors participating in a gang task force typically have much discretion. Unlike the sentencing guidelines that judges are forced to follow, officers and prosecutors with gang task forces do not have to arrest or charge individuals for all offenses committed. Of course, there are exceptions, as is the case with murder or any other violent offense. However, if an officer believes a gang member has the desire and potential to quit the gang, the officer may refer the individual to a community outreach program rather than arrest him for a relatively minor infraction. Thus, gang task forces may exemplify substantive rationalization rather than a neoclassical attempt to systematize the arrest and prosecution of gang members.

### Social Control

Garland (2001), in his comprehensive overview of the history and culture of crime control in Britain and the United States, agrees that current crime control efforts must respond to the shifting demands of political elites and the public.

Criminal justice actors and agencies are now less capable of directing their own fate and shaping their own policies and decisions. This is partly a result of the need to work with other ‘providers’, and the concern to be more responsive to the public and to other ‘customers’ (Garland 2001: 172).

Garland (2001: 170), when speaking of “multi-agency forums,” which include gang task forces, argues that “this new sector occupies an intermediate, borderline

position, poised between the state and civil society, connecting the criminal justice agencies with the activities of citizens, communities and corporations.” Garland (2001: 205) is optimistic about this new crime control arrangement; “effective, legitimate government must devolve power and share the work of social control with local organizations and communities.”

If society continues on its path of centralized bureaucracy and increasingly punitive sanctioning, a new “iron cage” will emerge (Garland 2001: 204). Barker (1993: 410) explains Weber’s (1978) iron cage: “we become so enmeshed in creating and following a legalistic, rule-based hierarchy that the bureaucracy becomes a subtle but powerful form of domination.” Garland (2001) is quick to point out that the state is limited in its ability to protect its citizens. Top down approaches exacerbate crime problems and marginalize minority and impoverished communities (Goetz 1996). Multi-agency efforts may be the key to exercising effective social control.

Garland (2001) is criticized for over-generalizing (Beckett 2001; Savelsberg 2002) and failing to provide adequate evidence to support his claims (Hannah-Moffat 2002). The present research will address whether gang task forces are formed as a top down approach to combating gang crime or a collective effort to involve the community in protecting its inhabitants.

### Innovation Diffusion

Those who study the diffusion of innovation seek to understand the “processes that underlie the adoption of new products, programs, or practices” (Weisburd and Braga 2006: 3). A pioneer in the study of innovation diffusion, Everett Rogers (1995), found that in order for a social system to adopt an innovation, there must be a “perceived need”

for change. Gangs and gang-related crime became of increasing concern to law enforcement, policy-makers, and the general public in the last several decades, fueled by much media attention (Howell 2007). Perhaps a “perceived need” drove certain communities to adopt the gang task force innovation.

Political pressure, instigated by public concern, may impact the formation of a gang task force. Yet, what do the interrelationships between law enforcement agencies, political parties and the media actually look like? Network analysis is most appropriate for examining interrelationships. Heinz and Manikas (1992) studied actors in the Chicago criminal justice system, conducting 211 interviews with government agents, policy-makers, and personnel in private organizations interested in the criminal justice system. They concluded that since law enforcement, political elites, and the news media are found in close proximity to one another this suggests that such networks may provide an environment conducive to the formation of organized responses to gang problems.

Curry and Thomas (1992) adopted a similar network approach in their analysis of 254 interviews with officials employed at criminal justice agencies participating in collaborative efforts to address gang problems. Respondents were asked, “with what other organizations is your agency in most contact in terms of dealing with the gang problem?” and their responses were divided into three categories. Social cohesion, or clique membership, described actors who had a bond with other actors. Structurally equivalent actors had no bonds but performed “similar roles in the overall structure of relations in the network” (p. 365). Prominent actors were highly regarded by other actors within the network. Using linear regression, Curry and Thomas (1992) examined how these network positions impacted law enforcement responses such as training, formal

policy, and initiating legislation. They conclude that most of the variation in gang policy response is explained by clique membership and structural equivalence and that prominence is positively related to gang policy response in cities with chronic gang problems.

The research of Heinz and Manikas (1992) and Curry and Thomas (1992) provides an empirical foundation from which to test whether similar results are true for gang task forces specifically, rather than organized responses more generally. A formal network analysis comparing the cohesion and structural equivalence across multiple gang task forces is beyond the scope of the present study, although it would undoubtedly be a fruitful endeavor for future research. Indeed, as Considine et al. (2009: 26) note, the study of innovation and network analysis in the public sector lags far behind such studies in the private sector. The present study seeks to close that gap, and provides in Chapter 5 a network analysis of one particular gang task force, the Metro Gang Strike Force in Minnesota (MGSF). Further, adoption of the innovation of a gang task force is addressed in Chapter 4, with an examination of whether there exists political pressure or a political environment conducive to task force adoption.

### Neo-Institutionalism

In line with neo-institutionalism (see Meyer and Rowan 1977), a theory positing that institutions become increasingly similar over time, it is arguable that gang task forces are not a new innovative strategy for combating street gang crime. Early task forces, such as the Chicago Area Project in 1934 and the Midcity Project, created in 1934 and 1954, respectively (Howell 2000; Miller et al. 1968), may have been precursors of future task

force models. Howell's (2000: 5) summary of the history of gang programs in the United States sheds some light on the ever-evolving process of youth gang task force formation.

Early in the Nation's history, youth gang work emphasized prevention. These programs were followed by interventions designed to reintegrate particular gangs into conventional society using "detached workers" (agency representatives dispatched from their offices to work directly with gangs in the community). Detached workers were sent out in automobiles to intervene in crisis situations. A major shift then occurred as programs, led by the police, sought to suppress youth gangs, buttressed by enhanced legislative penalties for gang crime. Currently, a mixture of approaches is being tried across the Nation; however, programs that integrate prevention, intervention, and suppression activities are gaining popularity.

This synopsis suggests that gang task force formation in a particular jurisdiction is not an isolated process. Rather than occurring inside a vacuum, the formation is influenced by task forces in other jurisdictions. Evidence for this is marked by the various shifts in purpose (prevention versus suppression), structure (increased police and community participation, for example), and popularity of specific task forces.

Proponents of neo-institutionalism argue that this ever-evolving process eventually results in all organizations within an organizational field becoming very similar. "Isomorphism" is the term used to describe this process. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) first distinguish competitive and institutional isomorphism. Competitive isomorphism is "most relevant for those fields in which free and open competition exists" (p. 150). This is obviously not the type of isomorphism at play in government. Rather, institutional isomorphism describes the process whereby law enforcement agencies become increasingly similar.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) identify three types of institutional isomorphism: coercive, mimetic, and normative. Coercive isomorphism "stems from political

influence” (p.150). Mimetic isomorphism occurs when an organization is uncertain of its purpose or structure and therefore looks to other organizations from which to model itself (p. 151). Normative isomorphism typically occurs from professionalization, which is “the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work, to control ‘the production of producers’ and to establish a cognitive base and legitimization for their occupational autonomy” (p. 152).

One, two or all three isomorphic mechanisms may contribute to the formation of gang task forces. First, with respect to coercive isomorphism, the present study will examine whether political pressure influences gang task force formation.

Second, mimetic isomorphism is perhaps the most outwardly evident form of isomorphism at play in regard to gang task forces. Grattet et al. (1998) claim that, “a remarkable feature of state policy-making is the degree to which states follow similar strategies and formulas” (p. 287-8). Evidence that states are encouraged to mimic successful programs in other states in the formation of a youth gang task force is found in three manuals. The first is Howell’s (2000) manual that was funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Howell describes various efforts to combat gang crime and concludes by urging youth gang task force representatives to evaluate their program so other potential task force representatives may learn from their findings.

The most effective program model will likely prove to be a combination of prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies integrated in a collaborative approach, supported by a management information system, and validated by rigorous evaluation. Communities across the country are undertaking collaborative efforts to deal with youth gangs, but few of these programs and strategies are being evaluated. State and local governments must undertake systematic examination of their youth gang programs and strategies. The knowledge gained about what is effective

and what is not will benefit not only their own communities, but also communities across the Nation (Howell 2000: 55).

The second is the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance's (1997) manual. Similar to Howell's manual, the BJA also describes existing programs (not necessarily gang programs) and concludes that:

Within each program description there is enough information about how the program was developed and implemented to give other communities guidance about pitfalls to be avoided and factors that can lead to success" (BJA 1997).

The third is Watkins and Ashby's (2007) manual, wherein the authors provide instructions for creating a gang unit, and state in their introduction (p. xx) that the book "contains information that can be used to combat street terrorism in any community in the United States."

These manuals indicate that states may be *encouraged* to mimic one another in the formation of task forces. Howell's manual also provides evidence that states *do* mimic one another. In particular, Howell (2000: 32) claims that the MGSF grew out of Minnesota HEALS (Hope, Education, and Law and Safety) and modeled itself after Boston's Operation Night Light program.

Finally, normative isomorphism may also contribute to the formation of gang task forces. Professionals participating in the collaboration bring with them knowledge of how their respective agencies operate and an opinion of how to structure a gang task force. This knowledge and opinion is shaped and legitimized by the training and experience of the professionals. For example, all police officers and sheriff's deputies in Minnesota have received a Peace Officer Standards and Training (P.O.S.T.) license. This license must be maintained through periodic training, some of which includes training on gang

problems and strategies. Training sessions may be hosted or attended by law enforcement officials from across the country. The information that is passed on in formal training sessions and informal network ties may lead to the homogenization of gang task forces across the country.

In support of neo-institutionalism, coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphic mechanisms may shape the formation of one gang task force and, in time, that task force will aid in the development of future gang task forces across the country. Eventually, all gang task forces may resemble one another; however, they likely will not be the same. Grattet et al. (1998: 303) noticed, in their analysis of the homogenization of hate-crime laws, that “institutionalism can also produce differentiation of cultural forms and practices. Once the basic practices become institutionalized, subsequent adopters exercise liberty and expand the domain of the cultural form (e.g., the law), thus creating distinctive permutations.” The same may be true for gang task forces. Each jurisdiction in every state has its own actual and perceived gang problem. They may also have a history of laws governing gang-related crime. Further, policy-makers in different states may have their own methods for dealing with the gang problem. Isomorphism may explain task force formation, though each task force may uniquely fit its environment.

The present study will specifically address whether coercive isomorphism helps to explain gang task force implementation; however, future research should consider all three types of isomorphism. The federal government, through its new National Gang Center, offers a “best practices” publication about a comprehensive, anti-gang program (National Youth Gang Center 2007). Along with this publication, the National Gang Center (2010) offers free online training on how to assess a community gang problem and

implement the comprehensive model. Future research could analyze the impact of these materials, and the similarities and differences between the resulting anti-gang programs that were implemented.

### **Network Structure of Gang Task Forces**

“A social network is a structure composed of a set of actors, some of whose members are connected by a set of one or more relations” (Knoke and Yang 2008: 8). An analysis of a social network “can explain variation in structural relations and their consequences” (Knoke and Yang 2008: 9). Aside from the work of Heinz and Manikas (1992) and Curry and Thomas (1992), there is apparently no social network analysis of the structure of gang task forces. As discussed earlier, most studies briefly describe the formal organization and mission of a gang task force before discussing a topic unrelated to network ideas. The value of social network analysis, however, is that exposes the connections and information channels (or lack thereof) between actors, which may impact an actor’s position within the network as well as future associations within or outside the network. In terms of gang task forces, multiple agencies must cooperate with one another in pursuit of a common goal. For instance, consider a gang task force comprised of an FBI agent, a school official, a city police officer, and a county probation officer. These four actors, who may or may not have previously known each other, must now put aside their own personal or professional agenda and share resources in order to carry out a combined mission, while concurrently managing their position in their home agency. Also, given the popular stigma of an FBI agent commanding control over an investigation, cooperation may be difficult if the city police officer holds a higher position within the hierarchy of the task force.

The work of Lazega and Pattison (1999) and Das and Teng (2002) could help in understanding cooperation in a gang task force. Lazega and Pattison (1999) used generalized resource exchange theory to guide their study of cooperation within the work environment of a law firm. They found regularities of exchanges that may be helpful in structuring an organization to promote collective action. Das and Teng (2002) discuss generalized exchange as it relates to constellations, or alliances with three or more partners. The present research will map the network connections of actors within one particular gang task force, the Metro Gang Strike Force in Minnesota (MGSF), and it will also use Kenis and Knoke's (2002) ideas as a guide.

#### Kenis and Knoke's "Interorganizational tie-formation"

Kenis and Knoke (2002: 275) discuss how interorganizational tie-formation is related to future strategic alliances. Using a macro-level perspective, they define an organizational field-net as "the configuration of interorganizational relations among all the organizations that are members of an organizational field" and theorize that the structural qualities of an organizational field-net influence rates of interorganizational tie-formation. They hypothesize that as network density, reciprocity, confirmation of ties, connectivity, multiplexity, and intergroup communication (though not cohesive subgroups) increase in the field-net, the rate of interorganizational tie-formation increases to capacity and then decreases. Also, as centralization and hierarchy increase in the field-net, the rate of interorganizational tie-formation decreases nonlinearly toward zero.

Knoke and Yang (2008) provide an overview of basic and advanced methods for conducting social network analysis. Chapter 5 presents a case study and network analysis of the MGSF, using these ideas as a foundation.

## **Program Evaluation and Determining Effectiveness**

### Prior Evaluations of Gang Task Forces

As discussed earlier, gang programs often attempt to demonstrate effectiveness by citing statistics showing decreases in gang crime in the targeted jurisdiction. However, these stated accomplishments are only important on a local level. These statistics are typically descriptive, not tested for significance or even appropriately controlled statistically; therefore they are not generalizable and barely even helpful.

Sociologists, in attempting to determine the effectiveness of gang programs, are not optimistic. Klein (1995) and Quinn and Downs (1993) argue that responses to gang problems often generate media attention to gangs, thereby popularizing gangs to youth and attracting youth to join. Thornberry et al. (2003) agree that gang programs are often ineffective and can even increase criminal gang activity. In his 10 years of participant observation of gangs in Boston, New York, and Los Angeles, Jankowski (1991: 258) concludes that, although police officials often say they want to eradicate gangs, they rarely do and, instead, employ a strategy of “accommodation and regulation.”

More recently, it was found that “traditional gang suppression methods by law enforcement fail to improve public safety and sometimes lead to increased youth crime” (Criminal Justice Newsletter 2007b). This finding was based on an evaluation of gang enforcement strategies in 17 jurisdictions over the past 20 years. Similarly, researchers found that violent crimes task forces run by the U.S. Department of Justice and operating in the same cities are “poorly coordinated, fail to communicate, and often duplicate efforts” (Criminal Justice Newsletter 2007a). However, interestingly, the same publication four months later reported that \$75 million was awarded by the U.S.

Department of Justice to state and local violent crime task forces (Criminal Justice Newsletter 2007c). Although these are not specifically gang task forces, it sheds light on the potential pitfalls of gang task forces, and how much money the federal government is willing to devote to reduce gang problems.

Boerman (2001) is also not optimistic about gang programs. Boerman (2001) believes that gang programs must possess ecological validity. Policy typically favors one uniform top-down approach to solving gang problems, rather than addressing the micro-level, individualized and comprehensive dynamics of gang members' lives. An ecologically valid gang strategy should then address:

(a) macrolevel socioeconomic factors that contribute to the development and persistence of gangs, (b) microsystem variables within the family, (c) relationships between gang and non-gang society, (d) the functional nature of gang membership within the context of young peoples' lives, and (e) intra and inter-gang dynamics (e.g., the relationships within and between gangs), and the effect those relationships may have upon gang member response to intervention (Boerman 2001: 36).

While a gang response that addresses all of these factors would be desirable, whether it is realistic remains to be seen. However, Boerman (2001) is not alone in arguing that gang responses should be tailored to the specific environment in which it is embedded.

In their archival analysis of national task forces and committees on corrections issues, Kalinich and Banas (1984) found that task forces actually legitimize existing policy and procedure rather than make any real change. Although initiating a task force to reform policy in correctional facilities is much different than initiating a task force to combat gang activity, the same underlying goal is present: to combine resources to overcome a problem.

When a special task force of national leaders and intellectuals is convened by the government to deal with a particular social problem an impression is conveyed to the public that the seriousness of the situation has been recognized and extraordinary resources are being marshalled to address the problem. As a result, the government has taken an important step in protecting its credibility. It has shielded itself from overwhelming public pressure and has taken some control of the critical examination and subsequent demand for change being voiced (Kalinich and Banas 1984: 63).

Thus, establishing a task force has more symbolic significance than making any intended changes. The present research seeks to determine if the formation of gang task forces is equally merely symbolic.

McGarrell and Schlegel (1993) compare and contrast two multijurisdictional drug task forces in Indiana with each other and two respective control regions.

The goals of the task forces are to increase coordination and communication among law enforcement agencies, to allow drug enforcement units to cross jurisdictional boundaries, and ultimately to increase the effectiveness of law enforcement efforts in the area of illegal drug distribution and use (McGarrell and Schlegel 1993: 231-2).

Drug task forces, then, may be very similar to gang task forces. McGarrell and Schlegel (1993: 239) conclude that, compared to the two control regions, drug task forces appear to foster “more effective interagency relationships in terms of communication, sharing information, and more frequent contacts.” However, the task force in the Northern region of Indiana enjoyed higher levels of satisfaction among criminal justice officials surveyed than the Southern region. McGarrell and Schlegel (1993) attribute the effectiveness of the Northern region to differences in organizational structure between the two task forces. The Northern region, in contrast to the Southern region, promotes active participation from key stakeholders such as the county sheriff’s department and prosecutor’s office.

One problem with McGarrell and Schlegel's (1993) study, and one that is common regarding program evaluation in general, is that it analyzes respondents' *perceptions* of effectiveness rather than observable effects on the intended goal of the task force. Smith et al. (2000) address the disparity between perception and observable outcomes in their study of Ohio law enforcement agencies. Smith et al. (2000) discuss two models of program evaluation. First, the goal attainment model focuses on whether the task force has been successful in achieving its stated goals. This model concerns the output or observable product of task forces. Secondly, the process model focuses on the benefits agencies receive merely by participating in a task force. This model concerns the perceptions or feelings of satisfaction members have regarding the task force.

Smith et al. (2000) surveyed law enforcement agencies in Ohio to determine whether those agencies that participate in a drug task force (1) make more drug-related arrests, (2) rate the quality of those arrests higher, and/or (3) have more frequent inter-agency communication compared to agencies that do not participate in a drug task force. Smith et al. (2000) conclude that agencies that do participate in a drug task force do not make more drug-related arrests than non-member agencies. Thus, according to the goal attainment model, task forces are not successful. However, member agencies do rate the quality of arrests higher and do report more frequent contact with other agencies. Thus, according to the process model, task forces are effective.

This discussion highlights the importance of clearly stating the method of program evaluation. The success of an organization clearly depends on what the researcher defines as success.

### What is a successful outcome?

A critical issue is defining what constitutes a successful outcome of gang task forces. A researcher could examine gang crime rates, the amount of gang training given to law enforcement professionals, the number of search warrants executed, the monetary amount of seizures, the amount of narcotics recovered, the number of gang members identified in a database, the satisfaction quotient of neighborhood residents, case studies of gang members desisting from gang involvement, social capital gained in a neighborhood or by law enforcement officials, and myriad other measures of effectiveness.

To be consistent with the study of formation and structure, a network approach to the study of effectiveness is in order. A network approach may allow for comparisons to be drawn between gang task forces and result in greater statistical power and generalizability of effectiveness measures. In other words, perhaps gang task forces structured in one way are more effective than gang task forces structured differently.

Provan and Milward (1995) propose a theory of network effectiveness based on their study of four mental health systems. They argue that network effectiveness is enhanced when the network is integrated through centralization, has direct external control, and is stable and located in an environment rich in resources. This research can be replicated for gang task forces because, in dealing with a public system, Provan and Milward (1995) faced the challenge of deciding how to best measure effectiveness with so many interested parties (i.e. policy-makers, funders, and taxpayers). In the end, Provan and Milward (1995) used client well-being as the indicator of effectiveness, yet that is just one indicator they could have measured.

Thus, the current study analyzes the relationships between actors participating in gang task forces. The study of such linkages, called the “social model of behavior” (Pfeffer 1997: 55), will determine what benefits exist for the actors. The social capital gained from involvement in a gang task force may be a beneficial outcome. There is rich literature on the topic of social capital. Coleman (1990) claims that closure within a network builds trust, which increases social capital. Conversely, Burt (1992; 2001) emphasizes the power of structural holes, a bridge between two networks allowing for non-redundant contact. Krackhardt (1999) modifies Burt’s argument by stating that an actor bridging two networks is constrained. Although these are competing views, it is widely accepted that social capital is a positive network outcome. In fact, social capital may also be a precondition for successful action (Burt 1997; 2001).

To complement the study of network effectiveness, the current research defines “successful action” as a reduction in youth violence in the areas targeted by gang task forces. Thus, rates of youth violence prior to and after task force formation are compared, with appropriate statistical controls. This two-pronged approach (network effectiveness and successful action) will result in the first comprehensive view of the success of gang task forces on a national scale.

### **Impetus for Research**

Law enforcement agencies have pursued an increasingly sophisticated suppression approach to youth gangs, including surveillance, stakeouts, aggressive patrol and arrest, followup investigations, intelligence gathering, coupled with some prevention and community relations activities. Police have created complex data and information systems and improved coordination among law enforcement. However, no systematic evaluation of varied police approaches has been conducted (Spergel et al. 1994: 8).

These observations, written by Spergel and his colleagues more than fifteen years ago and, aside from his own work in the area (Spergel 2007), are arguably still true today, and serve as the primary impetus for this research proposal. Law enforcement agencies attempt to curb criminal gang activity; yet, police administrators, social researchers, and taxpayers have inadequate data to determine whether such law enforcement efforts are beneficial. From a sociological perspective, it is unknown why law enforcement agencies adopt various approaches to dealing with youth gangs or whether such approaches are an effective form of social control.

Although More (2008) does not specifically mention gangs or gang task forces in his recent book on current issues in policing, he does stress the benefits of police and community partnerships. More (2008: 43) opines,

Insularity must be rejected and others accepted as partners in reducing crime and improving the quality of life. Cooperative working relationships should be established between civic officials and representatives, businesses, members of the community, and providers of social services.

Certainly More's (2008) sentiments can include gang task forces, and hence, as collaborations between criminal justice agencies and other concerned groups, gang task forces should be evaluated. The goal of this paper is to analyze the complex nature of gang task forces in the United States. Namely, I seek to explain (1) why gang task forces form in particular areas, (2) the network structure of gang task forces, and (3) whether gang task forces are an effective means of combating criminal gang activity.

## **CHAPTER 3: DATA, MEASURES, AND METHODOLOGY**

While this study statistically analyzes the formation, network structure, and effectiveness of gang task forces, perhaps the greater contribution to sociology is the data collection efforts conducted here that allow for these (and future) descriptions and analyses of gang task forces in the United States. Data were collected via an original survey instrument, a case study, and the compilation of secondary data obtained from multiple sources. The original survey data collection effort began with defining gang task forces and identifying every gang task force in the country.

### Defining Gang Task Forces

Identifying every gang task force in the United States sounds like a straightforward, albeit time-consuming, task. While the latter is an understatement, the former is far from true. There exist varying conceptions of the term “gang task force.” It seems that the term “task force” can refer to any collection of actors who work on a project together, even if only very briefly. Thus, I use a nominalist approach (Doreian and Woodard 1994) and impose the following definition of gang task force:

an organized policing effort that includes (1) a focus on combating criminal gang activity, and (2) a collaboration between two or more agencies, one of which is a police agency.

The definition is specific enough to form a boundary around comparable entities and brackets a set of similar organizations. The task forces included in the definition are similar to one another compared to excluded gang programs; yet, differences exist

between task forces included in the definition as well, just on a smaller scale. For example, a police officer stationed in a school may be considered a gang task force (assuming the other criteria points are met), while the Gang Resistance, Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) Program, a federal initiative that asks police officers to provide education and training to middle school youth, will be excluded. There are obvious differences between these two scenarios, the excluding factor being that G.R.E.A.T. is not an enforcement effort. However, there is great variance between the police officer stationed in a school and a larger effort, such as the Safe Streets Task Forces sponsored by the FBI. Yet, they will both be considered a gang task force and the differences between them can be meaningfully analyzed.

As with most definitions, there is ample room for interpretation. Consider the first part of the definition- “an organized policing effort.” How organized does it have to be? There are certainly different degrees of organization. Does it have its own funding? Office location? Mission? Organizational chart of participants? And, just what constitutes “policing?” Here I’ve narrowed “policing” to denote enforcement efforts aimed primarily at the suppression of criminal gang activity. Thus, like G.R.E.A.T., other efforts to address gang issues, such as gang investigators’ associations and more community-based efforts, which may involve a police agency but do not typically use its suppressive law enforcement authority, are excluded.

Next, consider the “focus” of the task force. Does the focus have to be solely on gangs? I exclude most task forces targeting major crimes, drugs, fugitives, and violent offenders. Yet, much of the actual work, and perhaps many of the targeted offenders, is likely the same. Some task forces (that are included in the analyses) merge these targeted

efforts into one, such as the Violent Crimes Gang Task Force. Thus, I interpret “focus” rather loosely. Gangs do not have to be the sole focus of the task force.

Finally, as long as at least one agency besides the police agency is involved, a gang task force can be as small as two agencies or as many as twenty or more. Therefore there is great variation in the structure and control of gang task forces. For example, as mentioned above, consider a gang task force comprised of one police officer stationed in a school versus a gang task force with 100 active members representing 20 different agencies. This study attempts to analyze whether such structural differences affect the effectiveness, perceived or real, of gang task forces.

The definition of gang task force provided here is clear. It brackets a similar set of multi-agency collaborations to combat gang activity, yet there is ample variation within the boundaries of the definition which allows for this and future important study.

### Identifying Gang Task Forces

The next step is to identify gang task forces fitting the definition. Multiple strategies were employed to find each and every gang task force in the United States. The process as a whole was akin to repeatedly casting a wide net to fish a large lake. Knowing that the castings must be strategically placed, I first used my contacts from my previous employer, what was formerly known as the Minnesota Gang Strike Force, to help me reach out to the handful of gang investigators’ associations in the country. These associations were contacted via telephone or email and asked to provide a list of member agencies. These member agencies were then contacted via telephone to determine whether they are, or participate in, a gang task force.

The second strategy for identifying gang task forces was to rely on secondary sources. For example, Howell (2000) identified and described a number of gang initiatives. Lists such as Howell's were reviewed for possible inclusion of these gang initiatives under the definition of gang task force. Third, the term "gang task force" was queried in various ways, including by each state, in internet searches. From there, each link provided in the search results was followed and examined for possible inclusion. Fourth, membership to [www.safetysource.com](http://www.safetysource.com) (2007), which contains a directory of law enforcement administrators, was obtained and every state law enforcement agency in the country was contacted via telephone and asked whether their agency participates in or is aware of any gang task forces in their state. Finally, and most time-consuming, each and every one of the 3,085 sheriff's departments in the country was contacted via telephone and asked whether their agency participates in or is aware of any gang task forces in their area or state. The variation in responses received from the state agencies and sheriff's departments would make for separate research project in itself! For purposes herein, it is enough to say that some immediately provided the contact information of a known gang task force while others had no idea what was being requested. The most memorable response was from a sheriff's department in Vermont, that claimed that there are no gangs in Vermont and so there are no gang task forces!

This lengthy process of net casting continued until the boundaries (Doreian and Woodard 1994) of the gang task force networks were identified. I am reasonably confident that each and every gang task force operating in America between 2004 and 2008 was identified, though it is possible that a very small number escaped the net. In all,

408 gang programs were identified and determined, at least on the surface, to meet the criteria for inclusion as a gang task force.

## **Data Sources**

### Mail Questionnaire

Each of the 408 gang task forces was contacted first by telephone to identify the commander, or agent in charge, and to introduce the study in person prior to sending the questionnaire via U.S. mail. The commander of each gang task force was the intended respondent and the individual to whom the mailed survey was addressed. After the name of the respondent was obtained and the mailing address confirmed, a cover letter (see Appendix B) with the questionnaire (see Appendix C) was mailed to each respondent. It should be noted that this was done in accordance with the Institutional Review Board's provisions under study number 0708P14933, and all research subjects also received a consent form (see Appendix D) that explains the details of the study and states that a response to the survey denotes consent to participate.

The questionnaire is divided into four sections: preliminary, formation, network structure, and effectiveness questions. The purpose of the first section is to confirm that the gang task force meets the criteria for inclusion in this study.

The second section focuses on the formation of the gang task force. Questions are asked that pertain to when and why the task force was initiated, and to the funding, legislative mandates, and definitional issues regarding gangs, gang members, and gang-related crime.

The third section focuses on the network structure of the gang task force. Questions are aimed at uncovering the associations between task force participants as

well as between participants and non-participants. Relationships between participants can be examined by whether participants have an office in the same location, whether there exists a mission statement or formal organizational chart, and the frequency and quality of communication between participants. Relationships between participants and non-participants can be examined by whether participants are encouraged to attend or provide training, and the frequency and quality of communication between participants and outside agencies.

The final section focuses on the effectiveness of the gang task force. Respondents are asked to provide the number of search warrants executed, arrests, convictions, guns seized, and money forfeited in an average month. Additional questions focus on the number of gang members referred to prevention or intervention efforts, whether participants have enhanced relationships with other participants and non-participants, and whether the task force has received any accolades from the community, politicians, or schools.

The mail survey method is most appropriate here because the questionnaire is quite extensive and respondents may need to research their answers to some of the questions, especially those in the final section. However, mail surveys typically have a very low response rate (Glicken 2003; Babbie 2004), especially surveys of government organizations (Majumdar 2008). Three strategies were employed in the effort to boost the response rate. First, the questionnaire was sent via First Class U.S. Mail rather than fourth class (Glicken 2003). Respondents are more likely to reply to First Class mail, especially in the workplace. Second, three weeks after the questionnaire was mailed, I contacted via telephone each task force that had not responded to remind the respondent to complete

the survey. If needed, I mailed a second questionnaire to each non-responding task force. Third, and most important, what was formerly known as the Minnesota Gang Strike Force (MGSF) supported this research project. All correspondence to respondents acknowledged this support. For example, I introduced myself as a former analyst from the MGSF as well as a graduate student from the University of Minnesota during the initial telephone contact. And the mailed cover letter was printed on MGSF letterhead. Additionally, a MGSF patch was included with each survey packet. I believe commanders of gang task forces were more willing to respond to the mailed survey knowing that another gang task force helped to conduct this study.

These efforts to boost the response rate were effective, and an overall response rate of 83.1% was achieved. Of the 408 surveys sent, 28 were duplicative and 72 were actually not active gang task forces. Thus, there were 308 valid surveys sent. Of those, I received a completed survey from 256 respondents, resulting in the response rate of 83.1%. However, of the 256 responses, 59 were later determined to be something other than a gang task force, typically a gang unit internal to a single police department. Thus, this analysis concerns the 249 gang task forces currently operating in the United States, 197 (79.1%) of which responded to the survey.

#### Case Study and Interview Data

Before turning to the secondary data collection effort, it is worthy to mention here, though it will be discussed further in Chapter 5, that one particular gang task force, what was formerly known as the Minnesota Gang Strike Force (MGSF), was selected for more in-depth study. As a former crime analyst for this task force, with connections to the then commander, I was granted access to this task force. I conducted a site visit in

October of 2007 to interview as many task force agents that appeared in the task force office for work that day who were receptive to an interview. Approval for this leg of the research was granted by the Institutional Review Board under study number 0507E71846. Respondents were provided a consent form (see Appendix F) and asked to complete a questionnaire (see Appendix G) about the formation and effectiveness of the MGSF as well as the frequency and quality of their work and social interactions with each other task force member. Responses were collected from 27 (79.4%) of the 34 agents assigned by their respective home agencies to the MGSF.

### Secondary Data

Choosing which sets of secondary data to employ was a difficult process, given the limitations of data availability as well as task force jurisdictional issues. For example, a task force may office in a particular city, but it may do most of its work in another city. It may have county-wide jurisdiction, or even state or federal jurisdiction. To further complicate the issue, the gang task forces were implemented in different years, spanning from 1980 to 2007. So, the best data to answer questions about formation and effectiveness are the data available most frequently and in the smallest comparable units. Furthermore, to test ideas about formation and effectiveness, the data must include information on the population, racial composition, socioeconomic status, political affiliation, and crime rate of each location under study. Thus, secondary data from three sources were selected.

The first set of secondary data was compiled by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS-USA). This comprehensive data set is comprised of all surviving federal censuses from 1850 to 2000 as well as the American Community

Surveys of 2000 to 2007 (Ruggles et al. 2009). IPUMS-USA compiled these massive sets of microdata and assigned uniform codes to all samples to allow for meaningful sociological analyses across time and place. There are many benefits to using IPUMS-USA. In an email communication with an IPUMS-USA staff member, I was informed of five of the benefits to using IPUMS-USA data, to include that (1) many of the datasets are unique, (2) multiple years of data can easily be used at the same time, (3) the data extract system allows the researcher to specify years, variables, and places relevant to the particular research goals, (4) comprehensive variable and coding documentation is available online, and (5) user support is available via email (Trent Alexander, email communication April 28, 2009). It is highly unlikely that I could find an equally accessible, robust, and supported dataset anywhere else that offers the variables needed to test ideas about gang task force formation and effectiveness.

The second source of secondary data is the Statistical Abstract of the United States, compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau (2009). More specifically, in the “Elections” section, there are data for each state on the percentage of the popular vote cast for president by political party in each presidential election. I use data from each election from 1980 to 2004. Also, the U.S. Census Bureau divides the fifty states into four regions. These regions are also used in this analysis as a control variable.

The third source of secondary data is collected by the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program and published annually in *Crime in the United States* (2008). I use the available crime data from every reporting law enforcement agency each year from 1980 to 2007. Because the data were not available in the format necessary to compare gang task force locations, I requested and

received the raw data in the Return A Master File for each year, so I could then extract the necessary variables by the unit of analysis, which will be discussed next.

## **Measures and Methodology**

### The Units of Analysis

As mentioned earlier, the choice of secondary data sources was difficult. This is, in large part, because I sampled on my dependent variable. I collected information from gang task forces about gang task forces. In the effort to understand why these collaborative entities form and whether they are effective, I needed additional data about the social environment in which the entities exist. Given the jurisdictional issues that many gang task forces face, described above, the best way to analyze the social environment of a gang task force is to collect socio-demographic, crime, and political data for the geographic area in which the gang task force office sits.

The most meaningful geographic area to use in this analysis is the metropolitan area. The term has changed over time, from standard metropolitan area to standard metropolitan statistical area, and others in between, but the general concept remains the same (Ruggles et al. 2009). A metropolitan area “is an area consisting of a large population [100,000 or more] center and adjacent communities (usually counties) that have a high degree of economic and social interaction with that center” (Ruggles et al. 2009). It is this outward expansion from the center, while remaining within the confines of a concentrated area, which makes the metropolitan area most appealing to use for this analysis. Gang task forces are likely to operate in metropolitan areas, rather than a single city or even county. Thus, to examine the social environments that are conducive to task

force formation, it is ideal to use socio-demographic and crime data for each metropolitan area.

There are, of course, certain limitations to using the metropolitan area as the geographic unit of analysis. First, metropolitan areas have changed over time, typically growing in population and necessarily expanding the geographic boundaries to account for this growth to include more counties or even add entirely new metropolitan areas. This undoubtedly affects the comparability of metropolitan areas over time. Second, gang task force operations certainly are not defined or limited by such statistical boundaries. Despite these two major issues, metropolitan area may indeed be the best geographic units of data to employ in this analysis. Moreover, data at this level are available for population, race, poverty, and crime.

For the political atmosphere surrounding the gang task force, this analysis is limited to state-level data. After searching data repository programs and directly contacting numerous experts in archived political data, I concluded that an indicator of political affiliation is not available for each metropolitan area for every year under study. Although I may have had some success with county-level political data, I rejected this idea based on the knowledge that few gang task forces operate in a single county. Since most task forces cross county lines, it follows that attributing formation or effectiveness to characteristics in the single county in which a gang task force sits would not be statistically sound.

However, similar dispute over using state-level data may be warranted. It is possible that a gang task force, especially a gang task force with federal jurisdiction, may operate in multiple states (consider Kansas City, for example). This is likely rare. A more

severe complaint against using state-level political data may be that since gang problems, and therefore anti-gang programs, are highly localized (Howell and Moore 2010), attributing formation to the political leanings of the state overall may be unhelpful. Remember, however, that 1) this is a first attempt at understanding why gang task forces form, 2) researchers in general are often limited to available data, and 3) it may be that some states, depending on the political leanings of their voting residents, are more likely to implement the task force as a method to combat gang crime. Importantly, this latter point is not meant to claim causation. Rather, the goal is to begin to understand the social environment most conducive to task force implementation.

#### Variables in the Analysis of Formation

The dependent variable in the analysis of gang task formation is simply whether a gang task force exists in the metropolitan area under study. To analyze formation, the independent variables are population estimates, racial demographics, socio-economic status, and juvenile crime rates in each metropolitan area, as well as the political affiliation of each state. As mentioned earlier, region is used as a control variable. Population estimates were obtained by IPUMS-USA for each survey year from 1980 to 2007 for each of the 328 metropolitan areas that existed in that period. The estimates for 1980, 1990, and 2000 are based on a random, weighted sample of 5% of the households in each state. The estimates for 2000 to 2007 are based on a random, weighted sample of 1% of the households in each state (Ruggles et al. 2009). The resulting variable provides an estimate of the population for each metropolitan area.

The measure of racial heterogeneity is also an IPUMS-USA variable. For years 1980, 1990, and 2000 through 2007, I use the number of respondents who consider

themselves Black to compute the percent of the population that is Black in each metropolitan area. There have been important changes in the conceptualization of race that led to changes in how respondents could categorize their race. Beginning in 2000, respondents could choose more than one category to describe their race (Ruggles et al. 2009). Thus, the percent of people who consider themselves Black in years 2000 through 2007 may also identify with additional racial categories.

The final IPUMS-USA variable used is a measure of socio-economic status. This variable is a calculation, assigned to each individual in the household, of income and family size that, adjusting for inflation, results in the percentage of households falling below the official poverty threshold in each metropolitan area (Ruggles et al. 2009).

Political affiliation is measured by the percent of voting residents in each state voting Democrat in each presidential election from 1980 to 2004. These data were compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau (2009), yet only the percent voting Republican or Democrat was available, typically leaving a small percentage unaccounted for, to be explained as a vote for a third party. So, the percentages voting Democrat and Republican were added and that total was divided by the percentage voting Democrat, to create a percentage voting Democrat that fully accounted for the remaining percentage to be a Republican vote. For example, in Alaska in 2000, 27.7% of voting residents cast a Democratic vote while 58.6% cast a Republican vote, leaving 13.7% of the vote to a third party (U.S. Census Bureau 2009). Instead, the data were re-calculated so that 27.7% was divided by 86.3%, which results in 32.1% of Alaskan residents who voted either Republican or Democrat voting Democrat, and the remaining 67.9% voting Republican.

Using these new percentages, it is clear to which side the state leans in the popular vote for president in each election.

The final set of variables to be treated as independent variables, at least in the analysis of gang task force formation, is the crime figures compiled by the FBI's UCR (2008). From the Return A Master Files for each year from 1980 to 2007, I extracted for each metropolitan area the number of juvenile clearances of murder, robbery with a gun, assault with a gun, auto theft, and the grand total. The grand total includes juvenile clearances of Part I offenses to include criminal homicide, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson (U.S. Department of Justice 2004). Juvenile clearances are those incidents involving only persons under 18 years of age resulting in an arrest.

Juvenile clearances of murder, robbery with a gun, assault with a gun, auto theft, and the grand total were selected for this analyses because it is well documented that gang members are more criminally active (Thornberry and Burch 1997; Howell and Decker 1999) more violent (Thornberry et al. 2003), more likely to carry and use firearms (Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Decker et al. 1997), and more likely to commit motor vehicle theft (Gleason and Howard 1999) than their non-gang counterparts. Furthermore, gang members are responsible for a disproportionate number of homicides (Decker and Curry 2002). Finally, the vast majority of literature on American street gangs examines gangs as a youth problem (see Howell and Decker 1999; Thornberry et al. 2003).

Also discussed earlier, gang data are not tabulated consistently across time or place. Far to the contrary, gang data are rarely even tabulated at all! The UCR does not include a "gang crime" classification, nor do many law enforcement agencies across the

country. Law enforcement agencies have varying ways of categorizing gang crime, whether by offenders or victims involved or by the motivation for the crime (Klein et al. 1986). Thus, it is extremely difficult to obtain an accurate assessment of the amount of gang crime committed each year in America.

For these reasons, I use the narrowest category of crime in the UCR, the one that is most likely to include the most amount of gang crime. Thus, I use the juvenile clearances for murder, robbery with a gun, assault with a gun, and auto theft, as well as the grand total of all juvenile clearances.

The clearance rate is based on the fact that the offender has been arrested by the police (or cleared by exceptional means) and the case has been solved. If the law enforcement agency in one jurisdiction is more aggressive than another, even though there may not be more actual crime in that jurisdiction, the clearance rate is higher. This is a potential serious issue with using the clearance rate. However, the same complaint can be made against all types of criminal justice information. Because the reported crime rate in a given area is higher than another does not necessarily mean that there is more crime in that area. This is a significant problem in using and interpreting crime data.

Police agencies report offense data monthly to the UCR. In this analysis, the monthly totals were added to compute the annual juvenile clearances for each offense type for each metropolitan area. The UCR does break the crime data by metropolitan area. However, the codes used by the UCR are based on old U.S. Census codes, and they do not always correspond to the codes used by the U.S. Census or, more important to this research, the IPUMS-USA codes for metropolitan area. So, the tedious task of matching *for each year from 1980 to 2007* the UCR codes to the IPUMS-USA codes ensued, and

resulted in a definition file that assigns all core cities in the UCR's metropolitan areas to the IPUMS-USA metropolitan areas.

There is certain to be some amount of error in the data. First, as mentioned previously, the geographies of metropolitan areas have changed over time, and it is uncertain whether the changes accounted for in the IPUMS-USA data have been equally accounted for in the UCR data. Second, I could include only core cities and not all cities in the effort to match the UCR and IPUMS-USA codes. I made an assumption that the non-core cities are coded the same as their core-city, and so the matching effort thereby includes non-core cities. Third, another assumption made, and this is potentially the biggest assumption regarding these data, is that the UCR population data for each metropolitan area matches the IPUMS-USA population data. Ideally, since the geographic areas were compared and the codes were matched, the population data is the same. But again, this is an assumption. A future study using these data, or any time-series analysis of metropolitan areas, should rebuild each metropolitan area county by county for each year for both the UCR data and the IPUMS-USA data.

For purposes herein, the number of juvenile clearances for each crime type was compared to the population for each metropolitan area to arrive at the rate of juvenile clearances for each crime type for each metropolitan area for each year. Consistent with most analyses using crime data, the rate was computed per 100,000 persons. Again, the variables are the rate of juvenile clearances for murder, robbery with a gun, assault with a gun, auto theft, and the grand total.

### Analytic Strategy regarding Formation

Since this research project is the first of its kind, simple descriptive statistics are important. Regarding formation, the frequency of varying responses to “why did the task force form?” will aid in understanding why, in general, gang task forces form. Responses can then be more carefully analyzed when compared to the demographic data. For example, does political affiliation, socio-economic status, or racial diversity affect whether the gang task force approach is implemented? Are gang task forces likely to be implemented in areas marked by high crime rates? Thus, there are four primary hypotheses to be tested here, as follows:

- H4.1: Gang task forces are more likely to form in areas of racial heterogeneity.
- H4.2: Gang task forces are more likely to form in areas of low socio-economic status.
- H4.3: Gang task forces are more likely to form in areas with a Republican political affiliation.
- H4.4: Gang task forces are more likely to form in areas with a high juvenile crime rate.

These hypotheses seem consistent with the literature in that crime is typically thought to be most prevalent in impoverished communities marked by high mobility (Gasper et al. 2010) and racial heterogeneity (Shaw and McKay 1942). Furthermore, it would make sense, then, that gang task forces are implemented in such areas in a “get tough on crime” approach commonly attributed to more conservative leanings (Unnever and Cullen 2010).

The comprehensive data collection effort described above entails a national mail survey and compilation of secondary data. Results of the mail surveys were combined into one data set with the secondary data. Regarding formation, *t*-tests are conducted to determine whether the independent variables are related to gang task force formation. Then, event history analysis (see Allison 1984) offers a life table showing the “hazard” or risk of gang task force implementation as well as those metropolitan areas “surviving”

the study period without implementing a gang task force. Event history analysis will also predict the rate of gang task formation. The following Cox regression (Fox 2002) equation is estimated:

$$\text{logit } h_{TF}(t) = \alpha_1 X_{BLK}(t) + \alpha_2 X_{POV}(t) + \alpha_3 X_{DEM}(t) + \alpha_4 X_{GC}(t) + \alpha_5 X_{MW}(t) + \alpha_6 X_{NE}(t) + \alpha_7 X_S(t) + u_{TF}$$

where:  $h_{TF}(t)$  is the “hazard” of gang task force formation

$X_{BLK}(t)$  is the coefficient for the percent of the population that is Black

$X_{POV}(t)$  is the coefficient for the percent of the population in poverty

$X_{DEM}(t)$  is the coefficient for the percent of population voting Democrat

$X_{GC}(t)$  is the coefficient for the juvenile crime rate

$X_{MW}(t)$  is the coefficient for the Midwest region, compared to the West

$X_{NE}(t)$  is the coefficient for the Northeast region, compared to the West

$X_S(t)$  is the coefficient for the South region, compared to the West

$u_{TF}$  are the unobservable random effects.

Event history analysis is most appropriate for this study of gang task force innovation adoption because it allows for an examination of the timing of events given the social demographics surrounding such events. Event history analysis has become increasingly popular in the social sciences, and its value is unquestionable. Yamaguchi (1987: 63) states that “the applications (of event history analysis) have greatly increased our substantive knowledge of individual life histories, organizational histories, and other forms of social and individual changes,” and thus it is applied here.

#### Analysis of Network Structure

Similar to the analysis of gang task force formation, at least in terms of the national survey results, the analysis of the network structure of gang task forces is largely exploratory. Frequency distributions are analyzed to identify the characteristics and structure of relationships most typical in gang task forces in the United States.

A case study of the Metro Gang Strike Force (MGSF) in Minnesota is also undertaken in Chapter 5. First, the formal organizational chart is examined and ideas of density, reciprocity, confirmation, connectivity, centralization, multiplexity, cohesion and hierarchy (Kenis and Knoke 2002) are discussed. Then, multiple network methods (Doreian 1988) are employed to uncover the structure of the network system. The computer program UCINET is the primary network tool, along with NETDRAW, to examine the density, degree, betweenness and closeness of MGSF actors, or nodes.

Density is calculated by dividing the number of observed ties between actors in a network by the number of possible ties (Knoke and Yang 2008: 87). Degree centrality measures “the extent to which a node connects to all other nodes in a social network” (Knoke and Yang 2008: 63). Betweenness centrality “measures the extent to which other actors lie on the geodesic path (shortest distance) between pairs of actors in the network” (Knoke and Yang 2008: 67). Finally, closeness centrality represents “how near a node is to the other nodes in a social network” (Sabidussi 1966; Knoke and Yang 2008: 65). The map of network positions reveals important associations.

#### Variables in the Analysis of Effectiveness

There are many ways to measure gang task force effectiveness, and Chapter 6 uses dependent variables from both the survey data as well as the secondary juvenile crime data compiled by the FBI in its UCR. There are four dependent variables gleaned from survey data. The first is the perceived effectiveness of the gang task force, as reported by the survey respondent, the gang task force commander. The second is the respondents’ perceived change in the size of the gang problem since task force formation. The third dependent variable, which attempts to measure the intrinsic value of the gang

task force, is whether relationships with agencies participating in the gang task force have improved since task force formation. The fourth and final dependent variable obtained from survey data, which again measures the intrinsic value of a gang task force, is whether relationships with non-participating agencies have improved.

These four dependent variables are compared with eighteen independent variables from the survey data. These eighteen variables include 1) whether the task force has a mission statement, 2) whether the task force has an organizational chart, 3) whether the task force is housed in another agency or has its own office location, 4) the number of task force offices, 5) how many participants have a desk at the task force office, 6) whether gang legislation exists, 7) whether enhanced penalties for committing gang crime exist, 8) the number of participating agencies, 9) the number of participating agents, 10) whether a probation agency is a participant, 11) whether a jail is a participant, 12) whether a prosecuting attorney is a participant, 13) whether a school is a participant, 14) whether a faith-based group is a participant, 15) whether a community group is a participant, 16) whether the respondent communicates with media personnel, 17) whether the respondent communicates with any politicians, and 18) whether the task force provides gang training.

Gang task force effectiveness is also measured using secondary juvenile crime data. As described earlier as independent variables in the analysis of formation, the five dependent variables in the analysis of effectiveness are 1) the total juvenile violent crime rate, 2) the juvenile homicide rate, 3) the rate of juvenile robbery with a gun, 4) the rate of juvenile assault with a gun, and 5) the juvenile auto theft rate. These rates are extracted

from the FBI's UCR for each year from 1980 to 2007 for each metropolitan area, and they represent the rate per 100,000 persons.

The primary independent variable in this portion of the analysis of gang task force effectiveness is the presence of a gang task force. Other independent variables, gleaned from secondary data as described above, include the percent of the population that is Black, the percent of the population below the national poverty threshold, and the percent of the population voting Democrat. Finally, the analysis controls for the locus region of the gang task force. Region is a dummy variable whereby the Midwest, Northeast and South regions are compared to the West region.

#### Analytic Strategy regarding Effectiveness

Effectiveness is measured with both survey data as well as secondary juvenile crime data. With the variables from the survey described in the previous section, the four dependent variables are each compared to the eighteen independent variables in bivariate percentage crosstabulations. This technique is utilized to ascertain whether any of the independent variables are statistically correlated to any of the dependent variables. With the results of these four sets of analyses, the significant relationships are further tested using logistic regression. The main goal here is to determine whether gang task forces structured one way may be more effective than gang task forces structured another way.

Using the secondary juvenile crime data, a more complex analysis is conducted, employing a fixed effects model approach. Given that there is a juvenile crime rate that is different for each metropolitan area for each year from 1980 to 2007, and given that a gang task force is implemented in different metropolitan areas in different years, the fixed

effects model approach accounts for these repeated observations within a metropolitan area. The following hypothesis, then, is tested for each of the five dependent variables:

H6.1: The juvenile crime rate is lower within the metropolitan area after gang task force implementation.

This hypothesis, if not rejected, would suggest that gang task forces may be an effective method to curbing youth violence. To test it, drawing from Raudenbush and Bryk (2002) and the *Laird-Ware form* (Laird and Ware 1982), the fixed effects model estimates the following equation:

$$y_{ij} = \alpha + \beta_1 X_{TF} + \beta_2 X_{BLK} + \beta_3 X_{POV} + \beta_4 X_{DEM} + \beta_5 X_{MW} + \beta_6 X_{NE} + \beta_7 X_S + u_{ij}$$

where:  $y_{ij}$  is the value of the response variable

$\alpha$  is the fixed intercept

$\beta_1 X_{TF}$  is the coefficient for the existence of a gang task force

$\beta_2 X_{BLK}$  is the coefficient for the percent of the population that is Black

$\beta_3 X_{POV}$  is the coefficient for the percent of the population in poverty

$\beta_4 X_{DEM}$  is the coefficient for the percent voting Democrat

$\beta_5 X_{MW}$  is the coefficient for the Midwest region, compared to the West

$\beta_6 X_{NE}$  is the coefficient for the Northeast region, compared to the West

$\beta_7 X_S$  is the coefficient for the South region, compared to the West

$u_{ij}$  is the unobservable error term.

The mixed models test the impact of the presence of a gang task force on the total juvenile crime rate, the juvenile homicide rate, rate of juvenile robbery with a gun, the rate of juvenile assault with a gun, and the juvenile auto theft rate, respectively, while controlling for the percent Black, in poverty, and voting Democrat, as well as region of the United States.

## **Chapter Summary**

This study is largely exploratory, as it is the first national study of gang task forces in the United States. There are 249 gang task forces in the United States, and a completed survey was received from 197 of them. The survey responses are described

and analyzed in three subsequent chapters. Chapter 4 discusses the formation of gang task forces. Chapter 5 describes the characteristics and structure of gang task forces. Chapter 6 evaluates the effectiveness of gang task forces. Also, in chapters 4 and 6, survey data about gang task forces is compared to secondary demographic and political data for the metropolitan area and state in which the task forces sit, controlling for region of the United States. Furthermore, a case study and network analysis of one particular gang task force, the Metro Gang Strike Force (MGSF) in Minnesota, is presented in Chapter 5. Although it is a cross-sectional study, the mixed methods approach and extensive data collection and analysis effort captures the dynamic processes of formation, structure and effectiveness of gang task forces in the United States.

## **CHAPTER 4: FORMATION OF GANG TASK FORCES**

As mentioned in Chapter 3, there are 249 gang task forces currently operating in the United States. Figure 4.1 (see Appendix A for all tables and figures) shows the location of each. The gang task forces cluster in large cities including Austin, Dallas, Houston, Kansas City, Phoenix, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, and Washington, DC. States without a gang task force include Delaware, Maine, North Dakota, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Wyoming.

[Figure 4.1]

Table 4.1 shows how many metropolitan areas and gang task forces are located in each state. There are 249 gang task forces in 328 metropolitan areas. In some instances multiple gang task forces are located in a single metropolitan area. Also, what is not obvious in Table 4.1 is that 23 gang task forces are located in areas outside of any metropolitan area boundary. For example, five of the nine gang task forces in Minnesota are located in non-metropolitan communities. Since the secondary data used to support the analyses of formation and effectiveness are for each metropolitan area, these task forces will unfortunately be excluded from some of my analyses. Future studies should strive to include these task forces.

[Table 4.1]

The survey was sent to all 249 gang task forces, and 197 responded. Of those that responded, 188 provided the year that the task force was created. Table 4.1 also shows for each state the year that the earliest gang task force was formed in the state as well as the

most recent gang task force to form in the state. This allows for comparisons between states that implemented the gang task force approach earlier than other states. For example, California, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, and Texas adopted the approach early, in the 1980s, while Alabama, Alaska, Hawaii, Kansas, Maryland, Nebraska, and North Carolina are among the most recent adopters of the gang task force approach, in or after 2005. Notably, New York and Virginia also adopted the approach later than other states, in 2002 and 2003, respectively. The length of time from first to most recent task force formation is interesting, too. Most states have a wide window of creation. For example, California implemented its first task force in 1980 and its most recent in 2006. A few states, like Georgia, Nevada, and New Jersey, had a much smaller window, spanning only four or five years (from 1997 to 2001 or 2002). Iowa's window spans from 1980 to 1992. Among the early adopters, a few states, like Arkansas, Connecticut, Indiana, and Mississippi, adopted the task force approach, but did not add many (if any) additional task forces after the initial formation.

Figure 4.2 shows the distribution of gang task force implementation by year. The bar graph shows that the first gang task force in the United States included in this study was created in 1980. This information is based on survey data collected in 2007; its accuracy relies on human memory. It is possible that there were other gang task forces implemented prior to 1980 (as well as after) and disbanded prior to 2007—those are not included in this analysis.

[Figure 4.2]

The bar graph shows two clear peaks in gang task force creation since 1980: 1997 and 2005. It could be said that metropolitan areas that created a gang task force before

1998 were “early adopters,” while those that created a gang task force in or after 1998 were “late adopters” of this approach to combating criminal gang activity. Early and late adopters will be compared to determine whether there are meaningful differences between them.

### **Gang Task Force Formation—Survey Results**

Before turning to external factors, such as the demographics and crime rate of metropolitan areas, it is interesting to review why survey respondents feel their task force was created. A group of questions on the survey asked respondents to rank how influential (from “not at all” to “very”) certain factors were in the implementation of their task force. Table 4.2 displays the percentage of responses in each category. What stands out here is an overwhelming percentage of respondents claim that an increase in gang crime was most influential in the decision to implement the task force. There is a wide gap between those who feel that an increase was not at all or not very influential (6.5%) and those who feel that an increase was somewhat or very influential (93.5%). At least a *perception* of an increase in gang crime was influential in most task force implementation. It will be determined whether metropolitan areas with higher juvenile crime rates are more likely to implement the gang task force approach, and this will help demonstrate whether this increase in gang crime is perhaps more perceived than real.

Another item of note is that gang task force formation does not appear to be instigated by a state initiative, though a federal initiative *is* influential. It also appears that some other initiative is influential, yet these results are inflated, because only 27 respondents answered and it would be likely that these respondents answered affirmatively because the survey asked the respondent to describe the type of other

initiative. Those responses varied from community outcry to city or departmental initiative to an increase in drug crimes or drug gangs to an event such as 9/11.

[Table 4.2]

Of the 188 gang task forces that provided a year of creation, 80 (42.6%) will be considered early adopters and 108 (57.4%) late adopters. Table 4.3 shows the differences between early and late adopters (the independent variable) in responses to how influential these various factors (the dependent variables) were in the implementation of the task force.

[Table 4.3]

The various factors were re-coded into dichotomous variables (0 is not influential and 1 is influential) to allow for a 2x2 crosstabulation for each factor, to determine whether a significant relationship exists between when a task force was created and what is believed to have been influential in the decision to create the task force.

The results indicate no significant relationship between early or late adopters and political pressure influencing the formation of the gang task force. However, it is interesting that a higher percentage of early adopters felt political pressure was influential.

The next four crosstabulations are statistically significant. First, early adopters felt that the media influenced task force formation, while late adopters did not. Second, early adopters felt that a high profile gang crime did influence task force formation, while late adopters are equally divided on this question. Third, almost all early adopters felt that an increase in gang crime did influence task force formation, while there was much more divergence of opinion among the late adopters. Given these three results, it appears that

in earlier years gang task force formation was influenced by gang problems, whether perceived or real, and the media portrayal of such gang problems. This is consistent with the “perceived need” required for an innovation to be diffused (Rogers 1995; Weisburd and Braga 2006).

In contrast, the fourth significant crosstabulation indicates that late adopters, but not early adopters, felt that a federal initiative instigated task force formation. This may represent a shift toward more involvement and oversight at the federal level in later years. For example, the FBI’s Safe Streets Violent Crime Initiative began in 1992 ([www.fbi.gov](http://www.fbi.gov)), and it likely picked up momentum and influence over the years. For example, in late 2009 it was announced that a Safe Streets Task Force would soon be created in Minnesota (Furst 2009c). While this point is simply anecdotal, the results of the crosstabulation provide support for institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). It is unclear which type of isomorphism applies here- coercive, mimetic, or normative- or whether it is some combination of all three. Future research could analyze this further.

The last two crosstabulations indicate that the creation of most gang task forces, whether adopted early or late, is not influenced by a state initiative but by some other initiative. Neither of these relationships approaches significance, and the latter is likely a function of respondents answering in the affirmative only because the question applied to their situation. In other words, if some other initiative had not influenced task force creation, the respondent likely provided no response to the question.

Changing the dependent variable to whether the task force was adopted early or late, Table 4.4 explores the relationship between the size of the (perceived) gang problem

and task force adoption. Given the overwhelming majority, particularly among early adopters, who claim a high profile gang crime and/or an increase in gang crime influenced task force creation, it is reasonable to expect that respondents would claim that the size of the gang problem in their area was large before task force creation. This is not the case.

[Table 4.4]

Instead, most respondents reported the size of the gang problem before task force implementation as “average.” Only a minority reported a small gang problem, but the real story is that there is consistency (rather than difference) among the categories of the independent variable. But the relationship is not significant. Thus, although early adopters reported that a high profile gang crime and/or increase in gang crime influenced task force formation, this is not supported by Table 4.4. Similarly, although late adopters stressed a federal initiative as influential rather than gang problems, Table 4.4 shows more similarity with early adopters in response to the size of the gang problem before task force implementation. Again, though Table 4.4 shows null results, it is an interesting finding in light of the significant crosstabulations in Table 4.3.

### **Gang Task Force Formation—External Factors**

I examined factors external to the survey leading to an environment more conducive to the creation of gang task forces. Table 4.5 summarizes the independent, dependent, and control variables used in this set of analyses. The dependent variable is the presence of a gang task force in the metropolitan area. In an attempt to narrow in on any effects, a cumulative decade variable was created, wherein a code of 1 means that a gang task force was created by 1980. Then the variable was duplicated and expanded to

include gang task forces created by 1990, by 2000, and then by 2007. Thus, the variable set acts like a counter, with gang task forces falling in as 2007 approaches. Table 4.5 shows that only 0.6% of metropolitan areas in the United States had initiated a gang task force by 1980, but 30.8% of metropolitan areas had adopted the approach by 2007.

[Table 4.5]

The independent variables include population, juvenile crime rate, percent Black, percent in poverty, percent casting an electoral vote for the Democratic presidential candidate, and region of the United States. The first four independent variables are based on metropolitan area, while the political and region variables are based at the state level. All of these independent variables span the entire period, from 1980 to 2007, yet for all but the crime and region data, they were interpolated to fit a line between Census and voting years. Thus, the data for population, percent Black, and percent in poverty were interpolated for all years 1981 to 1989, 1991 to 1999, and 2001. Additionally, many data points were interpolated for these variables, since there were data missing in the American Community Survey from 2002 to 2004. Likewise, the data for percent Democrat were interpolated for all non-presidential election years (from 1981 to 1983, 1985 to 1987, 1989 to 1991, 1993 to 1995, 1997 to 1999, and 2001 to 2003). Finally, data points for percent voting Democrat were linearly extrapolated from earlier years to fit 2005 to 2007. Admittedly, this technique assumes a linear fit to the data, and social behavior and demographics certainly may be non-linear in any given year. However, there is no data source of which I am aware that captures population, percent Black, or percent in poverty for each year for each metropolitan area, or for percent voting for the

Democratic presidential candidate in non-election years for each state. Thus, linear interpolation is the best recourse.

Table 4.5 displays the variables in the analysis of gang task force formation. It indicates that the mean metropolitan area population increased from approximately 611,000 persons in 1980 to approximately 815,000 in 2007. The mean metropolitan area juvenile clearance rate of all Part I Index crimes steadily decreased from 365.09 to 258.81 per 100,000 people. The mean juvenile clearance rates of murder, robbery with a gun, and assault with a gun followed similar paths. The rates increased from 1980 to 1990, decreased in 2000, and then increased again in 2007. The mean juvenile clearance rate of auto theft increased from 1980 to 1990, decreased in 2000, and decreased further in 2007. Yet, for all four of these crime types, the highest mean rate occurs in 1990. The mean percent Black increased steadily during the period (from 10.67% to 11.76%). The percent of the metropolitan area population living below the poverty threshold fluctuated a bit, but started at 11.95% in 1980 and ended at 13.27% in 2007. The percent of the state population voting Democrat also fluctuated, but started at 44.29% in 1980 and ended at 46.23% in 2007.

The final variable, region of the United States, is determined by the U.S. Census Bureau ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)). Region, then, is treated as a control variable, to insure that any effects found to be influential in gang task force formation are not due to regional variation. Table 4.5 shows that 24.7% of the gang task forces are located in the Midwest, 17.4% are located in the Northeast, 39.9% are located in the South, and 18% are located in the West region.

Table 4.6 displays the descriptive statistics and *t*-test results for the aforementioned variables. It should be noted that the dataset excludes all gang task forces created in a particular metropolitan area after the first. For example, the first gang task force in Los Angeles was created in 1980, so the city's 13 gang task forces that were formed more recently are excluded. While it would be interesting to explore why a metropolitan area implements subsequent gang task force efforts after the first, this study focuses on initial implementation. Further, the population, demographics, and political data pertinent to each gang task force may remain the same, and thus duplicative, for each subsequent gang task force implemented in a given metropolitan area.

[Table 4.6]

The hypotheses regarding gang task force formation, again, are as follows:

- H4.1: Gang task forces are more likely to form in areas of racial heterogeneity.
- H4.2: Gang task forces are more likely to form in areas of low socio-economic status.
- H4.3: Gang task forces are more likely to form in areas with a Republican political affiliation.
- H4.4: Gang task forces are more likely to form in areas with a high juvenile crime rate.

The *t*-test results shown in Table 4.6 indicate that population is higher in metropolitan areas with a gang task force, and this population difference (between areas with and without a gang task force) is statistically significant. The mean population in areas with a gang task force is approximately 1,534,000, while the mean population in areas without a gang task force is approximately 442,000. Unsurprisingly, gang task forces are more often implemented in highly populated areas.

Table 4.6 also indicates that areas with a gang task force have higher juvenile crime rates. For example, the mean rate of juvenile assault with a gun in metropolitan

areas with a gang task force is 2.57 per 100,000 persons compared to 1.83 in metropolitan areas without a gang task force. Similarly, the rates of juvenile murder, robbery with a gun and auto theft are higher in areas with a gang task force than in areas without a gang task force. Indeed, the overall juvenile crime rate in areas with a gang task force is 263.39 per 100,000 persons compared to 256.23 in areas without a gang task force. In sum, the mean juvenile crime rates in areas with a gang task force are consistently higher than in areas without a gang task force. However, the results are not statistically significant.

The size of the Black population is also not statistically different between metropolitan areas with and without a gang task force. However, the Black population is a bit higher in areas with a gang task force compared to areas without a gang task force (11.94 to 11.66%).

The percentage of the population below the poverty threshold is lower in metropolitan areas with a gang task force than in those without. The percent in poverty is 12.45 in areas with a gang task force and 13.7 in areas without a gang task force. This difference is statistically significant. It seems that gang task forces are implemented in metropolitan areas with a higher percentage of the population above the poverty threshold; it is possible that more affluent areas have greater financial means to implement the task force approach. This is surprising, however, since task forces may represent a method to conserve resources by pooling labor forces, equipment, and other resources to cover more ground and since higher task force implementation had been hypothesized for areas of relative disadvantage.

There is no statistically significant difference in the percent of the population voting for a Democratic president in metropolitan areas with and without a gang task

force. A slightly higher percentage of the population votes Democrat in areas with a gang task force compared to areas without one. The difference, though, is slight and not statistically significant.

There is no statistically significant difference in the Midwest or South regions. The Northeast region, however, has significantly fewer gang task forces, while the West has significantly more.

To summarize the results in Table 4.6, there are no statistically significant differences in the juvenile crime rates, percent Black, and percent voting Democrat in metropolitan areas with and without a gang task force. That said, it appears that areas with a gang task force have higher juvenile crime rates in every crime category including the overall clearance rate, a larger Black population, and slightly more voting Democrat. Population is a significant difference between metropolitan areas with and without a gang task force, with areas with a gang task force marked by a much larger population. The percent of the population below the poverty threshold also marks a significant difference between metropolitan areas with and without a gang task force—areas with a gang task force are more affluent. Finally, the Northeast region has fewer while the West region has more gang task forces in their respective metropolitan areas.

A note of caution is necessary here. Table 4.6 compares metropolitan areas that had created a gang task force by 2007 with metropolitan areas that never created a gang task force. The data for the variables being compared, however, comes *only* from 2007. So Table 4.6 offers a simple picture of comparison in the year 2007, but does not examine the demographic and political environment of earlier years. To examine the earlier years in more detail, I perform an event history analysis.

[Figure 4.3]

Figure 4.3 shows the cumulative proportion of metropolitan areas “surviving” gang task force implementation, meaning that a gang task force was not implemented in the time period under study: 1980 to 2007. The risk of task force implementation is extremely low in the 1980s. The risk increases in the 1990s, with 96% of metropolitan areas having yet to implement a task force in 1990 but dropping to 82% surviving without implementing a task force in 2000. The risk levels off again in the early 2000s, but increases dramatically as the study period ends. The percent surviving without implementing a task force drops from 79 in 2004 to 70 in 2006. At the conclusion of the study, 56% of the metropolitan areas “survive” without implementing a gang task force.

[Figure 4.4]

Figure 4.4 shows the hazard rate of gang task force formation for metropolitan areas from 1980 to 2007. Metropolitan areas face little or no hazard of task force formation until the late 1980s. The hazard slightly increases in 1992 and then spikes in 1997. After dropping off again in the early 2000s, the hazard of gang task formation peaks in 2005. In sum, in 1980 metropolitan areas had a very low chance of adopting the task force approach to combating gang crime, but the rate of formation increased dramatically over time.

With these visual representations of gang task formation across time, I examine factors particular to metropolitan areas that may impact task force formation. Table 4.7 provides the results of the Cox regression analysis of the total juvenile crime rate (a time-varying variable) on the likelihood of gang task force formation.

[Table 4.7]

The -2 log likelihood statistic for Model 1 is 1177.47, which has a significant chi-square of 5.83. Thus, the model with the total juvenile crime rate is a better fit than without the overall crime rate as a predictor of gang task force formation. The coefficient for the total juvenile crime rate is .001227 ( $p < .01$ ); for every one unit increase in the crime rate, there is a .1% increase in the odds of gang task force adoption ( $[e^{.001227} - 1] * 100\% = 0.1\%$ ). In sum, Model 1 shows that as the juvenile crime rate increases, so does the likelihood of gang task force formation. To better explain the relationship, I use the standard deviation of the total juvenile crime rate, which is 166.4226. For every one standard deviation increase in the juvenile crime rate, the likelihood of gang task force adoption increases by 22.65% ( $[e^{166.4226 * .001227} - 1] * 100\% = 22.65\%$ ).

In addition to the total juvenile crime rate, Model 2 of Table 4.7 includes the following time-varying covariates: percent of the population that is Black, percent of the population below the poverty threshold, and percent of the population voting Democrat. The model also controls for region of the United States. The -2 log likelihood statistic for Model 2 is 1138.16, which has a chi-square of 39.32 ( $p < .001$ ). Model 2 is a better fit.

The coefficient for the total juvenile crime rate is .001217 ( $p < .05$ ), so that for every one standard deviation increase in the crime rate, the likelihood of gang task force adoption increases by 22.45% ( $[e^{166.4226 * .001217} - 1] * 100\% = 22.45\%$ ). Model 2 shows that as the juvenile crime rate increases, so does the likelihood of gang task force formation. Even when accounting for the effects of the other covariates included in this model, youth crime rates significantly impact whether a metropolitan area implements a gang task force.

The coefficient for percent Black is .029183 ( $p < .01$ ); for every percentage point increase in the Black population, there is a 2.96% increase in the odds of gang task force adoption. Thus, even when accounting for the effects of the other covariates included in this model, metropolitan areas with higher percentages of a Black population are more likely to implement a gang task force.

The coefficient for percent voting Democrat is .092716 ( $p < .001$ ); for every percentage point increase in those voting Democrat, there is a 9.7% increase in the odds of gang task force adoption. Again, this relationship holds despite the other covariates included in the model.

Region is treated as a dummy variable, with the Midwest, Northeast and South regions being compared to the West. Region adds significantly to the model ( $\chi^2=9.201$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p < .05$ ) as it does to all subsequent models. The Midwest and South regions have negative coefficients (-.355409 and -.292048, respectively), yet neither is significant. The coefficient for the Northeast is also negative, at -1.064086, but it is significant at the  $p < .01$  level. Thus, compared to the West, metropolitan areas in the Northeast are 65.5% less likely to implement a gang task force.

Table 4.7 shows that total juvenile crime, percent Black, percent voting Democrat, and region are significant variables in the analysis of formation, and may help predict environments conducive to gang task force formation. Moreover, the relationship of these factors to gang task force adoption holds even while accounting for their covariation. The finding that gang task forces are more likely to be implemented in areas with higher youth violence and racial heterogeneity is in line with the hypotheses. It is reasonable that gang task forces would form in areas of higher youth violence; and youth

violence, or crime more generally, is thought to be most prevalent in communities with higher racial heterogeneity (Shaw and McKay 1942). However, the finding that gang task forces are more likely implemented in politically liberal areas is surprising. It was hypothesized that conservative states would be more apt to implement a gang task force, since conservatives typically favor rigorous regulation and enforcement (Unnever and Cullen 2010) and gang task forces, particularly as defined herein, are predominantly driven by law enforcement participation. It appears, however, that gang task forces may represent a more collaborative, bottom-up approach to social control (Garland 2001), rather than a centralized, top-down approach reminiscent of an “iron cage” (Weber 1978; Barker 1993). It could be, then, that liberal states are more prone to the use of social engineering and planning to solve gang problems, consistent with substantive rationality (Savelsberg 1992; Collins 1994).

Knowing that the overall juvenile crime rate may be one predictive factor for gang task force formation is important. Building on this (or, more accurately, deconstructing these findings) is also telling. Table 4.8 analyzes the elements that comprise the overall juvenile crime rate. The key is to focus on gang crime. As explained in Chapter 3, I have chosen robbery with a gun, homicide, assault with a gun, and auto theft as key crimes that, when involving juvenile offenders, may best bracket gang crime.

Table 4.8 displays the results of ten Cox regression models that attempt to predict gang task force formation. Models 1 through 8 consider the juvenile crime types separately and accounting for the other covariates. Models 9 and 10 consider the juvenile crime types all together and while accounting for the other covariates, respectively.

Model 1 in Table 4.8 shows the results for the rate of juvenile assault as a predictor of gang task force formation. The -2 log likelihood statistic for Model 1 is 1158.77, which has a significant chi-square of 24.53 ( $p < .001$ ). Thus, the model with (versus without) the rate of juvenile assault with a gun is a better fit as a predictor of gang task force formation. The coefficient for juvenile assault with a gun is .131 ( $p < .001$ ), which means that for every one unit increase in the assault rate, there is a 14% increase in the odds of gang task force adoption. In sum, Model 1 shows that as the rate of juvenile assault with a gun increases, so does the likelihood of gang task force formation.

The relationship between the rate of juvenile assault with a gun and gang task force formation stands strong in Model 2, wherein other covariates are tested. The -2 log likelihood of Model 2 is 1116.49, with a chi-square of 42.28 ( $p < .001$ ). Model 2 is a better fit to the data than Model 1. The coefficient for the rate of juvenile assault with a gun is .155 ( $p < .001$ ); for each unit increase in the assault with a gun rate, the likelihood of gang task force adoption increases by 16.8%.

Percent Black and percent in poverty are not significant predictors of gang task force formation in Model 2. Percent voting Democrat, however, is significant in this model. The coefficient for percent voting Democrat is .096 ( $p < .001$ ). For every percentage point increase in those voting Democrat, there is a 10% increase in the likelihood of gang task force formation.

The Midwest and South regions have negative coefficients (-.311 and -.033, respectively), yet neither is significant. The coefficient for the Northeast region is also negative at -.981, but it is significant at the  $p < .01$  level. Compared to the West, metropolitan areas in the Northeast are 62.5% less likely to implement a gang task force.

Model 3 in Table 4.8 shows the results for the rate of juvenile homicide as a predictor of gang task force formation. The model is significant at the  $p < .01$  level, with a -2 log likelihood of 1175.094 and a chi-square value of 8.205. The coefficient for juvenile murder is .628 ( $p < .01$ ), so that for each unit increase in the juvenile homicide rate, the likelihood of gang task force adoption increases by 87.3%.

The relationship between juvenile homicide and gang task force adoption holds steady in Model 4. The -2 log likelihood of Model 4 is 1135.68 and chi-square is 39.42 ( $p < .001$ ), and the model is a better fit to the data than Model 3. The coefficient for the rate of juvenile homicide is .652 ( $p < .01$ ), so the odds of gang task force adoption increases by 92% for every unit increase in the juvenile homicide rate.

Similar to Model 2, Model 4 shows that percent Black and percent in poverty are not significant predictors of gang task force formation, but percent voting Democrat is significantly related to gang task force adoption. The coefficient for percent voting Democrat is .093 ( $p < .001$ ), so the odds of gang task force adoption increases by 9.8% for every percent increase in those voting Democrat. Finally, and again similar to Model 2, Model 4 shows that the Midwest and South regions are not significantly different from the West, while the Northeast region is significantly different. The coefficient for the Northeast region is -1.101 ( $p < .01$ ), and thus cities in the Northeast region are 66.8% less likely than those in the West to implement a gang task force.

Model 5 in Table 4.8 shows the results for the rate of juvenile robbery with a gun as a predictor of gang task force formation. The model is significant at the  $p < .05$  level, with a -2 log likelihood of 1177.54 and a chi-square value of 5.76. The coefficient for juvenile robbery with a gun is .079 ( $p < .01$ ). For each one unit increase in the rate of

juvenile robbery with a gun, the likelihood of gang task force adoption increases by 8.3%.

The relationship between juvenile robbery with a gun and gang task force adoption remains significant in Model 6. The -2 log likelihood is 1137.52 and chi-square is 40.03 ( $p < .001$ ), and the model is a better fit to the data than Model 5. The coefficient of the rate of juvenile robbery with a gun is .09 ( $p < .05$ ). The significance of juvenile robbery with a gun dropped in Model 6 compared to Model 5. The addition of other covariates in Model 6 caused juvenile robbery with a gun to lose some of its significance as a predictor of gang task force formation.

Similar to Models 2 and 4, Model 6 shows that percent Black and percent in poverty are not significant predictors of gang task force formation and percent voting Democrat is significantly related to gang task force adoption. The coefficient for percent voting Democrat is .10 ( $p < .001$ ), so the odds of gang task force adoption increases by 10.5% for every percentage point increase in those voting Democrat. Finally, in line with Models 2 and 4, this model shows that the Midwest and South regions are not significantly different from the West, but the Northeast is significantly different. The coefficient for the Northeast region is -1.133 ( $p < .01$ ), and thus metropolitan areas in the Northeast region are 67.8% less likely than those in the West to implement a gang task force.

Model 7 in Table 4.8 shows the results for the rate of juvenile auto theft as a predictor of gang task force formation. The model is significant at the  $p < .001$  level, with a -2 log likelihood of 1125.08 and a chi-square value of 58.22. The coefficient for

juvenile auto theft is .084 ( $p < .001$ ). For each unit increase in the rate of juvenile auto theft, the likelihood of gang task force adoption increases by 8.7%.

Model 8 in Table 4.8 includes the other covariates in the analysis with the rate of juvenile auto theft, and all but two dummy variables for region are significant. The coefficient for the rate of juvenile auto theft is .084 ( $p < .001$ ). For every unit increase in juvenile auto theft the likelihood of gang task force adoption increases by 8.7%.

Percent Black and percent in poverty are both significant predictors of gang task force formation in Model 8. The coefficient for percent Black is .024 ( $p < .05$ ), which means that for every unit increase in percent Black, the likelihood of gang task force adoption increases by 2.4%. The coefficient for percent in poverty is  $-.06$  ( $p < .05$ ); for every unit increase in percent in poverty, the likelihood of gang task force adoption decreases by 5.8%. This is consistent with the earlier finding that gang task forces may be more likely to be implemented in more affluent metropolitan areas.

Percent voting Democrat is again a significant predictor of gang task force formation. The coefficient is .086 ( $p < .001$ ), so with every unit increase in the percent voting Democrat, the likelihood of gang task force adoption increases by 8.9%.

Finally, and again similar to Models 2, 4, and 6, Model 8 shows that the Midwest and South regions are not significantly different from the West, while the Northeast region is significantly different. The coefficient for the Northeast is  $-1.042$  ( $p < .01$ ), meaning that Northeast metropolitan areas are 64.7% less likely than those in the West to implement a gang task force.

The goodness of fit test for Model 8 shows that it is a better fit to the data than Model 7, with a  $-2$  log likelihood value of 1091.23 and a chi-square value of 33.85

( $p < .001$ ). In sum, juvenile auto theft, percent Black, percent in poverty, and percent voting Democrat are all significant predictors of gang task force adoption, even when controlling for region.

In the final two models, Models 9 and 10, all juvenile crime types are included in the analysis. Model 9 in Table 4.8 shows the results of all juvenile crime types together, without considering the impact of the other covariates. Juvenile assault with a gun and auto theft are significant predictors of gang task force formation, while juvenile homicide and robbery with a gun are not. The coefficient for juvenile assault with a gun is .092 ( $p < .01$ ), meaning that for every unit increase in the rate of juvenile assault with a gun, the likelihood of gang task force formation increases by 9.6%. The coefficient for juvenile auto theft is .078 ( $p < .001$ ), so every unit increase in the rate of juvenile auto theft corresponds to an increase of 8.1% in the likelihood of gang task force formation. Model 9 is significant at the  $p < .001$  level, with a -2 log likelihood of 1118.43 and a chi-square value of 64.87.

However, Model 10 is a better fit to the data, with a -2 log likelihood value of 1082.85 and chi-square value of 35.58 ( $p < .001$ ). Model 10 considers all covariates in the analysis. Here we see that juvenile assault with a gun, juvenile auto theft, percent in poverty and percent voting Democrat remain the ultimate factors influencing gang task force adoption, even when controlling for region. In this model, juvenile homicide, robbery with a gun and percent Black are insignificant.

The coefficient for juvenile assault with a gun is .107 ( $p < .01$ ), meaning that for every unit increase in the rate of juvenile assault with a gun, the likelihood of gang task force adoption increases by 11.3%. The coefficient for juvenile auto theft is .077

( $p < .001$ ), so every unit increase in the rate of juvenile auto theft raises the likelihood of gang task force adoption by 8.0%.

The coefficient for percent in poverty is  $-.063$  and holds its significance at the  $p < .05$  level. For every percentage point increase in the population below the poverty threshold, the likelihood of gang task force adoption decreases by 6.1%.

The coefficient for percent voting Democrat is  $.090$  ( $p < .001$ ), which means that every percentage point increase in those voting Democrat increases the likelihood of gang task force formation by 9.4%.

As has been true for all previous models, Model 10 shows that region does not negate the impact of juvenile crime, economic status, or political climate on the likelihood of gang task force creation. However, Model 10 does show that, compared to the West, the Northeast region is less likely to implement a gang task force. The coefficient for the Northeast region is  $-.944$  ( $p < .01$ ), which means that communities in the Northeast are 61.1% less likely to implement a gang task force than in the West. Despite this significant regional effect, Model 10 makes clear that gang task force formation may be influenced by the rate of juvenile crime, the percent of the population in poverty, and the percent of the population voting Democrat. Specifically, the findings indicate that gang task forces may be more likely to form in high crime areas of relative affluence dominated by left-wing constituents.

### **Chapter Summary**

Understanding why gang task forces form is the first goal of this research. The question is addressed using a two-pronged approach. First, survey responses are examined to determine why gang task force commanders believe their task force was

created. Then, secondary data are examined in metropolitan areas with and without a gang task force to identify factors conducive to gang task force formation. With this holistic approach to question formation, key factors are found both internal and external to the mail survey.

Of the 197 responses to the mail survey of all 249 gang task forces currently operating in the United States, the vast majority of gang task force commanders (93.5%) believe that an increase in gang crime was somewhat or very influential in the decision to create the gang task force. When separated into groups of early adopters (created before 1998) and late adopters (created in or after 1998), the results show that formation among early adopters was influenced by gang problems (whether perceived or real) and the media portrayal of such gang problems. This finding is in support of innovation diffusion (Rogers 1995; Weisburd and Braga 2006). In contrast, late adopters feel that a federal initiative instigated task force formation. As mentioned earlier, this may represent a shift toward more involvement and oversight at the federal level in more recent years, which may also show support for institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983).

One question left unanswered by the survey results is whether the gang problems task force commanders so often believed to have spurred task force formation are perceived or real. My analysis of secondary data attempts to answer this question. The findings suggest that increases in actual crime may indeed impact gang task formation. Increases in the total juvenile crime rate—and more specifically, the rates of juvenile assault with a gun and auto theft—are significant predictors of gang task force formation. Additionally, the socio-economic status of the metropolitan area is somewhat significant, with more affluent communities more likely to implement a gang task force. Another

highly significant factor influencing task force formation is political climate.

Surprisingly, gang task forces are more often implemented in metropolitan areas with a higher percentage of the population voting for the Democratic presidential candidate.

Finally, it is important to note that race plays no significant part in the implementation of a gang task force. These relationships remain constant, even when controlling for region.

In sum, the results of this analysis shows that gang task forces may be more likely implemented in metropolitan areas marked by higher juvenile crime rates, more affluence, and more left-wing constituents.

There are several limitations to this analysis of gang task force formation. First, the study period spans 1980 to 2007, with the survey being conducted in 2007. Some gang task forces may have been implemented prior to and/or during the study period and disbanded prior to the survey. These task forces, if they existed, are not included in the study. Second, surveys always rely on human memory and perception. Third, existing data for metropolitan areas were collected and used to examine gang task force formation, but some gang task forces are not located in a metropolitan area. These gang task forces are excluded from study. Further, only the *first* gang task force implemented in each metropolitan area is included in this analysis. All subsequent task forces created in any metropolitan area with multiple task forces have been excluded. Perhaps more problematic, data were used for metropolitan areas and states, though gang task forces are known to cross such boundaries. Finally, the demographic and political data were interpolated for the years falling between data collection years. This assumes a linear fit to the data, which likely is not an accurate fit.

Despite these limitations, this is the first research project using original survey data of all gang task force commanders in the United States and comparing those results to existing state-level and metropolitan area data. The significance of these results is that we can now understand more about why particular jurisdictions may be more likely than others to implement the gang task force approach to combating gang crime.

In Chapter 5, we turn to the actual structure of these gang task forces. Using results from the national survey, characteristics of gang task forces are described along with the structure of relationships between task force participants and non-participants. A case study of one typical gang task force is presented along with a network analysis of the task force.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **CHARACTERISTICS AND STRUCTURE OF GANG TASK FORCES**

Chapter 4 focused on the creation of gang task forces. This chapter starts after the decision to implement and looks closely at just how gang task forces are built. Who participates in the gang task force? How many office locations exist? Do all participants have a desk at the task force location? Is there a mission statement? Just how formalized is the task force, or is it more of an ad hoc effort? And, most central to this examination of the network structure of gang task forces, what is the frequency and quality of communication among task force participants and non-participants? These questions, and more, are answered in this chapter.

This chapter analyzes the results of the mail survey sent to every gang task force commander in the United States. As mentioned in Chapter 4, 197 of 249 gang task force commanders responded. Unlike Chapter 4, however, wherein only the first task force located within the boundary of a metropolitan area is included in the analysis, this analysis will include all 197 gang task forces since the gang task force itself is the unit of analysis here rather than the metropolitan area.

The first half of this chapter begins with a brief overview of survey results regarding the characteristics of gang task forces. For example, the purpose and funding of gang task forces are considered along with the numbers of participating agencies and individuals. Next, variables regarding the extent of formalization of gang task forces are considered. Mission, organizational charts, and gang legislation are analyzed. Finally, the

network structure of gang task forces is examined. Frequency and quality of communication among task force participants and non-participants is evaluated.

The second half of this chapter presents a case study of the Metro Gang Strike Force (MGSF) in Minnesota. This section provides an overview and brief history of the MGSF, examines the organizational structure of the MGSF both before and after significant change was implemented, and discusses the demise of the MGSF. Then, a network analysis of the MGSF is presented, and offers some insight into whether the MGSF was successful during its tenure.

### **Characteristics of Gang Task Forces**

This section summarizes the survey responses that help describe the characteristics of gang task forces. The first question on the survey was meant to evoke the overall purpose or main mission of the gang task force. The response categories were limited to “prevent,” “intervene in,” or “suppress” gang activity, as well as a choice of “none of the above,” but many respondents circled some combination of the choices.

[Figure 5.1]

Figure 5.1 indicates that 37.4% of gang task forces in the United States focus solely on the suppression of gang activity (see Appendix E for a table of these results). This is not surprising given that the definition of gang task force used in this research includes the requirement that at least one police agency is involved in the task force, and that one method to locate respondents was to call county sheriff offices. What is surprising is that the remaining gang task forces do not focus on suppression at all, or, more typically, focus on suppression along with the other goals of prevention and/or intervention. Of the 195 commanders responding to this question, 7 gang task forces

(3.6%) focus solely on prevention of gang activity and 18 (9.2%) focus solely on intervention. Twenty-five gang task forces (12.9%) focus on some combination of prevention, intervention, or suppression, while 32.3% focus on all three. Interestingly, 9 gang task forces (4.6%) focus on none of these three goals. This is likely because these gang task forces do not focus solely on gangs, but rather have more encompassing missions to include targeting other types of violent offenders.

In terms of funding, Figure 5.2 shows that 45.9% of gang task forces are funded by the federal government (see Appendix E for a table of these results). This figure supports the finding in Chapter 4 that, at least among late adopters of the gang task force approach, the federal government is influential in the implementation of gang task forces. The funding source for 41 of the 196 responding gang task forces (20.9%) is that the participating agencies themselves contribute the funds necessary to make the gang task force operational. The state is only fiscally responsible for 9.7% of the gang task forces. Only two gang task forces (1%) are funded through fund-raising efforts, and no gang task forces are funded by private donors. This latter source (which is not included in Figure 5.2) may be seen as a conflict of interest for a government-involved entity.

[Figure 5.2]

Interestingly, the second most common funding source is something other than what was offered as a category on the survey. When respondents took the opportunity to write the source of other funding, responses include that they receive no funding, the city funds it, or some combination of the choices provided. In one instance, a respondent wrote that seizures provide the source of funding. In another instance, a respondent wrote that each gang conviction results in a fee paid to the gang task force.

Figure 5.3 shows the level of jurisdiction gang task forces hold in the United States (see Appendix E for a table of these results). Jurisdiction is the breadth of control a certain agency has over a specified geographic area. It should be noted that while task forces are typically comprised of local law enforcement, among other agencies, many task forces have a higher level of jurisdiction and, through special provisions to deputize officers, allow a city police officer, for example, to execute enforcement duties outside the boundaries of that city.

[Figure 5.3]

Of the 193 responses, 81 (42%) have federal jurisdiction, 53 (27.5%) have county jurisdiction, 32 (16.6%) have city jurisdiction, and 19 (9.8%) have state jurisdiction. For those that claimed some other level of jurisdiction, responses varied from none to everything, which may mean the same thing, that the gang task force is not bound by any jurisdictional boundaries. It should be noted that survey respondents are asked to provide a written list of the cities and counties in which the task force has jurisdiction. Those results are not considered here, but it would be interesting, perhaps in a future study, to map areas in the United States in which a gang task force is operational. It would also provide the exact boundaries of task force coverage, and lack thereof.

Lending credence to the earlier claim that gang task forces often cross jurisdictional boundaries, and ignore metropolitan area and state lines, Table 5.1 shows that the majority of gang task forces, almost 90%, are multijurisdictional.

[Table 5.1]

Table 5.1 also shows the number of agencies participating in gang task forces. Of the 197 responses, 76 (38.6%) have fewer than five, 74 (37.6%) have five to nine, and 47 (23.9%)

have more than ten participating agencies. Table 5.1 also shows the number of individuals participating in gang task forces. Of the 197 responses, 24 (12.2%) have five or fewer, 52 (26.4%) have between six and ten, 53 (26.9%) have between 11 and 20, 28 (14.2%) have between 21 and 40, and 40 (20.3%) have more than 40 individuals participating in the gang task force. Thus, the majority of gang task forces have between 6 and 20 individual participants.

### **Formalization of Gang Task Forces**

One of the simplest and perhaps best indicators of how formal a gang task force is structured is whether it has its own mission statement. Table 5.2 shows that gang task forces are almost equally divided on this item.

[Table 5.2]

Of the 187 responses, 94 (50.3%) of all commanders answered in the affirmative, that there does exist a mission statement of the gang task force. Of this half, 43 (45.7%) provided their mission statement as an attachment to their completed survey. A few examples of a mission statement include that in use by a gang task force in California, Arizona, Illinois, Minnesota, and Massachusetts.

A gang task force with city-level jurisdiction was created in California in 1991. This task force focuses on intervention and suppression, and the mission statement is as follows:

We exist to ensure safe and healthy opportunities for [our city's] youth, free of gangs and crime, to realize their hopes and dreams, and become successful and productive in their homes, schools, and neighborhoods.

A gang task force with state-wide jurisdiction was created in Arizona in 1993.

This task force focuses on prevention, intervention, and suppression, and the mission statement is as follows:

To provide a safe environment for the citizens of Arizona by reducing criminal street gang activity. This will be accomplished by investigative enforcement and community based activities.

A gang task force with federal jurisdiction was created in Illinois in 1996. This task force focuses on suppression, and the mission statement is as follows:

The mission of the [task force] is to disrupt and dismantle significant criminal enterprises in the [city], specifically targeting National Gang Strategy (NGS) Tier One street gangs, through the use of sophisticated and sensitive investigative techniques.

A gang task force also with federal jurisdiction was created in Massachusetts in 1997. This task force also focuses on suppression, and the mission statement is as follows:

To identify, disrupt, and dismantle violent gangs in the [two county] areas of Massachusetts (MA) through utilization of the enterprise theory of investigation and sophisticated techniques such as undercover operations and Title III electronic surveillance.

Finally, as will be discussed later in this chapter, the Minnesota Gang Strike Force was created in 1997, and was disbanded and re-created in 2005. The mission statement of this gang task force, with state-wide jurisdiction, is as follows:

Originally the Minnesota Gang Strike Force was created to identify, investigate, arrest and prosecute gang members engaged in “criminal activity” in the state of Minnesota. The primary goals of the Metro Gang Strike Force remain the same.

1. Target for prosecution individuals who are most criminally active within a gang or who hold leadership positions. The key here is “criminal gang

- activity.” The GSF targets those who benefit from this gang activity, and does not target young people because of their physical appearance.
2. To coordinate proactive long-term investigations on targeted gang members.
  3. To react promptly to requests for assistance from other law enforcement agencies.
  4. To provide peace officers and prosecutors throughout the state of Minnesota with training on tactics and techniques for investigating and prosecuting gang crimes.
  5. To obtain information and intelligence regarding gang membership and related criminal activity and share that information with other law enforcement agencies in the state.
  6. To ensure that the community receives information about plans, activities and decisions of the Criminal Gang Oversight Council through regular meetings with Indian Affairs Council, the Council on Affairs of Chicano/Latino People, the Council on Black Minnesotans and the Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans, to ensure that the position of the Councils on Gang Strike Force activities is then heard by the Metro Gang Strike Force Advisory Board.

These examples provide a glimpse of the variety in specificity and scope of mission statements. A future study could conduct a content analysis of the mission statements.

Another good indicator of how formal a gang task force is structured is whether there exists a formal organizational chart of task force participants. Table 5.2 shows that the majority of gang task forces (76.1% of the 188 responding) do not have a formal organizational chart. Of the 45 gang task forces (23.9%) that do have an organizational chart, only 8 provided the chart as an attachment to the completed survey. This is perhaps due to any sensitive information that may be included on the chart, such as individuals' names.

Though again not reflected in table form here, it should be noted that 33 commanders included additional printed material as an attachment to their completed

survey. As previously mentioned, it may be an interesting future study to analyze the content of these materials, and to closely study a smaller set of gang task forces.

Central to a topic studied by Barrows and Huff (2009), the vast majority of gang task forces operating in the United States today use a gang database to house gang information. Table 5.2 shows that only 5 do not use a database while the remaining 181 (97.3% of the 186 responding) do. In reviewing the handwritten responses to the question of which database is used (which is not reflected in a table here), most respondents use Cal-Gang, or GangNET, as it is known outside of California. Others mention a database internal and unique to their agency. Still others cite federal databases. There are also many various other databases mentioned, and though it is outside the scope of this project, it would be interesting to look more closely at what databases are being used, as well as their benefits and limitations. Suffice it here to say that gang databases are being used to a great degree.

Another key indicator of gang task force formalization is whether definitions of gang members or gang-related crimes existed in legislation prior to implementation of the task force and whether those definitions changed after implementation. Table 5.2 shows that 125 of the responding 191 gang task forces (65.4%) did have legislation on gang definitions prior to task force implementation. Of those, 42 (21.3%) provided the printed legislation as an attachment to the completed survey (although this is not reflected in a table here).

Table 5.2 shows that of the 133 responses, 22 commanders (16.5%) noted that gang legislation had changed after gang task force implementation. This is worthy of future study as well. It is interesting that legislation would change after implementation.

It suggests that gang task forces are not always created and then left to operate in a vacuum. Rather, it could be that legislators and policymakers are in tune to the efforts of the gang task forces, and enact legislation to support the cause. This of course is the idealistic situation, and to understand the real situation the particular circumstances and verbiage surrounding the change must be evaluated.

Table 5.2 shows that the majority of respondents (66.3%) reported that enhanced penalties exist in legislation for committing a gang-related crime. Enhanced penalties can include an increase in offense level, from gross misdemeanor to felony, for example, or it could be an amount of prison or probation time added to any sentence, or both.

Turning now to the physical environment of gang task forces, Table 5.2 also shows the frequency distribution of the number of office locations for each task force. Most gang task forces (69.1%) have one office location. This leaves almost a third with multiple offices. Twenty gang task forces (10.3%) have six or more office locations. Further details about the location of these offices are not included in the survey results, but it is another potential limitation to the analyses in Chapters 4 and 6. After all, those chapters use the site of where the commander sits to place each task force in a metropolitan area. If a task force has multiple office locations located in multiple metropolitan areas, those localities and their respective crime and demographic data are not included in the analyses.

Table 5.2 shows that more than half of the responding 190 gang task forces (55.3%) have their own office location while just under half (44.7%) are housed within the offices of another agency. This item speaks to how organized the gang task force is because gang task forces with their own office location must make arrangements for

leasing space, funding, computer services, and many other administrative functions. Although not reflected in a table, those gang task forces that share space with another agency are typically housed in a law enforcement agency. However, there is one gang task force that is housed at a school and another that meets in the local library.

The final variable that aids in understanding the degree of formalization of gang task forces is how many task force participants have a desk at the office. Table 5.2 shows that at half of the gang task forces (51.6% of the 190 responding) all participants have a desk at the office. Conversely, no participants have a desk at 18.9% of the responding gang task forces. It may seem a trivial thing, whether to have a desk at the office. Yet a desk at the office can offer a place to be, a place to focus, a place to interact with others. This is why it is included here, along with these other indicators of gang task force formalization.

### **Structure of Gang Task Forces**

The survey targeted the commander of every gang task force in operation in the United States. The main goals of this research are to evaluate why gang task forces form, how they are structured and whether they are effective as a means to combat criminal gang activity. The second goal, how gang task forces are structured, is best understood using network analysis. However, a formal network analysis typically focuses on a single network, compares it to another network, and analyzes the relationships between actors within and outside the networks (see Wasserman and Faust 1994). The survey responses, since they are garnered from a single actor within each of the 197 gang task forces under study, do not allow for a formal network analysis. However, the survey responses do allow for a beginning approach to understanding the structure of and relationships among

actors involved in gang task forces, at least from the commanders' perspective. This section describes who participates in gang task forces and the frequency, quality, and strength of those associations.

Figure 5.4 shows the frequency distributions of gang task force commanders' opinions about the task force structure as well as the quality of communication with task force participants and non-participants. Respondents were to rank their level of (dis)agreement with seven statements regarding task force structure and communication. The first statement is "our program operates in a strict, hierarchical fashion, much like a para-military operation." It is often thought that police agencies in general are hierarchical in nature (O'Hara 2005), so it was expected that the same is true for gang task forces. This is not the case, however. On the contrary, most gang task force commanders (66.5% of 194) disagreed with this statement. This may suggest that gang task forces are more collaborative than hierarchical, which is supported by the opinions on the next statement. Of the 194 respondents, 82.4% disagreed with the statement "rather than being very collaborative, the program is dominated by one agency."

[Figure 5.4]

The next statement reflected in Figure 5.4 is "jurisdictional issues, or 'turf' issues, negatively affect our efforts." Opinions were sought to this statement because it is often assumed that law enforcement agencies compete with one another in their efforts to reduce crime. This assumption is perpetuated in popular culture, such as in television shows and movies, with federal agents usurping control from local police agencies over major crime scenes. This, however, does not reflect the opinions of gang task force commanders, with 84.9% of 192 disagreeing that turf issues negatively affect their

efforts, even though the majority of gang task forces have participants from federal law enforcement (67.9% of 184, as shown in Figure 5.5).

Gang task forces are comprised of individuals from multiple agencies assigned to work for the task force. The assignment may be short or long term, depending on the needs of the task force or the demands of the participant's home agency. As such, it might be expected that task force participants are coming and going, with little advance notice. The next statement, that attempts to address this issue, is "there is little stability in the program because the agents are often called back to their home agency." Figure 5.4 shows that, again, most task force commanders disagree with this statement (84.5% of 187). This may indicate that task forces are stable entities, with home agencies dedicated to serving the mission of the task force rather than their own interests.

Responses to the final three statements reflected in Figure 5.4 attempt to address the frequency and quality of communication between gang task force participants and with non-participants, a topic that dominates the remainder of this section. Most commanders (94.4% of 196) agreed with the statement "all participants frequently communicate with all other participants." Since this is not a formal network analysis of all task force participants, it is unclear whether this statement truly reflects the frequency of communication between task force participants. It is merely the commanders' opinion about the frequency of such communication. Yet it is telling that such a majority of commanders believe that communication among the task force participants is frequent. And, the vast majority of commanders (87.2% of 196) also agree with the next statement, that the "relationships between participants are strong and intense." Again, the true relationship quality is unknown. What is also unknown is what is meant by strong and

intense. Are these relationships based solely on professional pursuits, or are the relationships between participants also social in nature? A future formal network analysis could uncover the type of relationships present among participants (and non-participants).

The final statement reflected in Figure 5.4 is “communication is excellent with agencies outside the program.” As important as it is to understand the relationships present among members of gang task forces, it is equally important to understand the associations between task force members and non-members. As a civil service enterprise, and one that is not simply a given, such as a fire department or public works department, a gang task force must be well positioned among other agencies and well received in the community it serves. As such it is unsurprising that 84.1% of 195 gang task force commanders believe that communication is excellent with agencies outside the gang task force.

Table 5.3 shows the frequency distributions of responses to questions aimed at specifying the frequency of communication between 1) the commander and participants, 2) participants with each other, and 3) participants and non-participants. Of 195 gang task force commanders, only 19 (9.7%) communicate less than once a week with task force participants. The remaining commanders communicate more frequently, with the highest number, 92 (47.2%), communicating with participants five or more times a week.

[Table 5.3]

Suggesting some degree of distance between participants and the commander, the communication among participants is more frequent, at least in the eyes of the commander. Only 17 (8.7%) commanders believe communication among participants to occur less than once weekly while 106 (54.4%) believe that communication occurs at

least five times weekly. Table 5.3 indicates that task force participants communicate more frequently with each other than with the commander.

Responses to the question of how frequently do any task force participants communicate with other, non-participating, agencies are more evenly spread across the categories. Of 192 gang task forces, 44 (22.9%) communicate less than once a week, 65 (33.9%) communicate once or twice weekly, 39 (20.3%) communicate three or four times weekly, and 44 (22.9%) communicate at least five times weekly with outside agencies. In sum, Table 5.3 shows that communication among task force participants occurs more frequently than between participants and non-participants.

Table 5.4 offers perhaps the best view into the network relationships of gang task forces that these survey data allow. Respondents were provided the table and asked to select from the list which agencies participate (or not) in the task force and how often the task force communicates with those agencies. The vast majority of gang task forces (92.2% of 193) are comprised, in part, of city police, and communication between the task force and city police occurs often or very often (32.1% and 56.5%, respectively, of 184 responding task forces). Results are similar for county sheriff departments and federal law enforcement, though participation by and communication with state law enforcement is less frequent.

County probation agencies are involved in about half (48.9%) of the 176 responding gang task forces. Most of the 170 respondents claim that communication with county probation occurs sometimes (34.7%) or often (31.2%). Federal probation agencies participate in gang task forces much less often than county probation agencies, with only 15.9% of 164 gang task forces claiming federal probation as a task force member. It

follows then that communication with federal probation is not frequent, and the results show that 18.4% of 152 gang task forces never communicate with federal probation while only 4.6% communicate very often.

Correctional facilities are usually not involved in gang task forces. Of 135 gang task forces, only 25 (18.5%) include a city jail as a member. Interestingly though, responses for the frequency of communication with the city jail is spread almost evenly across the categories, with 22% of 118 claiming no communication, 21.2% claiming that communication is rare, 21.2% claiming that communication occurs sometimes, 25.4% claiming that communication occurs often, and 10.2% claiming that communication with the city jail occurs very often. Of all levels of correctional facilities, it is the county jail that is most often a gang task force member, with 75 of 170 (44.1%) participating. The frequency of communication reflects that as well, with 37.8% and 19.5% of 165 task forces communicating with the county jail often or very often, respectively. Almost a third (28.9%) of 166 gang task forces include the state correctional facility as a member, with most respondents (40.4% of 156) reporting that communication occurs sometimes. Of all levels of correctional facilities, it is the federal correctional facility that is least likely to serve on the gang task force, with 12.5% of 160 participating. The frequency of communication reflects this as well, with 38.8% and 19.4% of 139 gang task forces communicating with the federal prison only rarely or never, respectively.

Regarding prosecuting attorney's offices, city and state prosecutors are less often claimed as gang task force members, with 22.3% of 148 and 23.1% of 156 respondents reporting them as members, respectively. Communication with both city and state prosecutors leans to the infrequent side, while the reverse is true for communication with

both county and federal prosecutors. Just over half (51.2% of 172) of gang task forces include the county prosecutor as a member, and 39.9% of 173 include the federal prosecutor as a member.

The relationship with federal agencies is particularly interesting. Most gang task forces include federal law enforcement as a member (67.9% of 184) and nearly 40% (39.9% of 173) include the federal prosecutor as a member. Yet this level of involvement is not supported by federal probation or federal prison, with only 15.9% of 164 and 12.5% of 160 gang task forces claiming the agency as a member, respectively. This distinction is not evident at the other levels of jurisdiction.

Turning to agencies outside the criminal justice system, respondents were asked whether schools, faith-based groups, and community groups participate in the gang task force. Table 5.4 shows that almost a third (31.6%) of 174 gang task forces report that a school is a task force participant. Responses to the frequency of communication with the school are spread almost evenly among the categories, but lean toward infrequent communication, with 23.0% and 18.2% of 165 gang task forces reporting that communication with the school occurs rarely or never, respectively. Only 20 gang task forces (12.1% of 165) report that a faith-based group is a task force participant. The frequency of communication reflects this as well. Only 3.4% of 146 gang task forces report that communication with the faith-based group occurs very often, and the percentages in the response categories successively grow larger as communication becomes less frequent, resulting in 39.7% of gang task forces reporting that they never communicate with the faith-based group. Finally, 20.8% of 168 gang task forces have a community group as a participant. Responses to the frequency of communication with the

community group lean toward infrequent communication, with 30.5% and 26.6% of 154 gang task forces reporting that communication occurs rarely or never, respectively.

Figure 5.5 depicts more visually the results shown in Table 5.4. Participation is highest among law enforcement agencies, particularly at the city and county level but also at the federal level. Frequent communication closely matches that participation. Although communication is more frequent than is participation by state law enforcement agencies. A similar trend is seen among correctional facilities as well as prosecuting attorneys, with communication occurring more frequently than participation. In terms of level of jurisdiction, the county is obviously an important contributor to gang task forces, with participation high among county law enforcement, probation, correctional facilities and prosecutors. Finally, although gang task forces are permeated by criminal justice agencies, it is clear that schools, faith-based groups, and community groups play a significant role in gang task forces, both in terms of participation and the closely matched frequency of communication.

Overall, Table 5.4 and Figure 5.5 show that gang task forces most often operate at the local criminal justice level, with the highest percentages of participants along the criminal justice funnel to include the city police, county probation, county jail, and county prosecutors. Agencies outside the criminal justice system do not participate or communicate as regularly, though these results show that their significance cannot be discounted.

It should be noted that a latent class analysis of these participation data was attempted, with null results. That is, there exist no significantly different groupings of

gang task forces. In other words, there is no differentiation in the structure of gang task forces, at least in terms of which agencies participate.

What is not obvious from the results shown in Table 5.4, but what could be so important in examining the relationships among task force (non)participants, is that the percentages are based only on those responding. For example, 193 of 197 respondents completed the first portion of the first row of the table, indicating that 92.2% of the 193 responding task forces include the city police as a member. However, by the bottom row, only 168 of 197 respondents completed the first portion of that row, regarding participation. Given these results, it could be assumed that the remaining 29 gang task forces do not include a community group as a member of the task force. After all, respondents may be more likely to respond affirmatively when a question applies to them. If true, these results overall inflate the percentages of those agencies claimed as members and underestimate the percentages of those agencies not claimed as members. This could help explain why the latent class analysis did not compute.

Table 5.5 shows the frequency distributions for the final set of responses to questions regarding the interactions of task force participants with non-participants. Task force commanders were asked about their associations with media personnel and politicians, and the frequency distributions look very similar. Most gang task force commanders know a few or many media personnel and politicians (55.4% of 195 and 55.7% of 196, respectively). Only about 17% of gang task force commanders know no media personnel or politicians. Despite knowing these media personnel and politicians, gang task force commanders do not frequently communicate with them, however. Of the

responding commanders, 87.3% and 85.6%, respectively, claim that communication with the media and politicians occurs less than once a week, if at all.

Gang task force commanders were also asked about any gang training that is attended or provided by gang task force members. Table 5.5 shows that only 8.7% attend gang training less than once a year while most, 51.5% (of 196), attend a couple times a year. The majority of gang task forces (79.6% of 196) provide gang training. In rank order, gang training is typically provided to law enforcement agencies, community groups, schools, gang investigator associations, prosecuting attorneys, and finally, some other agency or group. For commanders who chose to specify these other agencies or groups, responses include churches, the military, public service agencies, jail administrators, conference attendees, mental health agencies, hospitals, social workers, and, in one case, “whoever calls.” Finally, gang training is provided at least a couple times a year, if not at least once a month, by 74% of responding gang task forces.

### **Summary**

In sum, the results presented here attempt to describe the characteristics, structure, and network relationships of gang task forces. In terms of characteristics, gang task forces have a varied number of participating agencies, but most have 6 to 20 individual participants. Most include suppression of criminal gang activity as at least one of the goals of the task force. Almost all gang task forces are multi-jurisdictional. Almost half are federally funded and most have federal jurisdiction.

Regarding gang task force formalization, about half have a mission statement but most do not have a formal organizational chart. Nearly every gang task force uses a gang database to house gang information. Most have only one office location, and half have

their own office. All participants have a desk at half the gang task forces. Most had gang legislation prior to formation and most have enhanced penalties for committing a gang-related crime.

Finally, in terms of network structure, gang task forces are generally not hierarchical nor dominated by one agency. Gang task forces are generally stable, and turf issues do not negatively affect efforts. Communication between task force participants is frequent and relationships are strong and intense. Communication between the commander and participants occurs less frequently, and communication between participants and outside agencies is even less frequent, although those relationships are still perceived as excellent. Gang task forces most often operate at the local criminal justice level, with the highest percentages of participants along the criminal justice funnel to include the city police, county probation, county jail, and county prosecutor. Schools are involved in about a third of all gang task forces, but participation by faith-based groups and community groups occurs less often. Most gang task force commanders know at least a few media personnel and politicians, but communications with these individuals are infrequent. Most gang task force participants attend and provide gang training at least a couple times each year, and the training is provided most often to law enforcement.

With this description of gang task forces on a national scale, it is time now to examine in detail one gang task force.

### **Case Study of the Metro Gang Strike Force in Minnesota**

As highlighted earlier, this is the first study of gang task forces on a national scale. What is missing in such a macro-level, quantitative analysis is an in-depth view into the birth, operations and structure, and ultimate demise of just one gang task force.

Having worked as a crime analyst assigned to a gang task force for almost five years, and having maintained contact with fellow personnel since my departure, I am uniquely situated to offer a case study of one gang task force. In an effort to complement the national study of gang task forces, then, this section traces a brief history of the Metro Gang Strike Force (MGSF) in Minnesota, describes the structure both before and after substantial changes were made in 2005, and presents a network analysis of relationships between task force participants with interview data gathered during an on-site visit in October of 2007. This section concludes with an overview of the circumstances surrounding the demise of the MGSF, and offers some thoughts on task force effectiveness, which will then lead back to the national study of task force effectiveness, offered in Chapter 6.

#### Overview and History of the MGSF

The Minnesota Gang Strike Force (MGSF) was created by state legislative statute in 1997. Although a few individuals in varying law enforcement agencies are likely responsible for spearheading its inception, by the time I started working for the task force, in 2000, it was commonly thought to arise as a result of public outcry after two innocent youths, Davisha Gillum and Byron Phillips, were murdered in separate incidents by bullets fired by gang members and intended for rival gang members (Wynne 2001).

At its inception and through 2004, the MGSF was organized into five regional task forces across the state, each with its own office location, all reporting to the Statewide Commander, who sat in the largest regional task force, located in the Twin Cities metro area. Each task force was comprised of agents from local, state, and federal

law enforcement, and while the MGSF did conduct outreach and training to schools and the community, its mission overall was on the suppression of criminal gang activity.

Figure 5.6 displays the formal organizational chart showing the hierarchical relationships the legislature intended upon creation of the MGSF. However, having worked for the MGSF I noticed a few discrepancies in the intended formal structure. Indeed, as O'Hara (2005: 48) noted, "organizational charts often belie the actual power being exercised by the offices illustrated." These, as well as other potential differences, are highlighted in the following discussion, which uses Kenis and Knoke's (2002) ideas on inter-organizational tie formation as a guide. It must be stressed here, however, that the discussion of the following organizational charts is based solely on anecdotal observations, and does not attempt to quantify or scientifically test network associations. It rather serves to provide a first glimpse into the formal structures of the MGSF, which may in turn provoke future research in this area.

[Figure 5.6]

The solid lines between actors in the figure depict the formal structure of the MGSF. The dotted lines depict additional informal relationships. The components of a network identified by Kenis and Knoke (2002) are density, reciprocity, confirmation, connectivity, centralization, multiplexity, cohesion and hierarchy.

Density is defined as the "proportion of present dyadic ties to all potential ties" (Kenis and Knoke 2002). Examining the solid lines that connect agencies above reveals that the MGSF network is low in density overall. For example, information between the northeast and southwest regions must pass through the Statewide Commander. Similarly, information from the legislature must pass through a funnel before reaching any of the

MGSF regions. This low-density network has positive implications. Burt (1992) describes a structural hole as non-redundant contact. The information channels in the formal organization of the MGSF are set up so actors do not have to wade through redundant information in an effort to carry out their job. However, direct experience with the MGSF indicates that relationships do not always adhere to formal policy. The Metro Deputy Commander is a friend of one attorney from the Attorney General's Office. These two individuals interact on numerous occasions and have both professional and personal conversations. Additionally, the Metro Deputy Commander often plays golf with the Statewide Commander. Thus, there must be some redundancy of information that is carried through the channels.

Reciprocity, or the "mutuality of information exchange" (Kenis and Knoke 2002), exists throughout the network. Denoted by the double-sided arrows, the flow of information between agencies comes down through the links in the form of supervisory directives and up through the links in the form of progress reports to supervisory agencies. For example, each Regional Commander supplies the Statewide Commander with updates on the success of their regional task force. The Statewide Commander summarizes the success of each region to the Oversight Council which presents it to the Councils of Color and the legislature. Then, the Councils of Color may offer suggestions regarding where to focus more law enforcement attention while the legislature will inform the Oversight Council whether the MGSF will continue to be funded. Finally, this information will be passed down the chain of command. The reciprocal nature of the MGSF network allows each agency to receive something in return for their contributions.

A confirmation of a tie occurs when an actor receiving information from another actor confirms receipt of that information (Kenis and Knoke 2002). Although the current exercise merely supposes that all ties are confirmed, and no data are collected to support such an assertion, it must be true that all agencies know that they are participating in the MGSF. Agents who are assigned to the MGSF by their primary agency must come to work each day at the MGSF office. For example, a Minneapolis police officer assigned to the MGSF will come to work not at a Minneapolis precinct but at the Metro Region of the MGSF. Work product submitted by a task force member to a supervising member is signed as approved and, in turn, forwarded on in the form of progress reports, such as the Annual Report, to the Oversight Council. In this way, the ties are then confirmed.

The formal organization of the MGSF appears completely connected. Information is to be shared between all agencies. There is one weakness in the connectivity of the network. If the connection between the Oversight Council and the Statewide Commander broke, there would almost be two separate networks. However, there is an informal link between the Attorney General's Office and the Metro Deputy Commander. This link would be crucial for the network to remain fully connected although the information flow would certainly change.

At first glance, the MGSF appears highly centralized. The links to the Statewide Commander resemble a "star" (Kenis and Knoke 2002) wherein the Statewide Commander is directly linked to most of the other agencies. However, there are other links between agencies to which the Statewide Commander is not directly linked. For example, the Statewide Commander is not directly linked to the legislature, the Councils of Color or the Attorney General's Office. Moreover, even though it seems as though the

Statewide Commander should hold more power in such a central position, the MGSF construction is hierarchical in nature. Should the link to the Statewide Commander be broken, the Oversight Council would simply refill that position. In doing so, however, there would certainly be drastic changes to the information flow within the network. That new actor may be difficult to communicate with and all subordinates would try to develop new ties to other actors to circumvent the new actor's authority. Conversely, the new actor may participate in a church group with members of the legislature, the Councils of Color or the Attorney General's Office. These personal relationships would thus increase the centrality of the professional position.

The relationships between agencies show a high degree of multiplexity. That is, there are many varied exchanges between agencies. The city police department assigns personnel to the MGSF. The MGSF compensates the police department by contributing to the wages of the personnel. A major county sheriff's office acts as fiscal agent for the MGSF. The legislature enacts laws governing the MGSF. All agencies have access to intelligence information regarding gangs and gang membership contained in the gang database. Personnel assigned to the MGSF will provide law enforcement assistance, such as surveillance, to any agency. These examples of the multiplex relationships are all within the formal, professional realm. Other non-professional examples include the Metro Deputy Commander's friendship with the attorney and the golf games shared between the Metro Deputy Commander and the Statewide Commander.

“A subset of actors ‘among whom there are relatively strong, direct, intense, frequent, or positive ties’ comprises a cohesive subgroup” (Kenis and Knoke 2002).

There are no cohesive subgroups in the formal organizational structure of the MGSF. It

may appear that the top four agencies in the figure above could be a subgroup. However, the subgroup is not cohesive; the ties are not intense or frequent. Based on the formal structure, then, it appears as though information flows freely and equally through the network. Suppose that all Regional Commanders are brothers; this would constitute a cohesive subgroup that could potentially undermine the authority of the Statewide Commander, especially if one of the brothers was also a close friend of a member of the legislature.

Information is supposed to flow within the solid links depicted above. For example, information should not flow directly from the northeast Regional Commander to the Oversight Council. The northeast Regional Commander has to follow the chain of command by informing the Statewide Commander who then informs the Oversight Council. In this way, the MGSF is hierarchical. The hierarchy insures that the lower agencies carry out the orders of the governing bodies. However, this is not always apparent. The Deputy Regional Commander is a friend of the attorney, which could undermine the Statewide Commander's authority. Similarly, the Deputy Regional Commander plays golf with the Statewide Commander, which could undermine the supervisory authority of the Regional Commander.

In summary, the formal components of the MGSF show that (1) the low-density is efficient by maximizing the non-redundant contacts; (2) the levels of reciprocity, confirmation, connectivity, multiplexity and hierarchy are high; and (3) the centralization and cohesion are low. Again though, these are largely anecdotal observations, based on the formal organizational structure of the MGSF as it existed from 1997 to 2004.

The Minnesota Legislature disbanded the MGSF in 2005 and replaced it with the Metro Gang Strike Force (MGSF), which continued operations during the transition. Two of the other four regional task forces shut down while two remained as task forces, though as stand-alone efforts, no longer reporting to the Statewide Commander. The Statewide Commander position was eliminated, and replaced by a Statewide Coordinator responsible for overseeing, though not directly supervising, all gang and drug task forces in the state. The former Statewide Commander became the new Metro Gang Strike Force Commander, and thus his responsibilities were reduced to supervising the operations of the “new” MGSF. While it had a new name, and was no longer a sister agency to the other gang task forces, the MGSF was much the same, with the same mission, policies and procedures, databases (described in detail by Barrows and Huff [2009]), and personnel assigned. Figure 5.7 displays the formal organizational chart of the MGSF, as it existed from 2005 to 2009.

[Figure 5.7]

In comparing the formal organizational structure of the Minnesota Gang Strike Force and the Metro Gang Strike Force, it is clear that many links remain the same. The major differences include that the Oversight Council became the MN Gang and Drug Oversight Council, a new Metro Gang Strike Force Advisory Board was created, and the new Statewide Coordinator must oversee all gang and drug task forces in the state. Since there are approximately 26 such task forces in the state, the Statewide Coordinator likely had less time to focus on the MGSF. Thus, the network overall likely became much less dense, with less reciprocity. The network was still connected, yet the connection could sever more easily since the Statewide Coordinator had responsibility for more task forces.

The network may still be centralized, hierarchical and multiplex, yet perhaps it makes more sense now to examine the MGSF as a smaller network, or even a cohesive subgroup, of the whole structure.

#### Site Visit at the MGSF

I conducted a site visit at the MGSF in October of 2007. My goal during the 10-hour day was to obtain a completed survey about the relationships between task force participants from as many agents as possible. I approached agents as they came in throughout the day, and explained the study and asked them to complete the survey that day after reading the consent form (see Appendix F). Responses were gathered from 27 (79.4%) of the 34 agents currently assigned by their respective home agencies to the MGSF. This represented all of the agents I saw that day, and the seven remaining agents did not appear in the task force office that day. It should be noted that there were several support staff members who were excluded from study since the focus is on relationships among law enforcement agents and agencies.

The interview questionnaire (see Appendix G) was treated more like a survey, although I remained on site to answer questions or probe for more detail, if necessary. The survey, which is comprised of open-ended questions, asked respondents the reason for task force implementation, the expected longevity of the task force, whether the respondent's home agency works well with the task force and whether the task force is successful in carrying out its mission.

In terms of reasons for task force formation, responses were very similar, addressing increasing gang activity and the need for a unified effort to combat the problem. One respondent said that “gangs are a continual problem in the Twin Cities that

cannot be addressed by police departments alone.” Another said that the task force formed “to provide interagency cooperation, to unify us as one gang unit that covers the whole metro area. For a smaller city there [sic] able to show a big presence on the street with a task force.” It seems, then, that the agents realize that a task force allows agents to work together, combining knowledge and resources, toward a common goal.

Responses to whether the respondent’s home agency works well with the task force were more varied. Most (66.7%) agreed that the home agency works well with the task force. These respondents highlighted the mutuality of information exchange as well as support from the home agency of task force efforts. One respondent said that “information is shared freely between the MGSF and my agency. Both the GSF and my parent agency have worked well with each other to resolve equipment issues, O/T [overtime], etc.” Another noted that “our sheriff gives us full freedom to do the job.”

The remaining third provided responses that were not as positive. One respondent noted that “my agency views it as to [sic] much money.” Along the topic of financial support, another offered that their home agency “could do a better job with money contributions.” Besides funding issues, another pitfall noted was territoriality. One respondent said that his “immediate supervisor [at his home agency] is reluctant to release cases and info.” This respondent further explained that the supervisor wants to keep the high profile cases for himself. Finally, another respondent said that “they [those at his home agency] feel that we are competing with them, not working with them.” Thus, it seems that some degree of “turf issues” does exist, and can negatively affect task force operations.

In terms of longevity and effectiveness, the responses are quite interesting given the ultimate fate of the MGSF. Almost everyone believes that the MGSF is very successful in carrying out its mission. Of course many pointed to typical law enforcement outputs as evidence of success. For example, one respondent said to “look at case load, seizures, arrests and convictions.” Another said that the success of the MGSF “is evident in the growing gang database and the number of gang member arrests.” Another stated simply that “our stats speak for themselves.”

However, many also highlighted success in terms of interagency collaboration, and positive working relationships between task force participants and non-participants. One respondent said quite simply that “we have dedicated officers who work well together.” This idea echoed throughout the responses.

One thoughtful respondent explained:

Success is measured not only in arrests and convictions but also by the lack of incidents associated with a particular gang. In addition to measurable statistics I believe the task force is accomplishing [an] intangible goal: respect given the officer by the gang members.

This may mean that, for at least this respondent, the MGSF has an immeasurable impact on the communities it serves. Relatedly, another respondent said,

Many agencies represented at the MGSF do not independently have the resources to combat criminal gang/drug activity within their jurisdictions. The MGSF alleviates that issue by pooling resources, identifying problem areas and working collaboratively to address the problems with little added cost to the individual agency.

Yet for a few the MGSF is not as successful as it could be. One respondent noted that “people get pulled in lots of directions by their home agencies.” And another

explained that “politics, funding, and disputes over commitment to the task force by various law enforcement agencies can undermine it.”

Indeed, these comments are reiterated by more than a few when predicting the longevity of the MGSF. While most agree that the task force either will or should remain in place “indefinitely,” mainly because “the public is bombarded nightly with news reports of gang violence and innocent victims being injured and murdered,” there is speculation as to why the MGSF would be disbanded.

There are several strains of thought regarding why the MGSF would not be permanent. All have to do with politics and none has to do with decreasing gang problems or actual task force efforts becoming unnecessary. The response that sums up reasons why the MGSF may not last forever is as follows:

It depends on politics, funding, and public perception. If/when a more pressing problem arises, generally, more funding is directed at that problem. Prior problems are forgotten, or minimized.

It would be easy to find support for this line of thinking. One would have only to trace the recent history of law enforcement efforts targeting guns, gangs, sex offenders, terrorism, and now, economic crime.

But a more specific reason as to why this particular gang task force would not survive is also evident in the survey results. One respondent hopes that the MGSF will last another ten years, but is “fearful of elected officials and certain law enforcement official that have been obstacles since the get-go.” Another respondent believes that the MGSF “will be a permanent fixture in gathering intel, displaying it to other agencies, and gang enforcement activities, unless the politicians and agency heads become selfish and

destroy a great thing.” Finally, and most ominous of all, one respondent claims that the MGSF will last “one more year. Everything is up in the air when [the Metro Commander] retires. [A particular agency] wants to take over.”

The accuracy of this respondent’s statement is uncanny. The Metro Commander retired in October of 2008 and was replaced by someone from a different home agency. And this agency became the new fiscal agent, at least officially if not in practice, for the MGSF effective January 1, 2009 (Luger and Egelhof 2009). By February of 2009 a state legislative audit of the MGSF began amid allegations of financial misappropriations (Furst 2009d). In a report released in May of 2009 auditors identify eleven major management problems (State of Minnesota, Office of the Legislative Auditor 2009), with the unknown whereabouts of more than \$18,000 and 13 vehicles being two of the more highly publicized problems (Furst 2009a).

The new Metro Commander shut down task force operations as a result of the audit review as well as allegations that task force agents shredded documents after learning of an internal investigation initiated by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (Furst 2009b). The findings of fiscal mismanagement were only the beginning of the end of the MGSF. The Department of Public Safety’s Metro Gang Strike Force Review Panel found evidence of serious misconduct by certain MGSF agents that is unethical at best and perhaps criminal (Luger and Egelhof 2009). The Panel also concluded that insufficient supervision as a “stand alone” task force, not solely governed by one agency, led to improper or poorly regulated policies and procedures. The Panel therefore recommends, among other things, against the implementation of stand-alone task forces, unless perhaps a prosecutor is assigned to assist in the supervision of

operations (Luger and Egelhof 2009). While a criminal investigation may still be pending, one possible positive result of the MGSF's demise is that a legislative reform now requires a prosecutor be assigned to each gang and drug task force in the state (Furst 2010).

It must be noted that, in terms of network structure, another major change between the MGSF prior to 2005 and the MGSF implemented in 2005 is that a prosecuting attorney was assigned to and physically present in the MGSF office prior to 2005. Given this change, as well as the change in fiscal agent, the retirement of the former and the hire of the new Metro Commander, the addition of an Advisory Board (which the Review Panel noted had little time to devote to the MGSF [Luger and Egelhof 2009]), and the foreboding comments about agency interests and politics provided by some respondents to the survey in 2007, it is possible that these changes in network structure and relationships contributed to the MGSF's downfall.

#### Network Analysis of the MGSF

Most of these network relations are impossible to study here, but what is available is a glimpse into the working and social relationships among task force participants in 2007. As mentioned earlier, 27 of 34 task force members participated in this study. Although the response rate is 79.4%, for purposes of this study the information gathered is treated as a complete network, and responses from actors about the actors not participating in the study are excluded. Respondents were asked to rate, on a scale from 0 to 3, the frequency of work interaction, the quality of work interaction, and the quality of social interaction with each other member of the task force. A value of 0 indicates that interaction is nonexistent or of very poor quality while a value of 3 indicates that

interaction is often or excellent. Although valued data were collected, only the binary data are analyzed. Since the network is so dense, only values of 3 were considered as 1 while values of 0, 1, and 2 were considered as 0. The value of 1 in these binary data, then, indicates the presence of a strong tie between two actors while the value of 0 indicates no strong tie. Also in an effort to focus on the most frequent or highest quality interactions, and to ignore the extra noise, the data are minimally symmetrized to include only those relationships in which both actors reciprocate the strong tie to each other.

[Figure 5.8]

The first network analysis concerns the frequency of work interaction among the 27 MGSF participants. Figure 5.8 displays the reciprocated high frequency ties between the 27 MGSF actors using the NETDRAW function in UCINET. The color of the nodes (actors) indicates the home agency by which the actor is employed. The 27 actors belong to 10 different home agencies. The home agencies include two county sheriff's offices, six local police departments, one federal law enforcement agency, and one department of corrections. Without naming the agencies, a few notable associations are apparent. First, NETDRAW automatically grouped together actors of the same home agency. Second, the blue, gray and pink nodes on the left side of the figure represent actors from agencies on the one side of the Mississippi River while the black, purple and red nodes on the right side of the figure represent actors from agencies on the opposite side of the river. The yellow and dark green nodes in the middle of the figure represent actors from a home agency with jurisdictional boundaries that cross the river. Thus, NETDRAW picked up a geographical division in associations between MGSF actors. The light green node also represents an actor from an agency that crosses jurisdictional boundaries, but the actor is

only strongly tied to the red nodes. Finally, there are two isolates depicted in the figure. It is unsurprising that one of these actors, denoted in light blue, is the only actor from his agency. It is more surprising, though, that the other isolate comes from an agency with six other actors from that agency.

[Table 5.6]

The overall density of the frequency of work interaction graph is 48.58%, with 341 ties. The three basic measures of centrality discussed here are degree, closeness, and betweenness. In terms of degree, Table 5.6, which provides a brief description of each node, shows that the network centralization of the frequency of work interaction is 42.82%. Node 15 is the most connected, with 19 in- and outdegrees. This actor is connected to seven of the ten agencies that make up the MGSF. Node 24 is the second most connected, with 16 in- and outdegrees. This actor is connected to six of the other agencies. Nodes 11 and 12 are tied for the third most connected position, each having 12 in- and outdegrees with six agencies. Nodes 4, 7, and 27 are tied for the fourth most connected position, each having 11 in- and outdegrees. Node 16 is the Metro Commander and node 3 is the Metro Deputy Commander, and they are tied with nodes 10, 1, 13 and 26 for the sixth most connected position behind node 17. Nodes 5 and 21 are the least connected actors in the network, aside from the two isolates, with only two in- and outdegrees.

[Table 5.7]

Centrality closeness is best employed in a completely connected network, but its calculation here is still helpful. Table 5.7 displays the sum of Freeman geodesic distances between nodes. Nodes 15 and 24 remain the two most central actors, respectively, and

node 21 remains the least central actor. However, minor shifts are apparent among the other nodes, in terms of closeness centrality. Most notable is that the Metro Commander, node 16, is a bit closer to other nodes than the Metro Deputy Commander, node 3, whereas they were equivalent in terms of degree centrality.

[Table 5.8]

Similarly, shifts are apparent in the betweenness centrality measures displayed in Table 5.8. While nodes 15 and 24 are again the most central actors, respectively, the Metro Commander moved up to be the third most central actor. Betweenness is a good indicator of how information flows between actors in the network. As the Metro Commander supervising all the actors in the network, it makes sense that he would control the information flow. It is immediately unclear why nodes 15 and 24 would have even more control over information than the Metro Commander. But a description of who these actors are may help explain the results. Node 15 has been assigned from his home agency to the MGSF longer than almost all of the actors. He is also older than almost all of the other actors, and has acted in a supervisory role to many of them. While node 24 is a newer addition to the MGSF, he comes from a local police department with jurisdiction that crosses many of the boundaries that limit actors from the other agencies. Thus, he may hold or have access to information that is unavailable from other sources.

Interestingly, node 3, the Metro Deputy Commander, dropped to the second least central position, excluding those five actors with no betweenness centrality. While it would seem that, at least according to title and hierarchical position shown in the organizational chart (Figure 5.7), information should pass to the Metro Deputy Commander before reaching the Metro Commander, it is clear from the results that this is

not the case in practice. The Metro Commander has far more betweenness centrality than the Metro Deputy Commander. This is likely because the Metro Commander has been assigned to the MGSF since its original inception in 1997, whereas the Metro Deputy Commander is a far more recent addition.

[Figure 5.9]

The second network analysis concerns the quality of work interaction among the 27 MGSF participants. Figure 5.9 displays the reciprocated high quality ties between the 27 MGSF actors using the NETDRAW function in UCINET. This graph is completely connected, meaning that all 27 MGSF actors have the highest quality of work interaction with at least one other MGSF actor and, as is quite clear from the figure, usually many more than with just one other. While node 22 continues to be a marginal actor, this network overall has much greater density than Figure 5.8. The overall density is 71.79%, with 504 ties. Thus, while actors may not have the highest frequency of work interaction with each other, the quality of the work interaction is of the highest caliber. And, while NETDRAW still grouped actors of the same agency near each other, there are many high quality interactions across agency lines.

[Table 5.9]

In terms of degree centrality, Table 5.9 shows that the network centralization of the quality of work interaction is 39.94%. Node 15 is the most connected, with 24 in- and outdegrees. This means that node 15 has the highest quality of work interaction with the most number of MGSF actors than any other node. Nodes 27 and 24 are tied for the second most connected position, with 18 in- and outdegrees. Following down the list, again nodes 16 and 3, the Metro Commander and Metro Deputy Commander, are tied for

the fifth most connected position. Finally, nodes 20, 5 and 22 are at the bottom of the list, with only 8, 3 and 1 in- and outdegrees, respectively.

[Table 5.10]

In terms of closeness centrality, Table 5.10 shows that the network centralization of the quality of work interaction is 50.05%. Nodes 15, 27, and 24 maintain their positions as the most central actors, while nodes 20, 5, and 22 maintain their positions as the least central actors, respectively. Thus, the closeness centrality measures are very similar to the degree centrality results, and the Metro Commander and the Metro Deputy Commander are again tied for the fifth most central position.

[Table 5.11]

In terms of betweenness centrality, Table 5.11 shows that node 8 holds the top position in quality of work interaction. This is surprising, given that actor's position in all previous tests of centrality. Indeed, in terms of betweenness centrality for frequency of work interaction (Figure 5.8), node 8 fell far short of the mean (2.125 compared to 8.630). It is also surprising given that node 8 is a female. There are only 2 other females assigned to the MGSF, and both (nodes 5 and 21) are at or below the mean on all measures of centrality. Further, node 8 is the only actor assigned to the MGSF from her home agency, which is a relatively small local agency in a suburb of the metro area. Further still, node 8 is a relatively new addition to the MGSF, and younger than many of her peers. Thus, there must be something about the quality of this actor's work, or her access to information, that is appreciated among her cohorts. Node 15 has the second highest betweenness centrality, slightly behind node 8. Node 16, the Metro Commander,

holds the third position while node 3, the Metro Deputy Commander, holds the sixth position.

[Figure 5.10]

The third and final network analysis concerns the quality of social interaction among the 27 MGSF participants. Figure 5.10 displays the reciprocated ties of high quality social interaction between the 27 MGSF actors using the NETDRAW function in UCINET. The quality of social interaction was measured to ascertain the multiplexity of relationships between MGSF participants. A tie between actors is present only when both actors agree that they communicate about a wide range of topics, including topics of a personal, or social, nature. The overall density is 49%, with 344 ties.

Similar to the frequency of work interaction, this graph shows more social interaction among members of the black and red agencies, with one notable exception, and less among the blue and gray agencies. The notable exception among the black agency is node 3, the Metro Deputy Commander. Node 3 is an isolate, as is node 22, with no other actors confirming a strong social relationship to exist. All 25 other MGSF participants are linked by at least three other participants.

[Table 5.12]

Table 5.12 displays the degree centrality results for the quality of social interaction. Network centralization is 33.43%. Node 16, the Metro Commander, is the most central figure in terms of social interaction while node 3 is an isolate. This is interesting in that 16 of the MGSF participants choose to share a multiplex relationship with the Metro Commander while none share a similar relationship with the Metro Deputy Commander. The females (nodes 5, 8 and 21) are again below the mean. Also

below the mean is node 15, who was more prominent in the earlier measures of frequency and quality of work interaction.

[Table 5.13]

Table 5.13 displays the closeness centrality results for the quality of social interaction. While network centralization cannot be computed for an unconnected network such as this, it is interesting that the Metro Commander again holds the top position. Also interesting here is that the most central actors are divided among the agencies. Rather than being dominated at the top by a single agency, the seven most prominent actors after the Metro Commander are assigned to the MGSF by seven different agencies: red, blue, dark green, yellow, black, purple, and gray, respectively.

[Table 5.14]

Table 5.14 displays the betweenness centrality results for the quality of social interaction. The Metro Commander is again the most central figure in the network. And again the top positions are diversified across the home agencies represented.

### Summary

The findings of this network analysis overall shed important new light on gang task forces in general as well as the MGSF in particular. Before discussing the implications of the analysis, there are several limitations that need to be addressed. First, responses were collected from 27 of the 34 MGSF participants. While it was treated as a complete network, and while it is unlikely that the exclusion of the remaining seven participants has hindered the analysis in any meaningful way, it is possible that alternate results would have been achieved. Second, this analysis only considers the frequency and quality of work interaction as well as the quality of social interaction among task force

participants. Future analysis could include more detail on the types of interactions, as well as the interactions (or lack thereof) with non-participants. Third, this analysis simply considers density and three measures of centrality. Future analysis could include more sophisticated network analyses. Finally, future analysis could include more actor attribute data. Considered here is home agency information, gender and, in a few instances, title, age, and length of task force participation. Future analyses could include these attribute data for all actors, as well as other attribute data such as gang training or specialization and supervision within and outside the task force.

Despite these limitations, there are two major findings of this analysis overall. First, the Metro Commander is a very prominent figure in the task force. Rather than being somewhat distant or detached, like the Metro Deputy Commander, the Metro Commander is very involved and central to the working and social lives of MGSF members. He is a key figure. This could help explain the demise of the MGSF shortly after his retirement. With the introduction of a new Metro Commander, the network as it existed was certainly disrupted, at least, and it is possible that the disruption in relationships affected the actual working operations of the MGSF.

Second, the results of the network analysis provide evidence of the success of the MGSF, at least in terms of its collaborative nature. When reviewing the figures of frequency of work interaction (Figure 5.8), quality of work interaction (Figure 5.9), and quality of social interaction (Figure 5.10), it is apparent that the MGSF is a dense and mostly connected network. Keep in mind that the figures represent only the highest frequency or quality of interaction and, further, the ties are reciprocal. Imagine how dense and completely connected the figures would be without such strict requirements on

frequency, quality, and reciprocity. Imagine now how the network could be, with less density, fewer reciprocal ties, subgroups along agency lines, and many more isolates. This is not the case, however. The actors act largely in concert with one another, regardless of their home agency. Such is the collaborative nature of the MGSF, and that is indeed the intent for all task forces to achieve.

Furthermore, the collaborative nature is strongest in terms of the quality of work interactions. Thus, while MGSF participants may interact frequently about work, and have high quality social relationships, it is the quality of their work interactions that is most agreed upon, and strongest among the relationships presented here. These results are consistent with the qualitative statements by task force members reviewed earlier. MGSF participants do believe the task force to be effective, and the network analysis provides strong support that it is, at least in terms of the strong relationships among members. However, it cannot be ignored that dense networks with strong ties between actors may have negative implications as well (Burt 1997; 2001). There exists the possibility for corruption or for the network to be closed off from important and alliance-building relationships with outside actors or entities. Future network analyses on gang task forces should examine the specific outcomes of such strong reciprocated ties.

### **Chapter Summary**

The first section of this chapter outlined the characteristics and structure of gang task forces gleaned from the national survey results. The typical gang task force is multi-jurisdictional, with between 6 and 20 participants who strive to suppress criminal gang activity. Gang task forces are collaborative entities, with multiple criminal justice agencies involved. Schools are involved in about a third of all gang task forces, but

participation by faith-based groups and community groups occurs less often.

Communication between task force members is reportedly frequent and strong, and relationships with outside agencies are reportedly excellent.

One such gang task force, which falls in line with these typical structural characteristics, is the MGSF. A case study of the MGSF is presented in the second section of this chapter. The case study and network analysis shows that interagency communication is an important component in the perceived success of the task force. MGSF participants report that the task force is effective. The results of the network analysis suggest that the MGSF is effective in terms of strong relationships between participants. However, given the potential negative effects of strong ties, future work on the specific outcomes of such strong relationships is necessary.

That said, task force effectiveness can be measured in terms of strong relationships, and Chapter 6 analyzes this on a national scale. Chapter 6 also considers other indicators of success to include perceived changes in the size of gang problems. Finally, Chapter 6 also evaluates real changes in juvenile crime rates in metropolitan areas with a gang task force.

## **CHAPTER 6:**

### **EFFECTIVENESS OF GANG TASK FORCES**

Chapter 4 focused on factors leading to gang task force creation, and Chapter 5 focused on the network structure of gang task forces. But what sociologists, policy-makers, and the general public really want to know is whether gang task forces are *effective*. Should agencies and funding groups continue to devote resources to gang task forces? Is law enforcement better equipped to combat gang problems by joining a targeted effort? Do gang task forces serve the community well? Do they really reduce youth violence? This chapter seeks answers to these questions. The first section describes the effectiveness measures gleaned from survey results, the second section analyzes factors influencing survey respondents' perceptions of effectiveness, and the third section analyzes whether the presence of a gang task force might reduce official juvenile crime rates. The first two sections rely solely on survey data, while the final section relies on the secondary data described in Chapter 4.

#### **Effectiveness Measures—Survey Data**

The survey was sent to every gang task force commander in the United States, and 197 responded, although some respondents did not answer every question. The questions were split into sections aimed at ascertaining why the task force formed, how it is structured, and whether it is effective. This section reviews those questions pertaining to task force effectiveness. Commanders were asked how many search warrants are executed in an average month, how many arrests are made in an average month, and other questions intended to measure task force effectiveness. The final questions asked

how effective the commander believes their task force to be and how long they think the task force will continue to exist. This section describes the responses to these questions.

[Table 6.1]

Table 6.1 displays the frequency distributions of responses to the questions asked of commanders regarding gang task force effectiveness. Respondents were first asked to provide information about various law enforcement activities conducted in an average month. Of 181 gang task forces, 19.3% do not execute a single search warrant in an average month, whereas 19.9% execute at least four. Most gang task forces (60.8%) execute one to three search warrants in an average month.

Responses also varied as to how many arrests are made in an average month. Of 176 gang task forces, 4.5% make no arrests, 48.3% make between one and nine arrests, 23.3% make between ten and nineteen arrests, and 23.9% make twenty or more arrests in an average month. Most gang task force commanders (71.1%) believe that more than three-fourths of all of their arrests result in a conviction.

Of 175 gang task forces, 12.0% seize no guns in an average month, while 24.6% seize at least five. Most gang task forces (63.4%) report that they seize between one and four guns in an average month.

Responses varied as to how much cash is seized, as well as the dollar value of other seizures in an average month. Of 144 gang task forces, 20.8% say that they seize no cash, while 17.3% seize at least \$5,000 cash in an average month. The remaining 61.8% seize up to \$5,000 in cash in an average month. Of 131 gang task forces, 32.8% seize nothing else of monetary value, while 22.2% seize at least \$5,000 worth of other items in

an average month. The remaining 45% of gang task forces seize up to \$5,000 worth of non-cash items in an average month.

Most gang task forces (63.4% of 165) do not refer any gang members for intervention, while the remaining gang task forces (37.6%) refer at least one.

In an attempt to measure the intrinsic value of creating a gang task force, commanders were asked whether relationships with participating and non-participating agencies had improved since task force formation. Of 194 gang task force commanders, most (73.2%) reported that relationships with participating agencies had greatly improved. Conversely, of 193 gang task force commanders, most (53.4%) reported that relationships with non-participating agencies had not greatly improved, but had stayed the same or had improved a little.

In an attempt to measure community response to the gang task force, respondents were asked how many accolades or awards (from neighborhood residents, community organizations, schools, the media, political figures, or anyone else) their group had received. Of 189 gang task forces, 31.7% had received none, while 37.6% received a few, 21.2% received a moderate amount, and 9.5% received many awards.

Gang task force commanders were also asked how effective their gang program is. It should be noted that no one reported that their gang task force was not at all effective. Of 193 commanders, 53.9% perceive the gang task force to be somewhat or moderately effective, and 46.1% believe it is very effective.

Finally, commanders were asked how long their gang task force would survive. Given the supposed fluid nature of gang task forces, it is surprising that half of the commanders (50.3% of 189) believe their gang task force will continue to exist for more

than ten years. Only 6.3% of commanders believe that their gang task force will last just two more years. The remaining 43.4% of commanders believe that their gang task force will continue for another three to ten years. It would be interesting to follow these gang task forces to determine whether these beliefs about longevity hold true.

Perhaps the best indicator of how effective a gang task force is perceived to be is whether the size of the gang problem has increased, decreased, or stayed the same since gang task force formation. In an effort to measure the change since formation, gang task force commanders were first asked to estimate the size of the gang problem in their area prior to gang task force formation.

[Figure 6.1]

Figure 6.1 displays the percent of gang task force commanders reporting a small, average, or large gang problem in their area prior to task force formation. Of 194 commanders, 38.7% remember a large gang problem prior to formation, while 45.9% remember just an average gang problem. Only 15.5% remember a small gang problem, though it is interesting that areas with a small gang problem would even implement a gang task force.

[Figure 6.2]

Figure 6.2 displays the percent of commanders reporting that the size of the gang problem in their area has increased, decreased, or remained the same since task force formation. The highest percentage (38.9%) of those responding (193) reported that the gang problem was smaller in 2007 than when the task force formed. Slightly fewer (38.3%) reported no change, and, surprisingly, 22.8% reported that the gang problem had grown worse. By combining these latter two categories of responses, it can be deduced

that 61.1% of gang task force commanders think their task force is ineffective at curbing the gang problem. This is interesting when, by comparison, no commander actually reported that their task force was ineffective (see Table 6.1).

[Table 6.2]

Table 6.2 displays the bivariate percentage crosstabulation of the size of the gang problem prior to gang task force formation by the size of the current gang problem. This analysis is meant to determine where the largest differences exist between the gang problem before implementation and in 2007. For those reporting a small gang problem prior to formation, the highest percentage of commanders (46.7% of 30) reported a subsequent growth in the gang problem. For those reporting an average gang problem prior to formation, the highest percentage of commanders (43.8% of 89) reported that the gang problem remained the same. Finally, for those reporting a large gang problem prior to formation, about half (48.6% of 74) reported a subsequent decrease in the gang problem. These results are significant at the  $p < .01$  level with a chi-square value of 14.795.

These statistically significant results suggest that the crime rate is a function of something besides the existence of a gang task force. If crime rates were perceived to drop across the board, for all respondents, it would suggest that gang task forces are effective. If crime rates were perceived to increase across the board, it would suggest that gang task forces are ineffective. But since there is an inverse relationship, it seems that crime functions independently from the presence of a task force. It could be, then, that the attention devoted specifically on gang crime by a task force affects the perception of the crime rate. For example, for those reporting a small gang problem prior to formation, the

gang problem could be, or could appear to be, much larger once energy and resources are actually focused on the problem. On the other hand, for those reporting a large gang problem prior to formation, the gang problem could be, or could appear to be, much smaller once attention is focused on the gang problem. To examine this more closely, the next section analyzes, from survey data, what affects the perception of effectiveness.

### **Perceptions of Effectiveness—Survey Data**

This section presents a bivariate crosstabulation and logistic regression analysis of predictors and effectiveness measures from survey data. The goal is to determine whether certain structural factors of gang task forces influence the perception of task force effectiveness. Four dependent variables are used to measure perceptions. The first is a dummy variable that contrasts respondents claiming the task force is somewhat or moderately effective with respondents claiming it is very effective. The second is a dummy variable that contrasts respondents claiming that the size of the gang problem is now the same or larger than before with respondents claiming that the size of the gang problem is now smaller than before. The third is a dummy variable that contrasts respondents claiming that relationships with participating agencies has stayed the same or improved a little with respondents claiming that relationships with participating agencies has greatly improved. And the fourth is a dummy variable that contrasts respondents claiming that relationships with non-participating agencies have stayed the same or improved a little with respondents claiming that relationships with non-participating agencies have greatly improved.

Eighteen independent variables were tested in the bivariate analysis. Ten of these variables showed no significant relationship to any of the four measures of effectiveness.

These include: 1) whether gang legislation exists, 2) whether enhanced penalties for committing gang crime exist, 3) the number of task force offices, 4) the number of participating agencies, 5) the number of participating agents, 6) whether a probation agency is a participant, 7) whether a jail is a participant, 8) whether a prosecuting attorney is a participant, 9) whether the respondent communicates with media personnel, and 10), whether the respondent communicates with any politicians. This section presents the results of the bivariate percentage crosstabulations for all of the independent variables, with focus placed on the eight variables for which a significant relationship with a measure of effectiveness is present. These include: 1) whether the task force has a mission statement, 2) whether the task force is housed in another agency or has its own office location, 3) how many participants have a desk at the task force office, 4) whether the task force has an organizational chart, 5) whether a school is a participant, 6) whether a faith-based group is a participant, 7) whether a community group is a participant, and 8), whether the task force provides gang training.

#### Perceptions of Effectiveness

A series of bivariate crosstabulations were performed to determine which of the eighteen structural characteristics of gang task forces impacted the perception of effectiveness. Table 6.3 presents the results of all of the bivariate percentage crosstabulations.

[Table 6.3]

The three characteristics that were significantly related to the belief that the task force is very effective are: 1) whether the task force has a mission statement, 2) how many task

force participants have a desk at the task force office, and 3) whether the task force provides gang training.

The results clearly show that task forces without a mission statement rate their effectiveness lower than those with a mission statement. These results are significant at the  $p < .01$  level with a chi-square value of 8.403. The interpretation that follows is that the more directed the effort, the more effective the task force is believed to be. A mission statement puts the purpose and goals of the group into writing. It is easily referenced, and perhaps makes it more obvious when the mission is not accomplished.

The results also clearly show that task forces that provide a desk for each and every task force member rate their effectiveness higher than those task forces that do not. These results are significant at the  $p < .01$  level, with a chi-square value of 9.314. Having a physical presence, a place to sit and work, at the gang task force's headquarters is significantly related to perceptions of task force effectiveness.

The results also show that leaders of task forces that do not provide gang training rate their effectiveness lower than others. These results are significant at the  $p < .05$  level, with a chi-square value of 3.900. Thus, it appears that sharing information about gangs with interested groups and conducting outreach in the community impact the perception of task force effectiveness.

The results of the bivariate percentage crosstabulations show that mission statements, physical work space and gang training are all significantly related to perceptions of effectiveness. To determine whether the relationship may be causal, logistic regression is employed.

[Table 6.4]

Table 6.4 displays the results of the logistic regression of whether there is a mission statement, how many participants have a desk at the task force office, and whether the task force provides gang training on whether the respondent believes the task force to be very effective. The existence of a mission statement is a significant predictor of perceptions of task force effectiveness. This positive relationship is significant at the  $p < .01$  level. So if there is a mission statement, the task force is 2.35 times more likely to perceive the task force as very effective, compared to task forces without a mission statement. The number of task force participants with a desk at the task force location and the provision of gang training, however, are insignificant predictors of perceptions of effectiveness.

Mission statements, then, are predictors of the perception of success. The number of agents with a desk and the use of gang training are at least correlated to the perception of success. But none of the other structural characteristics of gang task forces affect the perception of effectiveness. Now we turn to another possible indicator of success: whether the size of the current gang problem is believed to be smaller than before.

#### Perceptions of the Size of the Current Gang Problem

Bivariate crosstabulation and logistic regression analyses were repeated with the same eighteen independent variables to determine whether any influenced the respondent's perception of the size of the current gang problem. The dependent variable in this set of analyses is a dummy variable for whether the size of the gang problem is smaller now than before. This can be an indicator of success, since respondents would likely associate a decrease in the size of the gang problem with task force effectiveness. To create the dummy variable, a value of 1 was assigned to respondents claiming that the

size of the gang problem is smaller than it was before the task force was implemented. A value of 0 was assigned if the reported size of the gang problem remained the same or grew worse. Table 6.5 displays the results of the bivariate percentage crosstabulations of all eighteen independent variables by the perceived size of the current gang problem.

[Table 6.5]

Four of the independent variables (whether there exists a mission statement and whether a school, faith-based group, or community group participates in the gang task force) appear to be related to perceptions of the size of the current gang problem. The results show that 71.1% of the task forces without a mission statement claim that the size of the gang problem remained the same or grew worse. Most task forces with a mission statement also claimed that the gang problem remained the same or increased (51.6%). Yet, upon closer inspection of the results, the real story is that task forces with a mission statement appear better off than task forces without a mission statement. Only 28.9% of task forces without a mission statement claim that the gang problem decreased while 48.4% of task forces with a mission statement claim the problem decreased. These results are significant at the  $p < .01$  level, with a chi-square value of 7.323.

The results regarding school participation are similar to those for the existence of a mission statement in it is necessary to inspect the margins of difference between categories. While most task forces, regardless of whether a school participates, claim that the gang problem remained the same or grew worse, it appears that task forces with school participation are better off than those without. Only 34.7% of task forces without school participation claim that the gang problem decreased, while 49.1% of task forces

with school participation claim that the gang problem decreased. These results approach significance, at the  $p < .10$  level, with a chi-square value of 3.143.

The results clearly show that task forces with faith-based group participation rate their gang problem as improved compared to task forces without. These results are significant at the  $p < .05$  level, with a chi-square value of 5.964. A note of caution: only 19 of 162 task forces report a faith-based participant group.

The results also show that task forces with community group participation rate their gang problem as improved compared to task forces without. These results approach significance at the  $p < .10$  level, with a chi-square value of 2.709.

Overall, the existence of a mission statement and the participation of a school, faith-based group, and community group in the task force are significantly related to the perception of the size of the current gang problem. All are related to a perceived decrease in the size of the gang problem.

[Table 6.6]

To confirm, a logistic regression analysis was conducted to determine whether these four independent variables predict a perceived decrease in the size of the gang problem. Table 6.6 displays the results. The existence of a mission statement is a significant predictor of perceptions of the size of the current gang problem. This relationship is significant at the  $p < .01$  level. So if there is a mission statement, the respondent is 2.15 times more likely to report a perceived decrease in the size of the gang problem. Faith-based group participation also indicates a perception of decreased gang problems. Gang task forces with a faith-based group participant are 5.72 times more likely to report a perceived decrease in gang problems, compared to task forces without.

This relationship is significant, with  $p < .05$ . When accounting for the existence of a mission statement and faith-based group participation, however, school and community group participation drops their significance and has no effect on the perceived size of gang problems.

In sum, the existence of a mission statement and faith-based group participation are associated with, and predictors of, the perception of reduced gang problems. School and community group participation are at least correlated to the perception of reduced gang problems. None of the other structural characteristics of gang task forces affect the perception of the size of the gang problem. Now we turn to another possible indicator of success: whether the relationships with participating agencies have improved.

#### Relationships with Participating Agencies

The bivariate crosstabulation and logistic regression analyses were repeated with the same eighteen independent variables to determine whether any influenced the relationships the task force has with participating agencies. The dependent variable in this set of analyses is a dummy variable for whether the relationships have greatly improved, since improved relationships can be an indicator of success, at least an intrinsic outcome if not a measurable output. To create the dummy variable, a value of 1 was assigned to respondents claiming that relationships with participating agencies had greatly improved. A value of 0 was assigned if relationships were described as the same or only slightly improved. Table 6.7 displays the results of the bivariate percentage crosstabulation of all eighteen independent variables by relationships with participating agencies.

[Table 6.7]

Seven of the independent variables are related to greatly improved relationships with participating agencies. These include whether the task force has a mission statement, whether the task force has an organizational chart, whether the task force has its own independent office location, how many participants have a desk at the task force office, and whether a school, faith-based group, or community group participates in the task force. The results show that, regardless of whether there is a mission statement, most task forces (135 of 185) experienced greatly improved relationships with participating agencies. However, task forces with a mission statement were better off than task forces without a mission statement. Only 62.6% of task forces without a mission statement noticed greatly improved relationships, while 83.0% of task forces with a mission statement noticed greatly improved relationships. These results are significant at the  $p < .01$  level, with a chi-square value of 9.701.

The results regarding the existence of an organizational chart are very similar to those for whether the task force has a mission statement. Most task forces (134 of 185) reported greatly improved relationships with participating agencies, regardless of whether they have an organizational chart. However, task forces with an organizational chart are better off than task forces without a chart. Only 69.3% of task forces without a chart noted greatly improved relationships, while 82.2% of task forces with one noticed greatly improved relationships. These results approach significance at the  $p < .10$  level, with a chi-square value of 2.854.

To ascertain how independent the task force is, respondents were asked if the task force has its own office location or if the task force is housed within another agency. Considering the increased effort and commitment needed to find and lease office space

and set it up as a viable working office, having its own office location could indicate a higher level of task force organization. The results show that task forces with their own offices have greatly improved relationships with participating agencies compared to those housed in another agency's office. This relationship is significant at the  $p < .01$  level, with a chi-square value of 8.579.

Clearly, the results also show that the more participants with desks at the task force location, the better the relationships with participating agencies. For task forces with no desks offered to participants, only 52.8% of respondents claimed greatly improved relationships with participating agencies. For task forces offering a desk to some or many of their participants, the percentage reporting greatly improved relationships jumped to 77.8%. Finally, 79.4% of task forces offering a desk to every member reported greatly improved relationships with participating agencies. These results are significant at the  $p < .01$  level, with a chi-square value of 10.232.

While most task forces (127 of 172) noticed greatly improved relationships with participating agencies overall, it appears that task forces are better off when a school is not a participant. Indeed, 79.7% of task forces without a school participant noted greatly improved relationships, whereas 61.1% of task forces with a school participant noted greatly improved relationships. These results are significant at the  $p < .01$  level, with a chi-square value of 6.599.

Similarly, 77.1% of task forces without a faith-based group have greatly improved relationships, while only 52.6% of task forces with a faith-based participant have greatly improved relationships with their participating agencies. These results are significant at the  $p < .05$  level, with a chi-square value of 5.247.

The story is the same for community group participation: 77.3% of task forces without a community group have greatly improved relationships, while only 57.6% of task force with a community group have greatly improved relationships with participating agencies. These results are significant at the  $p < .05$  level, with a chi-square value of 5.238.

Overall, the existence of a mission statement and organizational chart, an independent task force office location, and desks offered to task force participants are all related to greatly improved relationships with participating agencies. School, faith-based, and community group participation are also related, but in the opposite direction. It is unclear why such non-criminal justice agency participation would relate to diminished relationships with participating agencies. Resorting to speculation, it could be that the goals of law enforcement compete with the goals of non-law enforcement groups, which may limit or negatively affect the relationships with participating agencies. A logistic regression analysis is conducted to further examine the impact of these seven independent variables on the quality of relationships with participating agencies.

[Table 6.8]

Table 6.8 displays the results of the logistic regression of whether there is a mission statement and organizational chart, whether the task force has its own office location, how many desks are provided to task force participants, and whether a school, faith-based group, or community group participates in the task force on whether the task force has greatly improved relationships with participating agencies. The existence of a mission statement and having its own independent task force location are associated with, and predictors of, greatly improved relationships with participating agencies. A task force with a mission statement is 3.54 times more likely to have greatly improved relationships

with participating agencies compared to one with no mission statement, and this relationship is significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

A task force with its own office location is 2.14 times more likely to have greatly improved relationships with participating agencies compared to task forces housed within another agency. This relationship approaches significance, with  $p < .10$ .

School, faith-based, and community group participation have negative coefficients (as expected, given the results of the bivariate crosstabulation), but these relationships are not significant. None of the other structural characteristics of gang task forces affect the relationships with participating agencies. Finally, we turn to whether the relationships with non-participating agencies have improved.

#### Relationships with Non-participating Agencies

The bivariate crosstabulation and logistic regression analyses were repeated with the same eighteen independent variables to determine whether any influenced relationships with non-participating agencies. The dependent variable in this set of analyses is again a dummy variable for whether the relationships have greatly improved. To create the dummy variable, a value of 1 was assigned to respondents claiming that relationships with non-participating agencies had greatly improved. A value of 0 was assigned if relationships remained the same or only slightly improved. Table 6.9 displays the results of the bivariate percentage crosstabulation of all eighteen independent variables by relationships with non-participating agencies.

[Table 6.9]

Only two of the eighteen independent variables are related to greatly improved relationships with non-participating agencies. Again, these include whether the task force has a mission statement and how many participants have a desk at the task force office.

The results clearly show that task forces with a mission statement note greatly improved relationships with non-participating agencies. Most task forces without a mission statement (65.9%) note that relationships with non-participating agencies have remained the same or improved only a little over time. Most task forces with a mission statement (55.9%) note that the relationships have greatly improved. These results are significant at the  $p < .01$  level, with a chi-square value of 8.867.

The results also clearly show that a higher proportion of participants with desks at the task force location is related to greatly improved relationships with non-participating agencies. For task forces with no desks offered to participants, only 25% of respondents claimed greatly improved relationships with non-participating agencies. For task forces offering a desk to some or many of their participants, the percentage reporting greatly improved relationships nearly doubled, to 48.1%. Finally, 53.1% of task forces offering a desk to every task force member reported greatly improved relationships with non-participating agencies. These results are significant at the  $p < .05$  level, with a chi-square value of 8.443.

Overall, the existence of a mission statement and the number of desks offered to task force participants are related to greatly improved relationships with non-participating agencies. A logistic regression analysis is conducted to determine whether these two variables are predictive of greatly improved relationships.

[Table 6.10]

Table 6.10 displays the results of the logistic regression of whether there is a mission statement and how many desks are provided to task force participants on whether the task force has greatly improved relationships with non-participating agencies. The results show that both mission statements and desks provided are significant predictors of relationships with non-participating agencies. Specifically, the existence of a mission statement increases, by 2.25 times, the likelihood of greatly improved relationships. This relationship is significant at the  $p < .05$  level. Likewise, desk-providing task forces are 2.61 times more likely to report greatly improved relationships with non-participating agencies, compared to task forces that do not provide a desk to any members. This relationship is also significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

#### Summary

Four indicators of task force effectiveness from the survey data are considered. The two outcome, or goal attainment model (Smith et al. 2000), measures include the respondents' perceptions of the overall effectiveness of the task force and the perceived size of the gang problem. The two more intrinsic, or process model (Smith et al. 2000), measures include relationships with participating and non-participating agencies. Eighteen independent variables are tested in a bivariate percentage crosstabulation with each of the four dependent variables. The results show that only eight of the eighteen independent variables are significantly related to any of the four dependent variables. The existence of a mission statement, providing desks to task force participants and conducting gang training are significantly related to perceived task force effectiveness. The existence of a mission statement and participation of a school, faith-based, or community group are related to a perceived decrease in the gang problem. The existence

of a mission statement and organizational chart, providing desks, and having an independent task force office location are related to greatly improved relationships with participating agencies. However, participation by a school, faith-based group, or community group is related to diminished relationships with participating agencies. Finally, the existence of a mission statement and providing desks to task force participants are related to greatly improved relationships with non-participating agencies.

These relationships were further tested with logistic regression. The results show that the existence of a mission statement and providing desks to task force participants are predictive of perceived task force effectiveness. The existence of a mission statement and participation by a faith-based group are predictive of perceived decreases in the size of the gang problem. The existence of a mission statement and an independent task force office location are predictive of greatly improved relationships with participating agencies. Finally, the existence of a mission statement and providing desks to all task force participants are predictive of greatly improved relationships with non-participating agencies.

The single most important and consistent finding here is that the existence of a mission statement positively impacts the success of a gang task force. It appears that a mission statement serves to focus a task force and give it purpose. Future effort should be applied in this area to qualitatively examine the content of the mission statement.

A second important finding here is that providing physical work space for task force participants has positive implications. A desk offers a place to sit and work and a place to interact (whether personally or through technology) with other task force participants and non-participants.

Third, having an independent task force office, as opposed to being housed within another agency, is related to the success of the task force. While not convincingly predictive of success, it appears that such independent task forces are better off than those relying on another agency for office space, at least in terms of its relationships with participating agencies.

Fourth, providing gang training and having an organizational chart are also related to the success of the task force. While these relationships are neither consistent nor predictive of success, these characteristics do stand out from many others as having positive implications.

Fifth, participation in the gang task force by a school, faith-based group, or community group shows mixed results. Such participation is related to a perceived decrease in gang problems, especially in the case of faith-based group participation. Yet, such participation has negative implications for relationships with participating agencies.

Finally, and perhaps adding strength to the findings thus far, none of the other ten independent variables are related to task force success. At least in terms of the four survey indicators of success, it does not appear to matter if definitions of gangs or enhanced penalties for committing gang crimes exist in legislation. It also does not appear to matter how many office locations, participating agencies, or participating members the task force has. Null results are also found for participation by probation agencies, jails, and prosecuting attorneys. This result, regarding prosecuting attorneys, is interesting in light of the discussion about the MGSF in Chapter 5, wherein Luger and Egelhof (2009) recommend an attorney be assigned to any gang task force. Finally, it

does not appear to matter how often the task force commander communicates with media personnel or politicians.

Overall, these results are limited to survey data. In the next section, attention is turned to factors external to the survey results. Using secondary data described in Chapter 3 and tested in regard to gang task formation in Chapter 4, the subsequent section analyzes whether the existence of a gang task force in a metropolitan area affects the official juvenile crime rate.

### **Gang Task Forces and Crime**

When thinking about gang task forces and their effectiveness, the big question is whether they reduce crime. Although there are many ways to measure effectiveness, from intrinsic to extrinsic value and from perceived to actual increases in public safety, and although there are many issues with crime data (McCleary et al. 1982)—especially gang crime data (Klein et al. 1986; Curry et al. 1996; Smith and Zahn 1999; Howell 1998)—this study of gang task force effectiveness would not be complete without examining official juvenile crime rates. Thus, this section begins with a comparison of the juvenile crime rates in metropolitan areas with and without a gang task force. A fixed effects model analysis is conducted to determine whether the presence of a gang task force actually reduces youth violence. The hypothesis is:

H6.1: The juvenile crime rate is lower within the metropolitan area after gang task force implementation.

The results shown in Figure 6.3 compare the total juvenile crime rate per 100,000 persons in metropolitan areas with and without a gang task force.

[Figure 6.3]

For the most part, we see that, until 1991, metropolitan areas with a gang task force experienced a higher rate of juvenile crime than areas without a gang task force. After the peak of juvenile crime in 1990 in areas with a task force, a major shift occurs, with metropolitan areas with a gang task force experiencing a lower rate of juvenile crime than areas without.

Given these results, it is possible that early adopters realized that juvenile crime rates were high and adopted the gang task force approach to help reduce crime. As later adopters joined the effort, juvenile crime rates declined and stayed consistently lower than in non-gang task force areas. These results are promising.

That said, it is also possible that the shift is explained by the fact that there were very few gang task forces operating from 1980 to 1990. In 1980, for example, there were only two, and by 1990 there were just ten task forces in metropolitan areas with crime data available. The rates may have come down after 1990 simply as a function of more task forces being introduced to pull down that mean crime rate. Even if this is true, though, it is still compelling that juvenile crime rates are consistently lower in metropolitan areas with a gang task force from 1990 to 2005. It should be noted that the rates switch again in 2006 and 2007, with metropolitan areas with a gang task force experiencing just slightly higher rates of juvenile crime than non-gang task force areas.

[Table 6.11]

To narrow the lens through which juvenile crime rates are viewed, Table 6.11 shows the total juvenile crime rate for each metropolitan area two years prior to and two years after the implementation of a gang task force. The year of formation is also provided in Table 6.11. (It should be noted again that only the first gang task force is

considered, even if there are multiple task forces in a given metropolitan area.) The table also shows the difference between the total juvenile crime rate before and after the task force intervention, as well as the percent change in that difference. For example, the total juvenile crime rate in 1993 in Akron, Ohio was 106.35 per 100,000 persons. The rate increased by 18.12, to 124.48 per 100,000 persons, in 1997, which is a 17% change. Thus, it appears that Akron's gang task force may be unsuccessful at curbing juvenile crime two years after its implementation. Conversely, the task force in Albany, New York, may be more successful at reducing crime. The total juvenile crime rate there dropped from 119.29 in 2002 to 76.07 in 2006. This is a decrease of 43.23 juvenile crimes per 100,000 persons, or a -36% change.

There are 76 metropolitan areas displayed in Table 6.11. These metropolitan areas are those for which there is crime data for both two years prior to and two years after the implementation of the first gang task force. The average difference between the crime rate pre- and post-gang task force implementation is -33.57. Thus, on average, there were 33.57 fewer juvenile crimes per 100,000 persons in these 76 metropolitan areas after gang task force implementation. When three outliers are excluded, the average difference is -40.27. It should be noted that a three year window was also considered (though not shown in the table) for those 61 metropolitan areas; the average difference was basically the same, with a reduction of 33.16 juvenile crimes per 100,000 persons. Overall, then, it appears that gang task forces may be generally effective in curbing juvenile crime. These results, however, do not account for any other factors that may affect crime.

Now we turn to determining whether juvenile crime rates decrease after the implementation of a gang task force when controlling for the region and demographic

characteristics of the metropolitan area. To model this, a rigorous analysis is conducted to account for repeated years within each metropolitan area. I used a random effect to adjust for repeated observations. Essentially, this adjusted each metropolitan area for its own intercept. The data file was flipped so that, for every metropolitan area with a gang task force, there is a row for every year from 1980 to 2007. A value of 0 is assigned for each year that a gang task force was not in existence in the metropolitan area, and a value of 1 is assigned for each year that a gang task force was in existence in the metropolitan area. The independent variables include the presence of a gang task force; a dummy variable for the Midwest, Northeast, and South region (compared to the West); the percent of the population that is Black; the percent of the population that is below the poverty threshold; and the percent of the population that voted Democrat. There is a model for each dependent variable (the total juvenile crime rate, the juvenile homicide rate, the juvenile robbery with a gun rate, the juvenile assault with a gun rate, and the juvenile auto theft rate).<sup>4</sup> Table 6.12 presents the results of the mixed models.

[Table 6.12]

Looking first at the results for the total juvenile crime rate, in a metropolitan area, there is an average drop in the total juvenile crime rate of 56 per 100,000 persons in years with an operating gang task force, controlling for region and demographics. This relationship is significant at the  $p < .001$  level. A gang task force may significantly decrease the total juvenile crime rate.

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<sup>4</sup> For robustness, I performed a log transformation of the juvenile crime rates, but the direction and significance of the results is the same, except for juvenile robbery with a gun.

In terms of region of the United States, the Midwest region is not a significant factor, compared to the West, although the Northeast and South regions are significant. On average, metropolitan areas in the Northeast region experience a drop in the total juvenile crime rate of 151.3 per 100,000 persons, compared to the West. This relationship is significant at the  $p < .01$  level. Similarly, metropolitan areas in the South region experience an average drop in the total juvenile crime rate of 120.77 per 100,000 persons, compared to the West. This relationship is significant at the  $p < .01$  level.

The percent of the population that is Black is also a significant predictor of the total juvenile crime rate, controlling for the other factors, including the presence of a gang task force. On average, within a metropolitan area, for every one percentage point increase in the percent of the population that is Black, there is a corresponding increase in the total juvenile crime rate of 3.43 per 100,000 persons. This relationship is significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

However, the percent of the population below the poverty threshold and the percent of the population voting Democrat are not significant predictors of the total juvenile crime rate.

Not surprisingly, the significant random effect of metropolitan area shows significant variation in total juvenile crime rates across metropolitan areas, with  $p < .001$ . The random effect controls for repeated observations within the metropolitan area. The variability in the intercept (351.0 per 100,000 persons) corresponds to a standard deviation of 137.65.

Turning to the juvenile homicide rate, the presence of a gang task force is again a significant predictor of decreasing rates. Specifically, on average, metropolitan areas

experienced a decrease of 0.17 juvenile homicides per 100,000 persons when the gang task force was operating compared to the period prior to task force implementation. This relationship is significant at the  $p < .001$  level.

Region and the percent of the population in poverty are not significantly related to the juvenile homicide rate. However, the percent of the population that is Black and the percent voting Democrat are significant predictors of the juvenile homicide rate. For every one percentage point increase in the Black population, there is a corresponding increase of 0.01 juvenile homicides per 100,000 persons. Also, for every percentage point increase in the percent voting Democrat, there is a corresponding increase of 0.01 juvenile homicides per 100,000 persons. These relationships are both significant at the  $p < .001$  level.

Again, the significant random effect of metropolitan area, controlling for repeated observations, shows that there is significant variation in juvenile homicide crime rates across metropolitan areas, with  $p < .001$ . The variability in the intercept (0.25 per 100,000 persons) corresponds to a standard deviation of 0.2.

Turning to the third model, the presence of a gang task force is shown to be a significant predictor of the rate of juvenile robbery with a gun. On average, metropolitan areas with a gang task force noticed a drop of 0.36 juvenile robberies with a gun per 100,000 persons, compared to the period prior to gang task force adoption. This relationship is significant at the  $p < .001$  level.

Similarly, region and the percent of the population in poverty are not significant predictors of the rate of juvenile robbery with a gun. However, the percent of the population that is Black and the percent voting Democrat are significant. For every

percentage point increase in the Black population, there is a corresponding increase in the rate of juvenile robbery with a gun of 0.10 per 100,000 persons. For every percentage point increase in voting Democrat, there is a corresponding increase in the rate of juvenile robbery with a gun of 0.07 per 100,000 persons. These relationships are both significant at the  $p < .001$  level.

Again, the significant random effect of metropolitan area, controlling for repeated observations, shows that there is significant variation in juvenile robbery with a gun rates across metropolitan areas, with  $p < .001$ . The variability in the intercept (1.30 per 100,000 persons) corresponds to a standard deviation of 1.14.

Turning to the fourth model, all independent variables are significant predictors of the rate of juvenile assault with a gun except for dummy variable for the South region. On average, within a given metropolitan area, there is a 1.06 per 100,000 persons drop in the rate of juvenile assault with a gun in the years of gang task force operation compared to other years. This relationship is significant at the  $p < .001$  level.

In terms of region, metropolitan areas in the Midwest experience, on average, a juvenile assault with a gun rate that is 1.59 per 100,000 persons lower than metropolitan areas in the West, controlling for the other demographics and the presence of a gang task force. This relationship is significant at the  $p < .05$  level. Similarly, metropolitan areas in the Northeast experience an average rate of juvenile assault with a gun that is 3.21 per 100,000 persons lower than metropolitan areas in the West. This relationship is significant at the  $p < .001$  level.

On average within a metropolitan area, for every percentage point increase in the Black population, there is a corresponding increase in the juvenile assault with a gun rate

of 0.10 per 100,000 persons. This relationship is significant at the  $p < .001$  level. For every percentage point increase in the percent of the population in poverty, there is a corresponding increase in the juvenile assault with a gun rate of 0.11 per 100,000 persons. This relationship is significant at the  $p < .05$  level. And, for every percentage point increase in the percent of population voting Democrat, there is a corresponding increase in the juvenile assault with a gun rate of 0.16 per 100,000 persons. This relationship is significant at the  $p < .001$  level.

Finally, the significant random effect of metropolitan area, controlling for repeated observations, shows significant variation in juvenile assault with a gun rates across metropolitan areas, with  $p < .001$ . The variability in the intercept (3.83 per 100,000 persons) corresponds to a standard deviation of 2.0.

Turning to the fifth and final model, the presence of a gang task force is a significant predictor of the rate of juvenile auto theft. On average, metropolitan areas with a gang task force noticed a drop of 5.1 juvenile auto thefts per 100,000 persons after implementation. This relationship is significant at the  $p < .001$  level.

None of the dummy variables for region are significant predictors of the juvenile auto theft rate, although the other independent variables are significant. On average, for every percentage point increase in the Black population in a metropolitan area, there is a corresponding increase in the juvenile auto theft rate of 0.21 per 100,000 persons. This relationship is significant at the  $p < .05$  level. For every percentage point increase in the percent in poverty, there is a corresponding increase in the juvenile auto theft rate of 0.25 per 100,000 persons. This relationship is also significant at the  $p < .05$  level. And for every percentage point increase in the percent voting Democrat, there is a corresponding

increase in the juvenile auto theft rate of 0.38 per 100,000 persons. This relationship is significant at the  $p < .001$  level.

Again, the significant random effect of metropolitan area, controlling for repeated observations, shows significant variation in juvenile auto theft rates across metropolitan areas, with  $p < .001$ . The variability in the intercept (10.66 per 100,000 persons) corresponds to a standard deviation of 6.76.

### Summary

The results of the five mixed models presented here consistently suggest that gang task forces may significantly improve juvenile crime rates. Metropolitan areas, on average, experience significantly lower juvenile crime rates when a gang task force is in operation, controlling for region of the United States, race, socio-economic status, and political affiliation. The implication of these results is clear: gang task forces appear to be effective at reducing youth violence.

While this finding is robust given the consistent results in all five models, there are several important limitations. First, the mixed model analysis only focuses on metropolitan areas that, at some point between 1980 and 2007, implemented a gang task force. The mixed model analysis does not include metropolitan areas that have never implemented a gang task force. While Figure 6.3 displays the total juvenile rates of all metropolitan areas from 1980 to 2007 and shows that locations with a gang task force changed from having higher to lower crime rates than those without a gang task force, this relationship proved too difficult to test empirically. With gang task forces implemented in various metropolitan areas at different times, and with some metropolitan areas having never implemented a gang task force, a regression analysis seemed

inappropriate. Several analyses were attempted (a lag model, for example), but each had null results. Those null results are not presented here, because it is inappropriate to rely, for example, on 2007 crime data for a metropolitan area that implemented a gang task force in 1985 (just as it would be to rely on 1985 crime data for a metropolitan area that would later implement a gang task force). Thus, a mixed model approach is the best way to evaluate the impact of a gang task force in metropolitan areas that have established one.

The second limitation to this analysis concerns official crime data in general. The weaknesses in using official crime data have been discussed earlier in this paper and extensively in the literature. Suffice it to say, the FBI's UCR does not specifically gather information about gang crime. I make an assumption here that juvenile serious crime largely encompasses gang crime. In an effort to overcome both limitations of my findings, future research should strive to determine whether metropolitan areas with a gang task force experience lower gang crime rates.

### **Chapter Summary**

Success can be measured in many ways, and this chapter strives to account for both the extrinsic (or goal attainment [Smith et al. 2000]) and intrinsic (or process [Smith et al. 2000]) value of gang task forces in the United States. The first section of the chapter uses only survey data to evaluate whether task forces structured one way are more effective than task forces structured another way. Effectiveness is measured in four ways: the respondents' perceived effectiveness, the respondents' perceived reduction in gang crime, improved relationships with participating agencies, and improved relationships with non-participating agencies. Eighteen independent variables, each representing some

structural characteristic of gang task forces, are tested in bivariate percentage crosstabulations with each of the four measures of effectiveness. Significant variables are then further tested in regression analyses.

The single most important and consistent finding is that the existence of a mission statement positively impacts the success of a gang task force. A second important finding is that providing a desk to task force participants has positive implications. Third, having an independent task force office, as opposed to being housed within another agency, is related to the success, as are the provision of gang training and an organizational chart. Finally, participation by a school, faith-based group, or community group in the gang task force shows mixed results. Such participation is related to a perceived decrease in gang problems (especially in the case of faith-based group participation), but it also seems to have negative implications for relationships with participating agencies.

An analysis of gang task force effectiveness is not complete without considering the impact of the task force on official crime rates (not just personal perceptions of crime levels). The second section of this chapter evaluates whether the implementation of a gang task force in any year between 1980 and 2007 affected official juvenile crime rates. Five mixed model analyses are conducted to determine whether the existence of a gang task force significantly lowers the total juvenile crime rate, the juvenile homicide rate, the rate of juvenile assault with a gun, the rate of juvenile robbery with a gun, and the juvenile auto theft rate. Across the board, metropolitan areas, on average, experience significantly lower juvenile crime rates when a gang task force is in operation, controlling for region of the United States, race, socio-economic status, and political affiliation. The results suggest that gang task forces may be effective at reducing youth violence.

However, given known issues in the compilation of official crime rates (McCleary et al. 1982), particularly in naturally self-interested criminal justice agencies reporting arrests executed in their jurisdiction, the validity of these results must be questioned. This is a note of caution, applicable to all studies of official crime rates, but does not necessarily negate these robust findings on gang task force effectiveness.

## **CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The goal here was to aim the research lens at multi-agency gang task forces in the United States in an effort to 1) explain why they form, 2) describe their organizational structure, and 3) determine whether they are effective. To accomplish the goal, extensive data collection and analysis ensued, beginning with identifying all 249 gang task forces operating in the United States. A mixed methods approach was employed to analyze survey and secondary data as well as conduct a case study and network analysis of one particular task force, the Metro Gang Strike Force in Minnesota (MGSF).

It was initially anticipated that gang task forces form due to serious gang crime problems, whether perceived or real. The findings in Chapter 4 suggest that early adopters of the gang task force approach were more influenced by the size of the gang problem, whether perceived or real, and the media attention on that gang problem. This finding is in line with the idea that a “perceived need” (Roger 1995; Weisburd and Braga 2006) must exist for an innovation to be adopted. Late adopters of the gang task force approach, however, were more influenced to implement a task force by a federal initiative. This could represent a shift in later years to a process of institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983).

The findings in Chapter 4 also suggest that gang task forces form in areas with higher youth violence and racial heterogeneity, although the racial heterogeneity factor was not consistently significant. These findings are in line with the hypotheses. However, the findings also suggest that gang task forces are more likely implemented in politically

liberal districts, and this is surprising. Also unexpected, though not consistently significant, is that gang task forces may likely be implemented in areas of relative affluence. All of these findings held while controlling for region, though one consistent regional effect was determined. That is, gang task forces are less likely to be implemented in the Northeast compared to the West region. Overall, the findings indicate that gang task forces are more likely to form in high crime areas of relative affluence, racial heterogeneity, and liberal leanings. In line with substantive rationality (Savelsberg 1992; Collins 1994), the gang task force may represent, then, exactly what was intended: a collaborative effort to solve the gang problem.

It was initially anticipated that gang task forces would probably experience considerable turf-fighting among participating agencies, as well as between the gang task force and other local entities. This has not been substantiated. On the contrary, as described in Chapter 5, gang task forces are generally not hierarchical and are not dominated by one agency. Rather, gang task forces are generally stable, and turf issues do not negatively affect efforts.

Additional findings presented in Chapter 5 indicate that communication between gang task force participants is frequent and relationships are strong and intense. Gang task forces most often operate at the local criminal justice level, but schools are involved in about a third of all gang task forces. Though it occurs less often, there is some participation by faith-based groups and community groups. Most gang task force commanders know at least a few media personnel and politicians, but communications with these individuals are infrequent. This picture of the typical gang task force, then, is that of a far more collaborative entity rather than a centralized and heavy-handed entity.

This may indicate that gang task forces exemplify Garland's (2001) "new sector" of crime control strategies, wherein law enforcement partners with other agencies and the community to address a mutual concern.

Providing further support for this finding, Chapter 5 also presents a case study and network analysis of the MGSF. Qualitative statements by MGSF participants as well as the network analysis show the collaborative nature of the MGSF. In an analysis of the frequency and quality of work interaction, and the quality of social interaction, it is clear that the MGSF is a dense and mostly connected network. All of the ties used in the analyses were reciprocal and high in quality. MGSF actors act largely in concert with one another, with strong work and social relationships between them.

Unfortunately, since this study was completed, the MGSF has been disbanded due to external political pressure, significant management changes, and inappropriate actions of a certain subset of MGSF officers. The demise of the MGSF, though not scientifically studied here, highlights the need to evaluate the implications of strong relationships among task force participants. It is easy to assume that strong ties between network actors are beneficial, though the potential for negative outcomes resulting from such strong ties cannot be ignored. Future research should evaluate whether strong and intense ties among task force participants can be problematic for task force effectiveness and for meaningful, alliance-building relationships with actors and entities outside the task force. And, more broadly, further research is warranted on the interactions within and outside the network to accentuate and promote the efficiency and effectiveness of the gang task force.

Chapter 6 describes the attempts to measure the success of gang task forces, both in terms of the goal attainment and process model (Smith et al. 2000). It was anticipated

that the more robust organization of a gang task force coupled with greater community involvement would permit greater effectiveness. In terms of the process model, from analysis of the survey data, the findings suggest that the existence of a mission statement and having an independent task force office rather than being housed within another agency are significant predictors of enhanced relationships with participating agencies. The existence of an organizational chart and providing desks to task force agents, while not predictive, are related to enhanced relationships with participating agencies. Participation by schools, faith-based groups, and community groups are also related, but appear to diminish task force relationships with participating agencies. Having a mission statement and providing desks to task force agents are predictive of enhanced relationships with non-participating agencies. In terms of the goal attainment model, from analysis of the survey data, the findings suggest that having a mission statement is predictive of task force effectiveness, both in terms of the perception of overall success and the perception of reduced gang problems. Providing desks and gang training are related to perceptions of overall success. School, community group, and particularly faith-based group participation are related to perceptions of reduced gang problems.

The results of the network analysis and the impact of organizational characteristics on success can be extended to other bodies of literature as well. Indicators of formalization, such as the crafting of a mission statement and providing a physical workspace to employees, can be evaluated in both private and other public sector organizations. The creation of a mission statement, for example, seems particularly important for task force success. Future research could apply this and other findings here

to other arenas, such as the health care field, corporations, or institutions of higher education.

Scientific evaluations of organized gang responses have been hampered by a lack of consensus on the definition of gang, what crimes are actually associated with or committed by a gang, and what actually constitutes a gang task force. This research has narrowed the definition of gang and gang task force, and made certain assumptions about where gang crime reports reside within the national crime register. Namely, I assume that the UCR's juvenile serious crime clearance rate is indicative of the actual incidence of gang-related crime. While the inadequacy of specific crime rate data was well-known in advance of this study, I believe this assumption reasonably accounts for the inadequacies. Other assumptions, such as those regarding metropolitan area definitions and political, socio-economic, and racial profiles, are reasonable and have a lesser impact on the overall validity of the results.

The mixed model analysis of the impact of gang task forces on official juvenile crime rates shows that, in each measure of the juvenile crime rate, metropolitan areas, on average, experience significantly lower juvenile crime rates when a gang task force is in operation, controlling for region of the United States, race, socio-economic status, and political affiliation. Thus, the results suggest that gang task forces may be an effective means to combat gang problems.

Despite significant limitations primarily related to definitional issues, crime reporting issues, and the interplay of actual versus perceived task force effectiveness, this research attempted to effectively measure actual reduction in gang crime. It is clear that until there is a significant modification of the way crime data are collected and tabulated,

it is unlikely that any research will permit conclusive and repeatable results in evaluations of gang task force effectiveness. Yet, the present study contributes to existing knowledge. Subject to the limitations already addressed, this research shows that on a national basis the gang task force does appear to be an effective means of reducing gang crime. The implication is clear: a well-structured and well-managed multi-agency gang task force may be effective at reducing gang crime. It is possible that a collaborative gang task force is more effective than a singular or intra-agency police response, and this is an area for future research.

At least on a national level, the research provides a firm basis for forming and supporting a multi-agency gang task force. This support should include a firm and stable management structure, an independent office location offering physical workspace to participants, an atmosphere of actor interaction and collaboration, a mission statement, and, though not analyzed here in terms of effectiveness but obviously necessary, sufficient funding. The actors within the gang task force should be from a cross section of local criminal justice agencies, and perhaps should include prosecutors, school personnel, community groups, and faith-based organizations, although this is another avenue for further research, given the mixed results of the analyses on these items.

The research identifies the glaring inadequacy of the crime data, and suggests that substantial research should be undertaken to further refine the validity of the measures of effectiveness. Additionally, implementation and evaluation research is always dependent on the available data surrounding formation of the initiative and outcomes associated with that formation. The present research offers a broad scope view of gang task force formation and effectiveness. Future research should strive to account for other factors

that may influence formation and effectiveness. More detailed or narrowly constructed evaluations, perhaps via content analyses and additional case studies, might offer insight into the micro-level processes affecting implementation and effectiveness. And clearly future research is warranted on exploring the potential for modifying the gang task force to be more proactive in reducing the gang members' desire to join the gang and commit crime. The ultimate solution is to modify the cultural and socio-economic factors that lead to a youth's interest in becoming involved with a gang, and existing and future sociological research should be evaluated and developed to determine the best and most efficient way to modify these factors.

The United States has had the highest prison population in the world since 2002 (Wakefield and Uggen 2010). Heavy-handed, top-down approaches to crime control that focus strictly on suppression and prosecution do not work (Goetz 1996; The Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice 2008). And with an estimated 774,000 gang members and 27,900 gangs in 32.4 percent of all cities, suburbs, towns, and rural areas in the United States, and with these numbers on the rise since 2002 (Egley et al. 2010), the importance and timeliness of the present research is clear. Law enforcement, policy-makers, and the general public must evaluate the most effective means of dealing with gangs, and determine and implement those effective responses to the gang problem. Gang task forces are one possible solution to the gang problem, and the present research is the first comprehensive national evaluation of the formation, structure, and effectiveness of such multi-agency gang task forces.

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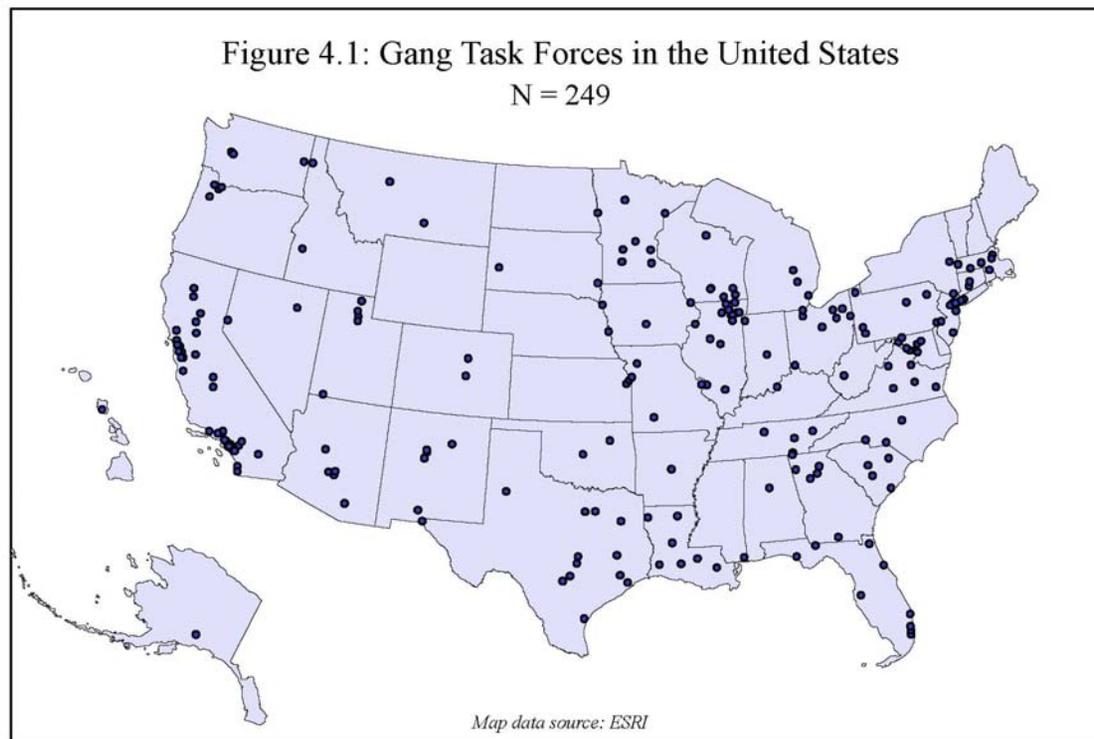
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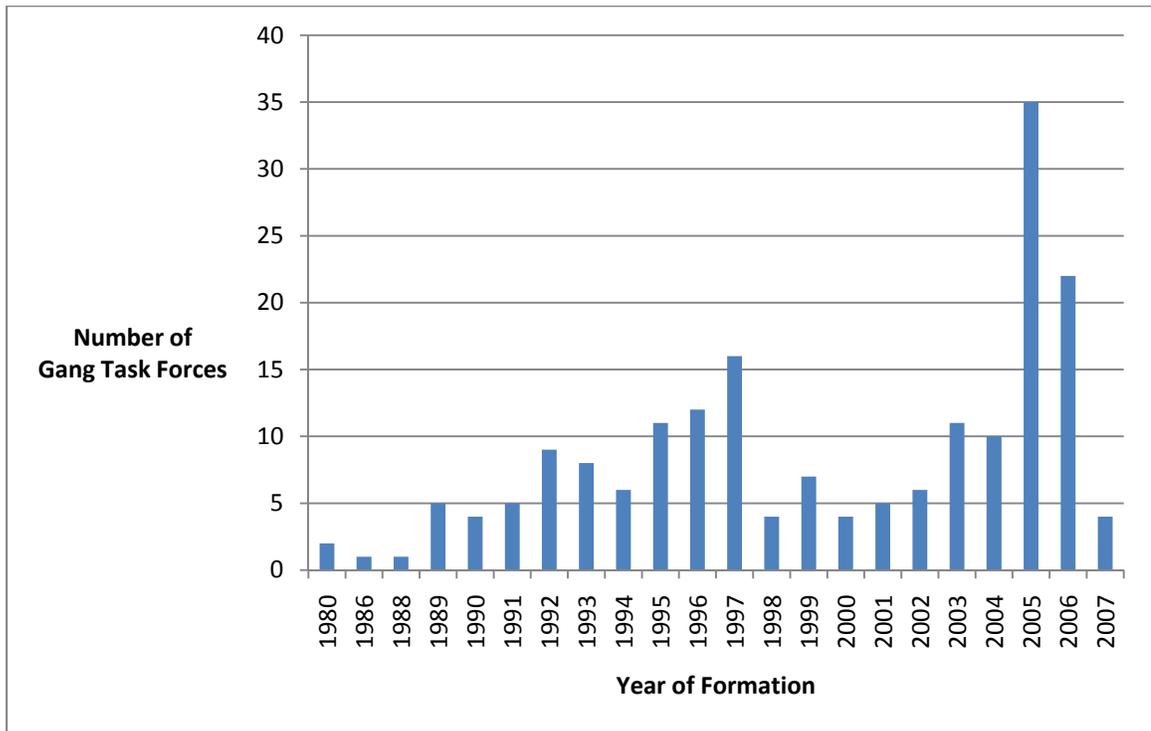
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Appendix A. Tables and Figures



**TABLE 4.1**  
**METROPOLITAN AREAS AND GANG TASK FORCES (GTF) BY STATE**

<i>State</i>	<i>Number of Metropolitan Areas</i>	<i>Number of GTFs</i>	<i>Year of Earliest GTF Formation</i>	<i>Year of Most Recent GTF Formation</i>
Alabama	11	1	2006	2006
Alaska	1	1	2007	2007
Arizona	4	6	1992	2006
Arkansas	4	1	1992	1992
California	22	42	1980	2006
Colorado	6	2	1993	2006
Connecticut	8	3	1990	1993
Delaware	2	0	-	-
Florida	21	10	1988	2006
Georgia	7	5	1997	2001
Hawaii	1	1	2007	2007
Idaho	1	2	2004	2005
Illinois	10	16	1989	2005
Indiana	11	2	1994	1997
Iowa	6	3	1980	1992
Kansas	3	2	2005	2006
Kentucky	3	1	No data	No data
Louisiana	8	7	1999	2007
Maine	3	0	-	-
Maryland	3	4	2005	2006
Massachusetts	8	6	1991	2006
Michigan	11	3	2003	2005
Minnesota	5	9	1997	2006
Mississippi	4	1	1995	1995
Missouri	5	5	1992	2006
Montana	3	2	2000	2000
Nebraska	2	1	2005	2005
Nevada	2	4	1997	2001
New Hampshire	3	0	-	-
New Jersey	7	5	1997	2002
New Mexico	3	4	1990	2005
New York	12	5	2002	2005
North Carolina	13	3	2005	2005
North Dakota	2	0	-	-
Ohio	13	9	1986	2005
Oklahoma	4	4	1996	2005
Oregon	4	4	1989	2005
Pennsylvania	14	8	1997	2006
Rhode Island	1	2	No data	No data
South Carolina	6	5	1997	2004
South Dakota	2	2	1989	2007
Tennessee	7	6	1991	2005
Texas	26	25	1989	2005
Utah	2	5	1990	2006
Vermont	1	0	-	-
Virginia	6	10	2003	2005
Washington	8	3	2003	2006
West Virginia	6	2	1999	2005
Wisconsin	11	7	1994	2006
Wyoming	2	0	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>249</b>		



**FIGURE 4.2 – YEAR OF GANG TASK FORCE FORMATION**

**TABLE 4.2  
PERCENTAGE OF SURVEY RESPONSES TO HOW INFLUENTIAL THE FACTOR  
WAS IN THE CREATION OF THE GANG TASK FORCE**

<b>Level of Influence</b>	<i>Political Pressure</i>	<i>Media</i>	<i>High Profile Gang Crime</i>	<i>Increase in Gang Crime</i>	<i>Federal Initiative</i>	<i>State Initiative</i>	<i>Other Initiative</i>
Not at all	32.6	24.3	20.5	2.7	35.1	47.6	14.8
Not very	17.1	21.0	18.8	3.8	7.5	19.0	3.7
Somewhat	35.4	40.9	34.1	26.5	19.5	20.8	18.5
Very	14.9	13.8	26.7	67.0	37.9	12.5	63.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	175	181	176	185	174	168	27

**TABLE 4.3**  
**CROSSTABULATION OF EARLY-LATE ADOPTERS AND HOW INFLUENTIAL THE**  
**FACTOR WAS IN THE CREATION OF THE GANG TASK FORCE**

<b>Political Pressure</b>			
<i>Was it influential?</i>	<i>Early Adopter</i>	<i>Late Adopter</i>	<i>Total</i>
No	43.9	53.5	49.7
Yes	56.1	46.5	50.3
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
(N)	(66)	(101)	(167)
$\chi^2=1.45, df=1, p=.229$			
<b>Media</b>			
<i>Was it influential?</i>	<i>Early Adopter</i>	<i>Late Adopter</i>	<i>Total</i>
No	33.8	52.0	44.5
Yes	66.2	48.0	55.5
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
(N)	(71)	(102)	(173)
$\chi^2=5.59^*, df=1, p=.018$			
<b>High Profile Gang Crime</b>			
<i>Was it influential?</i>	<i>Early Adopter</i>	<i>Late Adopter</i>	<i>Total</i>
No	24.3	50.0	39.3
Yes	75.7	50.0	60.7
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
(N)	(70)	(98)	(168)
$\chi^2=11.32^{***}, df=1, p=.001$			
<b>Increase in Gang Crime</b>			
<i>Was it influential?</i>	<i>Early Adopter</i>	<i>Late Adopter</i>	<i>Total</i>
No	1.4	10.7	6.8
Yes	98.6	89.3	93.2
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
(N)	(74)	(103)	(177)
$\chi^2=5.93^*, df=1, p=.015$			
<b>Federal Initiative</b>			
<i>Was it influential?</i>	<i>Early Adopter</i>	<i>Late Adopter</i>	<i>Total</i>
No	55.2	31.3	41.0
Yes	44.8	68.7	59.0
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
(N)	(67)	(99)	(166)
$\chi^2=9.45^{**}, df=1, p=.002$			
<b>State Initiative</b>			
<i>Was it influential?</i>	<i>Early Adopter</i>	<i>Late Adopter</i>	<i>Total</i>
No	66.7	66.3	66.5

(cont'd)

Yes	33.3	33.7	33.5
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
(N)	(66)	(95)	(161)

$\chi^2=.002, df=1, p=.963$

**Other Initiative**

<i>Was it influential?</i>	<i>Early Adopter</i>	<i>Late Adopter</i>	<i>Total</i>
No	22.2	6.7	12.5
Yes	77.8	93.3	87.5
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
(N)	(9)	(15)	(24)

$\chi^2=1.24, df=1, p=.265$

Note: Table displays column percentages.

**TABLE 4.4  
CROSSTABULATION OF SIZE OF THE GANG PROBLEM AND  
EARLY-LATE ADOPTERS**

<i>Early or late Adopter?</i>	<i>Small Gang Problem</i>	<i>Average Gang Problem</i>	<i>Large Gang Problem</i>	<i>Total</i>
Early	44.8	42.9	42.5	43.0
Late	55.2	57.1	57.5	57.0
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
(N)	(29)	(84)	(73)	(186)

$\chi^2=0.049, df=2, p=.976$

Note: Table displays column percentages.

**TABLE 4.5**  
**SUMMARY OF DEPENDENT AND INDEPENDENT VARIABLES, FORMATION**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Coding</b>	<b>Mean</b>
<i>Gang Task Force</i>	Presence of a gang task force (GTF) in the Metropolitan Area (MetArea) any time between 1980 and 2007.		
Yes1980	Presence of a GTF in the MetArea in or before 1980.	0=no 1=yes	0.6%
Yes1990	Presence of a GTF in the MetArea in or before 1990.	0=no 1=yes	3.7%
Yes2000	Presence of a GTF in the MetArea in or before 2000.	0=no 1=yes	17.7%
Yes2007	Presence of a GTF in the MetArea in or before 2007.	0=no 1=yes	30.8%
<i>Population</i>	Total population of the MetArea for each year from 1980 to 2007 (interpolated when necessary).		
RPop1980	Total population in 1980.	100,000s	6.11 (13.2)
RPop1990	Total population in 1990.	100,000s	6.57 (14.2)
RPop2000	Total population in 2000.	100,000s	7.56 (15.7)
RPop2007	Total population in 2007.	100,000s	8.15 (16.6)
<i>Crime</i>	Juvenile clearance rate of Part I offenses in each MetArea per 100,000 population for each year from 1980 to 2007.		
RTot1980	Total juvenile clearance rate in 1980.	Per 100,000	365.09 (176.4)
RTot1990	Total juvenile clearance rate in 1990.	Per 100,000	353.98 (217.8)
RTot2000	Total juvenile clearance rate in 2000.	Per 100,000	265.41 (137.4)
RTot2007	Total juvenile clearance rate in 2007.	Per 100,000	258.81 (146.8)
RMur1980	Juvenile clearance rate of murder in 1980.	Per 100,000	0.32 (0.4)
RMur1990	Juvenile clearance rate of murder in 1990.	Per 100,000	0.4 (0.7)
RMur2000	Juvenile clearance rate of murder in 2000.	Per 100,000	0.15 (0.3)
RMur2007	Juvenile clearance rate of murder in 2007.	Per 100,000	0.18 (0.3)
RRob1980	Juvenile clearance rate of robbery with a gun in 1980.	Per 100,000	1.73 (1.6)
RRob1990	Juvenile clearance rate of robbery with a gun in 1990.	Per 100,000	1.83 (4.0)
RRob2000	Juvenile clearance rate of robbery with a gun in 2000.	Per 100,000	0.89 (1.2)
RRob2007	Juvenile clearance rate of robbery with a gun in 2007.	Per 100,000	1.25 (2.0)
RAslt1980	Juvenile clearance rate of assault with a gun in 1980.	Per 100,000	2.41 (2.2)
RAslt1990	Juvenile clearance rate of assault with a gun in 1990.	Per 100,000	4.32 (5.5)
RAslt2000	Juvenile clearance rate of assault with a gun in 2000.	Per 100,000	1.71 (2.1)
RAlst2007	Juvenile clearance rate of assault with a gun in 2007.	Per 100,000	2.1 (2.6)

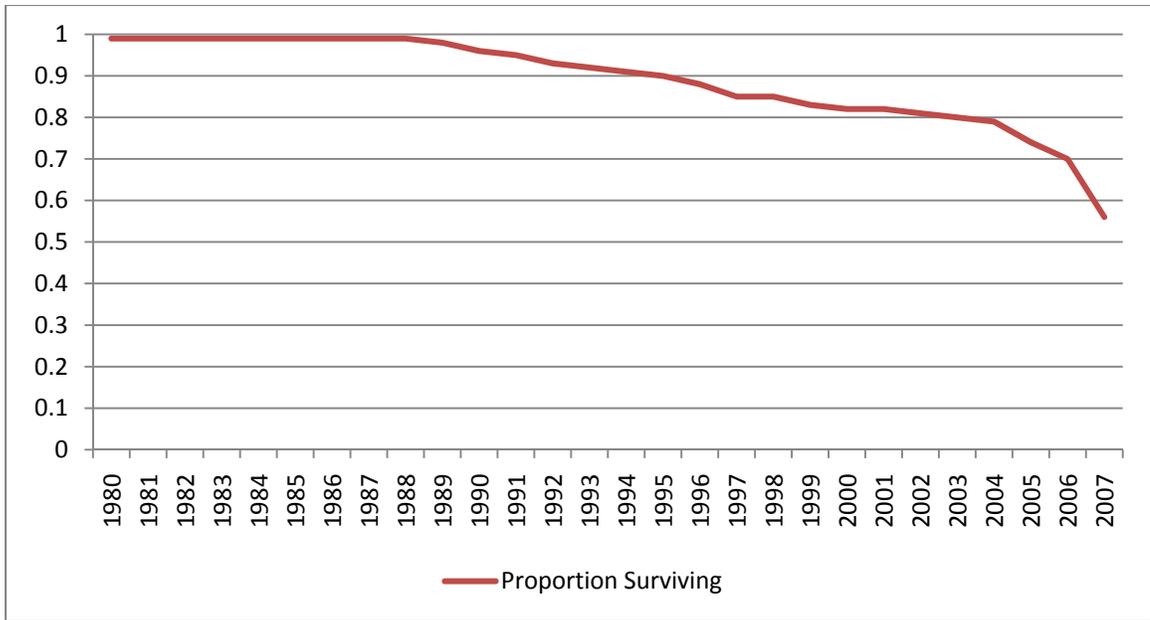
*(cont'd)*

RAuto1980	Juvenile clearance rate of auto theft in 1980.	Per 100,000	13.32 (9.0)
RAuto1990	Juvenile clearance rate of auto theft in 1990.	Per 100,000	17.78 (15.4)
RAuto2000	Juvenile clearance rate of auto theft in 2000.	Per 100,000	8.70 (7.0)
RAuto2007	Juvenile clearance rate of auto theft in 2007.	Per 100,000	5.89 (4.8)
<i>Race</i>	Percent of MetArea population that is African American for each year from 1980 to 2007 (interpolated when necessary).		
PBlk1980	Percent African American in 1980.	Percentage	10.67 (9.9)
PBlk1990	Percent African American in 1990.	Percentage	10.99 (10.1)
PBlk2000	Percent African American in 2000.	Percentage	11.37 (10.8)
PBlk2007	Percent African American in 2007.	Percentage	11.76 (11.0)
<i>Poverty</i>	Percent of MetArea population that is living below the national poverty threshold for each year from 1980 to 2007 (interpolated when necessary).		
PPov1980	Percent in poverty in 1980.	Percentage	11.95 (3.9)
PPov1990	Percent in poverty in 1990.	Percentage	13.34 (4.9)
PPov2000	Percent in poverty in 2000.	Percentage	12.72 (4.4)
PPov2007	Percent in poverty in 2007.	Percentage	13.27 (4.5)
<i>Politics</i>	Percent of state population that cast an electoral vote for the Democratic presidential candidate for each election year from 1980 to 2007 (interpolated in non-election years).		
D1980	Percent Democrat in 1980.	Percentage	44.29 (6.2)
D1990	Percent Democrat in 1990, interpolated from 1988 and 1992 election years.	Percentage	48.74 (4.9)
D2000	Percent Democrat in 2000.	Percentage	48.54 (7.6)
D2007	Percent Democrat in 2007, extrapolated from previous election years.	Percentage	46.23 (7.6)
<i>Region</i>	Region of the United States as determined by the U.S. Census Bureau		
Midwest	Dummy variable compared to West region. Includes IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI	0=no 1=yes	24.7%
Northeast	Dummy variable compared to West region. Includes CT, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT	0=no 1=yes	17.4%
South	Dummy variable compared to West region. Includes AL, AR, DE, DC, FL, GE, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, WV	0=no 1=yes	39.9%
West	Region to which others are compared. Includes AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NM, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY	0=no 1=yes	18.0%

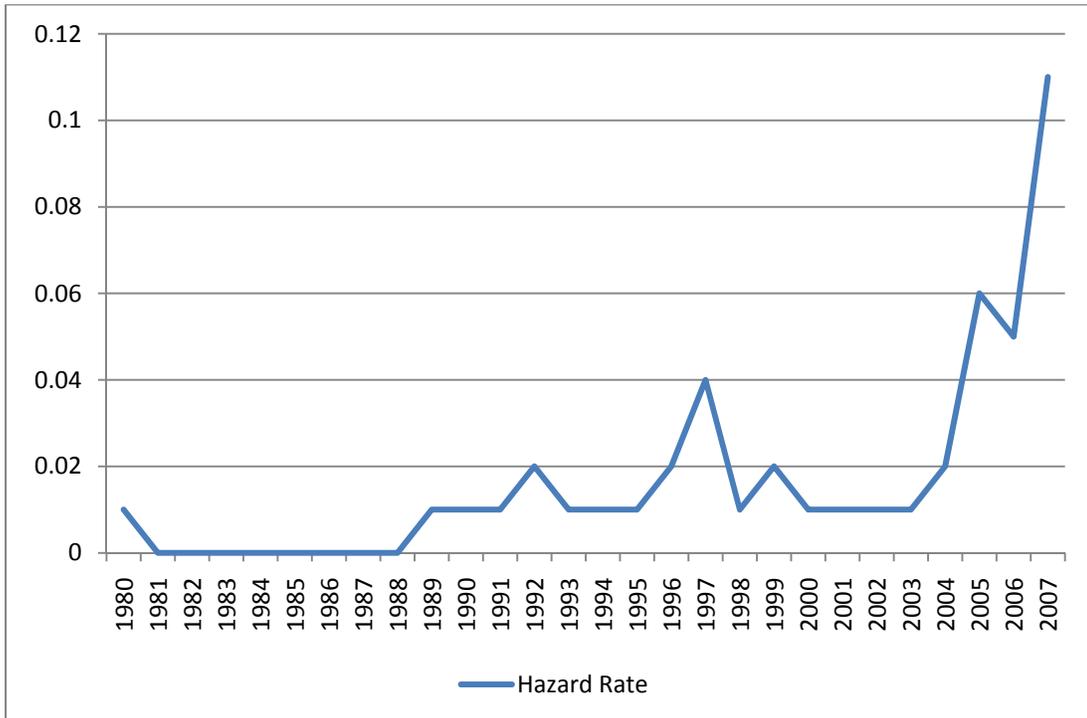
**TABLE 4.6**  
**BIVARIATE *t*-TESTS OF GANG TASK FORCE FORMERS AND NON-FORMERS, 2007**

	<i>Gang Task Force Formed</i>	<i>Gang Task Force Not Formed</i>
Population***	15.34 (24.8)	4.42 (7.7)
Murder	0.21 (0.3)	0.17 (0.4)
Assault with a gun	2.57 (2.7)	1.83 (2.6)
Robbery with a gun	1.47 (1.7)	1.14 (2.1)
Auto theft	6.72 (4.9)	5.43 (4.7)
Total clearance rate	263.39 (149.4)	256.23 (145.6)
Percent Black	11.94 (10.5)	11.66 (11.3)
Percent in poverty**	12.45 (3.6)	13.7 (4.9)
Percent Democrat	46.34 (7.4)	46.17 (7.7)
Midwest Region	0.24 (0.43)	0.25 (0.43)
Northeast Region***	0.10 (0.30)	0.21 (0.41)
South Region	0.39 (0.49)	0.41 (0.49)
West Region***	0.28 (0.45)	0.14 (0.34)

NOTES: \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$  Standard errors in parentheses.



**FIGURE 4.3 – PROPORTION OF METROPOLITAN AREAS SURVIVING GANG TASK FORCE FORMATION, 1980-2007**



**FIGURE 4.4 – HAZARD RATE OF GANG TASK FORCE FORMATION, 1980-2007**

**TABLE 4.7**  
**TOTAL JUVENILE CRIME RATE AND OTHER PREDICTORS OF GANG TASK**  
**FORCE FORMATION**  
**(COX REGRESSION)**

	<i>1</i>		<i>2</i>	
	<i>B</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
Total juvenile crime rate (t)	.001227** (.000463)	1.001	.001217* (.000525)	1.001218
Percent Black (t)			.029183** (.011142)	1.029613
Percent in poverty (t)			-.037882 (.025908)	.962827
Percent voting Democrat (t)			.092716*** (.021549)	1.097150
Midwest Region (vs. West)			-.355409 (.290687)	.700887
Northeast Region (vs. West)			-1.064086** (.351873)	.345043
South Region (vs. West)			-.292048	.746732
-2 Log Likelihood	1177.47		1138.156	
Chi-Square (df)	5.826* (1)		39.318*** (6)	
Events	111		111	
(N)	(259)		(259)	

NOTES: \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$  Standard errors in parentheses. The (t) denotes a time-varying variable. Model chi-square for the second model with controls is for the test comparing it to the previous model.

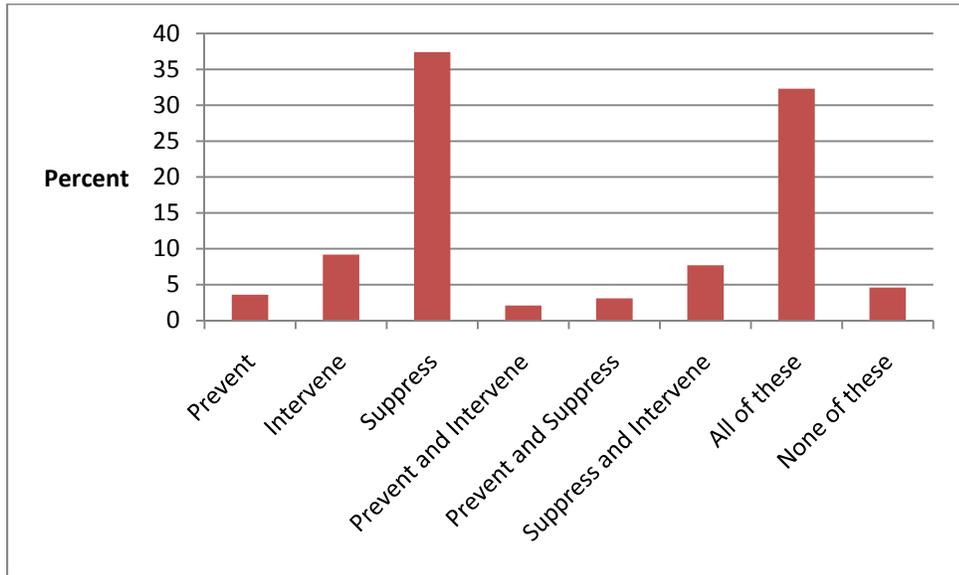
**TABLE 4.8**  
**VARIOUS TYPES OF JUVENILE CRIME RATES AND OTHER PREDICTORS OF GANG TASK FORCE FORMATION**  
**(COX REGRESSION)**

	1		2		3		4		5		6	
	<i>B</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
Assault rate	.131*** (.024)	1.140	.155*** (.028)	1.168								
Murder rate					.628** (.191)	1.873	.652** (.221)	1.920				
Robbery rate									.079** (.029)	1.083	.090* (.036)	1.094
Auto theft rate												
Percent Black			.010 (.012)	1.010			.022 (.011)	1.022			.015 (.013)	1.015
Percent in poverty			-.052 (.027)	.949			-.044 (.027)	.957			-.036 (.026)	.965
Percent voting Democrat			.096*** (.020)	1.100			.093*** (.022)	1.098			.100*** (.022)	1.105
Midwest Region (vs. West)			-.311 (.290)	.733			-.340 (.293)	.712			-.281 (.294)	.755
Northeast Region (vs. West)			-.981** (.355)	.375			-1.101** (.350)	.332			-1.133** (.350)	.322
South Region (vs. West)			-.033 (.366)	.967			-.158 (.379)	.854			-.009 (.382)	.991
-2 Log Likelihood	1158.771		1116.488		1175.094		1135.676		1177.543		1137.518	
Chi-Square (df)	24.53*** (1)		42.28*** (6)		8.205** (1)		39.42*** (6)		5.76* (1)		40.03*** (6)	
Events	111		111		111		111		111		111	
(N)	259		259		259		259		259		259	

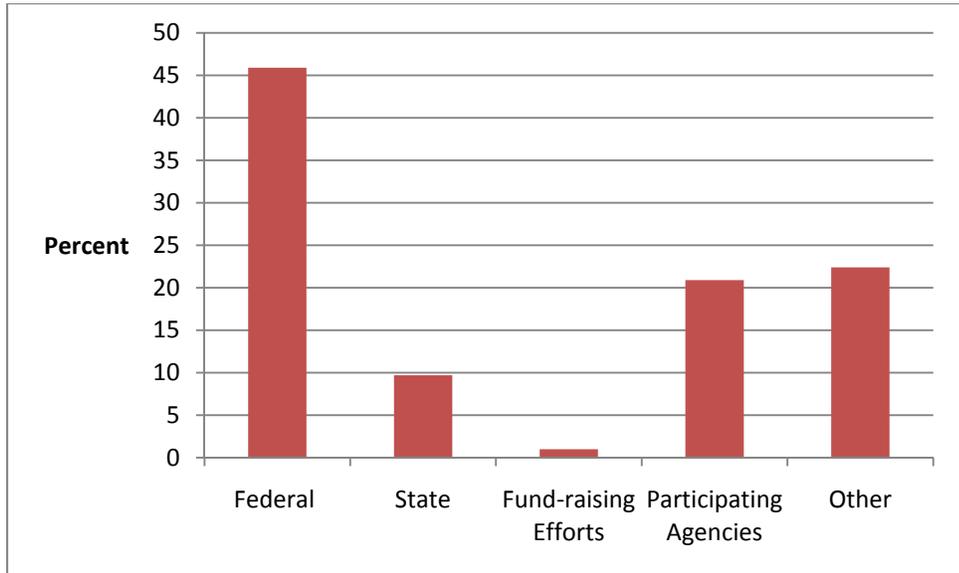
*Cont'd*

	7		8		9		10	
	<i>B</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
Assault rate					.092**	1.096	.107**	1.113
					(.034)		(.036)	
Murder rate					-.074	.928	-.003	.997
					(.267)		(.289)	
Robbery rate					-.072	.931	-.103	.902
					(.049)		(.061)	
Auto theft rate	.084***	1.087	.084***	1.087	.078***	1.081	.077***	1.080
	(.009)		(.01)		(.011)		(.012)	
Percent Black			.024*	1.024			.025	1.025
			(.011)				(.013)	
Percent in poverty			-.060*	.942			-.063*	.939
			(.028)				(.027)	
Percent voting Democrat			.086***	1.089			.090***	1.094
			(.021)				(.021)	
Midwest Region (vs. West)			-.484	.616			-.390	.677
			(.287)				(.290)	
Northeast Region (vs. West)			-1.042**	.353			-.944**	.389
			(.355)				(.358)	
South Region (vs. West)			-.240	.787			-.123	.884
			(.357)				(.363)	
-2 Log Likelihood	1125.076		1091.227		1118.425		1082.85	
Chi-Square (df)	58.22***		33.85***		64.87***		35.58***	
Events	111		111		111		111	
(N)	259		259		259		259	

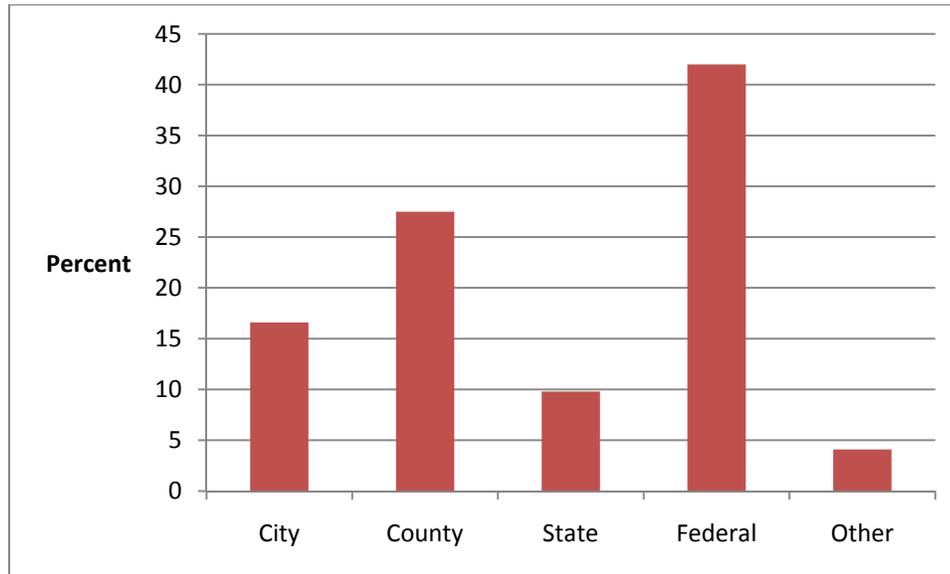
NOTES: \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$  Standard errors in parentheses. Model chi-square for the second model with controls is for the test comparing it to the previous model.



**FIGURE 5.1 PURPOSE OF THE GANG TASK FORCE (N=195)**



**FIGURE 5.2 SOURCE OF GANG TASK FORCE FUNDING (N=196)**



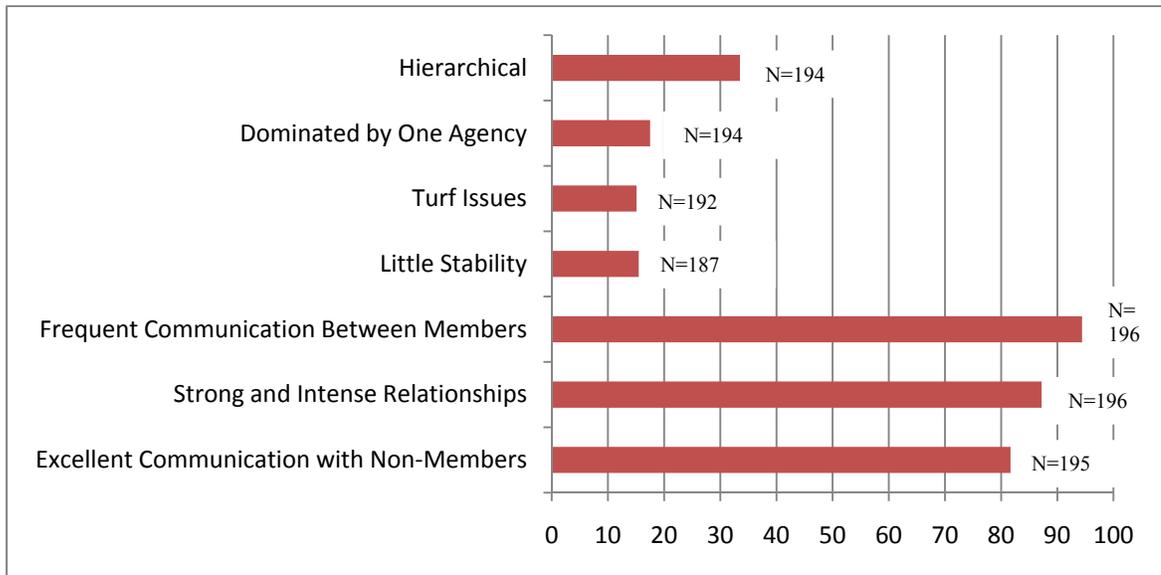
**FIGURE 5.3 GANG TASK FORCE LEVEL OF JURISDICTION (N=193)**

**TABLE 5.1  
CHARACTERISTICS OF GANG TASK FORCES**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>Is the Gang Task Force Multi-jurisdictional?(N=196)</i>	No	20	10.2
	Yes	176	89.8
<i>Number of Participating Agencies (N=197)</i>	Less than 5	76	38.6
	5-9	74	37.6
	More than 10	47	23.9
<i>Number of Participating Individuals (N=197)</i>	5 or less	24	12.2
	6-10	52	26.4
	11-20	53	26.9
	21-40	28	14.2
	More than 40	40	20.3

**TABLE 5.2**  
**GANG TASK FORCE FORMALIZATION**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>Is there a mission statement? (N=187)</i>	No	93	49.7
	Yes	94	50.3
<i>Is there an organizational chart? (N=188)</i>	No	143	76.1
	Yes	45	23.9
<i>Is there a gang database? (N=186)</i>	No	5	2.7
	Yes	181	97.3
<i>Was there gang legislation prior to formation? (N=191)</i>	No	66	34.6
	Yes	125	65.4
<i>Did legislation change after formation? (N=133)</i>	No	111	83.5
	Yes	22	16.5
<i>Are there enhanced penalties for gang crime? (N=187)</i>	No	63	33.7
	Yes	124	66.3
<i>How many office locations are there? (N=194)</i>	1	124	69.1
	2	23	11.9
	3	8	4.1
	4	3	1.5
	5	6	3.1
	6 or more	20	10.3
<i>Does the task force have its own location or is it in another agency? (N=190)</i>	Another agency	85	44.7
	Own location	105	55.3
<i>How many participants have a desk at the gang task force office location? (N=190)</i>	None	36	18.9
	A few	30	15.8
	About half	10	5.3
	Many	16	8.4
	All	98	51.6



**FIGURE 5.4 PERCENT AGREEING OR STRONGLY AGREEING WITH STATEMENTS ABOUT GANG TASK FORCE STRUCTURE AND RELATIONSHIPS**

**TABLE 5.3  
FREQUENCY OF COMMUNICATION**

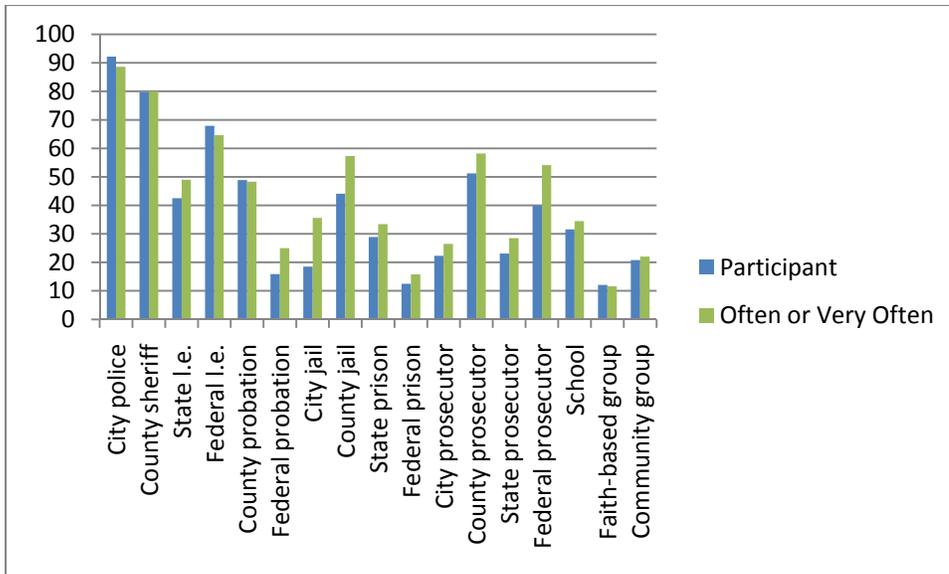
<b>Frequency of Communication</b>	<i>Your communication with participants</i>	<i>Participants' communication with each other</i>	<i>Communication with non-participants</i>
Less than once/wk	9.7	8.7	22.9
Once or twice/wk	26.2	22.1	33.9
Three or four/wk	16.9	14.9	20.3
Five or more/wk	47.2	54.4	22.9
N	195	195	192

NOTES: Table displays column percentages.

**TABLE 5.4**  
**FREQUENCY OF COMMUNICATION WITH PARTICIPANTS AND NON-PARTICIPANTS**

	<i>Participation</i>			<i>Communication</i>					<b>N</b>
	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Non-participant</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Very often</b>	
<b>City police</b>	92.2	7.8	193	0.0	3.3	8.2	32.1	56.5	184
<b>County sheriff</b>	79.7	20.3	187	0.6	8.9	10.6	36.7	43.3	180
<b>State police</b>	42.5	54.8	166	8.4	17.4	25.2	27.1	21.9	155
<b>Federal law enforcement</b>	67.9	32.1	184	5.7	12.0	17.7	28.0	36.6	175
<b>County probation</b>	48.9	51.1	176	1.8	15.3	34.7	31.2	17.1	170
<b>Federal probation</b>	15.9	84.1	164	18.4	30.3	26.3	20.4	4.6	152
<b>City jail</b>	18.5	81.5	135	22.0	21.2	21.2	25.4	10.2	118
<b>County jail</b>	44.1	55.9	170	4.3	13.4	25.0	37.8	19.5	164
<b>State correctional facility</b>	28.9	71.1	166	6.4	19.9	40.4	21.2	12.2	156
<b>Federal correctional facility</b>	12.5	87.5	160	19.4	38.8	25.9	14.4	1.4	139
<b>City prosecutor</b>	22.3	77.7	148	22.8	22.8	27.9	19.9	6.6	136
<b>County prosecutor</b>	51.2	48.8	172	4.8	8.5	28.5	35.2	23.0	165
<b>State prosecutor</b>	23.1	76.9	156	18.1	26.4	27.1	16.7	11.8	144
<b>Federal prosecutor</b>	39.9	60.1	173	7.5	24.5	13.8	20.8	33.3	159
<b>School</b>	31.6	68.4	174	18.2	23.0	24.2	20.6	13.9	165
<b>Faith-based group</b>	12.1	87.9	165	39.7	34.2	14.4	8.2	3.4	146
<b>Community group</b>	20.8	79.2	168	26.6	30.5	20.8	14.9	7.1	154

NOTES: Table displays row percentages.

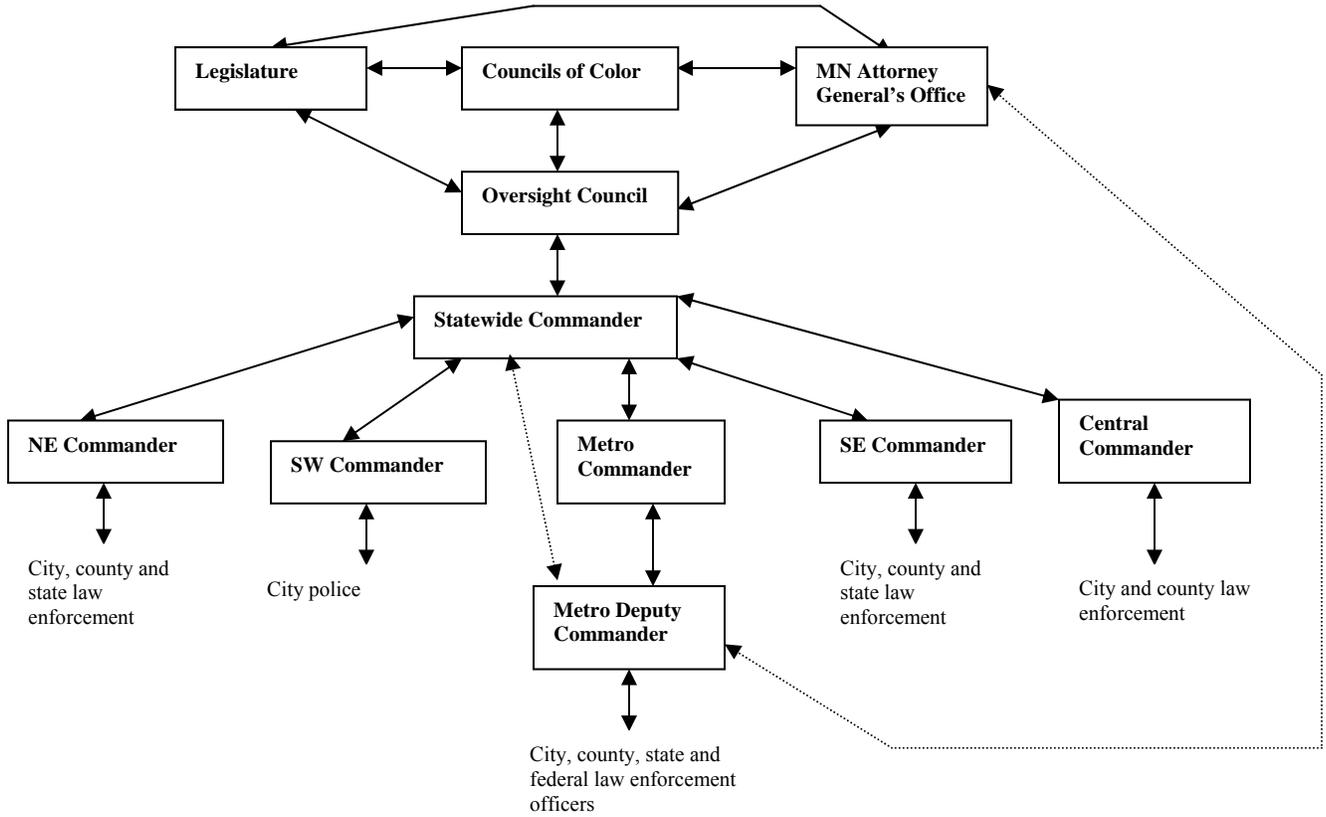


**FIGURE 5.5 PERCENT OF GANG TASK FORCES REPORTING ON PARTICIPATION BY AND FREQUENT COMMUNICATION WITH VARIOUS AGENCIES**

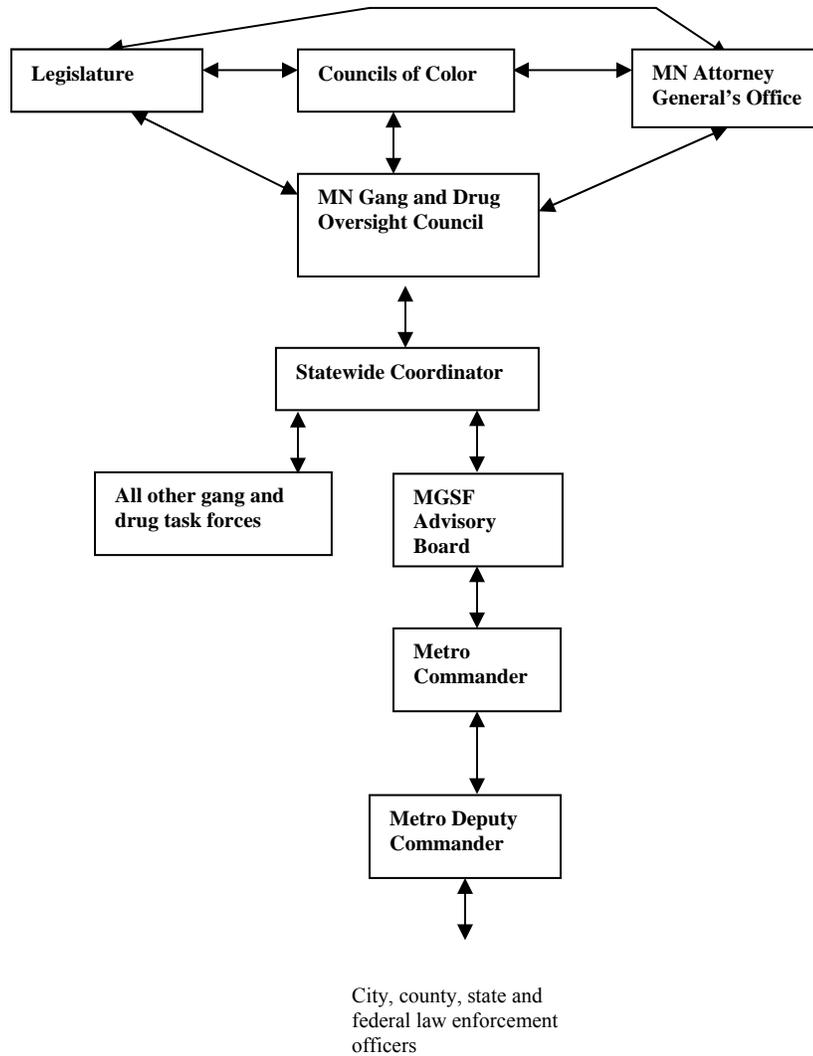
**TABLE 5.5**  
**GANG TASK FORCE STRUCTURE**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>How many media personnel do you know? (N=195)</i>			
	None	33	16.9
	One or two	54	27.7
	A few	72	36.9
	Many	36	18.5
<i>How often do you communicate with the media? (N=196)</i>			
	Never	75	38.3
	Less than 1/wk	96	49.0
	Once or twice/wk	18	9.2
	Three or more/wk	7	3.6
<i>How many politicians do you know? (N=196)</i>			
	None	33	16.8
	One or two	54	27.6
	A few	64	32.7
	Many	45	23.0
<i>How often do you communicate with politicians? (N=194)</i>			
	Never	69	35.6
	Less than 1/wk	97	50.0
	Once or twice/wk	20	10.3
	Three or more/wk	8	4.1
<i>How often do your agents attend gang training? (N=196)</i>			
	Less than 1/yr	17	8.7
	Once/yr	56	28.6
	Couple times/yr	101	51.5
	Once/mo or more	22	11.2
<i>Do your agents provide gang training? (N=196)</i>			
	No	40	20.4
	Yes	156	79.6
<i>To whom is gang training provided? (N=197)</i>			
	Schools	112	56.9
	Law enforcement	144	73.1
	Prosecuting attorneys	52	26.4
	Gang investigator associations	90	45.7
	Community groups	117	59.4
	Other groups	17	8.6
<i>How often do your agents provide gang training? (N=196)</i>			
	Less than 1/yr	44	22.4
	Once/yr	7	3.6
	Couple times/yr	74	37.8
	Once/mo or more	71	36.2

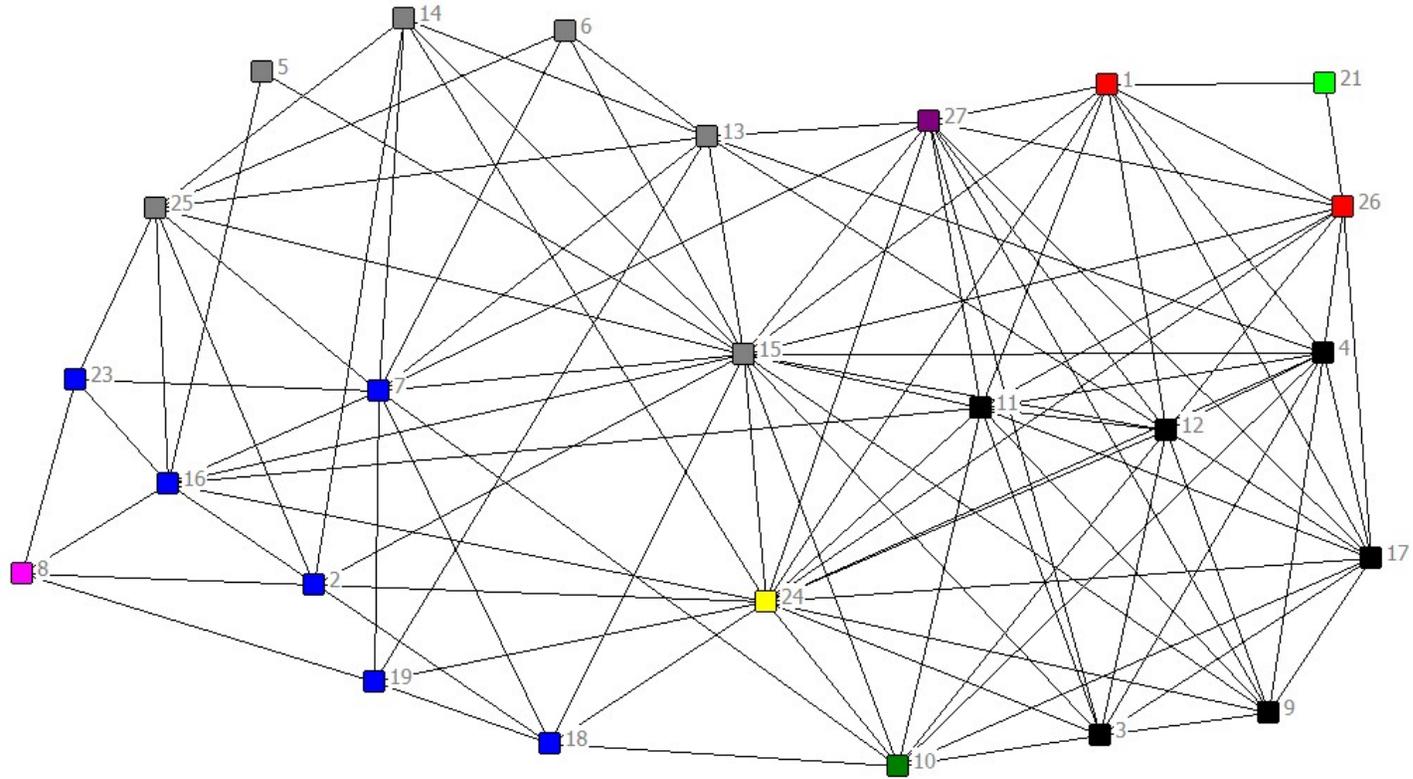
**FIGURE 5.6  
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART OF THE MGSF, 1997-2004**



**FIGURE 5.7  
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART OF THE MGSF, 2005-2009**



**FIGURE 5.8**  
**FREQUENCY OF WORK INTERACTION**



**TABLE 5.6**  
**DEGREE CENTRALITY, FREQUENCY OF WORK INTERACTION**

<b>Node</b>	<b>Node Description (Gender; agency color; agency jurisdiction)</b>	<i>Outdegree</i>	<i>Indegree</i>	<i>Percentage of Outdegree</i>	<i>Percentage of Indegree</i>
15	M; gray; city	19	19	73.077	73.077
24	M; yellow; other	16	16	61.538	61.538
12	M; black; city	12	12	46.154	46.154
11	M; black; city	12	12	46.154	46.154
27	M; purple; suburb	11	11	42.308	42.308
4	M; black; city	11	11	42.308	42.308
7	M; blue; county	11	11	42.308	42.308
17	M; black; city	10	10	38.462	38.462
3	M; black; city; Deputy Commander	9	9	34.615	34.615
10	M; green; federal	9	9	34.615	34.615
1	M; red; county	9	9	34.615	34.615
13	M; gray; city	9	9	34.615	34.615
26	M; red; county	9	9	34.615	34.615
16	M; blue; county; Commander	9	9	34.615	34.615
9	M; black; city	8	8	30.769	30.769
25	M; gray; city	8	8	30.769	30.769
14	M; gray; city	6	6	23.077	23.077
18	M; blue; county	6	6	23.077	23.077
19	M; blue; county	5	5	19.231	19.231
2	M; blue; county	5	5	19.231	19.231
8	F; pink; suburb	4	4	15.385	15.385
6	M; gray; city	4	4	15.385	15.385
23	M; blue; county	4	4	15.385	15.385
5	F; gray; city	2	2	7.692	7.692
21	F; light green; other	2	2	7.692	7.692
22	M; light blue; suburb	0	0	0	0
20	M; gray; city	0	0	0	0
Mean		7.778	7.778	29.915	29.915
Std Dev		4.417	4.417	16.987	16.987
Sum		210	210	807.692	807.692
N		27	27	27	27

NOTES: Network centralization is 42.822%.

**TABLE 5.7**  
**CLOSENESS CENTRALITY, FREQUENCY OF WORK INTERACTION**

Node	<i>Farness</i>	<i>Closeness</i>
15	83	31.325
24	86	30.233
11	90	28.889
27	92	28.261
7	92	28.261
12	92	28.261
4	93	27.957
16	94	27.660
13	94	27.660
1	95	27.368
26	95	27.368
10	95	27.368
3	96	27.083
25	96	27.083
9	97	26.804
18	97	26.804
14	97	26.804
17	97	26.804
2	98	26.531
19	99	26.263
6	101	25.743
5	103	25.243
23	107	24.299
8	110	23.636
21	117	22.222
22		
20		
Mean	96.640	27.037
Std Dev	6.962	1.862
Sum	2416	675.930
N	25	25

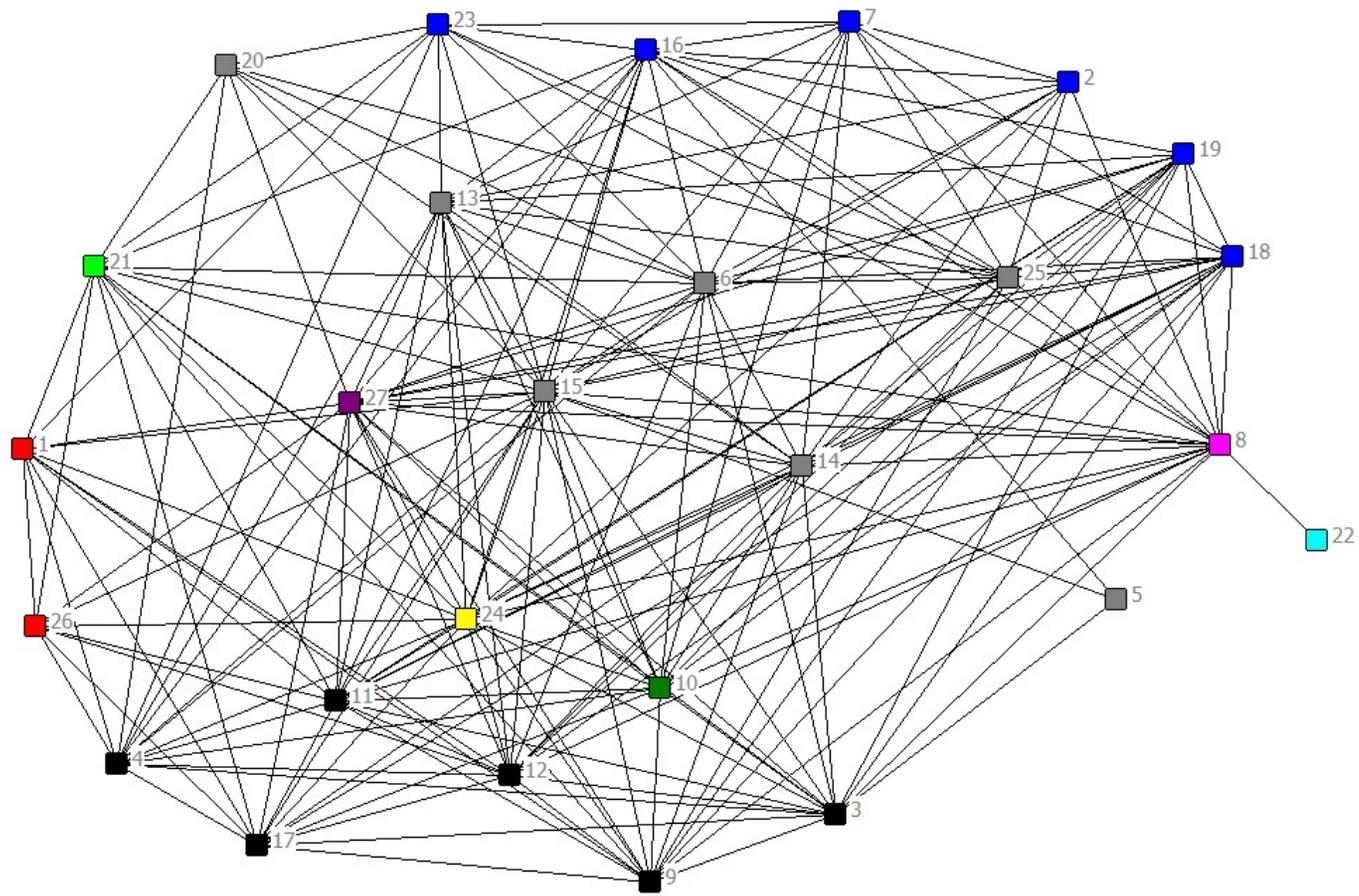
NOTES: Network centralization cannot be computed for an unconnected network.

**TABLE 5.8**  
**BETWEENNESS CENTRALITY, FREQUENCY OF WORK INTERACTION**

Node	<i>Betweenness</i>	<i>nBetweenness</i>
15	67.591	20.797
24	38.462	11.835
16	21.513	6.620
7	17.902	5.508
1	11.403	3.509
26	11.403	3.509
13	8.885	2.734
11	8.320	2.560
27	8.045	2.475
25	6.532	2.010
2	5.561	1.711
19	5.259	1.618
10	4.610	1.419
12	4.415	1.358
4	4.172	1.284
8	2.125	0.654
17	1.743	0.536
18	1.608	0.495
14	1.279	0.393
23	1.080	0.332
3	0.688	0.212
9	0.403	0.124
22	0	0
5	0	0
6	0	0
20	0	0
21	0	0
Mean	8.630	2.655
Std Dev	14.229	4.378
Sum	233	71.692
N	27	27

NOTES: Network centralization index is 18.84%.

**FIGURE 5.9**  
**QUALITY OF WORK INTERACTION**



**TABLE 5.9**  
**DEGREE CENTRALITY, QUALITY OF WORK INTERACTION**

<b>Node</b>	<i>Outdegree</i>	<i>Indegree</i>	<i>Percentage of Outdegree</i>	<i>Percentage of Indegree</i>
15	24	24	92.308	92.308
27	19	19	73.077	73.077
24	19	19	73.077	73.077
11	18	18	69.231	69.231
8	18	18	69.231	69.231
14	18	18	69.231	69.231
6	17	17	65.385	65.385
12	17	17	65.385	65.385
10	16	16	61.538	61.538
16	16	16	61.538	61.538
3	16	16	61.538	61.538
18	16	16	61.538	61.538
13	15	15	57.692	57.692
25	15	15	57.692	57.692
9	15	15	57.692	57.692
4	14	14	53.846	53.846
17	14	14	53.846	53.846
21	14	14	53.846	53.846
19	14	14	53.846	53.846
23	11	11	42.308	42.308
1	11	11	42.308	42.308
7	11	11	42.308	42.308
26	9	9	34.615	34.615
2	9	9	34.615	34.615
20	8	8	30.769	30.769
5	3	3	11.538	11.538
22	1	1	3.846	3.846
Mean	14	14	53.846	53.846
Std Dev	4.861	4.861	18.696	18.696
Sum	378	378	1453.846	1453.846
N	27	27	27	27

NOTES: Network centralization is 39.941%.

**TABLE 5.10**  
**CLOSENESS CENTRALITY, QUALITY OF WORK INTERACTION**

Node	<i>Farness</i>	<i>Closeness</i>
15	28	92.857
27	33	78.788
24	33	78.788
11	34	76.471
8	34	76.471
14	34	76.471
12	35	74.286
10	36	72.222
16	36	72.222
3	36	72.222
6	36	72.222
18	36	72.222
25	37	70.270
9	37	70.270
13	38	68.421
19	38	68.421
21	38	68.421
17	39	66.667
4	39	66.667
23	41	63.415
7	41	63.415
1	42	61.905
2	43	60.465
26	44	59.091
20	45	57.778
5	50	52.000
22	59	44.068
Mean	38.593	68.760
Std Dev	5.933	9.313
Sum	1042	1856.514
N	27	27

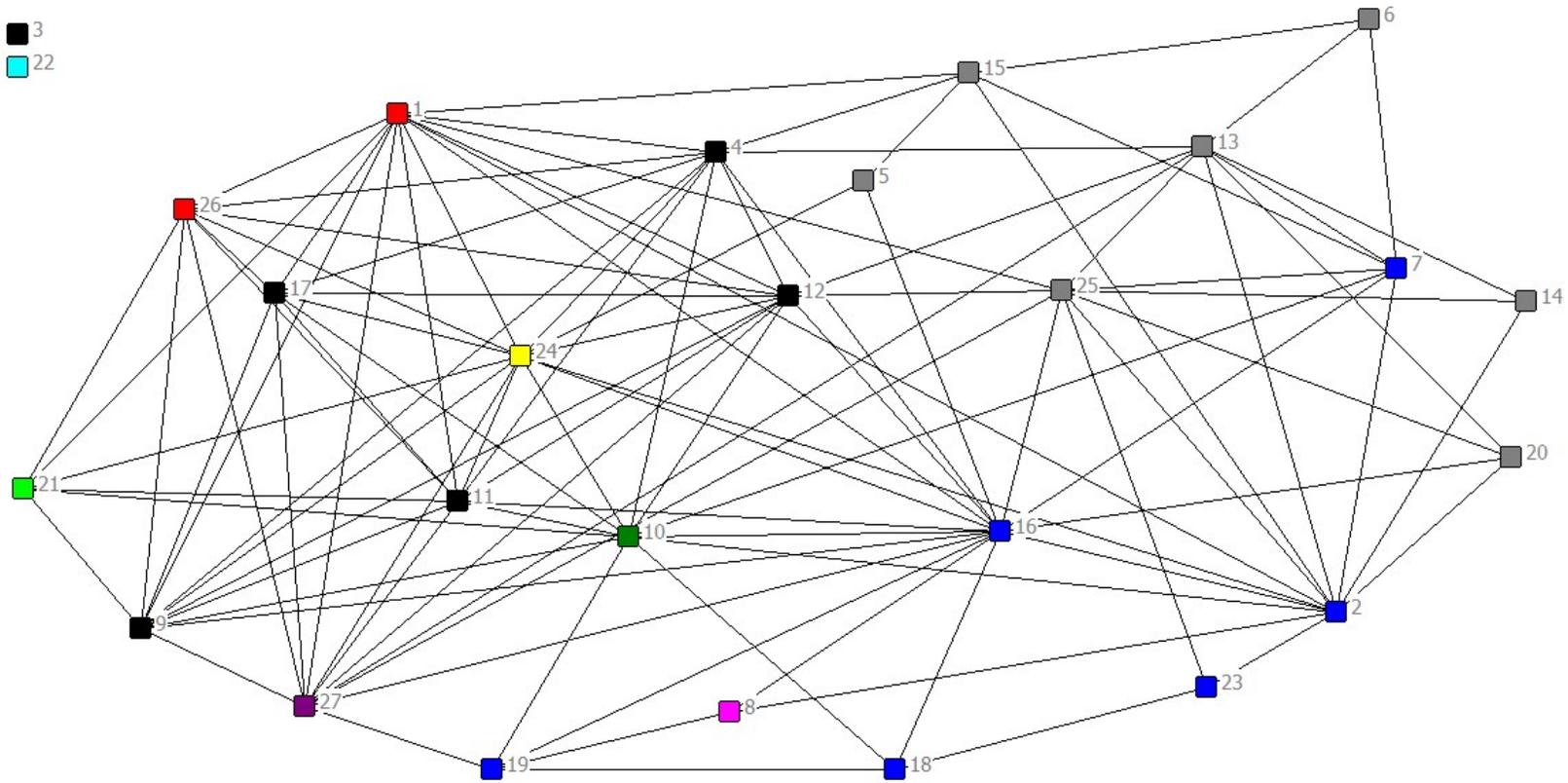
NOTES: Network centralization is 51.05%.

**TABLE 5.11**  
**BETWEENNESS CENTRALITY, QUALITY OF WORK INTERACTION**

Node	<i>Betweenness</i>	<i>nBetweenness</i>
8	30.990	9.535
15	29.256	9.002
16	10.897	3.353
27	9.314	2.866
24	9.007	2.771
3	8.323	2.561
14	7.577	2.331
6	7.419	2.283
21	6.401	1.969
12	6.074	1.869
11	6.028	1.855
4	5.573	1.715
25	5.235	1.611
10	4.289	1.320
13	4.212	1.296
23	3.813	1.173
18	3.351	1.031
9	2.821	0.868
17	2.193	0.675
1	1.841	0.566
19	1.784	0.549
7	1.510	0.465
20	0.991	0.305
2	0.673	0.207
26	0.337	0.104
5	0.091	0.028
22	0	0
Mean	6.296	1.937
Std Dev	7.384	2.272
Sum	170	52.308
N	27	27

NOTES: Network centralization index is 7.89%.

**FIGURE 5.10**  
**QUALITY OF SOCIAL INTERACTION**



**TABLE 5.12**  
**DEGREE CENTRALITY, QUALITY OF SOCIAL INTERACTION**

<b>Node</b>	<i>Outdegree</i>	<i>Indegree</i>	<i>Percentage of Outdegree</i>	<i>Percentage of Indegree</i>
16	16	16	61.538	61.538
1	13	13	50.000	50.000
24	13	13	50.000	50.000
10	12	12	46.154	46.154
2	12	12	46.154	46.154
12	12	12	46.154	46.154
4	11	11	42.308	42.308
27	11	11	42.308	42.308
9	11	11	42.308	42.308
11	11	11	42.308	42.308
25	10	10	38.462	38.462
17	9	9	34.615	34.615
13	9	9	34.615	34.615
26	9	9	34.615	34.615
7	7	7	26.923	26.923
15	6	6	23.077	23.077
21	6	6	23.077	23.077
19	5	5	19.231	19.231
18	4	4	15.385	15.385
20	4	4	15.385	15.385
6	3	3	11.538	11.538
8	3	3	11.538	11.538
5	3	3	11.538	11.538
23	3	3	11.538	11.538
14	3	3	11.538	11.538
3	0	0	0	0
22	0	0	0	0
Mean	7.630	7.630	29.345	29.345
Std Dev	4.322	4.322	16.622	16.622
Sum	206	206	792.308	792.308
N	27	27	27	27

NOTES: Network centralization is 33.432%.

**TABLE 5.13**  
**CLOSENESS CENTRALITY, QUALITY OF SOCIAL INTERACTION**

Node	<i>Farness</i>	<i>Closeness</i>
16	86	30.233
1	89	29.213
2	90	28.889
10	90	28.889
24	90	28.889
12	90	28.889
27	91	28.571
25	92	28.261
4	92	28.261
9	94	27.660
11	94	27.660
7	96	27.083
13	96	27.083
17	98	26.531
15	98	26.531
26	100	26.000
19	100	26.000
20	101	25.743
5	102	25.490
21	102	25.490
8	103	25.243
18	103	25.243
23	107	24.299
14	107	24.299
6	109	23.853
3		
22		
Mean	96.8	26.972
Std Dev	6.286	1.736
Sum	2420	674.302
N	25	25

NOTES: Network centralization cannot be computed for an unconnected network.

**TABLE 5.14**  
**BETWEENNESS CENTRALITY, QUALITY OF SOCIAL INTERACTION**

Node	<i>Betweenness</i>	<i>nBetweenness</i>
16	60.037	9.236
25	45.163	6.948
2	28.658	4.409
10	28.609	4.401
13	20.038	3.083
24	16.257	2.501
27	15.528	2.389
1	15.020	2.311
12	13.951	2.146
7	11.929	1.835
4	11.833	1.820
11	10.797	1.661
15	8.949	1.377
9	5.754	0.885
8	5.240	0.806
18	4.197	0.646
19	3.662	0.563
21	3.552	0.546
23	2.798	0.430
6	2.439	0.375
26	2.417	0.372
5	2.390	0.368
17	1.974	0.304
20	1.578	0.243
14	0.230	0.035
3	0	0
22	0	0
Mean	11.963	1.840
Std Dev	14.092	2.168
Sum	323	49.692
N	27	27

NOTES: Network centralization index is 7.68%.

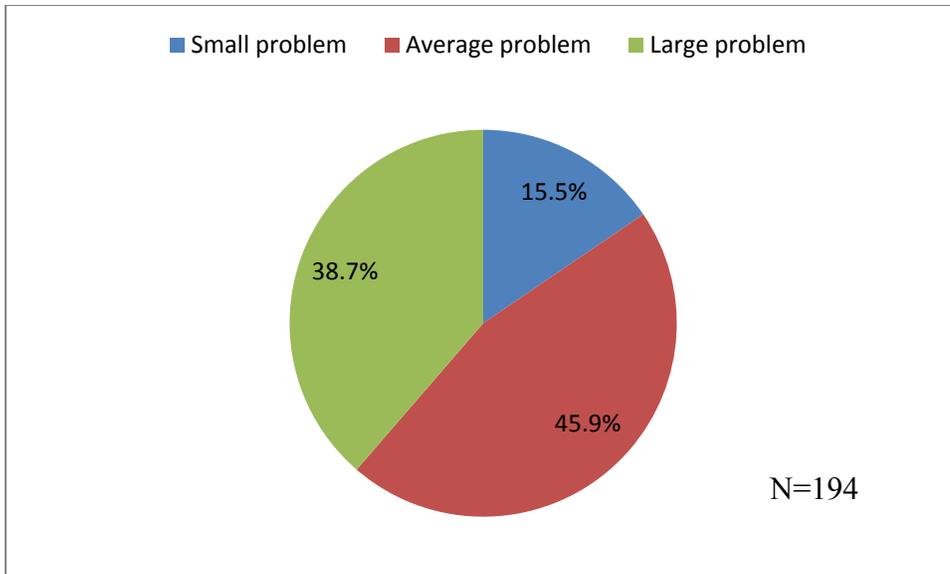
**TABLE 6.1**  
**MEASURES OF GANG TASK FORCE EFFECTIVENESS**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>How effective is the gang task force? (N=193)</i>	Somewhat effective	104	53.9
	Very effective	89	46.1
<i>Improvement in relationships between participating agencies since formation (N=194)</i>	Same or little improvement	52	26.8
	Greatly improved	142	73.2
<i>Improvement in relationships with non-participating agencies since formation (N=193)</i>	Same or little improvement	103	53.4
	Greatly improved	90	46.6
<i>Number of search warrants executed in an average month (N=181)</i>	None	35	19.3
	One to three	110	60.8
	Four to six	25	13.8
	Seven or more	11	6.1
<i>Number of arrests in an average month (N=176)</i>	None	8	4.5
	One to four	45	25.6
	Five to nine	40	22.7
	Ten to fourteen	25	14.2
	Fifteen to nineteen	16	9.1
	Twenty or more	42	23.9
<i>Percent of arrests resulting in conviction (N=166)</i>	Up to 75%	48	28.9
	76-100%	118	71.1
<i>Number of guns seized in an average month (N=175)</i>	None	21	12.0
	One to four	111	63.4
	Five or more	43	24.6
<i>Amount of cash seized in an average month (N=144)</i>	0.00	30	20.8
	1.00-499.99	28	19.4
	500.00-999.99	21	14.6
	1000.00-1999.99	18	12.5
	2000.00-4999.99	22	15.3

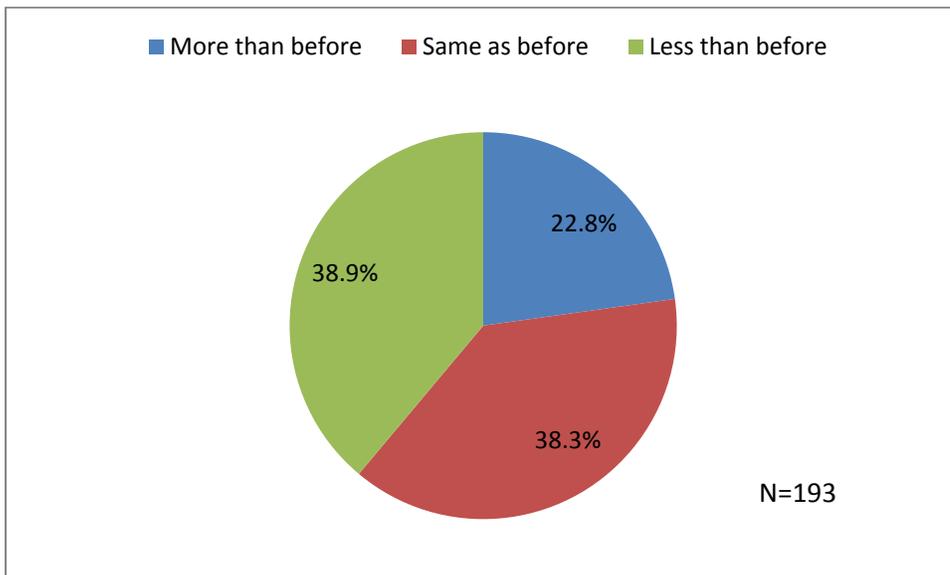
*(Cont'd)*

	5000.00-9999.99	11	7.6
	10000.00 or more	14	9.7
<i>Dollar value of other seizures in an average month (N=131)</i>			
	0.00	43	32.8
	1.00-499.99	18	13.7
	500.00-999.99	13	9.9
	1000.00-1999.99	17	13.0
	2000.00-4999.99	11	8.4
	5000.00-9999.99	12	9.2
	10000.00 or more	17	13.0
<i>Number of gang members referred to intervention in an average month (N=165)</i>			
	None	103	62.4
	At least one	62	37.6
<i>Number of awards received since formation (N=189)</i>			
	None	60	31.7
	A few	71	37.6
	A moderate amount	40	21.2
	Many	18	9.5
<i>How long will the gang task force survive? (N=189)</i>			
	2 years or less	12	6.3
	3-5 years	48	25.4
	5-10 years	34	18.0
	More than 10 years	95	50.3

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**FIGURE 6.1 PERCENT OF GANG TASK FORCES REPORTING ON THE SIZE OF THE GANG PROBLEM PRIOR TO TASK FORCE FORMATION**



**FIGURE 6.2 PERCENT OF GANG TASK FORCES REPORTING ON THE SIZE OF THE GANG PROBLEM NOW**

**TABLE 6.2**  
**BIVARIATE PERCENTAGE CROSSTABULATION OF SIZE OF THE GANG**  
**PROBLEM BEFORE TASK FORCE IMPLEMENTATION BY SIZE OF THE GANG**  
**PROBLEM NOW**

<b>Size of the Gang Problem Before</b>	<i>Size of the Gang Problem Now</i>			<i>(N)</i>
	<i>Less than before</i>	<i>Same as before</i>	<i>More than before</i>	
Small problem	26.7	26.7	46.7	30
Average problem	34.8	43.8	21.3	89
Large problem	48.6	36.5	14.9	74
Total	38.9	38.3	22.8	193

NOTES: Table displays row percentages. Chi-square of 14.795 is significant at the  $p < .01$  level.

**TABLE 6.3**  
**BIVARIATE PERCENTAGE CROSSTABULATION OF TASK FORCE**  
**CHARACTERISTICS BY PERCEPTION OF EFFECTIVENESS**

	<i>Somewhat or moderately effective</i>	<i>Very effective</i>	<i>(N)</i>	<i>Chi-square</i>
<b>Does the gang task force have a mission statement?</b>				8.403**
No	64.8	35.2	91	
Yes	43.5	56.5	92	
Total	99	84	183	
<b>Does the task force have an organizational chart?</b>				0.715
No	56.1	43.9	139	
Yes	48.9	51.1	45	
Total	100	84	184	
<b>How many task force offices are there?</b>				0.882
One	56.5	43.5	131	
More than one	49.2	50.8	59	
Total	103	87	190	
<b>Where is the gang task force office?</b>				0.364
In another agency	58.3	41.7	84	
Own location	53.9	46.1	102	
Total	104	82	186	
<b>How many participants have a desk at the task force?</b>				9.314**
None	62.9	37.1	35	
Some to many	68.5	31.5	54	
All	44.3	55.7	97	
Total	102	84	186	
<b>Did gang definitions exist in legislation?</b>				0.176
No	50.8	49.2	63	
Yes	54.0	46.0	124	
Total	99	88	187	
<b>Are there enhanced penalties for committing a gang crime?</b>				0.002

*(Cont'd)*

No	53.3	46.7	60	
Yes	53.7	46.3	123	
Total	98	85	183	
<b>Does the gang task force provide gang training?</b>				3.900*
No	67.5	32.5	40	
Yes	50.0	50.0	152	
Total	103	89	192	
<b>How many agency participants are there?</b>				0.116
Less than 5	55.3	44.7	76	
5-9	53.5	46.5	71	
More than 10	52.2	47.8	46	
Total	104	89	193	
<b>How many individual participants are there?</b>				4.329
5 or fewer	58.3	41.7	24	
6-10	52.9	47.1	51	
11-20	62.7	37.3	51	
21-40	39.3	60.7	28	
More than 41	51.3	48.7	39	
Total	104	89	193	
<b>Is a probation agency involved?</b>				1.195
No	55.3	44.7	85	
Yes	46.6	53.4	73	
Total	81	77	158	
<b>Is a correctional facility involved?</b>				0.020
No	47.8	52.2	67	
Yes	49.1	50.9	53	
Total	58	62	120	
<b>Is a prosecutor involved?</b>				0.264
No	43.5	56.5	46	
Yes	48.2	51.8	83	
Total	60	69	129	
<b>Is a school involved?</b>				1.829
No	50.0	50.0	116	
Yes	61.1	38.9	54	
Total	91	79	170	
<b>Is a faith-based group involved?</b>				1.042
No	50.7	49.3	142	
Yes	63.2	36.8	19	
Total	84	77	161	
<b>Is a community group involved?</b>				0.138
No	52.3	47.7	130	
Yes	55.9	44.1	34	
Total	87	77	164	
<b>Do you ever communicate with the media?</b>				0.964
No	58.1	41.9	74	
Yes	50.8	49.2	118	
Total	103	89	192	
<b>Do you ever communicate with politicians?</b>				0.383
No	56.7	43.3	67	
Yes	52.0	48.0	123	
Total	102	88	190	

NOTES: Table displays row percentages. \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

**TABLE 6.4**  
**PREDICTORS OF PERCEPTIONS OF EFFECTIVENESS**  
**(LOGISTIC REGRESSION)**

	<i>B</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
Mission	0.855** (0.330)	2.351
Desk: Some to many vs. None	-0.237 (0.488)	0.789
Desk: All vs. None	0.545 (0.435)	1.725
Gang Training	0.582 (0.416)	1.790
Constant	-1.325* (0.529)	0.266
-2 Log Likelihood	223.743	
$\chi^2$ , df (vs. intercept only)	17.204**, 4	
(N)	(175)	

NOTES: \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$  Standard errors in parentheses.

**TABLE 6.5**  
**BIVARIATE PERCENTAGE CROSSTABULATION OF TASK FORCE**  
**CHARACTERISTICS BY PERCEIVED SIZE OF THE GANG PROBLEM**

	<i>Gang problem remained the same or increased</i>	<i>Gang problem decreased</i>	<i>(N)</i>	<i>Chi-square</i>
<b>Does the gang task force have a mission statement?</b>				7.323**
No	71.1	28.9	90	
Yes	51.6	48.4	93	
Total	112	71	183	
<b>Does the task force have an organizational chart?</b>				0.383
No	60.7	39.3	140	
Yes	65.9	34.1	44	
Total	114	70	184	
<b>How many task force offices are there?</b>				0.071
One	61.4	38.6	132	
More than one	59.3	40.7	59	
Total	116	75	191	
<b>Where is the gang task force office?</b>				1.020
In another agency	65.5	34.5	84	
Own location	58.3	41.7	103	
Total	115	72	187	
<b>How many participants have a desk at the task force?</b>				1.544
None	52.8	47.2	36	
Some to many	61.8	38.2	55	
All	64.6	35.4	96	

(Cont'd)

Total	115	72	187	
<b>Did gang definitions exist in legislation?</b>				0.558
No	57.8	42.2	64	
Yes	63.4	36.6	123	
Total	115	72	187	
<b>Are there enhanced penalties for committing a gang crime?</b>				1.151
No	55.7	44.3	61	
Yes	63.9	36.1	122	
Total	112	71	183	
<b>Does the gang task force provide gang training?</b>				2.424
No	71.8	28.2	39	
Yes	58.2	41.8	153	
Total	117	75	192	
<b>How many agency participants are there?</b>				0.857
Less than 5	64.0	36.0	75	
5-9	61.6	38.4	73	
More than 10	55.6	44.4	45	
Total	118	75	193	
<b>How many individual participants are there?</b>				0.280
5 or fewer	58.3	41.7	24	
6-10	59.6	40.4	52	
11-20	61.5	38.5	52	
21-40	61.5	38.5	26	
More than 41	64.1	35.9	39	
Total	118	75	193	
<b>Is a probation agency involved?</b>				0.124
No	63.5	36.5	85	
Yes	60.8	39.2	74	
Total	99	60	159	
<b>Is a correctional facility involved?</b>				0.120
No	61.8	38.2	68	
Yes	64.8	35.2	54	
Total	77	45	122	
<b>Is a prosecutor involved?</b>				0.280
No	60.0	40.0	45	
Yes	64.7	35.3	85	
Total	82	48	130	
<b>Is a school involved?</b>				3.143 <sup>+</sup>
No	65.3	34.7	118	
Yes	50.9	49.1	53	
Total	104	67	171	
<b>Is a faith-based group involved?</b>				5.964*
No	65.7	34.3	143	
Yes	36.8	63.2	19	
Total	101	61	162	
<b>Is a community group involved?</b>				2.709 <sup>+</sup>
No	64.1	35.9	131	
Yes	48.5	51.5	33	
Total	100	64	164	
<b>Do you ever communicate with the media?</b>				0.025
No	61.6	38.4	73	

(Cont'd)

Yes	60.5	39.5	119	
Total	117	75	192	
<b>Do you ever communicate with politicians?</b>				0.594
No	64.7	35.3	68	
Yes	59.0	41.0	122	
Total	116	74	190	

NOTES: Table displays row percentages. <sup>+</sup>p<.10 \*p<.05 \*\*p<.01 \*\*\*p<.001

**TABLE 6.6**  
**PREDICTORS OF PERCEPTIONS OF THE SIZE OF THE GANG PROBLEM**  
**(LOGISTIC REGRESSION)**

	<i>B</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
Mission	0.765* (0.358)	2.150
School participation	0.207 (0.530)	1.229
Faith-based group participation	1.744* (0.834)	5.718
Community group participation	-0.904 (0.757)	0.405
Constant	-1.020*** (0.283)	0.361
-2 Log Likelihood	189.764	
$\chi^2$ , df (vs. intercept only)	11.351*, 4	
(N)	(152)	

NOTES: \*p<.05 \*\*p<.01 \*\*\*p<.001 Standard errors in parentheses.

**TABLE 6.7**  
**BIVARIATE PERCENTAGE CROSSTABULATION OF TASK FORCE**  
**CHARACTERISTICS BY RELATIONSHIP WITH PARTICIPATING AGENCIES**

	<i>Relationships remained the same or improved a little</i>	<i>Relationships greatly improved</i>	(N)	<i>Chi-square</i>
<b>Does the gang task force have a mission statement?</b>				9.701**
No	37.4	62.6	91	
Yes	17.0	83.0	94	
Total	50	135	185	
<b>Does the task force have an organizational chart?</b>				2.854 <sup>+</sup>
No	30.7	69.3	140	
Yes	17.8	82.2	45	
Total	51	134	185	
<b>How many task force offices are there?</b>				0.008
One	26.5	73.5	132	
More than one	27.1	72.9	59	
Total	51	140	191	
<b>Where is the gang task force office?</b>				8.579**
In another agency	37.3	62.7	83	

(Cont'd)

Own location	18.3	81.7	104	
Total	50	137	187	
<b>How many participants have a desk at the task force?</b>				10.232**
None	47.2	52.8	36	
Some to many	22.2	77.8	54	
All	20.6	79.4	97	
Total	49	138	187	
<b>Did gang definitions exist in legislation?</b>				0.000
No	26.6	73.4	64	
Yes	26.6	73.4	124	
Total	50	138	188	
<b>Are there enhanced penalties for committing a gang crime?</b>				0.308
No	24.6	75.4	61	
Yes	28.5	71.5	123	
Total	50	134	184	
<b>Does the gang task force provide gang training?</b>				1.270
No	34.2	65.8	38	
Yes	25.2	74.8	155	
Total	52	141	193	
<b>How many agency participants are there?</b>				1.447
Less than 5	26.3	73.7	76	
5-9	23.3	76.7	73	
More than 10	33.3	66.7	45	
Total	52	142	194	
<b>How many individual participants are there?</b>				5.282
5 or fewer	25.0	75.0	24	
6-10	32.7	67.3	52	
11-20	17.3	82.7	52	
21-40	22.2	77.8	27	
More than 41	35.9	64.1	39	
Total	52	142	194	
<b>Is a probation agency involved?</b>				0.002
No	23.3	76.7	86	
Yes	23.0	77.0	74	
Total	37	123	160	
<b>Is a correctional facility involved?</b>				0.554
No	22.1	77.9	68	
Yes	16.7	83.3	54	
Total	24	98	122	
<b>Is a prosecutor involved?</b>				0.164
No	19.6	80.4	46	
Yes	22.6	77.4	84	
Total	28	102	130	
<b>Is a school involved?</b>				6.599**
No	20.3	79.7	118	
Yes	38.9	61.1	54	
Total	45	127	172	
<b>Is a faith-based group involved?</b>				5.247*
No	22.9	77.1	144	
Yes	47.4	52.6	19	
Total	42	121	163	

(Cont'd)

<b>Is a community group involved?</b>				5.238*
No	22.7	77.3	132	
Yes	42.4	57.6	33	
Total	44	121	165	
<b>Do you ever communicate with the media?</b>				0.012
No	27.4	72.6	73	
Yes	26.7	73.3	120	
Total	52	141	193	
<b>Do you ever communicate with politicians?</b>				0.030
No	26.5	73.5	68	
Yes	27.6	72.4	123	
Total	52	139	191	

NOTES: Table displays row percentages. <sup>+</sup>*p*<.10 \**p*<.05 \*\**p*<.01 \*\*\**p*<.001

**TABLE 6.8**  
**PREDICTORS OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARTICIPATING AGENCIES**  
**(LOGISTIC REGRESSION)**

	<i>B</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
Mission	1.263* (0.525)	3.535
Organizational chart	0.439 (0.594)	1.550
Own office location	0.760 <sup>+</sup> (0.431)	2.139
Desk: Some to many vs. None	0.847 (0.594)	2.333
Desk: All vs. None	0.439 (0.570)	1.552
School participation	-0.759 (0.629)	0.468
Faith-based group participation	-0.312 (0.918)	0.732
Community group participation	-0.755 (0.864)	0.470
Constant	0.016 (0.527)	1.016
-2 Log Likelihood	135.793	
$\chi^2$ , df (vs. intercept only)	27.122***, 8	
(N)	(142)	

NOTES: <sup>+</sup>*p*<.10 \**p*<.05 \*\**p*<.01 \*\*\**p*<.001 Standard errors in parentheses.

**TABLE 6.9**  
**BIVARIATE PERCENTAGE CROSSTABULATION OF TASK FORCE**  
**CHARACTERISTICS BY RELATIONSHIP WITH NON-PARTICIPATING AGENCIES**

	<i>Relationships remained the same or improved a little</i>	<i>Relationships greatly improved</i>	<i>(N)</i>	<i>Chi-square</i>
<b>Does the gang task force have a mission statement?</b>				8.867**
No	65.9	34.1	91	
Yes	44.1	55.9	93	
Total	101	83	184	
<b>Does the task force have an organizational chart?</b>				2.625
No	57.1	42.9	140	
Yes	43.2	56.8	44	
Total	99	85	184	
<b>How many task force offices are there?</b>				0.013
One	53.4	46.6	131	
More than one	52.5	47.5	59	
Total	101	89	190	
<b>Where is the gang task force office?</b>				1.042
In another agency	60.5	39.5	38	
Own location	51.3	48.7	154	
Total	102	90	192	
<b>How many participants have a desk at the task force?</b>				10.232**
None	47.2	52.8	36	
Some to many	22.2	77.8	54	
All	20.6	79.4	97	
Total	49	138	187	
<b>Did gang definitions exist in legislation?</b>				1.277
No	60.3	39.7	63	
Yes	51.6	48.4	124	
Total	102	85	187	
<b>Are there enhanced penalties for committing a gang crime?</b>				0.099
No	52.5	47.5	61	
Yes	54.9	45.1	122	
Total	99	84	183	
<b>Does the gang task force provide gang training?</b>				1.270
No	34.2	65.8	38	
Yes	25.2	74.8	155	
Total	52	141	193	
<b>How many agency participants are there?</b>				0.887
Less than 5	57.3	42.7	75	
5-9	52.1	47.9	73	
More than 10	48.9	51.1	45	
Total	103	90	193	
<b>How many individual participants are there?</b>				4.213
5 or fewer	56.5	43.5	23	
6-10	50.0	50.0	52	
11-20	46.2	53.8	52	
21-40	51.9	48.1	27	
More than 41	66.7	33.3	39	

*(Cont'd)*

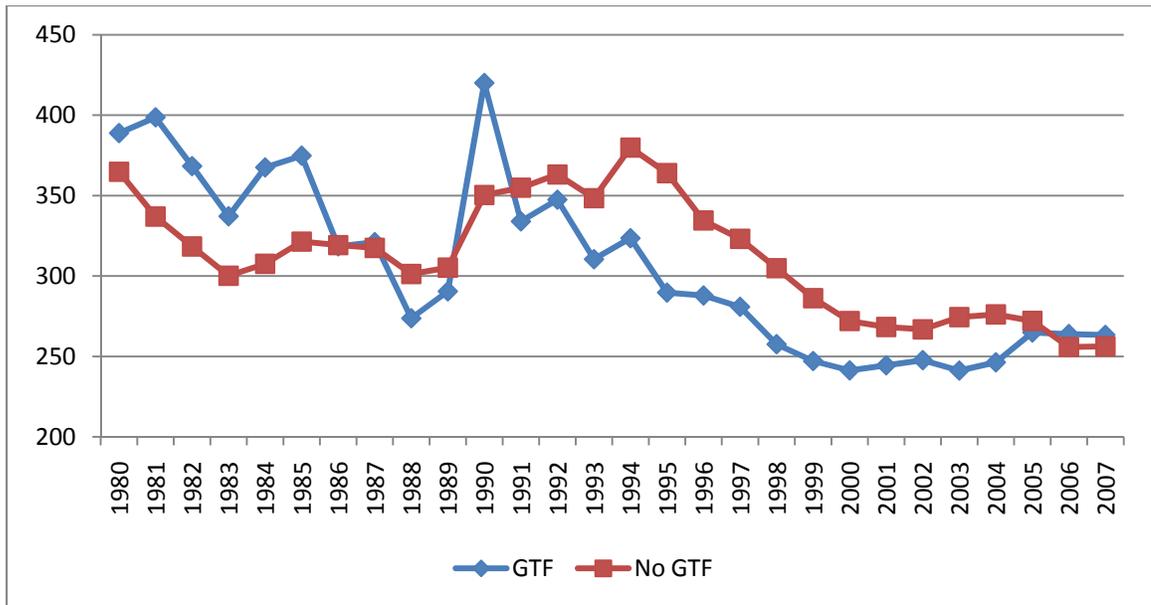
Total	103	90	193	
<b>Is a probation agency involved?</b>				0.850
No	48.8	51.2	86	
Yes	56.2	43.8	73	
Total	83	76	159	
<b>Is a correctional facility involved?</b>				0.237
No	50.7	49.3	67	
Yes	46.3	53.7	54	
Total	59	62	121	
<b>Is a prosecutor involved?</b>				0.062
No	48.9	51.1	45	
Yes	51.2	48.8	84	
Total	65	64	129	
<b>Is a school involved?</b>				0.522
No	52.5	47.5	118	
Yes	58.5	41.5	53	
Total	93	78	171	
<b>Is a faith-based group involved?</b>				0.877
No	51.7	48.3	143	
Yes	63.2	36.8	19	
Total	86	76	162	
<b>Is a community group involved?</b>				0.037
No	52.7	47.3	131	
Yes	54.5	45.5	33	
Total	87	77	164	
<b>Do you ever communicate with the media?</b>				0.004
No	53.4	46.6	73	
Yes	52.9	47.1	119	
Total	102	90	192	
<b>Do you ever communicate with politicians?</b>				0.206
No	55.9	44.1	68	
Yes	52.5	47.5	122	
Total	102	88	190	

NOTES: Table displays row percentages. \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

**TABLE 6.10**  
**PREDICTORS OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH NON-PARTICIPATING AGENCIES**  
**(LOGISTIC REGRESSION)**

	<i>B</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
Mission	0.812* (0.321)	2.252
Desk: Some to many vs. None	0.745 (0.491)	2.107
Desk: All vs. None	0.959* (0.451)	2.609
Constant	-1.356*** (0.407)	0.258
-2 Log Likelihood	228.772	
$\chi^2$ , df (vs. intercept only)	14.558**, 3	
(N)	(177)	

NOTES: \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$  Standard errors in parentheses.



**FIGURE 6.3 – TOTAL JUVENILE CRIME RATE IN METROPOLITAN AREAS WITH AND WITHOUT A GANG TASK FORCE, 1980-2007**

**TABLE 6.11 – TOTAL JUVENILE CRIME RATE IN METROPOLITAN AREAS TWO YEARS PRIOR TO AND TWO YEARS AFTER GANG TASK FORCE FORMATION**

<i>Metropolitan Area</i>	<i>Total Juvenile Crime Rate 2 Years Pre-</i>	<i>Year of Task Force Formation</i>	<i>Total Juvenile Crime Rate 2 Years Post-</i>	<i>Difference in Juvenile Crime Rate</i>	<i>Percent Change</i>
Akron, OH	106.35	1995	124.48	18.12	0.17
Albany, NY	119.29	2004	76.07	-43.23	-0.36
Albuquerque, NM	384.14	1990	463.37	79.23	0.21
Atlanta, GA	224.79	1998	127.36	-97.43	-0.43
Atlantic City, NJ	477.49	2000	382.8	-94.69	-0.20
Austin, TX	417.81	1994	211.07	-206.75	-0.49
Baton Rouge, LA	411.69	1999	298.15	-113.53	-0.28
Biloxi, MS	217.95	1995	154.21	-63.74	-0.29
Boise City, ID	419.75	2005	331.44	-88.31	-0.21
Boston, MA	119.46	1997	118.91	-0.55	-0.005
Charlotte, NC	275.57	2005	266.85	-8.72	-0.03
Chattanooga, TN	79.5	1996	104.47	24.96	0.31
Cleveland, OH	183.36	1990	278.91	95.55	0.52
Columbia, SC	326.63	2000	149.7	-176.93	-0.54
Corpus Christi, TX	462.8	1996	453.81	-8.99	-0.02
Dallas, TX	333.91	1989	441.12	107.21	0.32
Davenport, IA	177.45	1994	289.13	111.68	0.63
Denver, CO	428.17	1993	261.78	-166.39	-0.39
Detroit, MI	122.91	2005	155.33	32.42	0.26
Duluth, MN	577.97	1997	284.86	-293.12	-0.51
El Paso, TX	328.83	1996	272.99	-55.83	-0.17
Fresno, CA	531.72	1997	353.02	-178.7	-0.34
Hagerstown, MD	602.52	2005	439.79	-162.74	-0.27
Houston, TX	262.37	1999	208.23	-54.13	-0.21
Indianapolis, IN	260.54	1997	162.91	-97.63	-0.37
Kansas City, MO	403.33	1993	278.73	-124.6	-0.31
Knoxville, TN	47.69	1991	39.72	-7.98	-0.18
Lake Charles, LA	209.67	2002	144.32	-65.35	-0.31
Las Cruces, NM	304.11	2004	507.95	203.84	0.67
Little Rock, AR	226.15	1992	276.25	50.1	0.22
Lubbock, TX	292.17	2005	288.81	-3.36	-0.01
Lynchburg, VA	175.99	2005	125.12	-50.88	-0.29
Madison, WI	483.3	1995	440.42	-42.89	-0.09
Mansfield, OH	199.69	1986	113.17	-86.52	-0.43
Memphis, TN	236.5	1997	196.97	-39.53	-0.17
Milwaukee, WI	346.47	1998	272.51	-73.96	-0.21
Minneapolis, MN	434.16	1997	290.05	-144.11	-0.33

*Monroe, LA	191.85	2005	473.71	281.85	1.47
Nashville, TN	208.36	2004	243.2	34.84	0.17
New Haven, CT	543.52	1990	372.46	-171.05	-0.31
New Orleans, LA	344.32	1999	317.02	-27.3	-0.08
New York, NY	68.93	1997	45.55	-23.37	-0.34
Oklahoma City, OK	197.41	2005	185.84	-11.56	-0.06
Omaha, NE	439.09	2005	320.03	-119.06	-0.27
Philadelphia, PA	222.72	2001	166.74	-55.98	-0.25
Phoenix, AZ	415.29	1992	401.08	-14.21	-0.03
Pittsburgh, PA	128.37	1997	109.84	-18.53	-0.14
Portland, OR	263.96	1989	336.36	72.4	0.27
Redding, CA	403.87	2004	231.69	-172.19	-0.43
Reno, NV	466.78	2001	322.35	-144.43	-0.31
Richmond, VA	380.89	2005	353.61	-27.28	-0.07
Riverside, CA	201.83	2002	168.61	-33.22	-0.16
Sacramento, CA	330.11	1991	273.98	-56.13	-0.17
Saginaw, MI	202.36	2003	142.75	-59.61	-0.29
*Salem, OR	1.5	1999	0.7	-0.8	-0.53
Salinas, CA	208.03	2005	331.97	123.94	0.60
Salt Lake City, UT	957.61	1990	1149.04	191.44	0.20
San Antonio, TX	162.56	1995	209.21	46.65	0.29
San Diego, CA	236.66	1992	245.99	9.33	0.04
San Francisco, CA	130.13	1992	125.22	-4.91	-0.04
San Jose, CA	266.52	1991	267.81	1.29	0.005
Santa Rosa, CA	277.06	1997	204.81	-72.26	-0.26
Scranton, PA	99.63	2005	54.92	-44.71	-0.45
Tacoma, WA	351.86	2003	264.26	-87.6	-0.25
Tampa, FL	412.12	2003	449.56	37.44	0.09
Toledo, OH	277.45	1993	242.05	-35.4	-0.13
Tucson, AZ	563.11	1994	485.4	-77.71	-0.14
Tulsa, OK	361.83	1996	350.18	-11.65	-0.03
Tyler, TX	418.88	2005	200.45	-218.43	-0.52
Ventura, CA	243.12	1989	234.41	-8.71	-0.04
Washington, DC	252.74	1999	160.22	-92.52	-0.37
West Palm Beach, FL	303.83	2005	234.32	-69.5	-0.23
Williamsport, PA	246.92	2005	230.48	-16.44	-0.07
Worcester, MA	146.05	1991	230.67	84.62	0.58
*Youngstown, OH	13.81	1996	114.63	100.82	7.30

NOTES: Average difference is -33.57.

\*Average difference excluding outliers is -40.27.

**TABLE 6.12**  
**PREDICTORS OF GANG TASK FORCE EFFECTIVENESS**  
**(MIXED MODEL ANALYSIS)**

	<i>Total Juvenile Crime Rate</i>	<i>Juvenile Homicide Rate</i>	<i>Juvenile Robbery with a Gun Rate</i>	<i>Juvenile Assault with a Gun Rate</i>	<i>Juvenile Auto Theft Rate</i>
<b>Fixed Effects</b>					
Task Force Present	-56.08*** (5.31)	-0.17*** (0.02)	-0.36*** (0.08)	-1.06*** (0.15)	-5.10*** (0.36)
Midwest (vs. West)	-64.79 (40.48)	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.31 (0.35)	-1.59* (0.62)	-0.38 (2.03)
Northeast (vs. West)	-151.30** (52.22)	-0.15 (0.08)	-0.57 (0.45)	-3.21*** (0.79)	-4.10 (2.61)
South (vs. West)	-120.77** (41.99)	-0.003 (0.07)	-0.61 (0.39)	-1.13 (0.68)	-3.89 (2.18)
Percent Black	3.43* (1.46)	0.01*** (0.003)	0.10*** (0.01)	0.10*** (0.03)	0.21* (0.08)
Percent in Poverty	-0.79 (1.87)	0.01 (0.005)	0.02 (0.02)	0.11* (0.04)	0.25* (0.12)
Percent Voting Democrat	0.50 (0.47)	0.01*** (0.002)	0.07*** (0.01)	0.16*** (0.01)	0.38*** (0.03)
Intercept	351.0*** (28.90)	0.25*** (0.05)	1.75*** (0.26)	3.83*** (0.46)	10.66*** (1.47)
<b>Random Effects</b>					
Metropolitan Area	18948.24*** (3103.26)	0.04*** (0.007)	1.30*** (0.21)	4.01*** (0.67)	45.67*** (7.60)
-2 Log Likelihood	29994.24	2598.55	9663.91	12587.25	16945.97
BIC statistic	30009.83	2614.13	9679.50	12602.84	16961.56
N (Metropolitan Areas, total observations)	(98, 2435)	(98, 2435)	(98, 2435)	(98, 2435)	(98, 2435)

NOTES: \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$  Standard errors in parentheses. Percent Black, percent in poverty and percent voting Democrat are centered at the mean.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix B. Cover Letter



## MINNESOTA GANG STRIKE FORCE

Office of the Statewide Commander

Date

Commander  
Task Force  
Street Address  
City, State

Re: Study of Gang Task Forces

Dear Commander:

Enclosed please find a questionnaire. It will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The questionnaire asks you details about your gang task force. All responses are confidential.

This national survey of gang task forces explores (1) why gang task forces form, (2) the structure of gang task forces, and (3) the amount of task force activity during an average month. With support from the Minnesota Gang Strike Force, this study is being conducted as my doctoral dissertation at the University of Minnesota.

Please take a few minutes to complete the survey and send it back in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope by \_\_\_\_\_. Also, with our compliments for participating in this study, please find a patch from the Minnesota Gang Strike Force.

If you have any questions, or to request the survey results, please call me at \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you for your participation.

Best Regards,  
Julie Barrows

*655 West County Road E – Shoreview, Minnesota 55126  
Phone 651-917-4805 – Fax 651-917-4813*

## Appendix C. Survey Instrument

### Survey of Gang Task Forces

Gang programs come in many forms. Some of the questions may not pertain to your program. Please answer to the best of your ability, skipping any irrelevant questions. Please mark your answers as clearly as possible by circling the appropriate response or filling in the blank.

Please return the survey as soon as possible. I look forward to your response. Thank you!

---

#### Preliminary Questions

The first set of questions seeks to understand the general structure of your gang program.

1. Does your program prevent, intervene in, or suppress criminal gang activity?

- a) **Prevent**
- b) **Intervene in**
- c) **Suppress**
- d) **None of the above**

2. Do you consider your program a gang task force?

- a) **Yes**
- b) **No**

3. How many agencies participate in your program?

- a) **1**
- b) **2**
- c) **3**
- d) **4**
- e) **5 or more**

4. Is at least one of them a police agency?

- a) **Yes**
- b) **No**

5. Is your program multi-jurisdictional?

- a) **Yes**
- b) **No**

6. What database do you use to collect and maintain gang intelligence or gang information?

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) **We don't collect gang intelligence or gang information**

**Formation Questions**

The next set of questions is designed to uncover how your gang program came about.

7. When was the gang program created?

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
**Month                      Year**

8. I'm going to list a number of reasons why a gang program would form. For each item please indicate whether the reason was not at all influential, not very influential, somewhat influential or very influential. (Please indicate your answer by placing an "X" in the appropriate box.)

	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Not very</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>Very</b>
<b>Political pressure</b>					
<b>Media attention</b>					
<b>High profile gang case</b>					
<b>Increase in gang crime</b>					
<b>Federal initiative</b>					
<b>State initiative</b>					
<b>Other _____</b>					

9. What is the primary source of funding for your program?

- a) **Federal funding**
- b) **State funding**
- c) **Fund-raising efforts**
- d) **Private donors**
- e) **Funding from participating agencies**
- f) **Other \_\_\_\_\_**

10. Do you have a mission statement?

- a) **Yes                      - If yes, please attach your mission statement.**
- b) **No**

11. Did formal definitions of gang members or gang-related crimes exist in legislation prior to formation of the program?

- a) **Yes**
- b) **No**        - **If no, skip to question 13.**

12. Did those definitions change after implementation?

- a) **Yes**
- b) **No**

13. Do you have enhanced penalties for committing a gang-related crime?

- a) **Yes**
- b) **No**

**Please attach any relevant legislation such as your definition of gang, gang member, gang crime, or law(s) governing criminal gang activity.**



**Network Structure Questions**

The next set of questions is intended to understand the working conditions and relationships between program participants.

14. How many office locations does your program have?

- a) **One**
- b) **Two**
- c) **Three**
- d) **Four**
- e) **Five**
- f) **Six or more**

15. Please answer this question for the office location in which you presently sit.

Does the program have its own office or is it located within another agency?

- a) **Own location**        - **If own location, skip to question 17.**
- b) **Another agency**

16. If you're located in another agency, in which agency is the program located?

- a) **Police department**
- b) **County sheriff's office**
- c) **State law enforcement agency**
- d) **Federal law enforcement agency**
- e) **School**
- f) **Privately owned building**
- g) **Other** \_\_\_\_\_





21. Do you have a formal organizational chart?

a) Yes - If yes, please attach your organizational chart.

b) No

**\*It is not necessary to include any person's name on the chart.**

22. Please indicate by circling whether you strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree with the following statements.

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>Our program operates in a strict hierarchical fashion, much like a para-military organization.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>All participants frequently communicate with all other participants.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Communication is excellent with agencies outside the program.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>There is little stability in the program because the agents are often called back to their home agency.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Rather than being very collaborative, the program is dominated by one agency.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Relationships between participants are strong and intense.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Jurisdictional, or "turf," issues negatively affect our efforts.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

23. On average, how often do you communicate with other participants?

- a) **Never**
- b) **Less than once a week**
- c) **One or two times a week**
- d) **Three or four times a week**
- e) **Five or more times a week**
- f)

24. On average, how often would you estimate that participants communicate with each other?

- a) **Never**
- b) **Less than once a week**
- c) **One or two times a week**
- d) **Three or four times a week**
- e) **Five or more times a week**

25. On average, how often does anyone involved in your program communicate with other, non-participating agencies?

- a) **Never**
- b) **Less than once a week**
- c) **One or two times a week**
- d) **Three or four times a week**
- e) **Five or more times a week**

26. Please indicate by placing an “X” in the box as to whether the following agencies participate in your gang program and how often, on average, your program communicates with that agency.

	<i>Participation</i>			<i>Communication</i>				
	Participant	Non-participant		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
City police								
County sheriff								
State police								
Federal law enforcement								
County probation								
Federal probation								
City jail								
County jail								
State correctional facility								
Federal correctional facility								
City prosecutor								
County prosecutor								
State prosecutor								
Federal prosecutor								
School								
Faith-based group								
Community group								
Other _____								
Other _____								
Other _____								

27. How many television or newspaper reporters or other media personnel do you know?

- a) None
- b) One or two
- c) A few
- d) Many

28. On average, how often do you communicate with any of these reporters?

- a) Never
- b) Less than once a week
- c) One or two times a week
- d) Three or four times a week
- e) Five or more times a week

29. How many local politicians or other influential public figures do you know?

- a) **None**
- b) **One or two**
- c) **A few**
- d) **Many**

30. On average, how often do you communicate with any of these public figures?

- a) **Never**
- b) **Less than once a week**
- c) **One or two times a week**
- d) **Three or four times a week**
- e) **Five or more times a week**

31. How often do your agents attend gang training?

- a) **Never**
- b) **Less than once a year**
- c) **Once a year**
- d) **A couple times a year**
- e) **Once a month**
- f) **A couple times a month or more**

32. Do your agents provide gang training?

- a) **Yes**
- b) **No**      - If no, skip to question 35.

33. If yes, to whom do your agents provide gang training? (Circle all that apply)

- a) **Schools**
- b) **Other law enforcement agencies**
- c) **Other attorneys' offices**
- d) **Gang investigators' associations**
- e) **Community groups or concerned citizens**
- f) **Other**\_\_\_\_\_

34. How often do your agents provide gang training?

- a) **Never**
- b) **Less than once a year**
- c) **Once a year**
- d) **A couple times a year**
- e) **Once a month**
- f) **A couple times a month or more**

---

### **Monthly Activities Questions**

The final section deals with the average monthly activities of your gang program.

35. How many search warrants are executed in an average month?

- a) **0**
- b) **1-3**
- c) **4-6**
- d) **7 or more**

36. How many arrests are made in an average month?

- a) **0**
- b) **1-4**
- c) **5-9**
- d) **10-14**
- e) **15-19**
- f) **20-24**
- g) **25-29**
- h) **30 or more**

37. What percentage of arrests results in convictions?

- a) **Less than 25%**
- b) **26-50%**
- c) **51-75%**
- d) **More than 75%**

38. How many guns are seized in an average month?

- a) **0**
- b) **1-4**
- c) **5-9**
- d) **10-14**
- e) **15-19**
- f) **20-24**
- g) **25-29**
- h) **30 or more**

39. What type and quantity of narcotics are seized in an average month?

<u>Type</u>	<u>Kilograms</u>	<u>Pounds</u>	<u>Ounces</u>	<u>Grams</u>	<u>Doses/Pills</u>
Marijuana	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Cocaine	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Crack	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Methamphetamine	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Heroin/Opiates	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
LSD	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Ecstasy	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

40. How much cash is seized in an average month?

- a) \$0
- b) \$1.00 - \$499.99
- c) \$500.00 - \$999.99
- d) \$1,000.00 - \$1,999.99
- e) \$2,000.00 - \$4,999.99
- f) \$5,000.00 - \$9,999.99
- g) \$10,000.00 - \$19,999.99
- h) \$20,000.00 - \$49,999.99
- i) \$50,000.00 or more

41. What is the dollar value of other seizures not already mentioned in an average month?

- a) \$0
- b) \$1.00 - \$499.99
- c) \$500.00 - \$999.99
- d) \$1,000.00 - \$1,999.99
- e) \$2,000.00 - \$4,999.99
- f) \$5,000.00 - \$9,999.99
- g) \$10,000.00 - \$19,999.99
- h) \$20,000.00 - \$49,999.99
- i) \$50,000.00 or more

42. How many gang members are referred to prevention or intervention programs in an average month?

- a) 0
- b) 1-9
- c) 10-19
- d) 20-29
- e) 30 or more

43. In your opinion, what was the size of the gang problem in your jurisdiction prior to the formation of your gang program?

- a) **No gang problem**
- b) **Small gang problem**
- c) **Average gang problem**
- d) **Large gang problem**

44. In your opinion, compared to before the existence of the gang program, what is the size of the gang problem in your jurisdiction now?

- a) **Less than before**
- b) **Same as before**
- c) **More than before**

45. In general, do you believe your agents have enhanced relationships with *participating* agencies since formation?

- a) **Relationships have worsened**
- b) **Relationships have stayed the same**
- c) **Relationships have improved a little**
- d) **Relationships have greatly improved**

46. In general, do you believe your agents have enhanced relationships with *non-participating* agencies since formation?

- a) **Relationships have worsened**
- b) **Relationships have stayed the same**
- c) **Relationships have improved a little**
- d) **Relationships have greatly improved**

47. How many accolades or awards from neighborhood residents, community organizations, schools, the media, political figures or anyone else has the gang program received?

- a) **None**
- b) **A few**
- c) **A moderate amount**
- d) **Many**

48. Overall, how effective is the gang program in your opinion?

- a) **Not at all effective**
- b) **Somewhat effective**
- c) **Moderately effective**
- d) **Very effective**

49. If you had to guess, how much longer will your gang program continue to exist?

- a) **Less than 6 months**
- b) **6 months to a year**
- c) **1 to 2 years**
- d) **2 to 5 years**
- e) **5 to 10 years**
- f) **10 years or more**

50. In the space below, please feel free to add any comments regarding your gang program or the questions asked in this survey.

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Please remember that your identity and your answers will be kept confidential so that no one will know what answers you provided. However, I would like to include your contact information in a directory of gang task forces. Please fill in the information below.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Name) \_\_\_\_\_ (Title)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Program Name)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Address)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Phone) \_\_\_\_\_ (Fax) \_\_\_\_\_ (Email)

- Please check here if you do NOT want the contact information published in a directory.
- Please check here if you would like a copy of the directory mailed to you.

Please return this questionnaire to Julie Barrows, \_\_\_\_\_ in the self-addressed stamped envelope. Thank you. If you're interested in the survey results, please feel free to contact Julie Barrows at \_\_\_\_\_.

## **Appendix D. Consent Form**

### **Consent Form Gang Task Forces: Formation, Network Structure, and Effectiveness**

You are invited to be in a research study of gang task forces, conducted by Julie Barrows of the Minnesota Gang Strike Force and the University of Minnesota, Department of Sociology. The title of the study is: *Gang Task Forces: Formation, Network Structure, and Effectiveness*. You were selected as a participant because you are the commander, or agent in charge, or an otherwise appropriate person assigned to a gang task force in the United States. I hope to receive participation from every gang task force in the United States. I ask that you read this document and ask any questions you may have by calling me at \_\_\_\_\_ before agreeing to be in the study.

#### **Background Information**

The purpose of this study is to explore (1) why gang task forces form, (2) the structure of gang task forces, and (3) the amount of activity of gang task forces in an average month. In my experience with the Minnesota Gang Strike Force as well as my review of the literature, it is unknown why gang task forces form in particular areas. I'm curious to know whether some areas, or jurisdictions, are more likely to implement a task force than other areas. Also, which agencies or organizations typically participate in gang task forces? Finally, what is the outcome of the collaboration? These questions, and more, are the focus of this study.

#### **Procedure**

If you agree to be in this study, I ask that you complete the attached questionnaire to the best of your ability. The questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes of your time. The questionnaire asks for specific information regarding when and why your task force was created, details of your organization, and how those involved carry out their daily work activities. After completing the questionnaire, please send it back to me in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope.

#### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study**

There is no risk to you if you agree to be in this study. Although there may be no benefit of your participation to you personally, I feel that your participation will benefit our shared knowledge of the gang task force approach to combating criminal gang activity. Determining effectiveness on a national level has important ramifications for policy-makers, criminal justice personnel, and residents of communities with gang problems.

### **Confidentiality**

Your confidentiality will be protected by procedures to ensure that information you give cannot be traced back to you. Your questionnaire will be given a code assigned to your task force just for this project. The only way that code can be linked to your task force is through a form that has your project code number listed next to the name of your task force. That code sheet, which will be kept in a locked file cabinet, is needed because your task force may be selected for a follow-up interview. The code sheet will be destroyed upon completion of data collection. There will then be no way of connecting the name of your task force with any of the information from the questionnaire. The results of this study may be published in a book or scientific journal or presented at scientific meetings, but never in a way that connects you with your particular responses.

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study**

Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota or the Minnesota Gang Strike Force. If you decide to participate, you can refuse to answer any question and you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

### **Contacts and Questions**

The researcher conducting this study is Julie Barrows, former crime analyst with the MN Gang Strike Force and graduate student at the University of Minnesota. If you have questions, you may contact me at \_\_\_\_\_. If you want to talk to someone other than the researcher you may contact:

MN Gang Strike Force Contact: Commander

Phone: 651-917-4805

Advisor Contact: Professor Chris Uggen

Phone: 612-624-4300

University Contact: Research Subjects Advocate Line

Phone: 612-625-1650

You may keep this form for your records.

### **Statement of Consent**

Returning this survey to me indicates your consent to participate in this research.

**Appendix E. Tables of Results Depicted in Figure Form in Chapter 5**

**CHARACTERISTICS OF GANG TASK FORCES**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>Purpose of the Gang Task Force (N=195)</i>			
	Prevent	7	3.6
	Intervene	18	9.2
	Suppress	73	37.4
	Prevent and Intervene	4	2.1
	Prevent and Suppress	6	3.1
	Suppress and Intervene	15	7.7
	All of these	63	32.3
	None of these	9	4.6
<i>Source of Funding (N=196)</i>			
	Federal	90	45.9
	State	19	9.7
	Fund-raising Efforts	2	1.0
	Participating Agencies	41	20.9
	Other	44	22.4
<i>Level of Jurisdiction (N=193)</i>			
	City	32	16.6
	County	53	27.5
	State	19	9.8
	Federal	81	42.0
	Other	8	4.1

**OPINIONS ABOUT GANG TASK FORCE STRUCTURE AND RELATIONSHIPS**

<b>Agree or Disagree</b>	<i>Hierarchical</i>	<i>Dominated by one agency</i>	<i>Turf issues</i>	<i>Little stability</i>	<i>All participants frequently communicate</i>	<i>Strong and intense relationships</i>	<i>Communication with non-participants is excellent</i>
Strongly Disagree	23.2	21.6	31.8	32.6	0.5	0.0	1.5
Disagree	43.3	60.8	53.1	51.9	5.1	12.8	14.4
Agree	23.2	13.9	13.0	13.9	40.8	60.7	48.2
Strongly Agree	10.3	3.6	2.1	1.6	53.6	26.5	35.9
N	194	194	192	187	196	196	195

NOTES: Table displays column percentages.

## **Appendix F. Network Interview Consent Form**

### **Consent Form**

#### **Gang Task Forces: Formation, Network Structure, and Effectiveness**

You are invited to be in a research study of gang task forces, conducted by Julie Barrows of the University of Minnesota, Department of Sociology. The title of the study is: *Gang Task Forces: Formation, Network Structure, and Effectiveness*. You were selected as a participant because you are assigned to a gang task force in the United States.

#### **Background Information**

The purpose of this study is to explore why gang task forces form, which agencies participate, and whether gang task forces are effective as a means to combat criminal gang activity. Your participation is requested to specifically address the network relations among and between task force participants and non-participants.

#### **Procedure**

If you agree to be in this study, I'll ask you a few questions about the Metro Gang Strike Force and your professional relationships with other task force participants and non-participants. The interview will last approximately 10 minutes.

#### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study**

There is no risk to you if you agree to be in this study. Although there may be no benefit of your participation to you personally, I feel that your participation will benefit our shared knowledge of the gang task force approach to combating criminal gang activity. Mapping the network affiliations of task force members will provide new insight into the inner workings of law enforcement relationships. This is valuable knowledge because sociologists and policy makers may be able to discern more (or less) effective networks.

#### **Confidentiality**

Your confidentiality will be protected by procedures to ensure that information you give cannot be traced back to you. My interview notes, which will not contain your full name, will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my home. The notes will be destroyed upon completion of this project. There will be no way of connecting your name with any of the information you provide. The results of this study may be published in a book or scientific journal or presented at scientific meetings, but never in a way that connects you with your particular responses.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study**

Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota or the Metro Gang Strike Force. If you decide to participate, you can refuse to answer any question and you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**Contacts and Questions**

The researcher conducting this study is Julie Barrows, former crime analyst with the MN Gang Strike Force and graduate student at the University of Minnesota. If you have questions, you may contact me at \_\_\_\_\_. If you want to talk to someone other than the researcher you may contact:

Advisor Contact: Professor Chris Uggen

Phone: 612-624-4300

University Contact: Research Subjects Advocate Line

Phone: 612-625-1650

You may keep this form for your records.

**Statement of Consent**

Providing an interview to me indicates your consent to participate in this research.

## Appendix G. Network Interview Form

### Interview Questions

*\* My name is Julie Barrows and I am a former analyst for the Metro Gang Strike Force and I am also a graduate student at the University of Minnesota. You're invited to participate in a study of gang task forces. The study examines why gang task forces form, who participates, and whether gang task forces are effective as a means to combat criminal gang activity. Your participation is voluntary, and I assure you that any information you provide will be kept confidential, as will your identity. Do you consent to this interview?*

1. In your opinion, why was this task force formed?
2. How long do you believe that the task force will last? Why?
3. I'm going to ask you to review a list of individuals at this task force. Please rank on a scale of 0 to 3, the (1) amount of work interaction, (2) quality of work interaction, and (3) quality of social interaction that you have with them. Important: if there is someone not listed who should be, let's add them to the list.

1. For "amount of work interaction," please use the following scale:

- |   |              |  |
|---|--------------|--|
| 0 | – Not at all | (skip to #3 if there is no amount of work interaction) |
| 1 | – Rarely     | (once or twice in a great while)                       |
| 2 | – Sometimes  | (regularly, but not often)                             |
| 3 | – Often      | (multiple times each week)                             |

2. For "quality of work interaction," please use the following scale:

- |   |             |  |
|---|-------------|--|
| 0 | – Poor      | (there is no "meeting of the minds" on work details) |
| 1 | – Fair      |  |
| 2 | – Good      |  |
| 3 | – Excellent | (there is a "meeting of the minds" on work details)  |

3. For "quality of social interaction," please use the following scale:

- |   |                       |  |
|---|-----------------------|--|
| 0 | – Poor / Non-existent |  |
| 1 | – Fair                | (know them only as work acquaintance)                |
| 2 | – Good                | (some communication at personal level)               |
| 3 | – Excellent           | (know them well and speak on a wide range of topics) |

4. Do you feel that your home agency works well with the task force? Explain.
5. Do you think the task force is successful in carrying out its mission? Why?
6. Is there anything else about the task force that you would like to tell me?

Those are all of the questions I have for you. Please remember that your name and answers will be kept completely confidential. Thank you so much for your time.

Call #:

Call#	Agency	Amount of work interaction	Quality of work interaction	Quality of social interaction	Comments
1	1				
2	2				
3	3				
4	3				
5	4				
6	4				
7	2				
8	5				
9	3				
10	6				
11	3				
12	3				
13	4				
14	4				
15	4				
16	2				
17	3				
18	2				
19	2				
20	4				
21	7				
22	8				
23	2				
24	9				
25	4				
26	1				
27	10				
28	11				
29	12				
30	2				
31	3				
32	3				
33	3				
34	13				
	Politician				
	Media Personnel				
	School				
	Community group				