

**PRACTITIONER PERCEPTIONS OF THE TRANSPORTABILITY OF OPERATION
CEASEFIRE TO YOUTH IN GANGS IN THE LOWER MAINLAND OF BRITISH
COLUMBIA**

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Bachelor of Arts, Major in Sociology, 2014

University of British Columbia

GRADUATE THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

In the

School of Criminology and Criminal Justice

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UNIVERSITY OF THE FRASER VALLEY

Winter 2019

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Abstract

Gang violence, now more than ever, is fresh in the minds of British Columbians, politicians, and law enforcement entities. The coming years will see new policies and programs implemented with the aim of reducing gang-related violence, homicides, and related criminal activities. To that end, this research examines Operation Ceasefire, a program used in the United States, gauging practitioner perceptions of its applicability to youth in gangs in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. Using a qualitative methodology, 12 key stakeholders were interviewed, each currently employed in law enforcement capacities in various municipal, provincial, and federally organized gang units. Through garnering frontline responses, this study explored whether local practitioners believe Operation Ceasefire interventions used in Boston and other American cities can be successfully implemented in the Lower Mainland. The results of this research yielded three key perceptions. Firstly, practitioners believe gangs in the Lower Mainland are fundamentally different from gangs in other parts of Canada or the United States as many gang-involved youth come from affluence, are motivated by non-traditional push and pull factors, and engage in cross-jurisdictional criminal activity over large geographic areas. Second, practitioners perceived that the Canadian legal system hinders pulling-levers style approaches, though many identified promising avenues for enforcement. Thirdly, practitioners perceive prevention and intervention activities to be important elements of a gang strategy, in addition to enforcement. These results inform policy, programs, and intervention methods that can reduce gang violence in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia and yield valuable insights into the perceptions of practitioners actively engaged in the policing of gang violence in our communities.

Acknowledgements

For without your support, this project would never have come to fruition.

My Participants

Thank you to the members of the specialized gang units from the Lower Mainland. Your insights are so important. Thank you to all those who shared with me their thoughts. I've immensely valued this peek into your world and the important work you do.

Dr. McCormick

Your support, guidance, and feedback have been invaluable over the past year. I could not have found a better home than at UFV to grow and shape my ambitions. Your patience and attention to detail were a blessing to me. Thank you for all that you did to bring my ideas to the final product I have here today.

Dr. McConnell

The first time we met you told me it would be an enormous mistake to not write a thesis. You believed in me when few others did and helped my budding ideas to flourish. For every hour of valuable time that you dedicated to my success, I am grateful. I will always owe you a beer.

Shaveta Gahunia, Amanda Schenk, & Louise Lathey

I am blessed to be surrounded by intelligent, strong, and driven women. Thank you for challenging me to meet the precedents you set. For every read-through and 'you can do it', I thank you.

My grandfather, Gabor Csaba Juhasz

Your thesis has held a place on my bookshelf for as long as I can remember and I have long-awaited the day when I could place mine next to yours. Thank you for inspiring me.

My love, Cody MacLeod

You are, by far, my biggest supporter. For every dinner you made so I could write, every weekend spent home so I could focus, and all that you gave up so that I could accomplish this dream – I am grateful. Your unending love, patience, and encouragement are so valuable to me.
You're my compass when I'm lost, my anchor when I get tossed.

Dedication

This body of work is dedicated to the victims, families, and communities who needlessly suffer as a result of gang violence.

May we all strive for a better future.



It is far better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.

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List of Abbreviations

BC	British Columbia
CCC	Criminal Code of Canada
CFSEU- BC.....	Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit of British Columbia
FATE.....	Firearms Tracing and Enforcement Program (Ontario)
FOES	Firearms Operations and Enforcement Support
IHIT.....	Integrated Homicide Investigation Team
IGTF.....	Integrated Gang Task Force
NWEST.....	National Weapons Enforcement Support Teams
OCABC.....	Organized Crime Agency of British Columbia
POP.....	Problem Oriented Policing
PTEP	Priority Tactical Enforcement Priority
PVGO	Priority Violent Gang Offender
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
SLO	School Liaison Officer
YCJA	Youth Criminal Justice Act
YOA	Young Offenders Act

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Preamble

Last night I promised you wouldn't die. I am now rescinding that promise.

Last night as I was driving home, I came upon what I thought was a car accident scene. I could hear you yelling for help. I could vaguely see your shape lying on the road in the dark. I saw the cars in front of me turn around and speed away. As I came closer I could see you were lying on your side in a pool of your own blood. When I reached you, you said, "I have been shot. Please help me. I am dying. I can feel it".

You had been shot multiple times. I could see the blood pooling from two wounds in your back and what appeared to be another wound to your right arm. I could hear someone on the sidewalk calling 911. You begged me to help you. You wanted to know that we are not going to leave you there to die in the street alone. I grabbed your shoulder and looked you in the eyes and I promised you that you were not going to die. I meant that promise.

You are in pain, traumatized and at the mercy of strangers. You are begging us to help you. You need this community to save you. We were strangers, together, on a wet road, in the cold, in the dark, in a pool of blood, holding on, waiting for an ambulance.

And they came. Police, Ambulance, someone who seemed to know you. And I stepped back and got out of their way. When I got home I trailed your blood across my floor. I washed it out of my pants, off my shoes, and out of my hair.

This morning I read in the paper that you are alive. The paper also said that the police believe that the shooting was a targeted shooting because you are involved in the drug trade and that you weren't cooperating with the investigation.

Everyone has a moment in their life when they are forced to stop everything and re-evaluate where they are going. This is your moment. Someone wants you dead. If someone could shoot a gun properly, you would be dead now. Your parents would be receiving mourning family and friends this morning. Your mother inconsolable. Your brothers trying to plan your service, choose your coffin, and decide on your final resting place.

But you were given a second chance. So where do you go from here?

If you do not make the right choice, and soon, then you were right all along. You are dying. It's only a matter of time.

*Last night I promised you wouldn't die.
I am now rescinding that promise.
You are worth saving – choose to live.*

**This is a portion of a written response to a real event which took place on Tuesday December 5th, 2017 at a shooting at 148th and 64th in Surrey, British Columbia.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Problem Statement

Gang violence in the Lower Mainland has been a cause of concern for citizens, policy makers, and criminal justice practitioners alike over the past several years. Across the Lower Mainland, various policing agencies have endeavoured to address the problem through prevention and intervention activities. Nevertheless, waves of gang-related violence continue to impact communities, frequently with fatal outcomes. Looking for solutions south of the border, widely adopted programs, such as Operation Ceasefire, show promising effects on reducing gang and gun violence and are worthy of examination. The objective of this research was to analyze practitioner perceptions on the transportability of Operation Ceasefire to the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. Primarily, this study sought to explore whether local law enforcement believe the interventions used in the United States can be successfully implemented in the Lower Mainland.

Defining the “Lower Mainland”

According to Statistics Canada (2018), the Lower Mainland of British Columbia is one of Canada’s fastest changing regions, with an ever-growing population and rapidly evolving economy. The Lower Mainland encompasses Vancouver and its surrounding cities and municipalities, which include New Westminster, North Vancouver, Richmond, Burnaby, Surrey, Coquitlam, White Rock, Langley, Delta, Abbotsford, and Mission (Statistics Canada, 2018). Figure 1, produced by British Columbia Travel and Discovery (n.d.) provides a visual representation of the geographic layout of these cities and municipalities.



**Figure 1.
The Lower
Mainland.
Reprinted
from *Our
BC* by
British
Columbia**

**Travel and Discovery, n.d., retrieved from
http://www.ourbc.com/bc_maps/vancouver_coast/bc_maps_lower_mainland.htm**

As of 2016, the Lower Mainland had a population of 2.8 million dispersed across 5,067 square kilometers, making it the most densely populated region in the country (Statistics Canada, 2017). According to the Ministry of Environment (n.d.), the Lower Mainland contains over 60% of the province's population and includes several metropolitan centres as well as coastal and valley rural areas. The province of British Columbia is also known for its diversity, with over 200 First Nations and varied spoken languages including English, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Punjabi (Province of British Columbia, 2015). According to Statistics Canada (2017), the proportion of male youth aged 15-24 in the Lower Mainland is only slightly higher (6.3%) than the provincial rate (5.9%). The Lower Mainland has a policing structure that consists of seven independent municipal police departments and 12 Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) detachments. There are dedicated gang units in almost each jurisdiction, complemented by the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit of British Columbia (CFSEU-BC), which is a provincial gang task force operated under the Organized Crime Agency of British Columbia (OCA-BC).

Defining “Youth”

While there are many formal and legislative definitions for the term ‘youth’, it is difficult to generate a definitive term using age as the primary criterion (Furstenberg, 2000). In 2017, the

Government of Canada began a review of the impact of this definitional debate on policy, with particular attention to how difficult it can become to define a group both based on age and on its specific problems (e.g. delinquency, gang membership; Furstenburg, 2000). With a particular focus on the differences between adolescence and adulthood, the review drew attention to the challenges of policy development when using a definition based simply on age, without consideration for variance across mental development (Government of Canada, 2017). With respect to legislative definitions, the Government of Canada (2017) acknowledges that the laws represent society's differing expectations for the conduct of youth versus young adults.

The current approach to policing youth varies in Canada. The commencement of adolescence in law is formally marked using the *Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA; 2002)*, which states that youth should be accountable for their criminal actions beginning at the age 12, though held to a lesser degree of criminal responsibility than an adult due to their age and the corresponding perceived lower level of maturity. The *YCJA (2002)* is also characterized by an emphasis on shorter sentences that are primarily focused on rehabilitation, but which also include some elements of deterrence from future criminal behaviour. Another formal transitional milestone is met at the age of 16, whereby youth are considered capable of granting sexual consent under the *Criminal Code of Canada (CCC; 1985)*. Also at the age of 16 youth are permitted to maintain employment without parental consent, though this varies between the provinces and territories. Youth are next afforded the luxury of operating a motor vehicle on their own; though the exact age differs across the provinces and territories, this milestone tends to occur around mid-adolescence (e.g. 16 years old). The next universal benchmark arises at the age of 18 when two very important shifts occur. First, following their 18th birthday, youth transition out of the *YCJA (2002)*, effectively becoming adults whose behaviours are punishable

via the CCC (1985). Next, another gauge of this transition is marked by the minimum age to purchase alcohol, which is set provincially at either 18 or 19 years of age (*Criminal Code of Canada*, 1985). Conversely, Statistics Canada (2011) defines an adult as someone who is 16 years of age or older, a marker used to differentiate between working and non-working populations. The definition of youth also varies across the world. Internationally, the United Nations (2013) Secretariat defines youth as aged 15 to 24, with an understanding that different definitions are used in each member state.

While these formal definitions are necessary, they fail to account for the multitude of factors that influence the complex maturation of youth into adulthood. The strongest advocates for a non-numeric understanding of adolescence come from the disciplines of psychology and sociology, particularly through a life-course approach that acknowledges the non-temporal reality of human development. Dubas, Miller, and Petersen (2003) argued that the field of psychology has influenced research on the passage from youth to adulthood over the past century by helping to define it as a period of life and, consequently, a distinct stage of development. In 1965, Piaget published *The Stages of the Intellectual Development of the Child*, in which he outlined his conceptualization of childhood development. The adolescent stage, which Piaget (1965) referred to as the Formal Operational Stage, is marked by a child's ability to think about thinking, effectively becoming able to develop cognitions based on abstract schema and not simply concrete materials. The stage is marked by developing intellectual capabilities, which is echoed by another seminal psychologist, Erikson (1959). While Erikson's (1959) theory of psychosocial development had eight distinct stages, he placed particular emphasis on the adolescent stages (12 to 18 years old), arguing it was a crucial stage for developing a person's identity. This stage, labeled *Identity vs. Role Confusion*, occurs as individuals search for a sense

of personal identity and develop their personal values, beliefs, and goals (Erikson, 1959).

Erikson (1959) further suggests that this transition from childhood to adulthood is crucial as children become independent and begin to develop their future. In describing this shift, Erikson (1959) says “the adolescent mind is essentially a mind or moratorium, [in] a psychosocial stage between childhood and adulthood, and between the morality learned by the child, and the ethics to be developed by the adult” (p. 128). What Erikson (1959) describes next is the possibility of role confusion or identity crisis, wherein an adolescent may experiment with different lifestyles or may rebel in response to pressures to develop their identity.

From a neurological perspective, brain development throughout adolescence can also impact an individual’s cognitive development. Dahl (2014) argues that emotional and affective systems begin to develop at the onset of puberty, while important cognitive skills such as reasoning, logic, problem solving, and understanding of consequences develop with age and experience. In fact, the maturation of these cognitive skills has been shown to continue even after the adolescent stage (Dahl, 2004; Giedd, 2004; Luna & Sweeny, 2004). As a result, an adolescent may seek to explore sensation seeking and risk-taking behaviour at an earlier age, though they do not possess the regulating cognitions necessary to understand the consequences of those actions (Dahl, 2004).

While helpful, the theories presented above focus primarily on internal influences for development. Another notable approach emerged through the works of Bronfenbrenner (1992) who suggested an ecological perspective, whereby development is influenced by both internal factors (e.g. psychological) and external factors (e.g. family, friends, school). According to ecological theory, children who do not have sufficient relationships in their immediate microsystem, or family of origin, will not develop the tools necessary to explore other parts of

their environment, resulting in what Addison (1992) called deficiencies. These deficiencies, particularly emerging in adolescence, can result in antisocial behaviour, lack of self-discipline, and inability to provide self-direction (Addison, 1992).

Conclusively, a brief foray into the study of development through the field of psychology affords a more dynamic understanding of the transition from childhood to adulthood. This is important, as acknowledged by the Government of Canada (2017), because it requires the redefinition of age categories upon which policy can be based, and the subsequent review of the current policies that, generally, determined the age of 18 to constitute the “boundary between the social realities of adolescence and adulthood” (Paragraph 12). In other words, there needs to be an acknowledgement that adolescence is a dynamic life stage, one not marked by an immediate maturation at the age of 18.

While there are therefore varying definitions for youth across these different contexts, for the purpose of this thesis, which discusses the criminal justice system in both the United States and Canada, youth will be defined as a young person between the ages of 12 and 25. These ages are also commonly when youth first become involved in gangs (Chettleburgh, 2002; Pyrooz & Sweeten, 2015), making it essential to understand how to prevent or intervene at the earliest possible stage before youth become set on this delinquent pathway.

Defining “Gangs”

A true, clear, and comprehensive definition of what constitutes a gang has been an ever-elusive aim long-debated amongst scholars studying the phenomena (Spindler & Bouchard, 2011). In fact, many researchers relent that the word “gang” has different meanings to different people (Esbensen, Winfree, He, & Taylor, 2001; Howell, 1998; Richardson & Kennedy, 2012). The issue is further muddled as it has been used with inconsistency by the media, politicians, and

the public at large. The focus of this section is to establish a working definition of the term “gang” for the purpose of this research, with attention to prior definitions.

Issues with Defining Gangs

The earliest sociological examination of gangs can be traced to Thrasher’s (1927) research in Chicago, Illinois. In his seminal work, Thrasher (1927) identified a link between social settings and gang membership, arguing that gang membership emerged when boys attempted to “create a society for themselves where none adequate to their needs exist[ed]” (Thrasher, 1927, p. 37). Thrasher’s (1927) early definition of a gang was “characterized by the following types of behaviour: meeting face to face, milling, movement through space as a unit, conflict and planning” (p. 57). The collective result of those activities included the “development of tradition, unreflective internal structures, *esprit de corps* [emphasis in original], solidarity, morale, group awareness, and attachment to local territory” (Thrasher, 2013, p.57).

Even early work by Thrasher (1927) recognized the variability of gangs, suggesting that no two gangs are alike. Katz and Jackson (2004) go so far as to liken the definition of gangs to an elusive ‘ghost’. Others, such as Bouchard and Spindler (2010), suggest that the extreme diversity of gang structures makes them drastically different from other organized groups and more challenging to capture in a singular definition. At the onset of his research, Gordon (2000) explains his struggles to find “an accurate and widely accepted” (p.46) definition for ‘gang’ and ‘gang member’, though the challenge appears universal, noting that “similar difficulties are reported consistently in research reports and other literature on gangs, regardless of the location and objective of the research” (p. 46). Another Canadian gang researcher finds similar fault, arguing that the definitional debate distracts from the larger problem, sidelining and marginalizing academic research through an ongoing discussion of what the term ‘gang’ means

(McConnell, 2015). Some researchers go as far as to say that the term ‘gang’ has been emptied of its meaning and that the resulting ambiguity risks being appropriated by political agendas (Richardson & Kennedy, 2001), while others suggest that efforts to define ‘gangs’ are tainted by motivations to gain funding (Hagedorn, 2008; Hobbs, 1997). Still others raise concerns over the difficulties of measuring and documenting gangs as a phenomenon, particularly around pervasiveness of gang activity and the relationships between gang involvement and criminal activity, without consensus by those conducting research (Wortley, 2010). With reference to Operation Ceasefire, even Kennedy (1997) finds:

The experts can’t even agree on what a gang is, can’t predict why one kid will join when another won’t, can’t predict why one gang member will kill and the others won’t, can’t say why one neighborhood has an open drug market and others like it don’t. (p. 214)

With these considerable challenges in mind, the following section will explore definitions proposed by researchers in the past several decades and will establish a working definition for the purpose of this research.

Formal Gang Definitions

Law

The Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary defines gangs as “a group of persons working to unlawful or antisocial ends; esp: a band of antisocial adolescents” (n.d.), a definition that is neither exhaustive nor indicative of the functional use of the term gangs. Formal definitions of gangs have been established both legally and functionally by criminologists. With respect to legal definitions, neither the *YCJA* nor the *CCC* expressly defines gangs. The *CCC*, instead, provides a definition for Organized Crime:

A group, however organized, that (a) is composed of three or more persons in or outside of Canada; and (b) has one of its main purposes or main activities in the facilitation or commission of one of more serious offences that, if committed, would likely result in the direct or indirect receipt of a material benefit, including a financial benefit, by the group or by any of the persons who constitute the group. It does not include a group of persons that forms randomly for the immediate commission of a single offence. (Government of Canada, 1985, p. 315)

The confusion resulting from this lack of delineation between gangs and organized crime has not gone unnoticed (Haunk & Peterke, 2010). At that same time, the blurred lines speak to the related nature of two phenomena and further point to a problematic lack of consensus (Haunk & Peterke, 2010).

Policy & Practice

The Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit - British Columbia (CFSEU-BC) is a valuable resource for understanding the operational definition of a gang from a local law enforcement standpoint. The CFSEU-BC is an organization comprised of both officers and civilians operating across the province of British Columbia with the established aim of working collaboratively alongside local police forces for specified gang-related offences (Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit, 2015). Such activities include investigations into large-quantity drug trafficking, kidnappings, and gang homicide investigations (Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit, 2015). Much like the CCC, CFSEU-BC defines gangs as:

an organized group of three or more, that as one of its main purposes or main activities the facilitation or commission of one or more serious offences, that, if committed, would

likely result in the direct or indirect receipt of a material benefit, including financial benefit, by the group or any one of the persons who constitute the group. (2015, Para 1)

While functionally informative, a further examination of Canadian academic literature lends to a more robust understanding of the definition of gangs.

Spatially Organized Gang Definitions

The first theme that emerged across several definitions was a focus on the geographical constraints and localized spatial characteristics of many gangs. The term ‘street gang’ or ‘street youth’ arose in several definitions, lending to an understanding of gangs that is tied to the spatial areas in which they operate. An example can be provided by Klein and Maxson (2006) who defined street gangs as “any durable, *street oriented* [emphasis added] youth group whose involvement in illegal activities is part of its group identity” (p. 3). Similarly, Knox (2006) developed a five-level typology of gangs, each with a focus on the territorial component of gang activities. More specifically, Knox (2006) conceptualized a range of groups, starting from level-zero to level-four, where level-zero has a neighbourhood-scope while level-four is sophisticated in structure and operation and has an impact across multiple geographic areas. In similar fashion, Miller (1981, as cited in Weisel, 2002) found territorial jurisdiction to be a defining feature of gangs, describing gangs as a:

[s]elf-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* [emphasis added]. (p. 35)

While these geographical definitions may be useful in some jurisdictions, Prowse (2012) suggests that a contemporary conceptualization of gangs in Canada is more accurately described using the term ‘new age’ gangs. More specifically, Prowse (2012) suggests that ‘new age’ gangs are more mobile than earlier descriptions suggest, with activities effectively crossing police jurisdictions and the use of fluid partnerships for financial gain. Similarly, some authors suggest that gangs in B.C. today are far less territory based, instead using complex networks to facilitate the sale of commodities for profit, at times even working alongside other gangs for the sake of economic prosperity (Bouchard, Morselli, Hashimi & Oulette, 2016). At the same time, when compared to gangs observed in Chicago, Los Angeles, London, Toronto, and Hobbema, gangs in B.C. differ significantly in their lack of formal structure, their mobility and fluidity of geographical territory, and recruiting methods that differ from the other cities examined (McConnell, 2015).

Canadian Research Gang Definitions

A typology, as defined by Merriam-Webster, is a study of or analysis or classification based on types or categories (n.d.). While the use of typologies is not new, particularly in academic literature around gangs, Canadian literature is problematically limited (Descormiers, 2013). For that reason, this review will focus exclusively on those typologies developed for and within a Canadian context. As identified by Maxson and Klein (2006), most gang typologies present in two distinct forms; those categorizing primarily based on behaviour and those categorizing primarily based on structure.

Gang typologies first emerged in 1994 in Greater Vancouver (Gordon & Foley, 1998) and have since become a popular way of both defining and delineating between gang groups. Based on a study conducted in 1994, Gordon and Foley (1998) developed distinct categories for

the criminal groups operating in British Columbia, with groups differentiated based on their degree of structure, organization duration, and criminal activities. The six categories established by Gordon and Foley (1998) included: youth movements, youth groups, criminal groups, wanna-be groups, street gangs, and criminal business organizations. Gordon's (2000) later research focused on three of those groups: wanna-be groups, street gangs, and criminal groups. More specifically, Gordon (2000) defined the three in detail, starting with wanna-be groups, which are loosely structured groups who engage in spontaneous social activity and impulsive criminal activity and whose members may be vocal about their membership because they want to be perceived as gang-involved. Next, street gangs are comprised of young people who form a semi-structured organization whose primary purpose is to engage in planned and profitable criminal activity and instrumental violence against other rival street gangs (Gordon, 2000). Finally, Gordon (2000) describes criminal groups as a cluster of friends who form a short-term grouping to commit crime for financial gain and who are often mistakenly referred to as a gang.

Subsequent typological efforts by Mellor, MacRae, and Pauls (2005) similarly attempted to categorize gangs into types, though not without commenting that the definition of a gang was in itself problematic. More specifically, they argued that police, policymakers, and communities, in general, differ in their perceptions of gangs, a challenge that is further complicated given that different jurisdictions have vastly different gang issues that are unique to that particular area (Mellor et al., 2005). Nevertheless, they developed a five-category typology for gangs in Canada, whereby they categorized gang activity by level of organization, group purpose, level of criminal involvement/activities, and outward displays of membership. The first of these, Type A, is a Group of Friends that is interest based and generally does not involve criminal behaviour or pose a threat to a community (Mellor et al., 2005). Next, Type B is a Spontaneous Criminal Activity

Group or Gang that derives power from status and size, and engages in criminal activity that can be described as gratuitous violence or bullying (Mellor et al., 2005). Type C, a Purposive Group or Gang, is a group of people who have come together for a specific purpose, an example of which might include mob violence or thefts, and who exist within a larger group or disband following the execution of that activity (Mellor et al., 2005). Youth Street Groups, Type D, consist of highly visible groups that come together to engage in profitable criminal activity (Mellor et al., 2005). These groups will identify themselves through group branding, such as clothing, names, colours, or tattoos to display membership and who frequently have a clearly defined territory or turf that they occupy and defend (Mellor et al., 2005). Finally, Type E, or Structured Criminal Organizations, are structured and organized criminal networks whose primary purpose is financial gain, which is attained through criminal activities that are severe and pre-meditated, and in which youth are utilized by more experienced adults for specific purposes within the group (Mellor et al., 2005).

Another typology was proposed by Prowse (2012), a member of the Calgary Police Department with over 25 years of experience in policing. She identified only three types, though did pay homage to the emerging consensus of the increasing fluidity of modern gangs in Canada. The first type, the Organized Crime Group, consists of a geographically based group with longstanding relationships and associations who engage in low-risk and high rewards criminal activity (Prowse, 2012). Next, New-Age Gangs were described by Prowse (2012) as being a loose-knit and dynamic group of associates of a group leader's network who can be utilized in the commission of street-based criminal activity at the command of the leader, though who do not hold a long-standing collective identity as a group. Lastly, Action-Set Groups are youthful (generally under the age of 16) unorganized individuals who engage in criminal activity together

occasionally and do not identify as a collective group (Prowse, 2012). Prowse (2012) placed considerable emphasis on the individual's self-perception in relation to the group in addition to their activities to differentiate between the three groups.

Consensus on the Definition of a Gang?

The above typologies are suggestive of the varying conceptualizations of gangs and the challenge of creating a singular, inclusive, universally applicable definition of gangs given their range of structures and purposes. Typologies can be an attractive solution to the challenge of defining what constitutes a gang; however, they remain limited in their utility because there is no single form of gang. Rather, gangs can develop in a variety of forms depending on a myriad of factors including their age, purpose, sense of affiliation or identity, and geographical local (Klein & Maxson, 1996). Furthermore, it is nearly impossible to develop a universal model for Canada because there is no "single theory or definition that can account for the pluralistic or heterogeneous gang/group phenomenon in contemporary Canadian Society" (Matthews, 1999, p. 4). Similarly, Hagedorn (2008) critically likens the endeavour to attempting to create a singular static definition for an amorphous and dynamic phenomenon. In fact, the term gang must be used to describe fluid groups comprised of individuals from various cultural and economic backgrounds (Smith-Moncrieffe, 2013) in a group with infinitely varied behaviours and structures.

In contrast, one of the most inclusive definitions established to date was suggested by Wortley (2010), who defined gangs as

a group of three or more individuals that has existed for at least one month and engaged in criminal activity on a regular basis. Gang-related crime can be conducted within the

group context or by individual gang members in isolation – if such criminal activity, directly or indirectly, benefits the gangs (Para 6).

The strength of this definition lies in the fact that it allows for vast differences in behaviour and structure. Further, it encompasses many different types of gangs with innumerable combinations of characteristics, such as how many members exist and what manner of crime they engage in, as well as descriptors, such distinctive tattoos and symbols. At the same time, it is limiting in the sense that it prescribes a narrow view of the longevity of a group.

A broad definition is perhaps most appropriate when applied to the gang landscape in British Columbia, where it is increasingly recognized that gangs are not explicitly ethnicity based, are not necessarily likely to self-identify or overtly display signs of membership, and frequently engage in enterprise with rival groups for mutual financial benefit (CFSEU, 2015; McConnell, 2015). A term once used for this type of inter-gang collaboration is ‘gang imperialism’, which was first coined by Taylor (1990) to describe linkages made between gangs for financial gain. For that same reason, some have gone as far as to suggest that generalization of gangs should be cautiously undertaken, particularly in B.C. where racial segregation is scarce and the level of poverty seen in the Lower Mainland is vastly different from that which can be seen in the United States (McCuish et al., 2015). Thankfully, some law enforcement organizations recognize this unique and changing landscape, visible in statements presented by the CFSEU-BC on their website (<http://www.cfseu.bc.ca/>). To that end, the CFSEU-BC suggests that alliances and power blocks can be seen forming for the purpose of creating a monopoly on the illicit market, with gangs becoming so enterprise driven that former enemies work together and mid-level gangs have rapidly become more sophisticated than ever seen before (CFSEU-BC, n.d.-a).

For the purpose of this thesis, gangs will be modeled loosely after Wortley's (2010) definition, electing to define gangs as a group of three or more individuals engaged in criminal activity on a regular basis, conducted within the group context or by individuals in isolation for the direct or indirect benefit of the group. This definition was constructed because it is broad and allows for the encompassment of the variety of structures that gangs can take and the multitude of activities that youth can engage in when involved in a gang lifestyle. Further, it provides space for what research, such as that of McConnell (2015), and professional entities, such as CFSEU (n.d.-a), describe as a non-geographically bound, ethnically diverse, and enterprise driven gang landscape.

Chapter 2: Operation Ceasefire

The Emergence of the Problem-Oriented Policing Model

Problem-oriented policing (POP) is a conceptual approach to policing that aims to examine the underlying cause of an issue and create change at the source in order to establish a long-term solution (Goldstein, 2001). In contrast to the more traditional reactive policing approach, the symptoms of an issue are treated as secondary to the cause, with the belief that developing approaches to address the cause will, in turn, address the symptoms (Ratcliffe, 2016). POP, as defined by Ratcliffe (2016), is a bottom-up approach requiring stakeholders to accurately identify an issue. To that end, being truly problem-focused means “attending to the underlying community problems that can help police adopt a preventative approach to crime reduction” (Cohen, Plecas, McCormick, & Peters, 2014, p. 54). The focus is to place value on responses that are preventative in nature and engage the community and private sector partners in identifying and defining the problem when their contributions have the potential to significantly impact the problem (Goldstein, 2001). When used properly, POP has been shown to have positive effects on crime reduction and remains a widely utilized method of policing several decades after its inception (Weisburd, Telep, Hinkle, & Eck, 2010).

The usefulness of POP also lies in the fact that it can be applied to develop tailored approaches at various levels of community problems and at various levels in the police organization (Goldstein, 2001). Further, it has been argued that a POP approach is particularly useful in addressing gang-related issues (e.g., violence, homicides, trafficking) as it emphasizes understanding the causal issue(s) at the community or city level, such as poverty, and tailoring responses that are appropriate to the given context (Braga, 2008; Braga, Kennedy, Waring, 2001; Howell, 2003; Weisburd, Telep, Hinkle & Eck, 2010).

The Pulling Levers Approach

While POP has been useful for addressing a number of police concerns (Weisburd & Eck, 2004), its use in the prevention of gang violence is particularly promising as an intervention approach (Decker, 2002). In particular, the pulling levers strategy, framed as an extension of POP (Eck & Spelman, 1987), consists of policing exercises or activities undertaken to focus criminal justice and social service attention on a select group of offenders with the aim of reducing offending through increasing penalties to enhance deterrence, then offering alternatives to engaging in criminal behaviour (Braga, 2010). With respect to the disruption of gang violence, the approach has included the creation of a working group to scan and analyze the issue, the identification of specific behaviors and key individuals, groups, and behaviours, and the subsequent development of targeted interventions (Kennedy, 1997, 2006). One promising example of a pulling levers POP strategy for gang suppression is Operation Ceasefire.

Operation Ceasefire

Beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Boston experienced an epidemic of youth homicides, with rates increasing 230% between 1987 and 1990 (Kennedy, 1997). With these staggering rates came concern for the fate of Boston's youth and subsequent funding from the National Institute of Justice to examine possible solutions. Operation Ceasefire, at times referred to as the Boston Gun Project, emerged in the era of POP and utilized what has come to be known as the 'pulling levers' intervention strategy. As described by Kennedy (1997), the strategy was based on the concept of selecting elements of identifiable criminal activity (e.g., gun violence) and reducing it by all available levers to "impose cost on offenders" (p.451) by leveraging the vulnerabilities created by their lifestyle choices.

To that end, Operation Ceasefire was an initiative specifically aimed at “taking on a serious, large-scale crime problem: homicide victimization among youth in Boston” (Kennedy, Braga, Piehl & Waring, 2001, p. 1). The central objective of Operation Ceasefire was to reduce homicide victimization among youth in Boston (Kennedy et al., 2001). Within that, three primary goals were identified: (a) reduce gun violence and homicide rates for youth; (b) develop a large-scale POP strategy stemming from inter-agency collaboration; and (c) create an intervention framework that, if successful, could be generalized to other jurisdictions and other problem-solving efforts (Kennedy et al., 2001).

Operation Ceasefire developed from an inter-agency working group tasked with assessing the underlying causes driving youth homicide rates in Boston and developing interventions based on the insights gleaned (Kennedy et al., 2001). The specific interventions employed under Operation Ceasefire consisted of two main techniques. First, a working group of service providers, which included probation officers, parole officers, and community groups, provided gang members with services and assistance as necessary to facilitate their exit from gang life (Kennedy et al., 2001). These practitioners sought to address the underlying causes of gang involvement, while law enforcement addressed the symptoms, such as gun violence (Kennedy et al., 2001). The aim of the working group was to generate interventions that supported the push and pull factors contributing to youth gang involvement, such as lack of employment, community connection, or appropriate role models (Kennedy et al., 2001). They further delivered the explicit message that violent behaviour, and gun violence, in particular, would be met with a swift and powerful response from law enforcement agencies (Kennedy et al., 2001). In fact, the nomenclature of a “promise, not a deal” was used to describe the attention that would follow gang violence in Boston (Kennedy, 1997, p. 451). This messaging was delivered through a

systematic campaign that included: formal meetings with some gangs, visits to juvenile correctional centres to meet with incarcerated youth, school outreach, and individual contact between gang members and police, probation, and parole officers (Kennedy, 1997). It is also important to note that the ‘pulling levers’ strategy functions on what Kennedy (1997) describes as an imposition of cost on offenders, directly based on the vulnerabilities created by their gang-entrenched lifestyles. In that manner, Operation Ceasefire leaned heavily on deterrence theory in that program activities were designed to impact youth’s decisions to engage in gang activities based on increasing the perceived cost of doing so. This strategy was aptly coupled with the strength of interagency collaboration, which allowed for a greater plethora of both sanctions and incentives to either continuing or desisting from gang violence (Kennedy, 1997).

At the same time, police engaged in direct law enforcement intervention against illicit firearms traffickers believed to be supplying youth with guns in an effort to deter gang gun violence (Kennedy et al., 2001). To do so, the working group employed a number of techniques:

1. Expanded the focus of local, state, and federal authorities to include *intrastate* firearms trafficking in Massachusetts (in addition to interstate trafficking);
2. Focused enforcement attention on traffickers of guns with a short time-to-crime interval (time-to-crime interval is the time from the first retail sale to the time the gun is confiscated by the police). The Boston Field Division of the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) set up an in-house tracking system that flagged guns whose traces showed a time-to-crime interval of 18 months or shorter;
3. Focused enforcement attention on the traffickers of guns that were used by the city’s most violent gangs;

4. Attempted to restore serial numbers on confiscated guns to support trafficking investigations; and
5. Supported enforcement priorities through analysis of data generated by the Boston Police Department and ATF's crime gun tracing, and by developing leads from the systematic messaging of the program to gang-affiliated arrestees or those involved in violent crime (Kennedy et al., 2001, p.2)

For the second technique, the portion that came to be known as the "pulling levers" approach, law enforcement targeted gangs engaged in violent behaviour. To do so, they employed the following techniques:

1. Targeted gangs engaged in violent behaviour;
2. Reached out directly to members of the targeted gangs;
3. Delivered an explicit message that violence would not be tolerated; and
4. Backed up that message by 'pulling every lever' legally available (i.e., applying appropriate sanctions from a varied menu of possible law enforcement actions) when violence occurred (Kennedy et al., 2001, p. 2).

While a variety of sanctions and incentives were at the disposal of Operation Ceasefire, many individuals and gangs did not require an intensive deployment of the interventions; in fact, Kennedy et al. (2001) suggested that many required only minimal intervention. Nevertheless, Detective Gary French, who was heavily involved in the project, described four levels of intervention at the disposal of the Youth Violence Strike Force (YVSF), which was the department's gang task-force (Kennedy et al., 2001). These four levels included early messaging to stop the violence, escalating slowly to enforcement and specific deterrence-based actions by the police, followed by large, interagency intervention efforts and, eventually, coordinated

efforts to dismantle and disrupt groups (Kennedy et al., 2001). The reality of implementation was that few instances required the full force of Operation Ceasefire, though there were some groups who failed to heed the messaging being disseminated by the project (Kennedy et al., 2001).

Those individuals and groups were met with more concentrated levels of intervention. Figure 2 below was developed by this writer to explicitly understand the inputs, objective, activities, and outcomes of Operation Ceasefire in a logical, sequential manner.

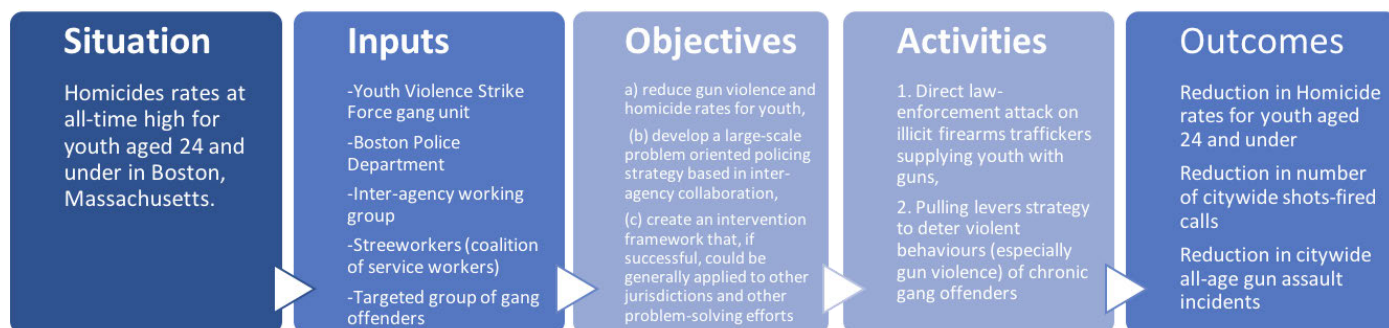


Figure 2. Operation Ceasefire Program Logic

As a result of the widespread implementation of Operation Ceasefire across the city of Boston and its various jurisdictions, there were no control areas within the city against which to compare the impact of interventions. Braga, Kennedy, Waring, and Piehl (2001) suggest this decision to depart from the ideal of randomized control experimentation rose from the desire to have a serious impact on youth violence sweeping across the city and the self-sustaining cycle of violence affecting all gangs and to which all gangs in the city contributed, at least to some degree. Consequently, evaluators elected to utilize a single-group, time-series design in addition to a non-randomized, quasi-experimental approach to compare the homicide trend in Boston to other large cities in the United States (Braga et al., 2001). For the time-series design, the primary outcome variable used to assess the impact of Operation Ceasefire was homicide rates for youth aged 24 and under, a measure indicative of program success as it was the stated objective for the program (Braga et al., 2001). As Operation Ceasefire also sought to reduce non-fatal gun

violence, calls for service for 'shots fired' and official gun assault incidents were examined. Findings from the time series analysis are summarized in Figure 3, where it can be seen that homicide rates in Boston fell substantially in 1997, one year after program implementation, for youth aged 24 and under (Kennedy et al., 2001). In fact, the time series also showed a marked decrease, with a 63% reduction in youth homicide victims by 1997, a decline that remained low through 1998 and 1999 (Kennedy et al., 2001).

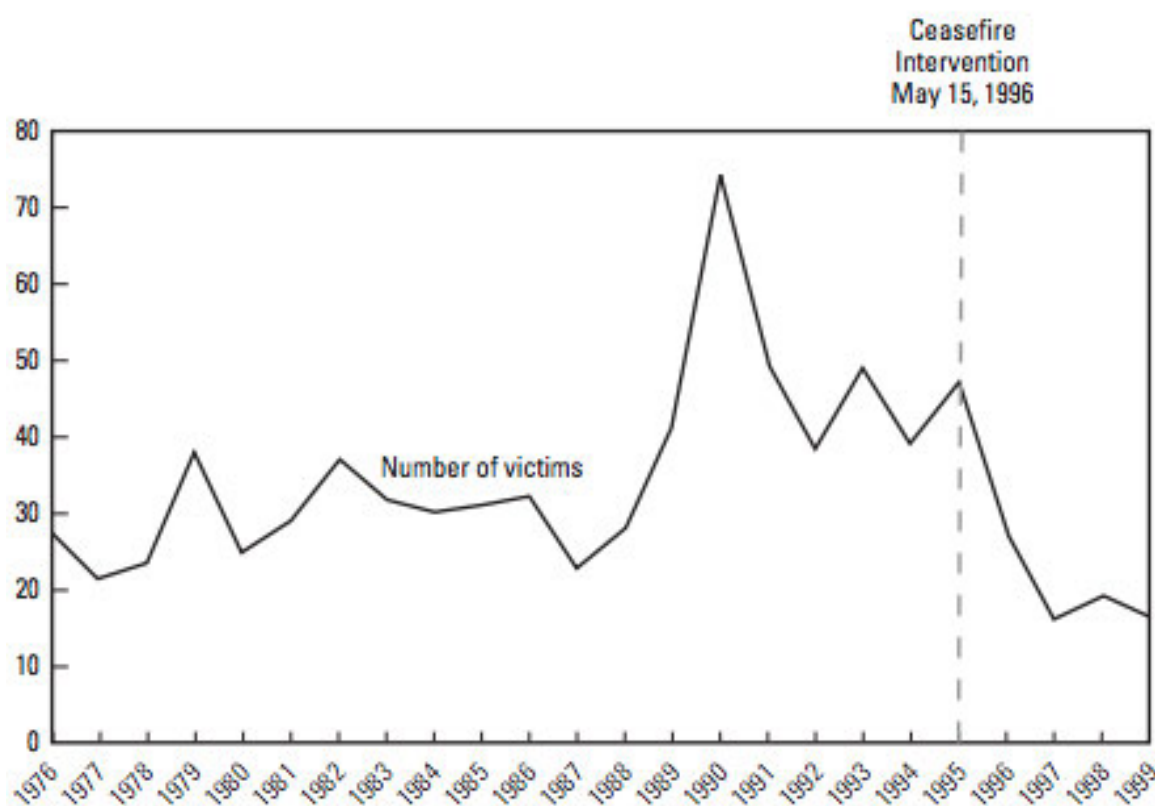


Figure 3. Youth Homicide Victims Ages 24 and Under in Boston, 1976-1999.
 Reprinted from *The Boston Gun Project's Operation Ceasefire: Developing and Implementing Operation Ceasefire*, by Kennedy, Braga, & Piehl, 2001, retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/188741.pdf>

When examined in terms of mean monthly number of youth homicide victims (Figure 4), a stark change was observed between the pre-test mean of 3.5 youth homicides per month to a post-test mean of 1.3 (Braga et al., 2001). It is important to recognize that there were fluctuations

across these years, but the fluctuations became small and the mean consistently lower following the intervention point, suggesting a noticeably sustained effect over time.

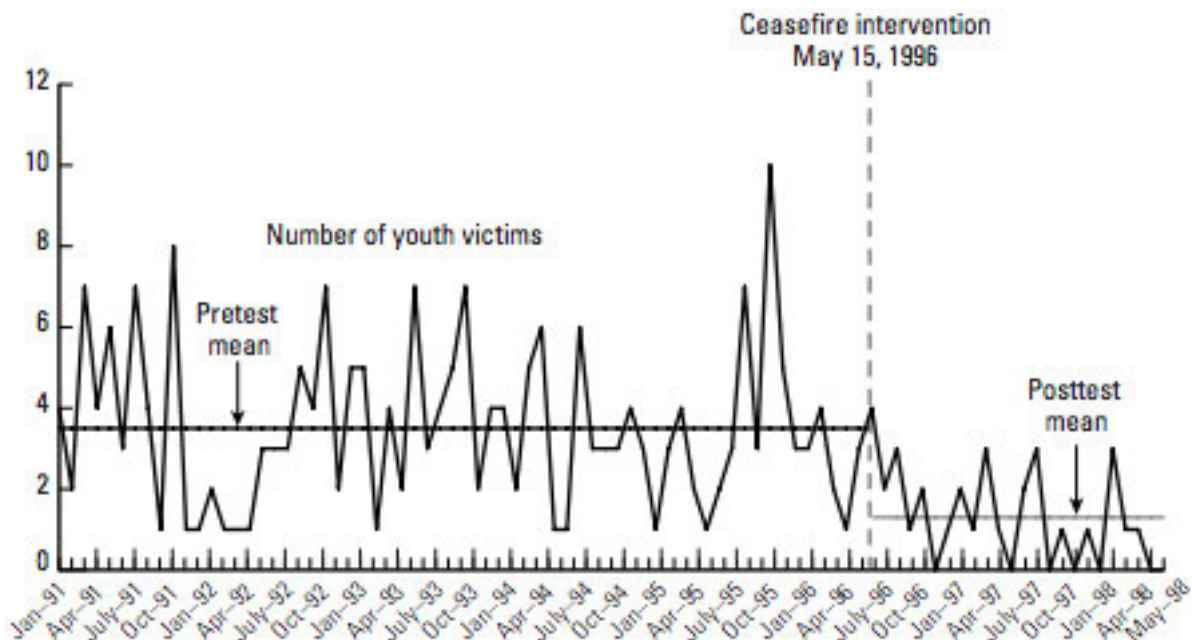


Figure 4. Monthly Counts of Youth Homicide in Boston.

Reprinted from *The Boston Gun Project's Operation Ceasefire: Developing and Implementing Operation Ceasefire*, by Kennedy, Braga, & Piehl, 2001, retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/188741.pdf>

Accounting for seasonal variations and random fluctuations, Braga et al. (2001) used Poisson regression generalized linear models to analyze citywide counts of three variables: youth homicides; citywide shots-fired calls; and citywide gun assault incidents. The results indicated that Operation Ceasefire interventions were associated with statistically significant results in several meaningful ways (Braga et al., 2001). More specifically, it was concluded that there was a 63% decrease in the average monthly number of youth homicides in the city of Boston, that the average monthly number of citywide shots-fired calls decreased by 32% and, finally, that the average monthly number of citywide all-age gun assault incidents decreased by 25% (Braga et al., 2001).

Again, because of the design of the program implementation, nothing can be concluded with certainty about whether these reductions were due, in whole or in part, to the Operation Ceasefire strategy, which is particularly important given the fluctuations visible in Figure 4. However, in response to questions of causality, Braga et al. (2001) conducted an analysis that controlled for changes in employment rates, youth population, citywide trends in violent crimes, homicide rates among older victims, and youth involvement in street-level drug market activity. When Braga et al. (2001) added the control variables to the Poisson regression time-series models, the results did not substantially change; differences in homicide rates, shots-fired calls, and gun assault incidents continued to be statistically significant. Although rival hypotheses have been suggested, Kennedy (1997) asserted very early on that:

The changes are too abrupt and substantial, however, to be wholly due to demographic factors, and there were no obvious changes in such things as gang membership, drug markets, incarceration rates, or the provision of social services that might otherwise be thought to be contributing factors (p. 468).

Further, Braga et al. (2001) found that neither public health initiatives nor previous gang-related interventions, such as Operation Night Light and Boston's Ten Point Coalition in 1992, had a positive effect on homicide rates and gun violence. Finally, Braga et al. (2001) examined whether there were noteworthy reductions in other cities in the United States coinciding with the implementation date of Operation Ceasefire in an attempt to rule out alternative explanations for the reduction experienced in Boston. To do so, Braga et al. (2001) obtained average monthly counts for homicide victims aged 24 and under for 29 major New England cities and 39 major U.S. cities during the period of January 1991 to December 1997. The results of this analysis indicated that the changes experienced in Boston following the implementation of Operation

Ceasefire did not coincide with national changes or changes in other major US cities. (Braga et al., 2001). The preliminary study concluded that it was reasonable to be “cautiously optimistic” that Operation Ceasefire had a meaningful and significant impact on the youth gang activity in Boston (Kennedy, 1997, p. 465). Cautious optimism, however, was far from what ensued in the following years, as Operation Ceasefire replications sprouted across the nation and the original framework was used to develop national initiatives, including Strategic Alternatives to Community Safety and Project Safe Neighborhoods (Dalton, 2002).

A Narrative Review of Operation Ceasefire Implementations & Evaluations

Systematic reviews of gang strategies have been completed in the past, though often with significant limitations due to the poor rigour in the evaluation studies themselves. Nevertheless, they are presented as a valuable exercise in evaluating gang control strategies. In particular, two notable studies influenced the creation of this small narrative review, one of which broadly focused on gang control strategies as a whole (Gravel et al., 2013) and one of which was comprised of a review of focused deterrence strategies (Braga & Weisburd, 2012).

First, in a narrative synthesis of 38 rigorous gang prevention/intervention strategies identified through a systematic review methodology, Gravel et al. (2013) found that gang activity suppression was the only category in which evaluations consistently found positive outcomes. In fact, the review suggested that the more specific the target population was, the more effective the result was, prompting Gravel et al. (2013) to suggest that “the more chronic the gang problem, the more effective gang activity suppression approaches” were found to be (p. 6). Though this may, in fact, be true in so far as there is more potential for change with chronic gang problems, these results are important as the study reviewed two Operation Ceasefire implementations and

went so far as to cite pulling levers strategies as an example of the most promising gang activity suppression approaches with respect to measured outcomes (Gravel et al., 2013).

A year prior, Braga and Weisburd (2012) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis in order to examine program effects and the impact of focused deterrence strategies on crime. With a sample of 10 quasi-experimental evaluations and one randomized controlled trial, they found that focused deterrence strategies were associated with a statistically significant crime reduction effect overall (Braga & Weisburd, 2012). Notably though, the strongest program effect sizes were found in evaluations that utilized the weakest research designs, spurring yet another call for rigorous evaluation research (Braga & Weisburd, 2012). Nevertheless, both studies concluded that deterrence strategies were promising crime-reduction approaches (Braga & Weisburd, 2012; Gravel et al., 2013).

Both Gravel et al. (2013) and Braga and Weisburd (2012) were consulted in the creation of the current narrative review, which sought to chronicle the various replications of Operation Ceasefire across the United States of America. Studies included in this review were those identified as being Operation Ceasefire replications, despite the fact that many adjusted the program activities to meet the unique needs, operational capacities of law enforcement, and contextual community framework of the cities in which they were replicated. Included in this review are the national pulling-levers replications, called the Strategic Alternative to Community Safety and Project Safe Neighborhoods (Dalton, 2002) as they met the criteria of embodying the original program activities of Operation Ceasefire. Of note, this review was not generated to critique the replications or the evaluations thereof, but to provide a comprehensive account of the specific activities, evaluation measures and designs, and outcomes of each. For a listing of the programs reviewed, see Appendix A.

Many studies failed to meet the criteria of an Operation Ceasefire replication but made direct reference to the principles or activities pioneered in the original Boston Gun Project. Such programs included Project Longevity in Connecticut (Gifford Law Center, n.d.) and the New Haven Gun Project in Connecticut (Coleman, Holton, Olson, Robinson, Stewart, & Holton, 1999). These studies were excluded from this review largely due to a lack of adherence to the program design of the original Operation Ceasefire to the extent that program integrity was compromised. Some were excluded from this review because they failed to make public details of their evaluation, from which the validity of their claims of success could be critically examined, as was found in Operation Safe Neighborhoods in Baltimore, Maryland and the Minneapolis Exercise in Minneapolis, Minnesota (Kennedy & Braga, 1998; Kennedy, Braga, & Tita, 2002). Others were excluded because they applied the principles of Operation Ceasefire's pulling-levers approach to disrupt other forms of crime, such as open-air drug markets in Rockford, Illinois (Corsaro, Bunson, & McGarrell, 2013) or street-level drug markets in High Point, North Carolina (Frabutt, Gatherings, Hunt & Loggins, 2006). The work of Papachristos and Kirk (2015) with the Violence Reduction Strategy (VRS) in Chicago modeled after Operation Ceasefire was excluded because it utilized social network analysis as a method of identifying and utilizing selected gang members themselves to act as interrupters of violence and deliver messaging of a 'ceasefire' to their respective groups. A total of eight studies remained after the above programs were culled from the sample.

Critical reflection on the review, as a whole, led to a number of observations that have implications for both a deeper understanding of the history of replications of Operation Ceasefire, as well as opportunities to strengthen program evaluation going forward. Notably, Operation Ceasefire remains a relevant topic of discussion some twenty years after the original

program, as evidenced in two recent news source headlines speculating on the success of the program (Muhammad, 2018; Vaughn, 2018). With respect to the eight studies included in this review, each program or replication featured some level of customization to the issues relevant in their respective contexts. While programs will not be useful unless tailored to the specific characteristics of the place in which it is being employed, the lack of program fidelity presents a challenge when it comes to evaluating a replication, as program components are piecemealed and utilized with varying adherence to the original inputs. Still, some evaluations accounted for these differences, with one conducting an analysis that measured varying levels of intervention (McGarrell, Corsaro, Hipple, & Bynum, 2010) and another measuring the effect of intervention types across eight models (Engel, Tillyer, & Corsaro, 2013).

Another considerable hurdle that became apparent through the narrative review was a lack of continuous evaluation of programs as they developed and evolved over time. Most replications were short and captured only a moment in the program's implementation, failing to measure how the program changed and evolved over time. Further, none of the replications were evaluated longitudinally or conducted follow-up evaluations, which would have been valuable to understanding the evolution and efficacy of the program over time.

Two challenges faced by replication evaluations are a lack of well-articulated measures and inadequately defined objectives (McDavid, Huse, & Hawthorn, 2013). In examining the replication studies, it was clear that nearly all focused solely on outcomes without attention to outputs. The difference between outputs and outcomes is an important one. Outputs represent the direct measure of products as a result of program activity (Frechtling, 2007), which might reference the number of youths upon which an intervention was deployed. By contrast, outcomes represent the benefit for participants from program activity or the level or achievement that

occurred as a result of the activity (Frechtling, 2007), which would refer to the effect that the program had on the youth included in the study. Differentiating between the two, it is important to measure both outcomes, such as the aim of reducing homicides rates through direct messaging to offenders, and outputs, such as how many offenders received the direct messaging. Further refinement of objectives would have led to greater internal and external validity with respect to measures (e.g., homicide rates versus homicide rates as a direct result of gang-related gun violence). Further, threats to validity arose in one study that used gun homicides as a proxy for gang violence, which failed to capture other forms of criminal activity commonly associated with gang activity (McGarell, et al., 2010). An example of when this was well done can be seen in Tita, Riley, Ridgeway, Grammich, and Abrahamse's (2011) evaluation of the Hollenbeck replication, of which one of the measures was gang crime. In this case, gang crimes were identified as a form of violence, terror threats, firearms discharge, vandalism, or graffiti committed by gang members (Tita et al., 2011). While broad, these defined measures cascade down into an evaluation design that provided robust data regarding changes in gang crime rates prior to and after implementation of the program. Accordingly, there is clear logic in the choice of outputs from which outcomes can be measured. Having examined Operation Ceasefire and its numerous replications, it is important to exhaustively explore what is known of the Canadian gang landscape.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Gangs in Canada

One of the most comprehensive reviews of youth in gangs in Canada can be found in the *2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth in Gangs*, executed by the Astwood Strategy Corporation (Chettleburgh, 2002). As the first study of its kind in Canada, the review was undertaken with the purpose of assessing the “extent and characteristics of the youth gang problem in communities throughout Canada, as reported by police agencies” (Chettleburgh, 2002, p.1). For the purpose of the survey, Chettleburgh (2002) defined a youth gang as a group of youth or young adults under the age of 21 and directed respondents to include individuals that each jurisdiction was willing to classify as a gang member, although respondents were directly instructed to exclude motorcycle gangs, hate or ideology groups, prison gangs, and other exclusively adult gangs (Chettleburgh, 2002). While dated, some of those findings are relevant to this research, as it sets the national stage for the state of youth in gangs in Canada who are known to police. To that end, the *2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth in Gangs* found that British Columbia was among the top three jurisdictions reporting the highest percentage of active youth gangs (Chettleburgh, 2002). Surrey and Vancouver, both in the Lower Mainland, reported the earliest onset of youth gang activity in the country (1975 and 1979), pointing to a long history of youth gang involvement (Chettleburgh, 2002). Nationally, the majority of youth gang members were males (94%), and nearly half (48%) were under the age of 18 (Chettleburgh, 2002). Finally, many respondents (44%) indicated that youth gangs were reported to function in collaboration with organized crime groups, most often for the purpose of facilitating drug trafficking (43%) and intimidation and extortion (23%) (Chettleburgh, 2002).

The most valuable aspect of this study is that it was conducted on the national level, accessing responses from 349 police agencies situated in every province and territory in the country (Chettleburgh, 2002). At the same time, this presents as a major limitation because it failed to account for the massive differences between and within the provinces and territories of this vast nation. Unfortunately, no similar national study has been conducted since the 2002 *Canadian Police Survey on Youth in Gang*, raising questions of the shifts that may have occurred in the gang landscape over the past decade and a half.

Several researchers have attempted to quantify the issue, most frequently through the examination of gang homicide data as an indicator of the severity of gang violence at any particular time. Statistics Canada, a significant data collection entity who is mandated to provide sound statistical information to Canadians, holds the unique power of being able to collect and synthesize vast information from across the country on an annual basis (Statistics Canada, 2016). Figure 5, retrieved from Statistics Canada (2015) displays the rates of gang-related homicides from the years 1995 to 2015.

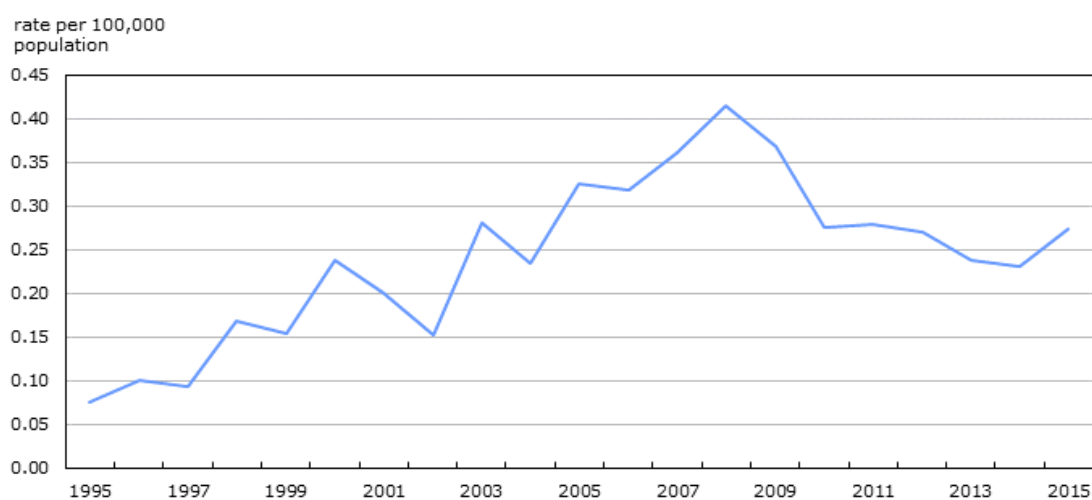


Figure 5. Gang-related homicides in Canada, 1995 to 2015

Reprinted from *Homicide in Canada*, by Statistics Canada, 2015, retrieved from <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2016001/article/14668/c-g/c-g05-eng.gif>

Notably, this data shows an overall rise in gang-related homicides, with a period of particular violence occurring in 2008 and 2009. In addition, the 2015 statistics indicate that the rate of youth accused of homicide increased 22% from the previous year and that youth were two times more likely to be involved in a gang-related incident as compared to individuals over the age of 18. A possible explanation of this statistic is that youth are more likely to engage in group offences, conflating charge statistics when a large group of youth are arrested for a single incident.

Firearms Trafficking in Canada

The United States have long been vocal about their right to bear arms, a sentiment that differs across the border in Canada. In a dated, though useful survey, Killias (1993) found that 48% of households in the United States self-disclosed to having a firearm in the home, compared to 29% of Canadians. Those cultural differences have persisted, with a more recent survey finding that 38% of households reportedly have a firearm in the United States, compared to 22% of Canadian households (Hoskin, 2011). At the per capita level, Kozuskanich (2015) found that there were approximately 270 to 310 million guns in the United States, which suggests that there are between 88.8 to 101.1 guns per 100 people. In contrast, it was estimated that there were approximately 10 million guns in Canada, amounting to 23.8 guns per 100 people (Kozuskanich, 2015). The prevalence of gun ownership in the United States is reflective in the use of those firearms, with the rate of gun related deaths in the United States amassing to a total that is seven times higher than in Canada (Dinshaw, 2015). The difference appears significant, though Morselli (2002) suggested that this is only part of the reality of firearm availability in Canada and the United States. More specifically, Morselli (2002) argued that more attention needs to be paid to using smaller aggregates to yield more accurate data than can be achieved

through examining rates at the national, state, or provincial level. As evidence of this, data on gun seizures across the country indicate that 5% of all seizures occurred in Surrey and 3% in Vancouver, which accounted for nearly half of all gun seizures in the province of BC (Morselli & Blais, 2013). While Surrey and Vancouver are the two largest cities in the province, which would account in part for these statistics, the rate of gun seizures in these cities is still comparatively high.

It is also noteworthy to examine the channels through which firearms are obtained illegally, though varying conclusions have been drawn in the past several years. Two primary markets exist through which offenders obtain firearms; the primary (legal) market and the secondary (unregulated) market (Wellford, Pepper & Petrie, 2005). With respect to the illegal market, several recent Canadian studies have produced different results, though one explanation for this could be the relatively small sample size of traceable guns compared to the United States and the complexity of tracing firearms. A study of the sources of crime guns in Canada that looked at 327 handguns found that 36.7% could be traced to the United States (Cook, Cukier, & Krause, 2009). Conversely, Ontario's Firearms Tracing and Enforcement program (FATE) traced 705 guns and determined that 69% could be traced to the United States (Heemskerk & Davies, 2008). Nationally, according to data collected by the Firearms Operations and Enforcement Support (FOES) Unit, Morselli and Blais (2014) found that of the 1,929 guns seized between January 2010 and November 2011, 84% of the guns originated from the United States. Interestingly, in another recent tally of guns seized, the Canadian Firearms Program (2013) concluded that only 46% of firearms were smuggled, though they readily acknowledged that a large number of guns could not be sourced (Canadian Firearms Program, 2013). Tracing became an enormous barrier to obtaining an accurate estimate of illicit gun sourcing. For context,

the Canadian Firearms Program (2013) reported that of the 1,379 guns seized in the Western Region and reported to the National Weapons Enforcement Support Teams (NWEST), only 335 could be successfully traced.

In addition to obtaining guns illegally through smuggling them into the country, another possible source that has gained popularity as of late is the use of ‘straw-buyers’ or ‘straw-purchasers’; whereby guns are purchased by a third-party individual, such as a friend or girlfriend, and given to someone who is prohibited from buying a firearm themselves (Cook, Harris, Ludwig, & Pollack, 2015). A recent comprehensive review of literature on illegal firearms was produced by Cohen and Burk (2016) and can be referenced for a further review of firearms in Canada.

Interestingly, the RCMP Firearms Operations and Enforcement Support reported that firearms offences in British Columbia decreased from 2,303 in 2014 to 1,889 in 2015, representing an 18% drop (as cited in Cohen & Burk, 2016). Further, only 1,223 firearms were seized in the Lower Mainland District in 2015, compared to 1,363 in 2014 (RCMP, as cited in Cohen & Burk, 2016). At the same time, nationally, the number of gang-related homicides involving a firearm increased from 69% in 2007 to 76% in 2014 (Statistics Canada, 2015). Overall, while the little data that does exist suggests that firearms in BC are an issue, particularly when it comes to gang-related crimes, Cohen and Burk (2016) recently concluded that there is an overwhelming lack of research and reliable empirical data from which to conduct a robust analysis of the issue or to develop effective programs or police responses targeting illegal firearm use.

Gangs in British Columbia

Partly as a result of a recent spate of gun-related homicides involving gang members and/or gang associates, the issue of gangs in BC has steadily gained public and political attention. In a press release issued in October of 2017, BC Premier John Horgan acknowledged the issue of youth in gangs in BC and announced the designation of funds in excess of \$500,000 to expand the Surrey Wrap program, a popular anti-gang program (Government of British Columbia, Office of the Premier, 2017). The Wrap program constitutes a partnership between the RCMP, the Surrey School District, and the City of Surrey and is aimed at collaboratively identifying and supporting students suspected of gang association with the goal of building connections between youth, their school, their home, and their community to prevent gang recruitment and facilitate gang exiting for those already involved in the lifestyle (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2018). Horgan proclaimed that the province is tackling gang violence while reassuring citizens that there is “steady support ...to stop their kids from falling into a life of gang violence” (Government of British Columbia, Office of the Premier, 2017). Similarly, the provincial Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Mike Farnworth, expressed support for gang initiatives targeting youth, arguing that “by keeping youth out of gangs, we can stop this vicious circle and build a better future for our communities” (Government of British Columbia, Office of the Premier, 2017). Statements such as the above point to the growing political concern about gangs, though the phenomenon of gangs is far from new (Howell, 2012). The growing political concern was further affirmed in January 2019 when the Federal government announced funding in the amount of \$7.5 million dollars towards anti-gang programs in Surrey, BC (Johnston, 2019).

It would be remiss to examine policy and interventions on youth in gangs without consideration for the contextual climate that contributed to the current state of perceptions towards youth in gangs. These concerns are rooted in a significant increase in gang violence in BC, with the rate of gang-related homicides per 100,000 increasing from .25 in 2000 to .79 in 2009, according to Statistics Canada (Beattie & Cotter, 2010). The most significant increase occurred in the mid to late 2000's, where a tally of 16 gang-related homicides in 2005 doubled to a total of 35 gang-related homicides in 2009 (Beattie & Cotter, 2010). As shown in Figure 6, Jingfors, Lazzano, and McConnell (2015) mapped British Columbia specific gang-related homicides using media headlines and confirmed the notable spike in 2008 and 2009.

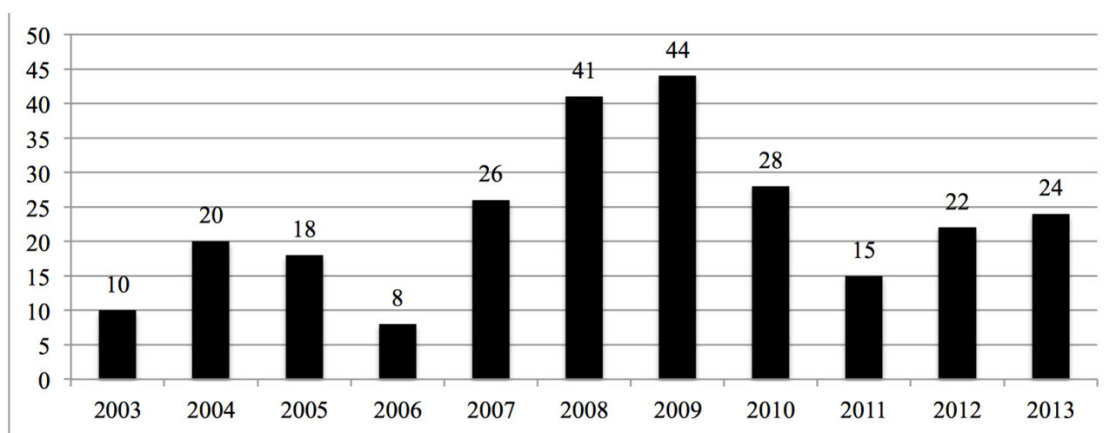


Figure 6. Gang Related Homicides; 2003-2013

Reprinted from *A Media Analysis of Gang-related Homicides in British Columbia from 2003 to 2013*, by Jingfors, S., Lazzano, G., & McConnell, 2015, retrieved from <http://kora.kpu.ca/islandora/object/kora:82>

Building on Young's (1993) assertion that gang violence follows a cyclical pattern, Bouchard and Hashimi (2017) examined gang violence in BC between 2006 and 2012 using two distinct methods of data analysis. Utilizing Statistics Canada data on gang homicides in Vancouver, BC, Bouchard and Hashimi (2017) suggested that trends can be examined through a monthly crime data approach as well as by using a micro-approach to map trends based on significant deviations from the mean number of days between homicides. The monthly method

focuses on calendar month trends, while the micro-approach seeks to identify spikes and map instances of violence that significantly differ from the norm. The first method can identify a particularly violent month, while the second a particularly violent era or period of conflict or a spate of revenge killings. They concluded that both methods yield important data and could be combined to accurately inform stakeholders on trends in gang violence resulting in homicide (Bouchard & Hashimi, 2017). Using the monthly approach, Bouchard and Hashimi (2017) were able to identify four distinct waves between 2006 and 2012, which they linked to discernible events that triggered the rise of a wave of violence (Figure 7).

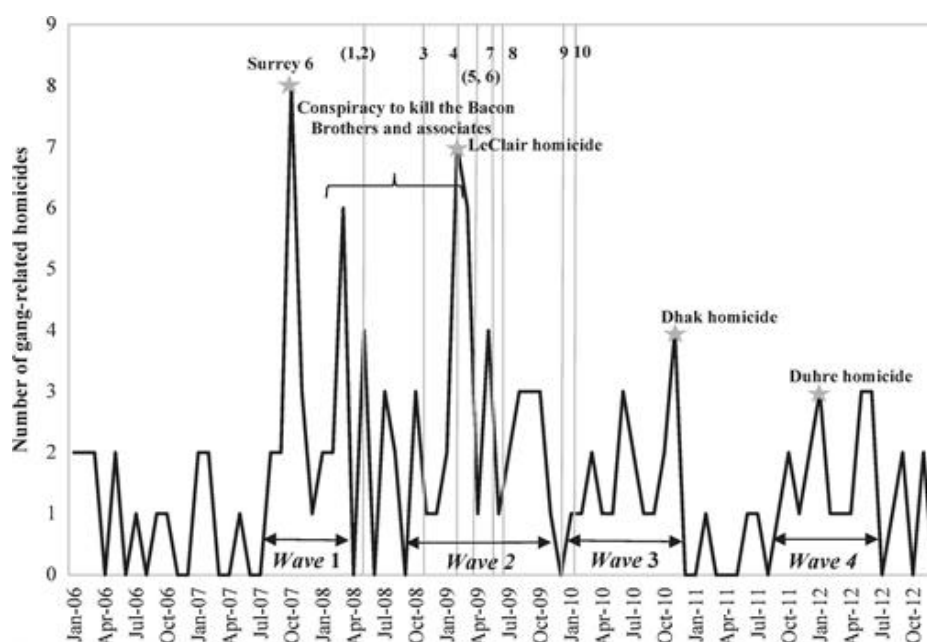


Figure 7. Waves” of Violence 2006 – 2012

Reprinted from *When Is a “War” a “Wave?” Two Approaches for the Detection of Waves in Gang Homicides*, by Bouchard, M., and Hashimi, S., 2017, retrieved from <https://eds-a-ebscohost-com.proxy.ufv.ca:2443/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=01caa495-5e12-42e5-9ac4-3beacccfd614@sessionmgr4006>

Their powerful visualization of the waves of violence provides insight into the trends of the various groups operating in the Lower Mainland and provides a chronology of the conflicts that resulted in homicides. Further, this study is particularly useful in that it provides a more

detailed account of the waves of violence that could not have been captured through annual homicide rates and lends to a greater understanding of the ebbs and flows of violence in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. Beyond understanding trends, the tracking of violence over time could provide law enforcement with the capability to recognize opportunities within the waves of violence during which prevention and intervention efforts can be tailored to the level of conflict.

Social Constructions of Gangs

The public forms most of its opinions about gangs from the media. Most notable among these waves was dubbed the *Surrey Six Slaughter* of 2007, in which four gang-members and two innocent bystanders were murdered as a result of gang rivalry (Bolan, 2015). In reference to those murders, a recent 2015 story entitled *Surrey Six: 2007 Slaughter sparked a vicious gang war. The bodies are still piling up appears* clearly indicates that the author perceives it to have been the catalyst for the continuous gang violence over the past eight years (Bolan, 2015). Even further back, a media release about a spike in gang-related deaths in 2009 indicates early concern over the ‘ever-rising’ gang problem (Bolan, 2009). Interestingly, the article quotes Sgt. Shinder Kirk of the B.C. Integrated Gang Task Force (IGTF), who said that the Red Scorpions, a well-known gang responsible for some of the worst gang violence in B.C. history, were formed at a youth detention center (Bolan, 2009).

More recently, CBC News reported on the murder of an 18-year-old man and the wounding of a 17-year-old in a brazen shooting in Abbotsford, BC (Bathe, 2017). The article quotes Cpl. Frank Jang of the Integrated Homicide Investigative Team (IHIT) as saying:

These are 17, 18-year-olds shooting at each other and it's concerning. As somebody who lives in the [Lower Mainland] and a police officer, it's alarming to me as well. I've seen footage of residents in the area and they're concerned and fearful (Bathe, 2017, Paragraph 10).

Similarly, when speaking to rising homicide rates in 2017 in a recent press release, VPD police chief Adam Palmer said, “Right now, I think everybody knows when you look around the Lower Mainland there is higher incidence of gang violence going on right now and Vancouver's not immune from that,” (Dick, 2017, Paragraph 7).

Relevant to the discussion of media representations of gang-related violence is the nature of gang homicide as distinctly different from non-gang related homicide. Canada data from 2015 portrays that stabbings continued to be the most common method of committing homicide (37%), followed by shootings (30%), and beatings (23%); these proportions have been largely stable over the past 10 years. In contrast, gang-related homicides accounted for nearly half of homicides committed with a firearm (46%), compared with 8% percent committed with another type of weapon and 5% percent with physical force. In a study on homicide arrest rates, Armstrong, Plecas, and Cohen (2013) found that the use of a firearm, coupled with the nature of the relationship between the suspect and the victim, contributed to the consistent lack of evidence in gang-related homicides. A visible repercussion emerged in their conclusion that investigators were only able to identify a chargeable suspect on the same day that the homicide occurred in just 12% of gang-related cases, compared to 55% in non-gang related cases (Armstrong et al., 2013). Undoubtedly, this complicates the process of investigation and prosecution of gang-related offenses, all the while fueling media perceptions of unsolved gang violence in the community. To that end, Vancouver Police Department Chief Adam Palmer recently acknowledged these hurdles, and the resulting public concern, in a statement that recognized that it can be frustrating when weeks pass after a major crime occurs and the perpetrator is not arrested or charged.

Evidently, gang violence in BC is a highly visible and concerning phenomenon that has garnered increasing public and political attention in the past ten years. Clearly, media rhetoric around youth and gangs has gained traction and issues of gangs have been increasingly discussed in public, policing, and political arenas. With the spotlight on gang violence in the Lower Mainland, stakeholders are certainly searching for answers to questions that were simply not asked a decade ago. It is unsurprising, then, that current state of public and political discourse around youth in gangs is born from highly pivotal mobilizing events (McConnell, 2015). The most recent discussion started after the highly publicized death of a 15-year-old boy, killed by a stray bullet in a gang shooting on January 15th, 2018 in Vancouver, British Columbia (CTV News, 2018). Then, Surrey saw the death of two young men, aged 16 and 17, in a shooting that spurred a rally at city hall that drew over 1,000 protestors (Ferreras, Brown, & Little, 2018). The reality is that we may once more see policy spurred by these pivotal moments. Though, as aptly noted by Public Safety Ministry Mike Farnworth at the rally; “there is no sweet pill, there is no magic wand that is going to end this, it’s a complex problem” (Ferreras, Brown, & Little, 2018, 2018, Paragraph 13). With respect to youth, there have also been some major changes to the ways in which young gang-affiliated offenders are dealt with under Canadian law.

Legal Frameworks

YOA to YCJA

The *Young Offenders Act* (YOA) (1985) was replaced by the *YCJA* (2002) in early 2003, representing a much-needed shift in the way young persons interacted with the youth criminal justice system. During the YOA era, Canada had disproportionately high rates of juvenile custody, many for minor offenses, relative to comparable nations such as the United States or Australia (Doob & Spott, 2004). Staggering incarceration rates, coupled with findings that

showed custody to be highly expensive and largely ineffective in reducing recidivism, contributed to the creation of the *YCJA* (Federal-Provincial-Territorial Task Force on Youth Justice, 1996). Support for the reform of the *YOA* also came from those handing down judgments, as a national survey found that 54% of judges believed that at least half of their cases could have been dealt with appropriately through the use of extrajudicial mechanisms that diverted youth away from more formalized processing (Doob, 2001).

Consequently, the *YCJA* was introduced in 2003, replacing the *YOA* as the legal legislature under which young offenders aged 12 to 17 were managed in the criminal justice system (*YCJA*, 2002). A primary goal of the *YCJA* was to reduce Canada's overreliance on expensive and ineffective custodial sanctions, particularly in cases of non-violent and less serious crime (*YCJA*, 2002). This vision was eloquently expressed early in the act, prefaced by a statement that the youth criminal justice system was established to provide meaningful consequences and rehabilitation efforts in order to foster responsibility and accountability, promote rehabilitation and reintegration, and reduce the over-reliance on incarceration of youth by reserving punitive measures for violent offenders who commit the most serious crimes (*YCJA*, 2002). In service of that goal, the *YCJA* (2002) encouraged the diversion of cases from the youth court system through extrajudicial sanctions, such as community-based programs, restitution, victim/family/group conferencing, oral warnings or written cautions by police, and police referrals to community agencies, to name a few (*YCJA*, 2002). Irrefutably, the overarching goal was to reduce the number of youth in contact with criminal courts and custody centres.

The *YCJA* differed from the *YOA* in many respects, most notable of which was the measurable reduction in the use of youth courts and custodial sentences, and the increased use of extrajudicial measures or sanctions for minor crimes (Zang, 2016). General deterrence was

removed as a sentencing objective and tougher sanctions as compared to those seen under the YOA were introduced for the most serious violent young offenders (Zang, 2016). The *YCJA* also included principles of justice that emphasized the need for “protection of society, accountability, special needs of the youthful offender, rehabilitation, alternative measures, rights of the young persons, and least possible interference” (Pulis & Sprott, 2005, p. 210). In line with those principles is an explicit directive under the *YCJA* for youth court judges to hand down proportional sentences and dispositions that are minimally restrictive, most likely to rehabilitate and reintegrate young offenders, and likely to promote a sense of responsibility and accountability (Pulis & Sprott, 2005). While these principles were not entirely foreign within youth justice legislature, it was the specific directives and guidelines with regard to the application of those principles that was revolutionary in the *YCJA* (Carrington & Schulenberg, 2004). For example, while the YOA called for the least possible interference with freedoms, the *YCJA* provided specific rules and limits for that interference through police discretion and the prohibition of judges from ordering custodial sentences unless certain criteria were met (Carrington & Schulenberg, 2004).

The diversionary and sentencing guidelines that accompanied the *YCJA* invariably changed the youth justice system in Canada. By adapting statistics from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada, and the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, Bala, Carrington, and Roberts (2009) created the charts seen in Figures 8 and 9 to display the highly visible effects that the *YCJA* had on youth crime and outcomes in the youth criminal justice system. That being said, it is important to note that some of the changes outlined in the *YCJA* were already being adopted prior to its implementation, which invariably affected crime statistics (Bala et al., 2009).

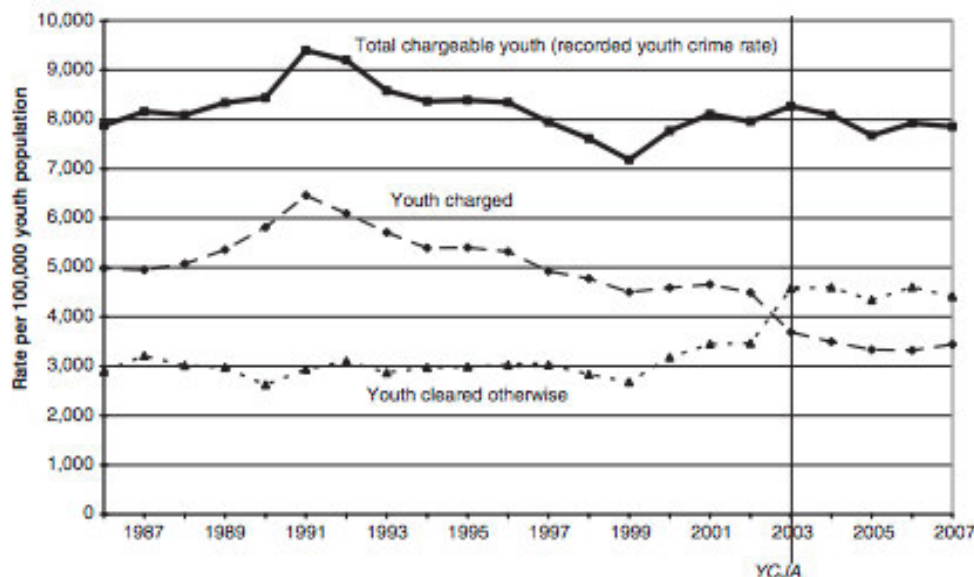


Figure 8. Rates of police reported youth crime; charged and cleared otherwise, 1986-2007.

Reprinted from *Evaluating the Youth Criminal Justice Act after five years: A qualified success*, by Bala, Carrington, and Roberts, 2009, retrieved from <https://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=15&sid=983261ed-98b2-44a4-88ac-48a770629773%40sessionmgr120>

Figure 8 displays a substantial drop in the number of youths charged by police and an increase of police diversionary (youth cleared otherwise) methods following the enactment of the YCJA (Bala et al., 2009). As discussed by Bala et al. (2009), 2003 was the first time in the history of youth crime statistics that more youth were dealt with through alternative measures than were processed and charged criminally. Figure 9 displays charging ratios (the proportion of chargeable offences that are charged) in five regions in Canada from 1987 to 2007. Throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, there was considerable variation between the regions, though all display a clear reduction in charges just prior to and following 2003. Therefore, as argued by Bala et al., (2009), the enactment of the YCJA appeared to contribute not only to a noticeable increase in the use of charging alternatives, but a noticeable decrease in regional differences in the enforcement of youth justice.

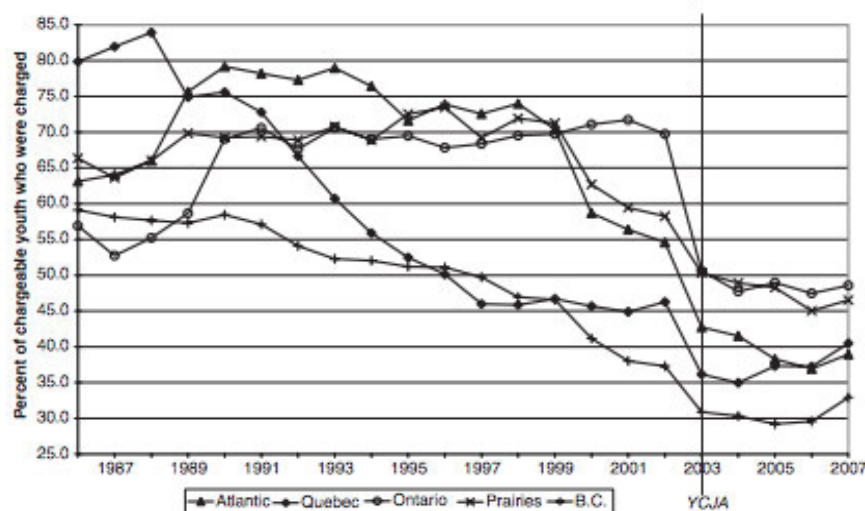


Figure 9. Proportion of chargeable youth who were charged, by region, 1986-2007
 Reprinted from *Evaluating the Youth Criminal Justice Act after five years: A qualified success*, by Bala, Carrington, and Roberts, 2009, retrieved from <https://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=15&sid=983261ed-98b2-44a4-88ac-48a770629773%40sessionmgr120>

One of the largest tangible effects were the significant costs saved through the reduction of incarceration rates and the subsequent shift in that funding from custody centres and courts to community-based programs (Bala et al., 2009). Additionally, Bala et al. (2009) argued that youth courts have shifted to a model in which community-based sentences and programs are primarily utilized to promote rehabilitation and reintegration of young offenders. Overall, it appears as though the YCJA can be credited with a very significant reduction in the use of courts and custodial sentences for young offenders (Bala et al., 2009). While police in BC have the ability to use their discretion in the primary decision making about diverting youth away from the criminal justice system, should they believe there is sufficient evidence to warrant moving forward with a charge, they then submit a report to Crown counsel recommending charges.

The charge approval process in British Columbia is unique in that it requires charge approval from Crown, on recommendation from police through a report to Crown Counsel based on their investigation (Ministry of Justice, 2016). Crown Counsel then reviews the report and

follows charge assessment policy when making the decision to charge the accused with a criminal offence (Ministry of Justice, 2016). Charge approval policies require a two-part test to determine the outcome of a charge assessment decision: a) is there a likelihood of conviction based on the evidence presented; and b) is a prosecution required in the public interest (Ministry of Justice 2016). Based on this assessment, Crown can decide between three courses of action: to not lay charges; to lay charges; or to recommend an alternative or diversionary process in lieu of criminal charges (Ministry of Justice, 2016). Typically, aggravating features, such as the vulnerability of the victim, whether the offence was gang related, and if the youth had a previous history of criminal involvement, would all be considered in the charge approval and subsequent legal process.

Characteristics of Gang-Affiliated Youth in British Columbia

In a local study with serious and violent youth incarcerated at the Burnaby Youth Custody Services Centre, Descormiers (2013) explored the characteristics of a sample of 73 self-identified gang members and the pathways that led to their gang affiliation. This sample provided a valuable representation of some of the young offenders engaging in gang activity within the Lower Mainland. Descormiers' (2013) sample was composed of youth with an average age of 16.42 years old who reported having joined a gang, on average, when they were 13.25 years old. The sample was comprised of mainly males (87.7%) who were racially diverse, with 42.5% of participants who were Caucasian, 24.7% Aboriginal, 12.3% who were South Asian, and 20.4% comprising other ethnicities (Descormiers, 2013). With respect to pathways into gang membership, Descormiers (2013) found that 68.5% of participants reported having a family member who was also involved in gang activity. When asked how they were introduced to the gang, a large proportion (61.6%) reported being introduced by at least one friend, while

others (30.1%) reported being introduced by parents or siblings (Descormiers, 2013).

Descormiers (2013) also explored motivations for gang membership among her sample and found that the most prevalent motivation was money (74%), followed by a desire to obtain respect (72.6%), to deal drugs (61.6%), for protection (53.4%), to make friends (34.25), and, finally, a select few reported being forced to join a gang (6.8%). That being said, Descormiers (2013) found that Aboriginal males were less likely to cite money as their motivation to join, but were more likely to be forced to join their gangs or introduced to the gang lifestyle by family members, forming a distinct subsample. While Descormiers' (2013) work is much needed in a field that lacks such research, it represents only one sample of particularly serious and violent youth incarcerated in the Lower Mainland. The field of criminology would benefit from the expansion upon or replication of her work.

Risk Factors and Motivators for Gang Membership

The study of the factors that contribute to youth and adults joining gangs remains a hotly debated and actively researched area of inquiry. Some scholars examine risk factors, while others focus on motivators for gang membership – the distinction between each is important to identify. Risk factors are those variables that contribute to an individual's external circumstance and elevate their chances of joining a gang. Motivators, on the other hand, are factors that direct or draw an individual to gang involvement. Motivators are more consistent with the theoretical orientation of rational choice, as individuals weigh the pros and cons of engaging in gang activity. Decker and Van Winkle (1996) provided a useful framework for understanding how risk factors and motivators impact the decision to join a gang, suggesting gang affiliation is influenced by “pushes” (e.g., external forces that draw individuals toward membership, such as the need for protection) and “pulls” (e.g., internal forces that make gang membership attractive,

such as the desire for money). There appears to be growing consensus in agreement of the cumulative effect of risk factors or push-factors (Howell & Egley, 2005; Maxson, 2011), though Decker et al. (2013) argue that researchers have long-neglected the study of internal motivators or pull-factors – a critical piece of the puzzle.

Risk factors for gang membership, as identified by Howell and Egley (2005), span traditional risk factor domains: family; peer group; school; individual characteristics; and community conditions. In a review of 20 studies on risk factors using data collected in the United States, Canada, and Europe, Maxson (2011) identified five broad primary categories of risk for joining gangs. Those five categories were critical life events (e.g., illness or injury), non-delinquent problem behaviours (e.g., impulsivity or antisocial tendencies), delinquent beliefs (e.g., neutralizations of guilt), weak parental monitoring, and negative peer influence (Maxson, 2011). The CFSEU-BC (2014) disseminated a pamphlet on youth in gangs in the Lower Mainland that identified risk factors as both internal and external factors. The identified risk factors similarly included internal individual factors, such as antisocial beliefs, impulsivity, callous personality traits, early violence and delinquency, weapons use, substance abuse, and school failure (CFSEU-BC, 2014). In contrast, social factors are those external to the youth, such as family violence, substance abuse in the family, limited parental monitoring, inconsistent/inappropriate disciplinary practices, low socioeconomic status, living in high crime neighbourhoods, delinquent peers, or peer rejection and alienation (CFSEU-BC, 2014). In a cumulative fashion, the presence of risk factors in multiple domains appears to further enhance the probability of gang involvement (Howell & Egley, 2005; Maxson, 2011). In a study that was able to quantify this relationship, McDaniel (2012) found that youth with four or more risk factors were nearly six times more likely to be gang affiliated than those with zero to one risk

factor. In other words, the greater the presence of risk factors, the greater the likelihood of gang involvement. Along that line of reasoning, Howell and Egley (2005) posited that gang interventions that target multiple risk factors are most likely to be effective. Interestingly, there are those who fundamentally disagree with the idea of risk factors specific to gang-involvement, suggesting that no factor can reliably predict the probability for gang membership, as the same factors may also predict other antisocial criminal behaviours that are not gang related (Decker, Melde, & Pyrooz, 2013). Additionally, while a risk factor approach can help to organize variables and attempt to predict outcomes, the intensity of variables, interactions between variables, the hierarchy of variables, and order of variables have not been adequately considered in the prior research (Decker et al., 2013). Further, the impact of motivating factors remains largely unexamined compared to risk factors (Decker et al., 2013).

Motivators for joining gangs are varied. Some join for recreation, a place of refuge, material gain, physical protection, or commitment to community (Jankowski, 1990). Similarly, in a review of 200 sources, O'Brien, Daffern, Chu, and Thomas (2013) found association-based factors, such as joining a gang to make friends, to be the strongest motivating factor for gang membership. Additional factors included familial gang ties, particularly for Aboriginal youth, aspirations of importance, and a belief that someone or something needs protecting (O'Brien et al., 2013). Some scholars believe these "pull" factors impact the 'rational' and well-thought-out choice made by individuals to join a gang based on their perception of best interest (Jankowski, 1990). Others subscribe to the belief that the social construction of gangs is a better explanation for why individuals join groups. A poignant example of this can be found in the work of Felson (2006), who posits that gang membership is socially constructed using signals of membership that denote something. For some, that message is one of fear and is meant to intimidate; for

others, gang membership sends a message of affluence, access to attractive women, and success (Felson, 2006; McConnell, 2015). These pull factors are unique not only to the individuals experiencing them but also to the geographic area and physical circumstance. For instance, when comparing the gang landscape between Toronto, Hobbema, Chicago, Los Angeles, London, and British Columbia, McConnell (2015) found that the motivators for gang involvement were very different. More specifically, McConnell (2015) argued that factors such as intergenerational familial involvement, low socioeconomic status, marginalization, and lack of opportunity are less likely to be motivating forces for gang members in British Columbia. Much more likely are factors such as status, hedonism, and glamour, at times visible in the celebrity-like status afforded to gang members receiving VIP treatment in bars, restaurants, and nightclubs (McConnell, 2015). In summary, the economic, social, and marginalization factors that exist in many gang entrenched areas elsewhere do not have the same influence in BC. This is exemplified through McConnell's (2017) qualitative interviews, where insights from participants point to two very different types of individuals who are joining gangs: the traditional at-risk youth and the non-traditional at-risk youth (McConnell, 2015). The latter is described as a young person coming from a good family who may possess attitudes including a "lack of work ethic, a sense of entitlement, and an unwillingness to be patient and work towards a goal in a legitimate, legal manner" (McConnell, 2015, p. 146). McConnell (2015) goes on to compare this phenomenon to the early works of Katz (1988), in which individuals are subject to the lure of a seductive lifestyle, one of wealth and status. Interestingly, decades earlier, Merton (1968) suggested gang or criminal involvement might attract individuals who accept the level of affluence that they have been afforded through their families of origin but who are not willing to achieve it in the same manner for themselves.

Inarguably, both risk factors and motivating variables have been shown to have an impact on individuals joining gangs, and the specifics of those push and pull factors must be incorporated into intervention models. As important, if not more so, are the protective factors and pathways to desistance from gangs.

Protective Factors and Pathways to Desistance

Compared to risk factors and motivators for gang involvement, research exploring protective factors and pathways to desistance remains in its infancy (O'Brien, Daffern, Chu, & Thomas, 2013). While protective factors and motivators for desistance (cessation of gang involvement) serve the same purpose of safeguarding the youth in our communities, they do so in distinctly different ways. Namely, protective factors are those characteristics or variables that shield youth from engaging in gang activity (Howell & Egley, 2005). Motivators for desistance, in contrast, are those factors that contribute to a youth's decision to cease gang involvement. Both are equally relevant to the discussion of addressing the issue of youth in gangs in BC, though from a programming perspective, the first falls into the category of prevention and the latter into the category of intervention.

Although many studies have been conducted in the area of protective factors, and many characteristics proposed, there is an insufficient literature base to suggest a reliable list of factors (Howell, 2010a). In a brochure intended for use by parents, the CFSEU-BC (2014) identified several internal and external protective factors that are relevant to youth in gangs. With respect to internal factors, they suggested that low levels of belief in violence, optimism and hope, balanced self-esteem, gratitude, forgiveness, humility, authenticity, and school social success enhance an individual's level of protection against gang involvement (CFSEU-BC, 2014). Externally, they suggest that positive relations with family and peers, pro-social peers, strong

commitments to school, positive connections to the community, involvement in pro-social activities, high expectations from teachers, and adult involvement in school and leisure activities also safeguard youth from gang involvement (CFSEU-BC, 2014).

Likewise, in a report published by Public Safety Canada, Dunbar (2017) categorized protective factors into five domains: individual; peer; school; family; and community. Within those domains, some research studies suggest similar protective factors to those identified by CFSEU-BC (2014) and Dunbar (2017), such as increased parental monitoring, having family support, and feeling connected at school (McDaniel, 2012). Klein and Maxson (2006) identified protective factors that fall within the peer and social domain, with protective factors of statistical significance including social skills and opportunities or rewards for pro-social involvement. Additionally, commitment to school, attachments to teachers, and parental expectations around academics were also identified as protective mechanisms (Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith, & Tobin, 2003). Still, others suggest substantial parental involvement and family cohesiveness represent some of the significant variables that protect youth from becoming associated with gangs (Maxson, Whitlock, & Klein, 1998). Some unique protective factors were examined by McDaniel (2012), such as a youth's confidence in coping with conflict and parents who use positive reinforcement. He also found that having two or more risk factors significantly increased the risk of youth involvement in gangs, while those who were able to acquire over five protective factors significantly lowered their odds of being affiliated with gangs (McDaniel, 2012). Nevertheless, Dunbar (2017) appropriately suggests that much more research is required before consensus can be gained regarding the protective factors that impact youth gang association.

An understanding of protective factors is essential to the prevention of youth gang involvement and provides a rich context from which to understand some of the variables that

have contributed to a youth's gang association. At the same time, intervention methods must examine theories of desistance and motivators for discontinuing gang involvement. Theories of desistance are varied and extensive; this review will focus specifically on examining motivators for desistance.

While desistance was once thought of as “static” (e.g., in a gang or not in a gang), more recent conceptualizations describe desistance as a dynamic process of disengagement (Bushway, Thornberry, & Krohn, 2003; Pyrooz, Decker, & Webb, 2010; Sweeten, Pyrooz, & Piquero, 2012). While this process and the motivations behind it vary across studies, there are two distinct theories that are frequently used to explain the process of leaving a gang. One theory is bound to the life course perspective, whereby there are turning points for gang-associated individuals, brought about by maturation through the formation of social bonds, age, employment, or having children (Hughes, 1998). In that manner, the desire for youth to be involved in gangs fades over time, accompanied by cognitive shifts that lead individuals away from engagement in criminal behaviour and criminal groups (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Rudolph, 2002). Giordano et al. (2002) propose that these cognitive shifts require four conditions; 1) that the individual be open to change; 2) the experience of a prosocial opportunity or “hook for change”; 3) the recognition of a new identity distinct from the prior identity; and 4) a shift in their view of old behaviours and associations. Prosocial opportunities, or “hooks for change”, are events that have the potential to redirect or shift trajectories and represent turning points as youth age and mature (Sampson & Laub, 2005).

A second theory of desistance can be found rooted in rational choice and parallels routes of engagement in that it focuses on “push” and “pull” factors. While still recognizing desistance as a process, Carson and Vecchio (2015) and Decker and Pyrooz (2011) suggest desistance to be

a decision impacted by a multitude of factors. With respect to the decision to engage in gang activity, “push” factors were conceptualized as external forces, such as a need for protection, and “pull” factors as internal forces that drive gang involvement, such as a desire for money or status (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). With respect to desistance, “push” factors become the internal forces that motivate or drive an individual to cease engagement, while “pull” factors are external forces that draw an individual away from gang involvement (Carson & Vecchio, 2015). Internal “push” factors might include being tired of the lifestyle or wanting to leave the violence behind, while external “pull” factors may involve family intervention, a prosocial relationship, a job, or having children (Pyrooz & Decker, 2011). These factors can also be interrelated and cumulative, as with motivators and risk factors for joining gangs in the first place (Carson & Vecchio, 2015). In fact, desistance may require a culmination of several push and pull factors resulting in greater insight into the negative consequences of gang affiliation (Berger, Abu-Raiya, Heinberg, & Zimbardo, 2016). Decker and Lauritsen (2002) suggested that the main reason for quitting a gang was the level of violence, either witnessed or personally experienced, impacting the individual’s life to the point where their own or family’s security was jeopardized. Similarly, Decker, Pyrooz, and Moule (2014) find disengagement to be associated with an increase in family ties or adult responsibility and, less frequently, employment. Interestingly, in their research, Berger et al. (2016) found that while both men and women attributed their desistance to similar push and pull factors, men tended to report more frequently that they desisted due to personal and vicarious victimization, while women more frequently attributed their desistance to social bonds, such as pregnancy, parenthood, or other familial responsibilities. At the same time, some factors function as disincentives to desistance. For example, Decker and Lauritsen (2002) suggested that gang-associated youth can rely on their associates for friendship, and desistance may not occur until a

suitable replacement for that source of support can be established. Interestingly, there is also a lack of consensus around whether interventions can have a significant effect as an external pull factor towards desistance.

In examining factors impacting desistance, Decker et al. (2014) recently found that many former gang members believed that neither social service agencies nor the criminal justice system influenced their decision to leave the gang. In contrast, earlier research has found that interventions, whether judicial or custodial, had a significant positive impact on an individual's desire to cease gang affiliation (Hasting, Dunbar, & Bania, 2011; Farrall, 2002). More specifically, it was found that interventions, such as probation, could significantly target, and have a positive effect, on the individuals' thoughts and actions (Farrall, 2002).

One final push factor that presents particular relevance to the current discussion and a social constructionist approach is that of disillusionment. Disillusionment is described by Decker et al. (2014) as the discrepancy between one's expectation and reality. They argue that many individuals join gangs in hopes of finding protection, familial support, and wealth, and are instead faced with unmet expectations and the realization that these expectations will likely never become a reality (Decker et al., 2014). For example, individuals are faced with the realities of gang violence and risk of danger, where protection was once expected. Others might find a sense of isolation and abandonment by peers in times of need, where social support and sense of belonging were once expected, or economic hardship where promises of wealth and prosperity were expected. In reality, it is through frequent and repeated exposure to these daily realities that discontent within the gang solidifies and functions as a major push factor for gang disassociation (Decker et al., 2015). In a recent longitudinal and multiple wave study on youth, Carson, Peterson, and Esbensen (2013) found that disillusionment was the most common push factor,

whereby 42% to 55% of formerly gang-associated youth reported disillusionment with the gang lifestyle. To that end, Decker et al. (2014) suggested that at-risk youth can be provided with information on the realities of gang life, allowing for the reality of those expectations to be presented before serious gang involvement. Returning to McConnell's (2015) assertion that gangs in BC are fundamentally different, the issue of disillusionment is particularly relevant to youth in gangs in the Lower Mainland of BC. In cities where the primary motivators for gang involvement are wealth and status, interventions aimed at providing information on the stark realities and consequences of gang involvement could potentially be effective. One such approach has emerged through the use of Civil Forfeiture, a measure gaining popularity in certain parts of the world.

A Word on Civil Forfeiture

Civil forfeiture is an emerging instrument available to law enforcement entities in Canada and abroad to target property linked to criminal activity, such as vehicles or homes bought with the proceeds of crime. This approach is growing in popularity with varying models now implemented in a variety of developed nations, such as Ireland, the United Kingdom, South Africa, and Fiji, as well as many provinces and territories of Canada (Gallant & King, 2013; Kennedy, 2006; Young, 2009). Some argue that this process is controversial, as the use of non-conviction based civil proceedings to circumvent criminal law represents an assault on individual rights and freedoms and lacks the safeguards afforded by procedural justice (Gallant & King, 2013; Piety, 1990). In the United States, civil forfeiture has been described as one of the most controversial practices in American law and, unfortunately, one that has been severely under researched (Gabbidon, Higgins, Martin, Nelson, & Brown, 2011). Civil forfeiture was described by Carpenter (2014) as an ethical "distortion of law enforcement priorities towards revenue-

generating activities” (p. 220) that creates conditions ripe for corruption through a lack of transparency and accountability. Some challenge civil forfeiture as being inherently criminal in nature, suggesting that due process obligations ought to apply (Gray, 2012).

Yet, while disdain for the process appears overwhelming, there are some who believe that civil forfeiture is an important tool in interdiction, and allows law-enforcement entities to recover criminal proceeds separately or in conjunction with criminal proceedings (Cassella, 2008). Further, it can be utilized as a deterrent mechanism to dissuade youth from becoming involved in gang-related activities. All the same, civil forfeiture is not without challenges; Young (2009) suggests it is effective only in instances where individuals can be proven to be integrally involved in the criminal organization. The local debate is far from immune from political attention, with B.C.’s NDP government rescinding a call for review of the province’s *Civil Forfeiture Act* after gaining office (Dhillon, 2018). At the time of writing, precedent has yet to be set, with two cases under review regarding their constitutionality of civil forfeiture (Dhillon, 2018).

The earliest civil forfeiture law emerged in Canada under the *Remedies of Organized Crime and other Unlawful Activities Act* (2001), which resulted from a summit on organized crime in Ontario. Shortly after, British Columbia became the second province to enact civil forfeiture legislation through the *Civil Forfeiture Act* (2005). Under the *Civil Forfeiture Act* (2005) an application for forfeiture order can be made in the following instances:

- (1) The director may apply to the court for an order forfeiting to the government
 - a. The whole of an interest in property that is proceeds of unlawful activity, or

- b. The portion of an interest in property that is proceeds of unlawful activity.

(2) The director may apply to the court for an order forfeiting to the government property that is an instrument of unlawful activity. (3, 1-2)

Interestingly, the act allows for seizure of both instruments and proceeds of illegal activity. Instruments of unlawful activity are described as property that has been, or is likely to be, used to engage in unlawful activity (Civil Forfeiture Act, 2005). Proceeds of unlawful activity include property, in whole or in part, which was acquired directly or indirectly from unlawful activity (Civil Forfeiture Act, 2005).

The courts have characterized civil forfeiture as a proceeding *in rem*, or against an object, rather than *in personam*, or against the person (Gallant & King, 2013). Resultantly, the individual's culpability is, in effect, a matter that is separate from the civil proceedings (Gallant & King, 2013). As a result, property may be targeted for civil forfeiture even where criminal charges are not pursued. Another interesting feature lies in the difference in burden of proof requirements between criminal and civil proceedings. In criminal proceedings, it is requisite that the courts be satisfied that an accused is guilty beyond a reasonable doubt (*Criminal Code*, 1985). In contrast, the *Civil Forfeiture Act* (2005) requires findings to be made on the Crown's ability to prove its case on a balance of probabilities. As a result, it has been suggested that a lower standard of proof leads to a reliance on civil forfeiture proceedings where criminal proceedings are unlikely to be successful or where criminal proceedings have a likelihood of being time and resource intensive (Gallant & King, 2013).

Currently, according to the Government of British Columbia's Public Safety website (BC Public Safety, 2017), civil forfeiture is utilized as a method of ensuring that individuals do not

profit from unlawful activity. Speaking to the massive scale of the program in BC, it is reported that from 2006 to 2017 the Civil Forfeiture Office (CFO) received over 4,900 file referrals from law enforcement agencies across the province (2017). As a result, the CFO has secured the forfeiture of \$73,000,000 since 2006, \$31,000,000 of which has been re-invested into communities across BC through crime prevention efforts and compensation to victims (2017). Astutely, there has been criticism that a singular measure of success – financial prosperity – has been taken to argue for the effectiveness of civil forfeiture (Young, 2009). The reality, though, is that civil forfeiture is favoured for its ease of use, as compared to criminal proceedings. Still, it appears to be a potentially valuable tool for anti-gang initiatives in BC where the primary motivators for involvement seem to include perceptions of a rich lifestyle. However, its value as a gang prevention tool has not been evaluated. There are a variety of other gang strategies that may further complement or enhance this approach, particularly those that are focused on suppression.

A Modern Typology of Gang Strategies

Police responses to crime have traditionally been categorized into one of four approaches: suppression; prevention; intervention; and comprehensive (Howell, 2000b; Huff, 2002; Klein & Maxson, 2006). These categories are differentiated from each other, often on a continuum, based on their fundamental differences in target populations, inputs, activities, and outcomes (Gravel, Bouchard, Descormiers, Wong, & Morselli, 2013). Three classification schemes are credited with developing a systematic structure for organizing gang control strategies, each with varying strengths and weaknesses (Gravel et al., 2013). Klein and Maxson's (2006) *gang control options* constituted a detailed table of 24 gang strategies by subdividing prevention, intervention, and suppression activities and further classifying them by risk level of the target population, agent of

change targeted by the program, and the level of intervention. In contrast, Spergel and Curry (1993) produced a non-homogenous group of *strategies of intervention* comprised of the following activities: community organization; social intervention; opportunity provisions; suppression; and organizational change and development. Finally, Sivilli, Yin, and Nugent's (1996) *evaluation-based typology* is slightly more specific, comprised of six categories with particular attention given to the differentiation between prevention and intervention activities. While these works have been long held as a useful classification too, Gravel et al. (2013) raised concern about their collective inability to provide a well-defined typology that is neither too heterogeneous, nor too specific. As a result, Gravel et al. (2013) developed a typology that aims to provide a detailed framework from which to classify and evaluate gang strategies. This typology is presented below in Figure 10.

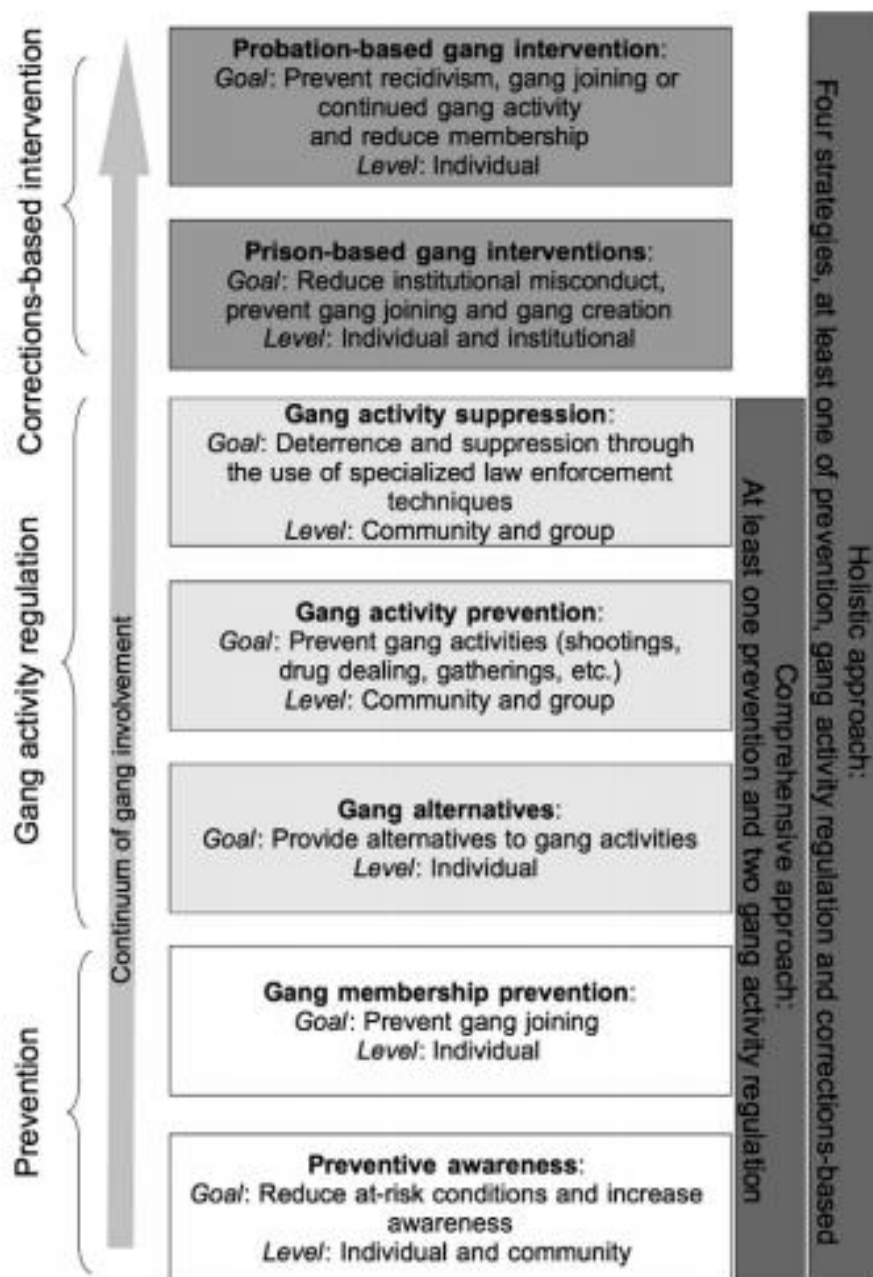


Figure 10. Typology of street gang control strategies

Reprinted from *Keeping promises: A systematic review and a new classification of gang control strategies*, by Gravel, Bouchard, Descormiers, Wong & Morselli, 2013, retrieved from https://ac-els-cdn-com.proxy.ufv.ca:2443/S0047235213000378/1-s2.0-S0047235213000378-main.pdf?_tid=30b63a3e-f7b7-4407-95e7-55acaa088ab1&acdnat=1521926328_7211042d5f7fe5a6e6125855ca40062e

Gravel et al.'s (2013) typology is useful as it met a need not previously met by prior typologies and created greater clarity in the evaluation of gang control strategies. More

specifically, this new typology offers greater detail with regard to program objectives, target population, and activities undertaken in the gang strategy. For the purpose of this paper, Gang Activity Suppression will be examined in greater detail as it is the gang intervention category under which Operation Ceasefire falls.

Gang Activity Suppression

Gang activity suppression strategies are useful when a gang problem has become unmanageable and the most appropriate solution is based on legal sanctions that remove gang offenders from the community and gang landscape (Wong, Gravel, Bouchard, Descormiers, & Morselli, 2012). Suppression activities might include intelligence gathering, disorganization of gang activities through police arrests, and prosecution of gang members (Wong et al., 2012). Suppression strategies function to directly target gang members by focusing on arrest and imprisonment, rather than dissuasion from gang activities, as is seen in gang activity prevention (Gravel et al., 2013). These approaches rely on identifying prolific gang offenders and aggressively pursuing them through the use of tough enforcement-based sanctions (Chettleburgh, 2007; Totten, 2009). Some disagree with this strategy, suggesting that suppression-based approaches result in an overreliance on police and courts while simultaneously failing to address the underlying social determinants of crime (Darke, 2011).

The most comprehensive review of Canadian programs and services was conducted by Mellor, MacRae, and Pauls (2005). One of the primary objectives was to categorize program initiatives in Canada as falling under three levels of intervention: primary (prevention, raising awareness); secondary (intervention); and tertiary (rehabilitation, exiting strategies) (Mellor et al., 2005). While a current comprehensive review of all services across the varied jurisdictions in

the Lower Mainland is not available, current law enforcement approaches all fall under one of these three categories.

Law Enforcement Efforts in British Columbia

Dedicated gang units in the Lower Mainland have grown and evolved significantly in the past twenty years. Though the Vancouver Police Department has had a gang unit since the 1980's, the remainder of the Lower Mainland lagged behind until the establishment of the Organized Crime Agency of British Columbia (OCA-BC) in 1999 as the first independent police agency aimed at suppressing gang activity (n.d.). The CFSEU was then created in 2005 (Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, 2005). At the same time, the Indo-Canadian Gang Task Force, established in 2002 and disbanded in 2004, was formed to address the violence perpetrated by and against young Indo-Canadian men. The task force was reinstated in 2005 under a new name: the BC Integrated Gang Task Force (Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General, 2006). The years between 2007 and 2009 saw the development and expansion of several units, arguably due to the polarizing effects of two major incidents in the Lower Mainland and the subsequent media coverage sparking public concern (Gravel, Wong, & Simpson, 2018). Those two incidents were the August 2007 shooting at the Fortune Happiness Chinese restaurant, which saw two people killed and six injured, and the October 2007 Surrey Six Murders, which saw six people killed – two of them innocent bystanders. In response, the VPD announced the creation of a gang task force (CBC, 2007), which was later called the Integrated Gang Task Force and, eventually, combined with CFSEU in 2009 following a funding expansion from both the provincial and federal governments (CFSEU-BC, n.d.). Also in 2009, the city of Surrey saw the creation of its own gang task force – Surrey Gang Enforcement Team (CTV News Vancouver, 2009). Abbotsford first created their Gang Suppression Team in 2010,

which was recently replaced by a dedicated Gang Crime Unit, named on their website as GangBusters, in early 2018 (Abbotsford Police Department, n.d.).

There are a number of different gang prevention and intervention programs operating in the Lower Mainland. Among others, these include the Surrey Wraparound program, CFSEU-BC's End Gang Life and Gang Exit, Surrey RCMP's Shattering the Image, the City of Abbotsford's In It Together, the Province's Priority Target Enforcement Program (PTEP) and Provincial Violent Gang Offender (PVGO) Program, and the VPD's Her Time and Restaurant/Bar Watch Programs. This section will provide a brief overview of each to provide a contextual understanding of some of the major efforts undertaken at present to combat youth gang violence.

Surrey Wrap Program

The Surrey Wraparound (Wrap) program is aimed at ensuring that at-risk youth receive support and attention to stay out of gangs and are provided opportunities for exiting gangs and criminal lifestyles (RCMP, 2018b). This strategy is a partnership between the Surrey School District, the City of Surrey, and the Surrey RCMP who, collaboratively, offer programs for students who are exhibiting signs of gang association (2018b). Depending on the youth's particular risk and needs factors, these activities might include sports and recreation programs, counselling services, and positive mentoring through the development of trusting relationships between youth and police and authority figures (RCMP, 2018b). Their primary goal is to create positive attachments between youth, their school, their community and their home as a way of insulating youth from the pull factors offered by local gangs (RCMP, 2018b).

End Gang Life

End Gang Life is an initiative developed and disseminated by the CFSEU (n.d.-b) across the province of British Columbia. End Gang Life utilizes emotive and visually impactful messages in varied mediums including videos, booklets, posters, radio advertisements, and television (CFSEU, n.d.-b). The aim is to engage the public, provide educational tools and material, prevent youth and young adults from joining gangs, and encourage those involved in gangs to exit (CFSEU, n.d.-b). Using myth-dispelling messaging, CFSEU (n.d.-b) seeks to:

give youth a fresh perspective on what gangs really are, give communities a rallying point around which they can mobilize against gangs in their neighborhood, and make gangsters pause and have a second thought about their life choices.

CFSEU delivers this program provincially and in partnership with the RCMP and various municipal police forces across the Lower Mainland. While it has not formally been evaluated, it is a popular program used by many school districts in BC.

Gang Intervention and Exiting

The Gang Intervention Team, an appendage of the province's CFSEU, provides gang intervention support to individuals who are engaged in, or at risk for engaging in, gang activity (CFSEU, 2018, n.d.-c). Through the Exiting and Outreach program, the team provides individualized case management support to gang members 18 years or older to support exiting from gang lifestyles, which may include counselling services, skills training and education, and practical supports as necessary (2018, n.d.-c). They also provide education and prevention pieces to communities across the province (2018, n.d.-c).

In conjunction with outreach and exiting, the team further engages in enforcement activities aimed at disrupting criminal behaviour and encourage gang exiting (2018, n.d.-c). Such activities include working hand-in-hand with other police agencies, providing hot spot targeted

enforcement or emergency gang intervention using focused deterrence tactics against individuals and groups who pose a risk to public safety (2018, n.d.-c). Again, while this program has not been formally evaluated, it was recently granted funding by the provincial government to continue its work in Surrey (Government of British Columbia, Office of the Premier, 2017).

Shattering the Image Anti-Gang Presentation

Shattering the Image is an anti-gang presentation modeled after the CFSEU's End Gang Life presentation, though it has been tailored to more specifically address the unique factors present for Surrey youth, parents, educators, and community groups (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2018a). Delivered by the Surrey Gang Enforcement Team (SGET), the presentations aim to dispel some of the myths and shatter the glamourized image of gangs in Surrey (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2018a). Topics of discussion include real stories of gang involved youth with emphasis on the dangers and tragic consequences of engaging in gang activity, including the threats posed to those who engaged in dial-a-doping (drug trafficking) practices (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2018a). The aim of the program is to provide Surrey youth with the tools required to make better choices and to provide adults with the ability to identify warning signs and broach these topics with youth (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2018a).

In It Together

In It Together is a John Howard Society-led prevention initiative that focuses on the safe reintegration of at-risk or gang affiliated youth or young adults who have served provincial or federal custodial sentences in either youth or adult correctional centers in British Columbia (John Howard Society, n.d.). In partnership with Abbotsford Community Services, the Abbotsford Police Department, Abbotsford School District, and the City of Abbotsford, the In It Together

program provides individualized one-on-one support and group workshops (John Howard Society, n.d.). The aim is to engage youth in their community in a pro-social manner, connect them with supports, help youth to actualize goals, and provide intensive support during community reintegration (John Howard Society, n.d.). Group workshops focus on issues such as developing life skills, employment skills, and education opportunities while challenging and rebuking pro-criminal attitudes and behaviours (John Howard Society, n.d.).

Provincial Tactical Enforcement Priority Program

The Provincial Tactical Enforcement Priority (PTEP) model is an integrated, province-wide targeting process that identifies individuals associated to gangs and organized crime and is managed by the CFSEU-BC (program coordinator, personal communication, October 13, 2018). The PTEP model assists law enforcement with the targeting of offenders whose criminal activity puts the public at risk and causes the greatest harm to society (program coordinator, personal communication, October 13, 2018). The gang landscape in the province of British Columbia involves criminality that spans across communities and jurisdictions, resulting in the need for a coordinated and integrated approach by all levels of law enforcement (program coordinator, personal communication, October 13, 2018). By encouraging the continual sharing of information, the PTEP model integrates municipal, provincial, and federal intelligence and target prioritization frameworks aimed at suppressing gang activity (program coordinator, personal communication, October 13, 2018).

Priority Violent Gang Offender Program

The PVGO Management Program is an extension of the PTEP model, also coordinated by the CFSEU-BC and executed by the various RCMP detachments and law enforcement agencies participating in the initiative. In a personal communication with the coordinator for the

PVGO Management Program, the aim of the initiative was described as “maintaining long-term, sustained attention on offenders throughout the cycle of enforcement, prosecution, sentencing, and monitoring in the community” (personal communication, October 13, 2018). While the program is coordinated by CFSEU-BC, they describe an emphasis on the ownership of enforcement action and follow up by the assigned agencies (personal communication, October 13, 2018). Offenders are deemed suitable for inclusion in the program if they meet the criteria, which includes consideration for individuals associated to a significant number of violent offences, those released from custody who are at risk to re-offend, and individuals known to police to be very active and a danger to the community, regardless of the number of charges or convictions they have amassed (personal communication, October 13, 2018). Offenders are notified of their inclusion in the program in the form of a letter. Offenders are informed that their criminal activity and involvement poses a threat to society, advised of services offered through CFSEU-BC’s Gang Intervention Team, and advised that law enforcement entities will take a non-discretionary enforcement approach, effectively utilizing all leverageable legal sanctions if criminal activity continues. Further, Crown Counsel is notified of an individual’s status as a PVGO identified offender, which serves to assist Crown Counsel with their decision to seek detention or release with restrictive conditions (personal communication, October 13, 2018). Notably, the Program Coordinator reports that the offender selection approach is evolving to focus on emerging threats, recognizing that younger offenders who are less criminally entrenched may be more receptive to gang intervention strategies (personal communication, October 13, 2018).

Her Time

Her Time, a new initiative started by two long-time police officers and members of Vancouver Police Department's Gang Unit, launched in December 2017 as one of the first programs aimed at tackling the issue of girls in gangs (Kerr, 2018). The program focuses on delivering presentations aimed at raising awareness around the dangers of getting involved with men who are gang-affiliated (Kerr, 2018). Her Time is not an official VPD program, though it is supported by VPD and is run under the umbrella of Odd Squad Productions, which is a non-profit started by VPD police officers (Francoeur, 2017). Two-tiered in nature, the program focuses on reaching women both proactively and reactively; it reaches out to young women and high-school aged girls who are at risk of becoming gang-involved and reaches out to those who are already gang-involved (Francoeur, 2017). The program is presently in its infancy, though it is growing rapidly, and is currently executed by dedicated police officers who volunteer their time.

Restaurant Watch & Bar Watch

Restaurant Watch emerged in 2008 as a community-based initiative modeled after Bar Watch, which was implemented in 2007 (Gahunia, 2017). Both represent voluntary initiatives aimed at addressing public safety following a wave of violence in bars, nightclubs, and restaurants in the City of Vancouver in 2006 and 2007 (Gahunia, 2017). The Restaurant Watch and Bar Watch programs operate under the *British Columbia Trespass Act* (2016), which permits the owner/occupier of a private establishment to remove someone from their premises. Interested establishments can opt into the program, whereby police are authorized by the owner of the establishment to eject inadmissible patrons on their behalf (Gahunia, 2017). The program, as argued by Gahunia, McConnell, and Bain (2018), represents a collaborative partnership between police and business owners presenting a united front against gang members who jeopardize public safety in the city's bars and restaurants. It is important to note that this initiative is only

currently in operation within the jurisdiction of the City of Vancouver, though it has been recommended in other cities such as Surrey through the adoption of an Inadmissible Patrons Program (Little, Brown, & Morton, 2018; Saltman, 2017).

The Challenge of Evaluating Gang Strategies

Notably, few of the gang prevention and intervention strategies reviewed above have been subject to formal evaluation and those that have undergone evaluations have not been made publicly available. Gang researchers have long expressed concern for the state of evaluation, particularly with gang programs, where results are overstated or marketed as successes in the face of mixed results (Klein, 2011; Wong, Gravel, Bouchard, Descormiers, & Morselli, 2016; Wong, Gravel, Bouchard, Morselli, & Descormiers, 2012). Further, it has been argued that practitioners prematurely herald programs as successes, replicating them long before external evaluations have been published (Papachristos, 2011). Decker (2002) went so far as to suggest that “gang programs are evaluated too infrequently and evaluated well even less frequently” (p. 11). Klein and Maxson (2006) suggested that gang programs face difficulties in identifying clear goals and objectives, creating challenges when it comes to evaluating the effectiveness of programs in achieving their stated aims. Others have suggested that programs lack sufficient theoretical foundations, dooming them to failure before they have even begun (McGloin & Decker, 2010). Papachristos (2001) shared concern for this lack of evaluation, indicating it stemmed from a desire to bend to political pressure, while Klein (1997) suggested that simply not enough has been done to communicate the lessons learned from gang programs that were found to be ineffective, leading to failed programs being re-tried. Nearly a decade later, Klein and Maxson (2006) continue to criticize gang strategies as overly-reliant on conventional wisdom in lieu of research with sound theoretical underpinnings. As identified by Gravel et al.

(2013), the key to understanding the successes and failures of gang control strategies relies heavily on being able to improve both the quality and quantity of gang program evaluations. The sentiment has been echoed by Noakes and Wincup (2004), who astutely note that it is unlikely, and not recommended, for one study alone to change practice, but that many opportunities to influence policy are missed due to a lack of systematic and rigorously gained knowledge.

While systematic reviews may present an answer to these issues, the reality is that there are few sound evaluations from which to draw a sample (Spergel, 2010; Wong et al., 2016; Wong et al., 2012). One such example is visible in a review, conducted by Klein and Maxson (2006), of 58 gang control approaches in which they found an overwhelming absence of evidence of gang program evaluation. Resultantly, a struggle has ensued between those suggesting that gang programs tend to be overly optimistic despite a lack of evidence to support them (e.g., Klein, 2011) and those who view this perspective as disparagingly pessimistic, lending to a ‘nothing works’ view of gang programs (e.g., Howell, 2010b). Nevertheless, a review of the current state of evaluation suggests that consensus on the subject of the effectiveness of gang prevention and control strategies has not yet been attained (Wong, et al., 2016).

The logic behind prevention over intervention is sound; if we prevent individuals from joining gangs, we will avert a range of consequences linked to gang membership, consequences that range from individual-level to societal in nature. Unfortunately, the research is nearly void of validated studies showing strong treatment effects for gang prevention (Kudluboy, 2004; Wong et al., 2016; Wong et al., 2012). Further, Sharkey, Shekhtmeyster, Chavez-Lopez, Norris, and Sass (2010) suggest that prevention efforts often fall short because they fail to adequately recognize schools as an environment ripe for providing early prevention for youth who are at-

risk for involvement and early intervention for those who are already involved. Lipsey (2009) took the inquiry a step further, and conducted a meta-analysis of prevention program failures, finding that the failure of prevention programs often lies in their inability to actually enroll those youth who are the highest risk for gang involvement and who need it the most, despite well-intentioned and well-placed programs. The Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) program in the United States is a perfect example of a widely introduced program that produced the desired positive outcomes in some ways, but fell very short in others (Pyrooz, 2013). More specifically, G.R.E.A.T. participants, relative to the control group, were found to have positive scores across a range of attitudinal measures and had improved police-youth relationships (Esbensen, Osgood, Peterson, Taylor, & Carson, 2013). They also achieved significant and meaningful reductions in the odds of gang involvement, both at the one year follow up and four year follow up (Esbensen, et al., 2013). At the same time, G.R.E.A.T. failed to have a positive program effect on a primary goal, which was to prevent violent and criminal activity (Esbensen, et al., 2013) – raising the question, what good is a prevention program that does not prevent crime (Pyrooz, 2013)? Interestingly, broad prevention programs such as G.R.E.A.T. have also been documented to have a negative effect on those youth who are at lower risk when placed in a program with aggressive or antisocial youth – a phenomenon called deviancy training (Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999; Hennigan, Tian, Maxson, & Poplawski, 2010; Piehler & Dishion, 2007). Conclusively, gang prevention approaches are hindered by a lack of school engagement, an inability to target those youth who are of the highest risk for gang involvement, the challenge of effecting both attitudinal and behavioral change, and the risk of raising a youth's risk to become gang involved by utilizing broad gang intervention approaches that provide a mode of contact between at-risk youth and non-at-risk youth.

The current approach to the evaluation of gang control strategies is also concerning. Decker and Reed (2002) suggest that “the lack of even basic knowledge about the impact of interventions on gangs should be a clarion call to researchers, practitioners, and policy makers” (p.19). A few researchers have risen to the occasion, conducting sound empirical evaluations of programs or conducting systematic reviews and meta-analyses of gang programs. One example of an extensive meta-analysis of gang program evaluations was conducted by Braga and Weisburd (2012), who set out to examine the effects of focused deterrence strategies on crime using a systematic review. Using strict criteria, they conducted a meta-analysis of 11 eligible studies, 10 of which reported strong and statistically significant crime reduction outcomes associated with focused deterrence. Of note, three of the eligible studies included Operation Ceasefire replications and two Project Safe Neighborhood interventions, an approach that was born from the reported success of the original Operation Ceasefire program (Corsaro, Bunson & McGarrell, 2009). Overall, Braga and Weisburd (2012) concluded, with caution, that focused deterrence approaches seem to have a positive effect on the perception of risk by offenders that they may face consequences to their actions. Their findings contribute to the body of literature in support of the control of crime problems through tailored approaches that engage the perception of consequences by offenders. These findings are similar to those of Wong, Gravel, Bouchard, Descormiers, and Morselli (2012) who concluded that the best evidence of success comes from suppression programs, likely resulting from a clearly identified target group with whom you can achieve measurable change through arrest. That being said, Braga and Weisburd (2012) echoed concerns for the lack of rigorous randomized experimental evaluations, having found only one randomized experiment that met the criteria for inclusion in their meta-analysis. They also acknowledged that the strongest effect sizes were found in evaluations that used the weakest

research designs (Braga & Weisburd, 2012). Conclusively, skepticism is warranted when looking at programs results. Despite this, a limited number of gang programs have demonstrated consistently positive results. One such program is Boston's Operation Ceasefire. To understand the success of this particular program, it is imperative to have a solid understanding of the theories of gang involvement and, correspondingly, desistance from gang-related activities.

Chapter 4: Theoretical Perspective

Two theoretical perspectives are particularly relevant to this thesis and the examination of practitioner perceptions towards Operation Ceasefire as a viable gang intervention strategy in the Lower Mainland of BC. Deterrence theory and social construction theory each provide a strong platform from which to launch this examination, but the true strength lies in the ways in which the two theories complement each other and, together, deepen understanding of the phenomena of gangs. Deterrence theory, in particular, can be applied to understanding the ways in which Operation Ceasefire provides both specific and general deterrence for gang members who choose to engage in illegal activity. At the same time, social construction theory allows us to develop a deeper understanding of the constructed perceptions of reality that are created around what it means to be ‘gang involved’, by both law enforcement and gang members themselves. Together, deterrence theory and social constructionism form a solid framework through which to examine gang intervention strategies.

Deterrence Theory

Early proponents of deterrence theory posit that, quite simply, crime can be prevented when the costs of committing the crime outweigh the benefits for the offender (Gibbs, 1975; Zimring & Hawkins, 1973). Individuals choose to obey or violate laws after weighing the benefits and consequences of their actions (Hobbes, n.d.). To that end, deterrence theory suggests that the more severe a punishment, the less likely an individual will be to engage in criminal acts (Tomlinson, 2016). The efficacy of deterrence efforts lies in the ability for consequences to be presented in a manner that clearly establishes the severity, celerity, and certainty of punishment (Thomlinson, 2016). Certainty of punishment is a component established by classical theorists such as Beccaria (1764), who suggested that individuals need to know that their undesirable acts

would be punished whenever a criminal act takes place. Also important is the application of punishment in a swift manner; the closer the punishment is to the act, the greater the likelihood that offenders will understand that a crime results in immediate consequences (Beccaria, 1764). Finally, severity of punishment must be sufficient that the offender perceives the cost of engaging in that activity to be too high (Beccaria, 1764).

In this manner, deterrence theory functions on three main principles: (1) a message is relayed to the target audience; (2) the audience receives the message and perceives it as a realistic risk or threat; and (3) the audience makes rational choices based on their perception of the risk versus reward of their actions (Hobbes, n.d.). Deterrence theory is rooted in the primary assumption that people are self-interested and that they are not likely to commit crimes if the cost of doing so outweighs the benefits of engaging in that behaviour (Hobbes, n.d.). At the same time, the nuanced application of deterrence theory relies heavily on the perception of punishment by the individual who is faced with the choice to engage or not engage in the behaviour. For example, Beccaria (1764) suggested that punishments perceived as too severe and unjust may invite rebellion and effectively increase crime, while punishment perceived as not severe enough will not deter crime.

Discussions of deterrence theory have long distinguished between ‘general’ and ‘specific’ deterrence (Cook, 1980). Differentiating between the two, Braga and Weisburg (2012) described general deterrence as the idea that the general population can be dissuaded from engaging in illegal acts by simply seeing that a punishment follows the commission of a crime. In contrast, specific deterrence requires the punishment of an individual with the intention of dissuading that individual from committing more crime in the future (Braga & Weisburg, 2012). Deterrence theory has been harnessed by programs such as Operation Ceasefire, which introduce activities

aimed at embodying the principles of deterrence theory through general and specific deterrence (Kennedy, Braga, Piehl, & Waring, 2001). Operation Ceasefire uses messaging to gang offenders that violence will be met with consequences and responded to through swift and severe punishment for those who continue to engage in violent behaviour (Kennedy et al., 2001). To do so, Operation Ceasefire increases the cost of engaging in violent behaviour, serving to deter those individuals who continue to engage through responsive and rapid punishment and by deterring a broader audience through the demonstrated punishment of the individual (Kennedy et al., 2001). Still, an important element of deterrence theory that requires examination is the perception of punishment by offenders, which is why social constructionism is a complementary theoretical lens from which to examine practitioner perceptions of an Operation Ceasefire replication in BC.

Social Constructionism

The origins of social constructionism can be traced across varied fields of study, including psychology, sociology, gender studies, and criminology (Stam, 2001). Early influences can be attributed to George Mead, Erving Goffman, Emile Durkheim, and Karl Marx (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). At its core, social constructionism is a theoretical perspective that acknowledges our understanding of the world as constructed by social and interpersonal influences (Gergen, 1985). More specifically, it emphasizes the subjective way in which individuals and groups of people perceive, interpret, and create their own social realities (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Proponents of social constructionism theory believe knowledge and truth are created, not discovered, by individual and collective perceptions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In that manner, the concept of reality becomes important. According to Hammersley (1992), reality is defined through subjective experiences and how we understand the world, rather than the

objective reality of the world. Through a social constructionism lens, individuals and groups define this reality.

Social constructionism has been used to explain phenomena such as gender, race, and sexuality, suggesting that these characterizations are not natural but, rather, human interpretations that have been shaped by cultural and historical contexts (Kang, Lessard, Heston, & Nordmaken, 2017). That is not to say that natural variations do not exist. Instead, social constructionism suggests that we create these categories, attach meaning to them, and then assign individuals to those categories as a subjective exercise of human meaning-making (Kang et al., 2017).

The application of social constructionism to the field of criminology is twofold, as it informs our understanding of the social construction of gangs and gang membership by practitioners and by those who engage in gang activity themselves. In that manner, the constructed reality of what it means to be a gang member by practitioners engaged in policing activities impacts their understanding of the motivators for engaging in gang activity and the factors that contribute to desistance. Further, when combined with a deterrence theory lens, the social construction of gangs by practitioners has implications for the activities employed to introduce sanctions that appeal to the rational cost/benefit of gang members. Likewise, gang members themselves socially construct, individually or as a group, their reality of what it means to engage in gang activity or affiliate oneself with a gang. Moreover, the socially constructed reality of gang membership has enormous implications for perceptions of the risks and rewards of engaging in gang activity. As an example, with respect to Operation Ceasefire, enforcement efforts undertaken by law enforcement were implemented based on their understanding of gangs and gang members; yet whether gang members perceived these consequences as meaningful and

having a deterring effect is dependent on their constructed reality. It is complex in the sense that meaningful consequences are only meaningful if constructed as meaningful by those facing the consequences. Likewise, severe consequences are only perceived as such if they do, in fact, raise the cost of engaging in gang activity beyond the benefits of subscribing to that lifestyle.

Forming a balanced theoretical perspective, deterrence theory and social constructionism are interlaced in a manner that allow for a deeper understanding of the complexities that make up engagement in gang-related violent criminal behaviour.

Operation Ceasefire as Transportable?

The differences between Canada and the United States with respect to both gang violence and access to weapons cannot be ignored. At the same time, as discussed above, the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, in particular, has had a history of gang violence and shootings. While occurring in waves, it does not appear to be slowing overall (Bouchard & Hashimi, 2017) and current interventions may need to be bolstered or new interventions introduced to counter these trends. In fact, a great deal of funding is going into expanding current prevention and intervention activities in several jurisdictions across the Lower Mainland, and in Surrey most notably (Government of British Columbia, Office of the Premier, 2017; Johnston, 2019). There may be an opportunity to further enhance these anti-gang activities through consideration of the transportability of Operation Ceasefire. Operation Ceasefire, and pulling-levers approaches in general, function off the principles of specific and general deterrence. To that end, the activities undertaken by Operation Ceasefire could be used to target offenders in the Lower Mainland and provide focused deterrence to individuals in the same manner as in the United States. However, to be effective, the deterrence must adequately consider the extent of the push and pull factors – the motivators – for engaging in gang activity. For this reason, it is important to explore the

potential motivating factors for Lower Mainland gang members as this may influence the effectiveness of Operation Ceasefire. Other challenges that need to be considered when determining the ‘transportability’ of Operation Ceasefire to BC include that the Lower Mainland is a huge geographic area that is policed by a number of diverse policing agencies, including municipal, provincial, and federal teams. To ensure uniform execution of a program across the agencies would be challenging and would require clear understanding and strong belief in the potential of the program to have a positive impact. There is also a cultural component at play, with a diverse population and communities that differ immensely within the Lower Mainland.

To begin assessing the transportability of Operation Ceasefire to the Lower Mainland of BC, it is important to start with assessing practitioner (i.e., police) perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of this program when considering the particular context of the Lower Mainland. In particular, practitioners were consulted with the goal of measuring perceived push and pull factors for gang involvement in the Lower Mainland, the flexibility of the youth versus adult legal framework for enabling the deterrent elements of the program, and under what conditions Operation Ceasefire would be perceived as useful in addressing gang violence in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia.

Chapter 5: Methodology

This chapter outlines the objectives, research design, participants, procedure, and method of analysis for the current study. The objective of this proposed research was to generate practitioner perceptions on the transportability of Operation Ceasefire to the Lower Mainland of BC with the parallel aim of reducing gang-related gun violence.

Research Design

This study was qualitative in nature (Silverman, 2005) and examined the perceptions of the transportability of Operation Ceasefire through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders across law-enforcement entities whose policing jurisdiction fell within the Lower Mainland (Statistics Canada, 2018). These included officers from two municipal agencies, one Royal Canadian Mounted Police detachment, and British Columbia's Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit. The sources were drawn from three major cities: Vancouver, Surrey, and Abbotsford. Attention was placed on those areas because Surrey and Abbotsford have experienced a large concentration of gang activity and major gang conflicts (Statistics Canada, 2015) while Vancouver has become a well-known attraction for gang members interested in dining and nightlife (Gahunia, 2017).

Participants

A total of 12 participants were interviewed, creating a small but rich sample of key police practitioners currently working with youth in gangs in the Lower Mainland. Law enforcement practitioners employed by police organizations (municipal and federal) were recruited as research participants. To meet the criteria for participation, individuals had to have direct experience working with youth involved in gang activity in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. Professionals that did not have experience working with youth with gang ties were excluded from the study as they were not able to provide information on their experiences nor

were they able to contribute insight into suitable approaches to working with youth/young adults in the community. Research participants included police officers in various roles. Source organizations are not listed for the purpose of ensuring that participants cannot be identified by their respective associations.

Participants were recruited using an emailed invitation to participate (see Appendix B), which was disseminated via email to one contact individual at each organization, who further distributed the author's contact information. Sent along with that invitation to participate was the Letter of Informed Consent (see Appendix C), which explained to participants the purpose, methodology, risk, and potential benefits of the research. Recruiting was conducted using convenience sampling by voluntary participation (Silverman, 2005), where participants contacted the primary investigator to schedule individual interviews if they wished to participate. This author is unaware of the number of practitioners who received this author's information for the purpose of this study, as this information was not shared with this author from the contacts that initially distributed this author's contact information; therefore, a response rate could not be determined.

Procedure

Several steps were taken to ensure the research was ethical in nature and designed to measure the objectives outlined above.

Ethics Approval

The author obtained approval from the University of the Fraser Valley's Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) prior to collecting data and was granted a certificate approving the ethics of this study (see Appendix G). One observation identified by the HREB was the potential for research participants to experience discomfort, anxiety, or emotional distress as a result of

discussions around sensitive topics, painful reflections, or upsetting experiences. To mitigate the risks to participants, it was specified to participants that they could end the interview immediately and also chose to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were also informed that if they did not want to answer a particular question, however, still wished to participate in the interview, they could simply ask to “skip” the question. Because participants were not asked to specifically discuss or recount experiences, it was highly unlikely that the content of this interview would be traumatizing. Nevertheless, participants were verbally provided with the number to the 24/7 Distress Phone Services Line (Lower Mainland): 604-872-3311.

Informed Consent & Confidentiality

In order to ensure that participants were fully aware of the purpose, methodology, risk, and benefits of the research, all participants were provided with a Letter of Informed Consent (see Appendix C) and provided the opportunity to sign the Consent Form (see Appendix D). This letter further outlined the confidentiality of the interviews and informed participants of the ability to withdraw from the interviews at any time during the process and prior to the thesis submission date.

To preserve participant confidentiality, particularly due to the nature of the study and its small sample size, the author assigned a unique code number to each participant in order to anonymize their interview responses. While the author elected to cite quotes from participants verbatim in an effort to preserve the integrity of participant responses, participant’s names were kept confidential through the use of given pseudonyms. Paraphrasing was used in instances where direct quotes were anticipated to have the potential to expose the identity of a participant. Privacy concerns were mitigated in the process of taping interviews by anonymizing and

transcribing them to remove any identifiers or names. Audio recordings were destroyed after transcription.

Interview process

The participants were informed that the interviews would take approximately 60 minutes of their time, with an additional 15 minutes of preparation directly preceding the interview to review the consent form, discuss potentials risks and benefits of participating, provide an information sheet (see Appendix E) and list of questions (see Appendix F), and address any questions and concerns participants had. The author was available for debriefing as necessary after the interview to answer any questions and to address any concerns or negative impacts experienced by the study. All participants emailed the author with dates and times that they would be available to meet. Interviews were then conducted in a professional office of convenience to the research participant.

Participants were informed, verbally and in writing by the Letter of Informed Consent, that the author would be recording the interviews with a voice recorder for accuracy when transcribing. To ensure confidentiality, the author stored the voice recordings on an encrypted password-protected USB drive that only the author could access. The interviews were manually transcribed by the author and then analyzed for patterns and themes (Silverman, 2005). All participants consented to participating and voiced having no concerns with the author using a voice recorder, and all signed the Informed Consent acknowledging this understanding. The signed forms were held in a locked filing cabinet at the author's home office and the interview recordings were stored on an encrypted password protected USB also locked in the author's home office.

Coding

The author coded the interviews by listening to the voice recordings, reading the transcribed interviews, and grouping patterns into themes. By taking a thematic analysis approach (Silverman, 2005), the author identified groups of words that related to the research questions. The author also looked for contradictions, theoretical connections, and other arguments that were relevant to the particular contextual landscape of gangs in the Lower Mainland and its implications for perceptions of program transportability. The author examined certain groups of words that were associated with motivators for gang involvement, intervention, deterrence and enforcement, perceptions of legal limitations, and messaging to gang offenders. The responses that most frequently occurred with the above words or concepts were then highlighted.

Chapter 6: Results

The research question addressed in this study was whether practitioners perceive Operation Ceasefire to be transportable to the Lower Mainland with the aim of reducing youth gang-related gun violence. More specifically, it sought to examine gang interventions through the same framework used in Operation Ceasefire to explore whether local law enforcement believe the interventions used in the United States can be successfully implemented in the Lower Mainland. To do so, 12 key stakeholders were interviewed; each currently employed in law enforcement capacities in various municipal, provincial, and federally organized gang units. Through analysis and coding of the transcribed interviews, the author identified three re-occurring themes across the aggregate of participants. These identified commonalities, repetitive concepts, and specific responses were grouped into three primary themes: (a) practitioners perceive gangs to be very different in the Lower Mainland; (b) practitioners perceive the Canadian legal system to hinder pulling-levers style approaches, though there are some promising avenues; and (c) practitioners perceive prevention and intervention activities to be important elements of a gang strategy, in addition to enforcement. The following section explores each of these three themes.

Theme 1: Practitioners Perceive Gangs to be Very Different in the Lower Mainland

A common theme that spanned all participants regardless of position or jurisdiction was the perception that gangs and gang activity in the Lower Mainland are fundamentally different than is seen in other parts of the country and in the United States. To highlight this difference, “Archer”, a uniformed member with 20 years of policing experience, stated that,

the interesting part about the Lower Mainland gang landscape is ethnicity and socioeconomic status typically doesn't have a significant determinant factor in who gets involved in the gang landscape or involved in selling drugs. We have individuals and kids who are university students, we have kids who come from the top 5% wealthiest families, just as we do have kids who come from the stereotypical at-risk upbringing.

This sentiment was echoed by “Arthur”, a strategic researcher with a wealth of knowledge around gangs and organized crime, who observed that:

locally, our gangs are very different than large urban gangs seen in places where dad is in jail and mom is working late and they have four brothers at home under the age of 10 and they need to do whatever it takes. That kind of ghetto mentality... we don't have that here.

The mentality and motivation of gang-involved youth for engaging in gang activity arose several times throughout many of the interviews. Several participants struggled to rectify the decisions made by these youth with the affluence and opportunity afforded to many of them.

“Allan”, a newer gang unit member, noted these unique features as well, stating,

the kids that I'm describing in the gang activity in the Lower Mainland are definitely not from poor families and have no other options – not to say that drug dealing is a viable option - but I could understand why a kid from a poor ghetto who has no money, no nothing, no parent or just one parent, and chooses that lifestyle. That's not the youth that we deal with here in the Lower Mainland, in my opinion.

As is visible in the comments above, the idea of choice emerged early on and persisted in many of the interviews. Several practitioners, including “Anthony”, a veteran member who is new to a uniformed gang unit, perceive these youth as having options and opportunity, explaining that,

a lot these people that are involved in this activity come from upper-middle-class families. One of the areas of town... has a large South Asian population. If you go there, the neighbourhood is, by appearance, a nice neighbourhood. There are lots of great family there and the homes there – those are million-dollar homes up there. Manicured lawns, nice vehicles in the driveway, professional people living there, raising their families. Having said that, there are members of these groups also live elsewhere in town and they're maybe not as financially well-off in terms of their family's economic status. But, a lot of the guys are from upper middle-class home, they drive nice cars, and they've got lots of money. The socioeconomic factor, in terms of not having a lot of material resources, is a factor for some, but for others they come from families that have means and they have other options.

“Archer” further highlighted these vast differences, going so far as to suggest that there are great differences when you compare Lower Mainland youth to others across the province, saying,

in other parts of the province you may have [individuals who] suffer from abject poverty and unemployment. And they have Aboriginal gang members ... from groups like Red Alert and Indian Possé coming to recruit them into drug dealing and they may not see any other option for their life or their future. Whereas here a lot of the kids who are involved go to school, they play sports, they have opportunity. Which sort of flies in the face of why kids join gangs, and yet they are.

This phenomenon is particularly jarring when compared to gangs in the United States, as described by “Austin”, a long-time member of a gang unit, who has utilized gang unit partnerships in the United States to better understand the issues here in the Lower Mainland.

we did go down LA and we have worked with the LA county sheriffs, ride along in Compton, and get to know and see some of their programs. But, the thing is that those are traditional gangs. Those are gangs that are coming from poverty areas. Our challenge, here in this community, is that we are dealing with guys that are getting involved in gangs because they want to be, not because they’re forced to be. It’s not because mom and dad don’t have food on the table, it’s because they want to be. They want to make a name for themselves and they want to have that power... We have kids that are involved in gangs that come from 3 or 4 million-dollar homes. It’s amazing that they have no reason why... No reason why, other than just for the pure sake of wanting more.

From “Austin’s” perspective, greed and a desire for power were primary driving forces, not a legitimate need for basic necessities of life. He also differentiated between gangs in the Lower Mainland and what CFSEU-BC and other local gang units have come to call ‘traditional gangs’ – alluding to the perception that the gang landscape in the Lower Mainland is ‘non-traditional’. Similarly, “Alice”, conveyed that,

we find youth who were becoming involved in gangs who have no reason to, on surface of it, become involved in gangs. They come from good homes, they are not lacking any basics of food or shelter, not needing for anything that would cause them to have to go out and make fast money in order to survive. What they want is the extra income that comes along with it to show off, and I’ll call it glitz, to show off the glitz of what their drug money can buy.

The idea of glamour and portraying an image came up several times, but many practitioners placed particular emphasis on the disparity between stereotypical impoverished gang-involved youth and the opportunity-rich youth that they see in the execution of their duties here in the Lower Mainland. “Amber” suggested that law enforcement is only beginning to recognize this unique feature, noting,

we’re starting to see a few programs, almost anti-gang initiatives, that target high school. I think a kind of hard reality check is what they need.... because a lot of these kids are spoiled, if that makes any sense. These aren’t these are kids that are struggling to eat or get food on the table, the kids that are, like I said, from middle-class families and upper-class families.

“Amber” went on to explain these differences in more detail, stating,

(h)alf of these hard-core gangsters that we’re dealing with, the ones doing drive-by shootings, usually go home park the car in the parent’s garage. They’re eating their parent’s food and getting their laundry done for them. That’s the kind of gangsters we have, right? It’s pathetic, but it’s the truth.

Some practitioners went as far as to compare the gang landscape directly to the United States. “Allan”, another uniformed gang unit member, stressed the difference in both motivating factors and manifestation of gang involvement through crime. He recounted,

I’ve traveled a lot to the US and I’ve worked with a lot of US law-enforcement agencies - the kids today in the Lower Mainland are not impoverished, they don’t come from nothing, some are very affluent, they come from very affluent families, they come from working-class families, they’re not starving or having to do robberies and this just to survive. There are a lot of cases in the US of very impoverished neighbourhoods where robberies are a standard thing, but that’s just a survival method. And they’re not clicking up here to survive from another rival gang, they’re strictly doing it for wealth, they’re doing it for the money side of it.

Some participants alluded to the presence of a cultural component in the Lower Mainland while reinforcing that gangs in the Lower Mainland are different from those seen in other areas.

To that end, “Allan” suggested,

most gangsters in the Lower Mainland aren’t poor or from the ghettos or anything like that. They don’t have to deal drug to make money – they could make money through

legitimate means. Most of their parents are hardworking immigrants or for first or second-generation here and have good jobs. They'll pretty much provide or do anything for their kids. But they take the easy way out.

Responses such as this raise the question: if not out of necessity, then why are youth becoming gang-involved here? Nearly all participants (n=11) describe the youth they deal with as having affluent and hardworking parents, opportunity for education and employment, financial means, and upbringings in which all of their basic necessities of life were provided. When asked what is driving gang involvement, "Archer" informed that,

there are some people who we know, from talking to them, they simply enjoy the lifestyle and they either know it's a myth and don't care, or they haven't realized it's a myth. The whole money, drugs, girls, fancy cars, the showy bling-bling lifestyle. They buy into the pop-culture stereotype of gangs: Scarface, Sopranos, Sons of Anarchy, like all of this, right? So, you have all of these things swirling in a melting pot and you have these thousands of kids who are looking at this, and some get pulled into this lifestyle.

"Andrew", a uniformed gang unit member, concurred,

they're drawn to this flashy lifestyle. When they're young they get recruited, I'd say by current gang members or older people who show them that if you come hang out with me, do this, do that, you get new shoes, cash, take girls out, spend money on their friends, they get new jeans or clothing. They get this glamorous lifestyle to recruit them, give them all that, then they start having to do more work for them. They become drug traffickers, or hit-men, or who knows what.

The draw of a lavish lifestyle is not unique. In fact, those same motivations can be seen in popular representations of gang life in the United States. The difference, it seems, is well described by "Amber",

I think it's a little different than what we see in other countries. It's very glamour based here... Vancouverites, we find, are really image oriented. I think that's a big sell for them – it's quick money and with money comes in nice cars and beautiful girls, right? I find a lot of the young guys it's kind of their goal, they want to flash all that stuff and get the hottest girls on arms. We're finding that a lot of the youth that we're dealing with are from middle-class or upper-class families, like educated parents. They still just like the whole thrill of it.

In other words, gang members in the Lower Mainland appear to be drawn by the perceived glitz and glamour, and the flashy and thrilling lifestyles. Some participants (n=10) alluded to this being a regional issue, perhaps due to the proximity to of the major metropolitan city of Vancouver. Others (n=9) felt that generational factors had a major impact in the youth they are seeing. “Adam”, a member with half a decade of experience dealing with gang-affiliated youth explained that this generation is different from those before it, stating that,

from what we’ve gathered so far, just by speaking with them on the street, is that the main motivation is quick money, access to like fancy vehicles, the girls, the restaurants... just basically like money. And, they think that, they associate money with power. That's their main motivation because a lot of the kids that we deal with right now, when you meet their parents, they're all wealthy. So, it's not because they don't have the money or they come from a hard neighbourhood. Most of them don't need to act that way – they have the money from their parents.

While almost all participants (n=11) identified the presence of unique motivators for gang involvement, others raised interesting points about their characteristics with regards to their operation. To that end, “Archer” said,

they are very different and that difference and that uniqueness translates to all aspects of our gang landscape. Our gang members are very transient. They have the means and opportunity to travel, whether it's interprovincial or internationally. They have influence on the gang landscape both nationally and internationally

Similarly, with respect to the mobility of gangs, “Angelo” noted of the Abbotsford gang activity of late,

I know these guys were all from around here, but were doing their business elsewhere, and then they go downtown Vancouver to do their partying and showing off.

“Archer” acknowledged the same, going so far as to say that the mobile and cross-jurisdictional gang activity seen in the Lower Mainland seems to negate what practitioners have come to know about gangs from other Canadian cities and the United States. He emphasized,

when you look at a city like Toronto, which is probably the most American-like Canadian city, in terms of its gang landscape where you have gangs based on neighbourhoods.

These gang members don't leave their neighbourhood or their small community. So, when we go and talk to our colleagues in other parts of Canada about our gang members, they are not only seeing our gang members there influencing their gang landscape, but they can't believe that our gang members, even low to mid-level gang members, have the ability to be transient all around the world. It's unheard-of, especially if you look south of the border to Chicago and some of these places.

“Aaron”, a sergeant overseeing a team of uniformed gang-unit members, echoed these concerns, noting,

there are no borders. You've got drug lines running and individuals constantly in conflict because there's such a demand for drugs and there's such a great number of individuals out there trafficking and working in networks, that it can happen. They can be in Surrey one day and Langley the next. They don't recognize civic boundaries.

He goes on to describe how these differences manifest in gang activity and have implications for the policing of drug trafficking, once again highlighting the differences between the Lower Mainland and other areas. “Aaron” suggested,

if you look at the US, take Southern California for example, you've got gangs who control certain square blocks and that's their turf. As long as they stay within their box, really there's no issues. If they cross into somebody else's turf, there'll be issues. There's not that division here in the Lower Mainland. It's not turf, it's not a square zone of area. Nobody owns anything, it's more fluid. They just run lines wherever they run lines, and when they do come in conflict, it's not necessarily about the turf, it's about two lines of drugs that are intersecting and you're taking business away someone. So, community engagement is a little more difficult because it's not geographically defined.

To that end, “Aaron” suggests where he perceives the violence to come from, if not from territorial conflicts. He said,

there's a huge multicultural population in the Lower Mainland and the gangs aren't ethnically driven. So, they're not... for the most part you don't have an all Vietnamese group or an all Somali group or an all-South Asian group. They have moving parts and they're all driven by money – they're all driven by profit. It's not a gang colour thing, it's not an ethnic thing, it's about money and as long as they're making money they're good. When something impedes that, that's when you see the violence come up.

In the same way that the gangs in the Lower Mainland have fluid geographical mobility, “Angelo”, a member who has long dealt with gang-affiliated youth in one of the areas that has

been a nexus for gang activity for the past decade, finds intra-gang mobility to be a unique factor. He stated,

I'll come in the morning and I'll check my overnight reports that come in from all over the Lower Mainland and I find out that this guy was checked yesterday at the bar with these guys. We wonder what these guys are doing together, they're from opposing groups. These guys don't usually eat together – they don't want to be seen together. As much as they say there is loyalty amongst thieves, there isn't much loyalty. These guys always go with the highest bidder.

In short, it appears that profit, glamour, and easy money trump all else. Consensus across participant interviews suggests that gang-involved youth in the Lower Mainland are fundamentally different from those in other parts of the province, the nation, and internationally. Most come from middle-class to affluent upbringings, have all necessities of life provided, and are afforded opportunities through the labours of their hardworking parents. They engage in gang-related activity for the lifestyle, motivated by lavish commodities such as cars, girls, fancy restaurants, and glamorous merchandises. They also appear to differ in their operation, prioritizing profit over loyalty and engaging in cross-group and cross-jurisdictional business in the name of personal gain. The nature of the beast is unique and the responses must be equally so.

Theme 2: Practitioners Perceive the Canadian Legal System to Hinder Pulling-Levers Style Approaches, Though Promising Avenues Exist

The second theme identified by many (n=8) of the participants was that they perceived the Canadian legal system to pose a challenge with respect to employing a pulling-levers approach. “Archer”, a member who has experience collaborating with police agencies internationally, made a direct comparison between Canada and the United states, stating,

the US criminal justice system is very different than Canada's. It's absolutely no secret, and it's very well documented publicly, the leniency that Canadian courts show

individuals, including individuals convicted of gun crimes and even violent gun crimes. In the United States where you have the most incarcerated population of our planet, not getting at whether that's a deterrent or not, the sentences are more significant there. The punishment for the crime is a lot lower here.

“Archer” went on clarify the process further and highlight some of the differences in the charge approval process. He explained,

the whole charge approval process in United States; you have a District Attorney model in the US. Here we have two layers of charge approval, two different types of Crown counsel; you have provincial Crown counsels, who work for the Ministry of Attorney General, and then you have the Public Prosecution Service of Canada. The federal Crown deal with all federal statutes like drug charges and things like that. Their charge approval standard is very high in British Columbia; it's the highest in Canada. It's not whether or not a criminal offence has been committed and that there are reasonable probable grounds to believe that [Someone] has committed the offence, and here's the evidence support it. Their test is whether there is a substantial likelihood of conviction in court, which is much higher when you think about that. We have to meet those charge approval standards in order for Crown to lay charges. In other provinces the police actually lay the criminal charge, so BC is unique even within Canada in terms of that.

Charge approval process was raised by many as a challenge, even in the face of good police work. “Alice”, a member with two decades of policing experience, submitted the same, suggesting,

the targeting gangs engaged in violent behaviour, reaching out to members of gangs, we do that. The explicit message that violence will not be tolerated, we do that. Yeah, the challenge is you're doing your work on the street... we don't do our own charge approval. It's through Crown Counsel and if they're not on the same page, nothing will go forward with charges.

Others highlighted these challenges at various points throughout the interviews, arguing that it is crucial that police and the criminal justice system have a common understanding of the issues at hand. “Adam”, a uniformed gang unit member, stated this well, saying,

with the court system, we're not really seeing eye to eye. Often when we get charges, everything will be tossed on a technicality or the perception of the Crown, they see something but it's hard to... They weren't there at the time of the traffic stop or whatever we did. So, you write a report, and they just base their decision on that, but it's hard to explain everything on a piece of paper. You're not living it and writing it – it's two

different things. That's a main problem we see. The court system is not playing ball with what we actually see on the street.

“Adam” went on to envision what it might look like if the court system and law enforcement were able to find common ground,

I wish that we could do better with our criminal justice system. So, at least, if you're involved in the lifestyle there's consequences; you will go to jail, you will face something. It's also if the entire country could be on the same page. Because you could see a crime in British Columbia and a crime in Alberta; over here you might be facing a month in jail, but you look in Alberta and you'll be facing a year in jail. So, if we could have the same across, so there's no... Most criminals, they know if you come to British Columbia and you're a career criminal, you'll have an easier life than if you were in Alberta or other provinces across the country.

The concept of deterrence through consequences arose again, with “Alexander” suggesting that without appropriate sentencing, deterrence is not possible. He went on to say,

I think what works well in the States is when the police put forward something, the courts there seem to be stricter and they'll actually deliver some kind of meaningful punishment. It's not the case here, we see. It's out of our hands, unfortunately. Especially with the gang and drug trafficking here, there definitely isn't that deterrent in the courts. You'll see guys that we'll get on multiple counts of trafficking and they'll just be on house arrest for a period of time. Or multiple firearms offences and they're on house arrest or they're on curfew, as opposed to actually being locked up for a period of time. There are very few that we've seen.

Light sentencing was criticized, along with the removal of mandatory minimums for firearms charges. More specifically, “Archer” credited changes in government and law as having a negative effect on sentencing, arguing,

people know that if you're going to commit crimes there's a chance you're going to be arrested. What is a deterrent - and many of them have told us this - is the potential of significant sentencing. When the previous federal government, the conservative government, had mandatory minimums for gun possession charges whether it was one year or two years, that caused many of them [gang members] to think twice. We have a long list of individuals who we've talked to, who have told us that they did not want to get caught with a gun because they did not want to go to jail for two years at a minimum. Whereas when the minimums are gone, or don't exist, they can do months in pretrial and get out. So, sentencing is a big thing.

“Archer” was not the only one to reference lenient sentencing as a major barrier to policing gang offenders. Several others raise particular criticisms of the *YCJA* and argued that the criminal justice system’s response to youth faces challenges due to the changing nature of youth involvement in gang activity. “Alexander”, a gang unit member with half a decade of experience, described some of these challenges, noting,

the *YCJA* is difficult to work under. I understand why, because in the spirit of it you’re dealing with kids, children. But, these 13, 14, 15, 16-year-olds aren't your average kid. They’re selling hard drugs, rolling around at midnight, wads of cash, sometimes weapons. They graduate from bear spray to... firearms. But, the law looks at them as kids. So, obviously we have to deal with them within those confines. Everything from the way they're arrested, the way they’re prosecuted, the way they’re held, does present a lot of challenges. When they do age-out and become adults, it becomes... I don’t want to say easier, because it presents a lot of its own challenges... With the Criminal Code it’s not as tricky or convoluted in some cases. So, the *YCJA* presents a lot of frustration sometimes.

“Anthony” concurred, also referencing times past where police played a different role in dealing with and diverting youth. He recalled,

in the time that I’ve been policing, there has been a number of changes. When I started policing it was the *YOA*. From my perspective, there were enough provisions in that statute to provide protection to young people. I see the *YCJA* as more restrictive in terms of law-enforcement's activities. There's a lot of emphasis on diversion and alternate means when it comes to young people under the *YCJA*. In Canada, I don't see the *YCJA* being effectively applied to [the] type of young people that I’m dealing with in terms of the level and scale of criminality that they’re involved in. I see the *YCJA* as fairly restrictive in terms of law enforcement goals and how we do our business.

Interestingly, some participants (n=9) suggested that it is not only the legal parameters that have changed, but the youth themselves. “Archer”, a member with direct experience working with at-risk youth and many years of utilizing the *YCJA* argued,

the *YCJA*, at the core of it, doesn't focus on sending kids to jail. It focuses on restorative justice, it focuses on intervention and mitigating future recidivism, on treatment...those sorts of things. Some of the challenges that we face are that these young kids are involved now in crimes that used to be reserved only for adults. Drug dealing, guns, assaults, kidnappings... serious crimes, indictable offences. I'm not sure the *YCJA* had the forethought to realize that's where our kids were going to go in 10 or 15 years, when we

nationally revised the YCJA in the early 2000. This very quick and almost immediate escalation to gun violence that a lot of kids have, and sometimes we talk about how when I was a kid we used to fight with our fists, and now they'll just go and get a gun and do a drive-by. The challenges is in finding that balance between the seriousness of the crimes that these kids are committing and the unbelievable negative impact that they're having on society. And balancing that with the fact that they're kids.

Many participants (n=10) sought to stress the level of blatant violence perpetrated by some of the gang-involved youth, suggesting that the appropriate entities are not addressing the violent behaviour early enough, leaving it to police attention at a stage that is beyond prevention or intervention. "Aaron" expanded on that, saying,

I just see the youth in the gangs and when you say 'well he's just a kid' – yeah, well, he was a kid with a handgun. Or he was a kid with a shotgun, or a kid with a knife. There's a problem there. That isolated incident is just the breakout point for what's going on with him, whether he was bullied or whether he was this, that or the other. There are issues behind every action, and if they're not getting addressed, whether at the family level, or at the counselling/ school level, or at the criminal justice level, then that kid is just going to keep moving through the system. Perpetually. Until one of two things: either he does something horrifically bad and goes to jail or he dies.

Based on participant responses, it appears as though there is a disconnection between the legal guidelines under which the gang units operate and the reality of working with today's youth in the Lower Mainland. "Aaron" went on to question the relevance of the YCJA in our current day and age, suggesting,

the YCJA is more designed towards rehabilitation and not putting them into the system, which I understand at the very young ages of 12 and 13. I don't know - and this is only my personal opinion - I don't know if the current YJCA is really relevant, because you look at the age of kids now and their development. A 12-year-old today is probably far more developed, far more educated, far more exposed to information than 40 years ago. I'm 20 years old and my 10-year-old knows more about world stuff than I knew when I was 20. With access to the Internet, everything is on your phone. When I was a kid I had to go to a Public Library and pull out an encyclopedia. Everything now is real-time. So, I don't know if the YCJA really benefits youth because I honestly don't know if it's relevant anymore. I think that when they talk about youth, and your program you're looking at 25 and below but youth is technically 12 to 18. I see 12-year-old kids dealing dope. They're trafficking drugs, trafficking heroin, trafficking methamphetamine, or trafficking fentanyl. Their access to this, their access to information and their access to texting and trafficking is far more sophisticated than organized crime groups 30 years

ago. And they're 12-years-old! So, I don't know if the YCJA act is actually relevant because the kids today aren't the kids of when that was created. I am not saying incarceration for all kids is appropriate, but I also think that there needs to be an understanding of... there has to be a consequence to an action.

"Alexander" echoed these concerns, questioning the intent of the legislation and how that intent fails to meet the reality of gang-affiliated youth. To that end, he noted,

I don't think the spirit of it was designed for hardened little kids who want to sell drugs. A lot of these kids, I wouldn't say they're the most intelligent, but they're definitely street savvy and they're good at what they do because they've been trained well by somebody else. And, typically, they think they're invincible at 15, and they're not. It seems like a lot of them are taught how to circumvent different responses. They're targeted by the recruiters because they are youth. Because these guys know we won't have the same enforcement options available to us that we would have in dealing with an adult. Today, it's almost like they... their target audience is 13 to 15 or 16. It's where we see a lot of these guys starting out as dialers, dealers. Street level guys. Certainly, the YCJA doesn't... I think maybe it needs to be updated and maybe tiered, to an extent. If you have a kid that's broken a window or stolen something, that's one thing. We're dealing with drugs and extreme violence, it should be a different thing.

Interestingly, it appears that it is not only the police who have noted this issue. In fact, gang members themselves have begun leveraging the legislative shortcoming to better their business. "Adam", a long-time uniformed gang unit member, suggests that gang-affiliated individuals have observed,

the younger they get people involved, the better it is for their business. They know that... I would say, unless we deal with a young offender who is a chronic offender with multiple charges, it's like almost weekly or monthly, most of these young offenders will be released, as seen, with a court date. The leaders, or the older subjects involved in the group notice that. They see it as a business move. They'll have all those young offenders, they don't know any better, so they can basically brainwash them. They will use them to sell drugs and commit crime because they know they won't be going to jail. While that person is on the street, they're money. If that person goes to jail, they're not making money. So, they know that there's only so much we can do when they're 14, 15, 16. That's challenging for us. Because, if you're working in a group who is 60% - 70% young offenders, it's hard to attack that group because no matter how much work you put in, there are always on the street. They're not in jail, you're not affecting their business. Because, within a few hours, they'll be back at whatever it was they were doing.

Against these odds, the gang units are coming up with strategies to utilize deterrence activities to combat gang violence. One such initiative is the Bar Watch and Restaurant Watch programs in Vancouver, otherwise known as Inadmissible Patron programs. While youth under the age of 19, the legal age to enter a primary liquor establishment in BC, would not be the target of Bar Watch, Restaurant Watch may be used for youth gang members. These initiatives function to remove individuals from restaurant and bar premises to deter them from accessing the Vancouver nightlife, thereby countering the image Lower Mainland gang members are seeking to develop. “Alice”, a long-time police officer, describes this in action. She said,

we finally have kind of come to that point and we all know our targets really well. We spot them driving or we spot them in bars and restaurants and we’re on them. We’re having those talks, we’re searching them, we’re doing everything we can within our legal means to make sure that they know that they can’t get away from us for longer than a day. They seem really irritated by it, but it means it’s working because we’re constantly on them.

With respect to Bar Watch, in particular, “Andrew” describes an experience of discussing the program with an individual who was subject to removal. He recalled,

I’ve had people say “It’s my girlfriend’s 21st birthday and all of her friends are going out to this club downtown... do you guys think I’d be able to go?” We tell them, if we see you in there we’re going to kick you out and then your whole night is ruined. You chose this lifestyle. Don’t hang out with these gang members. Don’t hang out with these drug traffickers. Stop drug trafficking and maybe you would be able to go out with your girlfriend or whoever to a bar or a club downtown. But because we have that in Vancouver a lot of them don’t come out down here. They’ll go out in Surrey or Burnaby where they don’t have the programs in place.

Other jurisdictions have come up with strategies to the enforcement barriers they perceive, electing to use alternatives to the *Criminal Code* in order to deter gang activity. “Anthony” provided an example, saying,

we’ll use a number of different strategies. We will use all the different Federal and Provincial acts to try to shut Joe Smith down. Whether that’s taking his vehicle away because we enforce traffic laws, which causes his driver’s license to get suspended. Now he can’t drive and deal drugs anymore because he can’t drive a car. That might be

putting the bail conditions on him and having that buy in from Crown and probation to make sure the bail conditions are asked for and not modified or watered down.

“Alexander” agrees, comparing the situation to the United States and the legal sanctions available as differing greatly from those available in Canada. As a result, enforcement activities for gang-affiliated youth have expanded to incorporate the use of legislature beyond the *Criminal Code of Canada*. To that end, he suggested,

the States enjoy more freedoms than we do here, with how their legal system is set up, their constitution. As far as how the pulling levers is described, I think we do something like that here, maybe, you’re not always going to go after your target for selling drugs if you can get them on Motor Vehicle Act infractions or Bylaw infractions. You’re going to take any enforcement action you can against them, especially to make it difficult for them to move around the community and sell their poison in the community. We’ll have conversations and we’ll use whatever legal methods we can to deter them or go after them.

“Angelo” described yet another deterrence tool, advising,

one of the tools we use - very effective - is civil forfeiture. You go after a guy and you take his house - that really disrupts him. You take his cars, anything that he is using for the purpose of committing the crime, and you take that and it is very, very effective. But, they restart. These guys, one day they’re driving the fanciest car on the market and wearing Gucci clothes, all the bling, and you see him two months from now and he’s got holes in his track pants and he’s wearing shoes with the sole coming off. You hit them in the pocketbook. They don’t care about the cops. If I go after that guy at that level of selling drugs, the first thing he’s going to do is call his very good lawyer who is going to get him off on some technicality. And after you spent all those resources on an investigation? It kind of explodes in your face. Then he walks out giving you the finger and smiles in your face and says “see you guys didn’t get me”.

And, yet, offenders adapt. Participants suggested that gang members have been quick to learn of policing tactics and develop ways to evade or circumvent sanctions for their illicit activity. In one example “Austin” described,

we also have seen the criminal groups utilize rental vehicles as a mechanism to get their drugs out there. What these guys will do is they’ll find a fraudulent ID, a fraudulent credit card, whatever. They go in and rent a vehicle for 2, 3 weeks, maybe a month and utilize that vehicle as their transport. Because, if they use their own car they run the risk of running into us, and if they run into us we may take that car and what we call ‘civil forfeit’ it. If we know it’s tied in with drugs we’ll seize that vehicle from them.

Nevertheless, police continuously seek to deliver enforcement that is responsive to the unique nature of gang involvement in the Lower Mainland. In a pulling-levers fashion, “Aaron” discusses using coordinated efforts to identify, target, and deliver explicit deterrent messaging to offenders. He said,

what we do is... the analysts, they take the list of bad guys in groups and then from that they move individuals who we can target. So, the pulling the lever side is they're issued a letter that says “you're a bad guy. You're a public safety threat and there are going to be members that are going to pay attention to you. We are going to curfew check you, if you're driving we're going to pull you over, you are going to face a lot more police scrutiny because you pose that imminent threat and imminent risk the people of the community”. Most recently, there was that publishing thing in Surrey where they went out they identified five or six individuals in the group said “if you're around these people you stand a very good risk of dying because they're going to either be shot or shoot somebody”. And, sure enough, they did.

He goes on,

we tell these people ‘we're going to pay extra special attention to you because you pose that much risk, if you don't want the police around don't engage in criminal behaviour. Don't engage in violent behaviour. Don't associate with gangsters’.

Clearly, participants perceive the criminal justice system in Canada to present enormous challenges to the execution of their duties as gang officers. Namely, they feel as though sanctions are too lenient for the particular offences being committed by young offenders, going so far as to question whether the intent behind the YCJA truly applies to the violent gang-affiliated youth with whom they interact with in the course of their duties. Weaknesses in the YCJA and the CCC are not only noted by officers, but by those gang members who are seeking to evade arrest and prosecution for their actions. One method of doing so is to use rental cars to evade the negative consequences of having their vehicle impounded or forfeited as an instrument of crime. Another is the exploitation of young offenders who are likely to escape serious punishment for their actions under court diversions that were once left to the discretion of police officers. At the same

time, gang units have begun responding to legislative weaknesses by leveraging alternative codes such as the MVA, civil forfeiture, and municipal bylaws. Further, they have shifted their focus to specific deterrence activities through the identification and targeting of violent offenders for intervention.

Theme 3: Practitioners Perceive Prevention and Intervention Activities to be Important Elements of a Gang Strategy, in Addition to Enforcement

The third theme that emerged through this thesis was the perception by practitioners that enforcement strategies made up a core function of their gang units. At the same time, many identified prevention and intervention activities as integral to a long-term strategy to combat youth gang violence. “Amber” described enforcement efforts, suggesting,

anywhere we can disrupt and dismantle, absolutely, that's what we do. It's the meat and potatoes of our unit and the organized crime section as a whole. We identify groups that have the highest propensity for violence or are pretty much THE group. Right now, it's just disruption. As soon as we see anything out there we will pull over cars, we go through bars and restaurants, it's kind of like the frontline interactions.

“Allan” agreed with the merit to this targeted approach, suggesting that specific deterrence was a tactic that is currently utilized in his jurisdiction, saying,

one of the approaches we have... is targeting a specific group of youths using every avenue in terms of surveillance, informants, uniform police presence, and enforcement. It's targeting a specific group... there are lots of groups so you're taking a small bite of the apple but I think that's an approach that we have here. The criteria for choosing this group was because they believe that they were responsible for a flare up of shootings, basically, in the Lower Mainland. There's been a lot of shootings in the Lower Mainland and we had a group that we thought was in Vancouver that was responsible for it. We had pretty good information that they were responsible for it. That's why it was targeted.

The focus on specific deterrence was echoed time and time again by participants, arguably because many felt the Canadian legal system provided them little recourse for the use of general deterrence. As a result, projects have been undertaken as a collaborative multi-jurisdictional fashion enforcement. “Arthur” suggested,

you need to have equality of responsibility, I think is very important, and the closest thing I would think that we have is the PTEP model. Provincial Tactical Enforcement Priorities - our policing targeting model. Every six months they tell us exactly who is of interest, who is up-and-coming, what groups, what are the highest threats, what commodities are they interested in, what criminality are they are interested in... They submitted it, we de-conflict it, they tell us what they are going to own and every six months, in front of their peers, they have to report on what they've done.

The targeting of priority or prolific offenders, based on practitioner responses, appears to be an area in which many of the respondents agreed. More challenging, though, was consensus around what tactics best addressed those offenders. Nonetheless, many felt that a pulling-levers strategy is currently being utilized one way or another. "Allan" responded by stating,

based on you describing the Operation Ceasefire program I definitely think we're using parts of it here. Whether we're using it to the truest form, I can't speak to that. But I definitely think there are pieces that we are using here in Vancouver. The goal is to disrupt [the violence]. Once again, we're looking for bigger charges but if there's smaller charges we would basically stack them. Stack is a term meaning that they'll just stack them on later, add them on later. But we're looking for bigger charges where they'll get significant jail time.

"Amber" felt as though enforcement for gang-entrenched youth was not tough enough.

She went on to describe,

I think we need to be tougher. I think we need to start enforcing things a little more. Because for years it was like always "oh, he's just a kid, right, like let's just forget it and try to go after the big guys", but the thing we're not realizing these guys, within 3 or 4 years, become the big guys. They're climbing pretty quick. Like some of the names of the guys that we have, [redacted] was just teaching them as an SLO in high school, and now they're some of the top-tier gangsters that we have. I think we're failing at enforcing it, to be honest.

Another respondent, "Angelo", found that pulling levers needs to be target group appropriate. He describes his position, stating,

I think this whole pulling levers where you go after a guy with everything you have - I think is very effective. If done properly. And you can't do that with the guy who is selling dope on the side, some guy you've never heard about, somebody who is 17 years old and just got involved in it. That's not going to work. That's just going to make him more of a gangster or more of a criminal. But, with somebody who has been through all these other approaches and they're continuing to... their enterprise is continuing to

succeed, you need to disrupt that. To do that, you go after him with a military tank if you have to. You need to make it very uncomfortable and pretty much impossible for him to continue operating his business. You need to disrupt his infrastructure. Take his car, tap his lines and make him aware of it, put conditions on him that he can't carry cell phones, conditions that he is not to contact other people that are involved in criminal activity.

At the same time, “Angelo” felt that pulling-levers approaches are resource intensive and unsustainable. He suggested,

we have used the approach of being in their face, going after and following them, being very overt with them – throwing everything we were able to throw at them. Yes, we were able to send out a message that these guys can't do their business here because we're all over them. We're pulling them over all the time searching their vehicle. We did that hardcore enforcement approach – that takes up a lot of resources focused on one person. I think that's what you refer to when you said “pulling levers”. We've done that. I think when you're doing that, especially for organization like us because we're such a small department, you're focusing so many resources on one or two key individuals and it takes so much more. The approach we've been taking now is more of an outreach approach - we're trying to talk to individuals and meet with their families. We're still hard on them, at times, if we see that these guys that we are trying to talk to give us the lip service. They say “yes, yes, yes, you are right, I know, I won't get involved”. And then we covertly follow-up to see what they're doing and we still see the same activity, that's where we go to a different approach. We're going to be more hardcore: issuing tickets for traffic violations enough so that they lose their license and we disrupt their way of doing business. And you'll see these guys get driven around by someone else and we'll do the same to that person too. These guys start getting the message... usually they end up being criminally charged.

The allocation of more members or resources to enforcement was perceived to be unsustainable, but also short-term in its effectiveness. This was described well by “Austin”, who stated,

for the most part, what we'd traditionally done to combat the shootings was just put more police officers on the street - more enforcement. That was effective, but it was short-lived effectiveness because we can't sustain that many police officers with that kind of a budget all year round. We just can't. It was costing the detachment millions of dollars.

If the allocation of additional members or resources to the issue was not effective, it is important to consider what the alternative strategies would be. When asked, “Arthur” suggested,

It's full-spectrum: educating the good kids to keep them good, preventing at-risk people from joining, intervening and interrupting before things really accelerate or aggravate or

amplify into high levels of violence, to disrupting using conventional and unconventional methods... using municipal bylaws, provincial acts, federal... leveraging all legislation, even the Immigration Refugee Protection Act.

With particular focus on prevention and intervention, “Austin” described how the model used in his unit was developed and evolved over time. He reflected,

in order to curb the violence that we are seeing on the streets, in order to curb the shootings, it wasn't just through enforcement. We actually needed to go into the schools and start communicating with the administrators, looking at the behaviors these kids are displaying, and seeing if it was growing, developing, and manifesting itself in the current violence we are seeing today. In order to deal with that, the end result, I felt that the most effective way that we can do it based on the resourcing that we had and the trends we were seeing, is that we actually had to develop something to deliver to the younger generation. Grade 6 and grade 7. Further to that, it wasn't just an education piece that we are looking at. We were also looking at the first entry that these kids will go into will be into grade eight. We need to educate and provide the grade 8 youth workers and educators and give them tips on what we're looking for, the trends we're seeing, the type of drugs that are being sold, how kids are being brought in. That way, they know how to report it and recognize it early enough that we can get to it, maybe do some intervention.

Early intervention was perceived as important by many respondents, with several identifying schools as an important area for partnership. “Amber” described her position,

I think my biggest thing is the relationship between gang cops and Vancouver schools needs to be strengthened. I think my perception is the Vancouver school boards very afraid to bring in an anti-gang kind of initiative. They think it has a negative connotation, whereas we're trying to explain that we're trying to educate. Because [we] can't ignore it. That's actually a problem and Vancouver is very well known for. I mean you meet certain people and ask what school they go to and they'll say [redacted] or [redacted]... the reactions are usually “oh...”. Well there's a reason for that, right? Because there's issues going on in those schools. So, I think that's a partnership that needs to be helped.

A similar issue is occurring in Surrey, with “Austin” going so far as to advise that much of their targeted prevention was developed a result of a concentration of issues in one particular school. He informed,

where the concentration of the violence is occurring, we identify two particular high schools within those dots. One of them being [redacted] and the other one being [redacted]. So, based on the analytics and what we were learning from doing our drug investigation at street-level, from images that we were seeing on kid's phone, coupled with talking to parents who were reporting the same thing. We decided what we were

going to do was go and talk to the administration of those two particular schools through the Surrey School District main office. We started our conversations and, from there, started working with the school liaison officers, and a program we have here called the Wrap program for working with high-risk youth.

“Austin” went on,

we identified that we need to introduce a gang prevention program and education program, based on what we’ve learned here coupled with our drug investigations. The target audience, because a large part of the kids who were involved in the stuff were between the ages of 13 and 16, with recruitment starting that young. We found that where we needed to actually start hitting the kids and delivering a prevention message to curb the violence and stop it, was actually at the grade 6 and 7 level. So, we’re looking at 11 and 12-year-olds.

The importance of outreach and school partnerships was well identified by “Andrew”, who stated,

You can never do enough speaking to kids and reaching out to kids, going to schools and stuff like that. Because at a youth age once they see police officers and realize we’re just humans like everybody else, they’ll feel more comfortable coming and talking to us.

At the same time, the pace was perceived by some to be unmanageable. For example, “Aaron” raised concerns, saying,

I don't know if we can keep up with the flow of the kids that are constantly coming into this, because it's almost like they're being raised in this culture - whether it's an ethnic community or whether it's an area - but they're developing and assimilating to the group of kids that they're associating with. I don't think we'll ever catch up to it. But, it's a combination of engaging with the community, engaging with the parents, and engaging with the youth and trying to show them the actual outcomes. I think we're doing a good job, but I don't think that there's enough of us to go around and make a really big effect.

Another strategy explored by participants was the use of interventions for youth who were not deeply entrenched in gang activity. Many participants differentiated between these youth and those who required enforcement-based approaches only. “Arthur” describes,

I know CFSEU is enforcement, but it is very important to realize that you can’t arrest your way out of this. I think for certain offenders this is the ship and it’s sinking and it’s going to be very difficult to get them out of that level of embeddedness and entrenchment in that world, but there are people who come on board in terms of being witnesses. For

the people that are still up-and-comers, I think there's lots of different interventions that aim to educate them on the myths and realities though End Gang Life.

He went on to say,

In my professional opinion, I think when we're dealing with young people we need to give them off ramps. They're on a bad highway and we need to give them off ramps. You may take exit 2, I may take exit 10 down the road. But then it's going to get to a place where these off ramps are not working and they need a little bit of disruption and enforcement action – let's go down there. It's all case-by-case and dependent. Are we talking guns? Explosives? Are we talking drugs? Fentanyl? It depends on the scenario but I think our mentality is young people are going to be engaging with our intervention and existing team.

“Anthony” agreed that there are different levels of embeddedness in gang activity by youth, describing instances where one-on-one interventions are highly useful. He stated,

What we try to focus on right now is actually targeting people and groups for enforcement, but within those groups we're also looking for the ones that are involved in the activity that we think might be early into their gang or criminal activity. Or those that come from a home that has enough support that we can maybe go in and intervene with the family and intervene with the person. We try to pull them out of that and form a support network around them that is pretty rigorous in depth. We try to pull them out of the lifestyle. We have a couple guys right now, one in particular I'm thinking of, he comes from an upper/middle-class - so there are financial resources there. His mother is now very engaged with what he's doing because now he's hit a watershed moment where he's been arrested for drug trafficking. So, he's now facing charges in court, he's got some bail conditions, and his mother is really focused and engaged on pulling him out of there. And we're working with him and his family, some of his extended family members as well, to try to get him out of this lifestyle. Trying to separate him from this group he's become involved with. That intense one-on-one type of intervention is something we're trying because we see that with the right person and the right circumstances, that this is an effective way of pulling someone out.

“Anthony” elaborated further, identifying the interconnected nature of intervention and enforcement activities by the unit. He informs,

We'll do this multifaceted approach where we will target a guy, arrest him, charge him, and then part of the intervention process will start with arrest and the bail conditions that we ask for. One of the goals being that we want to separate that person from the organization he is working for. That will often involve bail conditions of no contact with the other people that he was arrested with and restricting his movements and his ability to get into and operate a motor vehicle or be in a motor vehicle with somebody else that is

not the registered owner. The first step from the enforcement is to separate them from the activity and the people that they're associating with in that organization.

Another participant described prevention, enforcement, and intervention as a graduated system. “Alexander” suggested that.

One of the first things we try to do is prevention. We try to reach out to kids as young as [grade] 6, 7, 8, all the way up to high school kids. The presentations are tailored to each age demographic – obviously you’re not going to tell a six-year-old the same things you’re going to tell a 16-year-old. It’s just trying to give them the real-life view of what gangs and drugs are like. So, there’s that prevention piece to try and get them before they get involved. And then, failing that, there’s an enforcement interdiction strategy. Which is where we come in with the street enforcement and targeting people for criminal activity. And then there’s also a gang exiting strategy. So, if you are in this life, we can help you get out of it.

The provincial policing model uses a similar approach, which was described in detail by “Archer”, who stated,

The intervention team supports exiting, the exiting supports intervention, and we have successfully helped dozens of clients exit the gang lifestyle based on customized strategies that the intervention team has come up with. A bit of a holistic hub-type of approach, almost like an integrated case management type style, where they would engage with corrections and probation service providers and sit down with these people and figure out the root issues that are driving them to become involved in the activity that they’re involvement in, whether it's hardcore gang activity or they are new drug dealers.

Further, “Angelo” emphasized the importance of outreach and community involvement, adding,

the most beneficial approach, the one that is having the more long-lasting effect, is the outreach approach where you’re getting involved. It’s not just us... their family too. In my section we say we have velvet gloves but an iron fist if we need it. Even with this kid that I was just telling you, we’re following up and watching him constantly. Now we have the employer telling us what’s going on, members of his family, we talk to him, to the community social workers, we’ve followed him into the gym to see who he’s hanging around with.

Also focusing on a long-term perspective, “Archer” described the need for large-scale cultural shifts, in addition to intervention efforts. He endorsed,

it's a marathon, not a sprint, so we need 10, 15, 20 years of sustained pressure and strategies if we're going to have an impact. There needs to be a generational and a cultural shift in young people thinking it's okay to sell drugs and become a gangster, to get involved and escalate to gun violence.

Practitioner perceptions about the efficacy of certain approaches were highly telling of the system in which they are currently operating. Many felt as though general deterrence strategies were ineffective, arguably because the current legal sanctions hold little power of deterrence over individuals who are perceived to face minimal consequences for their actions. Many respondents suggested that a 'more boots on the ground' approach is futile from a long-term perspective, with nearly all suggesting that attention needs to be paid instead to prevention and early intervention efforts. It was suggested that school and community partnerships need to be fostered to have a sustained, generational effect on youth gang involvement. At the same time, many felt as though enforcement activities through specific deterrence are effective and that many are using a pulling-levers style approach already or perceive that it could be useful. It appears as though there is merit in outreach, prevention, intervention, and enforcement activities together to address youth gang violence as a part of a comprehensive gang strategy.

Chapter 7: Discussion

This study was undertaken to answer whether criminal justice system practitioners perceive Operation Ceasefire to be transportable to the Lower Mainland with the aim of reducing youth gang activity and gang-related gun violence. More broadly, the author set out to generate greater understanding of the current issues faced in the policing of youth gang violence in the Lower Mainland and to determine in what manner, and under what conditions, Operation Ceasefire is perceived to be useful.

The interview findings are valuable in that they provide insight into the unique issues associated with gang involvement in B.C. Currently, literature on gangs in British Columbia is at a crossroad. Commonly accepted notions of the motivating factors for gang involvement have been challenged by researchers in British Columbia who have examined the unique landscape presented in the Lower Mainland (Descormiers, 2013; Gahunia, 2017; McConnell, 2015). The current research adds to the conversation by presenting practitioner perceptions that have long gone unheard and by generating conversations about Operation Ceasefire as a strategy to combat youth gang violence. The following section will be structured much like the preceding chapter, with each theme examined in the pertinent previous research literature with attention to theoretical considerations.

Theme 1: Practitioners Perceive Gangs to be Very Different in the Lower Mainland

The review of the literature determined that there is a continued lack of consensus on what constitutes a gang and how to clearly define this term. This issue was also found in the current study. The language used by practitioners clearly differentiated the population of gangs in the Lower Mainland from those in the more traditional literature, using phrases such as “that’s

not the youth that we deal with here in the Lower Mainland” and “those are traditional gangs...that are coming from poverty areas.”

Deterrence theory and social constructionism provide a window into what efforts practitioners believe will be effective in combatting youth gang violence in the Lower Mainland. Each practitioner’s conceptualization of the issue as reflected in the results is socially constructed, with each participant perceiving, interpreting, and creating their own reality of the issue (Bergen & Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1985). Notably, in the current study, each practitioner expressed the perception that the gangs in the Lower Mainland predominantly represent a marked departure from what they perceive to be normal motivations for gang involvement and gang activity in other parts of Canada and in the United States. By summarizing practitioners’ perceptions of the Lower Mainland gang context, this research has established that there is a clear consensus among those working in the field that the Lower Mainland gang conflict presents unique challenges to the criminal justice system. This finding implies that gang prevention, intervention, and suppression activities in the Lower Mainland cannot simply adopt successful programs operating elsewhere, but needs to consider the unique motivators and forms of operation displayed by gang members in British Columbia.

In explaining their rationale for perceiving Lower Mainland gangs to be distinct from the traditional literature, participants focused on two closely related matters: the motivations to join gangs and the characteristics of gang-related activity. While some youth engage in gangs due to what has been described as traditional risk-factors in other parts of Canada and the United States (e.g., poverty, substance abuse in the home, absentee parenting, violence, etc.), all participants observed that the majority of the youth in the Lower Mainland that they interact with come from middle-class or affluent homes, wealthy communities, and families who were able to provide

their families with all of the basic necessities of life. All participants impressed that these features were unique to the Lower Mainland and that they were, at times, baffling to law enforcement. Many suggested that the opportunity and wealth afforded to these participants flew in the face of why they believed youth typically engage in gang activity or affiliated with gangs – necessity.

The perception of a glamorous life of luxury that can be gained by engaging in gang-related enterprises was suggested by some practitioners as the most important motivator for some of these young individuals. Decker et al. (2014) and Carson and Vecchio (2015) suggested that youth may choose to desist from gang activity after their perception of what it meant to be gang involved shifts or is shattered. This suggests that when it comes to prevention of gang involvement, practitioners in the Lower Mainland need to provide effective counter-messages.

Practitioners stressed that most Lower Mainland youth are not subject to a ghetto mentality and that the criminal activity they are engaging in is not for survival. The question that arises, then, is why are youth in the Lower Mainland engaging in gang activity, if not for what has been labeled ‘traditional’ motivators? The practitioners’ explanations described profit, glamour, easy money, glitz, power, wealth, nice cars, and pretty girls – a lavish life with wealth and fine commodities. Immediacy also plays a role: while the desired lifestyles can be attained through legitimate means, youth elect to engage in gang activity because it results in more immediate rewards. The perception of a glamorous life of luxury that can be gained by engaging in gang-related enterprises was suggested by some practitioners as the most important motivator for some of these young individuals.

Practitioners also perceived that Lower Mainland gangs differed in their operation. Many suggested a prioritization of profit over loyalty, with individuals and gangs engaging in cross-

group and cross-jurisdictional business in the name of personal gain. Much of the previous research suggested that gangs are traditionally confined to a geographical area or territory where they engage in their activity (Knox, 2006; Prowse, 2012; Thrasher, 2013; Weisel, 2002). Recent research by Bouchard, Morselli, Hashimi, and Oulette (2016) and McConnell (2015) have begun to recognize that gangs today in British Columbia appear to be structured around a profit nexus, rather than territorial based. The current research is congruent with this notion, with many participants suggesting that gangs in the Lower Mainland are fluid, complex, and frequently changing with a focus on profit generation and economic prosperity.

The social construction of gang life, both by gang members and the police dealing with them, is paramount when considering strategies to combat the violence. Weaving in deterrence theory, the issue can be examined based on the assumption that individuals are self-interested and make their decisions based on the perceived benefits and costs of doing so (Winterdyk, 2016). Based on participant responses, it appears as though some practitioners hold the belief that offenders are choosing to engage in gang activity despite an absence of perceived need - a choice which some of them struggled to comprehend. Many expressed their perception that the youth have autonomy and opportunity, suggesting that their decision to engage in gang activity is a conscious decision. It is an analysis of the cost and benefit experienced by offenders that is deeply important when considering what approaches will be effective in deterring gang involvement. It is vital to understand the factors that uniquely motivate offenders, at the very least through the perceptions of those practitioners who work closely with them.

The different motivators for gang involvement and gang activity itself in the Lower Mainland may present challenges to the 'simple' adoption of gang programming operating successfully in other jurisdictions. Police strategies must be reflective of the issue at hand here,

which has been clearly articulated by the participants as different from the United States and other places in Canada. This reality has implications for their perceptions of the transportability of Operation Ceasefire, and for policing of gangs in the Lower Mainland as a whole. It is through the following themes that this phenomenon will be explored with greater detail and with attention to the particular program activities of Operation Ceasefire that practitioners believe to be transportable to the Lower Mainland.

Theme 2: Challenges in the Criminal Justice System and the Use of Specific Deterrence

The second thematic result centered around practitioner perceptions of the legal context present in Canada and the way in which it is perceived to affect their ability to effectively combat youth gang violence. Two primary issues arose in participant responses; the first was a belief that the legal measures permissible under the YCJA may not be appropriately responsive to the violent nature of the gang-affiliated youth they are dealing with, and the second was a resounding frustration with the charge approval process and judicial sanctions being handed to offenders. In turning to the literature, the YCJA was introduced in 2003 with the aim of reducing Canada's overreliance on expensive and ineffective custodial sanctions, particularly in the case of non-violent crimes (*Youth Criminal Justice Act*, 2002). The YCJA saw a reduction in the use of youth courts and custodial sentences, and the increased use of extrajudicial measures or sanctions for minor crimes (Zang, 2016). In the years following enactment, positive outcomes were observed in the form of a significant reduction in the use of courts and custodial sentencing for youth and a decrease in regional variations with respect to the enforcement of youth justice (Bala et al. 2009).

Despite these successes, practitioner perceptions in this study indicated that many believed that the YCJA was not intended for application to young violent gang-offenders. Several

expressed opinions that the youth of today are far more educated, developed, and exposed than they ever were before, leading them to be highly effective in their criminal pursuits. Others were concerned that youth were being diverted at the court level, when police strongly believed they posed a risk due to their involvement in the gang landscape. One participant suggested that the *YCJA* does not provide adequate sanctions for gang-affiliated youth engaging in pre-violent crimes, such as possessing or carrying firearms and engaging in drug trafficking. Many criticized the *YCJA* for this shift towards what they perceived to be insufficient sentencing, whereby they see youth increasingly prosecuted in a manner that is not responsive to their level of dangerousness. Another participant questioned whether the *YCJA* provided police with the grounds to impart upon the youth that there would be consequences to their actions. It seems that practitioners not only believe that the youth are wise to the challenges perceived to be inherent in the act, but other older gang members are also smart to the limits of enforcement. Practitioners recounted instances in which older gang members have exploited the enforcement restrictions afforded by the *YCJA* by utilizing youth to conduct their business. For example, utilizing youth under the age of 18 to engage in the trafficking of illicit substances, knowing that there is a greater likelihood that they would be released at court and not face significant penalty, which, in turn, means only a short interruption in their business when the youth are arrested. Practitioners equally believed that there were immense challenges in utilizing the law to introduce appropriate sanctions even for those offenders who had graduated to the *CCC* by the age of 18. With regard to adults, practitioners felt as though bail was being granted at higher rates than they had seen before and that offenders were facing more lenient sentencing than in prior years.

The second challenge perceived by practitioners was the more general challenge of the process of charge approval that exists in British Columbia. In contrast to most other

provinces/territories in Canada, recommended charges in British Columbia are forwarded by police for approval from Crown Counsel (Ministry of Justice, 2016). Effectively, Crown Counsel act as gatekeepers, determining if a charge is likely to result in a conviction and whether it is in the public's interest to proceed (Ministry of Justice, 2016). It is important to note that the participants were not posed a question regarding their perceptions of the efficacy of Canadian laws in managing offenders – rather, responses were generated through questions of what challenges they perceive to exist in considering the transportability of Operation Ceasefire. Independently, all participants raised concerns regarding the state of charge approval and prosecution in British Columbia - a result that is telling in itself. Participants also expressed concerns over the leniency of Canadian courts, even in cases where individuals were found guilty of violence and gun-related offenses. One participant speculated that there is a disconnect between what police are dealing with on a daily basis in the community and perceptions of Crown Counsel, the message becoming lost somewhere between police writing a charge report and Crown Counsel evaluating it for approval. Statements reflect the view that Crown 'isn't on the same page' or 'isn't playing ball' with police. Others find that the burden of proof required in BC is simply too high, allowing violence to go unpunished when Crown is unwilling to lay charges and undertake court proceedings based on the test of substantial likelihood of conviction. All raised concerns that offenders believe there to be no meaningful consequences to crimes committed in BC, particularly in comparison to Alberta and other provinces across the country. Without the threat of meaningful punishment, police reflect that they have struggled to generate deterrence strategies for individuals involved in serious crime. They recount that some offenders have reported serious jail time to be a major deterrent, though police are unable to follow through on threats of consequences they were once able to – particularly with respect to being

able to cite mandatory minimums for firearms offences, among others, that are no longer in effect. Interestingly, many respondents advise of alternative enforcement techniques that they have begun to employ and perceive to be effective. These sanctions included the use of municipal by-laws, civil forfeiture, the *Trespass Act*, and *Motor Vehicle Act*. It is also important to note that many practitioners perceived that policing responses in the Lower Mainland, particularly with respect to the PTEP and PVGO models, were functioning well to utilize criminal intelligence to target and message offenders that they have been identified as posing a threat and will be under particularly close police attention. These insights are valuable, particularly when analyzed through deterrence theory and social constructionism.

Deterrence theory posits that individuals are self-interested and rational beings, and that individuals will not commit crimes if the cost of doing so outweighs the benefits (Winterdyk, 2016). Deterrence theory functions on three principles: a) that a message is relayed to a target audience; b) that the audience receives the message and perceives it as a real threat; and c) that the audience makes rational choices based on their perception of the risk and rewards associated with their actions (Winterdyk, 2016). Deterrence, when coupled with a social constructionism lens, is complex in the sense that meaningful consequences are only meaningful if constructed as meaningful by those facing the consequences. Likewise, severe consequences are only perceived as such if they do, in fact, raise the cost of engaging in gang activity beyond the benefits of subscribing to that lifestyle. The reality of the responses generated through this research indicated that not only are youth engaged in gang activity for reasons that are different than in other parts of the world, but practitioners feel as though they are battling against a system that does not provide meaningful consequences in the form of criminal convictions for violent gang offenders. More specifically, practitioners perceive challenges in utilizing both the *YCJA* and the

CCC to present effective deterrence for the offender based on criminal charges alone. It may be that programs such as the PVGO and PTEP models support the effective messaging to a target audience, but if that message is not perceived as a realistic threat, the audience will make their rational choice accordingly.

Interestingly, many practitioners did express a belief in the efficacy of pulling-levers style deterrence using specific deterrence by way of alternative sanctions. One such example is evident in responses around the Bar Watch and Restaurant Watch programs, which employ the *Trespass Act* to eject patrons who are deemed inadmissible to licensed establishments and restaurants due to the potential threat they pose to public safety. Effectively, the punishment is enacted through disallowing offenders to enter bars, restaurants, and clubs – which directly attacks motivations for gang involvement, such as the perceived glamorous and lavish lifestyle. Another method described by participants was the *Civil Forfeiture Act*, which allows police to seize instruments or proceeds of crime under a lesser burden of proof than criminal charges. This piece of legislature provides the police with a means to convey to an offender that if a vehicle is being used in dial-a-doping it will be forfeited, thus having expensive implications for offenders who want to drive luxurious vehicles and show off their wealth. In other words, practitioners perceive that general deterrence is not be achievable in the current criminal justice system given that a concerning amount of criminal offences are not resulting in charge approval and resulting in much less severe sanctions. Instead, practitioners rely on other innovative means to dissuade an individual from engaging in gang activity, which emerges in the use of municipal by-laws and various legislative acts. The British Columbian gang context therefore differs from many other jurisdictions in two important ways; the first being the differing motivations for gang involvement, including the perceived sophisticated lifestyle; and the second being the difficulty

with enforcing criminal sanctions for gang-related behaviours via the criminal justice system. This has forced practitioners to become creative with their sanctions, using alternative approaches to sanction offenders by targeting things that are meaningful to them, including their material goods and lavish and sophisticated lifestyles.

The above observations have a direct impact on the perceptions of whether and how Operation Ceasefire is transportable to the Lower Mainland. Again, Operation Ceasefire relies on a “pulling levers” strategy where police focus attention on high-risk populations with the threat of enforcing severe sanctions should their behaviour not change, and then provide alternative options for them to support a change in behaviour, such as via a gang exiting program. Based on analyzing practitioner perceptions, there are three primary conclusions from practitioner perceptions. First, it appears as though overwhelmingly, practitioners do not believe that the current criminal justice system supports the use of an Operation Ceasefire approach that relies on criminal charges and severe sanctions, given the issues with obtaining charge approval and achieving severe sanctions from the courts. Second, despite the issues with charge approval and sentencing, many practitioners do believe that a pulling levers approach is feasible, using specific deterrence to introduce every sanction possible to impose significant costs to engaging in gang activity, such as through the civil forfeiture process. Further to that, many expressed that they are already engaging in a pulling-levers style approach through various programs such as gang-exiting. Finally, Operation Ceasefire targets known gang members or high-risk youth with their enforcement strategies; in the British Columbian context, practitioners felt they are effectively utilizing criminal intelligence to target priority offenders through the PTEP and PVGO programs. In other words, there are elements of Operation Ceasefire already present in British Columbia’s response to gang members and gang activities, although as the following

section will explain, there are additional components necessary for an effective gang strategy that both prevents and suppresses gang activities.

Theme 3: Prevention and Intervention Activities are Important Elements of a Comprehensive Gang Strategy

Whereas prevention programs attempt to deter youth from ever joining a gang, intervention strategies are focused on those who are already involved. More broadly, anti-gang programs can be characterized using a variety of different approaches. Mellor, MacRae, and Pauls (2005) reviewed Canadian programs and services, categorizing programs into three levels of intervention: primary (prevention, raising awareness); secondary (intervention); and tertiary (rehabilitation, exiting strategies). Conversely, Gravel et al. (2013) distinguished between prevention, gang activity regulation, and corrections-based interventions. Beyond developing this typology, Gravel et al. (2013) found that gang activity suppression was the only category in which evaluations consistently found positive outcomes. Similarly, Braga and Weisburd (2012) found that focused deterrence strategies were associated with a statistically significant crime reduction effect overall. Yet, there is simply not enough empirical evidence to support the use of one approach over another given the lack of adequate evaluations (Decker, 2002; Klein, 2011; Papachristos, 2001).

In the current study, practitioners were asked several questions to ascertain what strategies were currently being employed and what their perceptions of the efficacy of those approaches were. They were also asked if they felt anything was missing from their current strategies and if they felt the program activities used in Operation Ceasefire were perceived to be transportable to the Lower Mainland context. While many expressed that their enforcement and disruptions activities took priority, they also perceived that a ‘more boots on the ground

approach' would not fix the problem. Enforcement activities were described as the targeting of individuals or groups with a high propensity for violence and disrupting their activity through any means possible. Several described using methods such as surveillance and informants, in addition to charge stacking and any means necessary to introduce sanctions. One participant likened it to making offenders uncomfortable and rendering it impossible for them to continue operating their business. These methods primarily centered around specific deterrence, targeting and enforcing on specific individuals and investing significant resources to bring forward punishments for illicit and violent activity by any means possible. At the same time, the shared sentiment by practitioners was that these efforts feel futile in the long-term. Many felt they were plugging a drain while the water was still running, so to speak. Taking a long-term perspective, one participant aptly suggested that they cannot arrest their way out of this problem. All respondents, in some capacity or another, raised the topic of prevention and early intervention for youth who are not yet gang involved or who are in the early stage of their involvement. They cited partnerships with the school system and many placed considerable value in the use of school presentations that speak to the general population of youth in a middle or secondary school. One participant described the ideal gang program as 'full-spectrum', while another stressed the importance of reaching out and building connections with young children and youth so that they have a positive reference of a police officer. Another suggested that the two pieces go hand in hand; prevention to help youth before they come involved, and, failing that, enforcement and interdiction. Overwhelmingly, practitioners perceive that a pulling-levers style enforcement approach is effective, but that a long-term gang strategy must include prevention and early intervention.

With respect to the third and final theme, both social constructionism and deterrence

theory add value to the analysis of practitioner perceptions, though in different ways. One practitioner expressed wanting youth to see officers as humans, while several others impressed their view that positive interactions with the police are important at a young age and in schools. It is through these efforts that practitioners attempt to alter youth's perceptions of law enforcement and build pro-social references that may impact their future decision making around gang involvement. Many felt that how youth socially construct their views of the law and law enforcement would have a contributing effect to remaining out of a gang. Conversely, when deterrence theory is applied, it became evident that many practitioners perceived that their ability to promote general deterrence was hindered by the criminal justice system, which leads to their reliance on specific deterrence for youth engaging in gang activity. Many practitioners therefore directly expressed support for a pulling-levers approach, with some stating that they felt this strategy is actively being utilized in their current approach. At the same time, as noted in the previous theme, practitioners expressed dissatisfaction with the legal tools available, namely criminal charges, to be used to deter youth from engaging in gang activity. To that end, many felt that other intervention methods are necessary for addressing overall youth gang involvement because gang suppression is not a viable long-term approach. Gravel et al. (2013) argued that practitioners should advocate for the use of a comprehensive gang strategy, which is one that incorporates at least one prevention and two gang regulation activities. Practitioners felt as though early intervention, particularly in schools, is necessary to have a large-scale and long-term impact on youth gang violence issues in the Lower Mainland.

These perceptions, analyzed through a theoretical lens, have an impact on how the participants identify the potential transportability of Operation Ceasefire to the Lower Mainland. First, most practitioners believe in the general effectiveness of deterrence,

particularly through pulling-lever style intervention approaches. That being said, many believed that they were already employing these strategies to the best of their ability within the constraints of the Canadian legal system. Where practitioners felt more attention needed to be paid was in regards to early prevention and early intervention for youth, particularly in the school system and developing those connections with youth in the community. It is of note that many such programs exist, though few have been evaluated or have not made their evaluations results publicly available.

What practitioners describe as necessary is more accurately described as a comprehensive strategy, rather than a suppression strategy, for a variety of reasons. In the second theme, practitioners expressed their thoughts that the criminal justice system in the Lower Mainland hinders approaches that rely on general deterrence. In response, practitioners are focusing their efforts on specific deterrence and utilize a plethora of alternative sanctions to impose punishment on offenders. In that manner, they are creating meaningful punishments for offenders by appealing to their motivations for engaging in gang activity, from removing opportunities to show off wealth and celebrity status in the nightclubs to seizing vehicles and assets through civil forfeiture. At the same time, most express that these efforts are in vain if a long-term approach does not include prevention and early intervention activities to avert youth from joining a gang in the first place. They believe this to be effective as it alters a youth's perceptions and views of police officers and provides them with positive references of law enforcement before becoming entrenched in the gang lifestyle.

The following conclusions can be drawn with respect to practitioner perceptions of the transportability of Operation Ceasefire to the Lower Mainland:

- a) Gangs in the Lower Mainland are different and strategic responses need to recognize the

- unique motivators for gang involvement and address those factors;
- b) Practitioners do not believe that the Canadian criminal justice system supports the use of an Operation Ceasefire approach through criminal charges alone, which significantly hinders general deterrence efforts;
 - c) Pulling levers is feasible and currently being utilized, particularly through the use of specific deterrence by way of direct messaging to offenders of consequences to their actions and introducing meaningful sanctions through whatever legislative means are available;
 - d) Practitioners believe that an effective, long-term approach requires prevention and early-intervention activities, in addition to enforcement and suppression; and
 - e) Practitioners believe they are already sufficiently utilizing criminal intelligence to target priority offenders and relate their notification process through PTEP and PVGO to that of Operation Ceasefire.

These conclusions, taken together, form a clearer picture from which recommendations and policy implications will be explored in the following section.

Chapter 8: Limitations, Policy Implications, & Future Research

Research Limitations

Sample Size & Geographically Diverse Research Area

While this study has yielded several important findings regarding the unique nature of the Lower Mainland gang context and the corresponding policy and programming it requires, there were a number of limitations that should be acknowledged. The first limitation is the small sample size from which this research was generated. Still, the study covered a large geographic area, generating 12 participants from three major police units (one RCMP detachment and two municipal police forces) and the provincial enforcement entity for British Columbia. While other RCMP detachments and local municipal forces could have been invited to participate, the participant organizations were chosen because they represent three large cities that have seen significant gang activity in the past decade. Still, future research should expand this study to a larger geographic concentration of participants. In addition, it would be useful to compare between urban and rural police forces across British Columbia, and activities in the North versus South geographical regions of BC. Likewise, it would be interesting to compare the strategies used by small, medium, and large police detachments.

As a result of the small sample size, caution should be used in making generalizations about practitioner perceptions and the findings should be treated as preliminary. Yet, it is noteworthy that the participants came from a variety of roles, including constables and sergeants. By interviewing this range of stakeholders, valuable insights were generated regarding practitioner perceptions of Operation Ceasefire, and gang-activity in general, in the Lower Mainland.

A second limitation, closely related to the first, stems from the geographic nature of the area in which this study was conducted. According to Statistics Canada (2017), the Lower Mainland constitutes an enormous 5,067 square kilometers and is home to 2.8 million people. As a major port region bordering the United States, the Lower Mainland is incredibly culturally diverse, which translates into cities that are vastly different from one another. While many participants noted that Lower Mainland gangs frequently cross jurisdictional boundaries to conduct their activities, it is also important to note that there are differences between these cities and their populaces. As a result of this limitation, it is noted that the perceptions garnered in this study should not be taken as a complete representation of all practitioner perceptions within that area, nor a full account of the gang activity in each of the cities from which participants were drawn.

Limited Perspective

In addition, the current research is significantly limited in that it makes inferences of the perceptions of gang members based on the responses and insights of the practitioners who work with them. Articulating these perceptions using evidence collected from practitioners who are policing this population helps to form an evidence-based assessment of the nature of the gang problem and push/pull factors in the Lower Mainland. While their perceptions are formed by fieldwork, it would be very helpful to gather data from the youth themselves about whether this is true and, if true, to what extent it applies to the youth gang population in the Lower Mainland. It would be interesting to explore the opinions of gang members, particularly in relation to the motivations for gang involvement and their views on deterrence, and analyze these responses alongside those of practitioners. The decision to exclude gang members as participants was well-considered and reasonably justified. The scope and aim of this research sought to garner

practitioner perceptions as an important first step in determining the transportability of Operation Ceasefire to the Lower Mainland. In other words, if practitioners believe that this program is not viable in this region, it is questionable whether gang members' perceptions are necessary or relevant. While accessing practitioners' perceptions was a useful first step to take in the assessment of the gang programming in the Lower Mainland, future research into the motivations for gang involvement would benefit from accessing this group of individuals, if possible.

Limited Transportability Assessment

This body of work, by no means, constitutes a comprehensive assessment of the transportability of Operation Ceasefire to the Lower Mainland. Instead, it chose to focus on practitioner perceptions, which represents only a fraction of the information needed to determine if a program would be successfully transportable. A comprehensive needs assessment would require a formal, evidence-based process by which the specific needs and resources of the community could be assessed. At minimum, this would include an examination of legislation, policies, timing, resources, capacity, organization and community support, and consideration for and concerns with respect to implementing the activities and interventions in the receiving context. The data is beginning to show that the context in the Lower Mainland is different, therefore, a needs assessment should also be conducted by each community adopting a gang prevention, intervention, or suppression program to ensure it both accurately meets their target population's needs and that the legal framework necessary is in place to support it. It is imperative that practice be well-informed by research, which could constitute evaluations of program process, implementation, and outcomes. Research of this nature would have great value to other communities wanting to adopt well-established gang programs, allowing them insight

into which elements of the program must be implemented and which can be tailored. Nevertheless, this body of work forms a preliminary exploration of police practitioner perceptions towards transportability in British Columbia, which is notably limiting.

Policy Implications

Firstly, this research has demonstrated the need to better understand the gang landscape present in the Lower Mainland and develop programs that are responsive to the unique factors present here. Many of the participating organizations appear to integrate this knowledge into their practices, which is most visible in the cross-jurisdictional collaboration evident through practices such as PTEP and PVGO. At the same time, policy makers need to be acutely aware of these features and consider them when directing programs or policy changes. This is particularly true with respect to inter-agency information sharing and collaborative work on investigations and special projects.

Second, policy-makers will ideally see from this research the incredible value in speaking to the practitioners who are working on the frontline of an issue. In this study, it became evident that practitioners perceive immense legal barriers to deterring gang activity. Further, all had valuable insights about the needs of the community in which they work, suggesting that a comprehensive gang strategy is most effective. Policy, moving forward, can reflect the feedback of practitioners as valuable insight into the functioning of a community and its needs.

Third, a comprehensive transportability assessment of Operation Ceasefire can be undertaken to adequately address some of the questions that remain unanswered about the program's implementation in the Lower Mainland. Many practitioners believed that functions of the program were already incorporated into their strategy, while others raised concerns for its feasibility within the Canadian criminal justice system. Should there be sufficient political

appetite, it is recommended that a considerable amount of further exploration be undertaken before implementation. As with any program, rigorous empirical evaluation should be integrated into the program at inception – it is only through good research that we can understand what is working, why it is working, and what is not. To that end, the following section raises several areas for potential future research.

Future Research

This research serves to indicate what police practitioners perceive of the gang context in the Lower Mainland and constitutes a starting point from which a variety of future research can commence. Firstly, future research needs to be conducted to understand the unique features of the gang landscape in the Lower Mainland. To do so, gang-affiliated youth and adults must be consulted to determine if the socially constructed views of police are accurate with respect to the push and pull factors for gang involvement. From a deterrence perspective, it is imperative that future research delves into the motivations for gang involvement, as such insights have an enormous impact on the efficacy of deterrence efforts.

The second area of research, and arguably the most important, constitutes a long-echoed call for rigorous evaluations of gang programs. The vast majority of programs being employed in the Lower Mainland have not been empirically evaluated and, of those that were, public access to these results is lacking. In order to understand if and how our gang programs, proposed and already in effect, are having an impact on gang activity, we need to dedicate attention and resources to evaluation. An emphasis on evidence-based practice is long overdue.

Third, practitioners highlighted through this research that the nature of criminal activity related to gang involvement in the Lower Mainland is not geographically restricted and frequently crossing jurisdictional boundaries. While practitioners spoke to the ways in which the

various policing bodies collaborate, efforts are inherently hindered because the Lower Mainland is policed by several RCMP detachments, municipal police forces, and the provincial enforcement agency. This research functions to reinforce the need to examine the efficacy of the efforts undertaken by the various agencies in their respective communities, particularly as approaches become increasingly concerted through programs such as the PVGO and PTEP.

Next, while gun violence may be a central concern raised with regards to the gangs in the Lower Mainland (Bolan, 2009; Bolan, 2015; CTV News, 2018; Ferreras, Brown, & Little, 2018, 2018), it would be helpful to determine if this is, in fact the most pressing feature requiring targeting. A main tenant of Operation Ceasefire is to reduce gun violence; therefore it would be useful to consider whether the program can achieve the same level of success in a region where there is significantly less firearm ownership and far fewer firearm-related homicides (Dinshaw, 2015; Hoskin, 2011; Kozusckanich, 2015).

Finally, as identified by practitioners, there is a belief that comprehensive gang strategies are most applicable to the context of the Lower Mainland. Future research could explore this sentiment further and examine how the current approaches either meet or fail to adequately address the gang issues present. As this research focused on the entirety of the Lower Mainland, which includes diverse cities, future studies could also delve into the specific nature of gang activity, comparing and contrasting between jurisdictions. Finally, as identified in the limitation section, this study by no means constitutes a full transportability assessment for Operation Ceasefire. If there is sufficient interest, a comprehensive assessment may be warranted.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

Violent gang activity has long dominated headlines and public attention in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. Shootings and acts of violence shake our communities and cost taxpayers immensely as criminal justice practitioners and policy-makers address the problem through prevention, intervention, and suppression activities. Despite these efforts, gang violence persists, increasingly among the youth of our communities. This body of research functions as a preliminary examination of a popular American program, Operation Ceasefire, and gauged police practitioner perceptions of its transportability to the Lower Mainland with the aim of reducing gang-related gun violence. Using the lens of both deterrence theory and social constructionism, this study identified key findings and analyzed perceptions, generating valuable insights. Conclusively, this study constitutes a platform from which policy and program changes can be made and a starting point from which future research can be undertaken.

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Appendix A: Systematic Review of Ceasefire Replications

STUDY	ACTIVITIES	MEASURES	RESEARCH DESIGN	OUTCOMES
OPERATION CEASEFIRE BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS (BRAGA, KENNEDY, WARING, & PIEHL, 2001)	- Formation of an Inter-agency working group. - Identification of chronic offenders - Direct law-enforcement attack on illicit firearms traffickers supplying youth with guns - Pulling levers strategy to deter violent behaviours (especially gun violence) in chronic gang offenders. - Direct messaging to target gang offenders - Service matching with community partners	- Citywide youth homicide rates - Citywide gun assault incidents - Citywide shots fired calls for service - Youth gun assault incidents in one high-risk district	- Interrupted time series design comparing pre- and post-intervention - Quasi-experiment comparing youth homicide trends in Boston relative to youth homicide trends in 39 other U.S cities and 29 New England Cities	- Statistically significant 63 percent reduction in youth homicides, 23 percent reduction in gun assaults, 32 percent reduction in shots fired calls for services, and 44 percent reduction in youth gun assaults in one high-risk district
THE HOLLENBECK INITIATIVE LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA (TITA, RILEY, RIDGEWAY, GRAMMCIH, ABRAHAMSE & 2011)	- Formation of an Inter-agency working group. - Identification of chronic offenders, (often drug trade-related). - Direct law-enforcement attack on illicit gun carrying and use. - Pulling levers strategy to deter violent behaviours (especially gun violence) in chronic gang offenders. - Direct messaging to target gang offenders - Service matching	- Violent Crime (homicides, attempted homicides, robberies, assaults & kidnappings) - Gang crime (violent from and terror threats, firearm discharge, vandalism, and graffiti committed by gang members) - Gun crime (including any of the above crimes that	- Interrupted time series design comparing pre-intervention and post-intervention. - Quasi-experimental design with three comparison areas within Los Angeles: 1) Boyle Heights (area highly afflicted with gang violence) compared to the remainder of Hollenbeck; 2) five police reporting districts where the	- In Boyle heights, gang crime decreased significantly during the suppression period of intervention and violent, gang and gun crime all decreased significantly during the deterrence period. - In the five targeted police reporting districts, violent crime decreased significantly when compared to the

with community partners - Stringent enforcement of public housing residence requirements for properties used by gang members. - Two phases: Suppression (4 months) & Deterrence (2 months)	involved use of a firearm)	intervention was targeted compared to remained of Boyle Heights; and 3) the Census block groups comprising the turf of targeted gangs compared with a group of census block groups scattered throughout Hollenbeck (matched with characteristics of targeted area).	rest of Boyle Heights in both suppression & deterrence period (37% versus 22%). Neither gang crime nor gun crime decreased significantly when compared to the rest of Boyle Heights. - In the census block groups, violent crime decreased significantly compared with the matched blocks (36 % versus 3%). Gun crime decreased significantly during the suppression period (28% versus 18%) but returned to pre-intervention levels in the deterrence period. Gang crime did not decrease significantly.
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**INDIANAPOLIS
VIOLENCE
REDUCTION
PARTNERSHIP
(IVRP)
INDIANAPOLIS,
INDIANA**

**(MCGARRELL,
CHERMAK, WILSON,
& CORSARO, 2006)**

- Formation of an Inter-agency working group. - Identification of chronic offenders, (often drug trade-related). - Direct law-enforcement attack on illicit gun carrying and use. - Pulling levers strategy to deter	- Citywide homicide rates	- Interrupted time series design comparing pre- and post-intervention - Quasi-experiment comparing gun homicide trends in Indianapolis to 6 other Midwestern cities.	- Significant reduction (34.3%) in homicides rates while no other city experienced a significant change.
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	violent behaviours (especially gun violence) in chronic gang offenders. - Direct messaging to target gang offenders - Service matching with community partners			
PROJECT SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS CHICAGO, ILLINOIS (PAPACHRISTOS, MEARES, & FAGAN, 2007)	- Formation of an Inter-agency working group. - Identification of chronic offenders - Direct law-enforcement strategies focused on supply-side firearm policing - Pulling levers strategy to deter violent behaviours (especially gun violence) in chronic gang offenders. - Direct messaging to target gang offenders - Service matching with community partners - Multiagency case review and prosecutorial decisions	- Dependent variable: lethal and nonlethal criminal violence: homicides and aggravated batteries and assaults. Six intervention measures: - Dummy variable indicating group assignment - Percentage of gun offenders in the areas who have attended a notification meeting - Number of federal prosecutions - Person-month sentences of federal prosecutions - Number of ATF gun seizures - Composite index of each of these measures.	- Quasi-experimental design with near-equivalent control group: treatment and control districts were selected non-randomly from the city's 25 police districts (two adjacent police districts were selected as treatment districts and two others were used as near-equivalent control groups).	- Treatment districts experienced a 37% drop in the quarterly homicide rate. The average quarterly homicide rate decreases to 24.2 per quarter after implementation compared to 38.2 before implementation. Association between nonlethal criminal violence and various program dimensions: - Negative and statistically significant correlation between homicide rates and percent of offenders in a beat who attended a forum - Number of ATF gun seizures were negatively associated with gun homicides. - Number of

federal prosecutions associated with a small decrease in homicide rates
 - Negative and statistically significant relationship between the cumulative index of components with homicide rates.

**OPERATION
PEACEKEEPER
STOCKTON,
CALIFORNIA
(BRAGA, 2008)**

- Formation of an Inter-agency working group.
- Identification of chronic offenders
- Pulling levers strategy to deter violent behaviours (especially gun violence) in chronic gang offenders.
- Direct messaging to target gang offenders.
- Service matching with community partners.

- Citywide homicide rates

- Interrupted time series design comparing pre- and post-intervention
- Quasi-experiment comparing gun homicide trends in Stockton to other midsize cities in the State of California.

- Mean monthly count of gun homicide incidents decreased by nearly 35 percent, from a pre-intervention monthly mean of 2.9 incidents to an intervention period monthly mean of 1.9 incidents. After the Peacekeeper strategy was no longer in place, the monthly mean number of gun homicides increased slightly to 2.1 incidents, but, relative to the pre-intervention series, remained low

**PROJECT SAFE
NEIGHBORHOODS
LOWELL,
MASSACHUSETTS
(BRAGA, PIERCE,**

- Formation of an Inter-agency working group.
- Identification of chronic offenders
- Pulling levers

- Citywide assaultive gun-violence incidents (aggregated assaults &

- Interrupted time series design comparing pre- and post-intervention
- Quasi-experiment comparing

- Mean monthly count of gun homicides and gun assault incidents decreased by 27.8%, from a pre-

MCDEVITT, BOND, CRONIN, 2008)	strategy to deter violent behaviours (especially gun violence) in chronic gang offenders. - Direct messaging to target gang offenders. - Service matching with community partners.	homicides)	assaultive gun violence incidents between Lowell and the largest cities in the State of Massachusetts over a 10-year period.	test monthly mean of 5.4 incidents to a post-test monthly mean of 3.9 incidents.
CINCINNATI INITIATIVE TO REDUCE VIOLENCE (CIRV) CINCINNATI, OHIO (ENGEL, TILLYER, & CORSARO, 2013)	- Formation of an Inter-agency working group. - Identification of chronic offenders - Pulling levers strategy to deter violent behaviours (especially gun violence) in chronic gang offenders. - Direct messaging to target gang offenders - Service matching with community partners	- Violent incidences; 1) Gang-member incident (GMI) and non-gang member incident homicides and; 2) citywide violent firearm offenses	- Pooled time series cross-sectional design examining monthly citywide violent incidents between 2004 and 2010 that were the direct target of CIRV. - Examination of the relationship between social service provisions with changes in targeted violent crime outcomes during the post-intervention period using fixed-effects regression analyses with a total of eight separate models (i.e. four distinct time periods across two targeted violent crime outcomes)	- average number of GMI homicides declined from 3.8 to 3.0 per month, while non-GMI homicides actually experienced a slight increase from 2.5 to 2.6 per month. - Total number of violent firearm incidents across the city experienced a modest reduction from 36.6 offenses per month to 34.4 offenses per month - Regression analysis of 8 separate models revealed no evidence of an instantaneous effect of social service on GMI homicides or on monthly violent firearm incidents in the post-CIRV intervention period.
PROJECT SAFE	- Formation of an	- Aggregated	- Comparison of 82	- Treatment cities

NEIGHBORHOODS) NATIONALLY IMPLEMENTED (MCGARRELL, CORSARO, HIPPLE, & BYNUM, 2010)	Inter-agency working group. - Identification of chronic offenders - Threat of federal prosecution for illegal gun possession - Pulling levers strategy to deter violent behaviours (especially gun violence) in chronic gang offenders. - Direct messaging to target gang offenders - Service matching with community partners	violent crime offenses (homicides, robberies, and aggravated assaults)	treatment cities and 170 non-treatment cities, controlling for state incarceration rate, police density, concentrated disadvantage and population density. - Variable dosage level for treatment groups.	in higher dosage contexts experienced statistically significant (4.1% on average), though modest, declines in violent crime whereas non-target cities and low dosage contexts experienced no significant changes in violent crime during the same period.
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Appendix B: Invitation to Participate

Hello _____,

My name is Amanda Juhasz and I am a student in the Master of Arts in Criminal Justice Program with the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV), working under the supervision of Dr. Amanda McCormick and Dr. Zina Lee. I am recruiting participants for my thesis research, which is focused on examining practitioner perceptions of the transportability of Operation Ceasefire to youth in gangs in the Lower Mainland.

I am recruiting participants who have experience working with gang-affiliated youth to participate in an interview. The interview will focus on exploring Operation Ceasefire as program aimed at reducing youth gang violence within the context of large urban cities in the Lower Mainland. It is anticipated that the interview will take approximately 75 minutes total, and will be conducted in a private location of the participant's preference.

Participation in the interviews is on a voluntary basis. Your decision to participate or not in this study will not affect or be shared with your workplace. You will not be identified as a participant in the final copy of this thesis. It is anticipated that your participation in this study will not negatively impact to your well-being and the Research Ethics Board of the University of the Fraser Valley has deemed this study to be of minimal risk. There may be some questions that touch on emotional topics and you may be asked to consider past experiences working with this population. You will not be asked to specifically discuss or recount those experiences and you will be provided with a resources line to call if emotional support is required. You will be asked to provide your consent to participate at the start of the interview. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. This study is undergoing review by the Human Research Ethics Board at the University and interviews will be scheduled once this process is complete.

Please let me know if you would be interested in participating in this study, and please feel free to share this email with anyone else in your organization who you think would be interested. If you need additional information about this study or its methods please let me know, or connect directly with my supervisor, Dr. Amanda McCormick, at Amanda.McCormick@ufv.ca or 604-557-4081.

Thank you,

Amanda Juhasz


Appendix C: Letter of Informed Consent

School of Criminology & Criminal Justice
University of the Fraser Valley
33844 King Road
Abbotsford, BC V2S 7M8



Date: April 4, 2018

Letter of Informed Consent

My name is Amanda Juhasz and I am a Master of Arts (Criminal Justice) student in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice with the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV), working under the supervision of Dr. Amanda McCormick and Dr. Zina Lee. My thesis research is focused on examining practitioner perceptions of the applicability of Operation Ceasefire as a technique for addressing gang involvement rates for youth in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. Primarily, my research seeks to examine practitioner perceptions of whether interventions used in the United States to counter youth gang participation/violence can and should be implemented in the Lower Mainland.

I am inviting you to participate in an in-person interview because you have worked with youth and, as such, have insight relevant to the management of youth involved in gangs. Participation will entail approximately 15 minutes of preparation time followed by a one hour interview, which will occur in a private setting in a location that is convenient to you. Such locations may include a private office setting. Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed into an anonymized document, both of which will be kept in a locked and secure setting in a home office safe. Your responses will not be linked in the final paper to names or any other identifying information. The interview data will be recorded with a randomly assigned code number that is unique to you and only accessible by me and my supervisors.

It is anticipated that your participation in this study will not negatively impact your well-being and the Research Ethics Board of the University of the Fraser Valley has deemed this study to be of minimal risk. There may be some questions that touch on emotional topics and you may be

asked to consider past experiences working with this population. You will not be asked to specifically discuss or recount those experiences and you will be provided with a resources line to call if emotional support is required. Your participation in this research study is voluntary and if you decide at any time that you no longer wish to participate, you have the right to withdraw your participation. If you do not wish to answer a question but still wish to participate in the interview, you may ask to “skip” the question. If, after the interview, you choose to withdraw from the research study completely, you can contact me and your data will be destroyed. However, please note after February 15, 2019 you will not be able to withdraw your data from this study as the information will have been analyzed and submitted to my supervisors in my written thesis.

It is important to inform you of the potential benefits that society will receive from this research study. The objective of this research is to examine whether Operation Ceasefire, a highly effective American approach to gang intervention, is suitable for implementation in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. The objective is to determine if the same techniques could affect change on rates of gang involvement. This research could positively affect outcomes for youth in gangs and inform intervention initiatives for addressing gang related violence in service of public safety.

Dissemination of this research will occur through publication as a Master’s Thesis by Amanda Juhasz as a student of the University of the Fraser Valley, and may include educational presentations and academic publications.

If you have any questions about this research study or its results, please contact me at [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED]. If you have any concerns regarding your rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, please contact the Ethics Officer at 604-557-4011 or Research.Ethics@ufv.ca. Please note the ethics of this research study have been reviewed and approved by the UFV Human Research Ethics Board (HREB Protocol # 1046C-18).

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research.

Appendix D: Detached Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

By signing below, I agree to participate in this study, titled: **Practitioner Perceptions of the Transportability of Operation Ceasefire to youth in gangs in the Lower Mainland.**

I have read the information presented in the letter of informed consent being for the project conducted by Amanda Juhasz at the University of the Fraser Valley. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive any additional details.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and that confidentiality and/or anonymity of all results will be preserved. If I have any questions about the study, I should contact Amanda Juhasz at [REDACTED] or call [REDACTED].

If I have any concerns regarding my rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, I can contact the UFV Ethics Officer at 604-557-4011 or Research.Ethics@ufv.ca.

Name (please print) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix E: Operation Ceasefire Information Sheet for Participants

Operation Ceasefire

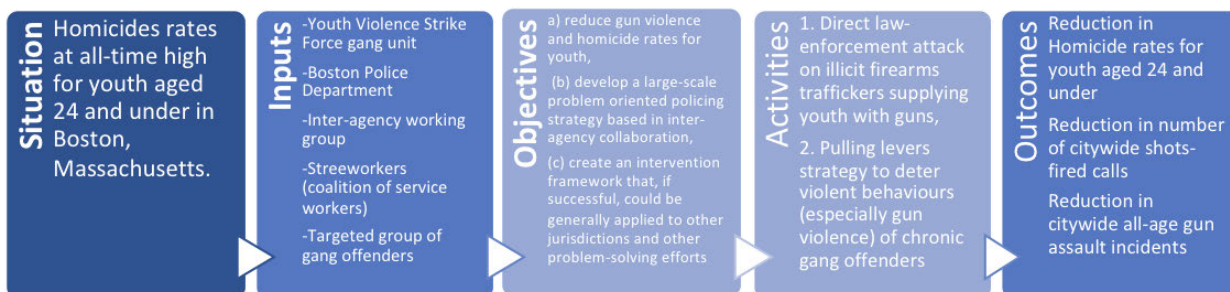
Beginning in the late 1980's and early 1990's Boston experienced an epidemic of youth homicides, with rates increasing 230% from 1987 to 1990. With the staggering rates came concern for the fate of Boston youth and funding was released by the National Institute of Justice to examine possible solutions. Operation Ceasefire, at times called the Boston Gun Project, was developed with the aim of reducing youth homicide and firearms violence in Boston. It constituted a working group aimed at assessing, developing, and implementing interventions to deter gang violence and have a direct impact on youth gun violence and homicide rates.

Operation Ceasefire was born from an inter-agency working group and the implemented interventions consisted of two main techniques. The first was a **direct law enforcement attack on illicit firearms traffickers** believed to be supplying youth with guns in an effort to deter gang violence. To do so, they employed the following techniques:

6. Expanding the focus of local, State, and Federal authorities to include *intrastate* firearms trafficking in Massachusetts in addition to interstate trafficking.
7. Focusing enforcement attention on traffickers of guns that had short time-to-crime intervals and, thus, were more likely to have been trafficked. The Boston Field Division of the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) set up an in-house tracking system that flagged guns whose traces showed a time-to-crime interval of 18 months or shorter.
8. Focusing enforcement attention of traffickers of guns used by the city's most violent gangs.
9. Attempted to restore obliterated serial numbers of confiscated guns and subsequent investigative trafficking based on those restorations.
10. Supporting these enforcement priorities through analysis of data generated by the Boston Police Department and ATF's comprehensive tracing of crime guns and by developing leads from the systematic debriefing of gang-affiliated arrestees or those involved in violent crime.

The second technique came to be known as the "**pulling levers**" approach, wherein **law enforcement targeted gangs engaged in violent behaviour**. To do so, they employed the following techniques:

5. Targeting gangs engaged in violent behaviour.
6. Reaching out directly to members of the targeted gangs.
7. Delivering an explicit message that violence would not be tolerated.
8. Backing up that message by 'pulling every lever' legally available (i.e., applying appropriate sanctions from a varied menu of possible law enforcement actions) when violence occurred.



Appendix F: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Objective: The objective of this project is to examine practitioner perceptions towards the transportability of Operation Ceasefire to youth in gangs in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia.

For the purpose of this study “youth” is defined as a person 25 years of age or younger.

Questions:

1. What is your current position and how long have you been employed in that position?
2. What do you believe are the main factors that motivate youth to engage in gang activity?
3. What do you believe are the main factors that motivate youth to stop engaging in gang activity?
4. What interventions are currently being used in your jurisdiction to combat youth gang violence? What are the effects of each these interventions?

Follow up: What is working well and what can be improved? Is there anything missing from the current response to youth gang violence?

5. Were you familiar with Operation Ceasefire prior to reading the program outline provided?
6. What do you think are some of the main challenges in implementing elements of Operation Ceasefire in BC? What are some elements of Operation Ceasefire that you think could be done well here, and why?
7. Firearms were a common feature in gang violence committed in Boston. Is the same true of the youth gang violence in BC? If so, where do you think youth are getting access to their weapons?

Follow up: What are the main strategies you currently employ to prevent access to weapons? Can you envision a direct law enforcement attack on illicit firearm traffickers to disrupt youth access to firearms would positively affect gang violence in B.C, or are there other strategies that would be more effective?

8. Operation Ceasefire relied heavily on crime and intelligence analysis (i.e. who to target & systematic debriefing of arrestees), does this happen in your jurisdiction?

Follow up: If not, is this a realistic strategy here? What are the challenges with implementing this practice?

9. Do you currently employ a direct ‘pulling levers’ approach to deter violent behaviours in chronic gang offenders and does it work?

Follow up: Can you envision a ‘pulling levers’ approach for deterring violent behaviours and what would it look like?

10. What community partnerships do you have in place?

Follow up: Can you envision these partnerships being operationalized to support gang offenders seeking assistance or to let gang offenders know that violence will not be tolerated?

11. We know that youth under age 18 are being recruited into gangs, and that they continue to engage in gang violence through their young adult life. What challenges do you face when dealing with youth and young adults who are engaging in gang activities when you are operating under the Youth Criminal Justice Act as opposed to the Criminal Code of Canada? Are there benefits to policing or particular strategies available under either code?
12. Do you have any final comments about your perception of the transportability of Operation Ceasefire policing activities to your jurisdiction?

Appendix G: Ethics Approval



Certificate of Human Research Ethics Board Approval - Amendment

Contact Person	Department	Protocol	
Amanda Juhasz	Criminology & Criminal Justice	1046C-18	
Co-investigator(s)			
Amanda McCormick; Zina Lee (supervisors)			
Title of Project			
Practitioner Perceptions of the Transportability of Operation Ceasefire to youth in gangs in the Lower Mainland			
Sponsoring/Funding Agency			
None			
Institution(s) where research will be carried out			
University of the Fraser Valley			
Review Date:	Amendment Date:	Original Approval Date:	Approval Term:
24-Mar-18	03-Apr-18	23-Feb-18	23-Feb-18 - 22-Feb-19
Certification: <i>The protocol describing the above-named project has been reviewed by the UFV Human Research Ethics Board, and the procedures were found to be in compliance with accepted guidelines for ethical research.</i>  _____ Michael Gaetz, Chair, Human Research Ethics Board <i>NOTE: This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above noted term provided there is no change in the procedures or criteria given.</i> <i>If the project will go beyond the approval term noted above, an extension of approval must be requested.</i>			