

**Youth and Young Adult Gangs:
An Evolving Social Problem**

Reassessment from the 2005 Report

**Exploratory Research on the Development and Operation of
Youth and Young Adult Gangs in Utica, NY
With Recommendations for Developing Effective Approaches to Address
the Issues of Youth and Young Adult Violence and Gangs**

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During the course of its [2006] investigation, the Commission heard testimony that gangs have become widespread and mobile... Gangs are now active in urban settings from New York City to Buffalo. While those cities and others have been plagued by gang violence, gangs are no longer solely an urban problem. Today, gangs are operating upstate and downstate in suburban and rural areas. Both counties on Long Island have recently seen a significant growth in gang violence. Gangs are also attracting younger members. The number of young victims – both gang members and innocent bystanders – is growing every day.

NYS Commission of Investigation May 2006. *Combating Gang Activity in New York: Suppression, Intervention, and Prevention.*

Last May of 2012 I was asked to attend a meeting ... in regards to an incident that occurred at Kennedy Plaza. During the meeting I was advised of an apartment party, where Blood Gang members attended in FULL BLOOD ATTIRE (Red). Upon watching the surveillance video and looking at the photos I was alarmed to see the Red Blood Attire. Thinking that, “[I hope] we are not there yet” ...[I was] at first praying and hoping that they were outsiders (New York City/Syracuse) but when focusing on the faces instead of the attire I was able to identify the subjects [as local].

A lengthy investigation was completed with an arrest of an admitted Blood Gang member (removed name) for criminal possession of a weapon in the 4th degree (a misdemeanor charge). After the court process and possible jury trial, [the defendant] saw that the odds of the truth were stacked against him and yesterday plead guilty to Criminal Possession of a Weapon (4th degree) with jail time imposed. This marks my first serious gang related arrest.

Respectfully,
Inv. W. R. Williams

SOURCE: 4/2/2013 email reprinted with the permission of Investigator Williams, Utica Police Department

Introduction and Overview:

Eight years ago a study of youth violence, juvenile crime and youth gangs in Utica, NY revealed an emerging gang problem that -- although it was not nearly as serious as other large cities around the nation or other larger Upstate NY cities-- was something that we needed to better understand and address or it would continue to grow and threaten the health and safety of our neighborhoods, our law enforcement personnel, and our youth.

Based on this small scale exploratory research, it appears that youth/young adult gangs have continued to emerge and grow; that a few gangs have grown much larger; that several of these gangs are getting more organized and that youth/young adult gangs in our region pose a greater risk to neighborhood residents, to law enforcement personnel, and to youth themselves than they did in 2005.

Although our issues are not as serious as other Upstate NY cities, recent reports from local law enforcement agencies and from community members of all ages suggests that youth and young adult violence and gang activity continues to be a threat to public safety and to healthy youth development. While our region has made progress with regard to prevention, intervention, and suppression of gang involvement and activity, we need to be aware of the social forces that combine to produce gang activity and violence. The Oneida County Gang Assessment Coalition emerged in 2012 in response to this perceived community risk.

Where do we go from here?

This initial exploratory research report reveals the need for more in-depth research on how and why local youth join gangs that engage in criminal activity, on gang-related criminal activity in the City of Rome and in Oneida County towns and villages *outside* the cities of Utica and Rome, and on what other communities have done to effectively respond to the conditions that drive gang membership and to effectively suppress gang activity that threatens public safety.

It is also clear that in the current absence of any comprehensive planning effort to address the causes and consequences of gang activity in Utica, Rome, or Oneida County that there is a need to develop comprehensive, concrete, realistic recommendations for prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies and programs that fit our community. To achieve these objectives we need to strengthen, broaden, and formalize our community processes for grappling with the social problems related to youth and young adult gangs and find the dedicated resources to develop and support a Gang Prevention Coalition that includes law enforcement and local government agencies, community and faith-based organizations, and community members and youth all at the same table.

Youth and Young Adult Social Groups, Gangs, and Criminal Behavior

There is a general misconception that the “gang” problem in American cities is something new. The reality is that it is many of criminology’s “new issues” that are merely just “new urgencies” to old issues (Short, 1990). Gangs have been a part of the American culture for over two hundred years and can be traced back to the immigration patterns that helped to form the diverse populations that comprise the United States.

One undisputed element of contemporary gang research is the finding that gang membership increases a youth’s likelihood to engage in criminal and other deviant behavior. Gang membership also contributes to developmental problems, making it difficult for youth to reenter mainstream society after engaging in, and being socialized by, gangs and antisocial peers. This finding has serious implications for the prevention of criminal and other deviant behavior at all ages, demanding further exploration and earlier youth intervention.

Gang membership interferes with pro-social bonding in general, and in particular with maintaining ties to school participation and success, the primary path for youth to make a successful transition to mainstream employment and to learning and internalizing pro-social adult roles in general, including responsible fatherhood. Once youth do get gang involved, the likelihood that they will drop out of school or simply stop attending escalates, hurting them, their families, the school district, and the community at large.

As a matter of fact, according to Harlow, C. W. (2003, January). *Education and correctional populations*. Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 75% of America’s state prison inmates are high school dropouts and 59% of America’s federal prison inmates did not complete high school. Locally, **the Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties and the United Way of the Valley and Greater Utica Area** have recognized through their Community Indicators Project the importance of improving the educational attainment of residents in our area, with the Community Foundation making it one of their top two priorities necessary to positively impact the county. Reducing youth violence and gang involvement will be a critical component of enhancing youth bonds to school attendance and graduation, both of which will be necessary to achieve the 25/25 Initiative of the Community Foundation, which is a plan to increase the percentage of adults in Herkimer and Oneida Counties who have bachelor degrees to 25% by the year 2025.

Police: Asian Boyz Member charged in machete attack

UTICA – A Utica man who police believe is a member of the Asian Boyz gang faces a felony assault charge after allegedly attacking a teenager with a machete, city police said. The 16-year old victim was playing soccer with friends at O’Conner playground on Arthur Street at about 7:45 p.m. Tuesday when a car pulled up and a man... got out. Police said [the 19-year old Asian Boyz member] approached the victim and began fighting with him. A third man handed [him] a machete and the suspect allegedly swung at the victim, causing a large cut on his arm.

Police responded after receiving a call for a large fight involving weapons and up to 20 people.

[The 19 year old suspect] previously pleaded guilty to attempted second-degree assault and was sentenced to six months in Oneida County jail and five years of probation in a separate case in which the Asian Boyz fought with another Utica gang -- LES, which stands for Lower East Side.

Utica Observer Dispatch, May 15, 2013

Crime Trends and Gangs

“A drop in reported crime [nationwide] should not be taken as an indication that youth violence and crime are no longer serious social problems in our nation today. Despite the overall decline in crime [in recent years], gang violence continues at high levels in some cities (Howell and colleagues, 2011)” [From the OJJDP Juvenile Justice Fact Sheet, April 2012].

National crime data from self-report victimization surveys tell a more complete story: reported crimes account for about *a third of all crimes and only half of violent crimes* (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1996). Youth violence, largely unreported, is everywhere- in our best and our most disadvantaged neighborhoods, communities, and schools-- and this violence affects a large proportion of the youth in our country. (Source: “Youth Violence, Juvenile Crime and Youth Gangs in Utica, NY”, Social Science Associates: May 2005)

In addition to the youth violence, both reported and unreported, that is not related to gang membership or gang activity, “an enduring concern for many jurisdictions...is the continued presence of gangs and gang activity, which are often associated with violence and serious crimes (Cooper and Smith, 2011)”.



Based on law enforcement reports, in 2010, there were an estimated 29,400 gangs and 756,000 gang members throughout 3,500 jurisdictions across the United States.

(SOURCE: 2010 National Youth Gang Survey as cited in the OJJDP Juvenile Justice Fact Sheet, April 2012)

Picture left: Local youth who appear to belong to a gang flashing their sign in a group photo. Photo courtesy of Utica Police Department.

Some history and context for this research project

In 2004-2005, a research team coordinated by Social Science Associates, working in partnership with Utica Safe Schools Healthy Partnership, Inc., the City of Utica, the Utica City School District, and the Utica Police Department undertook an investigation into youth violence, juvenile crime and youth gangs in Utica, NY. This yearlong research project funded by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services involved a fairly large team of research professionals and produced a report titled “Youth Violence, Juvenile Crime and Youth Gangs in Utica, NY” that was released on May 23, 2005.

The 2005 report essentially broke the silence on youth gangs in our region. It stimulated some controversy and it shifted the discussion around youth gangs from: “We don’t really have any ‘real’ gangs here” to “Yes, we have an emerging gang problem that, although not nearly as serious as other large cities around the nation or other larger Upstate NY cities, is something we need to understand and address or it will continue to grow and threaten the health and safety of our neighborhoods, our law enforcement personnel, and our youth.”

Since 2005 our region has made progress with regard to the prevention, intervention, and suppression of gang involvement and gang activity, however, we need to be aware of the social forces that combine to produce gang activity and violence. Recent reports from local law enforcement agencies and community members suggest that gang activity continues to be a threat to public safety and to healthy youth development. The Oneida County Gang Assessment Task Force emerged in 2012 in response to this perceived increase in risk.

The Project and the Project Team

The Oneida County Gang Assessment Coalition was formed in 2012 to better understand and more effectively address gang activity in Utica, Rome, and elsewhere in Oneida County. Initiated and coordinated by James Franco a retired Utica Police Officer who specialized in community policing and is now working with Utica Safe Schools Healthy Students Partnership, Inc., this Coalition includes the Oneida County Sheriff’s Office, Utica Police Department, Rome Police Department, Oneida County Probation Department, the Oneida County District Attorney’s Office, the U.S. Marshal’s Office, the NYS Office of Children and Family Services, the Herkimer-Oneida Counties Comprehensive Planning Program, Oneida County Department of Social Services/Preventative Services Unit, Utica City School District, the Oneida County School Resource Officer Coalition, Safe Schools Healthy Students Partnership, Inc., and Social Science Associates.

The primary objectives of this project were to: 1.) Share information about gang activity in the community; 2.) Develop a process for working together to plan and implement effective strategies and programs to prevent and reduce gang-related crime; 3.) Update the research done in 2005 to get a more complete and up-to-date picture of the set of social problems associated with gang involvement; and 4.) To design and implement effective strategies and programs to prevent and reduce gang involvement and gang-related crime.

Funding

In the fall of 2012, Utica Safe Schools Healthy Students Partnership, Inc. applied for and received a small (\$5,000) grant from United Way of the Valley and Greater Utica Area to do exploratory (“Phase I”) research on the prevalence and characteristics of gangs in our area and to develop a plan to move forward to address gang activity more effectively. Social Science Associates was asked to develop and implement a research strategy that fit the research budget. Their original 2005 youth violence,

juvenile crime and youth gang research and report was a multifaceted, year-long, \$50,000 project. This project had neither the time frame nor the budget for an effort of this scope. The goal was to collect and analyze enough data so the Gang Assessment Task Force had sufficient information to move to the next steps, 1.) Collect additional data and do further analysis that was not within the scope of Phase I of this project, 2.) Strengthen and further develop the planning vehicle(s) and partnerships needed to move forward to effectively to address the problems identified and 3.) To lay the foundation and do the groundwork to design and implement specific targeted new strategies and programs to prevent and reduce gang involvement and gang-related crime.

Methodology

We chose a research strategy that centered on interviews involving a series of open-ended questions. This exploratory research method has weaknesses, primarily with regard to what social scientists call “generalizability”, i.e. what we learn from a small, non-random sample cannot be statistically generalized to a much larger population. On the other hand, exploratory research using in-depth interviews with open-ended questions has methodological strengths not found in most survey research and it is often used when those doing the research are not sure what questions to ask or what answer choices to offer on a survey. Good examples of this include interview items like: “Are you aware of any of the initiation rites or requirements that young people must do to become a gang member?” or “Are the gangs you are familiar with associated with any particular neighborhood or with Utica only, Rome only, or some other territory?”

Data Source and Data Collection

Primary data collected for this report includes 1.) Thirteen interviews of local law enforcement personnel were conducted by James Franco of Safe Schools Healthy Students Partnership, Inc. 2.) Twenty additional interviews of Utica youth and Utica community members who work directly with youth or who live in neighborhoods where youth and young adult gangs operate were conducted by three different members of the Social Science Associates research team working on this project. All members of this team are racial minorities, know our community very well, live in Central Utica, and currently have personal connections with and work directly with youth and young adults in Utica.

Secondary data (jail reports on the gang affiliation of inmates) used for this report was supplied by the Oneida County Sheriff’s Office and the Utica Police Department (UPD Officer interviews and media releases).

Geographic and Demographic Limitations of this Research

Geographic Limitations: The primary goal of the Oneida County Gang Assessment Task Force involves the entire county, including the City of Rome and the smaller towns, villages and suburbs that are home to over half the county’s population. Information from the Oneida County Sheriff’s Office and the Oneida County Probation Department clearly indicates that youth and young adult gangs are not confined to the City of Utica. However, it became apparent that given the time frame and the budget for this research, we did not have the resources at the present time for an in-depth comprehensive look at gangs and gang activity throughout the entire county.

The attraction of gang culture, the factors associated with gang involvement, and gang-related criminal activity are clearly present to some degree in the City of Rome and in our suburbs, small towns and villages elsewhere in Oneida County. The Gang Assessment Task Force is in agreement that we need to do more outreach and research to identify, understand, and address gang issues outside Utica and efforts are currently underway to reach out to partners in the City of Rome to move forward in this direction.

Racial and Ethnic Diversity Limitations: Given the time and funding constraints, our exploratory research is missing an in-depth look at the following social groups: Asian youth and young adults involved in gangs, including most recently refugees from Myanmar (Burmese youth); Bosnian youth and young adults; and white youth involved in white supremacist and motorcycle gangs that appear to operate outside our small urban centers.

Gangs and Local Refugee Populations: The impact of gangs on local refugee populations- and the impact of local refugee populations on gang activity and gang dynamics and conflict are important topics. The evolution and organizational development of a local gang called “Asian Boyz” in Utica that was associated with the death several years ago of a 15-year old Asian youth who, according to Utica police and local press reports, was killed accidentally during an initiation ritual (a “beat-in”), and more recent press and police reports that point to street fights involving lethal weapons, indicate that we need a better understanding of ways to improve the relationships between our refugee neighbors and their children and the local social groups who have lived here much longer.

It was beyond the scope of this project to do justice to this complex set of issues, but one thing is clear: more research and program development is imperative for two important reasons. First, we need to reduce the conflict and the violence between ethnic and racial groups in our region, and second, beyond public safety issues, we need to support inter-ethnic and inter-racial understanding and cooperation if we hope to see our increasingly diverse community develop economically and socially in the decades ahead.

What did we learn?

In brief, we learned a lot. Our key findings are summarized in the report sections below.

Yes, there are many youth/young adult gangs in our region. Youth, community members, and law enforcement personnel report there are many gangs operating in the City of Utica. These gangs range from small “homegrown” and unorganized groups of youth to much larger, more highly organized groups of youth and young adults affiliated with national gangs.

Gang names most mentioned in interviews related to Utica include:

- 2 High Klass
- LES (Lower East Side)
- Cornhill Soldiers (CHS)
- Asian Boyz*
- Bloods*
- Crips*
- Latin Kings*
- NSG (Neva Slippin Gang)
- Neta*

*NOTE: Names with an asterisk are national gangs. If no asterisk, they are local/homegrown gangs.

Less Frequently Mentioned: **FBB (Full Blooded Bosnians); Bosnian Mafia Family, King of Queens** Gangs outside Utica include:

- Aryan Brotherhood*, other white supremacist gangs (from OC Jail report)
- Highwaymen (motorcycle gang)
- Also worth noting: Individuals wearing Hell’s Angels and Death’s Disciples motorcycle gang logos/colors have recently been seen by local law enforcement personnel in Western Oneida County as reported by personal communication to Social Science Associates.

See Appendix B. for the full list of all gang names cited in interviews.

Below: Gang-related graffiti in Utica, 2013. Graffiti is a tribute to a local youth who was popular and well liked by his peers.



“Icee”: Street name of 16 year old Proctor High School Student killed while visiting family in NYC.

“NSG” is Neva Slippin Gang.

Where do you see gang activity? Where are gangs located?

Our 2013 Interview Data indicates that gang activities are widespread throughout Utica neighborhoods.

Summary of 2013 Interview Findings:

- The Lower East Side of Utica, Utica’s Cornhill section and West Utica are the most frequently mentioned neighborhoods that have gang activity. *This fits with our 2005 findings.*
- Utica’s Middle Schools and Public and Private High Schools are, like most other schools in the nation, the safest place for youth to be: sometimes even safer than at home or in their neighborhood. However, youth form social relationships and groups of all kinds in school settings and schools are one site where youth culture is shared and transmitted.

I see gang problems mainly in the Cornhill and West Utica areas of the city, and I see issues beginning in the lower part of South Utica.

I see the problem in the Cornhill, West Utica and lower east side of the city areas.

I would call them groups rather than gangs. Cornhill and West Utica are where the problems are. It will get worse during warm months. (42 year old female community resident who said her sources were her nieces and nephews and their friends)

See Appendix C. for the full list of locations that were cited by those interviewed in 2013.

We found a very similar geographic distribution in a large survey (n=1351) of Utica youth in 2005.

2005 Survey Data and Findings: Indicators of gang presence by neighborhood

Percent answering "Yes" about neighborhood:	North	South	Cornhill	East-W/N	East-E/S	West-E	West-C	West-W
Kids wanting to join gangs.	14.9	16.3	47.4	44.8	20.9	31.1	39.2	19.2
Gangs fighting with one another.	9.5	10.1	49.1	46.5	18.2	17.4	35.3	19.2

SOURCE: Utica Safe Schools Healthy Students-Social Science Assoc. survey, Feb. 2005 (n=1,351)

Neighborhood Factors (excerpted from the 2005 Report)

Findings on the relationship between neighborhood factors in Utica and measures of youth violence and delinquency are consistent with the literature on *collective efficacy*, a sociological term referring to the combination of economic, social, and situational factors that contribute to elevated levels of delinquency in specific neighborhoods. Collective efficacy is related to the better-known phenomena of *social disorganization*, *social cohesion*, and *social isolation*, which all contribute to a neighborhood’s ability to independently monitor and control the behavior of its residents. A somewhat unexpected research finding was that there are very low levels of collective efficacy in some areas of West Utica. These levels of neighborhood disorder are clearly correlated with levels of neighborhood violence and drug activity, as Table 2 below indicates.

2005 Neighborhood Safety and Social Organization Indicators for Utica Neighborhoods

Percent of youth answering "Yes" about neighborhood:	North	South	Cornhill	East-W/N	East-E/S	West-E	West-C	West-W
Heard gunshots	8.1	17.5	54.2	45.3	18.1	33.3	41.2	30.8
Seen people shoot gun	4.1	4.7	18.2	17.2	9.5	15.9	17.6	15.4
Seen people attacked or robbed.	10.8	12.6	36.0	33.3	17.8	31.1	33.3	15.4
Seen drugs sold	14.9	22.8	55.2	40.5	22.3	26.1	47.1	40.0
Percent of families with children in poverty in Census tracts in neighborhood: highest % /and/ lowest %	9/7%	39/4%	59/26%	49/41%	49/12%	48/41%	60/27%	24%/NA

SOURCE: Social Science Associates Utica Safe Schools survey of 7th, 7th, & 11th graders, Feb. 2005, n=1351

How old are youth when they first join a gang?

The most common response to this question in our 2013 interviews was 13-15 years old. A number of respondents indicated that youth are joining at even younger ages (10-12).

“[Most are] 12-15 yrs old when they start; personally I was 15-16; now even younger; the home environment matters” (31 year old former gang member).

Why are our youth joining gangs?

In 2005, the youth we interviewed in Utica reported that the primary reason they joined and participated in gangs was for protection [from other youth]. The youth we interviewed in 2013 reported that protection was also a primary reason for joining, but other key reasons for joining a gang were also mentioned frequently, including:

- Social status
- Friends and family members belong
- “To be part of a group. A place to hangout when there is nothing else to do.”
- “Not getting the attention they seek [from parents and other adults] so they seek attention else where.”
- “Friendship with peers, money (shoplifting)”

“[They are joining] mostly for protection. Many of the youth fear other gangs and join to have someone watch their backs. Many are brought in by friends and family.”(40+ year old community member with younger family members who are gang involved in Utica)

What are the initiation rites or requirements that young people must meet to become a gang member?

The most complete information received on gang initiation practices was from a current member of one of Utica’s homegrown gangs, the Cornhill Soldiers. His breakdown of the various initiation rituals for Utica gangs in 2013 is:

- 2 High Klass: Shoplifting, smoking weed, colored T-Shirts worn under clothing, sexual acts.
- Cornhill Soldiers: attacking a targeted youth, smoking weed, shoplifting, colored sneakers, and professional team hats.
- Latin Kings: Tattoos, graffiti will get you into the gang.
- Bloods and Crips: – fighting, wearing bead necklaces, learning gang greeting.
- King of Queens: – fighting, sexual initiations
- Lower East Side (LES) Gang: – Tattoos, fighting, smoking drugs.

Another current gang member (2013) reported: *“I have to wear beads with the color of my gang. [Doing] Shoplifting, [or] intimidating youth that are in another gang or if we don't like them...or fighting anyone other than our members [are also requirements for membership in the gang].”*

A former gang member (2013) who still has close family members that are gang involved reported that: *“Females may have to screw a whole crew; Males - "beat in" or he has to rob someone or do something crazy; He'd have to show some initiative to get into the gang.”*

Another 22 year old former gang member (2013) said: *Getting jumped in...I have not seen that much; [but] you've got to prove yourself; bust a lick, some kind of test, put in work.”*



Cornhill Soldiers tag on a house in West Utica- outside the Cornhill neighborhood.

Utica Police Dept. photo, 2013

How large are the gangs in Utica today? 2013 Findings:

Current gang members interviewed report that some Utica gangs are getting larger

- *The Cornhill groups and Asian gangs are growing at a rapid rate and will probably clash in the very near future.*
- *We have over 100 members and need more to protect ourselves from the Asian gangs.*

Former gang members report that many gangs are quite small:

- *The majority are not that large*
- *Not very large (20-30?)*
- *Not large at all- maybe 15-20 people.*

Law Enforcement Personnel report small group sizes as well- and it's clear that no one knows for sure how many members these various youth groups/ "gangs" have at any one time. Below are some of the responses from local law enforcement with regard to a question about gang size:

- *Anywhere from 20 - 30 kids as regards the Asian Boyz. A couple dozen [each] perhaps with the other hybrid groups.*
- *It varies from groups with only 5 members, to those with 20+ and some even at 40.*
- *I believe that they are growing, they are not huge, but they are definitely growing. I believe some groups have a large number of members, such as the Asian Boys and LES, while Too High Class is not as large.*

How organized are youth/young adult gangs? Our 2013 findings:

The gang groups reported by current and former gang members, other community members who work with youth and law enforcement personnel are at various stages of organizational development.

The Cornhill Soldiers and Too High Klass are very organized. Don't know about the rest. We have over 100 members and need more to protect ourselves from the Asian gangs.

-16 year old self-identified gang member (who declined to name the specific gang).

Not very organized and they do not have a real purpose or goal to accomplish anything. Most are younger youth being drawn into gangs that have a dislike of certain races or ethnic groups in the community including their own.

- Different view from another 16 year old self-identified gang member than one above

I believe that most of the groups are very organized, especially the Asian Boyz and the NSG [Neva Slippin Gang].

- Local law enforcement officer

Gang types/categories: (Excerpted from the 2005 Report)

Taylor (1990) has defined essentially three-types of social groups that can be characterized as gangs and it is not uncommon to find that these gang-types evolve from one to another (Taylor, 1990; Grennan et al., 2000). The most harmless of these gang types are called scavenger. Scavenger gangs are transitional collectives of loosely organized youths with no real leader, who participate in acts of property destruction and disorderly conduct just for something to do. They have no common bond beyond the willingness to behave compulsively and their need to belong (Taylor, 1990; Grennan et al., 2000).

Scavenger groups can evolve into territorial gangs when one of the members takes on a leadership role and designates a geographical area and/or business as something that belongs exclusively to the collective and is worth defending with violence if necessary. When collectives evolve to this stage, they develop an unwritten code for their home turf or territory. This territorial law can- and often does- become more respected and feared by the inhabitants that reside within the neighborhoods in this territory than the legal law. To defend their interests from intrusion by outsiders and enforce their code within the neighborhoods they control, the territorial gang will employ violent means where innocent bystanders and non-gang members can be injured and killed (Taylor, 1990; Grennan et al., 2000).

With the establishment of a lucrative business such as drug and gun trafficking, a territorial collective can evolve into the most sophisticated of all these collectives: organized or corporate. A strong leader runs this type of collective and the main focus is on making money for the organization. Mobility within the organization is based on an individual's merit and loyalty to the collective and this type of gang is run with military efficiency and discipline. Violence is used to further the business and to keep members and others who get in the way of their objectives in compliance. This type of collective will not hesitate to commit murder, arson, and whatever is seen as necessary to get their point across to those who oppose them. The biggest problem with a collective such as this is that it attracts members from all walks of life and socioeconomic backgrounds because of the vast amounts of money and power that it is capable of providing (Taylor, 1990; Grennan et al., 2000).

2013 Summary and Analysis: These various gangs are in different stages of organizational development. While there are a number of smaller "cliques" based on living on the same block, there are larger gangs that now have a mix of school-age youth and young adults in their late teens and early 20s.

In 2005, based on in-depth interviews with 45 youth, we concluded that:

Regarding gang size and composition, the largest number of members reported was "about seventy-five members" with one female respondent answering that there were too many members in her organization to count but she knew of at least twenty of the members being female. Another gang-involved youth reported that there were twenty-five to thirty members in his gang; another reported that about fifty members belonged to his group. The smallest group size reported was seven to eight members.

Of particular concern is that it appears that since 2005 when we first looked at gangs in Utica, youth groups imitating gang culture have proliferated and some youth/young adult gangs have become larger and somewhat more organized.

What kinds of crimes are these gangs committing? 2013 Findings:

Current and former gang members reported that the gangs they are familiar with are:

- *Shoplifting, drug selling, assaults, burglaries, car property thefts, and rapes that don't get reported*
- *Would not answer/other than stealing.*
- *Violence; fighting; robbery; nothing too much.*
- *Robbery (stores, houses, jewelry, random people); jumping.*
- *Selling drugs; robbery; beating people up.*

Law Enforcement Personnel reported:

They mainly fight among each other, though the Asian Boyz group gets involved in bigger stuff like robberies and guns.
Larcenies, assaults, gang graffiti.
Larcenies, assaults, criminal mischief, robberies among themselves.
Sales and possession of narcotics, assault, robbery, menacing, domestic violence and assault involving deadly weapons..
Assaults, disorderly conducts, larcenies, criminal mischief. Sometimes, in a few instances, there have been some sex crimes committed also.
Assaults, car larcenies, petty larcenies and some sale of marijuana.
Anywhere from simple assaults to narcotic possession and sale, to some violent crime. I am hearing that older gang members are starting to use youth to hold onto weapons and contraband for them.
Robberies, car larcenies, assaults, harassments, graffiti.
Mainly assaults and larcenies from vehicles.
A lot of group assaults, petty larcenies, breaking into cars, and a lot of stealing whenever they find an opportunity.
Robberies, burglaries, assaults, and some selling of drugs. Also, some harassments and menacing.
Criminal mischief (destruction of property), gang assaults and some extortion of money.
Mainly assaults and fighting.

Summary and Analysis

Most troubling in the interview data are consistent reports of violent felony crimes, in particular robberies and assaults that by definition involve violence against a person or persons and can cause serious bodily harm, injury, and possibly death. Petit larceny, larceny, criminal mischief, and destruction of property are lower level crimes, but if prevalent in a particular neighborhood they can have a serious adverse impact on the quality of life at the neighborhood level, which in turn can affect the likelihood that more serious crimes will be committed.

Do gang members in these gangs have or use guns or other weapons of any type?

Current and former gang members report:

Mostly knives and guns, the Asian Gangs will use anything that inflicts pain (bats, knives, tire irons, chains, etc.)
Yes, whenever we need them to prove a point.
Yes, guns; machetes; chains; anything they can get their hands on.
They have access but I don't know if they use them; I know they use bats and s**t
Yes, guns.

Law Enforcement Personnel Report:

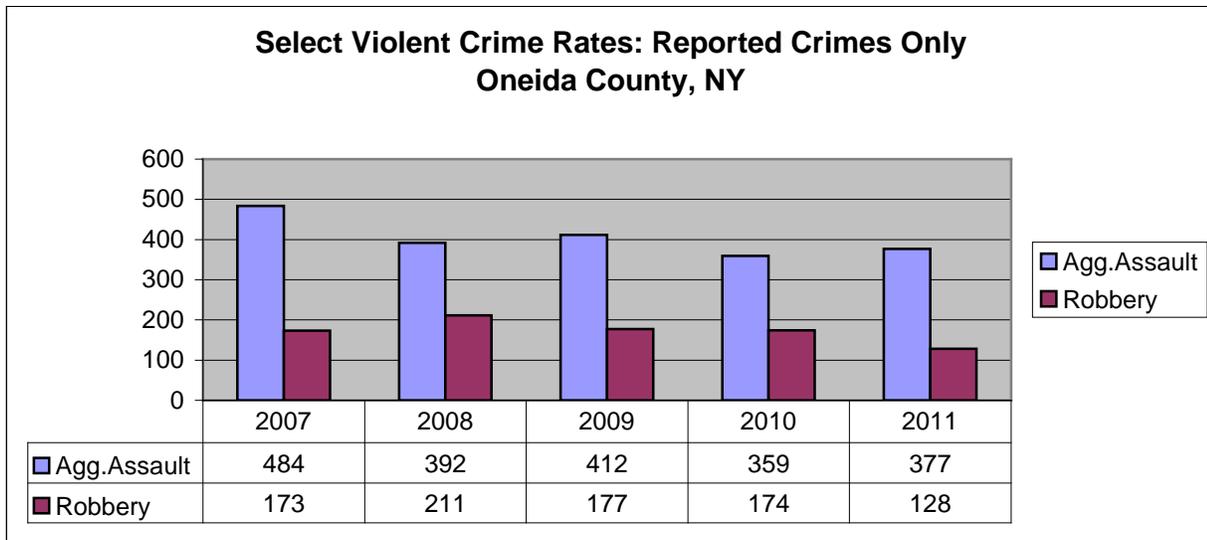
I think the Asian Boyz have guns, but most of the other gangs have knives, although I think they can get guns.
They do have access to guns, even if they don't carry them all of the time. Most of the time they carry box cutters and knives.
Yes – they have access to weapons, including guns.
Predominantly handguns and repeating rifles with high capacity magazines illegally.
Pocket knives and box cutters, don't see them used but carried more for protection. I have also seen some steak knives sometimes.
I think that most if not all gang members have access to guns, even if they don't carry them all of the time. I have seen some gun violence among youth, but not a lot.
Most of the gang members that I come into contact with have easy access to handguns, even if when they are arrested they didn't possess it at the time.
Yes! We have been having a problem with house parties and a few of them have resulted in shootings.
They may have guns, but not much gun violence.
I believe they either have guns or have access to guns and/or knives. They usually use knives and can be very violent.
Yes, some of them do. As a matter of fact some of the younger gangs are starting to carry BB guns to mimic the older gangs who may be carrying real guns. If they aren't actually carrying guns, they may have easy access to guns.
The older LES Gang, Hells Angels, Highwaymen and Aryan Nation all are presumed to carry and use guns.

Summary and Analysis (having or using weapons)

Clearly, the youth and young adults who are gang involved in our community possess knives and other weapons- and if they do not own a gun, they have access to one. Combined with reports of gang related robberies and assaults, the risk of serious injury or death is high.

While the risk of gang-related homicide appears to be a valid concern, it is not a current reality. In 2012 there was only one homicide in Utica- the result of a late-night argument between two males, age 35 and 42. In the first three months of 2013, there were two separate murder-suicide incidents involving estranged intimate partners, but no gang-related deaths in spite of multiple shootings throughout Utica. The NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) reports that aggravated assault and robbery reported crimes have declined from 2007 to 2011.

Table 1.



SOURCE: NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services

While the overall *reported* violent crime rate in Oneida County has declined in recent years, the violent crime rate for reported “crimes with a firearm” are relatively high: exceeding those of 48 other counties in Upstate NY which has 57 counties. Many larger counties in Upstate, NY have substantially lower violent crime rates and violent crimes with firearm rates than Oneida County. See Appendix A. for a table of the 2011 Violent Crime Rates for select Upstate NY counties.

Sex, Race, and Ethnicity of Gangs and Gang Members

Sex: The most common observation reported was that there were “Mostly male gangs with a few females joining the male gangs”. Females are usually friends/girlfriends or family members of the male gang members. There is some evidence that there are a couple of all-female youth groups that consider themselves a “gang”.

Race and Ethnicity: There is no single racial/ethnic profile: most youth/young adult gangs are all one race/ethnicity, others include a mixture.

Community members and youth report that:

- *Many gangs are race specific. Mainly a group of friends that share similar cultures are the people forming gangs. In essence, the gangs end up representing certain races but the intent of the gang is not to be race specific, but more friend specific.*
- *They are from their different communities. [Black community, Latino community, etc.]*
- *L.E.S. – [is both] Spanish and White; Other gangs are race specific for the most part.*

Law enforcement personnel observations and comments are essentially similar, and also indicate that this racial/ethnic mix is- to a limited extent- fluid.

- *Mostly race or ethnic specific, Bosnian, Asian, African American, Latino. I am starting to see some cross over among groups, but that is the minority at this time.*

What factors in our community contribute to youth getting involved with a gang?

Current and former gang members report:

Feel unprotected in school and in the streets and the only means of protection is by being a part of the gang.
Lack of jobs, education, not good families, money (lack of), no protection.
Home environment; no father in the home/father not there; sometimes parent may have been in a gang; youth not in school; nothing for youth to do; no recreation center; there is nothing to showcase their abilities.
Nothing for youth to do (We used to go to Skate a Rama.); Drugs
Violence; drugs

Community members living in neighborhoods with gangs or with friends or family in gangs report:

Lack of activities, raised around it (older siblings), lack of parental care.
Drop out rate, abuse at home, peer pressure, police brutality/need protection.
Because family.
Family structure not intact (no father), lack of police presence to protect them, peer pressure.
Not too much to do in the community.
Bad influence.
Kids do not have anything to do to keep them occupied. Therefore, they join gangs just to have something to do. Lack of recreational and educational resources
The fact that Utica is a small community. There is not enough activities in the community for youth to be a part of so they fill that void by joining gangs.
Not having a dad; Not having anything to do; Centers closed; No programs
Media (T.V.); Rappers; Movies

Law Enforcement Personnel Report:

Poverty, the need to belong to something either for protection or to replace a lack of family structure, and the lack of a realization that education is the best path to success. Kids look around and don't see positive, successful role models of their own race or ethnicity.
Poverty, lack of positive middle class role models among the ethnic groups, the need for them to feel that they belong to something like a family that they don't get at home.
Poverty, depression and peer pressure are the main contributing factors in our area.
Poverty, breakdown of the family unit. Socio-economic factors.
The poverty level in the Utica area, also I think that the large refugee population are recruited for protection purposes.
I believe most youth join gangs for something to belong to and that they don't see a strong value in the educational experience.
I think the major problem is that there is a lack of extracurricular activities for youth to engage in after school.
Utica has been slowly becoming a depressed area, no jobs, school programs being cut (athletics) the kids have nothing to do but join these gangs or pursue some type of belonging / fulfillment.
Lack of parenting, break down of the family unit.
I think young parents who do not have the skills to raise children. Lack of guidance and examples to follow for positive opportunity. Young parents who don't monitor their children's activities and in some cases enable the criminal activity.
I think the larger refugee population contributes to the situation, as they group together for protection. Also, the poor economic situation and lack of opportunity, along with young parents contribute to gangs. Also, the media idolization of gang life looks attractive to some youth.
Fractured and unsupportive home life, no positive role models in their lives, poverty.
Poverty, and a need or sense to belong to something.

Summary and Analysis of Interview Data for “What factors in our community contribute to youth getting involved with a gang?”

Youth we interviewed emphasized that they feel unprotected and need gangs for protection and that there is little or nothing for them to do after school and on weekends.

Older community members we interviewed emphasized the lack of pro-social family supports, the absence of involved fathers for many, and, that echoed what youth said about “*Having nothing to do, Centers closed. No programs.*”

Law enforcement personnel who work in Utica schools as police and probation officers, etc. saw that there were larger structural problems at work in our region including the high level of poverty, and the related lack of jobs and cuts to school athletic and community-based youth programs. In Utica in particular, the large influx and collision of different ethnic groups and refugee populations was cited as an important factor driving gang involvement and organizational development. They also frequently mentioned family structural issues and family dynamics as driving forces for gang involvement. Other factors cited by law enforcement partners contributing to gang involvement: a lack of positive role models, the need for protection, and the influence of peers and media.

We feel unprotected...and the only means of protection is by being a part of the gang.... Current gang member

Poverty, the need to belong to something either for protection or to replace a lack of family structure, and the lack of a realization that education is the best path to success. Kids look around and don't see positive, successful role models of their own race or ethnicity.... Local Law Enforcement Officer

[Image to the right: FaceBook picture copied from a local youth's FB page appears to have one version of a Cornhill Soldiers (CHS) logo with a crown in the background. Courtesy of Utica Police Department.]



What do you think our local law enforcement agencies (Police Department, Probation and Parole Depts, DA’s Office) could do to make a positive difference with this problem?

Current and former gang members report:

They are useless to us because they only want to put us in jail. Most of them try to provoke you into committing a crime by fighting them. They are very racist and prejudiced against all youth.
I don't know; a lot of us have a bad perception of the police; us taking care of ourselves; they are there to do their job and that's all their going to do
Leave us alone, let us live; police f**k with us; put some money into the area; I think they should abide by the same laws we have to (drinking and driving, talking on the cell phones, etc.)
Nothing; do not put sets together

Community members living in neighborhoods with gangs or with friends or family in gangs report:

More involvement in a positive way.
Nothing. Maybe be more visible in the communities. They are not very friendly at all with the residents in different areas. More of a hindrance to the problem, than help.
Talk positively to children.
Stop being so negative and racially biased against youth of color in the different communities. Some police officers have a pre-conceived attitude about youth in different parts of Utica. Youth are having a hard time respecting officers and law enforcement staff that treat them like crap.
Have more open eyes around the community. Keep track of crimes and protect people.
More positive involvement in after school programs and in the classroom. Get more involved with Utica city events, such as the king of kings tournament. Be more directly involved with the community in a positive way. The police interact with the community in a negative way for the most part. Police really need to get more involved with this community in a positive way to show that they do care about the well-being of this community.
Patrol the areas more often so crime can decrease in certain neighborhoods. Install surveillance cameras to maintain safety in some neighborhoods where gang activity is high.
Come into the community; Listen to people; Not worry so much about the law but the problems; UPD Facebook is not positive it's a place where; people bash others, and not really know their circumstances
Pay more attention to the problems
I'm not sure
I don't know; they just do their jobs (they lock people up)
Patrol streets more often; cameras; ask questions from individuals/youth in the community
Nothing- they are too biased in their work with many of the youth in the system. Many Police Officers actually add to the problem with the racist and prejudiced statements that they make to youth from different cultures when confronting them for different reasons. Parole [probation] officers are not too bad with the youth but they have no respect for police officers, that needs to change quick.

Law Enforcement Personnel Report:

I think law enforcement does a good job currently, but I think that they need to establish specific juvenile gang units and establish a countywide database on youth gangs to help better address the problem.
I believe that juvenile gang units need to be established to deal with the problem as it has grown into a need that specifically needs to be addressed.
Law enforcement needs more resources and that takes financial resources to secure, which will require a political will to commit the resources needed. We need to be careful that in an effort to avert incarceration, and the costs associated with that, that we don't begin to tacitly approve the criminal actions just to avoid arresting and/or imprisoning someone.
I think that local law enforcement does a good job, but they need more resources of every type including personnel and funding. Adding more elements of the community policing model and police being more proactive rather than reactive.

I think law enforcement does a good job overall, but greater intelligence on gangs and intelligence sharing among the law enforcement groups could help.
I think that local law enforcement does a good job, but they need more resources of every type including personnel and funding. Adding more elements of the community policing model and police being more proactive rather than reactive. I like the presence of School Resource Officers and trying to get the kids to look at SRO as someone who is there to assist them, rather than to just arrest them. Positive role models.
I feel that law enforcement and the City of Utica are already taking steps to improve the relationship between these kids and the gangs. The Police are constantly training in cultural awareness, diversity and have made efforts through various programs such as book bag giveaways and charity events. I feel in order to be successful we have to hit these kids early in the stages of life.
More youth interaction.
I think the police could better show that they want to help and support the at risk population. Most gang involved youth believe that law enforcement is their enemy, and that they exist to just hassle them. More positive contact between youth and police on a regular basis.
I think law enforcement could have greater interaction in a positive manner with youth to form a positive connection.
More recognition from law enforcement that gangs are present. Creating gang specific units in law enforcement agencies. The continued and enhanced sharing of information between law enforcement and other agencies could and does currently help regarding this problem. Allowing the proper personnel of law enforcement members to combat the problem.
I believe law enforcement is the suppression aspect and needs to continue to focus on that, which they do well. The continued and enhanced sharing of information between law enforcement and other agencies could and does currently help regarding this problem.

Analysis and Summary:

Because of the size of the sample and the sample selection method used for this research, we cannot generalize our findings to a larger population with statistical integrity. However, based on the data we collected from the 33 key informant interviews we conducted, there appears to be a partial disconnect between the views of community residents and current and former gang members, and the views of law enforcement personnel with regard to what our local law enforcement agencies (Police Department, Probation and Parole Departments, DA’s Office) could do to make a positive difference with this problem.

There is also some alignment between some community members and law enforcement on key issues that include maintaining neighborhood safety and getting more involved with youth in the community.

Report Author’s Note (by Steve Darman, Director, *Social Science Associates*)

I have had the privilege to work with most of our local law enforcement agencies on this project in addition to community members from our poorest neighborhoods and some local government agencies involved with youth and youth service planning. Without exception, they’ve come to the table with a sincere interest in finding more effective ways to use law enforcement resources and tools to improve public safety. They fully recognize that they face formidable challenges that they cannot meet alone or without more resources. And in spite of their training and background that emphasizes the use of suppression, every law enforcement officer and administrator I’ve worked with on this project is sincerely interested in promoting healthy youth development, healthy families, safe neighborhoods, and a healthy and safe public school system. No one is under the illusion- soundly discredited in the criminal justice research- that we can arrest and incarcerate our way out of the set of social problems associated with gang-related violence and criminal activity.

As I write the final additions to this report prior to its release, Eric Zorn of the Chicago Tribune (2013) reports a call by U.S. Sen. Mark Kirk, R-Ill., to “Round up 18,000 members of the Gangster Disciples street gang and put them behind bars awaiting trial.” That’s 18 *thousand*. This is in reaction to yet another tragic loss of life related to gang-related gun violence impacting bystanders (via stray bullets). The Tribune reports that “Hadiya, a 15-year-old honors student at King College Prep, was shot and killed in a South Side park in late January [shortly after visiting the White House and sitting with the First Lady as a guest at the State of the Union Address], allegedly by a man affiliated with the Gangster Disciples.”

This misguided policy proposal highlights why it’s important to use current research-based strategies and practices to better understand and more effectively address the multi-faceted, multi-level challenges we face that contribute to- or fail to suppress- youth and young-adult violence and gang activity. Youth are joining gangs and using lethal weapons to resolve disputes – and the use of these weapons leads to more violence. These youth and young adults as well as innocent by-standers and school and law enforcement personnel can and will get hurt or killed in the future if we don’t act intelligently and work together as a community to implement effective strategies and solutions. I look forward to being part of this effort.

David Kennedy’s (2011) groundbreaking work documented in his book “Don’t Shoot” demonstrates that it is possible to drastically reduce gang-related gun violence in large and small cities around the nation, and that both law enforcement and community agencies play a key role in this effort. However, while arrest and incarceration of the most violent offenders is a key tool in the toolkit- there is much more that law enforcement can do, and much more that schools, community partners, local youth and their parents and other adults can do to reduce the violence by working together and using the right strategies. The lives and the future of our children and youth are at stake. Let’s get to work!

Police should “*Come into the community; Listen to people; Not worry so much about the law but the problems....*”

Community resident.

I think the police could better show that they want to help and support the at risk population. Most gang involved youth believe that law enforcement is their enemy, and that they exist to just hassle them. More positive contact between youth and police on a regular basis....

Local Law Enforcement Officer.

What do you think our community in general could do to better divert youth from joining gangs and/or to make our community a better place for youth to find a path to becoming a productive member of society?

Current and former gang members report:

More outreach from different law enforcement groups and agencies within the community.
Nothing.
Get more involved in their lives; get more support from other entities in the community; churches, mosques, synagogues; youth need something to stimulate their minds; they need more guidance.
Go back to Old School; Open arcades; free gym; group trips; fundraisers; show initiative.
I don't know.
The community has to educate youth on positive things to do; parents have to communicate; the community has to help youth find their passion.

Community members living in neighborhoods with gangs or with friends or family in gangs report:

Have more programs for youth (activities).
Open up youth centers in all the different communities. Give them jobs.
More community programs.
Find money to have activities or jobs to keep them busy, more police forums for youth to attend to discourage gang activity.
Give the children more activities. Open their eyes to what cannot come from being in gangs. Have various community meetings. Explain what negative comes out of gangs.
Advertise anti-gang policies as they would anti-smoking.
More community activities; More events. Parents could get more involved in the lives of their children. Kids with bad parents usually got into the most trouble in school.
Have a place for kids older than the age of 13 to hang out (boys and girls club ends at 13). Organized sports to get youth involved in the community.
Give them something positive to do; Have somewhere positive to go; Mentoring system; Not for profit organizations (who care) working with youth in the community.
Having more activities for youth.
Do more activities; open parks; have more stuff to do; a place for young kids to go party (no alcohol).
Community organizations could do more to help youth.
Education places; Community Center (things like that for teens-25 years old).
Provide after school programs; to have something for youth to do; mediation (one-one programs).

Law Enforcement Personnel Report:

Get them more involved in schools and after school programs. More sports after school so they can belong to a positive team as opposed to a gang.
More programs for youth and better positive engagement with adults and law enforcement. More after school options.
More after school programs and more programs to help youth develop along a positive path.
I am not sure we can. I don't think we can do it. We can assist but individuals make their own choices and we can't substitute by being someone's mommy, daddy, etc. Whatever mechanisms are chosen to intervene, it will still come down to an individual making a choice to do someone positive instead of negative.
Education and better education of gang consequences. A fuller consequence for those who are convicted of crimes. Better prevention, intervention and suppression programs. A return to strengthening family values. Helping would require a whole system change, with an entitlement feeling needing to change.

I think we need greater law enforcement and suppression efforts, they need to know that there are consequences to pay for illegal activity. In addition, providing more after school and other youth enhancement programs are critical. We need to reach youth when they are young, or they may be lost until their early thirties in age.
Education, specifically focusing on job skills for youth to learn and have a manner to support themselves legally in the future. Helping would require a whole system change, with an entitlement feeling needing to change Law enforcement does a great job with what they currently have to work with. The police have been in a reactive state for a long time and have not had the ability to be proactive due to a lack of staffing. Law enforcement needs more resources and financial resources to acquire the personnel needs to be proactive.
The fact that there is no money to be had by the Citizens of Utica and taxpayers being stretched to their limits, I feel the only solution is through federal funding, whether it be through the school offering a more extensive sports program or private entities engaging in after school programs, we have to offer these kids an alternative to the streets or we are all doomed.
Keep youth busy and provide some type of role model.
Encourage youth to utilize the existing teen centers and programs to help youth. More youth programs to exemplify positive paths for youth. Parenting programs for young parents.
More and stronger youth programs to provide a positive path for youth. Also, parenting classes for younger parents and refugees could help mitigate the problem.
More parenting involvement and after-school activities and programs, specifically targeted for at-risk youth. Better community wide information campaigns letting youth know that there is help and other pathways to get away from gangs.
More after-school activities and programs, specifically targeted for at-risk youth.

Analysis and Summary:

There was extensive agreement between youth, older community members and law enforcement personnel that our youth need many more opportunities for pro-social engagement. Suggestions range from “old-school arcades, free gym, gym trips” to “more events, activities, open parks, youth centers, etc.”, to many comments about youth needing a way to work and earn some cash and develop a career path.

In addition to opportunities outside the school setting, as some of our key informants indicate above, school itself is a key component in the development of all children and youth. Looking at students, there is research that “academic achievement is a strong predictor for gang membership”. Focusing on schools themselves there is a body of research suggesting that “poorly functioning schools with high levels of student and teacher victimization, large student-teacher ratios, poor academic quality, poor school climates, and high rates of social sanctions (e.g. suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to juvenile court) hold a greater percentage of students who form and join gangs” (Bernburg Krohn, and Rivera, 2006; Debarbieux and Baya, 2008; Gottfriedson and Gottfredson, 2001; Morrison and Skiba, 2001 Thornberry, Lizotte, et. Al., 2003; Weisel and Howell, 2007 as cited in the OJJDP December 2010 Bulletin titled Gang Prevention: An Overview of Research and Programs).

Here in Oneida County, as recently highlighted by the Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties, “twenty-one percent of Oneida County residents have bachelor’s degrees or higher while the New York state average is 31 percent, (excluding New York City) and the national average is 28 percent”. See <http://foundationhoc.org/foundation-announces-education-goal-that-will-change-community/> for more information on CF’s initiatives to address this deficit.

There were also several suggestions that our community needs to develop ways for youth to connect with pro-social adults and community agencies and with law enforcement agencies and personnel in particular.

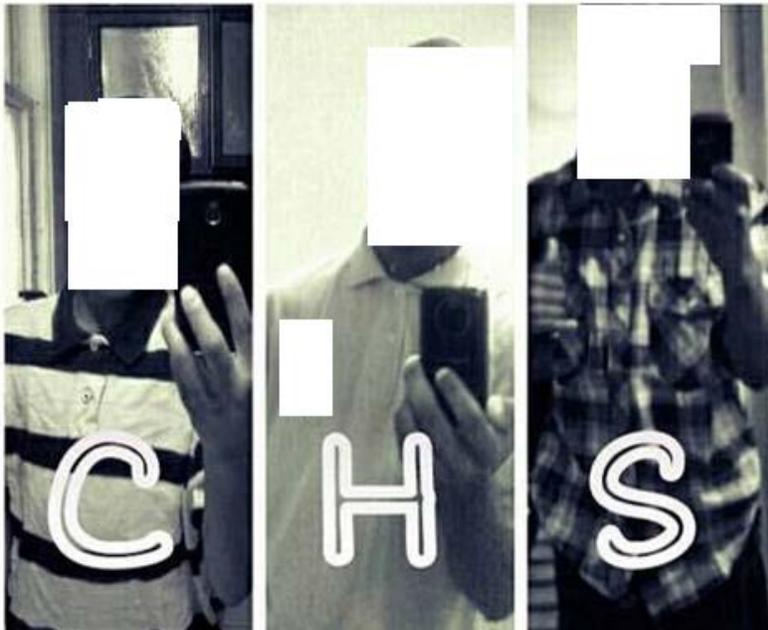
The community has to educate youth on positive things to do; parents have to communicate; the community has to help youth find their passion... former gang member

Get more involved in their lives; get more support from other entities in the community; churches, mosques, synagogues; youth need something to stimulate their minds; they need more guidance... former gang member

[We need to] have activities or jobs to keep them busy, more police forums for youth to attend to discourage gang activity.... Community member

[We need to] encourage youth to utilize the existing teen centers and programs to help youth. More youth programs to exemplify positive paths for youth. [We need] parenting programs for young parents. Law Enforcement Officer

Picture below from FaceBook page of a local youth showing three youth in one photo with the “CHS” tag (Cornhill Soldiers), courtesy of Utica Police Department.



Summary of Key Findings from 2005

- Exposure to violence at home, in school, with peers, in the neighborhood, and through the media is a major risk factor affecting the likelihood that children and youth will exhibit violent behavior.
- It's family dynamics- not family structure- that affects children and youth the most.
- Youth violence and crime in Utica are not concentrated in one neighborhood only. Utica's poorest neighborhoods are both safer and less safe than popular conceptions.
- Neighborhood-level poverty and collective efficacy/social disorganization affect the level of youth violence and crime.
- Girls are increasingly likely to use violence and/or become delinquents- in Utica and elsewhere in the U.S.
- Racial and cultural differences are sites of conflict for youth.
- Utica is an emerging gang city: scavenger youth gangs exist and there is some indication of an evolution to territorial gang activity.
- Gangs have existed for centuries and contemporary gang culture permeates the nation. Gang culture is imported: from jails, prisons, youth detention centers, from nearby cities, and through various media.
- Youth gang evolution will continue in Utica unless there are countervailing forces.

Did we get it right in 2005? Where are we today? (Repeated from the Introduction and Overview)

Looking back 8 years, it appears that our findings and our problem analysis were sound. Unfortunately our prediction that “youth gang evolution will continue in Utica unless there are countervailing forces” appears to be the case today: the evidence we have strongly suggests that countervailing forces have not been able to substantially reduce the size or scope of the gang problem in Utica or elsewhere in Oneida County.

How can we move forward to address the youth violence and youth and young adult gang activity in Utica, Rome, and Oneida County?

Clearly we need a strategy and a plan that involves all segments of our community, including local government, community and faith based organizations, public schools, neighborhood residents, youth themselves and other key community stakeholders.

In brief, our primary recommendation is to immediately develop an Oneida County Youth Development and Violence Prevention Coalition that includes the stakeholders listed above, get organized and focused, and use the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Comprehensive Gang Model to develop and implement a process that identifies the most effective approaches to prevention, intervention, and suppression of gang activity and youth violence in Utica as well as Rome and the rest of Oneida County.

Other Recommendations Emerging from the Data and Planning Discussions

1. Maintain the Gang Assessment Coalition for the purposes of conducting a Phase II data collection and analysis (described below), while transitioning to an Oneida County Youth Development and Violence Prevention Coalition. The Youth Development and Violence Prevention Coalition would have two (2) components under its auspices: A) A law-enforcement based group with a focus on developing and coordinating suppression efforts. This would greatly facilitate the ability of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to share intelligence and data and to better coordinate and collaborate on investigations and other suppression efforts; and B) A youth violence prevention and young adult support committee, modeled on the Juvenile Assessment Team paradigm. This group would identify and support community-based efforts to address youth violence and gang activity in Utica, Rome, and Oneida County by linking and coordinating with community members and area youth organized to address the same issues; with a special focus on prevention and intervention strategies tailored to mitigate violence, enhance the ability of youth to see education as a positive pathway to success, and on achieving and promoting the elements of the Community Indicators Project.
2. Expand the current research to include a “Phase II” data collection and analysis of gang activity that includes research on Asian and Bosnian youth and youth and young adults in Rome and elsewhere in the county (outside the City of Utica).
3. Investigate funding sources to provide planning, program development, and grant writing services to fund youth and young adult gang prevention, intervention, and suppression programs.
4. Find a way to provide additional community policing personnel focused on working with youth and adult residents in neighborhoods with a high level of gang activity in Utica.
5. Encourage our community and political leaders to continue to be proactive, while expanding their efforts, with regard to addressing the issues of gang violence and the community conditions that drive youth toward gang involvement and criminal activity.
6. Set up a meeting that includes our local political leaders and School Superintendents from Utica, Rome and Oneida-Madison BOCES to discuss the Report and agree on a unified regional strategy for addressing the Report’s main findings.
7. Include a focus on younger youth in Grades 4, 5, 6 for gang prevention work.
8. Identify what strategies and programs are in places that have worked to deter more serious gang activity and youth violence in our own community.

If you have further questions or concerns about youth violence or gang involvement, please contact:

Inv. William Williams, Utica Police Department, wwilliams@uticapd.com

Inv. Joseph Surace, Oneida County Sheriff Department, jurace@oneidacountysheriff.us, 315-765-2319

John Syrotynski, Utica City School District, jsyrotynski@uticaschools.org, 315-368-6061

James Franco, Safe Schools Healthy Students Partnership, Inc., jfranco@uticaschools.org 315-735-1345

Comprehensive Framework to Reduce Youth and Young Adult Violence and Crime in Our Community:

To be successful over the long-term, efforts to address youth violence and delinquency must include remedies that acknowledge and address both long-standing and newer racial and ethnic tensions that promote neighborhood safety, stabilization, and economic development as well as the promotion of positive family practices. An effective comprehensive plan must address multiple domains; school based approaches, neighborhood-level and community -based approaches, individual-peer level approaches and family-level approaches.

Linkages are a critical component of a comprehensive approach. When several strategies are incorporated into a program, a diverse implementation staff is needed. Select one organization to coordinate hiring of staff, keep track of all activities in the various interventions, and monitor staff performance. This will ensure continuity among the interventions and improve the overall effort. An essential component to a comprehensive approach addressed through collaboration is evaluation. Evaluation continues to be a challenge in the violence prevention movement. Evaluation must consider a broad range of outcomes and processes to respond to the breadth of issues addressed by this comprehensive plan and to serve as a basis for future violence prevention planning in Utica.

SOURCE: The OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model, 2009. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

We also recommend that the Gang Assessment Task Force and the Oneida County Youth Development and Violence Prevention Coalition research and planning include a look at programs and services instituted as a result of the 2005 study such as the Safe School Truancy Prevention, Arrest Diversion and Pre-PINS Diversion as well as several new after school program within Oneida County in response to youth violence. Since Utica has not evolved in its gang violence to other similar Upstate Communities, what protective factors are working? In addition, it is also recommended that the Coalition look at neighboring communities in Upstate NY. For example, we can learn from communities with similar characteristics (like Binghamton/Broome County), and from nearby communities that are also attempting to reduce gang-related violence and crime like nearby Syracuse, NY as the articles below indicate.

Below is a picture of an unidentified person flashing the Asian Boyz hand sign next to a telephone pole with "ABZ" graffiti. Picture courtesy of Utica Police Department.



Binghamton Press & Sun Bulletin, February 10, 2003,

Connie Nogas

BINGHAMTON -- Mike Early of Binghamton has heard the crack of gunfire, the squeal of tires from stolen cars and the metallic clang of jail doors slamming shut -- all the result of gang activity.

"I've seen people get shot up," he said. "I have seen a lot of my friends die, go to jail, disappear."

Early is a 20-year-old Binghamton resident who says he was a member of the Hoover Deuce Crips when he lived in Houston. Now that he is out of the gang, he says, he is working to stop gang violence here.

And with at least two gang-related killings in the past four years, anti-gang efforts are needed, authorities say, as gangs make their presence known in Broome County. Jury selection is ongoing for three men -- including at least one alleged member of the Bloods gang -- accused of strangling suspected New York City marijuana dealer Carlton Rose, who was found slain in Broome three years ago.

Currently, Broome counts at least 300 gang members among its 200,000 residents, authorities said. Most are in the county's more urban areas, such as Binghamton and Johnson City, said Trooper Richard Berry, gang coordinator with state police Troop C.

While local prosecutors and police crack down on gang members, they're getting help from a new gang-prevention coordinator and a team of volunteers.

The goal is to target young people via prevention and education, and to offer information to schools, organizations and parents, said Beth Harrington, program coordinator for Broome County Gang Prevention.

Last year, 121 confirmed gang members came to the Broome County Jail. Another 129 inmates are suspected of being gang members but wouldn't confirm it, Broome County Jail Administrator Larry Fischer said. That amounts to about 8 percent of the 3,856 people booked in last year. Jail officials are working on identifying 25 more.

Perhaps surprisingly, major simultaneous drug raids in the past decade such as Golden Road have created a vacancy filled by gang members.

Excerpted from an article in the Binghamton Press & Sun Bulletin, February 10, 2003, by Connie Nogas

NOTE: In 2011, Binghamton's population (47K) is somewhat smaller than Utica's (62K). Broome County's population was just under 200K vs. Oneida County at 234K.

Syracuse - One of nine in the nation to receive funding to reduce gun violence.

September 27, 2012

Albany, New York - United States Attorney Richard S. Hartunian announced today that the Syracuse community has received one of only nine grants awarded nationally from the Bureau of Justice Assistance Violent Gang and Gun Crime Reduction Program. Under the Department of Justice's Project Safe Neighborhoods Program, the grant will provide \$300,000 to fund "Syracuse Truce," an innovative collaboration between law enforcement and community service agencies to reduce gun crime and gang violence and diminish tension between law enforcement and the community. Syracuse Truce will be implemented with the assistance of the Rosamond Gifford Foundation.

Source: <http://www.syracusetruce.com/syracusetruce/index.html>

Syracuse (WSYR-TV) -- Some of the most violent men in Syracuse came together Thursday as part of a program called "Syracuse Truce" – a group effort to curb gun violence in the city. The program brings together law enforcement officials, prosecutors, social services, gun violence victims' relatives, and counselors as well as former gang members.

The group met at the Syracuse Federal Building. Syracuse was one of nine cities in the nation that received Federal funding for such a program to reduce gun violence. The grant provides \$300,000 for Syracuse Truce. According to Syracuse Police, the approach holds the group accountable for the individual's act of gun violence. Source: http://www.9wsyr.com/mostpopular/story/Syracuse-Truce-meets-for-the-first-time/d_UB_wZHm0CP0kPITZdkAg.csp

Related news story from YNN, May 17, 2013

SYRACUSE, N.Y. -- Syracuse Police say a violent street gang, the Lex Ave Midtown Assassins, or LAMA, had a deal, but broke it and now are paying the price. It's all part of the federal, state and local initiative launched this year known as "Syracuse Truce."

A task force met with several gangs, including LAMA. The gangs were told that if they maintained a truce, various services would be provided to help members find a way out of a life of crime. But if gang related killings continued, the gangs involved would face a massive crackdown.

On March 10th, authorities say a Lex Ave member shot and killed Daryl Mobley, leading to a month long effort focused on every member of the group.

"In those 30 days, we arrested 22 members of the LAMA gang. We revoked the parole of one member. We revoked probation of another member. We revoked the federal probation of another member. We had eight LAMA members had their social services benefits revoked because they didn't belong on them," said Syracuse Police Department Sgt. Thomas Connellan. Connellan says searches also led to recovery of weapons and drugs. He says the message to all gangs in the city is that if they break the truce, they can expect a similar crackdown in the future.

Source: http://centralny.ynn.com/content/all_news/665000/broken-deal-leads-to-crackdown-on-gang/

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APPENDIX A.
VIOLENT CRIME RATE COMPARISON OF SELECT NYS COUNTIES

2011 County Violent Crime Counts and Rates Per 100,000 Population

County	2011 Population	Violent Crime		Violent Crime With Firearm	
		Count	Rate	Count	Rate
Albany	305,571	1,161	379.9	196	64.1
Broome	201,502	521	258.6	46	22.8
Dutchess	298,825	623	208.5	89	29.8
Erie	923,171	4,201	455.1	1,155	125.1
Monroe	747,689	2,654	355.0	697	93.2
Nassau	1,345,553	2,226	165.4	398	29.6
Niagara	217,442	811	373.0	139	63.9
Oneida	235,934	548	232.3	93	39.4
Onondaga	469,125	1,656	353.0	303	64.6
Ontario	108,416	150	138.4	13	12.0
Orange	374,489	979	261.4	192	51.3
Rensselaer	160,146	485	302.8	112	69.9
Rockland	313,088	552	176.3	44	14.1
Saratoga	220,594	132	59.8	8	3.6
Schenectady	155,422	687	442.0	126	81.1
Suffolk	1,500,062	2,213	147.5	530	35.3
Ulster	183,313	335	182.7	36	19.6
Non-New York City	11,248,79	26,05	231.6	4,863	43.2

Source: DCJS, Uniform Crime/Incident-Based Reporting systems.

Includes all reports received as of 10/16/2012.

New York City counts are not available.

APPENDIX B. LIST OF GANG NAMES FROM INTERVIEW DATA

Q13: Gang Names Reported by Youth and Community Members
Cornhill Soldiers, Lower East Side (Latinas), Too High Class, King of Queens
CHS (Cornhill Soldiers), PGR (Pretty Girls Rock), Two High Class, Crips, Bloods, Latin Kings, ABZ.
Cornhill Soldiers, Eastside, Westside, Too High Class, Crips, Bloods, Cornhill Thugs+Gangsters.
CH Soldiers, 2 High Class, Crips/Bloods. There are many Asian groups but don't know the names. Bosnian groups/ don't know names.
YGS, CHS, 2HC, ABZ.
Cornhill Soldiers, Crips/Bloods, West Side?, No Limit Chicks.
Bloods, Crips, Latin Kings, Folk[?], Nieta, Pyruu, MS13, Arian Brotherhood.
U.T.G. – Corn Hill; L.E.S. – Lower East Utica
Corn Hill - Bloods, Crips, A.B.Z.// Limehood Pyru - Blood set// L.E.S. - Bleeker St., Nicols St. // James St. - Bloods, Crips // F.B.B. - Full Blooded Bosnians
LES (Lower East Side); CHS (Cornhill Soldiers)
LES; Too High Class; CHS
Bloods, Crips, Latin Kings (East Side)
Bloods, Crips, Too High Class, CHS (Cornhill Soldiers)
Crips; Bloods; Niatas [Netas]; Latin King; Rolling 20's (East Side); Mafia Crip
CHS; Too High Class; Scorilla Gang; Musical
LES, Westside ???; Stueben St.; Neilson St.; Dudley St.; they rep their streets
CHS (Cornhill Soldiers); THK (Too High Class)
Q13: Gang Names Reported Law Enforcement Partners in Interviews
Asian Boyz, Neval Slippin Gang, Hoover Ave, Cornhill Soldiers.
Asian Boyz, Lower East Side, Too High Class, Neva Slippin Gang.
No Limit Chick, Cornhill Soldiers, Asian Boyz, Too High Class.
Lower East Side, metas, bloods, crips and some subsets of them.
Asian Boyz, NSG Neva Slipping Gang, Two High Class, Cornhill Soldiers, Lower East Side Gang, The Hoover Gang (Hoover Crips), etc.
Asian Boyz, Too High Class, Cornhill Soldiers, Bloods.
Asian Boyz, NSG Neva Slipping Gang, Two High Class, Cornhill Soldiers, Lower East Side Gang, The Hoover Gang (Hoover Crips), etc.
Lower East Side (LES), Natural Born Killas (NBC), Latin Kings, Crips, Bloods, Corn Hill Soldiers, Full Blooded Bosnians (FBB), just to name a few.
LES – Lower East Side, CHS – Cornhill Solders, NSG – Never Slippin Gang, Asian Boyz.
Cornhill Soldiers, Too High Class, Asian Boyz, AMA (?), NSG – Neva Slippin Gang, Hood Ave., LES – Lower East Side, Hollister Gangsta Boyz.
Asian Boys, A Gang, LES, Too High Class, Neva Slippin Gang, Cornhill Soldiers, Gwala Gang, Hood Ave Scrilla Gang, Goodfellas, BMF Bosnian Mafia Family.
Asian Boyz, Cornhill Soldiers, Lower East Side, NSG – Neva Slippin Gang (formerly Two High Class), Brick City Posse (BCP), MS 13, Aryan Nation, Highway Men Motorcycle Gang), Latin Kings, Bloods.

Asian Boyz, Cornhill Soldiers, Lower East Side, NSG – Neva Slippen Gang (formerly Two High Class).	
Gang Names Reported by Oneida County Sheriff’s Office obtained from persons incarcerated at the Oneida County Jail in 2012 (and entered into the Gang Reporting Intelligence Program) with city the gang member is from.	
Piru Bloods	Utica
Bloods	Utica, Columbus, SC
4 Block	Schenectady, NY
Asian Boyz	Utica
Aryan Brotherhood	Herkimer
Aryan Brotherhood	Oneida, NY
Dirty White Boys	West Winfield, NY
Skinheads	Oneida, NY
White Supremacist	Marcy, NY
INS (Independent Nazi Skins)	Clinton, NY
LES	Utica
Crips (Rollin’ 60s)	Utica
Crips	Utica
Netas	Syracuse
Netas	Utica
Netas	Trenton, NJ

APPENDIX C.

Q1:Where do you see a gang problem? Youth and Community Members
Utica's Cornhill Section, West Utica and East Utica has a high number of gang members, many of these youth attend Donovan, Proctor and JFK schools. The Asian gangs are the most dangerous at this time and are the fastest growing group.
Schools and Neighborhoods.
In my neighborhood.
West Utica, East Utica, Cornhill, Proctor, Donovan.
After school programs.
Proctor High School. I would call them groups rather than gangs. Cornhill and West Utica are where the problems are. It will get worse during warm months.
In Cornhill, West Utica, East Utica. There are gang related problems in Proctor High School and Donovan Middle School.
Neighborhood, schools, corner stores.
Cornhill area; Lower East Side of Utica
Bleeker St; James St; Nichols St (Cornhill Area)
I don't see gangs but, groups hanging out. Not necessarily gangs.
In neighborhoods by the stores.
In the neighborhoods; Not much in school here; It is different in Rochester where I was raised.
In the streets; more in black-oriented (hood) areas
In neighborhoods (in the streets); all around
I see more in the neighborhoods (around Cornhill)
I'm not sure
Neighborhoods
Mostly in the neighborhoods East Utica, West Utica, and Cornhill; mainly at events (it could get physical); some in school, but not much now; mostly when people are under the influence (drugs/alcohol)
Mostly Cornhill and Proctor H.S.
Q1:Where do you see a gang problem? Law Enforcement
Mainly in the Utica area.
In the Cornhill, west and east sides of Utica.
West Utica, Lower East Side of Utica and Cornhill area of Utica.
With the parole population, generally throughout the city of Utica - adult gangs, along with some family members who are involved in youth gangs. Adult gang members are generally over the age of 20.
Majority of the gang related issues that I deal with come from kids in the Utica area, specifically the Cornhill area.
East side, west side and a small portion of the south side of Utica, but mainly the Cornhill area.
Majority of the gang related issues that I deal with come from the inner city of Utica.
I have learned that the problem area's / neighborhoods are those neighborhoods that have parks, rec centers, with little or no supervision available.
Both, Cornhill area, Proctor H/S and BOCES alternative Education.
In both Utica Middle schools and at the High School.

Youth and Young Adult Gangs

I see gang problems mainly in the Cornhill and West Utica areas of the city, and I see issues beginning in the lower part of south Utica.

I see the problem in the Cornhill, west Utica and lower east side of the city areas. I also see the issue present in the high school, but it begins in middle school.

The problem comes through when the students are on their way home from dismissal from Proctor High School, specifically at Armory & Arthur. The youth gang members live primarily in the Cornhill area.