

Comprehensive Gang Assessment

September 13, 2012

Submitted to:

The City of Chattanooga

Submitted by:

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Comprehensive Gang Assessment

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FOREWORD

An assessment differs from a mere "study." While both involve the gathering of data, an assessment is designed to guide action. Studies differ from assessments in the same way that a family photograph differs from a medical MRI. One ends up in a photo album, while the other ends up in the hands of professionals, who use the data to guide treatment plans. In short, the Chattanooga Gang Assessment comprises the greatest diagnostic tool regarding our gang activity that has ever been completed. In fact, the National Gang Center advised us that ours is the most comprehensive gang assessment that has been done in the entire nation. It involves more participants, includes more communities and addresses a greater variety of social issues than any other past gang research project. Our researchers have been asked to write up how they were able to accomplish this feat, so that the Chattanooga methodology can serve as a model for other communities across the country. Accordingly, everyone in the city should know that the Ochs Center and the UTC Center for Applied Social Research really came through for our community.

The assessment reflects the hearts and minds of our community members. Hundreds of neighborhood leaders and thousands of teenagers, along with pastors, teachers, counselors, other at-risk youth and even active gang-members, all provided the wealth of their perspectives. The data extend far beyond confirming what we already knew, not only in scope and depth, but because they reveal the "why" and the "how" of the gang problem. The assessment provides a view inside the heads of those most affected by gang violence, critical to designing effective programs. Further clarified within the greater context of the crime data, poverty mapping and geographical contours, this single document provides the best source of guidance for individuals and agencies who want to make an impact on our city's gang situation. Even so, as complete as it is today, we recognize that there is always room for the expansion of that data. We plan for the assessment itself to continue growing through our undertaking follow-up research projects and integrating reliable findings by other agencies.

So, this city has its diagnosis. The Ochs Center/UTC partnership has provided us with an MRI. What will be our treatment plan? Our first step: divide the city in two.

Throughout history, groups of people have been divided into those who **have** and those who **have not**. Understandable, but not acceptable for the task before us. We need separation right now between those who **do** and those who **do not**. It does not matter if you are poor or rich. White or black. Young or "more experienced in life." It comes down to action. Action is the difference. Action is critical. Action is needed.

This assessment provides direction for such action. No one can say that action is not needed, not after nine people were shot on Christmas Eve in a single gang shootout. That one incident made national news, so no one in Chattanooga can say that they do not know that we have a problem, not anymore. Especially not after a subsequent gang shootout just a few months later ended with 13-year old Keoshia Ford shot in the head and lying in a vegetative state. Furthermore, those individuals with the financial resources, intellectual capital and political will cannot say they don't know what action to take, because they all hold in their hands the best gang assessment in the country. Plus, the assets we have to work with are incredible.

Chattanooga has a truly amazing number of caring individuals and agencies, committed to action, who have long been engaged in action and embrace their missions of charity. In this city, we have far more people who **do** than those who **do not**. When presented with a mission, or a goal, or a crisis, this city truly comes together. The Chattanooga Way is both simple and beautiful: we set our sights on a lofty point in the future and we work until we get there. We understand that, if we are to reach that point on the mountaintop, we must get ourselves up the mountain. We know that no one is going to do it for us. This is our history. We have consistently risen up as a community to reach high goals in the past. That history lives in our name. It is time once again for those who are part of the Rock that Rises to a Point to set out to achieve a lofty goal. Combatting gang violence will require that rock-solid commitment by everyone who wants to make a difference. It is time for the **do nots** to join us or step aside. To be a part of the process or to be removed from it. The city needs to be divided into those who **do** and those who **do not right now** because we have no more time to waste. Many people recognize the need for urgency and would love to help, but do not know where to start. The starting line for this journey can serve as the line that separates out the **do nots**.

Illiteracy is intimately connected with poverty and crime. Approximately 70% of prison inmates are illiterate. States select sites for future prisons based on locations with high percentages of third-graders with poor reading levels. A person who cannot read has extremely limited opportunities for a legitimate job, but he still has to eat. Anyone reading these words right now can teach a child from an affected area how to read. Everyone reading these words right now, who is committed to action, should either commit to teach a child how to read or get involved in another outreach initiative within their capabilities. So, a simple test that can identify those who **do** is the question: "Have you taught a child to read?" There are only two passing answers: 1) "Yes." 2) "No, but I have gotten involved in _____." Any outreach initiative in the city that impacts the issues identified by the assessment will suffice. There are only about a thousand.

Finally, a strong message needs to be communicated to those who were (or are) part of the problem. Former gang members, former drug dealers, recovering addicts, felons, and delinquents need to clearly understand one thing: they have the power to do great things. Their words have influence. Their negative life experiences may seem worthless to them, but in the context of helping at-risk youth, those life experiences have the highest value. By living, experiencing and surviving THE PROBLEM, they can become THE SOLUTION.

So, everyone has a role. The need is critical. The mission is clear. The data needed to guide our efforts awaits within the pages that follow.

The future is ours, Chattanooga.

Boyd Patterson
Gang Task Force Coordinator

Acknowledgements

This report would not have been possible without the assistance of many persons who helped through their cooperation and work in the overall research process. The Center for Applied Social Research wishes to especially thank the Hamilton County Department of Education, Superintendent Mr. Rick Smith and Assistant Superintendent Dr. Lee McDade, Dr. Kirk Kelly, and other members of the Central Office staff. We also thank the principals, assistant principals, staff and teachers of the schools that participated in the Student Survey for their tremendous help with the survey. We also express our appreciation to agencies and individuals who assisted with the focus groups, particularly those with the Partnership for Family and Children Services and the City of Chattanooga. This study was hugely facilitated by an outstanding graduate and undergraduate student staff from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga who performed major work in data collection, compilation, analysis, and report development. These students are listed below and we thank them for their professionalism and excellent work.

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Special Assistance Appreciation to:

Lisa K. Brown, MPA., Doctoral Candidate; Howard University, Washington, DC.
Katlyn Porter, BA., Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, N.C.

The Ochs Center would like to thank Stacy Richardson for her efforts in setting up and conducting focus groups during the early stages of this report. We also benefitted from the work of two exceptional interns, Brittain Ayers and Charlotte Baltz. They provided invaluable assistance with research as well as data collection and presentation. Their dedication to the project is greatly appreciated. Numerous neighborhood organizations, law enforcement agencies, community leaders, local residents and gang members cooperated with us throughout the project; the quality of the assessment would have suffered without their contributions.

We thank the City of Chattanooga and the Community Foundation of Greater Chattanooga for making it possible to conduct this research.

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Chattanooga Comprehensive Gang Assessment

Executive Summary

The Chattanooga Comprehensive Gang Assessment follows the methodology developed by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) which includes data collection in the following five domains: Community Demographic Data, Law Enforcement Data, Student and School Data, Community Perceptions Data, Community Resources Data. The findings in this assessment are derived from analyses of demographic and crime data; surveys of public middle and high school students and surveys of Hamilton County Department of Education (HCDE) personnel; multiple community workshops, focus groups and individual interviews, all involving citizens with diverse backgrounds; and, a review of existing programs offered in Chattanooga.

The assessment reveals a metropolitan community that is at a crossroads in dealing with gang activity. In a handful of neighborhoods—Alton Park, East Chattanooga, Westside and Avondale—gangs are entrenched and have been for years. These gangs are multi-generational and gang affiliation is associated with certain neighborhoods. For example, the Bloods are entrenched in Alton Park and the Crips are entrenched in East Chattanooga. In the rest of the city, gangs are an emerging menace. There is evidence that gangs are spreading. For example, all of the Hamilton County Schools participating in the assessment reported some level of gang activity taking place inside and outside of their walls.

The Student and School Domain Study includes a comprehensive exploration of student, Hamilton County Schools employee, and parent views on the problem of gang proliferation in Chattanooga/Hamilton County from the standpoint of students in the 6th through 12th grades. Specifically the study considers how the growth of gangs in Chattanooga is affecting students and the school environment, and what factors are important in any effort to reduce the gang problem and its effects. The School Study included a survey of 6,721 students in 13 Hamilton County schools, a survey of 4,000 Hamilton County School employees, 7 employee and 2 parent focus group sessions, and a review of behavioral and disciplinary data for Hamilton County Schools for the school years 2010-2012.

The analysis of school surveys found:

(1) Gangs are a growing phenomenon and gang members are present to some extent in all the schools in this survey. Students who self-identified as either currently in gangs or had been in a gang were present in all 21 zip codes represented in the student study population.

(2) The impact of gangs is felt in regards to student concerns about their safety and their heightened awareness of gang-related behavior both inside and outside of school regardless if gang affiliated or not. Gang-associated incidents and actions affect the teaching and learning environment of the school and students' sense of safety and well-being after school. While largely aware of gangs, most students and school employees, including teachers, staff and administrators, felt they did not have sufficient information to address the problem effectively.

Many youth expressed their frustration with the fact that they had few resources for dealing with gang recruitment, and potential reprisals if they wished to avoid or leave a gang.

(3) A number of reasons were given for why youth voluntarily join gangs, with affiliation for some beginning as early as early elementary school. The major reason given by student respondents was the desire for money. Other major motivating factors were peer pressure (friends in gangs), and a desire for protection. School employees and parents noted most strongly a lack of parental involvement, few positive role models for many youth, and few or very limited options for pro-social outlets for youth at school or in the community.

(4) The role of poverty was emphasized by a number of respondents as a major factor in gang proliferation in Chattanooga, with jobs and job training stressed as the most important ways to help reduce the power and growth of gangs.

(5) The need for a comprehensive set of school and community programs, that could address a range of needs among youth in Chattanooga, was extensively noted by student, employee and parent respondents. They felt such programs should range from positive activities and outlets for youth of all ages, to changes in educational options that would allow more non-traditional and vocational tracks for students. The latter were viewed as crucial to support job access during and after high school. A point was made that all students may not be college ready, or have the financial means or interest to go to college immediately after high school. There should be better preparation for these students to enter the job market. It was strongly suggested that the educational system implement a comprehensive vocational training program for a variety of occupational tracks that could facilitate attending community college or entering an apprenticeship program. Such options were seen as important in helping to overcome poverty and reduce the lure of gang-related illegal activities.

(6) The importance of parents and families in gang issues was strongly noted. However, both gang affiliated and non-gang affiliated student respondents tended to come from similar household situations, indicating that family structure alone is not the key to understanding the family dynamic. Rather, the quality of parenting and the presence of positive role models make a difference in whether a young person will be likely to get involved in a gang.

Recommendations derived from the school component data and supported by other research include:

(A) Developing a formal Hamilton County Schools initiative to address the problem of gangs to include prevention, intervention, and suppression components in all district schools, to ensure that all school personnel have the information and guidance to effectively handle gang-related concerns of students and employees, including how these may be addressed through disciplinary measures.

(B) Developing multi-dimensional programming in the school and community sectors that meet a wide range of student needs and interests as noted in this study and other research on the gang issue.

(C) Strengthening families and addressing the problem of generational gang affiliation and/or family members who are in gangs, and who thereby have a major influence whether youngsters join gangs.

(D) Overcoming continuing problems of income and employment disparities that perpetuate poverty in Chattanooga. This requires a re-commitment to job training and job access that can enable viable employment options for all youth and adults.

Community perceptions overlap strongly with student perceptions. Residents are frustrated because they believe the gang problem has until recently been ignored by city leaders—politicians, pastors, agency heads, law enforcement, non-profits, the school system and the business community. Many residents remain skeptical of promises of change and largely apathetic to calls to action because conditions within many of these neighborhoods have not improved over the last several decades. The prosperity and growth that is marketed in national publications has not significantly impacted these communities. The “Chattanooga Way” is renowned for generating results, but the model will be severely tested in transforming the quality of life in neighborhoods mired in multi-generational poverty and a host of social ills. Post-assessment programmatic efforts need to address the roots of the gang problem and tangibly demonstrate to frustrated residents that this time, the promises are more than rhetoric.

Introduction

The comprehensive gang assessment is complete and the findings provide Chattanooga leaders with a strong foundation to build more targeted, effective future programs. They also provide the community with benchmarks that can be used to gauge programmatic success in the future.

While some of the report confirms “what we already know” about gang involvement and crime, this comprehensive gang assessment provides exceptional depth into the pathos acutely affecting some neighborhoods in Chattanooga. Although all neighborhoods are not equally affected, the gang problem touches everyone in the community. It affects the quality of schools and the learning environment. It stresses local law enforcement budgets and the allocation of police personnel. It contributes to the inefficient use of health care dollars. It adversely affects Chattanooga’s image and the City’s appeal and attractiveness to national and global businesses. It also sabotages the good work of government organizations, neighborhood leaders, nonprofits, and faith based organizations that are attempting to improve the quality of life throughout the city. Most importantly, gang affiliation and crime destroy future livelihoods for hundreds, if not thousands, of Chattanooga youth who make the fateful decision to join a gang.

The gang problem is at heart a community development problem. Many of the challenges facing the city have formed, solidified, and hardened over multiple generations. The comprehensive gang assessment does not provide any silver bullets or magic solutions to solve the gang problem because there are none. Addressing the reasons why gangs form and how to inoculate children from the gang disease will require sustained collaborations between various community partners.

Chattanooga is not alone. Large and small cities across the country are struggling with youth violence and gang problems. Researchers are largely in agreement on the reasons why youth join gangs. The perverse and cumulative impacts of poverty, increases in the percentage of single-parent households, low-performing schools, the lack of positive male role models and too few economic opportunities create conditions conducive to gang formation. However, much less is known about successfully reclaiming gang infested communities and creating tangible pathways to economic opportunity.

Using the Comprehensive Gang Assessment

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) recommends five strategies for the comprehensive gang assessment.

Community Mobilization: Involvement of local citizens, including former gang youth, community groups and agencies, and the coordination of programs targeted at gang-involved youth.

Opportunities Provision: The development of a variety of specific education, training, and employment programs targeted at gang-involved youth.

Social Intervention: Youth-serving agencies, schools, grassroots groups, faith-based organizations, police agencies, and other criminal justice organizations reaching out and acting as links to gang-involved youth, their families, and the conventional world and needed services.

Suppression: Formal and informal social control procedures, including close supervision and monitoring of gang youth by agencies of the criminal justice system and by community-based agencies, schools, and grassroots groups.

Organizational Change and Development: Development and implementation of policies and procedures that result in the most effective use of available and potential resources, within and across agencies, to better address the gang problem.

Who is Responsible for Gangs in Chattanooga?

The comprehensive gang assessment discovered high levels of frustration in the community. However, blaming the gang problem on any individuals or organizations in Chattanooga is counter-productive and a waste of valuable resources. Rather, the assessment focuses on identifying the root causes of Chattanooga's gang problem. Gangs are a symptom of larger social ills that cannot be solved independently by the police, the court system, the schools, local government, nonprofits, churches, or the business community. Building stronger communities that have an abundance of the social, fiscal, and human capital needed to combat poverty, under-education, and a lack of pathways to the workforce will require sustained, concerted efforts of all community stakeholders.

Initiatives resulting from the comprehensive gang assessment must take a different form than past initiatives. A review of news reports indicates the following pattern with respect to gangs: A spike in crime or a gang-related incident occurs, followed by an interest in tougher laws and vigorous prosecutions, prayer vigils and other church and civic-related responses, the convening of a gang summit, and, finally, the establishment of short lived youth activity programs. It's time to admit that this approach has not worked and to focus more deeply and resolutely upon the underlying causes of young people joining gangs.

Building Prosocial Communities

Some researchers use the term "prosociality" to refer to communities that nurture positive relationships between residents and their environment. According to the Promise Neighborhoods Research Consortium, "If we are going to build neighborhoods of successful young people, it will pay to promote prosociality. But for prosociality to succeed, we need to be sure that our neighborhoods are highly nurturing and minimize stress and conflict."¹ A critical element that undermines the flourishing of prosocial behaviors is trust. The comprehensive gang assessment finds a high level of distrust across the Chattanooga community. Focus group participants repeatedly professed deep levels of distrust in elected officials, the criminal justice system, the business community, schools and the nonprofit community.

The distrust seems most pronounced in the areas that are disproportionately impacted by gang activity. Again, Chattanooga is not alone in this battle. Trust in traditional institutions, from the

church to Congress, continues to wane.² Distrust is fueled by media saturation and increased knowledge of the perceived failures of public and private sector leaders. It is also fueled by the failure of well-intentioned programs to truly uplift struggling communities and young men. Those failures are reinforced by high incarceration rates, especially for African American males.

As one community activist explained, “You all have promised us things in the past and none of it has happened. How can I go back to my people and get them involved if promises are never kept?” Chattanooga, like other cities, has a history of well-intended programs that never materialized or abruptly expired after the seed money was gone. Community residents complained that successful programs in the past that were funded largely by federal money have been cut and eliminated. In short, many residents of lower-income neighborhoods have quit believing.

The complexity of the problems affecting struggling communities is immense. And, the problems are no longer confined to urban neighborhoods. Suburban poverty is increasing. The Brookings Institute estimated that Chattanooga’s median household income decreased by 7 percent between 2007 and 2010, and suburban poverty in the metropolitan area increased by 69 percent between 2000 and 2010.³ These trends, coupled with community feedback, suggest that a comprehensive gang strategy needs to include the entire county, not solely the most impacted neighborhoods. The American Journal of Preventive Medicine recently published several articles on protective factors for youth violence. Factors that are strong candidates for protecting youth against violence include close family relationships, school support, social involvement, and living in non-deprived and nonviolent neighborhoods.⁴ All of the methodologies used in this assessment indicate that young people in some of our neighborhoods face issues in each of these areas. It will take a community-wide strategy to tackle these challenges.

The Reach of Gang Activity

The comprehensive gang assessment shows that much of the gang violence and crime is confined to inner city neighborhoods in East Chattanooga, Avondale, Alton Park, and Westside. Residents of neighborhoods not currently affected by high levels of youth violence and gang activity could conclude that this is simply an urban problem. This perspective ignores real and tangible costs to all Chattanooga residents. The Center for Applied Social Research (CASR) found self-identified, gang-affiliated youth in every Chattanooga zip code. Roughly 26 percent of students surveyed at middle and high schools reported that they were aware of drug sales at their school; 41 percent believed gang-related fighting occurred 1-2 times per month at their school. A total of 419 students indicated that they are currently in a gang. These students attend schools throughout Hamilton County.

CASR also surveyed Hamilton County Department of Education (HCDE) teachers and employees. When asked about the presence of gangs in their schools, 21 percent of elementary school employees, 49 percent of middle school employees and 75 percent of high school employees responded “yes.” Moreover, 59 percent of all HCDE respondents believe that gang activity in schools is increasing. These data suggest that all communities in Hamilton County have a stake in combating gangs.

Community Conditions

The most recent 2010 Census data shows that certain neighborhoods in Chattanooga continue to struggle in many ways. Several areas have high levels of concentrated poverty, unemployment, racial isolation, and single-parent households. The inter-connectedness of these variables is widely established in urban research. Statistical analysis of Chattanooga data shows high levels of correlation between the percentage of a census tract that is African American and the percentage of individuals living in poverty; the percentage of households receiving food stamps and public assistance; median household income; educational attainment, and participation in the labor force. Breaking the pattern of behaviors that perpetuate trends in the data has remained elusive. Larger cities such as Los Angeles and Chicago have been dealing with gangs and gang violence for several generations; yet, gang problems persist.

Some researchers highlight the emergence of a stark opportunity gap between children from highly educated households compared to children from less educated households.⁵ This is important because persistent differences are relatively new and reflect the ability of more affluent parents to reinforce competitive advantages. For example, some children have the advantage of participating in expensive child enrichment activities, SAT workshops, and global travel. Their parents establish college funds and have strong expectations for success. These children develop the academic skills and social networks that provide opportunity. Children without these advantages are more likely to eventually disengage from school and ultimately enter the criminal justice system.

The estimated median household income for 2010 in Hamilton County, Tennessee was \$45,408. As Table 1.0 shows, approximately 10 percent of children under the age of 5 lived in census tracts where the median household income is less than one-half of the county median. As the table shows, 23 percent of black residents in Hamilton County lived in the most impoverished census tracts compared to 2.4 percent of white residents. When aggregated, almost 52 percent of black residents compared to 11 percent of white residents lived in tracts where the median household income is less than 75 percent of the county median. About 44 percent of whites lived in census tracts with median incomes greater than 125 percent of the county median (\$56,761) compared to 11.7 percent of blacks. This relative inequality has major impacts on opportunity structures, neighborhood culture, and school conditions.

Table 1.0 Children Residential Neighborhood by Median Income and Age Cohort, 2010

Median Income	Children Age Groups				Hamilton County		
	Aged <5	Ages 5-9	Ages 10-14	Ages 15-19	All County	Black	White
<50%	9.7%	8.2%	6.8%	6.8%	6.8%	23.4%	2.4%
<75%	15.3%	12.6%	12.1%	21.1%	13.1%	28.3%	8.5%
75%-124%	40.8%	39.4%	39.7%	36.1%	42.9%	36.5%	44.9%
>125%	34.2%	39.9%	41.3%	35.9%	37.1%	11.7%	44.2%

Source: US Bureau of the Census. American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates.

These data underscore inequalities at birth that some childhood experts contend limit opportunities for disadvantaged children.

“There is extraordinary inequality in the capacities and resources of American parents. These things determine what parents can do with or for their children. Unequal childhoods become unequal adulthoods⁶.” A central mission for Chattanooga stakeholders is to implement programs that mitigate the developmental shortcomings that high percentages of at-risk children accept as normal. Inasmuch as the behaviors and incentive structures that inhibit the development of prosocial attributes are normalized, well-intentioned neighborhood interventions will be thwarted. The full discussion of community demographics is covered in Chapter 1 of the report.

Crime and Violence

Crime and violence are scattered throughout the Chattanooga region, but the data show concentrated areas of crime in East Chattanooga and South Chattanooga. Dodson Avenue seems to be a spine of activity where violent crime, shootings, and murders are most concentrated. Property crime and other non-violent offenses happen in North Chattanooga and in suburban neighborhoods like Soddy Daisy and Ooltewah with less frequency. However, the likelihood of being a victim of gang violence in most communities throughout Hamilton County is low.

The absence of gang crime in some communities is not an excuse to ignore the problem. As the survey of middle and high school students attests, the perception of gang activity in schools is widespread. In addition, the perception of gang activity downtown contributes to a lowered quality of life for some residents who fear going there. All residents pay for resources dedicated to gang suppression. The full analysis of crime data is provided in Chapter 2 of the report.

The Costs of Gang Violence

It is difficult to determine the exact cost of gang activity in Chattanooga due to the number of factors involved. We can, however, begin to understand the magnitude of the costs by looking at cost studies of other municipalities as well as some of the known factors. We know, for example, that addressing gangs involves significant resources from law enforcement and the criminal justice system, including the costs of incarceration. Medical care for gang members and their victims resulting from violence is another potential source of high costs.

Direct and indirect costs of gangs are felt by all of the following agencies:

- Police Department
- Sheriff’s Office
- City Attorney
- District Attorney
- Public Defender
- Superior Court
- Adult Prison
- Adult Parole
- Adult Probation
- Juvenile Incarceration
- Juvenile Parole
- Juvenile Probation

- Nonprofits
- Faith-based Organizations

The Tennessee Department of Corrections estimated the cost to incarcerate a prisoner in Tennessee for 2011 was \$64.83 per day, or \$23,663 per year. This figure could be used to determine the costs of incarcerating gang members in Hamilton County, but it is only one of many costs of gang activity. Medical care for gang-related violence is an important cost driver. Phillip Cook recently updated his 1999 study by stating that medical costs for a gunshot injury are likely to average \$48,610 per incident. Costs are much higher for those with severe injuries, running as high as \$500,000. Roughly 50 percent of such costs are borne by the government.⁷

To put this in perspective, there were 9 individuals shot in the December 24, 2011 at a local club. Using the average cost presented above, that would result in about \$437,490 in health care costs. If 50 percent of this were paid for by the government in the form of either Medicaid or uncompensated care payments, then the costs to taxpayers for this one incident would be \$218,475.

The shooting of Keoshia Ford is also illustrative of the high costs related to gang violence. She was caught in crossfire between gang members and is now comatose due to a gunshot wound to the head. A spokesman from TennCare estimated the costs for someone receiving the level of care that Keoshia Ford is receiving at \$320,000 per year.

The medical costs are just one element of gun shots. The costs start accruing once 911 is called and dispatchers go to work directing police and emergency medical services to the scene of the shooting. The costs of police, ambulances, paramedics, detectives, continuing field investigations, prosecutors, public defenders, and judges reach into the thousands of dollars. For residents, lower level calls for police assistance are likely put on hold when a shooting occurs. In addition, property owners could suffer negative property value impacts in communities stigmatized by crime and perceived gang activity. The Christmas Eve shooting drew national media attention that could detract from tourism and economic development opportunities.

Gang violence represents a significant drain on resources. Providing an estimate of its costs in Chattanooga and Hamilton County would require a thorough assessment of the amount of time law enforcement must deal with gangs, the number of gang related cases in the criminal court system, the number of incarcerated gang members, and the number of hospitalizations and health care interventions that take place as a result of gang violence. It is likely that gang activity costs millions of dollars annually and that these costs will rise unless this activity is reduced.

Organization of the Report

The remaining sections of the report follow the guidelines established by the OJJDP. First, a comprehensive demographic analysis that highlights neighborhood socioeconomic conditions is presented. Following that, crime data, gang crime data, and shooting data are presented along with appropriate maps that provide a geographical lens on neighborhoods most affected by crime. The third chapter of the report presents data gleaned from surveys of Hamilton County Public School students, employees, and parents. These data provide a rich source of information

on the pervasive influence of gangs in schools from the perspective of teenagers and adults. Strikingly, both students and teachers alike described similar conditions and impacts.

The fourth chapter provides a comprehensive community overview of gangs and their perceived neighborhood impacts from residents, community leaders, agency directors, non-profits, and gang members. The gang assessment cannot confirm all of the opinions expressed during the data collection process, but the themes that emerged from community dialogue were repeatedly heard at different forums.

The final chapter provides a comprehensive database of existing programs that target at-risk youth in the community. Community leaders will be challenged to determine which programs are successful, duplicative or inefficient. This chapter will force funders and agencies to make difficult choices that, if not managed correctly, could undermine the ultimate success of any comprehensive gang strategies. Moving forward, all agencies involved in improving opportunities for youth need to be willing to share turf and work outside of silos.

Chapter 1

Demographic Analysis

The purpose of the demographic analysis is to provide additional community context to the socioeconomic environment of high crime neighborhoods. The data show that the neighborhoods most associated with gang activity suffer from a variety of socioeconomic challenges. These neighborhoods are typically racially concentrated and suffer from high levels of poverty, low rates of education attainment, dependence on public assistance and public transportation, and limited attachment to the traditional labor market. All of these problems are associated with higher levels of crime, dysfunction and lower quality of life.

The police department and criminal justice system did not create the underlying conditions that are conducive to crime, but they are disproportionately responsible for managing the problem. The central theme of this report is that long term solutions to the gang problem will require unique collaborations among educators, the business community, nonprofits, neighborhood residents, and the criminal justice system to cultivate prosocial values in communities throughout Chattanooga.

Both Chattanooga and Hamilton County experienced population growth between 2000 and 2010. However, the patterns of growth were uneven and some areas remain mired in poverty. Urban gentrification has occurred in Southside and near the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC) where the white and college educated population grew at a rapid pace. The success of Southside and downtown redevelopment efforts in attracting more affluent residents back to the city has been impressive. Sustaining this growth and spurring additional growth in marginalized communities is dependent upon crime rates and school quality. Failure to keep crime and gang activities out of these neighborhoods could threaten their long term viability. This is another example of how the gang problem affects the entire city, not just areas that are crime hotspots.

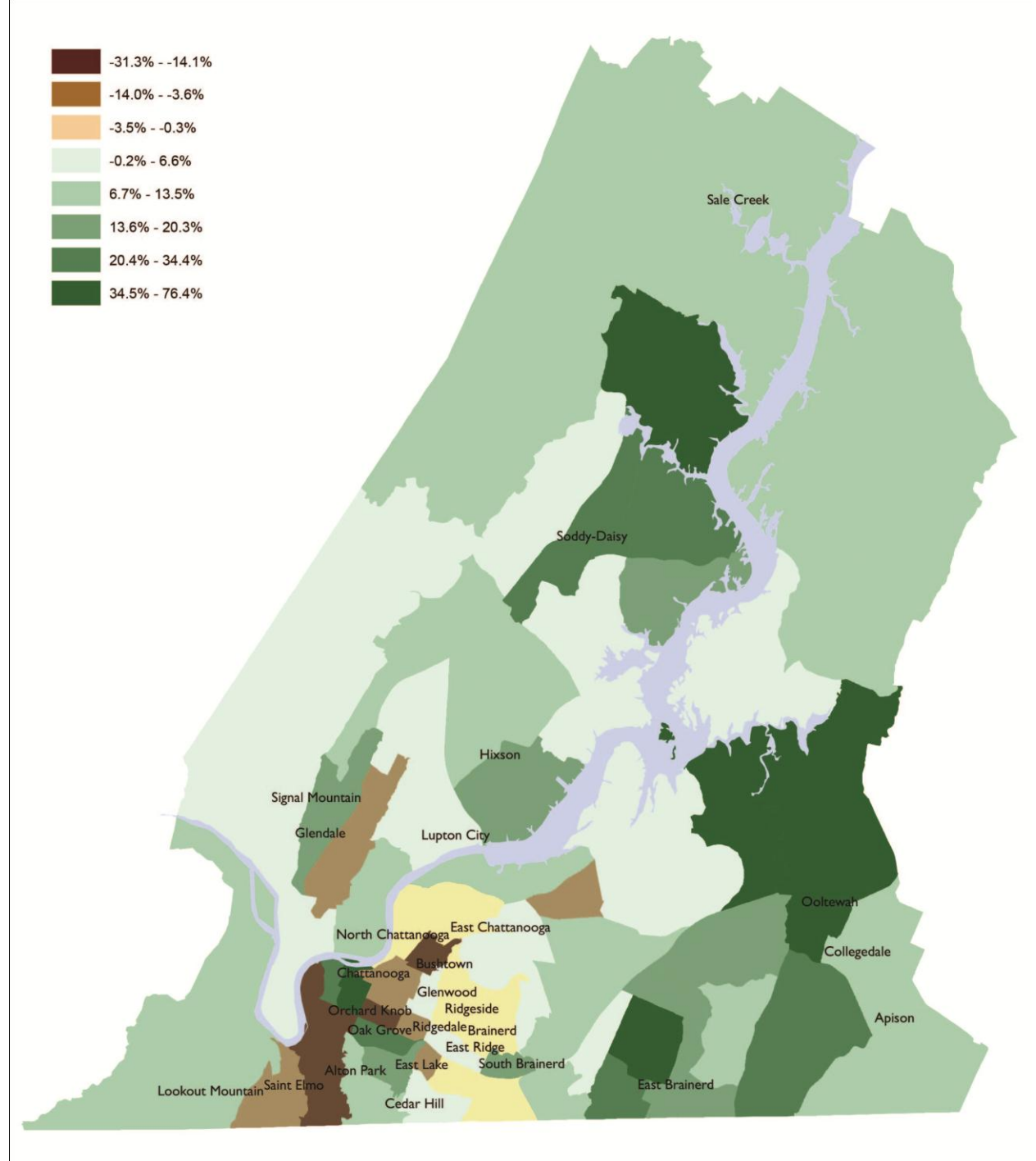
General Growth Trends

Chattanooga grew at a rate of 7.8 percent between 2000 and 2010 while Hamilton County grew at a rate of 9.3 percent. (A table of demographic data broken down by census tract can be found in Appendix A.) In the past decade, the county grew 3 percentage points faster than the city of Chattanooga. Within the city, some census tracts have experienced growth and others have experienced population decline. Chattanooga is one of a few mid-size cities to recover from large population losses in the 1980s.

The population change map (Map 1.1) shows those areas that experienced the largest shifts in population. The areas shaded in hues of green experienced population growth while areas shaded brown or yellow experienced population decline. The population growth in the eastern half of Ooltewah was 76.4 percent, followed by a 65.1 percent increase in population in the Hamilton Place area. The siting of Amazon and Volkswagen manufacturing centers along with the regional mall have made the area a popular place to live. In the city, the population surged by 51.2 percent around UTC, reflecting the new dorms and increased numbers of students. The Southside area experienced a population decline of 31.3 percent; the Westside and Feger Place/Oak Grove areas lost 18 percent of their population. Avondale saw a 17.3 percent drop in residents. Both

Westside and Alton Park saw decreases in housing stock. Westside saw a 22.9 percent decline in housing units while Alton Park experienced an 11.7 percent loss in units.

Map 1.1: Population change in Hamilton County: 2000 to 2010



Source: Census 2000 and 2010 SF1 files.

Megatrends

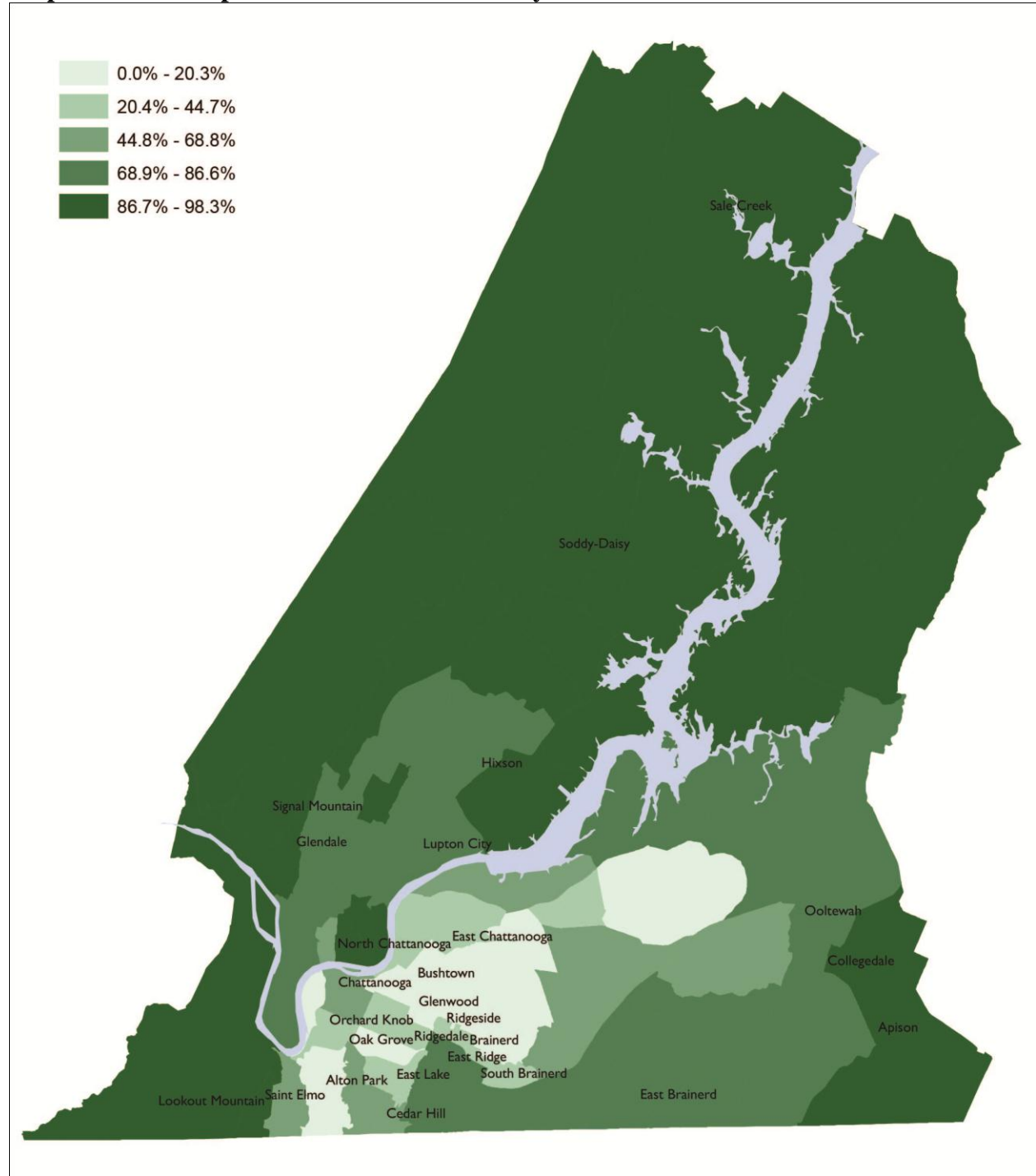
The most noticeable demographic trend in Chattanooga is the growth of the Hispanic population. At present, Hispanics make up about 5 percent of the total population, but they are the fastest growing ethnic group and Hispanic females have the highest fertility rates. The population distribution for the Hispanic community is skewed younger than either the black or white populations. The median age of the white population is about 42 years; the median age of the black population is about 32 years; and, the median age of the Hispanic population is about 24 years. Even though the Hispanic population is relatively small in 2012, these trends suggest that the demographic profile of Chattanooga in the future will be much different. According to law enforcement officials and gang members, Hispanic gangs are not presently a problem in Chattanooga. That could change as neighborhoods undergo racial and ethnic transition.

White Population Trends

The white population in Hamilton County reflects the impact of the baby boom, with the highest percentages of residents in the 45-60 age groups. The oldest groups are skewed towards females who typically have a longer life expectancy than males. While whites made up the majority of the population in 2010, the data suggest that whites will slowly decline as a percentage of the total population over time. The white population in the younger cohorts—as a percentage of the total white population—is smaller than for blacks and Hispanics. This will have additional impacts on schools, businesses, criminal justice, health care systems and local development patterns.

Since 2000 Hamilton County has become more diverse. There has been a slight decrease in the percentage of whites in Hamilton County. Chattanooga is 55.9 percent white and Hamilton County is 72 percent white. Map 1.2 shows that whites are concentrated in the northern part of the county. In most northern census tracts, white residents exceed 90 percent of the population. Certain areas in the city—Southside—have experienced white population growth between 2000 and 2010. The Westside has experienced a decline in the white population. Crime, especially gang crime, is typically associated with younger age cohorts. The number of white youth aged 5 to 19 as a percentage of the population is highest in the area around UTC (26.0 percent), Middle Valley (24.0 percent), Dallas Bay (22.8 percent), and Lookout Valley (22.6 percent). These areas do not show signs of high gang crime.

Map 1.2: White Population in Hamilton County: 2010

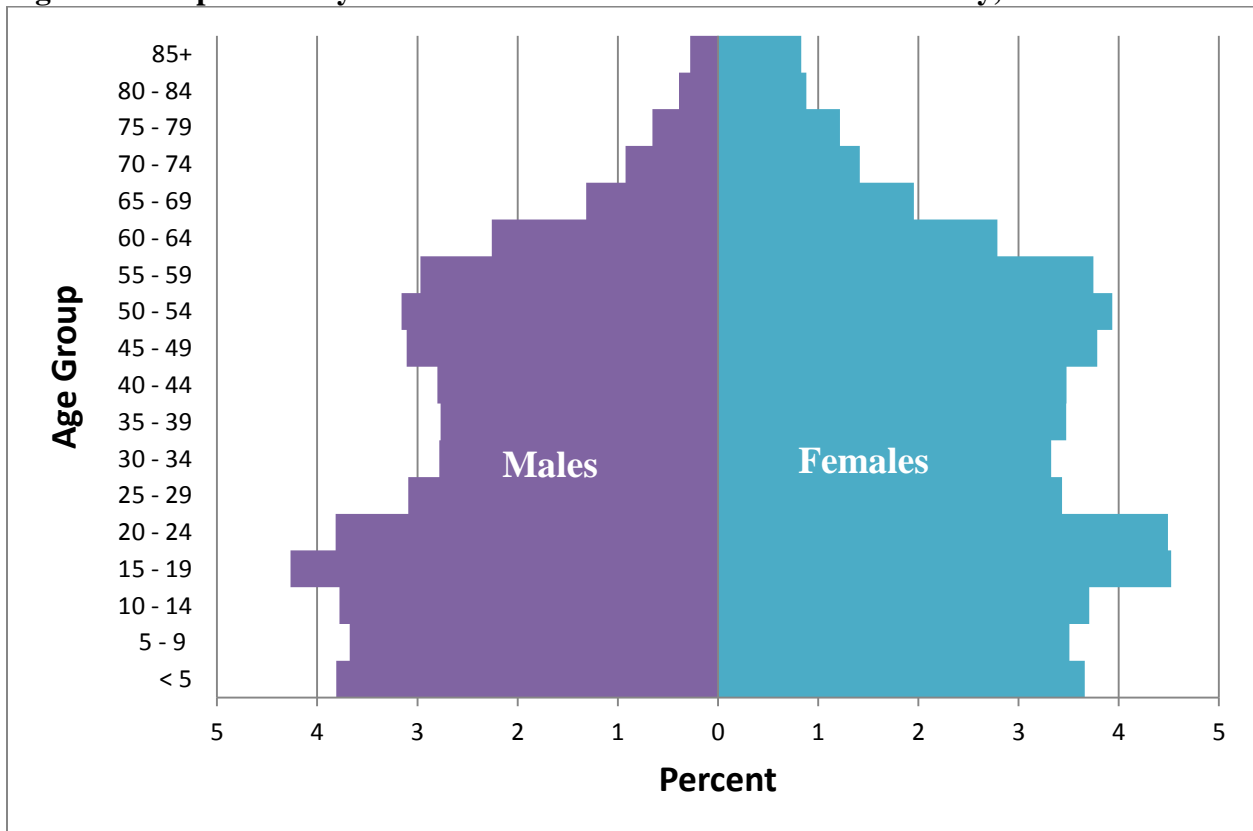


Source: 2010 Census Summary File 1— Tennessee

Black Population Trends

The black population distribution is more complex than the white distribution. The data show lower life expectancies overall, especially for black males. The largest cohorts of black females are found in the 15-19 and 20-24 age groups. The same general pattern is true for black males, but the percentage of the population in these cohorts is smaller than for females, especially in the 20-24 age cohort. This likely reflects high rates of incarceration and death for black males. The disparity by gender is most noticeable in the 30-45 cohorts where black males make up roughly 2.8 percent of each cohort compared to 3.5 percent for females. The disparate number of black males compared to black females has repercussions for society, especially as it relates to family structure. Simply put, the shortage of black males limits the options of black females who might seek a traditional family structure. Residents in focus groups frequently referenced the need for traditional family structures in low-income neighborhoods. *High levels of unemployment in some black majority neighborhoods coupled with lower numbers of males creates a conundrum for social policy that promotes stronger traditional families as the key to solving problems in low-income neighborhoods. The supply of males is much lower than the supply of females.*

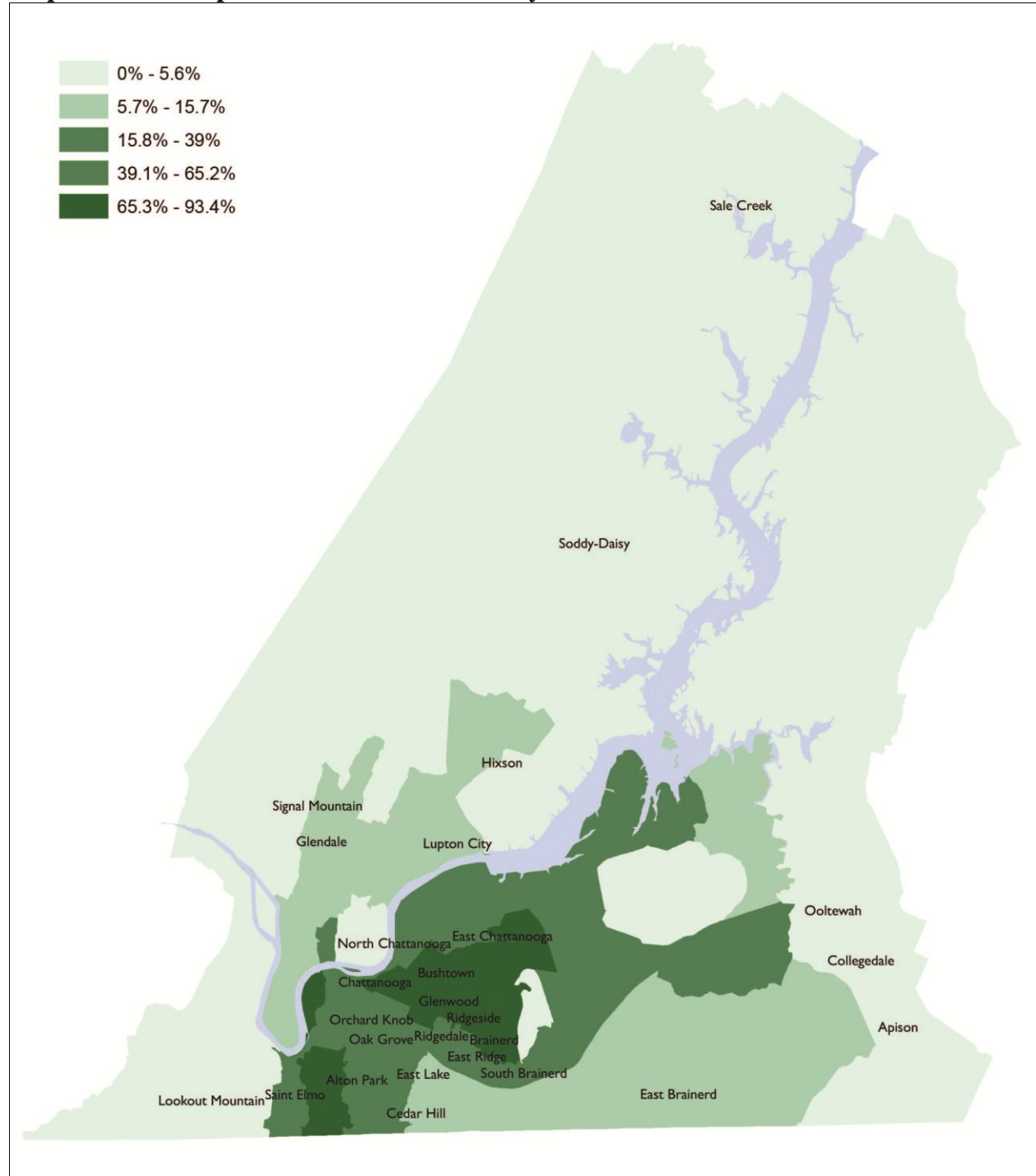
Figure 1.A Population Pyramid for Black Residents in Hamilton County, 2010.



In Chattanooga city 34.7 percent of the population is black while in Hamilton County the percentage of blacks is 20.1 percent. The black population is concentrated in the urban core as

shown in Map 1.3. In the Bushtown and Avondale neighborhoods, blacks are 90 percent or greater of the population. East Ridge and Lookout Valley have seen increases in the black population while North Chattanooga and Southside have experienced declines in the black population. When looking at the break down of population by age within the black community, the South Chattanooga (Alton Park 28.1 percent and Southside 24.4 percent) and Avondale (25.1 percent) areas have large populations of black youths between the ages of 5 and 19. Many of these areas also experience a disproportional share of gang crime.

Map 1.3: Black Population in Hamilton County: 2010

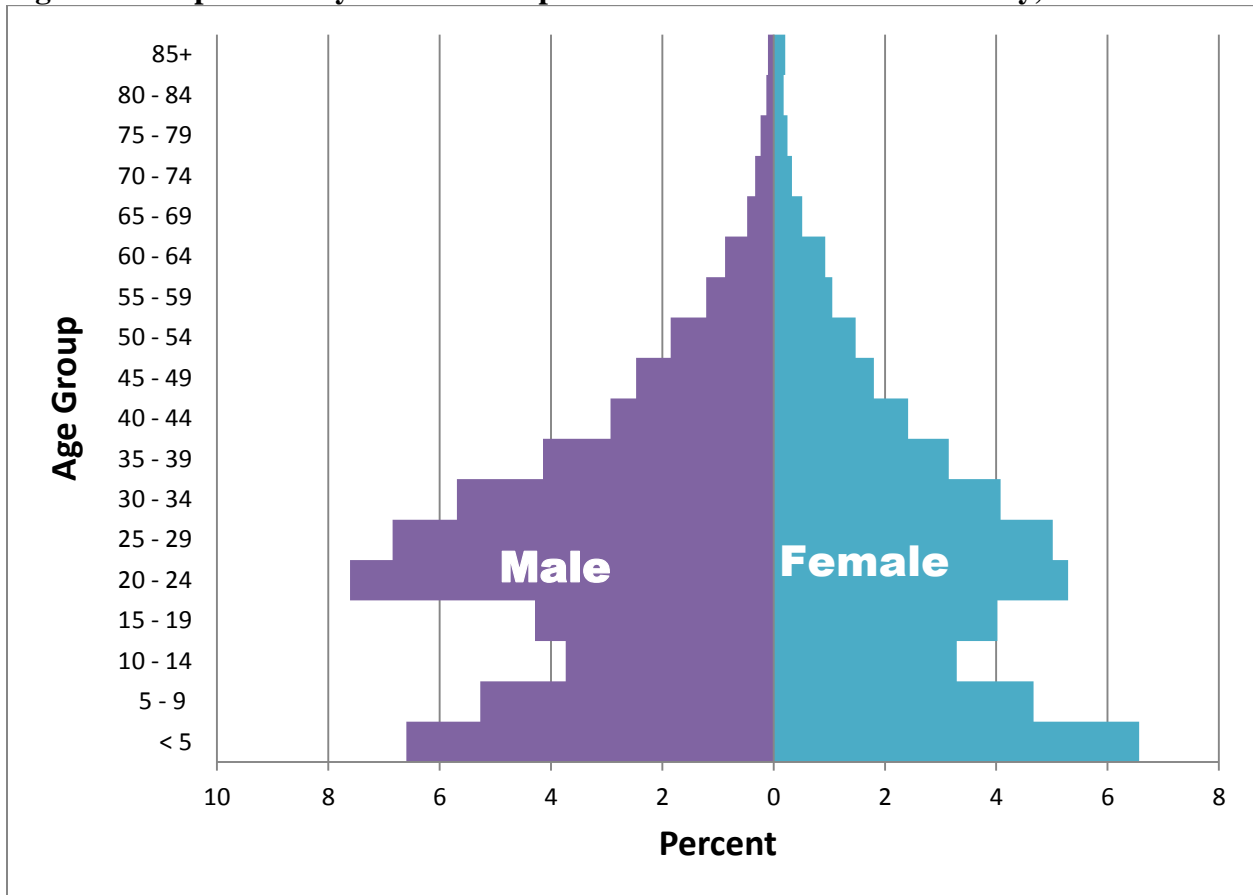


Source: 2010 Census Summary File 1— Tennessee

Hispanic Population Trends

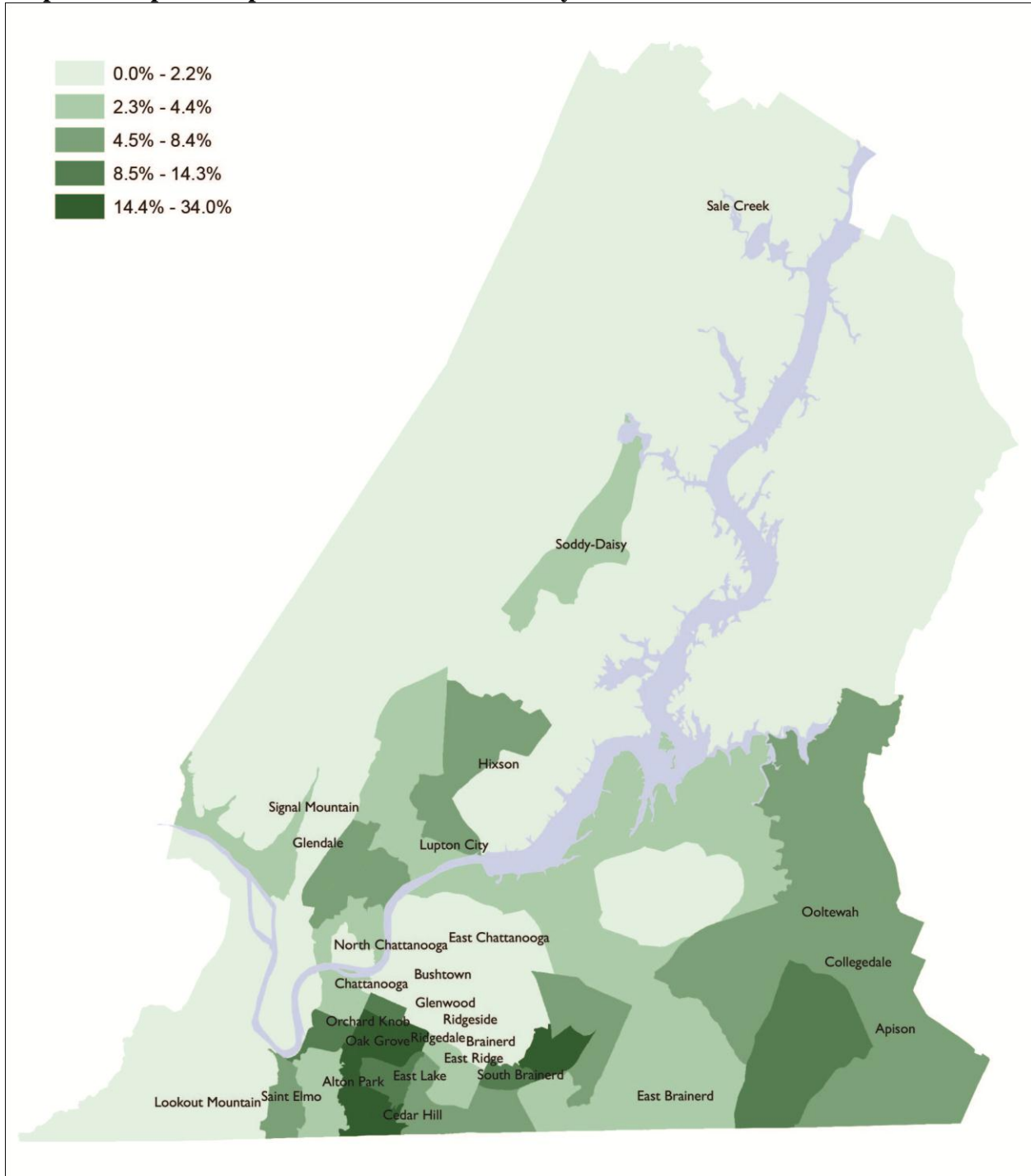
The Hispanic population pyramid is shaped like a triangle with a large bulge within the youngest cohorts. There are more Hispanic males than females, but the data show almost identical ratios in the 19 and younger age cohorts. Hispanic females, on average, have more children than white and black females. Education levels in Hispanic households tend to be low, but the percentage of Hispanics living in traditional family households is higher than both whites and blacks.

Figure 1.B Population Pyramid for Hispanic Residents in Hamilton County, 2010.



The Hispanic population grew by 181.2 percent from 2000 and 2010—increasing from 3,281 in 2000 to 9,225 persons in 2010. Hispanics represent 4.5 percent of the population in Hamilton County and 5.5 percent of the Chattanooga city population. Hispanics live predominately in southern Hamilton County. Neighborhoods that have seen large influxes of Hispanics include Highland Park, Clifton Hills and East Lake. In the county, Soddy Daisy has experienced a modest increase in the number of Hispanics. The Hispanic population in Hamilton County is predominately Guatemalan in origin followed by Mexican.

Map 1.4: Hispanic Population in Hamilton County: 2010



Source: 2010 Census Summary File 1— Tennessee

Another gauge of Hispanic population growth is kindergarten enrollment. School enrollment data for 2006 through 2010, as shown in Table 1.1, finds increased numbers of Hispanic children enrolled in kindergarten. In the five year period, Hispanic enrollment grew by 49.5 percent

compared to the white rate of 1.0 percent and the black rate of -4.5 percent. Hispanic children make up about 9 percent of the population under five years of age compared to 5 percent of the general population.

Table 1.1 Hamilton County Kindergarten Enrollment

	Total	White	% White	Black	% Black	Hispanic	% Hispanic
2005-06	3,375	2,059	61.0%	1,058	31.3%	192	5.7%
2006-07	3,439	2,044	59.4%	1,043	30.3%	261	7.6%
2007-08	3,348	2,009	60.0%	1,016	30.3%	241	7.2%
2008-09	3,425	2,050	59.9%	1,018	29.7%	285	8.3%
2009-10	3,467	2,075	59.9%	1,010	29.1%	287	8.3%

Source: U.S. Department of Education. Common Core of Data

The growth of the Hispanic population will stress the public education system and require more bilingual teachers. It will also complicate efforts to train and hire teachers who understand and can breach cultural divides between schools, students and parents. Some neighborhoods will experience ethnic tensions as long term residents confront rapid racial transition. It is likely that second and third generation Hispanics will increase educational attainment, but the growth in the Hispanic labor market could create heavy competition for construction and other manual labor jobs, fueling tensions with working class whites and blacks who are competing for similar jobs.

Census Overview

The Bureau of the Census defines family households as housing units occupied by related individuals (birth, marriage, adoption). About 57 percent of the 70,749 households in Chattanooga are defined as family households. In Hamilton County there are 136,682 households of which 64.5 percent are family households. In the city 17.3 percent of the family households are headed by females, which is 3.4 percentage points higher than in the county. In the United States, 13.1 percent of the family households are headed by females. Traditional husband-wife family households represent 35.0 percent of the households in the city and 46.3 percent of family households in the county.

Renters are more likely to live in the city than the county. In the city 47.4 percent of householders rent while 52.6 percent own. In Hamilton County 35.7 percent of the housing units are renter occupied. Renters typically pay a much higher percentage of their household income to housing costs than owners. Consequently, low-income renters have less disposable income available to cover monthly expenses and emergency situations.

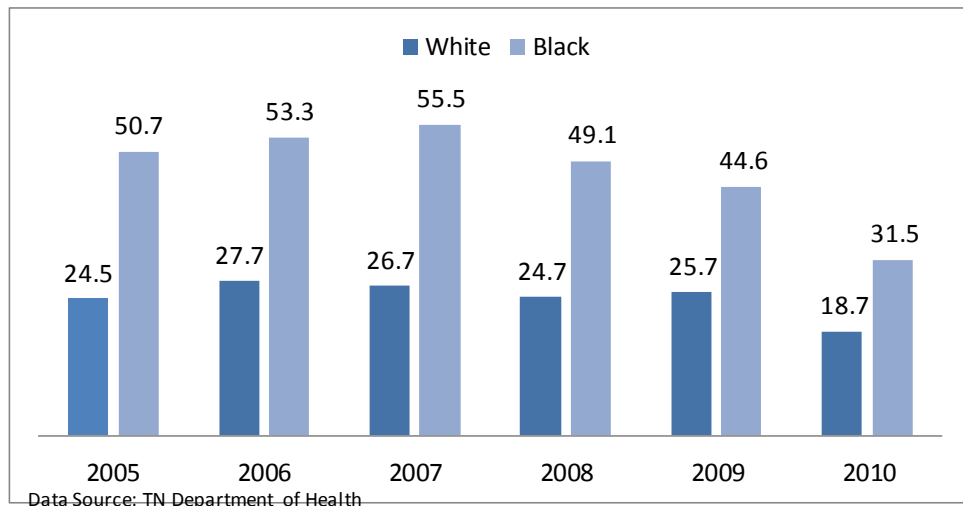
The poverty rate is higher in the city than in the county. The Westside (61.6 percent), Southside (50.3 percent), and Alton Park (52.2 percent) areas all have household poverty rates above 50 percent. Another measure of economic stress is the number of households with children under 18 receiving Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP). Neighborhood level data on SNAP participation are highly correlated with poverty rates. Areas where over 50 percent of the households received SNAP include: Southside (57.5 percent), Alton Park (56.5 percent), Westside (51.6 percent) and Avondale (49.9 percent).

Certain Chattanooga neighborhoods experience high levels of unemployment for the population aged 16-64. According to census estimates in 2010, the unemployment rate in Alton Park was 33.8 percent and it was second highest in Bushtown/Glenwood at 28.3 percent. For males the unemployment rate was highest in Alton Park at 47.8 percent and East Chattanooga was 33.2 percent. Education levels are also correlated with employment outcomes. The unemployment rate for high school graduates was high in East Chattanooga (32.6 percent) and the North Chattanooga area (37.6 percent).

Health Data

Health data are available only at the county level, but they still they provide some insight into the overall vitality of the city. As Figure 1.C illustrates, the pregnancy rate for females aged 10-19 has declined since 2006. Since 2007 the rate has been lower than the state average.

Figure 1.C Hamilton County Pregnancy Rate for Females aged 10-19: Births per 1,000



Babies born below 5 pounds 8 ounces are considered low birth weight babies. These babies are at a higher risk for serious long term health issues including disabilities and premature death. Table 1.2 shows a relatively high ratio of low birth weights for blacks—more than double the white rate for many of the years reported. The rate in Hamilton County declined from a peak of 19.7 per thousand births in 2008 to 18.6 per thousand births in 2010. Low birth weight babies remain an issue in Hamilton County as the national average in 2010 was 8.1.

Table 1.2 Low Birth Weight Babies in Hamilton County by Race of Mother, 2006-2010

Year	Total			White			Black		
	Live Births	Number	Rate	Live Births	Number	Rate	Live Births	Number	Rate
2010	4,107	432	10.5	2,993	293	8.0	991	184	18.6
2009	4,211	445	10.6	3,030	271	8.9	1,021	157	15.4
2008	4,317	444	10.3	3,108	222	7.1	1,095	216	19.7
2007	4,332	522	12.0	3,108	303	9.7	1,124	209	18.6
2006	4,267	458	10.7	3,062	266	8.7	1,095	183	16.7
2005	3,961	441	11.1	2,874	246	8.6	999	182	18.2

Source: Tennessee Department of Health

Socioeconomic Status in High Crime Neighborhoods

The areas most affected by crime and gang activity differ substantially from other communities throughout Hamilton County. Tables 1.3 through 1.7 provide additional insights into the socioeconomic conditions in census tracts that roughly correlate with the neighborhoods of Avondale, Glenwood, Ridgedale, Westside, Alton Park, Oak Grove, Highland Park and Glass Street in East Chattanooga. The data are 5-year Census estimates and the tracts do not necessarily align with exact neighborhood boundaries.

In general, the communities that are most impacted by crime are disproportionately black. Blacks make up about 20 percent of the population in Hamilton County, but they make up over 50 percent of the population in all of the selected neighborhoods. These communities typically suffer from disinvestment, as evidenced by high rates of vacant housing units. Vacancy rates in Ridgedale exceed 26 percent, for example. For occupied housing units, the rates of ownership in these neighborhoods range from a low of 0.3 percent in Westside to 43 percent in Avondale.

Table 1.3 Demographic Profile of Areas with Highest Crime Activity

Census Tract	Neighborhood	Housing		Occupied Units		Race
		Total Units	% Vacant	% Owner Occupied	% Renter Occupied	% Black
4	Avondale	1,568	18.8	42.7	57.3	89.9
12	Glenwood	1,594	16.0	27.8	72.2	92.0
13	Ridgedale	903	26.5	37.7	62.3	51.3
16	Westside	1,664	8.1	0.3	99.7	76.9
19	South/Alton Park	1,834	13.8	31.8	68.2	92.8
25	Oak Grove	2,114	13.6	38.8	61.2	54.4
26	Highland Park	982	18.9	33.0	67.0	46.5
122	Glass Street	1,449	21.8	27.6	72.4	92.0
County		151,107	9.5	64.3	35.7	20.5

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. General Housing Characteristics, Summary File 1.

Economic Variables

The Bureau of the Census collects data on economic attributes of the population, including labor force participation rates, means of transportation to work and median household, family and non-family income. Across all these measures, the selected neighborhoods are vastly different from county averages, as shown in Table 1.4. Some of these areas—Ridgedale and Highland Park—have labor force participation rates that are similar to the county average of 66 percent. Both of these neighborhoods have large Hispanic populations that have higher labor force participation rates than blacks. Ridgedale is 20 percent Hispanic and Highland Park is 34 percent Hispanic. Only 33 percent of residents between the ages of 16 and 64 in Westside are in the labor force. They could be disabled or no longer actively seeking work. Roughly 46 percent of working age adults in Alton Park and Avondale are not in the labor force.

Low rates of participation in the labor force are reflected in low median incomes. Typically, median family income is higher than median household or median non-family incomes because it often reflects two adult wage earners. For example, the median household income in Hamilton County is estimated to be \$45,408 and the median family income is estimated at \$58,004. The median income levels in all of the selected communities are substantially lower than the county medians.

Table 1.4 also includes data on the percentage of workers who use public transportation. Almost one-quarter of working residents in Westside depend upon public transportation to get to work. In all neighborhoods, the dependence upon public transportation is high compared to the county average of 1 percent.

Table 1.4 Economic Profile of Areas with Highest Gang Activity

Census Tract	Neighborhood	Ages 16-64		Median Income (\$)		
		% in Labor Force	% Public Transportation	Household	Family	Non-family
4	Avondale	53.9	14.0	21,823	29,336	18,380
12	Glenwood	62.5	10.9	23,894	23,098	24,787
13	Ridgedale	67.8	3.9	25,787	36,696	20,439
16	Westside	33.5	24.3	9,277	8,566	9,336
19	South/Alton Park	54.3	7.0	15,245	15,271	15,129
25	Oak Grove	61.2	3.3	19,641	18,671	18,808
26	Highland Park	68.1	7.7	23,649	26,920	18,766
122	Glass Street	49.2	3.4	13,991	16,700	12,321
County		65.6%	1.0	\$45,408	\$58,004	\$26,980

Poverty Statistics

The low income levels are also reflected in the poverty data presented in Table 1.5. The percentage of households receiving cash public assistance in the selected neighborhoods, with the exception of Ridgedale, is 4 to 12 times higher in the high crime neighborhoods. This assistance only includes temporary assistance to needy families (TANF) and does not include

social security disability, Medicare, or other cash assistance. Similarly, the percentage of households receiving food stamps in these neighborhoods ranges from 29 percent in Ridgedale to 56 percent in South/Alton Park, compared to 12.6 percent for the county. The percentage of people who lived in poverty over a 12-month period was much higher than the Hamilton County rate of 14.7. For children under the age of 18, the percentage of children living in poverty over a 12-month period ranged from 38 percent in Glenwood to 100 percent in Westside. Slightly more than one-fifth of children in Hamilton County lived in poverty during the 12-month period.

Table 1.5 Poverty Data in Areas with Highest Gang Activity

Census Tract	Neighborhood	Households		Living in Poverty	
		% Cash Public Assistance	% Food Stamps/SNAP	% People in last 12 months	% Under Age 18
4	Avondale	8.4	39.9	29.9	39.7
12	Glenwood	23.4	42.6	30.8	38.1
13	Ridgedale	0	28.9	38	52.1
16	Westside	8.7	51.6	66.7	100
19	South/Alton Park	12.4	56.5	58.8	77.5
25	Oak Grove	7.9	46.8	47.3	61.1
26	Highland Park	7.5	35.6	37.1	49.4
122	Glass Street	14.5	49.9	59.1	75.5
County		2.0	12.6	14.7	22.1

The majority of households in high crime neighborhoods, as shown earlier, are renters instead of home owners. As Table 1.6 shows, the housing burden is extreme in these communities. Roughly 53 percent of households in Glenwood spend 35 percent or more of their monthly income on rent. Westside has the lowest renter housing burden at 30 percent, but that is largely due to subsidized public housing. The median household income in these neighborhoods is much lower than the county median; thus, there is little disposable income left over to cover other life expenses. These data highlight the economic pressures faced by households in these communities and renters in general.

Table 1.6 Percentage of Households Paying more than 35% of Monthly Income on Housing

Selected Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income			
Census Tract	Neighborhood	Owners w/Mortgage	Renters
4	Avondale	32.0	45.7
12	Glenwood	37.1	52.7
13	Ridgedale	29.3	33.9
16	Westside	0	29.5
19	South/Alton Park	38.7	46.2
25	Oak Grove	36.6	46.1
26	Highland Park	46.7	47.0
122	Glass Street	38.1	41.1
County		23.2	37.9

Educational Attainment

Human capital is of vital concern to businesses and is a critical factor in corporate relocation decisions. Higher levels of education are highly correlated with higher levels of life time earnings and lower rates of poverty. In high crime communities, rates of educational attainment are very low. Table 1.7 shows that the majority of residents have not progressed beyond a high school education. In many of these areas, one-third or more of the adults do not possess a high school diploma or equivalent. In Hamilton County, 27 percent of the adult population has earned a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 9 percent in Ridgedale, 7 percent in Avondale and 5 percent in Glass Street. These disparities in education attainment perpetuate existing disparities in wealth and opportunity.

Table 1.7 Education Attainment in Areas with Highest Gang Activity

		Education				
Census Tract	Neighborhood	Less than High School	High School	Some College	Associates	Bachelors or higher
4	Avondale	29.2	39.2	19.3	5.2	7.2
12	Glenwood	22.5	37.8	17.8	6.7	7.6
13	Ridgedale	34.7	28.7	24.5	0.9	8.9
16	Westside	34.8	42.5	11.5	5.9	5.4
19	South/Alton Park	36.7	32.4	20.7	4.4	5.1
25	Oak Grove	29.7	36.4	22.2	4.9	5.2
26	Highland Park	41.1	34.8	14.5	4	4.9
122	Glass Street	34.5	40.9	14.7	4.8	5.2
County		14.6	28.8	22.8	6.8	27

Conclusion & Implications

In sum, the data presented in this section highlight the multiple socioeconomic challenges concentrated in high crime neighborhoods. These areas are fighting the cumulative impacts of poverty, marginal economic opportunities, low levels of educational attainment and community disinvestment. The services that most Hamilton County residents take for granted—grocery stores, banks, restaurants—are less likely to be available in many of these communities. These are areas of concentrated poverty that are isolated and lack the fundamental underlying market conditions to attract new investment. In addition, the public schools serving these communities are more likely to be low performing than in other, more affluent areas.

For all of these reasons, it will be difficult for any single institution to change conditions in these neighborhoods. Many gang members who participated in the study said that the gang lifestyle “was all I knew; it’s the environment I grew up in.” The economic and cultural incentives to participate in the underground economy are strong in the absence of a functional, traditional marketplace.

However, environment is not destiny. The overwhelming majority of residents in these neighborhoods are law-abiding citizens whose quality of life suffers because of a small criminal element. Neighborhood leaders in collaboration with law enforcement, non-profits, local governments, schools, universities and faith-based organizations should explore new collaborations that attack the core socioeconomic roots of Chattanooga’s gang problem. Many high crime neighborhoods lack the capacity to change without external assistance. As one case in point, many highly trained Ph.D’s at the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga are on the sidelines, but could be strategically utilized in building the capacity of neighborhoods to change. A tremendous amount of expertise in psychology, counseling, business entrepreneurship, social work, education policy and practice, math and engineering and social sciences remains largely untapped. Community stakeholders must figure out how to harness the potential of the region’s educational institutions to teach, train, mentor, tutor, and empower low-income communities.

The data presented here should be used as benchmarks to measure the effectiveness of future policy interventions. There are hundreds of non-profits and numerous faith-based initiatives simultaneously underway throughout the community. Unfortunately, leaders are largely unaware of what is working and what is not working. Some of this is due to competition for scarce resources and well-intended groups working in silos. Future collaborative efforts should explore efficiencies of scale and exploit partnerships to leverage resources in the most effective ways. This will not be easy because some organizations will be perceived as winners and some will be perceived as losers. Community leaders will need to balance those considerations when forming new coalitions to change conditions in high crime neighborhoods.

Chapter 2

Analysis of Crime and Gang Data

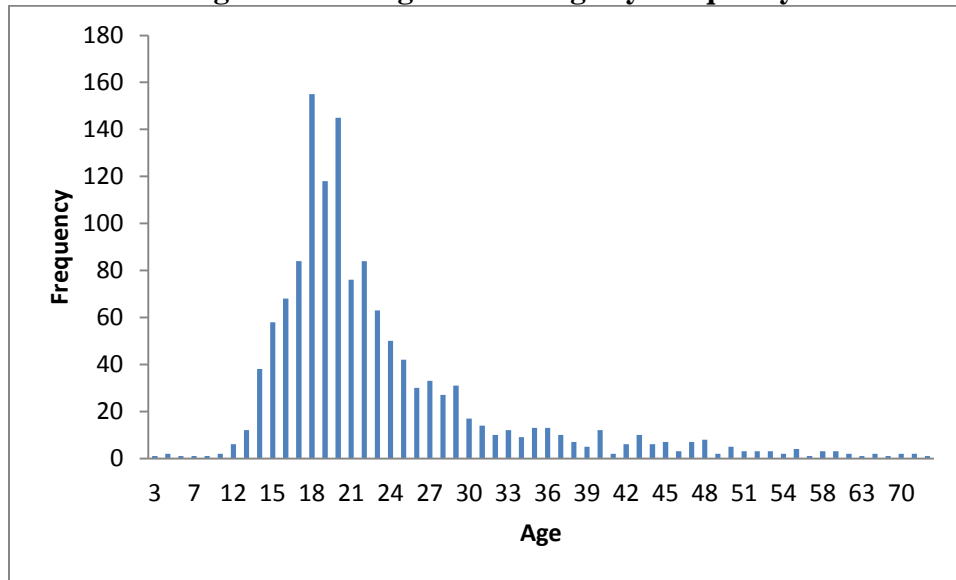
Over the past 10-months, gang activity in Hamilton County has received much media attention. This section of the comprehensive gang assessment analyzes crime data collected by the Chattanooga Police Department (CPD) to determine if media hype and community concerns about gangs and gang crime in Chattanooga is warranted. Analyses of crime data suggest that Chattanooga has an entrenched gang culture in a handful of neighborhoods where gang-related crime and violence are most prevalent. The crime data, combined with community feedback and school surveys, suggest that the rest of Chattanooga has an emerging gang problem that could fester and grow if left untreated. The uptick in gun-related violence in the last two years is an example of the entrenched gang activity spilling out into traditional low crime areas. Gang violence is expensive and dangerous, and the cost in lives and human capital is staggering.

This section of the Comprehensive Gang Assessment reviews local law enforcement data from 2007 to 2011. The records indicate that there were 654 unique incidents that involved 1,883 gang members captured in the database from 2007 through 2011. The total number of incidents is likely much higher. The database only captures crimes that are reported and where gang membership is accurately captured at the time of writing the police report. Often times, many gang crimes are not reported or individual perpetrators are not correctly identified as gang-affiliated at the time the police report is written.

Overview of Crime Data

Figure 2.A shows that the bulk of gang activity is committed by individuals between the ages of 17 and 24. The majority of gang members interviewed also fit this profile. For gang members in the database, the median age was 20 and average age was 23.⁸ By gender, 84.4 percent were male and 15.6 were female. When race was reported, about 89 percent of the gang members were black, 10.5 percent were white, and 0.4 percent was classified as other.⁹ Of those recorded incidents, 55 percent were listed as suspects and 45 percent were victims—most of the identified older individuals were victims. The overwhelming majority of gang members were in a street gang identified by CPD (97.4 percent). Organized crime (1.6 percent), miscellaneous (0.7 percent), terrorist (0.2 percent) and outlaw motorcycle gangs (0.1 percent) were also represented. The Office of Juvenile Justice typically does not include organized crime as street gangs.

Figure 2.A Gang Member Age by Frequency



Data Source: CPD Crime Activity File

Victims and Suspects

The data are reported for both crime victims and suspects. The median age for a suspect was 21, compared to 28 for victims. For suspects 93.8 percent were male and 6.2 percent were female. Nearly two-thirds (63.4 percent) of victims were male and 36.6 percent were female. The suspect profile found a disproportionate percentage of gang crimes were committed by blacks, 94.7 percent. For victims, 76.4 percent were black. Whites comprised 5.1 percent of suspects but 22.9 percent of victims. Of the suspects 31.5 percent were carrying a gun and 34.2 percent of the victims reported that a gun had been used in the crime. Overall, black-on-black crime comprises the bulk of gang-related crime incidents.

Looking at the data over time finds sharp increases in gang suspects and victims in 2008 and 2009 followed by modest decreases or increases between 2009 and 2011.¹⁰ Some law enforcement officials believe that better data collection and quality control have led to a more accurate picture of gang activity in the community. This is reflected by increased numbers of reported gang crimes in 2008 and 2009 shown in Table 2.1. In reality, the data are likely underreporting the total number of gang crimes and victims. Many gang members talked about assaults on rival gang members, many of which are likely not reported to local police. Only about 1.1 percent of the total number of crime victims and crime suspects in the 2007-2011 period were classified as gang-related. As data protocols improve, the number of reported incidences and individuals involved will likely rise.

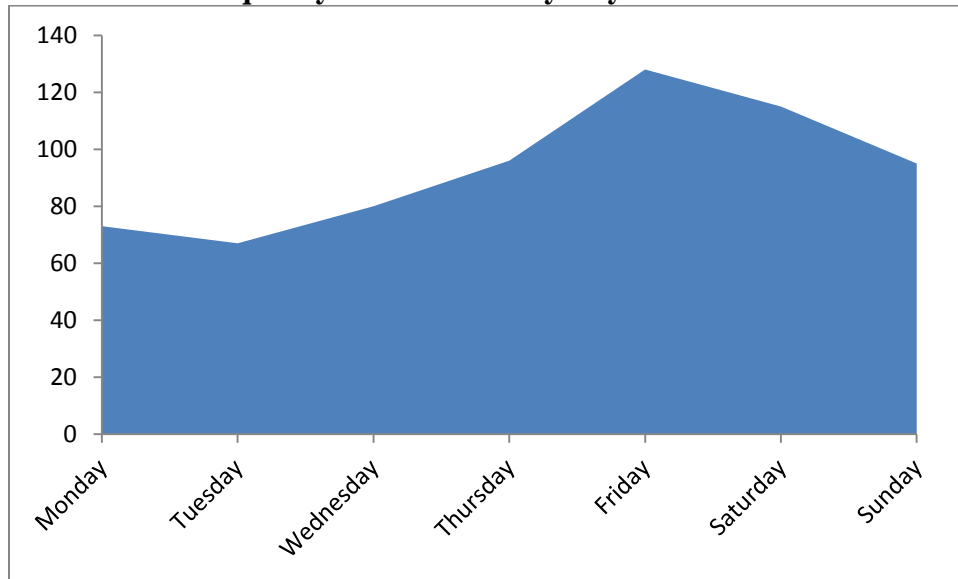
Table 2.1
Gang Related Crime Reported in Chattanooga: 2007-2011

Type	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
Suspect	73	171	274	258	259	1,035
Victim	54	135	219	198	241	848
Total	127	306	493	456	500	1,883

Source: Chattanooga Police Department.

The data have also been broken down by day, time and month, as shown in Figure 2.B. Weekends, with Friday as the peak, were the busiest days for gang crime. About 20 percent of crimes occurred on Fridays. Tuesday proved to be the slowest day of the week, with only 11.2 percent of incidences occurring on that day.

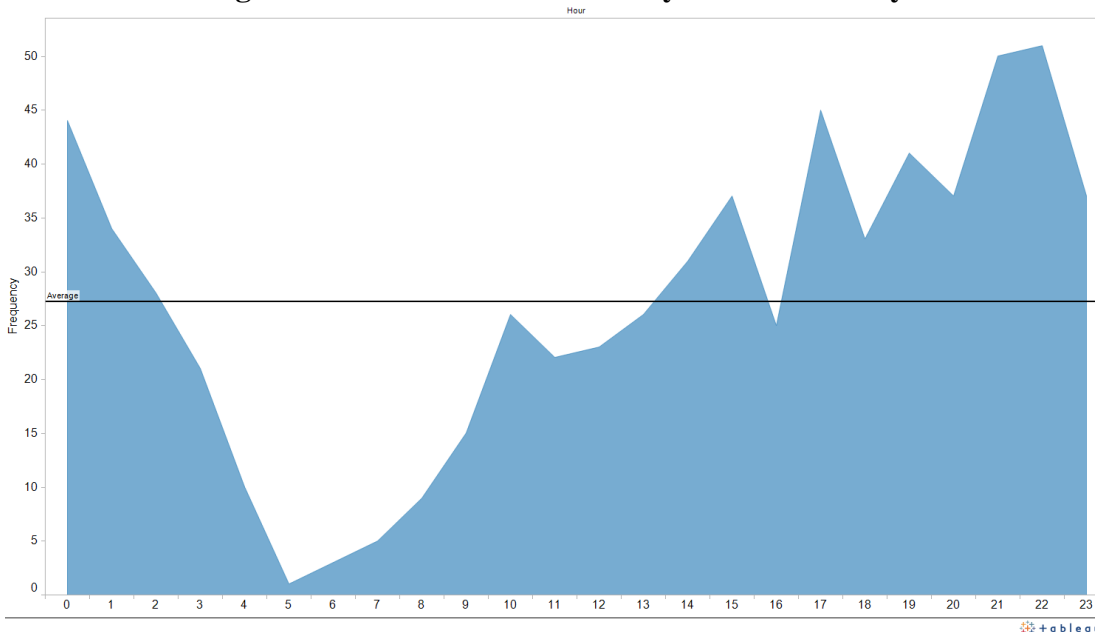
Figure 2.B
Frequency of Incidences by Day of the Week



Source: Chattanooga Police Department

Crime ebbs and peaks during certain hours of the day. According to the database, 65 percent of gang-related criminal incidents occurred between the 7AM and 9PM. Figure 3 shows criminal activity peaked at about 11PM, declining to almost no activity by 5AM. Crime trended upward during the day with spikes between 2PM and 3PM and 5PM and 6PM.

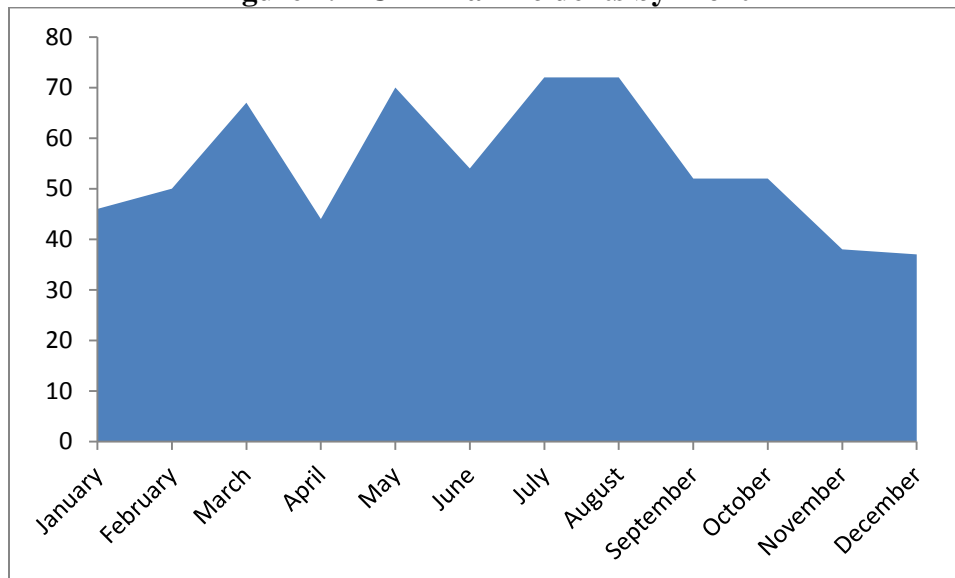
Figure 2.C Criminal Incidences by Time of the Day



Source: Chattanooga Police Department

There appears to be some seasonality to gang-related crime as illustrated in Figure 2.D. The warmer months, especially summer when children are not enrolled in school, tended to have more reported crime activity. July and August accounted for 22 percent of the reported incidents. March and May also have a large number of incidents while November and December were the slowest months.

Figure 2.D Criminal Incidents by Month



Source: Chattanooga Police Department

According to law enforcement officials, there are about 40 active gangs and 1,391 validated gang members operating in Chattanooga. There were 59 gangs included in the database but about 16 percent of the database was reported as “missing data.” Of those gangs captured in the database, many of them are locally-based with loose or no ties to gangs in other cities. The most well-known gang names are the Bloods, Crips, and the Gangster Disciples. The Bloods are entrenched in South Chattanooga, the Crips are entrenched in East Chattanooga, and the Gangster Disciples are dispersed throughout the city.

Table 2.2 reports the number of gang members in the database by gang name. It illustrates two concepts very well. One, it shows that data entry needs to be enhanced to accurately capture gang affiliation. Almost one-half of reported gang incidents failed to list the name of the gang. The table shows inputs for “52 Hoover Crips,” “Hoover 52 Crips,” and Hoover Crips as distinct and separate gang affiliations. These entries reflect inaccurate coding procedures that need to be addressed. Two, the table shows the diversity of gangs that are affiliated in name only with Bloods and Crips. Sharing the name “Crip” or “Blood” does not mean that these gangs share resources or coordinate activities. In fact, some gang on gang violence is perpetrated by gangs sharing the same origins and can occur within individual gangs. Different sects of the Bloods, Crips and the Gangster Disciples made up about 84 percent of the total gang incidents where a gang name was included in the database. Overall, the average age of the gang members is consistently in the early 20’s. Gangs in Chattanooga are not associated with namesakes in Los Angeles, even though inductees are typically expected to know the history of their gang, and some are well versed in the history of their individual gangs.

Table 2.2 Gang Affiliation by Incidence

Gang Affiliation	Number	Percent	Mean Age
Crips			
357 Crips	58	3.1	23.9
52 Hoover Crips*	14	0.7	22.2
87 Kitchen Crip	8	0.4	22
Boone Height Mafia Crip*	2	0.1	20
Crips	87	4.6	24.8
Hoover 52 Crips	6	0.3	21.5
Hoover Crips	4	0.2	22.5
Main Street Crips	4	0.2	19
Rollin 20 Crip	2	0.1	23
Rollin 40 Crip	2	0.1	28
Rollin 60 Crip*	53	2.8	21.1
Woodlawn Crip	4	0.2	
Royal Ace Crips	2	0.1	33
Crips Subtotal	246	12.9	
Bloods			
Athens Park Blood*	18	1.0	26.9
Bloods	267	14.2	22
Bounty Hunter Bloods*	4	0.2	19.5
Kemp Drive Bloods	4	0.2	17
Kemp Drive Posse*	12	0.6	19.4
Rollins 20 Bloods	2	0.1	23
Skyline Piru*	4	0.2	20
Skyline Piru Bloods	4	0.2	16.5
Treetop	4	0.2	23.6
Treetop Blood Piru	20	1.1	23.1
Bloods Subtotal	339	18.0	
Gangster Disciples*	207	11.0	21.7
Vice Lords*	36	1.9	23
Traveling Vice Lord*	4	0.2	16.3
Vice Lords Subtotal	40	2.1	
Other, including unknown	934	49.8	
Missing Data	117	6.2	26.1
TOTAL	1,883	100	26.1

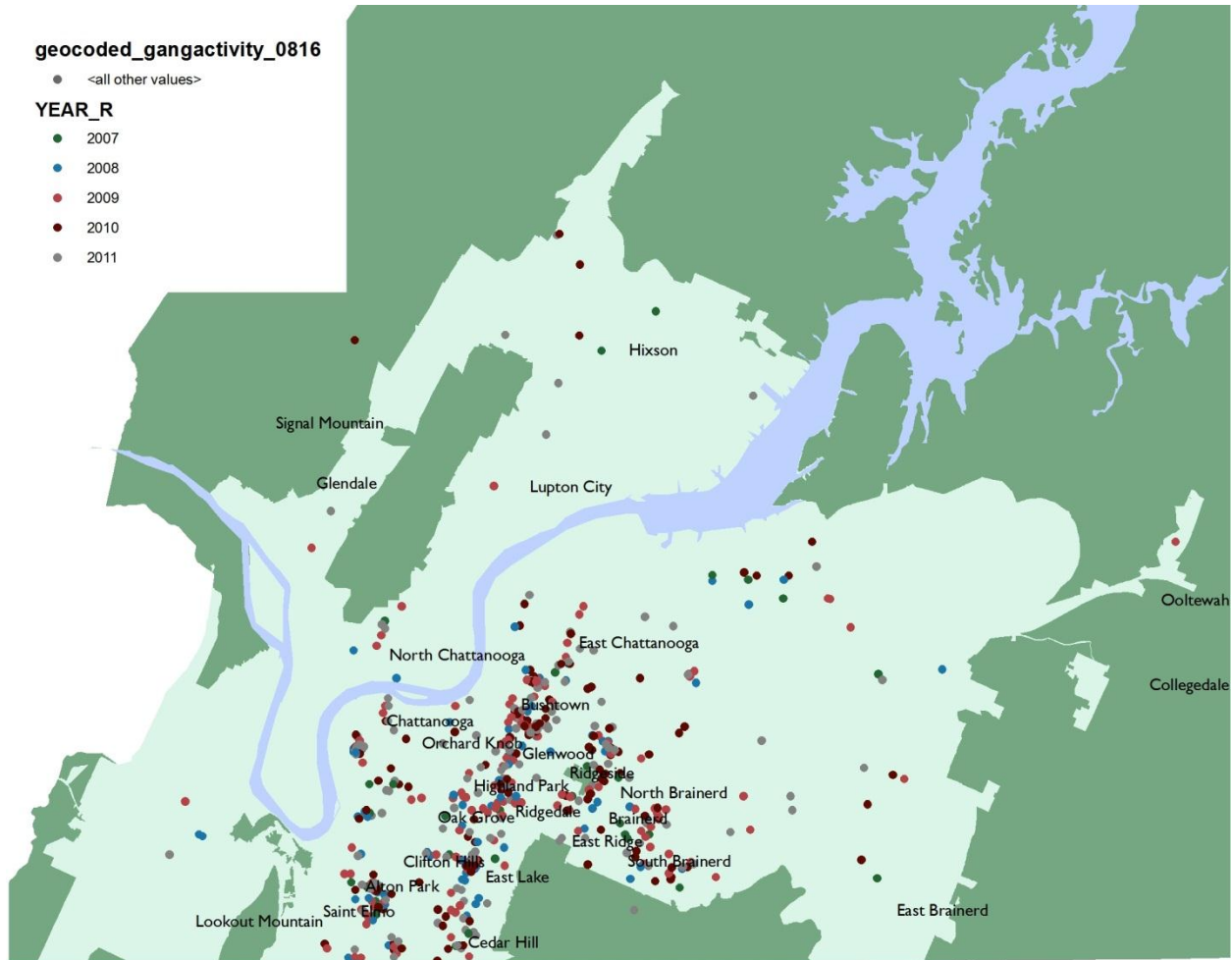
Source: Chattanooga Police Department

Spatial Distribution of Gang-related Crime

Map 2.1 shows all gang-related crime in Chattanooga from 2007-2011. Gang incidents were largely confined to neighborhoods south of the river in east Chattanooga and south Chattanooga. Most of the incidents were confined to inner city neighborhoods. Nodes of activity are evident

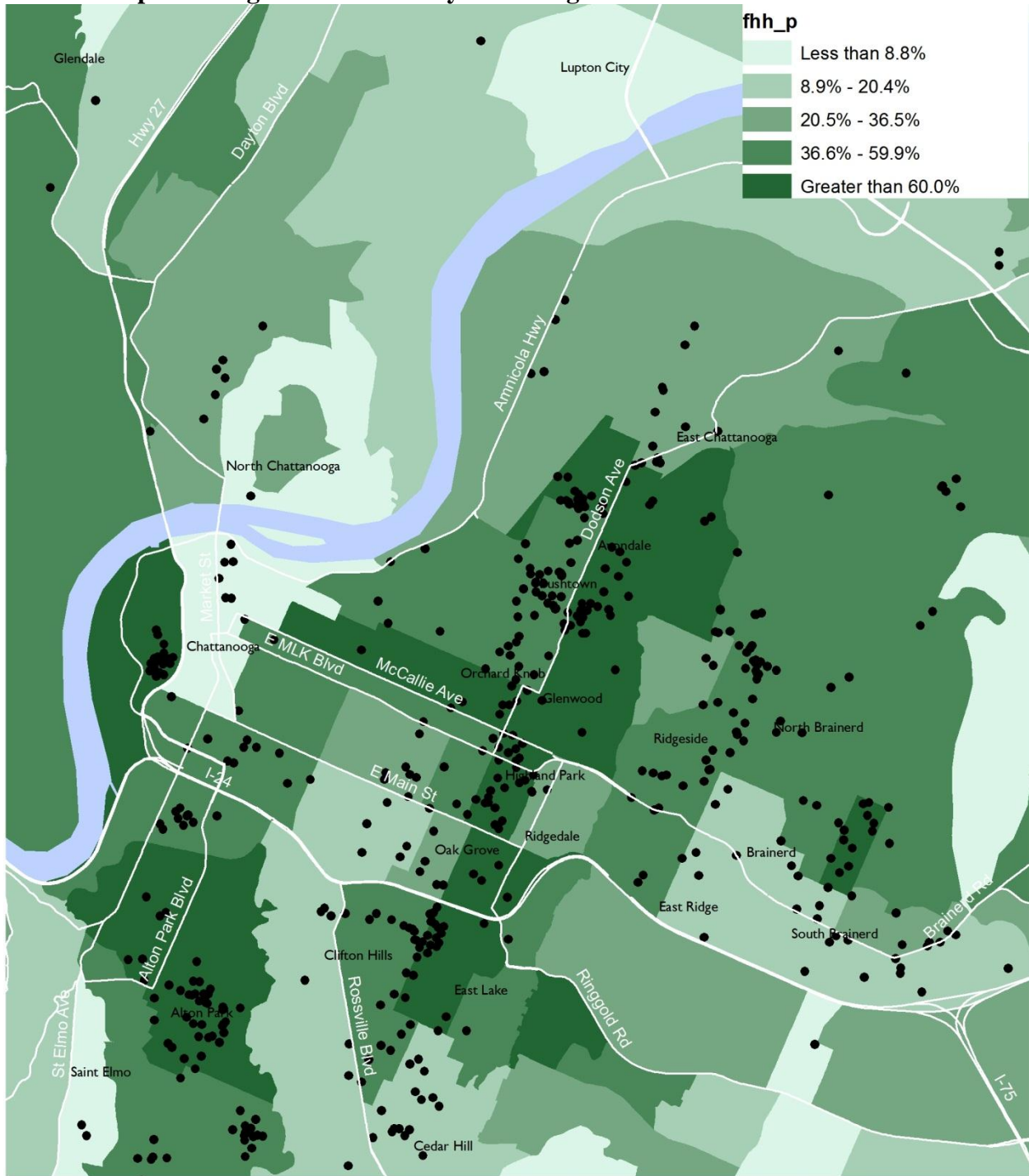
along major north-south corridors that transect East Chattanooga, Highland Park, Orchard Knob, East Lake, and in Ridgeside, Ridgedale, Brainerd and Alton Park. These neighborhoods are typically targeted by the Chattanooga Police Department’s Crime Suppression Unit for patrol.

Map 2.1: Chattanooga Gang Crimes, 2007-2011



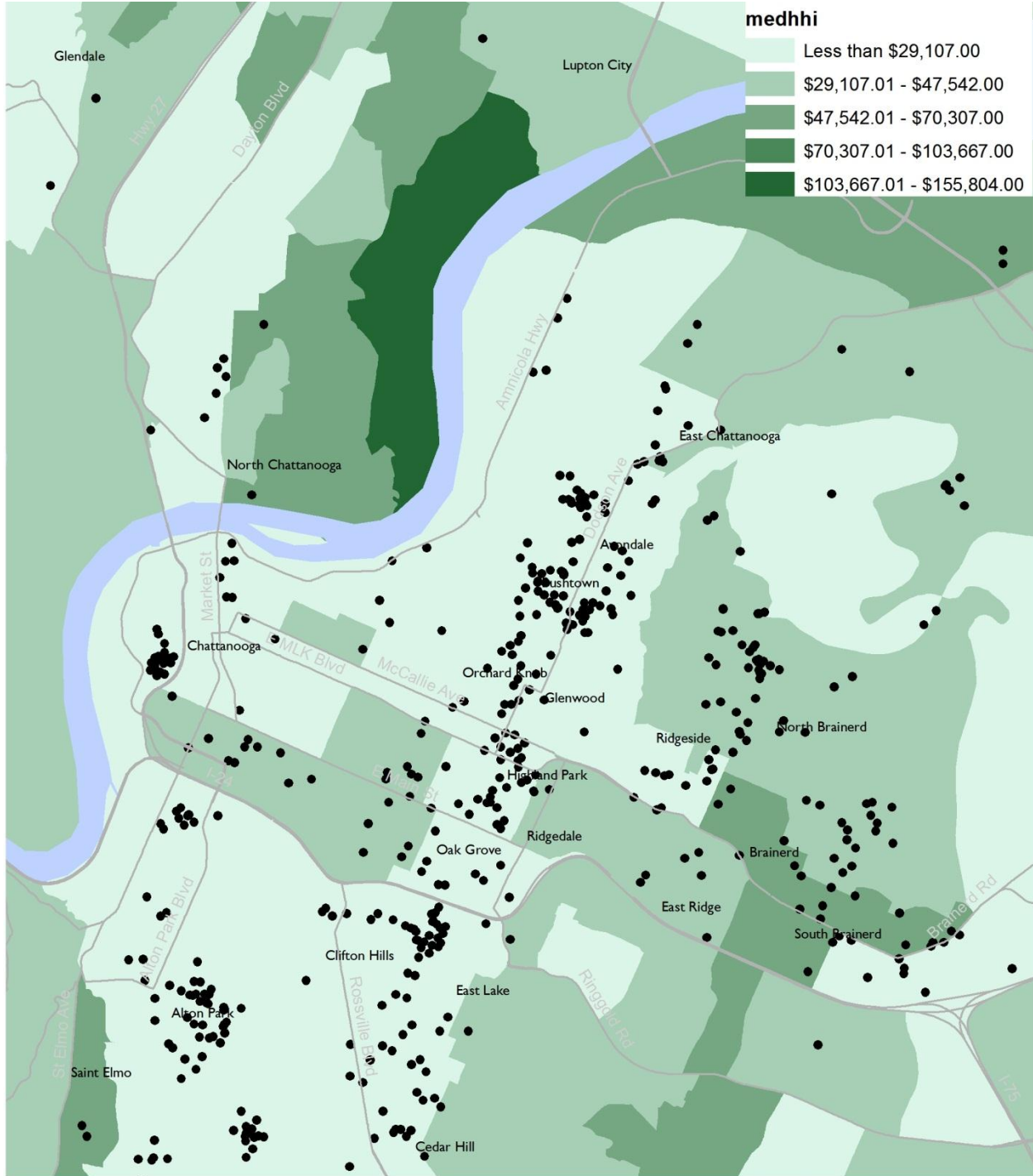
Crime data were applied to demographic maps to show how selected variables correlated with gang activity. The percentage of female-headed households is a strong predictor of gang-related crime, as illustrated in Map 2.2. A lot of gang-related crime was clustered in census tracts with high percentages of female-headed households. The relationship is not necessarily causal, but female-headed households are often associated with higher rates of poverty and fewer male role models. The clusters of crime along Dodson Avenue, in Alton Park, in west Chattanooga, and in Brainerd share many similar socioeconomic conditions—high rates of concentrated poverty and female-headed households.

Map 2.2 Gang-related Crime by Percentage of Female-headed Households



Gang-related crime correlated highly with census tract median household income. Clusters of crime were found in the neighborhoods with the lowest levels of reported household income. The median household income in areas around Brainerd are slightly higher than in East Chattanooga and Alton Park; however, those incomes are inflated by Missionary Ridge neighborhoods, where median household income is typically higher than in areas near Tunnel Boulevard.

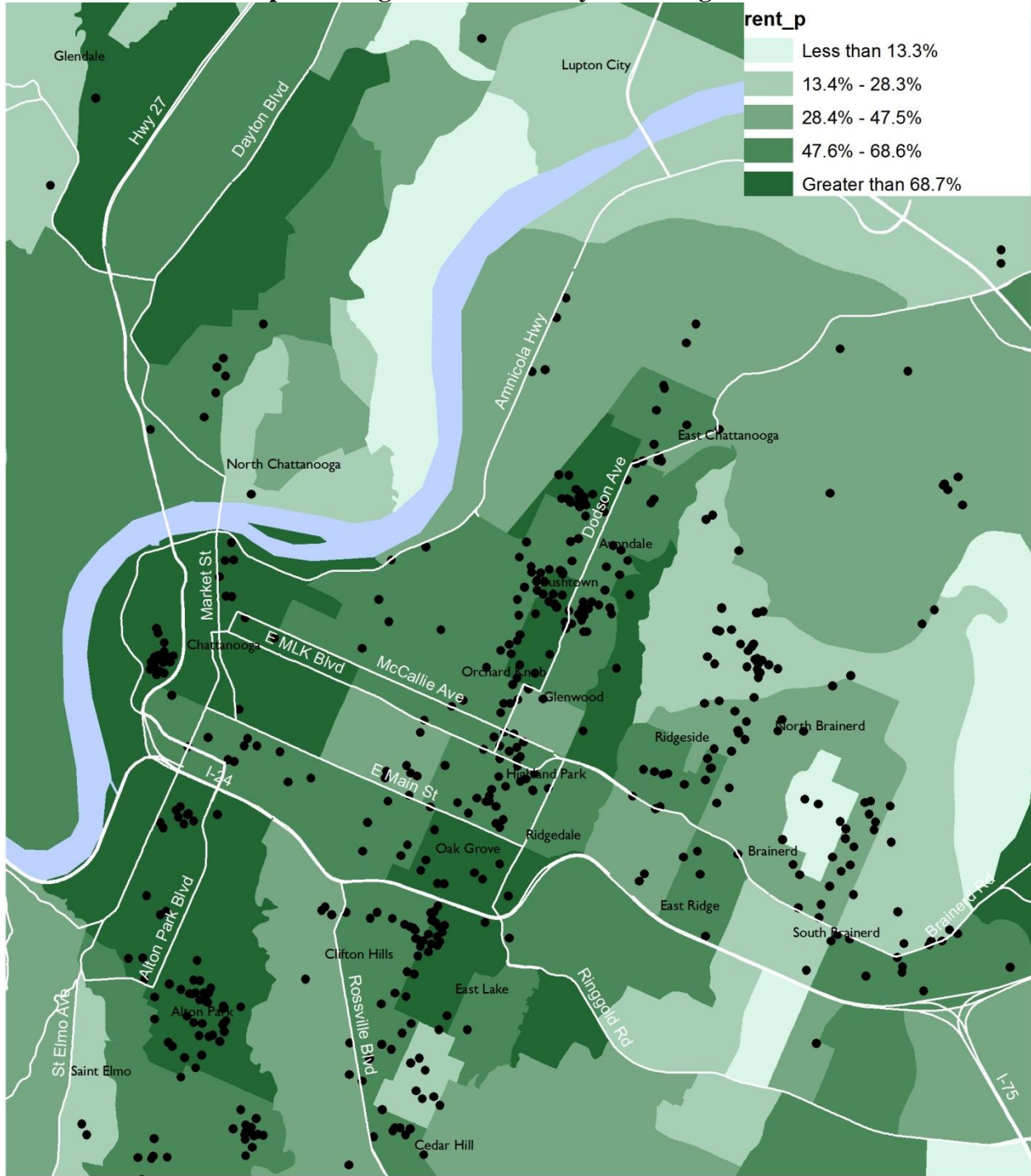
Map 2.3 Gang-related Crime by Median Household Income



Another feature of higher crime neighborhoods is lower rates of home ownership. Map 2.4 illustrates the correlation between high rates of renting and gang-related crime. Renting is not always a proxy for poverty, especially since the housing bubble crashed in 2008. Many middle- and upper-middle class families rent housing. However, the rates of renter occupied housing in many neighborhoods exceeds 50 percent. In these environments, low quality rental properties are

more frequent and are associated with concentrated poverty. With the exception of a neighborhood near Brainerd, gang-related crime was clustered in neighborhoods with low rates of home ownership.

Map 2.4 Gang-related Crime by Percentage Rental



Types of Gang Crime

Aggregated crime data show that gang arrests have been primarily for drug offenses, assaults and Group B offenses. The total number of incidents recorded in the database is probably low, but the primacy of drugs, assaults and weapons violations fits descriptions given by gang members. Drugs are the number one money maker for gangs. Gang members talked frequently about “smashing” or assaulting rival gang members and members within their own organization. The total number of people involved in weapons violations provides evidence that gang members have access to weapons.

Table 2.3 Frequency of Incidents by Crime Type

Crime	Incidents		People Involved	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Assault	128	19.6%	423	22.5%
Burglary	13	2.0%	36	1.9%
Drugs	237	36.2%	597	31.7%
Homicide	6	0.9%	20	1.1%
Larceny	14	2.1%	11	0.6%
Robbery	28	4.3%	29	1.5%
Vandalism	50	7.6%	141	7.5%
Weapons Violation	81	12.4%	301	16.0%
Group B Offenses	85	13.0%	164	8.7%
Other	12	1.8%	161	8.6%
Total	654	100.0%	1,883	100.0%

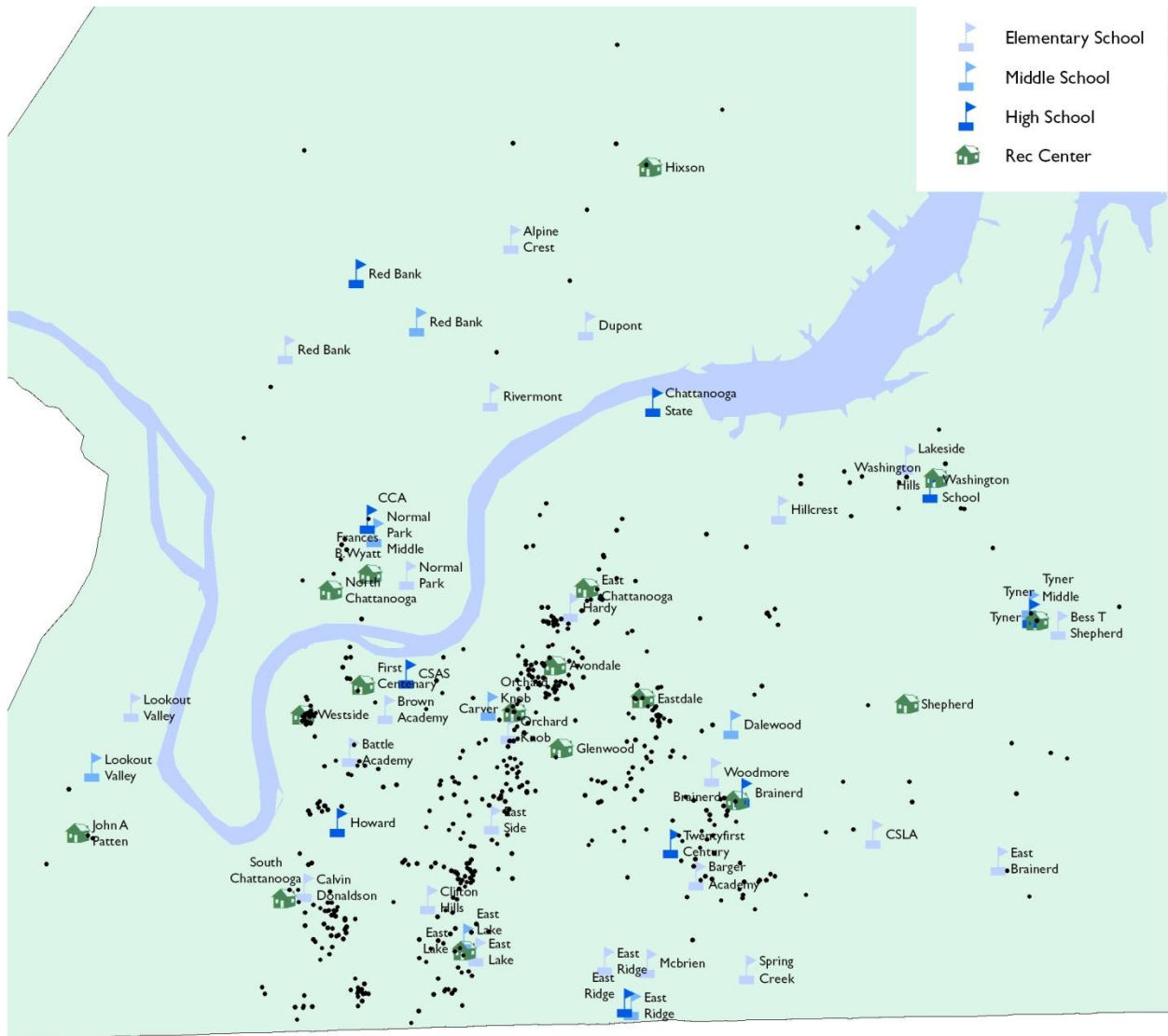
Drug-related crime experienced steady increases in the number of incidents and the number of gang members involved between 2007 and 2011. Analysis of activity by gang name indicates that Bloods (29.6 percent of the drug arrests) and Gangster Disciples (20.6 of the drug arrests) were arrested for more drug activity than other gangs. Assault was the second activity reported to include gang members. Of the assault cases, 33.6 percent were attributed to members of the Crips. Assault, weapons violations and vandalism activity peaked in 2009. On a yearly basis, assaults increased up until 2009 and then began to decline. The same trend is true for weapons violations, which accounted for 12.4 percent of the incidents over the five-year period. Bloods (29.4 percent) and Gangster Disciples (21.8) were most involved in weapons violations.

Gang-related Crime Near Schools and Recreation Centers

Schools and recreation centers should be safe havens for children, and for the most part, they are. However, school surveys found a high percentage of students who are fearful in and around schools. Map 2.5 overlays gang-related crime with school and recreation center locations and shows how many elementary, middle and high schools are surrounded by gang crime. Similarly, several community centers such as Hardy, Carver, Eastdale, Brainerd, Avondale, Glenwood, East Lake and South Chattanooga are located in or near hotspots. The schools and community

centers in these neighborhoods are strategically situated to be change agents. The facilities already serve gang members and at-risk youth, but many residents think existing programs are not working to curb gang formation and violence. Schools can serve community needs after the formal school day ends. They could be used to improve parental capacity in families with unique needs. Similarly, community centers could explore gang prevention and implementation programs to replace the role of gangs in children’s lives.

Map 2.5 Gang-related Crime Near Schools and Recreation Centers



Neighborhood Hotspots* by Year

Crime activity has a spatial element and mapping where crime occurs can assist community leaders in targeting resources to areas of need. The gang hotspot map aggregates data from all years to show areas in Chattanooga that have experienced gang activity at rates higher than expected.¹¹ The hotspots show the spatial movement of activity over time, but certain neighborhoods are consistently identified as hotspots for each of the 5 years.

In 2007, activity was concentrated in urban neighborhoods, but some activity was dispersed into suburban Hamilton County. Most activity was south of town with 2 hotspots in the Hixson area. The Southside Garden area and the areas off Brainerd Road were the leading hotspot areas.

For 2008, more activity occurred in the urban core with areas along Dodds Avenue exhibiting increases in gang crime. North Brainerd and Alton Park showed continued levels of activity. Also, Westside and Lookout Valley appear as hotspots in 2008 for the first time. The Hixson activity disappeared (if this was at Northgate Mall, it may have been due to changes there) but clusters of activity in Bonnie Oaks and North Chattanooga emerged. This is the only year that Coolidge Park appears as a hotspot. Increased police presence, restriction of access for minors at certain times and better lighting were implemented to address community responses to crime in Coolidge Park. Coolidge Park and Westside showed the highest number of gang incidents in 2008.

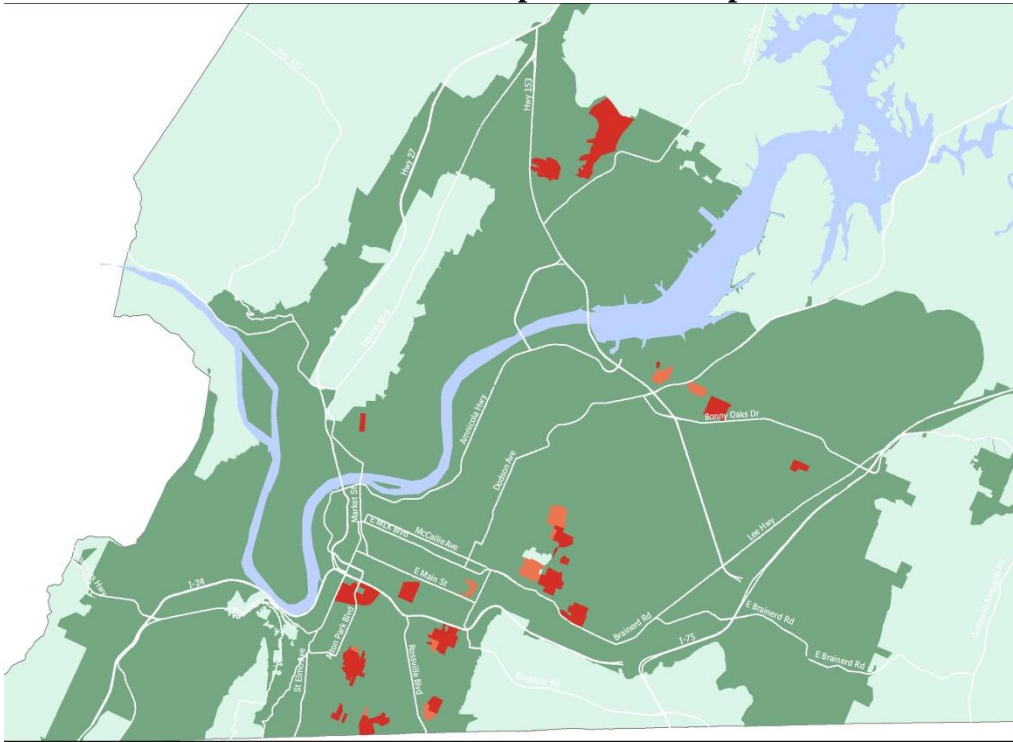
The 2009 hotspots map shows continued concentration of gang activity in the inner-city. Washington Hills off Bonny Oaks cropped up as the leading hotspot, but most of the crime in this area was vandalism. The Highland Park area near downtown was the second rated crime hotspot. During 2009, the concentration of crime along the Dodson Avenue corridor continued to grow. The areas around Brainerd High School and Cromwell Hills also exhibited high levels of gang activity.

The cluster of activity at the south end of Rossville Boulevard in the Cedar Hill area was the leading hotspot in 2010. The second largest hotspot was the Pin Oak area in East Chattanooga where one-half of the logged incidents were assaults.

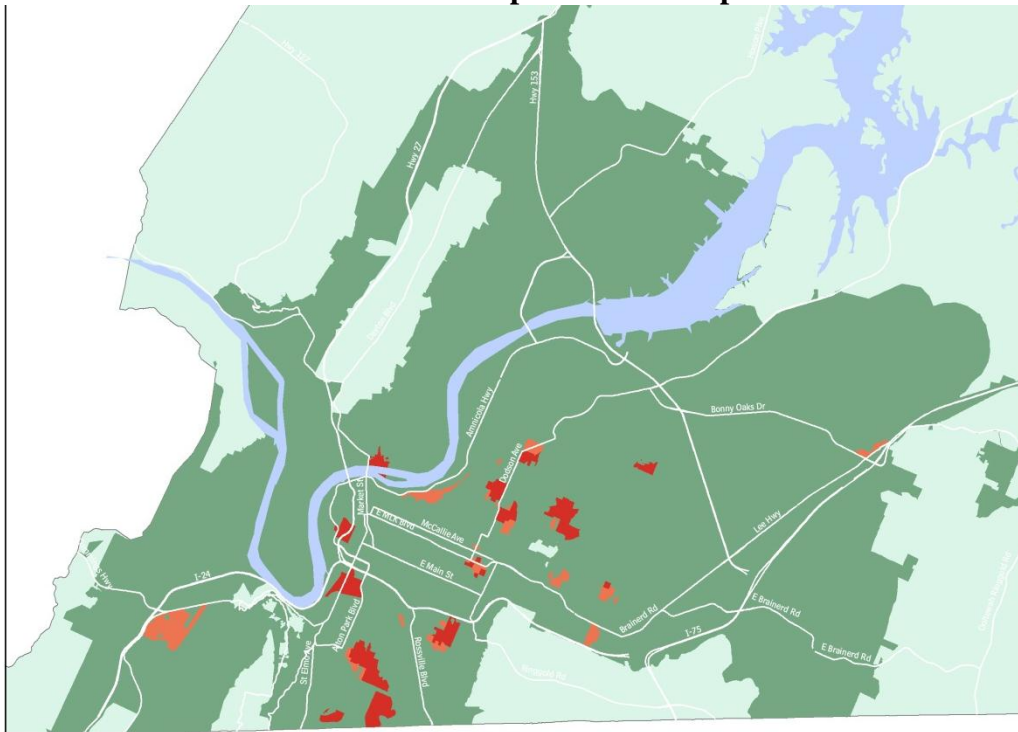
New hotspots in 2011 were identified as Hamilton Place, Lookout Valley and the Mountain Creek area. Westside had the leading number gang-related criminal incidents; in this area, more gang victims than suspects were reported. The area with the second leading number of incidents was the Tunnel Boulevard and Hoyt Road areas where drugs and assaults were the most commonly reported gang activities.

**= the identification of a neighborhood "hotspot" in any given year does not necessarily indicate that it is a hotbed of gang activity. Due to the relatively small number of crimes specifically indicated as 'gang related', it is important to consider the areas that repeatedly show up as "hotspots" as areas for action.*

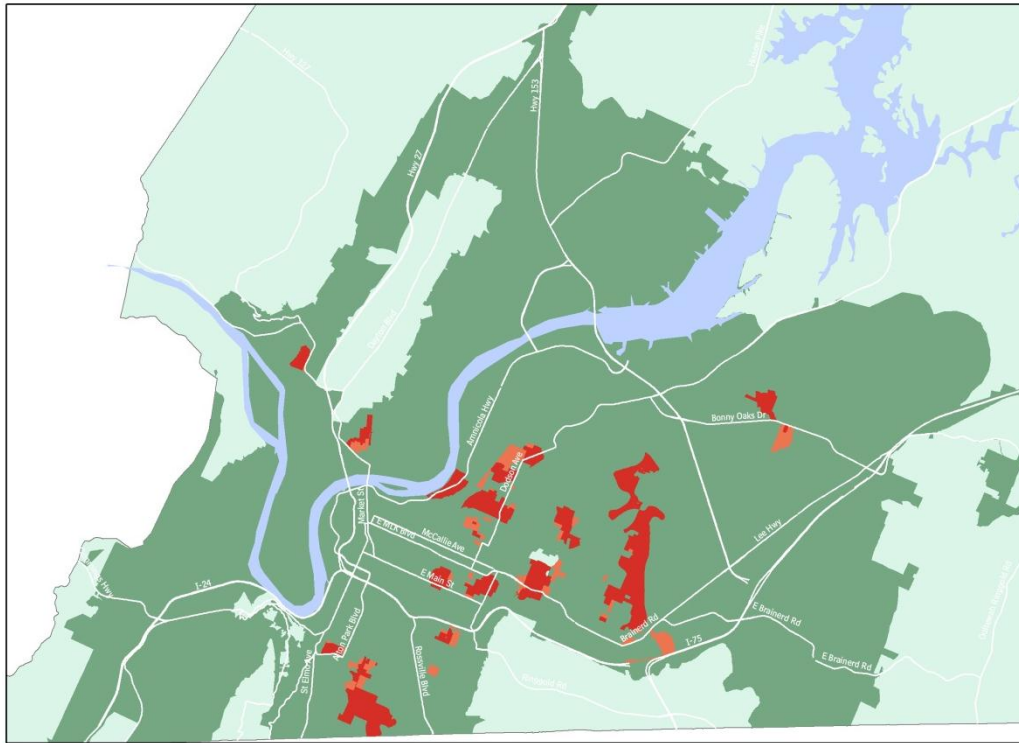
Map 2.6 2007 Hotspots



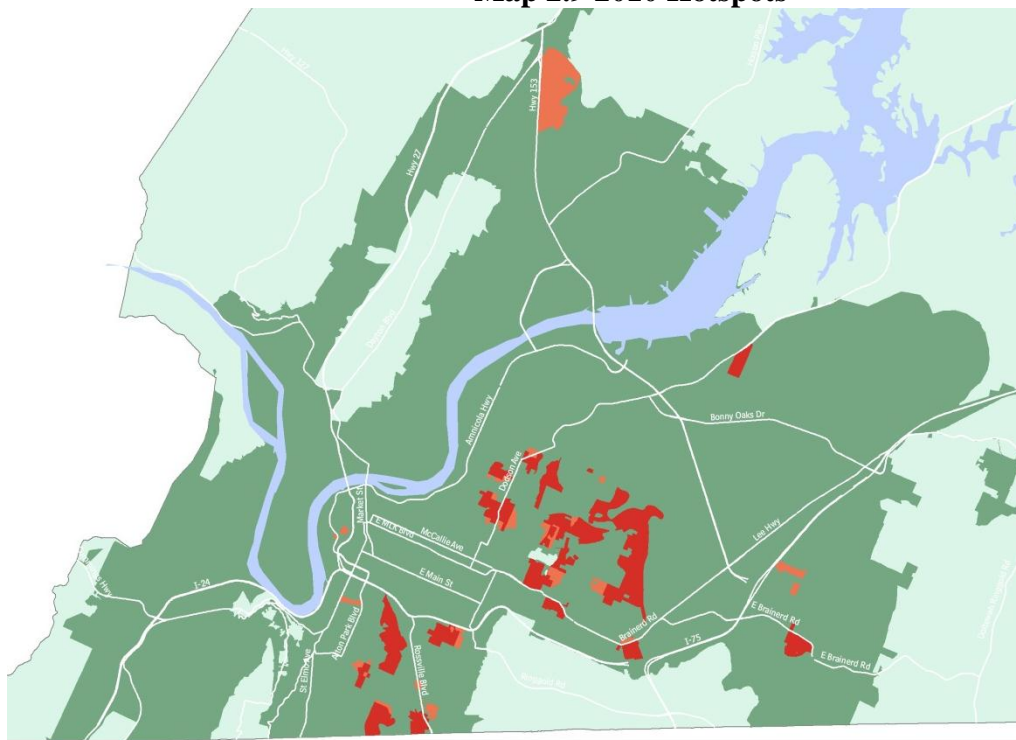
Map 2.7 2008 Hotspots



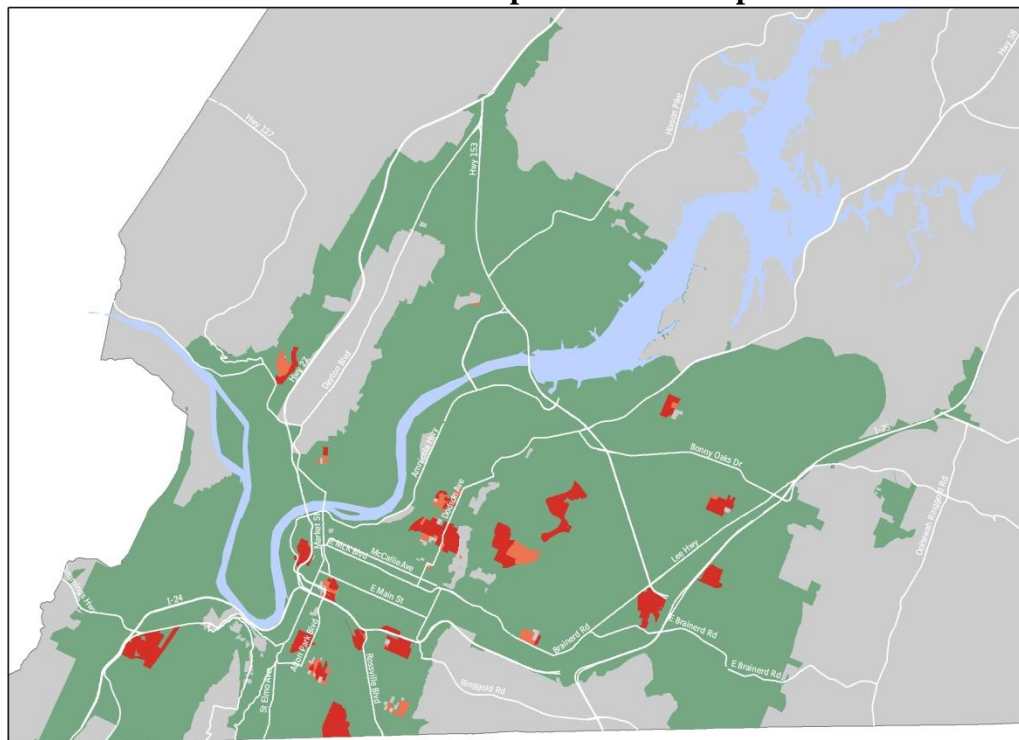
Map 2.8 2009 hotspots



Map 2.9 2010 Hotspots



Map 2.10 2011 Hotspots



As the maps show, hotspot activity moves over time, but certain areas—specifically Westside, Alton Park, Avondale, and areas along Dodson Avenue in East Chattanooga—were consistently gang hotspots over the 5 year span. There are multiple factors affecting the location of crime and gang activity other than physical addresses.

Hispanics and Crime

Law enforcement officers reported growing numbers of Hispanic children at several Hamilton County public schools. Many of these children form gangs for self-protection. One officer explained that some of the Hispanic children born in the US are emulating some of the behavior of other gangs by carrying guns and committing robbery. Much of that behavior is targeted in Hispanic communities, but it can be more effectively managed because families without citizenship can be deported for gang crimes.

According to law enforcement officials, there has been some targeted crime committed against Hispanics in Chattanooga. Several laborers carry cash and can be easy prey to street criminals. Many Hispanics distrust or fear law enforcement and these types of crime often are unreported. One law enforcement official estimated that there are about “two dozen” Hispanic gang members in Chattanooga who are affiliated with larger, non-local Hispanic gangs. However, as he pointed out, it is difficult to estimate the number because Hispanic gangs tend to be covert in their activities.

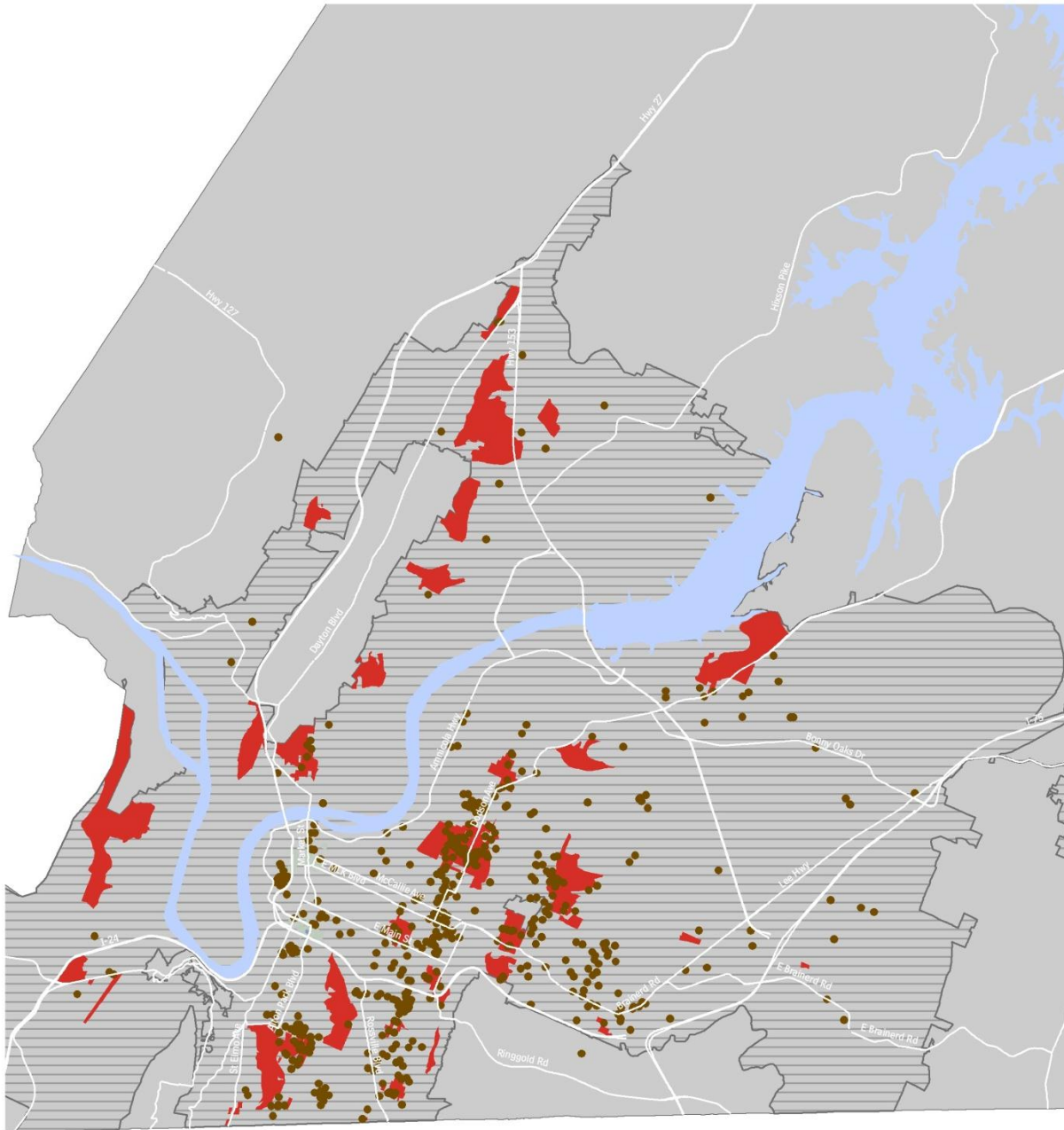
Programs Implemented to Address Gang-related Crime

Over the years, there have been numerous programs implemented to stabilize neighborhoods in Chattanooga. Programs to curb gang activity at Coolidge Park and Hamilton Mall, as already mentioned, demonstrate that strong measures can assist in managing the problem. Another successful initiative was Community Impact’s program to stabilize the urban neighborhoods of Bushtown and Glenwood through community leadership building and housing redevelopment. The programs focused on building order and aggressively targeted community blight. The rationale for the program loosely followed the Broken Windows theory that relates prosocial behavior as a hedge against community decline.¹²

Of course, new programs will require funding and resources. However, Chattanooga has an array of data that could augment existing data to better understand the linkages between the built environment, community conditions and crime. Chattanooga’s 311 system allows residents to report abandoned vehicles, litter, overgrown lots, and illegal dumping to city hall. These data could complement crime and education data to make more efficient resource allocations. Chattanooga’s Metro United Way also collects a tremendous amount of data through its 211 system. This database includes information on calls for service assistance related to rent assistance, utility assistance and other family services that could better target community resources to community needs. By accessing data from other City of Chattanooga programs and other community organizations, CPD could develop data-driven models to guide the allocation of manpower to areas of highest need.

Map 2.11 overlays housing complaint calls to the 311 system—a rich source of data on neighborhood change—with Chattanooga crime data. The housing complaints demonstrate two important attributes of social capital: community awareness and community concern. If concerned citizens are ignored, community concern could change to apathy or prompt residents to relocate to communities with a better quality of life. In 2011 there were 8 housing complaints, 5 litter complaints, and 4 complaints about overgrowth on a block in the Pin Oak/ Wilcox Boulevard area. This is the same area that was identified as a leading hotspot area in 2010. Of the 2 block areas identified with the most complaints to Neighborhood Services in 2011, they bookend 3 crime hotspots. Other neighborhood-level data such as foreclosures, vacancies, Section 8 housing and access to basic retail services could improve community knowledge of the cumulative obstacles facing struggling neighborhoods.

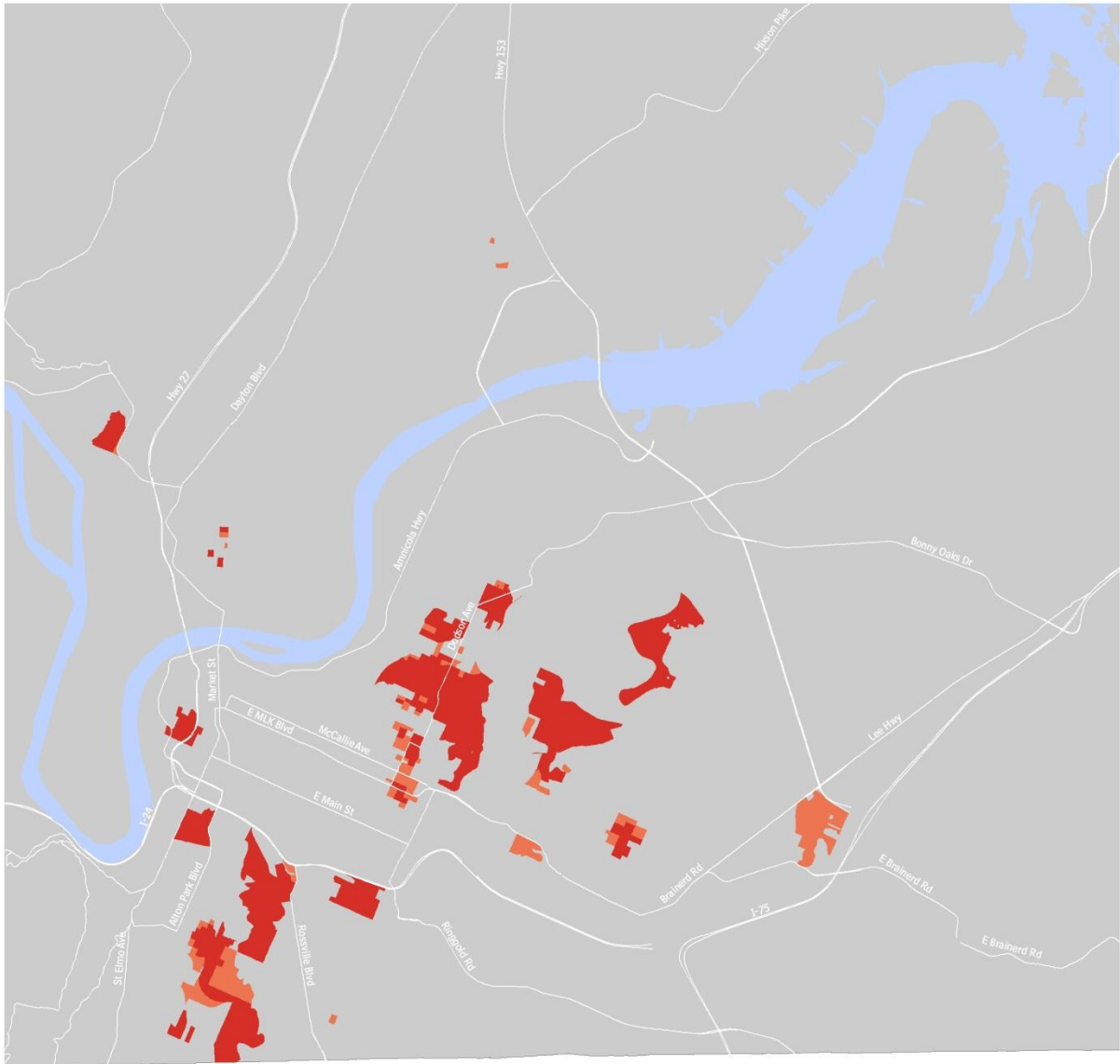
Map 2.11 2011 Housing Complaints Hotspots to 311 and Crime Activity



Drug Offense Hotspots

Because drug activity was the leading gang offense, hotspot Map 2.12 was produced to show the location of that activity. East Lake, Alton Park, Westside, Avondale, and North Brainerd were all hotspots of drug activity. The average age of a person involved in drug crimes was 23. Fifty-three percent of drug activity occurred between the hours of 5PM and midnight, and 48 percent of the activities took place on Fridays and Saturdays.

Map 2.12 Drug hotspots: Data from 2007-2011



Weapons Violations

As of the writing of this report, over 55 shootings had been recorded in Chattanooga in 2012. Most of these shootings are reported in the Chattanooga Times Free Press or other media outlets, raising awareness about gangs and guns. As of the writing of this report, over 50 shootings had occurred in Chattanooga during 2012. A high number of shootings were clustered in the vicinity of schools and recreation centers. A handful of shootings have occurred in the suburbs, but most are clustered in crime hotspots.

The majority of the weapons violations and gun crimes in the CPD database were clustered in East Chattanooga. Gun use peaked in 2009 with 198 reports of firearms being used. During the 5-year period, 32.7 percent of those identified as gang members were reported to be carrying a firearm when identified.¹³ Of those people associated with a weapons report, 52.9 percent of suspects used a gun and 47.1 of victims reported that the perpetrator had a gun. Firearms were used in 90 percent of the homicides reported, 67 percent of robberies and 45 percent of assaults. Map 9 shows the areas where guns were used between 5 and 12 times in the 2007 to 2011 period. The two blocks in which gun use appeared 12 times each were the intersections around Hoyt/Tunnel and Dodds/Kirby. The weapons violation hotspots are not as widespread as the drug hotspots. Weapons are not constrained to an address, thus gun users who live in one area of town could be arrested for weapons violations in other parts of town. The weapons violations data likely capture a very small proportion of the amount of illegal weapons activity.

Map 2.13 Firearm use 2007-2011:



Conclusion

Recorded gang crime is a small percentage of total crime reported by the CPD and the HCSO, but the data are inaccurate and incomplete. Moving forward, community leaders should focus on establishing gang data collection protocols that are shared among law enforcement agencies throughout Hamilton County. Until that happens, an accurate benchmark of gang crime cannot be established. Given that caveat, the available data is consistent with observations made by local police, community leaders, and gang members. The gang activity and crime are highly concentrated in lower-income urban neighborhoods.

The concentration of activity means that residents in these communities are disproportionately impacted by gang activities and violence. This was reflected in community forums where residents of neighborhoods with crime hotspots tended to complain more about gangs and their impact on quality of life. As the demographic analysis showed, these neighborhoods struggle with high levels of concentrated poverty, unemployment and low levels of educational attainment. There are numerous structural barriers to economic development and the formation of functional, legitimate markets. Consequently, high levels of unemployment—both youth and adult—create incentives to engage in organized criminal activity to eke out a living.

As many gang members explained, gang life is the only life they've ever known. It surrounds children in these neighborhoods, and provides a means to an economic end. Many gang members repeatedly said that the lure of easy money and the excitement of the gang lifestyle attracted them to join. Gangs also provide a sense of belonging that is missing in the lives of too many young Chattanooga residents. Local police are fully aware of the crime issues in hotspot neighborhoods identified in this section of the assessment. They make many arrests in these communities, but high rates of crime, unacceptable numbers of shootings and homicides persist. The police alone cannot fix this problem. African American churches alone cannot fix this problem. Residents alone cannot fix this problem. Politicians alone cannot fix this problem. Sustained and coordinated community development initiatives rooted in gang prevention, intervention and human capital development for children, youth and adults are needed to rebuild these communities.

Recommendation

The Ochs Center requested data from both the CPD and the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) from 2007 through 2011. Unfortunately, the HCSO was not able to provide usable data for the comprehensive gang assessment. The CPD data were provided as raw data files and many inconsistencies and duplications were found in the spreadsheets. In addition, many individual crime records were riddled with missing data about gang affiliation, demographics and nature of the crime.¹⁴ Despite the weaknesses of the data, they do provide a valuable snapshot of the location of gang crime in Chattanooga. Both CPD and the HCSO need to implement best practices on data quality to accurately track gang crime and to monitor programmatic success in gang suppression.

The value of the gang assessment to policy makers and community stakeholders is only as good as the inputs. It is recommended that law enforcement agencies throughout Hamilton County implement best practices in gang-related data collection and reporting. Officers should be educated on proper reporting procedures to ensure accurate information is captured. In addition, the evaluation of programs implemented to combat gang formation, violence and crime depend on accurate benchmark data to compare pre-program and post-program results. The importance of reliable and accurate data in defining the scope and location of the gang problem cannot be overstated.

Chapter 3

Student and School Study

I. Introduction

The Comprehensive Gang Assessment includes several components designed to bring together information from five data domains –Community Demographic Data, Law Enforcement Data, Student and School Data, Community Perception Data, and Community Resources Data. The Student and School Domain assessment conducted by the Center for Applied Social Research comprises this report. The purpose of the School Component Study (also termed the Student and School Study) was to identify and examine the risk and protective factors associated with gang involvement at the level of the student or youth in Hamilton County schools, and identify gang influence and proliferation factors associated with the growth of gangs in the greater Chattanooga community. Several types of data were therefore to be obtained: (1) student and school staff perceptions of gang activity, (2) perceptions of risk behaviors that may be linked to gang affiliation, vulnerability and violence, (3) attitudes and values that are associated with a higher risk for gang affiliation and/or gang-related activities, and (4) evidence of possibly gang related behavioral problems as reflected in existing school disciplinary and incident data. By analyzing this multi-faceted compilation of information this study seeks to provide a comprehensive view of the nature, scope, and dynamics of the gang problem from the standpoint of youth in the Chattanooga area. As such, the study provides a data-driven foundation for developing effective gang reduction strategies, guidance for resource procurement and allocation, and enables an informed community and law enforcement response.

II. Conceptual Framework for the Student and School Domain Study

A number of research studies inform any examination of gang membership and youth risk. The current study is informed by much of this work, and a tested theoretical framework guides the study analyses. Although much of what was learned as part of this study is in line with what has been learned from other such studies, the value of the current study lies in its specific information about Chattanooga, the unique profile of gang affiliation among its youth, the views of its young people who are daily confronted with gangs, and the input they and significant adults in their daily lives provide to the overall problem. How we understand and learn from this important input is aided by the concepts discussed below, which provide a critical framework for analysis and interpretation.

Research from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and Howell and Egley's (2005) *Developmental Model of Gang Involvement* serve as primary resources in understanding the multiple factors and developmental domains associated with gang membership. The *Developmental Model of Gang Involvement* builds on the gang membership theory and model developed by Thornberry and colleagues (Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith, Tobin, 2003; Thornberry, 1987; Thornberry & Krohn, 2001), and is shown in Figure 3A.

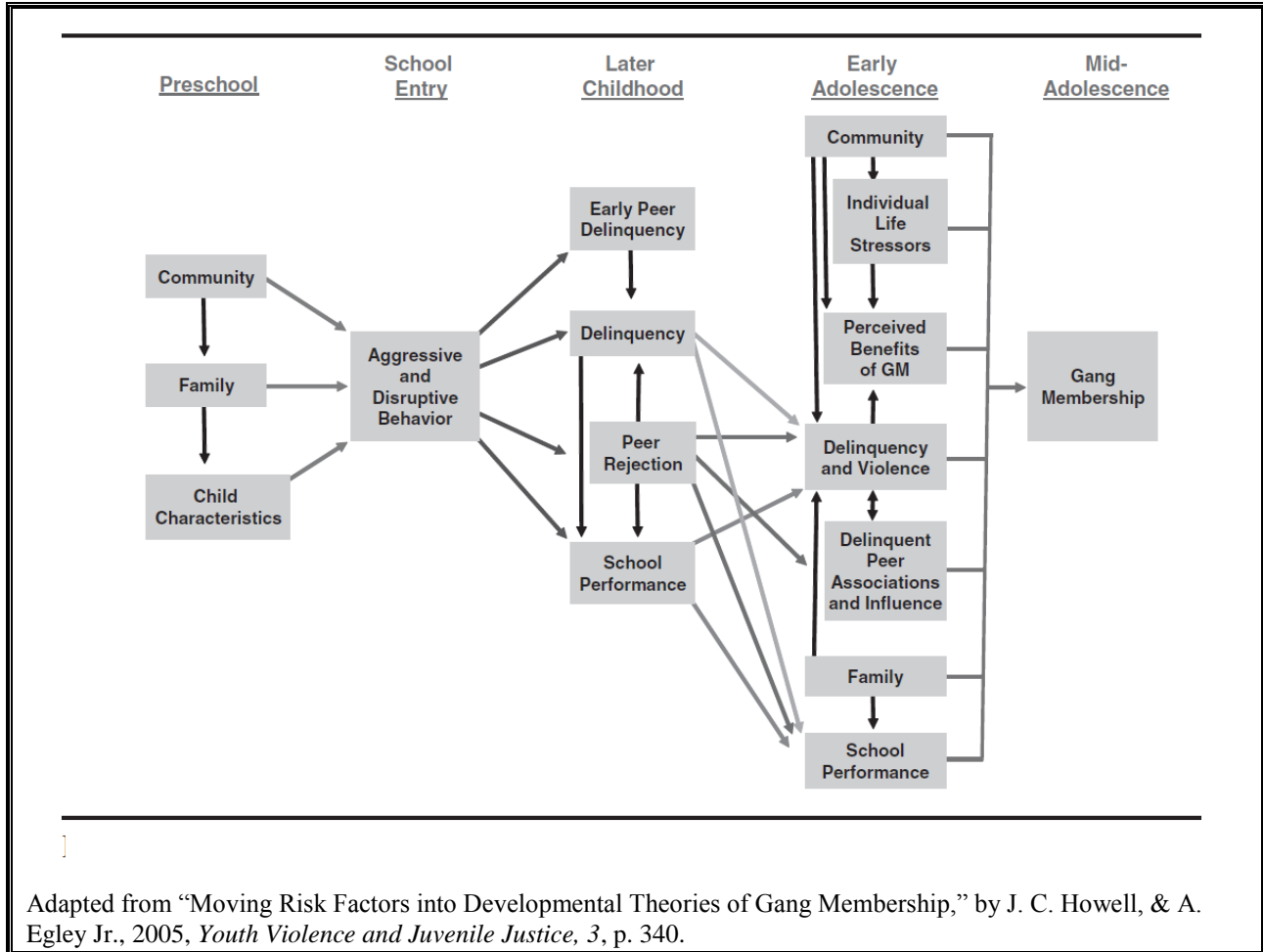
The model, as shown in Figure 3A, reflects a progression of gang involvement by age that begins with risk factors the child experiences as early as pre-school. The Office of Juvenile Justice and

Delinquency Prevention (2009) suggests the following definition of *risk and protective factors* associated with youth violence and potential gang involvement:

Risk factors are conditions in the individual or environment that predict an increased likelihood of developing a problem. Protective factors, on the other hand, are conditions in the individual or environment that buffer or moderate the effects of risk factors or increase resistance to them, and thus inhibit the development of problems even in the face of risk exposure (p. 72).

In brief, from the environments created by the community and family, negative factors or influences exerted on the young child can lead to early school academic and behavioral problems. These early risk factors can include problematic parenting, family stressors, poverty, and a lack of family and community resources and positive support systems. Later childhood may bring into play problems associated with acceptance and valuation, leading to early delinquency, continued poor school performance and conflicts with peers. In early adolescence, unless successfully countered, the child can be further affected by negative community factors, family situations, various life stressors and delinquent peer associations. By mid-adolescence, gang membership can appear an attractive way to resolve personal issues and needs, provide a sense of belonging, and achieve desired money and material things.

Figure 3.A A Developmental Model of Gang Involvement



Using this theoretical framework, the OJJDP developed a national protocol for use by communities wishing to explore the problem of gang proliferation. A survey, based on the work of James Howell and Arlen Egley (2005), was developed by OJJDP, drawing upon this research and youth risk behavior studies from the Centers for Disease Control. These surveys were tested in various cities, and became the standard protocol for gang research. The Chattanooga School component used this protocol as a base for developing the student and HCDE Employee Surveys. The final Chattanooga surveys, however, were a modified version of the original OJJDP survey, using a smaller number of total questions while retaining the principal question domains that refer back to the conceptual framework. These domains are family experiences, school performance and/or experiences, community influences, peer associations, and individual motivational factors. Additionally, certain risk and protective factors operate to increase the likelihood of a young person being influenced to participate in gangs, or can work to reduce this likelihood. Questions assessing risk and protective factors are therefore included in the Student and Employee Surveys.

Questions on both survey instruments were designed to gain information related to specific domains as well as various risk or protective factors simultaneously. Questions were designed to

assessed various risk and protective factors such as: Family structure, parental monitoring, parental academic expectations, family safety concerns, school environment, school safety, discipline, level of gang activity in or around school, neighborhood environment, neighborhood stability, neighborhood safety, level of neighborhood attachment, level of gang activity, crime and drug activity, exposure to and/or involvement in delinquent behavior(s), level of gang contact/exposure, peer and/or family member gang involvement.¹

On the HCDE employee survey, perceptions regarding students' family experiences were addressed. However, the majority of this survey's questions related to HCDE employees' attitudes regarding the school environment, students' school performance and/or experiences, community influences, peer associations, and students' motivational factors. Multiple questions assessed various risk and protective factors such as: School environment, school safety, discipline, levels of gang activity in or around school, academic performance, students' perceptions/attitudes related to gang affiliation.²

The Discussion Section of this analysis provides additional insight on the role of risk and protective factors as evident from the findings from this study and other similar research.

III. Methodology

Following the OJJDP model, the School Component of the model includes a student survey, a school system employee survey, and data on disciplinary action and behavioral incidents from the school system. In addition, the current study included several focus groups for parents and school system personnel.

Comprehensive Student Survey

Survey Development and Administration

The original OJJDP Student Survey was comprised of over 200 questions. With input from a team of reviewers this survey was reduced to a 39 item student survey. The final survey maintained the key issue areas of importance for identifying gang activity, involvement and influence in the schools. These key areas sought students' (1) perceptions of gang violence, (2) risk behaviors linked to ones vulnerability toward gang affiliation and violence, (3) attitudes and values linked to a vulnerability to gangs and gang-related activities, (4) self-reported delinquency and/or gang related activities, (5) gang awareness, (6) self-reported personal gang experience(s), and (7) recommendations for reducing gang interest and involvement. The Student Survey was provided to HCDE Assistant Superintendent Dr. Lee McDade and several middle and high school principals who made suggestions for further refinement of the survey which were incorporated. The final survey was approved by HCDE Superintendent, Mr. Rick Smith. School selection was also discussed with HCDE administrators, and it was decided that the paper and pencil survey would be given to a purposive sample of 13 HCDE schools, grades 6-12. The

¹ To request a copy of the HCDE Student Survey, please contact the Center for Applied Social Research at casr@utc.edu

² To request a copy of the HCDE Employee Survey, please contact the Center for Applied Social Research at casr@utc.edu

school selections were derived from principal recommendations, using the criteria of school population diversity and broad community representation based on individual school location.

The survey and study protocol were submitted to the UTC Institutional Review Board (IRB) in the project application, and were subsequently approved (IRB #12-077. Note: This IRB Approval includes all components of the School Component Study, including those discussed below.). Prior to the administration of the student survey HCDE notified parents of the 13 participating schools via 1) an electronic parental communication message informing them of the upcoming survey and 2) a written parental consent letter (passive consent method) sent home with each student.³ A total of 6,783 parental letters were distributed. The letter included an introduction informing parents of the following: 1) the survey had been approved by UTC's Institutional Review Board, 2) student participation was voluntary, 3) student responses were confidential and anonymous, and 4) participants could refuse to answer any question they wished. Contact information was also provided for parental questions and concerns. Parents who did not wish for their child to participate in the survey had the option to return a signed 'do not participate' form to the school. A total of 62 'do not participate' forms were returned, representing 0.92% of students in the sample group. A total of 6,721 students comprised the final student sample.

A paper-distributed survey was determined to be the most appropriate instrument for surveying large youth populations. Online methods, while more efficient and less costly, require access to computers. The lack of computer access for all students and the length of the survey (approximately 25 minutes completion time) made an online survey unworkable. Survey packets were prepared and delivered to each school by CASR staff. These packets included the survey materials, pencils, student resource information sheets, and administration instructions for the teacher, as well as completion instructions for the students. The survey administration methodology required that all students in the 13 schools and within each building complete the survey simultaneously, thus avoiding student discussion and/or advance notice of the survey items. All attempts were made to construct survey questions on a 4th- 6th grade reading level. Teachers were instructed to read aloud the survey completion instructions and were free to address any student's question(s) during the administration of the survey. All participant responses remained anonymous and participants had the option to skip any question they chose. All administering teachers collected the surveys and placed them in a sealed envelope. A CASR representative was present at each participating school to collect the surveys from each classroom.

District-Wide Comprehensive School Employee Survey

Survey Development and Distribution. A comprehensive 45 item survey was developed based upon OJJDP suggested interview and survey questions. Items were selected regarding employee: 1) perceptions regarding student violence, 2) perceptions and/or first-hand knowledge of students' risk behaviors linked to vulnerability and violence, 3) attitudes and values regarding students' risk and vulnerability to gangs and gang-related activities. Twelve of the employee survey questions mirrored those on the student survey in order to provide comparison data in

³ To request a copy of the HCDE electronic communication and/or the parental consent letter, please contact the Center for Applied Social Research at casr@utc.edu

terms of perceptions and experiences related to gang affiliation and gang related behaviors. The survey enabled those individuals who interact with students throughout Hamilton County schools to participate in the assessment and voice issues and/or concerns regarding youth violence as related to their specific school location and/or the school system as a whole.

The online survey was piloted prior to implementation and administered via the Qualtrics survey software. A recruitment email (“Invitation to Participate”) was developed and distributed to all school personnel via the HCDE email distribution system. The invitation to participate email included an introduction informing participants: 1) the survey has been approved by UTC’s Institutional Review Board, 2) participation is voluntary, 3) responses are confidential and anonymous, and 4) participants may refuse to answer any question they wish. Participation in the survey served as informed consent. A live link was embedded within the invitation to participate which enabled easy and anonymous access to the survey. Respondents were given the opportunity, via an additional link, upon completion of the survey, to indicate their interest in participating in one of the Employee Focus Group sessions. There were no identifying factors between the respondents’ indication of focus group interest and their survey responses. Of the 4000 HCDE employees who were invited to participate, 819 responded indicating a response rate of 20.5 percent.

District-Wide School Employee Focus Group Sessions

Question Development and Protocol. Seven focus groups were conducted involving 32 HCDE employees who had expressed an interest in participating. These one and one-half hour interactive sessions were designed to provide comprehensive and rich data focusing on the participants’ perceptions, attitudes, and experiences regarding gang-related activities as related to their specific school location, and/or the school system as a whole. Sessions were conducted by a professional moderator and assisted by a note-taker. The focus group moderator followed a moderator guide and questioning route which was designed based upon the OJJDP model.⁴ Sessions were conducted at UTC at the CASR Survey Center. An informed consent was distributed, explained, signed, and collected.⁵ Participants were informed of the confidentiality requirements of the session, including the CASR’s responsibility to keep the identities of those participating anonymous, as well as the participants’ responsibility to not share others’ information, including names and information discussed in the group. Participants were provided with light refreshments and a gift card as a thank you for participating.

Data Collection and Analysis. In order to provide a full analysis of the data, the focus groups were tape recorded, with participants’ permission, and later transcribed with all identifying information removed to ensure confidentiality of participants and those who may have been mentioned during the session.

⁴ To request a copy of the focus group protocol and questioning route, please contact the Center for Applied Social Research at casr@utc.edu

⁵ To request a copy of the focus group informed consent, please contact the Center for Applied Social Research at casr@utc.edu

HCDE Parent Focus Group Sessions

Question Development and Protocol. Two focus groups were conducted involving 13 parents of current HCDE students. These sessions followed the same protocol as the HCDE employee focus groups. Questions were modified to more appropriately address those issues and/or experiences which were unique to parents while maintaining the focus upon the participants' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences regarding youth gang affiliation, gang-related experiences and activities.

HCDE Disciplinary and Incident Data

To some extent behavioral and disciplinary problems may be aggravated by gang activity. Information was obtained from Hamilton County Schools from the Office of Accountability and Testing to determine if any significant changes have occurred over the past two-year period. A brief comparison of this data is included in Section VII of this chapter.

IV. Findings: Student Survey

Respondent Demographic Profile

Of the 6,721 surveys distributed to the 13 participating schools, 5,057 were completed, representing a response rate of 75.24 percent overall, with a middle school response average of 79.56 percent and a high school response average of 73.44 percent. In terms of gender, the respondents show a fairly even distribution of males and females (see Appendix B, Table A). A little over half of the survey respondents were African American (51.3 percent) and approximately one-third were Caucasian (32.3 percent). Hispanic respondents were slightly less than 6 percent, and roughly 7 percent of students identified themselves as mixed race. This compares to the HCDE total district breakdown of: 59.3 percent Caucasian, 31.3 percent African American, 6.8 percent Hispanic, 2.3 percent Asian, and 0.3 percent other.

In addition to demographic questions asking students to give their racial/ethnic background, age and grade, students were asked if they were currently involved in a gang or had ever been involved in a gang. Respondents who answered "yes" to either question have been termed "gang-affiliated" in this report. This data is compiled with the demographic profile of students shown in Appendix B Table A. A brief summary of this data shows:

- A total of 747 students, or 15.1 percent, reported being gang-affiliated either currently or in the past.
- Among gang-affiliated respondents: 62.7 percent male and 37.3 percent female.
- Among gang-affiliated respondents: 57.7 percent Black, 22.6 percent White, 8 percent mixed race, and 6.9 percent Hispanic.

Out of the 4,407 students who reported their age, gang-affiliated student respondents indicated the average age for joining a gang to be between the ages of 11 and 12 with a wide standard deviation of 3.253. In addition:

- The grade level of gang affiliated students shows a standard bell curve with a peak affiliation in 9th grade.
- Gang-affiliated students ranged in age from 11 to 19.
- 52 percent of respondents affiliated with gangs were ages 14-16.
- Age 13 represented the next highest number of gang-affiliated respondents, with 14.3 percent in this group. Those aged 17 were 13.0 percent of the total.

When considering age, almost 80 percent of our respondents were in the age range of 13 to 17. The fringes of the survey's age range represent a very small segment of the students in regard to those who reported gang affiliation. Only 2.9 percent of students reported gang-affiliation at age 11, while by age 12, the number rises to 10.8 percent. Of the students that reported gang-affiliation, only 6.0 percent were 18. Only 0.9 percent of gang-affiliated students were age 19, but this is likely due to the small number of students that are 19 years of age still in high-school. Student respondents were asked to indicate the zip code in which they lived (teachers were provided with a listing of students' zip codes in support of those students who may not have known their zip code). A total of 21 zip code areas were represented among the respondent population. It is important to note that all (100 percent) 21 zip code areas had student respondents who indicated gang affiliation, albeit at varying levels of saturation.

Gang Affiliated and Non-Gang Affiliated Survey Respondents Selected Response Comparisons

Family Dynamics. Respondents were asked about family structure, and views associated with their families related to selected items such as safety and expectations, rules and conflict resolution. The intent of these questions was to ascertain the family influence in key areas of values and attitude.

Gang affiliated and non-gang affiliated students show a similar pattern in terms of family structure (see Table 3.1). Most respondents, 84.1 percent, indicated they lived "most of the time" with their biological mothers, and 40.9 percent indicated they also lived most of the time with their biological fathers. A small percentage, 13.1 percent, of respondents lived most of the time with grandmothers, and only 5.6 percent indicated living most of the time with a grandfather. Additionally, some respondents lived with stepparents in their homes, with 15.6 percent having stepfathers in the home, and 5.4 percent having stepmothers. As shown below and in Table 3.1, this did not vary considerably by whether respondents indicated they were gang-affiliated or non-gang affiliated.

Additionally the number of siblings shown as living in the home tended to be similar (see Figures 3B and 3C).

- 85.1 percent of non-gang affiliated students, and 81.5 percent of gang affiliated students lived most of the time with their biological mothers.
- 43.5 percent of non-gang affiliate students and 33.7 percent of gang affiliated students lived most of the time with their biological fathers.
- 15.3 percent of non-gang affiliated and 18.1 percent of gang-affiliated respondents lived most of the time in a household with a stepfather.

- 5.1 percent of non-gang affiliated and 7.3 percent of gang-affiliated respondents lived most of the time in a household with a stepmother.
- 12.4 percent of non-gang affiliated and 15.7 percent of gang-affiliated respondents lived most of the time in a household with a grandmother.
- 5.1 percent of non-gang affiliated and 7.5 percent of gang-affiliated respondents lived most of the time in a household with a grandfather.
- The majority of both groups of students had siblings, with 55.7 percent of non-gang affiliated and 47.4 percent of gang affiliated students having 1-2 siblings, and 19.6 percent non-gang affiliated students and 23.6 percent of gang affiliated students reporting 3-4 siblings.
- Gang affiliated respondents indicated a higher frequency of other people (e.g. aunt, uncle, cousins, and others) living in their household in all categories.

Table 3.1 Student Respondent Family Profile with Gang vs. Non-Gang Affiliation

Which of the following people live with you most of the time? (select all that apply)		
Family Member	Gang Affiliated Student (n=762)	Non-Gang Affiliated Student (n=3,684)
Mother (biological)	81.5%	85.1%
Father (biological)	33.7%	43.5%
Grandmother	15.7%	12.4%
Grandfather	7.5%	5.1%
Brother(s)	46.0%	44.6%
Sister (s)	43.4%	43.0%
Other Children	11.4%	9.7%
Cousins	10.4%	5.6%
Aunt	8.8%	5.4%
Uncle	7.7%	4.3%
Other Adult(s)	4.5%	2.7%
Foster Mother	1.7%	0.7%
Foster Father	1.4%	0.4%

Student responses were similar when comparing number of siblings in the home, with one marked difference in the category of 5 or more siblings living in the home (see Figure 3.B & 3.C). Gang affiliated students were twice as likely to have five or more siblings in the home than non-gang affiliated students (15.4% vs. 7.9%).

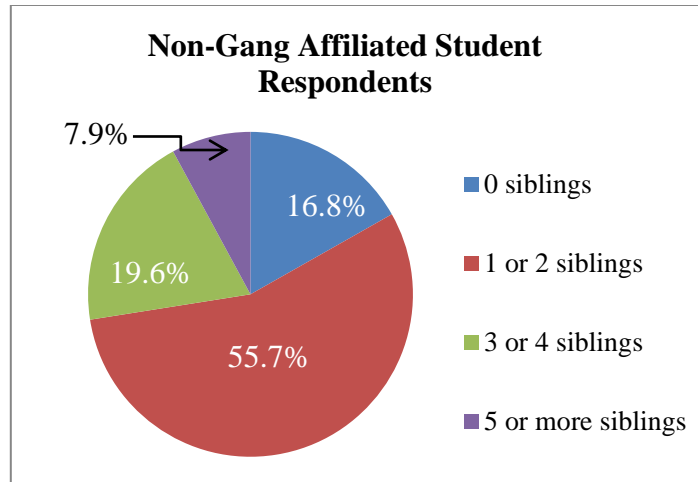


Figure 3.B Number of Siblings-Non-Gang Affiliated Student Respondents (n=3609)

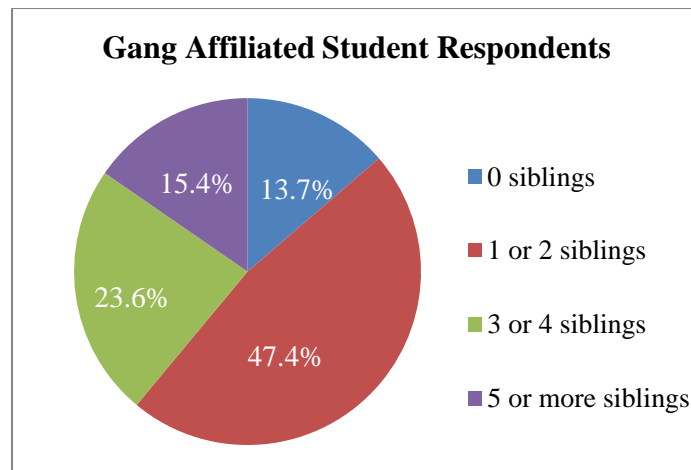


Figure 3.C Number of Siblings-Gang Affiliated Student Respondents (n=735)

Students answered questions regarding their attitudes about their home life with responses of “No!!,” “no,” “yes,” and “YES!!” These responses were subsequently coded on a scale of 0 to 3 respectively with responses closer to a “3” indicating a strong belief that the item was true. Responses closer to a 1 or lower indicate a weak belief or acceptance of the item as true. As shown in Table 3.2, both gang and non-gang affiliated students had similar attitudes about the role that they felt parents and families should play in their lives. Students in both categories had a mean of 2.3 or higher for questions about the importance of feeling safe in the home, desiring a dependable and caring family, and having parental involvement in homework activities, indicating a relatively strong acceptance of these items.

There were statistically significant differences in the responses of gang and non-gang affiliated respondents regarding two separate questions about solving problems through fighting, as well as the acceptability of adults shoving, pushing or hitting other youth or children.

- In response to the question of the acceptability of adults acting physically violent toward children, respondents not affiliated with gangs had a mean response of 0.49, as opposed to a mean of 1.08 from gang affiliated students.
- In response to the question about the acceptability of solving problems through fighting, the mean of gang affiliated students was 1.94, while non-gang affiliated students' responses had a mean of 1.13.

Table 3.2 Attitudes toward Home Life: Gang vs. Non-Gang Affiliated Responses

How closely do the sentences below match your feelings?	Gang Affiliated Student Respondent		Non-Gang Affiliated Respondents	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
It is important to have people in your family that you can depend on for help.	2.56	0.82	2.78	0.57
I do have people in my family whom I can depend on for help.	2.45	0.92	2.67	0.69
It is important to care about people's feelings in a family.	2.48	0.86	2.68	0.65
It is important to be safe in your <u>home</u> .	2.42	0.89	2.83	0.52
I feel safe in my home.	2.42	0.89	2.63	0.68
Parents should care if you finish your homework.	2.32	0.96	2.57	0.73
Parents should know where you are and who you are with.	2.17	1.03	2.51	0.74
Adults in my family talk to me about my problems.	2.08	1.06	2.35	0.88
Families need clear rules that everyone follows.	2.06	1.05	2.39	0.80
Sometimes fighting is the only way to solve a problem.	1.94	1.09	1.13	1.09
My family has rules that everyone follows.	1.92	1.09	2.18	0.92
My parents don't care if I come home on time.	1.59	1.24	1.17	1.25
It is Ok to shove, push, or hit kids if adults are really mad.	1.08	1.19	0.49	0.89

0=NO!!, 1=no, 2=yes, 3=YES!! Independent t-tests conducted on this data found all differences significant ($p \leq .05$).

Therefore, while all students rejected these items as relatively negative and unacceptable, gang affiliated respondents were less likely to do so than the non-affiliated respondents.

School Gang Activities and Influence

Students answered questions regarding gang related behavior and activities within the school setting with responses “Yes,” “No,” and “Not Sure.” Gang affiliated students showed a significantly higher percentage of “Yes” answers to questions regarding knowledge of students in gangs/cliques within their school, knowledge of boys and/or girls at their school in gangs/cliques, and knowledge of gang members from outside the school having a presence around the school (see Table 3.3). When asked, “Do any of the students at your school belong to a gang or clique?”

- 78.1 percent of gang affiliated student respondents, and 56.9 percent of non-gang related student respondents, answered yes.
- 78.1 percent of gang affiliated respondents stated that they knew boys at their school in gangs, opposed to 49 percent of non-gang affiliated student respondents.

- 60.5 percent of gang affiliated students knew girls at their school involved in gangs/cliques, in sharp contrast to just 26.7 percent of non-gang affiliated students.
- 43.0 percent of gang affiliated compared to 17.5 percent of non-gang affiliated respondents indicated awareness of gangs/cliques from outside of the school coming around the respondent’s school.
- Students who were gang affiliated were twice as likely to have knowledge of guns being brought to school, with 25.9 percent of gang affiliated student respondents answering yes compared to 10.7 percent of non-gang affiliated students.
36.4 percent of gang affiliated student respondents had knowledge of gang/cliقة involvement at their school in selling drugs, compared to 25.1 percent of non-gang affiliated student respondents.

Table 3.3 At School Behaviors: Gang and Non-Gang Affiliated

Survey Question	Gang Affiliated Respondents (n=762)	Non-Gang Affiliated Respondents (n=4295)
Do any of the students at your school belong to a gang or clique?		
Yes	78.1	56.9
No	4.0	7.7
Not Sure	17.9	35.4
What about gangs/cliques that don’t have members that go to your school...have any of those groups come around your school during this school year?		
Yes	43.0	17.5
No	17.9	25.3
Not Sure	39.1	57.2
Have gangs/cliques been involved in selling drugs at your school this year?		
Yes	36.4	25.1
No	27.3	23.8
Not Sure	36.4	51.0
Have any gang or clique members brought guns to your school this year?		
Yes	25.9	10.7
No	33.3	37.1
Not Sure	40.8	52.2
Do you know boys at your school who are in gangs/cliques?		
Yes	78.1	49.0
No	10.2	26.3
Not Sure	11.7	24.7
Do you know girls at your school who are in gangs/cliques?		
Yes	60.5	26.7
No	20.3	42.5
Not Sure	19.2	30.9

At-School Behaviors: Gang and Non-Gang Affiliated

Students were asked to respond to additional questions regarding *gang-related activity at their school* with answers in categories of “NEVER happens,” “FEW times” (1-3 a week), “MANY times” (4-10 a week), and “ALL of the time.” These responses were coded on a scale of 0 to 3 respectively. As shown in Table 3.4, the means, or averages, of all responses for gang-affiliated respondents and those for non-gang affiliated respondents were calculated. Means closer to 3

indicated higher perceptions of gang related activity at the school, and those closer to 0 reflect perceptions that gang activities are lower. While there was some overlap in awareness of activities between the gang and non-gang affiliated student respondents, gang-affiliated students tended to indicate a higher level of awareness of these activities.

Table 3.4 At-School Gang-Related Behavior: Gang and Non-Gang Affiliated Students

How often do students...	Gang Affiliated Student Respondent		Non-Gang Affiliated Respondents	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Wear gang colors?	1.59	1.24	0.96	1.10
Get into a physical fight?	1.59	1.11	1.15	0.97
Threaten someone?	1.57	1.16	1.26	1.09
Injure someone in a physical fight?	1.36	1.18	0.92	0.98
Steal something from a student or teacher?	1.18	1.15	1.01	1.02
Wear certain types of clothes meant to identify a gang or a certain clique?	1.17	1.21	0.72	1.00
Tag or write on walls, sidewalks, cars at school?	1.13	1.19	0.77	1.00
Skip school because of gangs/cliques?	1.02	1.145	0.70	0.92
Damage or destroy school property?	0.96	1.16	0.69	0.94
Bring a weapon to school?	0.83	1.12	0.44	0.83
Threaten a student or teacher with a weapon?	0.78	1.12	0.34	0.76
Injure a teacher or student with a weapon?	0.60	1.08	0.24	0.66

0=Never happens, 1=Few times, 2=Many times, 3=All of the time. Independent t-tests conducted on this data found all differences significant ($p \leq .05$).

Questions regarding feeling safe at school were asked with responses ranging from “No!!,” “no,” “yes,” and “YES!!,” and were subsequently coded on a scale of 0 to 3. Gang and non-gang affiliated students both indicated a belief that it is important to feel safe in school with mean answers of 2.33 and 2.62 respectively, which falls between the “yes” and “YES!!” response options. Gang and non-gang affiliated students also responded similarly to the statement, “*I do feel safe at school.*” With mean scores of 1.89 and 1.98 respectively, gang and non-gang affiliated students’ responses were positive although reflecting a response slightly less than “yes.”

Neighborhood Gang Activity

Regarding gang activity in the neighborhoods where they lived, student respondents were given the response options (“NEVER happens,” “FEW times” (1-3 a week), “MANY times” (4-10 a week), and “ALL of the time,” with the scale of 0-3 respectively (see Table 3.5). Responses indicated:

- Gang-affiliated students were significantly more likely to experience gang-related behavior within their neighborhood than were non-gang affiliated student respondents.

- Gang-affiliated students were more likely to experience people wearing gang colors, carrying weapons, getting into physical fights, using and selling drugs, and stealing and damaging property within their neighborhood than non-gang affiliated students.

Table 3.5 Neighborhood Gang-Related Behavior: Gang vs. Non-Gang Affiliated Students

How often do people...	Gang Affiliated Student Respondent		Non-Gang Affiliated Respondents	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Use drugs?	1.69	1.29	0.98	1.20
Sell drugs?	1.65	1.32	0.92	1.21
Wear gang colors?	1.63	1.29	0.81	1.16
Carry a weapon?	1.51	1.30	0.79	1.13
Get into a physical fight? (because of gang issues)	1.43	1.27	0.71	1.07
Threaten someone?	1.36	1.24	0.71	1.05
Injure someone in a physical fight?	1.36	1.28	0.65	1.03
Wear certain types of clothes meant to identify a gang or a certain clique?	1.35	1.29	0.65	1.07
Tag or write on walls, sidewalks, cars?	1.29	1.29	0.62	1.02
Steal something?	1.29	1.24	0.79	1.07
Rob other people?	1.29	1.26	0.71	1.05
Threaten someone with a weapon	1.23	1.29	0.56	.99
Damage or destroy someone else's property?	1.21	1.26	0.64	1.00
Injure someone with a weapon?	1.14	1.27	0.51	.96
Steal cars?	1.01	1.27	0.47	.93

0=Never happens, 1=Few times, 2=Many times, 3=All of the time. Independent t-tests conducted on this data found all differences significant ($p \leq .05$).

As shown in Table 3.6, gang and non-gang affiliated student respondents had similar answers to certain questions regarding beliefs about the people within their neighborhood. Both gang and non-gang affiliated student respondents indicated that they would miss their neighborhood if they had to move, and believed that people in their neighborhood help each other and notice positive accomplishments. However, gang affiliated student respondents showed an average mean response of approaching 1.0 (“SOMETIMES”) when asked if adults thought it was ok for children to smoke, drink, and use illegal drugs. This was in contrast to a mean of 0.4, on a scale between 0 “NEVER” and 1 “SOMETIMES,” of non-gang affiliated students.

Table 3.6 Neighborhood Behaviors and Attitudes: Gang vs. Non-Gang Affiliated Students

What happens in your neighborhood?	Gang Affiliated Student Respondent		Non-Gang Affiliated Respondents	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Adults in my neighborhood think it is OK for a kid to smoke cigarettes.	0.99	1.09	0.45	0.80
Adults in my neighborhood think it is OK for a kid to drink alcohol.	0.95	1.09	0.41	0.74
Adults in my neighborhood think it is OK for a kid to use illegal drugs.	0.92	1.13	0.35	0.75
If a kid drank some beer, wine or liquor in my neighborhood, they would be caught by the police.	0.61	0.90	0.66	0.87

0=Never, 1=Sometimes, 2 =Often, 3=All of the time. Independent t-tests conducted on this data found all differences significant ($p \leq .05$).

Student Sub-Group Response Comparisons

Although differences in student responses based on affiliation or non-affiliation with gangs were seen as important, other distinctions such as the degree of gang infiltration and activity based on type of school were also of interest. To examine these differences, survey respondents were coded by school level (middle or high school) and school category (Title I or non-Title I schools). Of the total respondent population, 88 percent (4,452) of students attended a Title I school, 61 percent were high school age students (3,091) and 39 percent middle school students (1,959). These sub-groupings were placed in comparison with the overall student responses to key questions regarding gang presence and activity in their schools. Table 3.7 shows the results for questions related to gang presence and such activity as selling drugs, bringing weapons to school, and personal involvement in gangs. Little difference is evident among the responses for nearly all the questions. Exceptions are that for the high schools and non-Title I schools, a somewhat higher percentage of students indicated “yes” answers regarding the presence of gangs, belief in gang membership among fellow students, gang involvement in drug selling activity, and weapons being brought to school by gangs. Non-Title I students also reported a somewhat higher percentage of “yes” answers to the question “Are you a member of a gang/clique now?” with 12.1% indicating membership. *Please note: Table data should be interpreted with the following in mind, that only one non-Title I HCDE high school was included in the student study, reflecting 12% of the student respondents. There were no student respondents from non-Title I HCDE middle schools.*

Table 3.7 Student Respondent Perceptions of Gang Presence and/or Activities in Schools

Survey Question	Total Student Respondents	Grades 6-8 Respondents	Grades 9-12 Respondents	Respondents from Title I Schools	Respondents from Non-Title I Schools
Are there gangs/cliques present at your school?					
Yes	54.5	46.6	59.5	53.5	61.9
No	12.9	13.4	12.6	13.2	10.8
Not Sure	32.6	40.0	27.9	33.3	27.3
Do any of the students at your school belong to a gang/cliقة?					
Yes	59.8	50.3	65.8	58.9	66.3
No	7.4	9.0	6.3	7.5	6.5
Not Sure	32.9	40.7	27.9	33.6	27.2
What about gangs/cliques that don't have members that go to your school...have any of those come around your school this year?					
Yes	21.8	18.5	23.9	22.5	16.6
No	24.1	27.9	21.6	23.9	25.2
Not Sure	54.1	53.6	54.4	53.5	58.2
Have gangs been involved in selling drugs at your school this year?					
Yes	26.3	15.9	32.9	23.3	47.7
No	24.7	37.6	16.6	26.4	12.4
Not Sure	49.0	46.6	50.5	50.2	39.9
Have any gang/cliقة members brought guns to your school this year?					
Yes	13.0	8.0	16.2	12.8	14.6
No	36.2	48.7	28.3	37.0	31.0
Not Sure	50.7	43.2	55.5	50.2	54.4
Do you know any boys at your school who are in gangs/cliques?					
Yes	53.5	50.7	55.2	53.8	51.7
No	23.2	28.8	19.7	23.5	21.0
Not Sure	23.3	20.4	25.1	22.7	27.3
Do you know any girls at your school who are in gangs/cliques?					
Yes	32.1	28.1	34.6	32.6	28.6
No	38.3	46.7	33.1	38.3	39.0
Not Sure	29.5	25.2	32.3	29.1	32.4
Have you ever belonged to a gang/cliقة?					
Yes	13.8	15.3	12.8	13.7	14.7
No	81.9	80.7	82.7	82.2	79.6
Not Sure	4.3	3.9	4.5	4.1	5.7
Are you a member of a gang/cliقة now?					
Yes	9.1	9.4	8.9	8.7	12.1
No	86.8	86.6	87.0	87.3	83.5
Not Sure	4.1	4.0	4.1	4.1	4.4
Do you believe gangs are responsible for a lot of youth violence in the community?					
Yes	61.2	62.2	60.6	61.2	61.4
No	18.8	18.1	19.2	18.7	19.5
Not Sure	20.0	19.7	20.2	20.1	19.1

As shown in Figure 3.D, students attending Title I schools and/or high school were more apt to report that gangs were a problem in their schools than non-Title I and middle school age students with over 25% of non-Title I students indicating gangs were “never” a problem at their school.

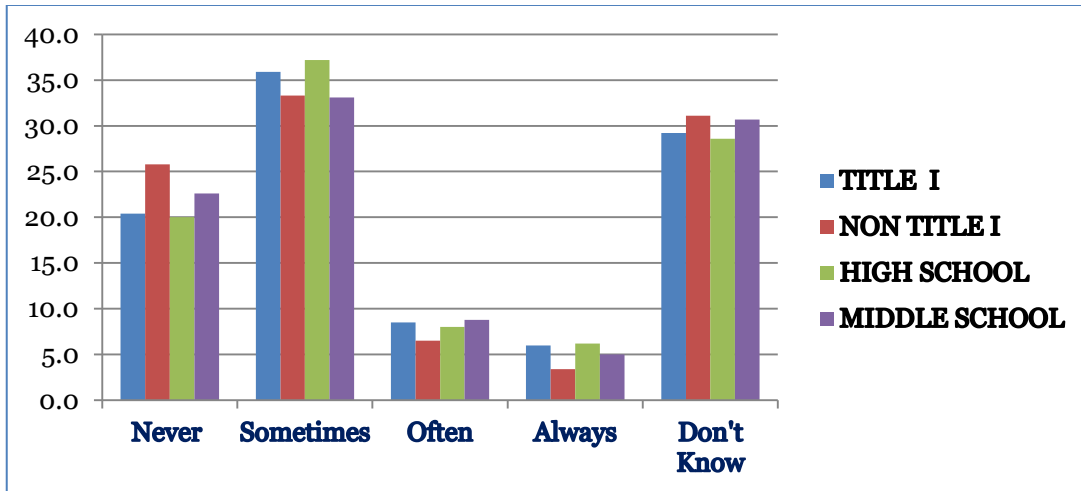


Figure 3.D Response by school type and grade to question: “Are gangs a problem at your school?”

When asked to indicate the frequency of fighting at school that they believed to be gang related (see Figure 3.E), students from all four school types indicated similar perceptions of the frequency of fighting. However, over 40% of the student respondents, regardless of school type, indicated that they were “not sure.”

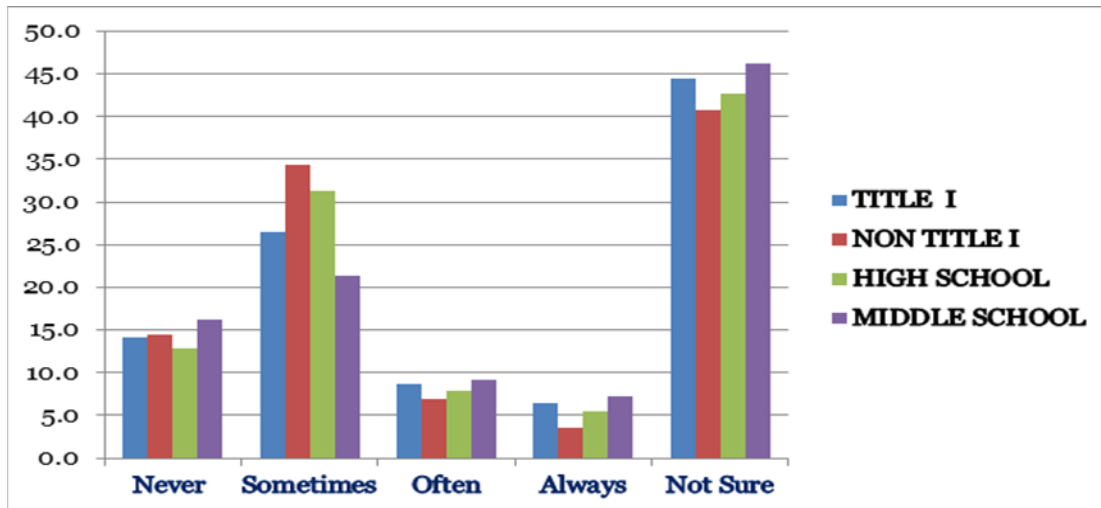


Figure 3.E Response by school type and grade to question: “How often do you believe that gangs have been in fights at your school this year?”

When asked to identify various locations where students believed gang activity took place, there was very little variation between the school categories with all respondents indicating after school, personal media, home and neighborhood locations, and restrooms the most frequently mentioned. Other major areas identified by most students regardless of type of school were hallways at school, bus stops, and recreation centers. Respondents also tended to agree, regardless of school type, that the activity occurred most often away from school. Key differences among school types were in regard to other more specific locations. For example,

high school students more frequently selected online/Facebook (40.2 percent), home/neighborhood (39.3 percent), hallway (33.7 percent), cell phone activity (31.0 percent), and bathroom (29.3 percent) as locations for gang activity (see Table 3.8).

Table 3.8 Most Frequently cited Locations for Gang Activity: Total Student Respondents vs. Four Sub-Group Student Respondents

Where do you believe gang issues happen? (Select all that apply)					
Location	Total Student Respondents (n=5057) Percent (rank)	Grades 6-8 Respondents (n=1959) Percent (rank)	Grades 9-12 Respondents (n=3091) Percent (rank)	Respondents Attending Title I School (n=4452) Percent (rank)	Respondents Attending Non-Title I School (n=605) Percent (rank)
After school	50.0 (1)	50.2 (1)	50.0 (1)	49.9 (1)	51.4 (1)
Online/Facebook	41.1 (2)	40.2 (2)	41.7 (2)	41.3 (2)	40.0 (4)
Home/Neighborhood*	39.3 (3)	39.3 (3)	39.3 (3)	37.0 (3)	50.8 (2)
Don't know	34.9 (4)	30.6 (7)	37.7 (4)	34.0 (4)	41.7 (3)
Bathroom	32.8 (5)	38.5 (4)	29.3 (7)	32.4 (5)	35.9 (5)
Hallway	31.4 (6)	27.7(8)	33.7 (5)	31.3 (6)	31.7 (6)
Bus stop	29.8 (7)	31.2 (5)	28.9 (8)	30.0 (8)	27.8 (9)
Recreation centers	29.6 (8)	30.8 (6)	28.9 (8)	31.7 (7)	18.7
Student cell phone activity	29.5 (9)	27.2 (9)	31.0 (6)	29.6 (9)	28.8 (8)
On the bus	23.7(10)	25.5(10)	22.5	23.9(10)	22.3(11)
Before school	21.4(11)	17.8(12)	23.6	21.4(12)	21.2(12)
Parking lot	21.2(12)	13.9	25.8(11)	20.1	28.9 (7)
Cafeteria	21.0	8.8	28.6(10)	20.5	24.6(10)
Everywhere/anywhere*	20.3	16.4	22.6	21.5(11)	14.3
School sporting events	18.6	9.9	24.1(12)	18.4	19.8
Playgrounds/parks	9.2	17.9(11)	6.0	10.4	6.0

*Indicates a response written in the "other-please explain" response option

When asked, "Why do you think kids might be interested in joining gangs or cliques?" student responses varied little based on school category. As shown in Table 3.9, the majority of students identified "poverty," "friends in gangs," and "desire for protection" as the three most likely reasons for gang participation or affiliation. However, non-Title I school respondents selected other factors as being important as well. These included "desire for power," "family members in gangs," "to feel respected," "family issues," "lack of positive role models," "fear," "boredom," "school/academic problems," and "drugs" as reasons for gang involvement.

Table 3.9 Most Frequently cited Motivation for Gang Affiliation: Total Student Respondents vs. Four Sub-Group Student Respondents

Why do you think kids might be interested in joining gangs or cliques? (Select all that apply)					
Reason/Perceived Benefit of Gang Affiliation	Total Student Respondents (n=5057) Percent (rank)	Grades 6-8 Respondents (n=1959) Percent (rank)	Grades 9-12 Respondents (n=3091) Percent (rank)	Respondents Attending Title I School (n=4452) Percent (rank)	Respondents Attending Non-Title I School (n=605) Percent (rank)
Poverty/Money	70.2 (1)	69.9 (1)	70.4 (1)	69.7 (1)	73.7 (1)
Friends in gangs	68.3 (2)	68.5 (2)	68.2 (2)	67.7 (2)	72.6 (2)
Desire for protection	62.0 (3)	55.9 (3)	65.8 (3)	60.6 (3)	71.7 (3)
Desire for power	57.0 (4)	53.4 (4)	59.2 (7)	55.8 (4)	65.3(6)
Family members in gangs	55.7 (5)	51.1 (5)	58.7 (8)	54.6 (5)	63.8 (8)
To feel respected	55.0 (6)	48.2 (6)	59.3 (6)	53.5 (6)	65.6 (5)
Family issues	54.8 (7)	45.5 (8)	60.8 (4)	52.7 (7)	70.1 (4)
Lack of positive role models	54.1 (8)	45.8 (7)	59.4 (5)	52.7 (7)	64.3 (7)
Gang members moving into their community	47.3 (9)	43.4 (9)	49.8(10)	46.8 (9)	50.9(10)
Sense of belonging	44.5(10)	33.0	51.7 (9)	41.9(10)	63.1 (9)
Forced to join/aggressive recruiting	42.4(11)	42.8(10)	42.2(12)	41.7(11)	47.4(12)
Fear	40.8(12)	34.2(12)	44.9(11)	39.4(12)	50.7(11)
Boredom	36.5	30.7	40.1	35.2	45.6
To feel loved	33.6	26.2	38.2	32.5	41.0
Lack of other activities	31.2	26.0	34.5	30.4	37.2
School/academic problems	27.2	22.2	30.5	25.5	40.0
To be cool/popularity*	26.2	36.5(11)	15.9	28.6	14.3

*Indicates a response written in the “other-please explain” response option

Motivation to join a gang or participate in gang related activities was examined by asking respondents to select all that applied from a list of statements reflecting views that might encourage such participation. Respondents were asked, “*How closely do the sentences below match your feelings about gangs/cliques?*” Response options for each statement were very true (YES!!), somewhat true (Yes), somewhat false (No) to very false (NO!!), with a point range of 0-3. Table 3.10 provides the responses by school category.

Table 3.10 Student Respondent Attitudes and Opinions Regarding Gang Affiliation: Total Student Respondents vs. Four Sub-Group Student Respondents

How closely do the sentences below match your feelings about gangs/cliques?										
Survey Statements	Total Student Respondents (n=5057)		Grades 6-8 Student Respondents (n=1959)		Grades 9-12 Student Respondent (n=3091)		Student Respondents Attending Title I Schools (n=4452)		Student Respondents Attending Non-Title I schools (n=605)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
It is dangerous to join a gang.	2.40	0.97	2.54*	0.90	2.32*	1.00	2.40	0.97	2.40	0.94
Being in a gang makes it more likely that you will get into trouble.	2.38	0.98	2.51*	0.91	2.30*	1.01	2.38	0.99	2.38	0.95
People in gangs end up getting hurt or killed.	2.28	0.97	2.43*	0.91	2.18*	0.99	2.29**	0.97	2.21**	0.94
You have protection if you join a gang.	1.10	1.10	1.08	1.13	1.11	1.07	1.10	1.10	1.12	1.08
My friends are in a gang.	1.08	1.08	1.13*	1.12	1.04*	1.05	1.10*	1.08	0.94*	1.07
Being in a gang is no big deal.	1.06	1.19	1.13*	1.27	1.01*	1.14	1.07*	1.20	0.96*	1.12
A gang has your back no matter what.	1.04	1.09	1.06	1.13	1.03	1.06	1.04	1.09	1.05	1.07
My friends would think less of me if I didn't join a gang.	0.77	1.04	0.79	1.07	0.75	1.02	0.77	1.04	0.74	1.06
Belonging to a gang means that you are tough.	0.66	0.87	0.66	0.87	0.65	0.86	0.66	0.86	0.68	0.90
Being in a gang keeps you safe.	0.61	0.83	0.53*	0.80	0.66*	0.84	0.60*	0.82	0.68*	0.87
Gangs do good things in my neighborhood.	0.57	0.84	0.48*	0.79	0.63*	0.86	0.56*	0.83	0.65*	0.91

* Independent t-tests conducted on this data found all differences significant ($p \leq .05$).

** Independent t-tests conducted on this data found all differences significant ($p \leq .10$).

Gang Involvement Prevention and Action

Student respondents were asked what was being done, could be done, or should be done by their schools to reduce gang presence and help students avoid or reduce gang influence. Gang and non-gang affiliated students suggested the same four protective factors for reducing the level of gangs in the community. While the top four suggestions were the same, the ranking of these suggestions showed notable differences. Gang affiliated students ranked their top four suggestions as: (1) Jobs for kids and adults; (2) Youth programs and activities; (3) More involved parents; (4) More helpful adults/Mentoring. Non-gang affiliated students top four ranking was: (1) More involved parents; (2) Youth programs and activities; (3) More helpful adults/Mentoring; (4) Jobs for kids and adults (see Table 3.11).

Table 3.11 Protective Factors: Gang vs. Non-Gang Affiliated Responses

What do you believe would help reduce the level of gangs in the community? (select all that apply)	Gang Affiliated Students	Non-Gang Affiliated Students
	Percent (Rank)	Percent (Rank)
Jobs for kids and adults	48.0 (1)	50.0 (4)
Youth programs and activities	47.1 (2)	59.0 (2)
More involved parents	40.5 (3)	59.9 (1)
More helpful adults/Mentoring	39.4 (4)	53.9 (3)
Job training for kids and adults	35.5 (5)	37.9 (8)
More involved community members	35.1 (6)	48.0 (5)
School programs	31.2 (7)	39.7 (7)
Nothing will help	27.5 (8)	14.0 (11)
More police help	26.9 (9)	45.5 (6)
New laws	25.0 (10)	34.0 (9)
Tutoring	19.7 (11)	20.7 (10)

Student Open-Ended Responses

The final question of the student survey asked if there was “anything else you would like to tell us about gangs or gang related issues?” Over 40 percent of the student respondents completed this field. Student responses varied widely, representing the full spectrum of opinions about gangs and gang-related activity. While some students denied gang presence in their schools and communities, others expressed fear and concern for their safety in both locales. Overall, responses indicated that students are aware of and in many cases familiar with gang activity throughout the community.

A. Gang Presence

While some respondents expressed that “*they feel safe*” and do not believe that there is a gang presence in their schools or communities, the majority indicated at least some awareness of gang activity in their schools and/or the greater Chattanooga area. Some students who indicated that their neighborhood was safe did express the view that “*a lot of the kids that are bussed in from [other] neighborhoods...are in gangs,*” so “*kids that aren’t zoned for this school come... and cause problems.*”

Students were vehement for someone to please “*stop the gangs,*” while others suggested that no matter what, “*gangs are always going to exist.*” Undertones of hopelessness and the seriousness of the gang problem were expressed in responses such as “*it’s almost impossible to control what happens*” and “*don’t try and stop it you will only make it worse.*” Others suggested that “*as long as there [are] poverty and drugs, there will always be gangs.*” Respondents said the problem will continue because “*if you put one gang member or gang in jail, another one will step up and it will get worse.*” Many students expressed that gangs needed to stop since “*they are creating a feeling of unsafeness around [the] school*” and “*killing young innocent people.*” Frustration was expressed in the fact that although many students disapprove of gangs, they “*feel like they can’t do [anything] about it.*” This opinion suggested that, for many respondents, gangs and gang related activities have become entrenched in Chattanooga.

B. Gang Information and Opinions

One overarching theme evident throughout the student responses was the fear of violence. Students reported feeling unsafe in both their neighborhoods and their schools, with some stating that they were afraid to go outside their homes or to attend “*public events.*” They also reported feeling “*threatened*” at school, because “*gangs are really dangerous and the school I go to has a lot of them... sometimes I don’t even want to come to school because I don’t feel safe and the gangs are up on me a lot.*” Others stated that although gang members bullied them at school, they would not ask for help for fear of being labeled a “*snitch,*” and thus being further targeted. Respondents stated gangs were responsible for lots of “*fight*s” and seem willing to “*kill people for no reason.*” Students expressed the belief that “*every day people die*” as a result of gangs and gang related activity. A few respondents shared personal stories of loss, citing relatives who died as a result of gang violence. While students “*think kids deserve to live in a safe environment,*” many indicated that they do not feel that their neighborhoods provide that level of safety.

While most students said that gangs were a negative influence, not all students shared this opinion. Some respondents indicated that there could be “*good gangs,*” with one student saying “*I am the leader of a gang that protects people and helps the community. We are not all violent bloodthirsty kids with guns...some of us are peaceful kids with guns.*” Others who shared this opinion indicated awareness of a “*Christian gang*” and an “*academic gang,*” suggesting that “*it is a stereotype... to think all gangs do bad things.*” Respondents believed that “*there are certain types of gangs...but you shouldn’t assume every gang is like that,*” because “*gangs can be bad or good.*” This suggests that the word itself has entered mainstream culture, and groups that may have formerly been considered “*clubs*” or “*cliques*” are now referring to themselves as gangs. These smaller local gangs were considered “*made up*” by some because they lacked national affiliates, but one respondent suggested that “*real gangs aren’t... the problem, it’s the wanna be gangs that are*” dangerous. Some of these groups bear similarities to the “*starter gangs*” discussed by gang researchers since respondents suggested that certain groups were less organized, more social in nature, and may have lower levels of delinquent behaviors than full-fledged gangs.

Respondents also noted that drugs, especially marijuana, seemed to be strongly linked to gang activity. Gang members “*smoke weed,*” “*take drugs to school,*” and “*sell weed to students*” both at school and in the “*community.*” Several students expressed the opinion that since many gangs are “*just in it for the money,*” “*decriminalizing drugs would stop income for gangs,*” ultimately decreasing levels of violence. They suggested that “*Gangs revolve around illegal drugs and they [sell] on the black market. Take away the crime and get rid of the criminals.*”

A subset of student responses admitted to or bragged about their gang affiliation. One self-identified gang member suggested that “*you can’t fight it, so join it. Together we will run this.*” Others shared gang names or sayings.

A few student respondents were less enthusiastic about their gang affiliations, saying “*gangs are crazy, but I’m part of one.*” Another stated “*it needs to be stopped but... yes, I am in a gang, but I don’t want to be in it. I just do it to feel better.*” One respondent said “*the only reason I’m still in a gang is because if I leave they might kill me and my family.*” A few students reported that

they had successfully gotten out of gangs because they *“knew what they [were] doing was wrong”* or because they have become a member of *“God’s family.”*

Students voiced the belief that gang membership was *“not safe,”* and that once involved *“you are always targeted.”* Respondents indicated that *“you can get killed in a gang”* or *“shot out on the streets selling dope.”* They also stated that *“gang members can turn their backs on”* other members, *“trick[ing]”* them into serving for their own purposes. Students also stated the belief that, *“once you get in a gang there is no getting out”* because many gangs require you to be *“ganged by all members”* or *“murked out,”* meaning *“they have to kill you”* to leave the group. Students stated that because they can’t leave, members may *“find themselves staying and having to do things they don’t want to”* do. These responses suggested that students who join gangs found themselves in a catch-22 situation; they are not safe in the gang but they are not safe out of the gang either.

Several respondents indicated that they disliked gang members for *“killing and hurting people over a stupid color”* and the implications that color identification had for others in school. One student said that since *“every color is a gang color, everybody wear[s] them, even the [principal].”* Others conveyed frustration that they *“can’t wear a nice color”* just because a gang had taken that color for itself. Others suggested that, since *“any color can be a gang color,”* gangs also show affiliation through *“small things like necklaces, bracelets,”* or *“flags on their face [or] in their back pocket.”*

Racial tensions and prejudices were highlighted in responses from some students. As expected, these responses were polarized, with some suggesting that *“African Americans”* and other *“minorities”* were the source of the problem, while others stated that *“prejudice behavior drove the youth into creating gangs”* noting that *“it isn’t always Black people.”* A student suggested *“gangs [are] not always about violence,”* they also exist *“to protect each other from racists that see us like we don’t belong here.”* One student stated that, *“White people are just as bad”* but that *“people let them get away with stuff and it’s not fair when a Black male does right [and still] gets in trouble... It’s really true and it’s hard on me. So treat us with respect who do right and speak proper.”* African American students reported feeling unfairly targeted, stating that *“just because I’m in a Black community in the south... you think I’m in a gang. That’s how Trayvon Martin got killed. Racist.”* Another suggested that gangs should be eliminated because they have perpetuated stereotypes, saying *“White people already think “niggas”[sic] are low class when we are better than that.”* Many respondents alluded to feeling frustrated that their specific school and/or community had been “labeled” and expressed concern that the local news media contributed to those negative stereotypes. They suggested that people of all races should work together to address gang issues.

C. Reasons for Joining a Gang

Respondents named parental factors as one of the primary reasons people join gangs. Parents who *“don’t care”* share *“bad messages”* with their children, sometimes *“encouraging them to join gangs.”* Students indicated that sometimes these parents are gang members themselves. Students expressed the belief that some parents may *“neglect”* their children, causing lack of a

“good living structure at home.” Students also cited community members as a potential negative influence, saying that “people in the neighborhood only help about the wrong things.”

Respondents also indicated a belief that those kids who lack support systems may turn to gangs, where they “get more love,” “affection,” or a sense of “belonging” than they do at home. In this way, “friends...can be brothers in a gang” and students who are “looking for a family” can have their needs met. Respondents also noted that gang membership may serve as “a plea for attention” for some students who “want to be known.” Additionally, they suggested that “boredom,” “respect,” and “reputation” needs could be reasons for joining gangs.

Protection is another important factor that many students identified as a reason for students to join gangs. Students may “want someone to have their back all the time,” especially if they are “bullied and can’t defend themselves.” These students “feel like it makes them stronger to be in a gang.”

Economic factors were frequently identified by the students as a potential factor in gang involvement. These students believed that “everybody wants money” and “if kids could work, they wouldn’t get into gangs for money.” Suggestions indicated that if we could “lower the age to work” to 13 or 14, it would help keep students “off the streets” and give them something positive to do. Respondents believed that money is the motivation behind “most of these shootings.” One member said, “We need money and that’s why we kill.”

Students realized that “not everybody in gangs are bad people...some join because they feel they have nowhere else to go or nothing better to do with their lives.” Several respondents noted that “troubled kids” with “no good role models” and a lack of structure at the home were likely drawn to gangs for the perceived benefits membership offers. As one respondent stated, “it is hard to be a kid and never hard to be an adult.” These students indicated feeling a lack of support or help from any of the authority figures in their lives, so they have banded together to take care of themselves. “Gang related people might feel as if...teachers and parents don’t believe that they can make it in life. They do the things they do because of a lack of communication. They need love and a listener. Help them.”

D. Student Respondent Suggestions for Decreasing Gangs and Gang Activities **Home Life**

Respondents believed that positive family involvement was critical in order to decrease gang activity, suggesting that “nothing is going to solve this issue until parents start...getting involved.” They stated that parents should “always supervise their child” or “have someone they trust” watching them so that “when their children are young... they don’t get exposed” to gang activity. Respondents believed parents should “tell their kids to never join a gang” and to “step up” and “take care of their kids.” Students suggested that parents should be forced to care and “step up,” because they are “the only people who can stop kids.” Others stated that “father figures” and households with two parents could be instrumental in helping children make positive choices.

Community

Students frequently asked for “*more youth programs,*” “*activities,*” and “*clubs*” to keep them “*busy*” in both the community and at school. Respondents suggested that these programs would “*give children a positive alternative [to] joining a gang in the first place.*” One respondent suggested surveying student interests and then forming clubs around those interests. Sports such as basketball, community meetings, and more free centers were other suggestions.

Student respondents also suggested the need for increased programs to target those already involved in gangs or gang activity. They stated that many current programs were not “*life changing.*” Instead, they suggested programs in which “*ex-gang members*” speak to students about “*what can happen*” when you become involved with a gang, showing “*real life images*” and “*videos*” of those affected. Others suggested these programs may be too late for those already affiliated and suggested that the “*10 – 12 years olds need the most learning...to prevent future members,*” indicating “*teaching of bad parts about gang life at young ages*” may help change cultural opinions of membership among younger children. One respondent suggested the creation of outreach “*programs for the recent gang members to keep others from getting injured and to keep them safe.*” Similarly, another student noted the helpfulness of a “*hotline that young or old gang members can call for help or advice.*” Most respondents expressed a desire for the community to “*help the kids*” instead of penalizing them.

Respondents believed that “*more involved community members would make a big impact*” on issues of gang involvement. They suggested that they “[*we do not need*] *more laws and programs, but people who just love these kids. You never know what they deal with or how far love can go.*” Others mentioned “*teaching [students] to do better*” through mentoring and focusing on people as individuals instead of “*stereotyping a [gang] member.*”

Some students also believed that community involvement should come from churches, suggesting that there is a need to “*talk to gangs about Christianity*” so that they could come to “*know God,*” indicating that might help “*spread the love [instead of] the hate.*” “*Bible classes,*” prayer, and other “*church activities*” were suggested as programs that could reach gang members and other at risk students.

Schools

Student responses implied that gang activity is present in some school environments, but not all of them. These respondents who indicated an awareness of gang activity often believed it was a problem. In those cases, respondents suggested that the gang activities were not adequately addressed by the adults in the school building(s). One student stated, “*It’s very prevalent, but the teachers aren’t good sources of info because they are the last to know [and are] sometimes ignorant*” on the subject. Other students “*think teachers should get more involved because sometime[s]...children tell the teachers but they don’t do anything.*” Respondents also suggested addressing “*bullying*” and increasing the role that school counselors play, so that they could “*talk to students and actually start caring.*”

Students also believe that some principals should stop giving kids “*20 million chances*” and should “*make examples out of*” gang members. They suggested “*kick[ing] them out of school*” or

sending them to a separate school where they cannot distract or intimidate those who want to learn. A few respondents suggested that busing students from other districts results in bringing the gang activity to their schools; they believed that stopping those bus policies would be a benefit to their school. Interestingly, students from schools which they felt have been labeled as having a “*gang problem*” often wrote in defense of their school, stating they were “*not as bad as you think*” and that “*the media*” has contributed to the negative stereotyping of their school. These students reported that the “*bad publicity... gets really old.*”

Law Enforcement

Student responses varied widely in regards to opinions of the police departments and laws. Some respondents called out for help from the police, asking them to be “*everywhere at all times*” to keep them safe. They suggested that the “*laws need to be more strict,*” and that “*if we’re going to keep calling this violence gang violence... it needs to be handled like gang violence,*” by instigating crackdowns similar to those held in other communities. Students also believed that gangs “*need to be illegal*” and that “*our city should have a curfew*” at night.

Several students opposed police and legal interventions, suggesting that “*the last thing to do when trying to reduce gang violence is involve more police*” because “*gang members will just retaliate.*” They suggested that more laws will make the problem worse because gang members “*want to break as many laws as possible...to get respect in their gang.*” Others suggested that “*arresting them isn’t working*” so maybe try to “*get to the source of the problem*” instead of just punishing them. Respondents suggested that being “*sincere*” in the redirecting of gang members could be more effective than punishment.

E. Looking for Help and Answers

While there were some students who indicated a negative feeling about this survey process, others said they enjoyed it “*because someone will finally listen to [us] about gangs.*” These students believed that the “*survey may help some people out there*” who want to feel safer in their schools and communities.

A number of students wrote questions in the survey’s open-ended response section, which indicated that youth are looking for answers and guidance concerning gang issues. One student said “*Gangs could really mess up your life and if you’re asked to join a clique and you say no and tell [someone] there will be problems for you and your family, so how do you stay safe? How do you say no without getting hurt [or] killed?*” Other respondents asked “*If someone pulls a gun at your head, what would you do?*,” “*Do gangs have to gang people?*,” and “*Do gangs always carry a weapon or pocket knife?*”

Respondents’ questions suggested that students were unsure of the best way to handle gang related situations. “*If I told somebody personally about the use of drugs at my school what would happen?*” Others asked, “*My friend is in a gang, I wanna help him get out now, can I?*” and “*What do you do if you[r] brother wants to be in a gang? How do I change his mind?*” Another student asked “*If there was a gang at school where adults can’t do anything and no one will help, not even the police station, what should you do?*”

These questions provide valuable insight into the attitudes, opinions, experiences, and concerns of students in our county and the seriousness of what students must deal with on a daily basis. Respondents seemed to share the belief that people “*deserve to live in a safe environment,*” yet expressed frustration that they seemingly have little control over the environment in which they live. These students indicated that they want to look to schools, government, churches, families, and community members for help and support, but many felt that the necessary help was not always be available. These students overwhelmingly expressed a desire to avoid gangs and gang membership and make positive choices for their future.

HCDE Employee Survey and Focus Groups Findings

The HCDE Employee Survey asked respondents to answer a range of questions from their perceptions of gang activity in their work experience, how they felt their schools and the school system were responding to the gang crisis, and what they felt should be done to improve this response.

Respondent Demographic Profile

Hamilton County employees received emails inviting them to participate in an online survey regarding their perceptions and experiences of gangs and gang related activities. Of the roughly 4,000 employees that received the link to the survey, 819 responded, for an overall response rate of 20.5 percent. Participant demographics appeared to be representative of the population of Hamilton County school district employees as a whole, with 78.1 percent female respondents and 21.9% male respondents compared to the county-wide rates of 76 percent female and 24 percent male. Demographic information obtained indicated that those who took the survey were racially and ethnically representative of HCDE district employees as a whole: 85.3 percent of respondents were Caucasian, compared to the HCDE total of 89 percent, and 10.1 percent of respondents were African American, comparing to the HCDE total of 10.2 percent. Slightly more than 81 percent of respondents were 35 years or older, with the age range of 45-54 the most frequently identified (27.3 percent). Several respondents participated in special activities as part of their work, including 13.5 percent reporting involvement in athletic coaching, 35.5 percent involved in academic coaching or tutoring, and 30.4 percent involved with other after school programming.

The majority of respondents, 632 (83.4 percent), identified themselves as working in school buildings, with 162 (16.6 percent) indicating they worked for the Central Office. Classroom teachers formed the largest group of respondents, making up 61.5 percent of the school building participants. Special Education teachers, principals, secretaries, and counselors were a few of the other positions represented. The response rate for central office employees of 53.4 percent was higher than other groups who participated in the survey (see Appendix B, Table B).

Employees were asked to share information about the schools where they were employed. For those in school buildings, 58.7 percent reported being employed in Title I schools, 36.7 percent of respondents identified their school as suburban, 26.6 percent as urban, 18.8 percent as inner city, and 12.2 percent as rural. Slightly more than thirty-four percent indicated of participants indicated that they worked in racially mixed schools, 23.5 percent in schools with primarily

African American populations, and 39.2 percent in schools with primarily Caucasian students. Only 0.6 percent came from schools with primarily Hispanic populations.

Respondents worked in a variety of grade levels and types of schools, with 35 percent in elementary schools, 23.2 percent in middle schools, 37.6 percent in high schools, and the remaining 4.2 percent in schools with a combination of grade levels. In terms of school size, 55.4 percent of educators identified their schools as medium sized (301-700 students), while 36.1 percent identified their schools as large (701+ students). Small schools (less than 300 students) represented 7.8 percent of respondents.

The Employee Survey included a core group of questions that were also included on the Student Survey which enabled an examination of key factors related to gang presence and involvement from both a student and HDCE employee perspective. Other questions asked for input on prevention, action by individual schools and/or the school system to deter gang infiltration and activity, and recommendations for additional action.

School Findings

When asked “*Are there any gangs at your school?*” 43.1 percent of total respondents said yes, 24.2 percent said that no, gangs were not present in their school, and the remaining 18.7 percent indicated that they were uncertain. Response rates varied depending on the grade level(s) taught as well as the Title I status of the school. Elementary school educators indicated the lowest level of gang activity, with 20.6 percent indicating that gangs were present in their school and 58 percent indicating no presence. Forty-eight percent of middle school employees and 74.5 percent of high school employees indicated the belief that gangs were present in their schools. Only 7.8 percent of high school employees surveyed stated that there were no gangs in their school.

Although non-Title I respondents indicated less gang presence (35.9 percent) than Title I school respondents (47.6 percent), over one third of all respondents indicated that gangs were present in their school building. Thirty-eight percent of non-Title I educators and 28.1 percent of Title I educators identified their schools were gang free. Similar differences can be noted across responses, with Title I schools close to 10 percentage points higher on questions regarding gang presence and frequency gang activity, which mirrors findings of existing research indicating socioeconomic status as a significant risk factor for gang involvement.

A number of educators indicated that they had frequently come into contact with students who had self-identified as gang members. Overall, 18.1 percent of elementary school staff, 47.2 percent of middle school staff, and 67.8% of high school staff reported firsthand knowledge of self-identified gang members. Respondents were also aware of students who expressed interest in gang membership but had not joined. Of these, 23.2 percent were elementary educators, 41.4 percent were in the middle schools, and 36.9 percent were high school educators.

Some respondents, 24.8 percent, indicated they were “not sure” if there was a gang presence in the schools where they worked. These numbers were similar among different categories of schools, from elementary to high school, and among both Title I and non-Title I schools.

However, some variation existed, with those uncertain being less likely in high schools (17.6 percent) and more likely among non-Title I schools (25.9 percent).

Respondents were asked how frequently they believed gangs were a problem at their schools. Frequency of gang problems increased with grade level, with the greatest frequency indicated at the high school level. Among elementary school educators, 29.2 percent indicated that gangs were a problem in their schools. That percentage rose to 58.4 percent for middle school educators, and 71.3 percent for high school educators.

More than one-third of all employee respondents indicated that gangs were “*sometimes*” a problem. Those in Title I schools were more likely to have this view, with 42.1 percent reporting a problem as compared to 38.4 percent in non-Title I schools. Title I schools had a higher frequency for both the “*often*” and “*always*” categories, suggesting that these schools may experience more severe or chronic issues with gangs and gang related activities. Combined percentage rates for “*often*” and “*always*” were 13.4 percent for Title I schools as compared to 3.6 percent for non-Title I schools.

Respondents were asked to choose which indicators of gang presence they had witnessed in the school(s) where they worked or in the school district as a whole. High school and non-Title I educators selected “*wearing certain colors*” the most frequently (75.8 percent and 58.0 percent, respectively). In elementary, middle, and Title I schools, “*threatening someone*” was the most frequent response, with 57.1 percent, 73.4 percent, and 65.2 percent respectively for these schools. Other answers with high selection rates included “*getting into a physical fight*” (57.1 percent), “*wearing certain colors*” (55.9 percent), “*doing illegal things*” (51.0 percent), “*being suspended*” (49.2 percent), “*wearing certain types of clothes*” (48.7 percent), “*disrupting or ditching class*” (48 percent), and “*tagging or writing on walls, sidewalks, cars, etc.*” (47.3 percent) (see Table 3.12).

Table 3.12 HCDE Employee Perceptions of Gang Indicators in their Schools

Which of these indicators do you believe are present in your school or school district (select all that apply)						
Indicator	Total HCDE Respondents Percent(rank)	HCDE Employees K-5 th Grade Respondents Percent (rank)	HCDE Employees 6 th -8 th Grade Respondents Percent (rank)	HCDE Employees 9 th -12 th Grade Respondents Percent (rank)	Employed @ Title I schools Percent (rank)	Employed @non -Title I schools Percent (rank)
Threatening someone	58.0 (1)	57.1 (1)	73.4 (1)	67.3 (6)	65.2 (1)	57.6 (2)
Getting into a physical fight	57.1 (2)	56.4 (2)	68.1 (2)	69.3 (5)	64.9 (2)	56.5 (4)
Wearing certain colors	55.9 (3)	47.4 (3)	67.0 (3)	75.8 (1)	60.2 (3)	58.0 (1)
Doing illegal things (using selling drugs, theft)	51.0 (4)	38.3 (10)	54.3 (7)	75.2 (2)	50.0 (7)	56.9 (3)
Being suspended	49.2(5)	44.4 (6)	58.5 (4)	65.4 (7)	57.7 (4)	48.2 (7)
Wearing certain types of clothes	48.7 (6)	42.1 (8)	58.5 (4)	72.5 (3)	54.7 (5)	48.6 (6)
Disrupting/ditching class	48.0 (7)	36.1 (11)	57.4 (5)	71.2 (4)	53.6 (6)	51.8 (5)
Tagging or writing on walls, sidewalks, etc.	47.3 (8)	39.1 (9)	54.3 (7)	62.1 (8)	49.7 (8)	48.6 (6)
Damaging or destroying school property	45.2 (9)	42.9 (7)	55.3 (6)	54.2 (10)	48.1 (10)	46.7 (8)
Stealing	43.5 (10)	45.1 (5)	46.8 (9)	52.8 (11)	48.3 (9)	43.1 (9)

Which of these indicators do you believe are present in your school or school district? Cont. (select all that apply)						
Indicator	Total	K-5	6-8	9-12	Title I	Non-Title I
Injuring someone else in a fight	43.0 (11)	45.9 (4)	54.3 (7)	52.3 (12)	47.5 (11)	43.1 (9)
Skipping school	41.9 (12)	28.6	48.9 (8)	60.1 (9)	44.2 (12)	43.1 (9)
Doing violent things (assault, use of weapons)	41.4	31.6 (12)	46.8 (9)	52.3 (12)	39.2	43.1 (9)
Being hurt in a fight	33.2	30.1	41.5 (10)	45.1	36.5	33.7 (10)
None of the above	3.9	11.3	5.3 (11)	0.7	4.1	6.7 (11)

HCDE employees were also asked to identify specific locations where they believe gang activity to occur within school buildings and/or the community. “*Bathrooms*” were the most frequently mentioned location for gang activity, with 61.7 percent of middle school educators and 56.2 percent of high school educators noting this as a problem spot. “*Hallways*,” “*Cafeteria*,” and “*school sporting events*” were also identified as locations where middle and high school educators believed gang activities occurred. “*Buses*” and “*bus stops*” were other commonly mentioned locations, with 44% of total respondents naming bus stops as a problem, and 39.4 percent reporting problems on bus rides as well. Additionally, 30.1 percent of elementary school educators reported “*playgrounds and parks*” as problem spots (see Table 3.13).

Table 3.13 HCDE Employee Perceptions of Gang Activity Locations in their Schools

Where do you believe gang issues happen at your school? (Select all that apply)						
Location	Total HCDE Respondents Percent(rank)	HCDE Employees K-5th Grade Respondents Percent (rank)	HCDE Employees 6th-8th Grade Respondents Percent (rank)	HCDE Employees 9th-12th Grade Respondents Percent (rank)	Employed @ Title I schools Percent (rank)	Employed @non –Title I schools Percent (rank)
Away from school	52.1 (1)	45.1 (2)	61.7 (2)	62.7 (3)	58.3 (1)	51.4 (1)
After school	50.8 (2)	47.4 (1)	61.7 (2)	64.1 (1)	57.5 (2)	47.8 (2)
Texting/Twitter/Cell Phone	44.1 (3)	22.6 (9)	55.3 (7)	64.1 (1)	46.4 (5)	47.8 (2)
Bus stop	44.0 (4)	35.3 (3)	63.8 (1)	51.6 (8)	51.7 (3)	39.6 (8)
Bathroom	43.6 (5)	29.3 (7)	61.7 (2)	56.2 (5)	47.2 (4)	45.9 (4)
Before school	42.1 (6)	33.1 (4)	54.3 (8)	54.9 (7)	46.4 (5)	38.8 (9)
Online-Facebook	40.3 (7)	20.3 (10)	61.7 (2)	55.6 (6)	45.3 (6)	42.7 (6)
Hallway	39.6 (8)	26.3 (8)	56.4 (6)	58.8 (4)	40.3 (8)	43.1 (5)
On the bus	39.4 (9)	33.1 (4)	53.2 (9)	45.8 (11)	42.3 (7)	40.0 (7)
Parking lot	34.9 (10)	18.0	25.5	46.4 (9)	27.3 (10)	37.6 (10)
School sporting events	32.1 (11)	19.5 (11)	31.9(12)	38.6 (12)	27.3 (10)	33.7 (12)
Cafeteria	31.1 (12)	19.5 (11)	34.0(11)	46.4 (9)	30.7 (9)	34.1 (11)
Recreation centers	25.5	16.5	35.1(10)	26.1	26.5(12)	22.4
Classroom	22.6	16.5	26.6	33.3	24.6	23.5
Gym	19.8	8.3	26.6	24.8	16.9	23.1
Playground/parks	18.3	30.1(6)	17.0	7.2	19.6	14.5
School dances	15.0	11.3	17.0	13.7	13.3	14.5
ISS	11.2	6.8	9.6	10.5	9.9	9.0

Family Life

HCDE employees were asked what factors they considered most critical in contributing to the rise in gang activity. Respondents indicated that home factors played an important role in students' interest in joining gangs, suggesting that the most important motivational factor was "poverty." They indicated the belief that students are also interested in joining gangs when they experience a "lack of parental involvement" or a general "lack of positive role models." Respondents stated the belief that these students seek out gangs to find a "sense of belonging" and "to feel loved." Responses suggested that gang support systems may appear promising to students who have family issues. Other suggested factors that could lead children into gangs included "prejudice," "boredom," the "desire for power," and having "family members involved" with gangs.

Neighborhood and Community

Survey participants were asked where gang issues occurred apart from the physical school space. Top responses were "away from school" (52.1 percent) and "after school" (50.8 percent). Respondents also indicated a belief that a great deal of gang related activity occurred via student cell phones (44.1 percent) or online on social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter (40.3 percent). Additionally, 25.5 percent of total respondents suggested that recreation centers may unintentionally offer opportunities for gang recruitment and gang activity. Additionally, 87.9 percent of all survey participants shared the belief that gangs are responsible for much of the youth violence in our community, with only 3.8 percent disagreeing.

When asked the question "What do you believe would help reduce the level of gangs and/or gang related activities in the community?" most responses were consistent across the three levels of schools (Elementary, Middle and High), with the most frequently selected answer "More involved parents" (see Table 3.14). Following parental involvement the second most frequently noted recommendation was "More helpful adults/mentors," with 56.9 percent making this selection. This response was most common among middle school respondents (63.8 percent) and among those in high schools (60.8 percent). The third most frequently noted recommendation was to have more involved community members. Increasing "youth programs and activities" was another frequently cited suggestion. Teacher responses suggested that providing positive support and the opportunity for engagement in positive activities may enable students to make better life choices. Responses receiving considerably less support included those related to law enforcement.

Table 3.14 HCDE Employee Suggestions for Reducing Gang Presence and Activity

What do you believe would help reduce the level of gangs and/or gang related activities in the community? (select all that apply)						
Options/Protective Factors	HCDE Total Percent(rank)	K-5 Percent (rank)	6-8 Percent (rank)	9-12 Percent (rank)	Title I Percent (rank)	Non-Title I Percent (rank)
More involved parents	75.1 (1)	78.9 (1)	79.8 (1)	83.0 (1)	83.4 (1)	78.4 (1)
More helpful adults/mentors	56.9 (2)	50.4 (4)	63.8 (2)	60.8 (2)	62.4 (2)	61.6 (2)
More involved community members	56.4 (3)	52.6 (3)	60.6 (3)	60.1 (3)	60.5 (3)	58.8 (3)
Youth programs/ activities	52.4 (4)	54.9 (2)	52.1 (4)	52.3 (5)	57.7 (4)	55.3 (4)

What do you believe would help reduce the level of gangs and/or gang related activities in the community? Cont. (select all that apply)

Options/Protective Factors	HCDE Total Percent(rank)	K-5 Percent (rank)	6-8 Percent (rank)	9-12 Percent (rank)	Title I Percent (rank)	Non-Title I Percent (rank)
Jobs for youth/adults	48.6 (5)	51.1 (5)	43.6 (6)	54.2 (4)	49.4 (5)	54.5 (5)
Job training for youth/adults	47.7 (6)	50.4 (6)	45.7 (5)	50.3 (7)	49.4 (5)	52.2 (6)
More police help	37.9 (7)	36.1 (7)	39.4 (7)	51.6 (6)	41.7 (6)	43.5 (7)
School programs	31.4 (8)	28.6 (9)	28.7 (8)	34.6 (8)	36.2 (7)	32.5 (8)
New Laws	23.7 (9)	29.3 (8)	24.5 (9)	32.0 (9)	27.3 (8)	26.3 (9)
Tutoring	22.3 (10)	20.3(10)	20.2(10)	20.9 (10)	25.1 (9)	21.6 (10)
Jail/Harsher Punishment/ Discipline*	2.3 (11)	2.3 (11)	3.2 (11)	4.6 (11)	2.5 (10)	3.1 (11)
Religion/Church/God*	0.7 (12)	0.8 (12)	2.1 (12)	0.7 (12)	1.1 (11)	0.4 (12)

*Indicates a response written in the “other-please explain” response option

Open-Ended Survey Questions Summary

Question 31 of the HCDE Employee Survey was designed for employees working in school settings (non-Central Office). They were asked the question, “Are you satisfied with the current response(s), by the school, to gang related issues that occur at the school?” The options of “Yes,” “No,” “Not Sure” and “There are none” were given, along with the opportunity to provide additional information. Of the 524 answers provided, 35 percent of respondents indicated “Yes” they were satisfied with their schools’ responses to the gang related issues. Twenty- five percent of respondents indicated “No” they were not satisfied, another 16 percent said they were “Not Sure,” and 24 percent indicating that “There are no gang issues at [my]school.”

Respondents’ explanations for these responses reflected very diverse opinions, experiences, and attitudes, thus reflecting the complicated nature of this topic. Of this respondent group, 62.4% identified themselves as teachers, 5.3 percent as Principals and/or Assistant Principals, with the remaining 32.3 percent representing the wide variety of other positions within a school building. Just over 61 percent reported that their school was identified as a “Title I School,” 35 percent indicated their building was a “Non-Title I School,” and 4% were unsure of their school’s status. Elementary school personnel represented 33.8 percent of respondents, 33.5% were from middle schools, 30.2 percent from high schools, and 2.5 percent from K-8th grade school buildings.

Administration/Teacher/SRO Response

Those respondents who expressed “satisfaction” emphasized and praised the effectiveness of their buildings’ administration, teachers, and School Resource Officers (SRO) indicating that gang problems were handled promptly in an appropriate manner, and proactively. They also reported a high level of consistency regarding their schools’ reactions such as stating, “When anything related to/suggested that involves gang activity, our school administrator(s) deal with the situation immediately, and I think as appropriately as possible.” Another respondent indicated that his/her principal was working to make gang membership “unpopular” adding, “A lot of gang members have been expelled. Students are beginning to buy into our principal’s initiatives.” Praise for proactive administrators was a common theme, “The administration has

met with potential gang members and reminded them of the consequences for their behavior on school property and in the community.”

Of those respondents who indicated “dissatisfaction” with their schools’ response, or lack thereof, many expressed a belief that their administration, teachers, and SROs were part of the problem, citing inconsistent or inadequate consequences and intervention, a lack of response, a refusal to acknowledge the existence of a problem, and even an apparent fear of disciplining students. A desire was expressed for more SROs or more effective SROs. Some respondents indicated that their buildings lacked SROs all together. Respondents expressed frustration with the lack of a response stating, “[*There is*] no response, too worried about suspension rates of a few while the whole class is held hostage and cannot learn.”

The need for a more varied discipline approach designed to deter gang activities and membership within their schools was another common theme. Many respondents said that they believed that suspensions were ineffective, and in some cases, actually “rewarded” at risk students by giving them days away from school. “*Alternative school placement is the only response used. Other responses should be attempted prior to kicking students out.*”

Level of Communication and Cooperation

Satisfaction with the level of communication and cooperation between faculty and administration appeared to be a major difference between those respondents who indicated satisfaction with their school’s response(s) and those who were not. “Satisfied” respondents cited the importance of a continued dialogue on the topic stating, “[*Our*] administration works diligently with SRO and faculty to stay on point in addressing any gang issues.” It is important to note that the level of satisfaction may be a result of the frequency of such behaviors with one respondent noting, “*We have very little gang related activity at our school. It is very isolated and dealt with promptly.*”

In contrast, those respondents who reported a dissatisfaction with the response to gang related problems that occur at their school indicated that the issue was often “hidden” or “ignored,” while others expressed the belief that the administration was “in denial” over the existence of a problem in the school. “*Our administration refuses to believe the problem exists at our school.*” “*Discipline is out of control. There is no backup from admin[istration] to help the teachers with these problems in the school.*”

Those respondents indicating that they were “Not sure” about their schools’ response(s) overwhelmingly expressed that they were unaware of any gang problems. Some indicated that they had not witnessed activity themselves, while others felt as if they are being “kept in the dark.” One respondent reported, “*The admin [istration] do not tell us anything about gangs so I really do not know if the school is directly responding to gang problems.*”

Training / Knowledge

Respondents frequently noted the importance of training in order to better identify gang activities such as signing or displaying colors as an important element in addressing the gang issue.

“Teachers and students [who] seem to be more aware of signs are reporting to school [administration] and or the SRO. This helps identify potential issues to address if needed.” By being aware of issues, *“The administration deals with them on an individual basis. Watching for indications of trouble early to diffuse or eliminate.”*

The lack of gang awareness training was frequently mentioned as well. *“Gangs, although present at our school, are not talked about. We [teachers] are not informed about gangs, what individual gangs believe, and what percentage of or students are involved. We need more education on a professional level regarding gangs.”* One respondent stated, *“It would be nice if we were kept more in-the-know from authorities on what is happening, what to look for, and how to respond.”*

Alternative Programs and Opportunities for Students

Many respondents expressed a desire for alternative programs and additional opportunities for the students as a means to protect students from joining gangs. *“Kids need to feel accepted and be a part of some activities.”* Many respondents indicated that even if their schools had activities, such as after school programs or sports teams, many *“at risk”* students don’t participate. *“The options are always there for after-school activities such as sports, clubs and organizations, and tutoring, but the students do not choose to take advantage of these opportunities. They say they are just ‘too busy’ to do things such as this.”* Respondents indicated that economic factors affect the level of student participation stating, *“Many of the gang members I have known in the past live in poverty. They do not have transportation in order to participate in afterschool activities. Many schools don’t even offer afterschool activities. NO ONE offers transportation for these children.”*

Some respondents who expressed concern over the lack of alternative programs and/or opportunities for their students, noted that providing activities *“every day after school and on the weekends [is necessary] to keep them out of trouble.”* *“[We need to] teach them basic skills in various trades; retail, office work, etc. Most of the kids would be happy with a very small salary and the opportunity to learn something and [the] opportunity to have information for his/her resume.”*

Providing programs that present students with alternatives to the gang lifestyle was another frequently mentioned suggestion. *“We have to find mentors who can relate to the students and get them [the mentors] involved with these children inside and outside of the school building.”* An increased presence of and accessibility to guidance counselors within the schools was also frequently mentioned. *“Counseling would help, but the school counselor is only available once a week and has to do certain lessons.”*

Parental Involvement and Home/Community Environment

The seemingly lack of parental involvement, and *“at risk”* home and community environments were frequently mentioned issues by all respondents, whether *“satisfied”* or *“dissatisfied”* with their school’s reaction to gang violence. *“Our school seems to be sensitive to the problem and has initiated several programs to help students academically. The one area [where] we fall down*

is parental involvement.” Respondents expressed a high level of frustration with the lack of parental responsiveness.

“To solve the problem, we need to get parents involved. The parents that are involved are not the students we are concerned about. The parents of the students we are concerned about are the ones that are not involved in their student’s academics. They are the same ones, beginning in kindergarten, [who] never show up to parent conferences.”

Another frustration experienced by these respondents was the lack of control school personnel have over that which occurs in the students’ *“non-school life.”*

“After school, they sell drugs. It used to happen at school, but not anymore. Recruitment efforts have moved off of our campus, but I know that they haven’t decreased overall, because I still see just as much tagging. The school is safe, but there’s not a whole lot we can do for our kids when they leave here...there is little or no gang activity at our particular school, [however]some of our students may live in areas where this is an issue.”

In addition to the potential for neighborhood gang problems, several of the respondents expressed both concern and frustration regarding parental gang involvement, indicating that some of the parents were actually involved in gangs themselves and encouraged their child(ren) to join or participate. *“Some [parents] consider joining a gang as inevitable, while others even claim it as a ‘right of passage’.”* *“Not enough is being done with the parents that are gang members. MANY parents belong to gangs, and of course, their children want to follow in their footsteps.”*

Cross county bussing, as a result of No Child Left Behind policies, was viewed both positively and negatively by respondents. Some indicated that students who were being bussed in were not the cause of trouble. *“There is little or no gang activity at our particular school. Some may live in areas where this is an issue, but it doesn’t seem to follow them to school.”* Conversely, some respondents indicated that the problem was coming into their buildings from outside of their community. *“Most of our problems come here on a bus from an inner city school. That program is about to end, so no worries. If the busing were to continue then we would have a growing issue.”*

The wide range of opinions, attitudes, and perceptions expressed by these respondents indicates the challenging nature of addressing the gang issue in the schools. Where some respondents indicated that gangs were not prevalent, or in existence at all, others expressed the belief that the problem is too entrenched to ever be resolved. Mutual respect, cooperation, on-going communication and support among and between administrators and teachers were the critical elements respondents identified as necessary in order to positively address student gang issues. Focusing upon proactive programs and activities within the schools and the communities in which these students live was another widely expressed need. Additionally, these respondents overwhelmingly expressed a need and desire for an increased focus on training and on developing positive parental involvement with the schools.

Additionally, HCDE employees located directly in schools were also asked, “*Are you satisfied with the current response(s), by your school, to other student delinquent behaviors that occur at the school?*” Response options of “Yes,” “No,” “Not Sure,” and “There are none” were provided, with an opportunity to provide additional information. Of the 507 responses, 45% reported “satisfaction,” 37% indicated “dissatisfaction,” and 9% indicated “Not Sure” or “There are none” respectively. Whereas the previous question referenced schools’ responses to gang related activity, this question focused upon the entire school population, offering an opportunity to shed light on possible disciplinary problems among non-gang affiliated youth.

Reaction to Problem

Many of the responses regarding delinquent behaviors mirror those related to gang based activities. The respondents who expressed “satisfaction” with their school’s reactions often referred to the speed and consistency of that response. “*Appropriate disciplinary actions are taken for students that are violating school policies and that occurs for students who are in gangs as well as students that have no known gang affiliation.*” “[Our] administration deals with disciplinary issues in a timely and appropriate manner.” However, some respondents indicated that, “*In general, admin[istration] tries to deal with them appropriately...however [politics/graduation] rates get in the way.*”

Respondents who indicated a feeling of ‘dissatisfaction’ frequently mentioned a lack of consistency and accountability as part of the problem. “*Delinquent behavior is not appropriately handled and is definitely not consistently addressed. Students at my school don’t mind going to the Principal’s office...they know nothing is going to be done.*” Respondents repeatedly mentioned feeling a lack of concern, by administration, in terms of student behaviors that directly impact teachers. “*I feel more should be done about students and their disrespecting of teachers, they are talked to and sent back to class with no consequences.*” “*Major offenses seem to get minor suspensions, especially where assault on teachers is concerned.*”

Cooperation between Teachers and Administration

Much like the responses referring to gang-related behaviors, the perceived level of cooperation between administration and teachers differed greatly among the responses. “Satisfied” respondents reported a high level of satisfaction with the cooperation that occurred between the teachers and administration. “*Administration is very supportive of teachers and communicates strongly with parents and other stakeholders including central office when necessary.*” Respondents pointed to their principal(s) as being one possible reason for the success in their schools in regards to successfully dealing with delinquent activities. “*Our principal is very committed in solving the problems as soon as they are recognized.*” “*We have a wonderful principal who addresses issues when they happen.*”

Respondents who expressed “dissatisfaction” with their school’s actions often mentioned feeling a sense of conflict between administration and staff. “*The way that issues are dealt with or handled sometimes seem hasty...a lot of the faculty choose to send their ‘problems’ to the front office/ administration rather than deal with the problem in their classrooms. That, in my opinion,*

breaks down the respect level for teachers.” Conversely, many respondents expressed the belief that, “There is a tremendous lack of consistency by administration and none of the schools want to discipline students because everything seems to always be the teacher’s fault.” “Bullying is a serious issue in our school as well as other classroom discipline issues. Our school doesn’t have a clear and consistent way of addressing any of these behaviors.” A lack of communication between administrators and teachers was another common theme. “[I] don’t really know how administration handles the issue because we are hardly ever informed.”

Discipline Plan/Policies Strength, Structure and Consistency

Respondents repeatedly stressed the importance of cooperation and communication between teachers and administration in order to achieve effective discipline plans and policies. The respondents who expressed “satisfaction” with their schools’ response(s) pointed to the importance of this type of cooperation in order to maintain consistency with their discipline plans. *“Behavior issues are handled through our discipline plan and backed by our principals.”* Another respondent cited the importance of the expectations set forth by administration. *“High expectations for all students...low tolerance for delinquent student behaviors.”* Many respondents pointed to a *“School-Wide Behavior Plan”* as a *“positive form of discipline”* at their school.

The respondents who were not satisfied with their school’s response(s) to the non-gang related delinquent behavior expressed concern regarding the lack of a school-wide discipline plan and the lack of consistency, and the role those deficiencies may play within the school. One respondent suggested that a lack of clear expectations may be part of the problem, stating *“Although there is a movement to put a behavior plan in place, there is confusion at the school about behavior expectations and policies with students.”* Many respondents also questioned the fairness of some disciplinary actions stating, that when discipline is administered, it is not done fairly or consistently. *“I think the discipline is NOT fairly administered. I see students committing the exact same offense. The Caucasian, higher socioeconomic status students get MUCH less severe consequences than do the lower income minorities.”* Little agreement was evident among responses regarding “effective” disciplinary measures. One respondent proposed, *“We need more suspensions and removal of students who do not make an effort in the classroom”* while another indicated a belief that *“Suspension is over used...students act up to get suspended, then [they] get what they want... a day away from school, legally.”* Many respondents suggested the need for alternative programs. *“I think that our system needs to develop more programs to combat the problem-such as bringing back vocational education programs. Not all students are ready to go to college; they need job training to develop a skill and or trade to work in society until they are ready for college.”*

Community/ Home Cooperation

The need for more active parental involvement and an increased level of parental support of the schools was also noted by many respondents. *“Teachers receive zero support from parents; we have no control [because] our hands are tied.”* Respondents also identified the students’ community and/or home life as one possible origin of delinquent behaviors. *“I think our school*

does not tolerate delinquent behaviors at school, but a lot of what happens in the community spills over into school.”

“‘Delinquent’ behaviors by elementary –aged students are a direct result of what is demonstrated by the adults in their home and social life. We do what we can while we have them for 7 hours each day. We cannot control what goes on when they leave, behaviors glorified by the adults, or the lack of positive behaviors being demonstrated in their home/social arena.”

A sense of frustration regarding a seeming lack of parental responsibility was also evident among many of the responses. *“Our principals are awesome, but the lack of parent involvement is our biggest problem...parents who don’t care, or [who] get mad because the principal suspended their kids, or it is someone else’s fault. Those are also the same parents that will not come to the parent/teacher conferences, etc.”*

The wide range of opinions, attitudes, and perceptions expressed by these respondents demonstrates the tremendous challenge facing schools when trying to tackle delinquent behavior. Respondents repeatedly stressed the need for cooperation, communication and support among and between administrators and teachers as well as proactive programs and student activities both in the schools and the communities in which the students live. These respondents overwhelmingly expressed the importance of developing positive parental support and influence.

The final survey question asked Hamilton County Department of Education employees if there was “anything else you would like to share regarding gangs or gang-related issues.” One hundred and forty-four (144) of the 820 survey participants responded. The responses were varied, showing a wide range of emotions and opinions on this issue. Emotions conveyed ranged from anger, frustration, and dire concern, to enthusiasm, caring, and a hopeful outlook for eliminating the problem in the future, with the majority of respondents acknowledging the existence of a gang presence that *“has been in the Chattanooga area for some time now.”* A few respondents did indicate that though gangs are not present in their communities, they were beginning to see a gang presence in their schools as a result of what they described as *“No Child Left Behind,”* policies that *“bus”* students in from lower performing schools.

Analysis of the responses revealed four major categories: School Issues, Home/Family Structure, Community Involvement, and the City/ Local Government Responsiveness. Within each category, respondents indicated specific risk and/or protective factors which they believed to be important in examining the youth violence, gang involvement, and gang related issues.

School Issues

Many respondents indicated an interest in and a need for training in gang related issues. Potentially, such training would enable them to better identify gang symbols and activities. Many reported, *“We see our students ‘flashing signs’ but we don’t know what any of it means or what we should do about it.”*

Lack of consistency regarding policies and expectations was identified as an issue both within individual schools, as well as within the district as a whole. A number of respondents indicated dissatisfaction with inconsistent or ineffective behavior policies stating,

“Schools need school-wide behavior plans with consistency from teacher to teacher on the implementation of them. [Often], students have been expelled, but are let back in by Central Office through the appeals process. ‘Zero Tolerance’ should mean just that, ‘Zero Tolerance’. When some kids seem to attend school just to start gang fights and deal drugs, it takes away from the students who actually come to school to learn and get an education.”

Additionally, many respondents felt that *“even if [they are] not in a gang, there are a lot of students emulating that lifestyle and they are equally disruptive.”* A sense of frustration was evident in many of the responses, as some teachers indicated that they may be losing both patience and hope in fighting this battle against unruly students while navigating seemingly inconsistent discipline policies. *“If the students are allowed to disrespect teachers at an early age they learn that it is acceptable behavior. If elementary kids are disrespectful and refuse to do as teachers ask them to, then they need to be held accountable for their actions, [as they would be at other grade levels].”*

The perceived lack of early intervention programs concerning the ‘at risk’ student was another commonly mentioned theme. One respondent suggested enrolling children *“in programs that build on their potential instead of allowing them to find their way in the streets.”* Others suggested that *“more attention needs to be given to the kids while they are in elementary school.”* Respondents also pointed to a perceived lack of high academic expectations for these students, suggesting that *“many gang leaders are very bright and have great leadership qualities which have never been tapped by ‘the system’ for good.”* A desire to *“abandon the single path diploma system”* and the *“traditional school model”* in order to *“individualize and personalize the educational experience,”* was a frequently expressed opinion. Respondents identified the need for additional *“vocational opportunities”* and *“job training”* to help students prepare for life beyond high school, as well as enabling students to develop a sense of *“accomplishment,”* and providing possible *“alternatives to the gang lifestyle and the entrapments of poverty.”*

Ultimately, educators suggest that *“gangs are often used to fill a gap in children’s lives. They often do not have enough self-esteem to advocate for themselves, and gangs are there to offer them something to fill that gap.”* Some respondents further suggest, *“The only way to stop gangs is to remove their power by filling that gap one person at a time. For some children this may be a mentor, for others it may be a program. But the truth is we need to start caring about the individuals and providing them support so that there will be alternatives to the gang life style and the entrapments of poverty.”*

Home/Family Structure

HCDE respondents expressed strong views regarding students’ family structures, with most noting *“a lack of parental involvement in their children’s lives.”* One educator stated that, *“until we require parents to become responsible for the actions of their children, the problems will*

continue.” These respondents reiterated the need for parents to set “*high expectations for academics and behaviors*” and becoming more involved in their child’s schooling. Many expressed frustration with parents who may “*turn a blind eye*” to their child’s negative behaviors, especially if the child is earning money to help support the family. Others indicated a belief that some parents make excuses for their children when they are disciplined at school, saying that the teachers are “*picking on*” their children.

Absent fathers and the perceived breakdown of “*a more traditional family model*” were also mentioned as possible factors facing the at risk youth in the schools. Many suggested that a lack of a consistent family structure could lead to “*a child feeling that they are on their own*” and possibly “*trigger the need for peer group acceptance and protection. Gangs are the new family model for too many kids.*” These respondents also indicated that for some students, the gang lifestyle is a “*generational family model.*” They are literally born into the situation and/or have parents who “*encourage... [them] to join gangs,*” noting that for some, the expectation to join a gang is very similar to other parents’ expectations of attending college. A significant number of respondents indicated a belief that parents need to be held more accountable for, become more involved in, and provide better direction for their children. Mandatory parental involvement was suggested by many respondents, as well as the importance of parents supporting the school’s attempts at discipline.

Community Involvement

Respondents noted that many community organizations are already providing positive support, but that these efforts should be increased, “*Faith-based groups, businesses, schools, [and] government must all help to end these issues.*” They noted that “*adults in the area need to unite*” to create a “*shift in culture and mindset about success and its availability*” to children. Additional comments emphasized that the problem is not just in one segment of the community, stating, “*It would help if the white community would get more involved. This is not just a black community problem.*” Others suggested that “*if there is going to be a change it has to come from people they [students] trust, interventions must be more personal.*” Suggestions included providing speakers who have experienced the “*gang*” lifestyle “*to explain that they [students] have a choice about gangs.*” Some respondents focused on programming that “*builds on their potential instead of allowing them to find their way in the streets,*” and/or training programs that target the students’ parents, equipping them with more effective parenting and life skills.

A re-occurring theme among respondents was the apparent lack of opportunities for students in the community. Some noted the lack of job opportunities for the students after school and during non-school periods, such as summer or winter breaks, suggesting that perhaps “*jobs could even take place on the school campuses. They [students] need a way to earn respect [self-respect], independence, and financial security so they don’t have to find it in the street.*”

City Local Government Responsiveness

Many respondents questioned the city’s response to gang activity, suggesting a belief that “*more has been done to hide the problem than to help it.*” “*It’s funny that we...have known about the gang problem, but it wasn’t a ‘problem’ until it began affecting the revitalized downtown!*”

Other respondents reported feeling afraid to take their families downtown because they “see gangs” or because of “the shootings that take place” in Coolidge Park. Some also expressed doubt that the situation will improve “until lawmakers and people in power realize, accept, and then deal with the problem at hand.”

Many respondents indicated a belief that in order to “deal with” the gang issue there needs to be a strengthening of law enforcement and increased penalties for gang activities. Suggestions included: “Undercover work, tougher laws, [and] increased judges’ involvement to remove current gang members.” Other respondents stated that “gang leaders should be held responsible for all crimes committed by gang members.” In addition, many expressed a desire for “an anti-gang program within the police departments to teach students in elementary school the dangers of joining a gang.”

Individual Responsibility

Environmental, social media, and pop culture influences were also noted as possible reasons for the rise in gang popularity and the seemingly increased level of desensitization to violence among today’s youth. One issue that was rarely mentioned by the respondents was the role that “individual responsibility” may or may not play in a student’s decisions regarding gang involvement and/or gang related activities. It was alluded to by some respondents when discussing the need for early intervention programs, but never specifically referenced. Instead, respondents indicated that it was the responsibility of parents, schools, teachers, administrators, the community, the city, and law enforcement to prevent, deter, and suppress gang activity.

Employee Focus Group Summary

HCDE Focus Group Profile. Thirty-two HCDE employees participated in seven focus groups over a four week period. The majority of participants (71.9 percent) were female, with 37.5 percent between the ages 55-64. Participants averaged 10 years of employment with the HCDE with 65.6 percent working at the school level as teachers, specialists, or administrators. Participants identified “County Wide Enrollment” most frequently (40.6 percent) as the student populations with whom they worked. 21.9 percent indicated that they worked in “Inner-City Schools,” 18.8 percent “Suburban,” and 15.6 percent “Urban.” Almost a third (31.3 percent) of the participants indicated that they work with students of all ages, grades Pre-K through 12, 21.9 percent with grades 9-12, and 12.5 percent grades 6-8. Over one half of the participants (53.1 percent) were “Caucasian/White,” 43.8 percent “African American,” and 3.1 percent “American Indian or Alaska Native” (see Appendix B, Table C).

Focus Group Findings. Hamilton County Department of Education focus group participants were asked to share their perceptions, attitudes, and personal experiences regarding gang-related activities as related to their specific school location, and/or the school system as a whole. Questions were designed to gain participants’ perceptions relating to gang presence, gang activity, effects of gang activity, prevention, and recommendations for future action. The findings described below represent a summary of the major themes and/or a consensus of opinion(s) expressed by the participants.

Presence of Gangs

- 100% of participants indicated both a gang presence and a gang problem in the schools-as young 3rd and 4th graders are being actively recruited. Students as young as kindergarten are *“...being exposed to gang related conversations, behaviors and activities...they can tell you things you wouldn’t believe about what they saw down the street, or at home, etc.”*
- Gang affiliation among students is increasing and spreading throughout the district-in many cases it is a case of generational gang membership-with active parental recruitment.
- Historically the attitude has been one of denial, *“oh those aren’t real gangs...those kids are just wannabes”* or *“if we don’t talk about or acknowledge it then we don’t have to deal with it...”*
- All of the students but, especially those in the younger grades, are very open to talking about gangs, gang activities and/or their involvement. *“I even had one of my seniors do his senior project on his gang affiliation.”*
- Flashing gang signs, drawing gang symbols, and usage of specific words and/or gang codes is a common occurrence-gang colors are still an issue for some schools.
- Fighting is a problem and often it is hard to determine the root cause-whether it is gang related or not.

Perceptions of Gang Presence and Activities

- The issue is *“Much more than a gang problem...it’s a poverty problem, a lack of hope problem; gangs are simply a symptom of the disease...”*
- In some cases the girls are getting worse than the boys.
“The girls are much more volatile...they are ready to go at it at the drop of a hat...doesn’t matter where they are-class, the hall, the cafeteria...” *“We have middle school girls in [gangs] with high school boys...they will do anything for those guys...run drugs, pick up money...some don’t know any better...they are so impressionable...”*
- In many cases these kids are just reacting to their environment, *“...basically they are dealing with the cards that they’ve been dealt...they are so smart...everything they are doing is strategic in order to survive...”* *“Some of my smartest kids are the ones in the most trouble.”*
- Students have a skewed sense of appropriate personal behaviors.
*“One of my students, who is an active gang member, defined ‘respect’ in terms of intimidation...he viewed kindness and calmness as signs of weakness...If they [other students] don’t give him respect he’s going to beat the c***p out of them...he’s a ticking time bomb...”*

- For many students the gangs are their “family.” For some *“it [gang affiliation] may be the most consistent thing in their lives...”*

Gang Effects on School Environment

- Inconsistent/eroding discipline due to the pressures (either real or perceived) not to suspend students often because of NCLB attendance requirements, etc. As a result, participants indicated a high level of frustration, *“...there are no consequences [for their behaviors] or any consequences that matter to these kids...”* *“Being sent home is what they want...they will wait until an adult is right in front of them and then do something...”* Often students think, *“If I get kicked out of school I get to go home and play video games and I don’t have to get up in the morning...cool...”*
- Potential for manipulation of the system-specifically in regards to the federal limitations on the number of days of suspension for students with special needs, etc.

“...if you have a student who has already exhausted his 10 days in the first 20 days of school, but because of his IEP/special status he is right back in the building after an incident...what do we [teachers] do with that? What kind of message are we sending...they [students] run our buildings...”

“Their whole thing is they want to go ahead and get into trouble and get sent home before school starts... ’cause if there is something going on in the neighborhood they wanna be a part of it, or if there is something about to go down at the school then they don’t want to be a part of it...”

- Impact upon students’ ability to engage in school/successfully complete work, etc.

“I had one student who was brilliant-when he came to school his work was unreal...we had conversations about what he could accomplish and he straight up said, ‘I can’t...I have a little sister, and a little brother, my mom works through the day, goes to school at night, I’ve never met my dad...somebody’s gotta make money...I want to [come to school] but I can’t...I just can’t’...”

- Student safety, both physical and emotional is a major concern.
“The underlying silent stress that no one talks about is the emotional stress on these kids...the intimidation...the ‘you better not fill out that survey ‘cause we are watching you’ kind of thing...everyone [students] is watching who is doing what...”
- School is about more than academics.
“The students who are in danger of being sucked into gangs need a place to be from dawn to dusk and [need to]have positive things to do...not just homework...our high school kids get out of school

at 2:00-2:30...that's a whole lot of time to wreak a whole lot of havoc...at school X we have a problem with getting the kids to go home because they don't want to go...school is a better place to be...they may not want to go to class, or engage in learning while they are at school, but they like being at school..."

- Lack of student engagement is a big problem.
"We have an awful lot of very bright kids who are absolutely unengaged every single day. They come to school, they are bored out of their minds...they are natural born leaders with no opportunity to utilize those leadership kinds of skills in a positive direction...they are bright...but they are not being channeled in a productive or positive way..."
- Lack of support for academic achievement seems to be the norm.
"Academic intelligence, giftedness, school success is not valued in some communities...it is not valued at all...it's a detriment to a lot of them [students from high risk neighborhoods]...they lack access to culturally acceptable ways to use their academic or leadership skills..." "We need to build that understanding and culture, starting in the lower grades, among the students, among the parents about why school is important..."
- Low academic performance or lack of academic success is a key factor.
"Many kids think, 'if I'm gonna stand out-I'd rather stand out for being a thug than for being dumb'...it's a whole lot cooler to be suspended for 10 days than to appear dumb."

Additional Risk Factors

- The lure of riches is overwhelming. For many students, gangs appear to be a viable source of money, which is very attractive. Many of these kids face extreme financial pressures.
*"One student told me 'if you are going to take this dollar, you better show me how I'm gonna get another one... 'cause a n****r can only eat so many Ramon noodles'..."*
- Lack of stable home environment is a contributing factor.
"They [students] could give 2 flips about reading or science if they don't have a place to go home to tonight...if they are worried about who's gonna come in and steal my stuff..."
- Peer pressures and influences are very powerful.
"I never have behavior issues in the classroom, but I see it happening outside in the hallway, in the cafeteria, or waiting for the bus...when they are in front of [other] kids they have to put up that [gang banger] persona, be that person...but when they are given support and when they are given a safe place to be themselves, they are completely different."
- Neighborhood and community factors greatly influence the school environment.
"Things happen in their neighborhood, those problems come into the schools...those contacts, those conflicts come into the building...even with very, very young"

children...sometimes it is not just the kids...the parents bring the problems...or encourage/support their child(ren) to escalate those issues at school.”

Deterrent and Preventive Actions

- Mentoring and additional support for students works.
“The YCAP program is a fantastic program...it [provides] that piece that can step in to support a child where a parent(s) might not be able to...”
- School wide positive behavior intervention type programs make a difference. Providing the opportunity and then requiring the entire school to focus on developing a positive discipline program rather than just punishment is important.
“Positive discipline really works...it is all about how do you teach [students] what the alternative is to bad behavior instead of just punishing a kid for those bad behaviors.”

HCDE Employee Recommendations

- **Build positive teacher/student relationships:** Having the time and administrative support necessary to enable and encourage school personnel to establish ongoing, respectful and meaningful relationships with the students is critical. *“Regardless of where you’re sitting, if you establish a relationship with the kids, built on trust and respect, they’re gonna come and tell [you] things...we need more people in the buildings who are willing and able to build those relationships.”*
- **Expose students to positive possibilities:** *“It is critical to broaden these students’ horizons...expand their world...and help them figure out how to access these opportunities...”*

“When these kids get to about 4th grade they begin to recognize...realize what the future holds for them-especially the boys...they have in their minds what they have to look forward to and that’s when hope dies...we fail them if we don’t help them to see that #1 we believe in them and we believe they could be more than what they perceive their future to be...secondly, we must expose them to the positive possibilities in their lives...if you [the students] don’t have hope that something will be a little bit better...why do you even get up? Why do you even care what a teacher says or asks you to do?”

- **Get them [at risk students] in school and keep them in school:** *“The one hope for these kids is what they get from [at] school...there’s a lot of making up for what they don’t get at home or [outside of school]...” “...but we have to make school meaningful to them...and engaging...I’ll be the first to admit with all this pressure and focus on testing, testing, testing...school isn’t fun!”*

- **Provide a variety of after-school opportunities:** *“Sometimes kids need more than just tutoring, they need time to develop and foster positive relationships with adults, and with other kids...”*
- **Provide extensive and ongoing training/professional development for all school personnel:** *“We need training on how to identify the warning signs, whether a student is gang affiliated or not, how to identify and look for clues...and then what to do about it and how to deal with a problem before it is a problem or once it becomes a problem...and then how and what to communicate with students and parents.”*
- **Early intervention is the key:** *“We need to focus on those risk factors and those kids who are the most vulnerable...the kids that have the most exposure...and get them early...I’m talking about early elementary school...start catching them up...not just in academics but social behaviors...build up those protective factors like coping skills, how to resist the [gang] recruitment, etc.”*
- **Targeted proactive interventions:** *“Those most at risk need to be identified and we must find a way to engage them in school so that they can feel important, so that school has a positive meaning for them, so that they actually can see that they can be successful and they can shine...give them a cause...a reason to connect with the school in a positive way...and it may not have anything to do with academics.”*

VI. Parent Focus Group Summary

Parent Focus Group Profile. Eleven parents participated in two different focus group sessions, with the majority female (90.9 percent) and 100 percent African American. All participants had children currently enrolled in HCDE schools, or had recent graduates of HCDE schools. The majority (45.5 percent) had children currently enrolled in high school, with 31.8 percent in elementary school, and 22.7 percent in middle school. Over one-third identified “*inner city Chattanooga*” as their child(ren)’s school location, 30.8 percent identified “*other Chattanooga communities*” and 23.1 percent did not respond (See Appendix B, Table D).

Parent Focus Group Findings. These focus group participants were asked to share their perceptions, attitudes, and personal experiences regarding gang-related activities. Questions were designed to gain participants’ perceptions relating to gang presence, gang activity, the effects of gang activity, and recommendations for future action. The findings described below represent a summary of the major themes and/or a consensus of opinion(s) expressed by the participants.

Presence of Gangs

- As was true with the HCDE employee focus groups, 100 percent of the parent focus group participants indicated that gangs are present throughout the school district and that the gangs present a very real problem. *“It don’t matter where you move your kid...in a different zone...it don’t matter...you just be movin’ them to another gang’s spot...and if they [the children] are not known there they gonna get ’em quick...”*

- Fighting, claiming colors, intimidation, recruitment, and initiation activities were cited as a common occurrence. *“My son has told me that at his school there’s a lot of gang initiating...they get them in the bathroom and they throw them up, flush them, or whatever they do...initiating into the gang involves getting beat up...”*
- The level of girl gangs and girl involvement seems to be increasing. *“My nephew’s been jumped by the girl gang at his school...” “You would be surprised at the amount of girls that are in gangs now days...” “My son told me that the girls at his school are as rough as the boys...”*
- The level of gang violence is increasing. *“The police...they can’t control it, it’s getting worse and worse...”*

Perceptions of Gang Presence and Activities

- Peer influences, social media, and the exposure to a “glorified gang culture” via TV, music, and movies impacts perspectives and attitudes regarding gang life and violence. *“Its peer pressure...it’s the television they watch, it’s the music they listen to...but don’t get me wrong...we all done listened to rap...but I think that the kids today are more weak minded...they are more easily influenced by their peers...like ‘hey for me to be cool this is what I need to do’...”*
- Siblings and/or other family members who are involved with gangs have tremendous influence on younger family members. *“It’s like ‘I just want to be like them because they are my brother or sister’ so they’re [younger siblings] gonna try to model themselves after that person...”*
- Parenting and family structure does matter. *“In those households they’re not being parents, they’re being friends...they [the mother] got their little boyfriend who is part of a gang...so it’s encouraging the kids...and they say...it’s OK we [the gang] are here to take care of you...there’s a lot of that going on...”*
- Current consequences for delinquent behaviors are ineffective. *“There is no consequence, to them, [regarding] what they are doing...they think...I get put in juvenile, OK... like oh man, I look real good then...I look tough...because they know they gonna get out...the punishment becomes a reward...so it is like cool... ‘I was in for a week or 2’...their buddies think it’s cool...”*
- Disciplining children has changed. Participants expressed frustration over what they described as an undermining of their rights to discipline their child(ren) as they saw fit, as well as the role that the larger community could or should play in child rearing and discipline.

“It used to be that everybody knew everybody in the neighborhood...so if I went down the street and did something, they knew who you was...[and said] I’m calling your momma and there was gonna be some fuss...nowadays if somebody fusses at somebody else’s child the parent is gonna go off on the other

adult...so what does that look like to the child?? The child thinks...I'm running things..."

- A child's need to belong, have a sense of security, and/or a place to belong are important motivational factors for gang affiliation.

"They think they [the gang] have their back...that they are friends...that 'I ain't worried to walk down the street cause if they gang me my homeboys gonna get them'...cause if I am just a little nerd, I'm a good boy, go to school, do what my momma told be...they gonna beat me to death..."

Effects of Gang Activity/Involvement

- The quality of education is suffering as a result of increased gang activity. *"Everyone's education is put into jeopardy...teachers are afraid...I'm quite sure they are...teachers are scared...the kids are scared...but they are scared to tell anybody about what's going on cause then you're gonna be a snitch..."*
- Retaliation is a reality. *"They know where you stay, they might come and shoot your house up..."*
- Increased likelihood of drug use and crime. *"They get on drugs, they selling drugs, some bid daddy came and hooked them up... that's' how a lot of them get caught"*

VII. HCDE Disciplinary and Incident Data 2010-2012

Existing data on incident and disciplinary actions compiled for the school district by the Hamilton County Schools Office of Accountability and Testing were reviewed to ascertain possible indications of an increase in these data over the two year period 2010-2012. The data reflect some changes in middle and high school total reports of various incidents and disciplinary measures executed to address infractions. Middle school in-school suspensions, detentions, out of school suspensions, bus suspensions, and expulsions show an increase across the two years, while several infraction areas reflect a decrease in the middle schools, certain others increased, including fighting, drug violations, and alcohol violations. For high schools, declines occurred in nearly all disciplinary areas, including the number of expulsions, in and out of school suspensions, and bus suspensions, as well as among most infraction areas. However, a slight increase occurred in drug and alcohol violations. Most notably there was a significant increase in the number handgun possession incidents (9) (see Appendix B, Tables E-H).

VIII. Discussion of Findings

This section examines and summarizes the main themes that have emerged from the Student and School Study component of the Gang Assessment, and attempts to place them in a context that opens the door to further discussion and solution building. Each of the theme discussions includes (a) references to findings from the study that relate to the theme; and (b) insights from other studies on gang issues or related information.

1. **Gangs are a real presence in the lives of students and have become a “culture.”**

Based on study results, we can generalize that most students in Hamilton County Schools are aware that gangs are present in their schools. They also know something of the gang “culture” that involves certain symbols, colors, norms, and activities. Students may or may not know who actually is in a gang, but individual students come in contact with gangs on a daily basis. Some have been recruited, know of other students involved in gangs, or are present targets for recruitment. They were able to report extensively about gangs being active in their schools. Gang presence in schools was confirmed in the Employee Survey, with teachers and staff indicating gangs have become an active factor in the schools. However, they also stated that most teachers and staff have had little training on how to deal with gangs, and how to identify them. Teachers and staff also reported it can be difficult to know when students are being targeted for recruitment or retaliation. It was noted that some schools have been proactive and begun programs that communicate about gangs, and have stepped up disciplinary measures to deter gang activity. However, this is not uniform across all schools. To date, a system-wide initiative to address gang issues has not been developed, but rather has been the prerogative of individual schools.

Communication and information sharing extends to other areas of the school environment as well. Bus stops were reported as a key location of gang activity, and school buses were not immune to gang problems. Through social media connections, gang members have been able to communicate about students to be targeted on certain buses and at certain stops. Some bus drivers reported having difficulty getting a response to their reports of gang actions on their busses or at bus stops. Calling law enforcement for bus-related gang situations was discussed as not always helpful since too often gang members entering buses or on buses can “get away” before authorities can arrive.

- ### 2. **Students fear gangs and feel vulnerable to gang activities, behavior, and reprisals.** A number of students indicated fear and strong concern about gangs and personal vulnerability. The majority of students, both those affiliated with gangs and those who were not, indicated they were aware of the danger and potential harm that could result from gang affiliation. However, avoiding gangs was seen as difficult by many students. Gang activity in areas of school with limited adult supervision – restrooms, the cafeteria, sporting events, hallways, etc. were noted. Although only a small proportion of students (12.7 percent) were aware that weapons, specifically guns, had been brought to school, this represents a critical area of school safety. Students and educators also indicated there is also a strong anti-snitch intimidation in place, such that students are very reluctant to report gang-related incidents, or gang-related behavior or actions, since this might result in being targeted for a gang reprisal. This extends to the sale of drugs in school. Over a quarter of the student respondents were

aware of drug-selling taking place in school, but expressed frustration about how to deal with this activity, including the influence on other students who might be drawn into gangs.

Research on risk factors for gang membership notes behaviors that can be categorized as delinquent not only impact the individual child displaying the behavior, but can also negatively impact the behavior of peers. Delinquent peer associations also increase the risk that a child will join a gang (Lahey, Gordon, Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber, & Farrington, 1999). Gordon et. al (2004) define four types of peer delinquent behavior: drug selling, drug use, violent delinquency, and property delinquency. The influence of peers increases during adolescence, and aggressive and delinquent children tend to affiliate with one another (Maston and Coatsworth, 1998; Cairns and Cairns, 1991; Coie and Miller-Johnson, 2001). Gangs frequently provide an outlet for these types of delinquent behavior, and were reported by our respondents.

Feeling unsafe at school is a risk factor that can have a negative impact on academic performance as well (Gottsfredson & Gottsfredson, 2001). Conversely, there are opportunities within the school environment to increase and enhance protective factors, which can reduce gang involvement and improve academic interest and achievement. Student and employee respondents discussed the importance of schools being proactive in addressing gang issues, and having programs and activities that offered a deterrence to gang involvement. Such programs should be based on student interests and needs, both academic and developmental.

- 3. Gang affiliation identification is problematic.** According to both students and school employees, identifying who is involved in a gang and who isn't could not always be easily determined. Particular gang colors, symbols and signs were viewed as reliable indicators at times, but not always. Over two-thirds of our respondents stated that gang members could not be easily identified just on the basis of certain colors, clothes or other visible paraphernalia. Thus, the use of gang colors and symbols appears to be limited in school – making gang identification difficult through these means alone. A number of educators stated more information in this area is needed.

Additionally, assuming individuals are part of gangs because they have on clothing or other physical items in certain colors, flash signs or engage in other “gang” behavior does not mean they are in fact part of a gang. Some individuals were reported as mimicking gang behavior for different reasons, but were not actually part of gangs. This can pose problems for both the individual youth and for authorities seeking to check gang activity in schools and other locations. Helping youth understand that gang mimicking can be a serious problem is important in gang reduction strategies.

Respondents also noted that fights and problematic behavior could not always be assumed to be gang-related, though there was a belief among many student and employee respondents that fights quite often are a result of gang agitation. Additionally, it was noted that gang affiliation can be a point of pride for some individuals, with gang membership representing power and protection. Bravado is associated with being a gang member or leader, and this status is therefore not hidden. A few student respondents who indicated they were affiliated

with gangs also took umbrage with the notion that all gangs are bad – stating that the gang he/she was part of actually did “good things” in the community and/or was not a violent gang.

Teachers, school administrators and staff also pointed out that gang membership could not always be identified with poor academic performance, problem behavior or non-involvement in worthwhile activities. It was observed that in a few cases some of “brightest” and most mannerly students were gang affiliated, and even leaders. This aligns with the gangland model of the more sophisticated leader being the mastermind that gives the orders for gang activities to the rank and file members while remaining personally removed from the violent or illegal activity. These rank and file members are often younger individuals whose age protects them from being subject to harsher legal penalties if caught.

How to define a gang was also discussed as problematic, since the definition varies considerably. What constitutes a gang is very fluid, with differences in how gangs are defined by authorities (police, etc.), students, teachers, parents, and the general public. Views of gangs ranged from those considered very negative to some viewed as relatively benign. Those seen as less violent or less of a problem have been described as “starter” gangs, which can involve youth students in gateway behaviors leading to later delinquency. Starter gangs can be a part of this developmental pathway for some children. Starter gangs are less delinquent groups than gangs, but serve to introduce gang culture to children and adolescents (Howell, 2010). “Established gangs sometimes create cliques or sets composed of younger youth called “wannabes,” “juniors,” “pee wees,” and the like (Vigil, 1993). Typical characteristics of starter gangs include shifting membership, lack of stability, minor delinquent behavior of members, and similarity to social networks rather than organizations. Being a part of multiple peer groups, as well as changing peer relationships, is normal during adolescence (Warr, 2002). These changing and overlapping peer relations contribute to the characteristics of starter gangs and their similarity to social networks. However, the potential for these groups to develop into full-fledged gangs is high.

- 4. Many reasons exist for gang involvement.** Student respondents reported several reasons for getting involved in gangs. The most frequent reasons given after money (number one reason) were having friends who are involved, for protection, for power, and having family members who are in gangs. Gaining respect was also a frequently given reason, along with family problems, and having no positive role models in the neighborhood. These reasons are consistent with other research on why young people join gangs.

Howell and Egley’s (2005) gang membership model suggests that at the stage of early adolescence, children begin to consider the potential “benefits” of joining a gang. “Youth make a conscious choice to join a gang during adolescence, and multiple personal and environmental factors influence this choice” (Howell, 2010, p. 3). The desire to join a gang because family or friends are members is a perceived social benefit of membership (Howell & Egley, 2005). The need for protection and a sense of safety, as well as the aspiration for power and control, are all potential reasons for joining a gang (Kallus, 2004; Omizo, Omizo, & Honda, 1997). There is also often an alluring financial benefit, whether through selling drugs or other means (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996).

Educator respondents also felt the most critical factors influencing kids to join gangs were poverty, lack of parental involvement, and lack of positive role models in the lives of youth. They also noted the importance of power and the desire for respect. They also observed that social media (Facebook, etc.) is now a major way gang activity and communication take place, aiding in recruitment, and in hiding gang affiliation from adults.

Other ways in which a child's school environment and performance can serve as factors leading to gang membership include academic problems. Thornberry (2003) suggests low math achievement scores, low parental expectations of school performance, low degree of commitment to school, and low attachment to teachers are contributing risk factors for gang membership. For students who are performing poorly in their academic work, providing academic tutoring is recommended. It is also suggested that discipline should focus more on delinquent gang behaviors than on gang apparel, signs, and symbols (Howell, 2010).

- 5. Neighborhood gang issues are linked to school gang problems.** The majority of student respondents were aware of gang activities in their neighborhoods, and nearly a fourth (22%) stated they had family members who were in gangs. Respondents who indicated they were currently, or in the past, part of a gang were more likely to have family members and friends in gangs, and reported higher levels of gang related activity in their neighborhoods. Unsurprisingly, gang activity was considered greatest outside of school, with neighborhood locations being among the key sites. Such places as bus stops, the vicinity of recreation centers, the general neighborhood, and social media outlets were among the "locations" frequently named, with "after school" being named by half of the respondents as where gang activities occur, and "on the streets" selected by 13%.

Some gang affiliated respondents were found in all 21 zip codes reported in this study. Students and school employees were aware of the growing problem of gang proliferation and the effects of increased neighborhood gang activity. It was recognized by educators especially that a "bleed-over" effect from neighborhood gang actions impacts students' availability for learning. Traumatic events in the community associated with gangs can make it difficult to concentrate on learning in school.

Studies have shown that a child's development is impacted by the neighborhood and community in which he or she lives. Lack of economic stability and limited resources within a community have been identified as factors that increase youth violence and negatively impact academic performance, both of which can lead to involvement in gang activity (Reese, Vera, Thompson, & Reyes, 2001; Prince & Howard, 2002). Feeling unsafe within the neighborhood and low neighborhood attachment are also shown to be risk factors for gang involvement (Kosterman, et al. 1996; Hill, Howell, Hawkins, & Battin-Pearson, 1999). In addition, a higher rate of gang membership occurs in communities in which gang activity, including availability of drugs and crime, is more prevalent (Curry and Spergel, 1992; Fagan, 1996). Providing opportunities for youth within a community for pro-social activities can reduce the likelihood of gang involvement. Centers offering youth recreation and developmental opportunities, as well as referrals for services that meet personal and family needs help provide a pro-social environment (Howell, 2010). Improving supervision of

youth within the community through various programs, organizational outlets, and school-based activities also assist in minimizing risk factors that can lead to gang membership.

- 6. Poverty plays a key role in gang proliferation.** Poverty was cited by many respondents as a factor in gang growth largely due to the opportunity some youth see for monetary gain through illegal gang activities. Poverty is a multidimensional issue that is strongly related to employment and household status. Several respondents noted that jobs and job training for youth and adults are among the best solutions to gangs. Of interest, this was especially true for gang affiliated respondents, who felt the opportunity for jobs for themselves and adults would help most to reduce gang activity. In contrast, non-gang affiliated respondents placed a slightly greater emphasis on the role of parents and suggested more involved parents as the number one protective factor in reducing gangs in the community.

The correlation between poverty, low income community areas, and gang involvement is high; hence schools serving these student populations are more likely to have a greater gang presence. Poverty also has a significant impact on a child's academic performance by increasing drop-out rates, special education placement, and grade level retention (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994; Ford, 1992; Haynes & Comer, 1990; Sherman, 1997). Schools with a higher population of low income students have also historically had greater academic achievement problems. They also have been reported as too often having fewer resources for students, in contrast to other schools even within the same school district. Gang activities detract from the learning environment of the school, resulting in an additional loss in academic achievement for all students. Teachers and administrators must give time and attention to these problems, taking away from time for teaching and developmental activities.

- 7. Helping students avoid gang involvement must begin early and be sustained throughout the school years.** Gang involvement can begin as early as elementary school. Of interest, 20.6 percent of employee respondents who worked in elementary schools reported a gang presence in their schools, and 18.1 percent knew of self-identified gang members in their schools. These numbers increase for employees in middle and high schools. Of middle school employees, 48.9 percent reported a gang presence, and 47.2 percent knew of self-identified gang members. Among high school employees these numbers were highest, with 74.5 percent of employee respondents acknowledging a gang presence in the school, and 67.8 percent reporting knowing self-identified gang members. Similar statistics were derived for those who believed gangs to be a problem in their schools – 29.2 percent for elementary school respondents, 58.4 percent for middle school respondents, and 71.3 percent for high school respondents.

Both student and school employee respondents felt strongly that gang deterrence requires a proactive agenda that includes professionals in the schools (counselors, SRO officers, etc.) who are present and available to help students with personal, social, and academic problems. Such staff positions are needed in all schools, on a daily basis, and whose work is largely dedicated to these student needs. Schools with these dedicated personnel currently in place reported that administrators were better equipped to address gang issues quickly and effectively. In another vein, some respondents expressed frustration over what they viewed

as effects of the No Child Left Behind policies, which had resulted in the greatest attention in the school being given to tests and attendance data. School results and the state report card parameters were noted as too often the primary concern, taking much of the time and attention of school staff, including counselors. This has left little time to address student needs and provide help with various student problems, including gang issues.

8. Family and parental support are critical to solving the problem of gangs.

The role of parents in providing guidance, monitoring activities and whereabouts, providing adequate care, support, and concern were repeatedly noted by student and employee respondents in this study. This is not surprising, as the family represents the dominant influence on the child from the earliest ages, and remains either a positive or problematic factor in child development. Although a number of studies have shown that a non-intact (not living with biological parents) family structure has been found to be a risk factor for gang membership (Howell and Egley, 2005), our study suggests it is important to look more at the quality of parenting than family structure. Although respondents who self-identified as having participated in a gang more often came from less traditional home environments, both gang-affiliated and non-gang affiliated respondents often came from similar home situations. Regardless of family structure, poor parental supervision and inconsistent discipline have been identified as key factors that can lead a child to consider gang membership (Elliot, Williams, & Hamburg, 1998; Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986). Low parental expectations of a child's academic performance are also a risk factor (Thornberry et al., 2003). The violent and aggressive nature of many gangs can often be a reflection of behavior that a child has already experienced within the family structure, particularly from inappropriate and harsh discipline. Children are more likely to display aggression and anti-social behavior if they have been exposed to violence within the family, and gang membership can provide an outlet for this behavior (Edleson, 1999). Thus, while the healthy two-parent household is generally a stronger economic unit and correlates with lower gang involvement, it is not a panacea against joining a gang. Other factors are important, including quality parenting, consistent involvement in the school and the child's education and development, having positive and effective mentors and role models for youth, and ensuring involvement in activities that meet the child's interests and needs.

IX. Recommendations for Action

- A.** Build proactive programs in schools that enable communication and trust among students, teachers, staff, and administrators. Some schools have begun such programs but they need to be expanded to all schools (see Section V. *HCDE Employee Findings*).
- B.** Develop a system-wide initiative that addresses the growing problem of gangs. Such a program should include information on gang culture, symbols and other forms of identification, gang recruitment, intimidation and reprisal methods, how to advise students on resisting and safely getting out of gangs, and how they can access help for themselves and others targeted by gangs (see Section IV. *Student Respondent Suggestions for Decreasing Gangs*).

- C.** Youth often do not have the individual interpersonal skills and understanding to know how to respond to risk factors that are present in their lives. For the particular purpose of reducing the potential of gang membership, training to assist youth in understanding how to properly resolve conflict should be included in an effective school program. Such programs can help youth to recognize the dangerous realities of gang membership (see Section V. *HCDE Employee Focus Group Recommendations for Action*).
- D.** Professional training for teachers and resource officers regarding gang awareness, as well as how to manage disruptive students and mediate conflict, should be implemented as a protective factor for students (see Section V. *HCDE Employee Focus Group Recommendations for Action*).
- E.** Identify ways to provide greater support and valuation to students as individuals, including building self-esteem, confidence, and a sense of self-worth. Attention cannot only be toward high achievers – all students need to feel the school is a safe place where they belong and where they can achieve as individuals (see Section V. *HCDE Employee Focus Group Recommendations for Action*).
- F.** Develop alternative education modules that enable students to move toward career paths that include technical and craft occupations as well as college-based professional tracks. A multiple or dual diploma option is needed to meet the different needs of students. The new emphasis in the State of Tennessee on building the community college environment to meet both vocational and higher education goals can be a driver in this respect. Beginning in middle schools, and enhanced in high school, students should have options for non-traditional and vocational paths as well as college-track paths based on their interests and personal goals. The education experience needs to be more individualized and geared toward a wider range of student capabilities and interests (see Section V. *HCDE Employee Findings*).
- G.** Review suspension and expulsion policies against other school policies for handling students with infractions. Develop a balance that includes removing students when needed, but which addresses deeper issues that may be part of the problem. Suspensions too often are ineffective because they can be seen as a reward rather than a punishment (see Section V. *HCDE Employee Findings*).
- H.** Develop non-academic and non-athletic opportunities that generate and establish attachment to school. Most students do not participate in band or athletics, and need ways to be involved in school outside of academics. A range and diversity of activities are needed and offered throughout all schools in the district. Programs should include a transportation component to enable students to participate who lack transportation home past the regular bus schedule (see Section V. *HCDE Employee Findings*).
- I.** Develop programs that have an entrepreneurial and jobs dimension that can teach youth about business, legitimate ways to earn money, how to get a job, and related subjects. Building a school-based jobs program could provide limited income to students. It could

also serve to enhance students' self-respect, development of a positive work ethic, and useful experience for future jobs (see Section V. *HCDE Employee Findings*).

- J.** More programs are needed that target those already involved in gangs or gang activities. It is suggested that such programs need to be “life-changing,” and backed with resources that help involved youth leave gangs safely and remain out of them (see Section IV. *Student Respondent Suggestions for Decreasing Gangs*).
- K.** Gang reduction strategies should take into account that gangs often fill a gap in a young person's life. These gaps need to be identified and the needs met in positive ways. Interventions cannot be “one size fits all” but rather a more personal, individually-based program is needed. Mentorship can help, but may require a structured, trained approach for effective intervention (see Section V. *HCDE Employee Findings*).
- L.** Programs for younger youth are needed to deter them from joining gangs in the first place. The critical ages are 10-12 years, and these youth should be engaged in positive programs that reduce their vulnerability as targets for gangs (see Section IV. *Student Respondent Suggestions for Decreasing Gangs* and Section V. *HCDE Employee Focus Group Recommendations for Action*).
- M.** Programs sponsored by schools and communities entities need to have weekend as well as after-school components. Many youth lack positive options for weekends, vacation and holiday periods, and summer. Filling this void is crucial to helping young people avoid more negative influences (see Section V. *HCDE Employee Findings*).
- N.** Law enforcement needs to be judiciously applied with consideration for both the need to have effective police action against gangs, but recognition that this cannot be the only answer. Removal of gang members and leaders too often leads to more recruitment or coercion of new members into gangs, and emergence of new leaders. Splinter gangs arise and create additional violence in turf wars and power struggles (see Section IV. *Student Respondent Suggestions for Decreasing Gangs*).
- O.** Parental involvement is central to the solution to gangs. Such involvement includes better child supervision, care, and values training. Research has shown that effective parental monitoring of children is a protective factor (McDaniel, 2012) (see Section IV. *Student Respondent Suggestions for Decreasing Gangs* and Section V. *HCDE Employee Findings*).
- P.** Strengthening the family structure can serve as a protective factor (Howell, 2010) (see Section V. *HCDE Employee Findings*).
- Q.** Training for parents regarding gang awareness, as well as development of overall parenting skills, is recommended for strengthening the family and protecting youth against considering gang membership (see Section V. *HCDE Employee Findings*).

- R.** Special attention is needed to address the problem of parents who are gang members (see Section V. *HCDE Employee Findings* and Section VI. *Parent Focus Group Findings*).
- S.** Address the importance of “individual responsibility” in programs for youth and adults, including the consequences of gang involvement. Solutions need to be holistic in how responsibility is understood, as well as in how help and support are provided (see *Section V. HCDE Employee Findings*).

Chapter 4

Community Perceptions

The Ochs Center for Metropolitan Studies followed a research protocol developed by the Office of Juvenile Justice to gauge community perceptions. The data for this section are derived from 15 focus groups; two small non-random surveys with community residents and ex-offenders; group meetings with community leaders; interviews with gang members; discussions with agency heads; law enforcement personnel; social workers; clergy; and neighborhood activists. Overall, more than 450 community stakeholders ranging from elementary school to retirement age provided feedback on gangs. Stakeholders were all asked about the extent of the gang problem and the impact of gangs on their communities.

Despite the fact that hundreds of stakeholders had the opportunity to participate in the assessment, continued and sustained efforts to reach out to diverse community residents are needed. Gang initiatives emanating from the assessment that are rooted in robust community dialogue have a greater likelihood of community buy-in than those imposed by elected officials.

It is important to keep in mind that a perception is not necessarily reality. Community residents could harbor perceptions about subjects that are not rooted in empirical research; thus, perceptions could be more opinion-based than fact-based. The perceptions included in this report are themes that were repeatedly heard at multiple focus groups and across different geographical areas. For example, many residents complained about the “revolving door” of justice where criminals are arrested but back on the streets within 12 hours. The general public might not be aware of how existing statutes and the nature of a crime affect bail and detention. Nevertheless, many community residents harbor the perception that the justice system is too lenient on criminals. Across multiple themes, community perceptions are clouded with anecdotal evidence.

An overarching theme that emerged from our outreach is that a number of surprisingly diverse stakeholders lack trust in elected officials, church leaders, the criminal justice system, schools, the business community and nonprofits to address the wide range of problems impacting their communities. Residents in neighborhoods most affected by crime expressed frustration about programs that were promised but never delivered or that expired after initial funding ran out. Many complained about federal, state, and local budget cuts for jobs training programs and summer work programs for teens. Some residents expressed strong support for more vocational and job-training programs for high school students.

Moving forward, community leaders must deliver tangible benefits to communities to ensure confidence in any programs or initiatives emanating from the gang assessment. If this assessment is not utilized to strategically attack the long-standing economic, social, political, and cultural roots that foster gang activity, future community development efforts will likely be met with apathy and higher levels of distrust.

Residents in high crime neighborhoods expressed frustration about the gang task force. They were adamant that Chattanooga has had a gang problem for many years that was ignored until high profile shootings downtown forced leaders to acknowledge the problem. A review of *Chattanooga Times Free Press* articles over the last 5 years found that some leaders have voiced

concerns about gangs over the years, but those concerns never translated into a comprehensive strategy to attack the problem.

The community perceptions are reported by themes. To be included in the report, a theme had to be repeatedly mentioned in multiple focus groups or discussions. Gang member insights are sprinkled into the narrative to add context to the community dialogue.

Why do kids join gangs?

The National Gang Center's review of gang literature finds that kids join gangs for two primary reasons: social reasons and protection.¹⁵ This finding was validated by individual gang member interviews. Many gang members said they joined because their friends had joined, not necessarily because someone persistently recruited them. Gang members also spoke frequently about the need for protection. When asked why kids joined gangs, one gang member said, "to get the bullets off your back." Gang members repeatedly said that they carry guns for protection. In addition, most gang members explained how gangs provide stability and, to a degree, a family that they can count on when the going gets rough. The gang provides kids a group of comrades who protect one another in a world marked by frequent violence.

Kids who join gangs are often seduced by the lifestyle and attracted to seemingly easy money and the clothes, cars, and other material benefits of membership. Gangs can also meet psychological needs for belonging and family. The excitement of hustling and working on the streets is also a powerful lure to kids who grow up in neighborhoods lacking other economic options or role models. Most of the gang members interviewed reported growing up in non-traditional families and many had spent time in group homes as adolescents. While there is no single reason why kids join gangs, the allure of gangs is strong among children who grow up in poverty, lack parental involvement and who struggle to keep up in school.

Community perceptions about kids and gangs are strongly held, and often matched gang member testimonies. Focus group members complained that children need things to do as a hedge against gang membership. However, many of those who reminisced about the bounty of programs available in the past did not reconcile how the availability of those programs failed to protect them and their family members from the negative impacts of life on the streets. Most of the gang members interviewed participated in youth sports, church groups, and other programs offered in their communities as children.

Focus group participants identified lack of parental involvement, poverty, limited opportunity and pathways, family disintegration, moral decline, and too few positive male role models as factors contributing to Chattanooga's gang problem. They complained about budget cuts and discontinued programs. The number of such discontinuations has created a perception that program leaders are not truly dedicated to at-risk communities. It seems that piecemeal programs have fragmented efforts to keep children out of gangs and to develop community trust. Overcoming this community animosity will require diligent efforts by community leaders to demonstrate that the gang assessment is action-oriented instead of rhetoric.

Gang Member Insights

The Ochs Center gained access to gang members both in and out of detention facilities. Researchers convened one focus group of four gang affiliated adults and conducted 23 one-on-one gang member interviews. In general, gang members were forthcoming and all volunteered to participate in the assessment. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 55. Most stated that they didn't so much formally join the gang as they simply fell into it. The lifestyle was pervasive in their neighborhoods and adults failed to provide other options.

Older gang members explained that peer groups organized into loose gangs based upon what they had seen on TV and in videos; they often adopted names associated with gangs in Los Angeles or Chicago. The majority joined gangs between the ages of 12 and 16. However, some pointed out that they were not made "proper" until ages 16-18. One member explained that joining was "like watching a movie—you don't realize the consequences." He said that there is nothing else to do in the projects and gangs are "enticing" and fun. Kids seek recognition and status, and they look up to the older males in the gang who have money, nice clothes, great parties and girls. The only immediate pathway to that lifestyle is through membership in the gang. It is important to note that the majority of gang members interviewed had turbulent childhoods, moving in and out of foster or group housing. These kids are more likely influenced by gang members who seek out kids looking for mentors and a place to belong.

The rationale for staying in the gang is money—"Money is the big motivator." Alienation and fear are factors that also keep young men and women embedded in the lifestyle. Quitting the gang would sever strong kinship ties and can be dangerous. Many members who stated they want out of the gang were concerned about their safety on the streets without protection from the gang. As a couple of gang members pointed out, the best strategy to leave the gang would be to leave Chattanooga; however, that is not possible because they don't have resources and are on parole or probation.

A huge factor in gang recruitment is disengaged parenting. A disturbing trend mentioned by a few gang members is parents who actively promote gang culture to their children. Several gang members said that it is not uncommon for 3 and 4 year olds to sling gang signs and speak in gang lingo. This is a significant departure from previous generations who were discouraged by parents and guardians from joining gangs.

Gang members stated that many outreach programs are well-intentioned but that they do not promote viable alternatives to gangs. Summer feeding programs are fine, but they fail to replace the role of the gang in a child's life. Similarly, church programs that work to "save" kids are not substitutes for programs that provide activities, skills and options. Most of the gang members participated in youth sports and other community-based programs aimed at building positive outcomes but did not remain active into their teenage years.

Most of the gang participants experienced discipline problems in school. Several spent much of their childhoods in alternative schools and homes. As one gang member put it, "I didn't have much of a childhood." Most of the gang members interviewed did not complete high school. When asked what his school could have done better to reach him, a gang member who spent his

teenage years in institutions claimed “If I don’t want to learn, you can’t make me.” Gang members had differing opinions on respect for education. Some claimed that kids who are book smart are ridiculed and that the culture of learning is not embraced in the projects. They complained that too many children are being raised by women who themselves are under-educated. Yet, some gang members argued that good students are not hassled for stellar school performance. On the contrary, as one said, “most guys respect that.” The opinions expressed on this topic varied by gang affiliation.

Incarcerated gang members stated that opportunities for education and rehabilitation in jail are extremely limited. The stereotype that criminals leave the penal system as better criminals was echoed by several inmates. An older gang member stated that criminals make good connections with other criminals while in jail. When they are released, they develop stronger networks to engage in criminal activity. Younger gang members said that a stay in the penitentiary provides status and rank. When they are released, they can go back to the streets with more respect and prestige in the gang.

Many of the gang members have children of their own. Only a few of the gang members interviewed were married. Some claimed that they worry about their children’s futures, and most said they would strongly work to keep their kids from joining a gang. Gang members unanimously said that too many kids—because of poor parenting—get lost and seek something to fill the void. As a result, they start running the streets with other kids in similar predicaments. Ultimately, gangs meet familial, social and economic needs of at-risk youth. In many cases, hard core recruiting is not needed because the kids seek the gang lifestyle that is advertised daily on the streets of their communities.

All participants agreed that any successful prevention strategy must catch the kids early. The gang mentality is now part of the culture. It’s on TV and reflected in music. Several said the gang problem is “out of control,” but few had any substantive advice on managing it. They do not believe that the police alone can manage the problem. Prevention and intervention were viewed as acceptable goals and some gang members said prevention efforts should start as early as 6 or 7 years old.

The Gang Problem is Growing

Among all sectors of the community, most residents believe the gang problem is growing. Some of this perception may be fueled by an increase in graffiti and tagging throughout the city. Many residents have noticed an uptick in the amount and frequency of graffiti on buildings and signs in the community. Residents did not distinguish between gang graffiti and non-gang graffiti. It seems that defacement of private and public property is considered gang graffiti by default. The presence of graffiti along trafficked corridors certainly fuels the perception that gangs are everywhere. However, law enforcement officers reported that most of the graffiti is tagging, not gang symbols or communications. (Tagging is simple to complex colorful street art.)

Another possible explanation for the perception that the gang problem is growing is media saturation. Crime news, shootings, and school violence is covered in-depth by traditional and electronic media. In addition, the use of social media, phone cameras, crime blogs, and other

technologies leads to the immediate public dissemination of community disturbances. A school fight might get reported on the 6 o'clock news today but was probably not broadcast 20 years ago. Increased knowledge of criminal activity leads to an increased perception of crime, and thus gangs.

The obvious explanation for the perception that the gang problem is growing is that gang crime and activity are indeed increasing. Data from the Chattanooga Police Department suggest an increase in gang-related crime and arrests over time. Some of this growth is attributable to better data collection efforts. According to one officer, while gang crime has remained relatively stable over the last five years, the accuracy of the data has improved, perhaps falsely suggesting a growing problem. In reality, the number of gang-related crimes captured in the database is likely under-reported.

At present, gang crime data are not robust. Community residents and gang members all claimed that gang crime and violence are getting worse. Researchers encountered problems in the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) and Chattanooga Police Department's data collection systems. Researchers were unable to accurately identify the number of gang-related crimes in the HCSO reporting system. Over time, both CPD and the Sheriff's Department should standardize data collection procedures to more accurately capture the extent of gang crime in the city and county.

Implications

In order to effectively proceed against street gangs, all law enforcement agencies in Hamilton County should strive to integrate gang databases and standardize gang member identification practices. Gang crime data needs to be accurately captured across all jurisdictions in Hamilton County and, ideally, in adjacent counties as well. Individual gang member databases should also be shared as much as possible among different law enforcement agencies. Officers and deputies in the region could benefit from additional training on accurately coding gang incidents, and efforts should be made to update gang crime databases as new information becomes available. For instance, an officer might not know at the time of an investigation that a crime is gang-related. When confirmation of gang affiliation is made—perhaps two weeks later—mechanisms must be developed to update the crime database to accurately reflect the new information.

They're Only Wannabes

Many focus group residents dismissed Chattanooga kids as “wannabes.” In many cases, those who hold this view would follow-up with a comparison of Chattanooga to Chicago or Los Angeles where “real” gangs and gang members operate. National gang researchers refer to “wannabes” as “gonnabes” who want money, prestige, and power. Local gang members reported that wannabes are dangerous because they are attempting to solidify a “hard” street reputation. The desire to gain respect contributes significantly to youth violence and gun play. Violence can be part of “putting in work” for the gang and is often rewarded with increased rank. Violence and toughness are core values of gang members.

The primary attribute desired of a young gang member is the ability and willingness to fight. Gang members said that they sought young members with “heart” who could contribute to the success of the organization. In most gangs, new members are violently “beat in” during initiation rituals. This commonplace willingness to fight, coupled with easy access to guns, contributes to random violence. All gang members interviewed stated that guns are easy to get on the streets of Chattanooga. Many younger members who were interviewed said that 15-18 year olds commonly carry guns for protection.

Implications

Dismissing the actions of gang affiliated middle and high school students as lightweights compared to “real” gang members in larger cities is a mistake. In fact, older, more hardened gang members marveled at the actions some kids will take to prove their gang worthiness. If they have guns—and many of them do—they are tempted and even encouraged to gain status by using them to prove their hardness. Many aspire to be gang leaders and are influenced by what movies, television, Facebook, and music videos define as gang behavior. An older gang member summed it up best by saying, “some of these kids just like banging.” Numerous gang members in Chattanooga post photos of themselves on Facebook holding guns and money—some of these photos show groups of kids in school uniforms flashing gang signs in school classrooms.

Neighborhood leaders, churches and community groups need to vigorously reclaim their neighborhoods from gang members instead of dismissing them as wannabes. Schools need to be vigilant in their attempts to limit gang activity on school property. However, this is a double-edged sword. One, it validates gang members by giving them negative attention. Two, it could lead to draconian policies that expel or relocate potential gang members to alternative schools where student performance is low.

Girls and Gang Activity

The focus groups and community outreach found unanimous belief that girls are actively engaged in gang activity and membership. Several residents commented “the girls are worse than the boys.” School Resource Officers (SROs), teachers, students and gang members confirmed the role of girls in gangs. In some cases, girls are peripheral to gangs and are affiliated with a particular gang through dating a gang member. However, girls engage in street fighting, bullying, drug dealing and precocious sexual activity that are gang-related.

Some gang members reported that girls can and do attain leadership positions within local gangs; however, the percentage of girl gang members is typically low. According to female and male gang members who participated in the assessment, females can be “beat in” or “slapped in” to the gang.

Young women explained that gangs are very active in Chattanooga and that girls definitely join and participate in gang activity. In addition, girls face multiple threats on the streets, in school and online. Programs such as *Girls Inc.* focus on the unique needs of young women, but most programs are not gender specific.

Implications

The inclusion of girls in gangs and gang activities underscores the severity of the gang problem in Chattanooga. Young females interviewed for the assessment highlighted how girls willingly engage in assaults on other young males and females. During focus groups, girls expressed advanced knowledge of gang activity, gang names, signs, rituals, neighborhoods and activities. Most of them knew family members and friends who are gang members. They talked about friends or acquaintances they knew who had been assaulted or shot. The breadth of information expressed by these girls suggests that gang problems are firmly rooted in some neighborhoods. The girls knew less about crime and violence in other areas of Chattanooga. One girl asked “do white neighborhoods have gang problems?”

Gang Members Getting Younger

Chattanooga's gangs are allegedly attracting kids at younger ages than in the past. In some cases, residents said that it is not uncommon for gang members to recruit children aged 9 to 11 years old. These children are eager to please older gang members and are less likely than adults to be harshly treated by the criminal justice system if and when they are arrested. Gang members reported some kids who join as early as 12, but most members interviewed joined between the ages of 14 and 16.

Residents complained about juveniles who hang out on street corners late in the evenings. The demographic analysis of crime-ridden neighborhoods found higher numbers of children raised by single parents and grandparents in lower income neighborhoods. Despite the best efforts of these guardians, some residents recognize that adults have limited control over these children.

Some gang members suggested that many young males who profess to be in a gang are not “proper.” That is, they have not been formally inducted into the gang. Prior to formally joining, a candidate is typically put “on watch” and has to demonstrate that he or she has the requisite skills to be a gang-banger. This might require fighting, robbing, shooting, or selling drugs.

Chattanooga has many small, splinter gangs that are not formally associated with the Bloods, Crips, Gangster Disciples or Vice Lords. For example, a notoriously violence group called “Money over Everything,” or MOE, is made up primarily of younger teens.

Implications

The community thinks that gang members are getting younger. The school survey found that many middle-school students self-reported a gang affiliation. Teachers who participated in the survey identified troubling numbers of children in elementary, middle and high school as gang affiliated. Given these perceptions, prevention and intervention efforts should be launched in public schools, churches, and public agencies to compete with gangs for youth seeking status, belonging, and adventure.

Gangs and Schools

The richest data on gangs and their presence in schools are reported in the school conditions section of this report, Chapter 3. Focus group residents believe urban schools are more impacted by gangs than suburban schools. This observation fits national trends. Neighborhood schools that serve primarily lower-income communities with high percentages of at-risk youth are more likely to enroll more gang members than suburban schools. Some focus group members stated that a handful of schools are infested by gangs.

The school surveys found that students perceived gangs to be wide-spread throughout the public school system, including more rural parts of Hamilton County. Several students scribbled racial slurs on the survey instrument. Students and gang members said that gang rivalries often lead to fights on school grounds.

Implications

Children spend more time in school than in any other activity outside of their home lives. Schools could play a stronger role in meeting needs such as security, protection, belonging, healthy adult and peer role models, identity, and pathways to success and positive networks.¹⁶ Education research provides some ideas on the types of programs that might assist policy makers who seek to turn around low-performing schools. Yet, the combination of high poverty, low parental involvement and limited access to traditional career pathways found in some neighborhoods creates great challenges to implementing sustained positive change. The research on what works in low-performing is inconclusive.

Interviews with gang members and ex-offenders revealed major education deficiencies in the prison population. A handful of gang members completed high school, but the vast majority had long histories of classroom disruptions, school fighting and lack of participation in traditional student clubs and sports teams. Gang members alleged that gangs are very active in schools. For example, some said they used to fight rival gang members for no other reason than gang affiliation. The schools responded by suspending, expelling, ignoring or transferring troubled students to alternative schools. There is anecdotal evidence that whatever strategies have been implemented to date have not made a major impact on dissuading youth from joining gangs or insulating schools from gang activities.

Yet, these behaviors impact all public school children. They interrupt learning and create distractions. There are a variety of gang intervention programs that operate in schools in other cities that should be explored by local leaders, especially in neighborhoods with high levels of gang activity and violence.

Gang Recruitment

The assessment asked residents and gang members about recruitment of new members. Some gang members contend that they do not need to actively recruit new members. They claimed that kids seek the gang lifestyle and volunteer to join. The gang literature describes a process termed “seduction” to describe how kids look up to gang leaders and are impressed by their material

well-being. As one gang intervention program director explained, “They are attracted by the lifestyle, the money, the clothes, the girls. Once they get involved it is very hard to get them out.” This is a form of seduction where kids are sold on a lifestyle but they are typically unaware of the full array of consequences that come with membership.

Other gang members explained that gangs actively recruit new members. They appeal to the needs of teens to be validated. A gang member might approach a kid after a ball game and say “I see you have heart ... I like the way you operate ... you should get down with us.” Some kids will resist the recruiter without threats of violence or reprisal for not joining. The gang member might remind the kid that he will be keeping an eye on him and, if the kid needs anything, let the gang member know. Once a kid reaches out for money or protection, he or she is hooked. Many teenagers said that some gangs are more aggressive and violent in recruiting methods than others.

Recreation centers are often times located in the heart of low-income neighborhoods struggling with gang problems. In some neighborhoods, the clientele served by recreation centers has a high risk of gang membership. Many residents believe that some—not all—recreation centers are used by gang members to recruit children. In addition, several parents said that they do not allow their children to play at some recreation centers because they deem them unsafe. Parents also said it is not enough to “roll out basketballs” as a substitute for structured activities. Many complaints can be classified as concerns about a perceived lack of oversight at certain recreation centers.

The complaints about recreation centers were not universal; some residents referenced by name recreation centers that do excellent work in the community. Recreation centers offer and manage a variety of programs to children that meet the demand of parents to “give them something to do.” However, they lack infinite resources to use on behalf of program development. All children in the community are welcome in their buildings, and a percentage of those children are involved in other programs with other service providers or faith based organizations. The societal problems at the root of why kids are drawn to gangs seep into the recreation centers. Consequently, recreation centers are ideally suited to drive gang prevention and intervention programs.

Gang members disagreed on recruitment activities in recreation centers. Some claimed that gangs recruit everywhere, but mostly on the street. In this narrative, recreation centers are not hotbeds of recruitment but an extension of the street. Two gang members stated that their gang had used recreation center bathrooms for beat-ins; initiations had also occurred behind recreation center buildings. Parents echoed this contention in focus groups. Overall, parents and children are skeptical of the safety of some recreation centers.

Implications

The role of recreation centers in providing safe activity options for community residents cannot be overstated. They are at ground zero in many communities that are disproportionately affected by gang activity; thus, they are strategically well-positioned to deliver programs and services for at-risk youth. The recreation centers are not responsible for unsupervised children running the

streets after 11PM, neighborhood graffiti or gunshots heard in the middle of the night. However, recreation center management should continue to evaluate best community center management practices. The new community center in Hixson, for example, focuses on delivering programs to all members of the community, not just youth. It is recommended that community center leadership consider a management audit of recreation centers to determine which centers are exemplary and which centers need additional capacity and technical assistance. The audit could also determine which programs are working, which programs need to be discontinued, and which programs need to be implemented.

Public Housing & Gang Activity

Another theme that was echoed in multiple focus groups dealt with the impact of closing public housing complexes on other neighborhoods. Numerous participants blame the closure of public housing and the subsequent relocation of displaced residents into new communities for increases in crime and violence. As a gang member observed, “gangs are not segregated in Chattanooga”, and this means rival gangs live and compete with one another in the same neighborhoods. These tensions can escalate and spill over into public fighting, disorderly conduct and violence. The displacement of people from one area to another can also negatively affect the capacity of local residents to retain order. As Jane Jacobs pointed out, “eyes on the street” work best when residents know who belongs and who does not belong in a neighborhood. Residential mobility and large dislocations can undermine the capacity of long-term residents to accurately assess insiders and outsiders.

Implications

This theme has additional importance because it underscores the complexity of gang-related issues. Housing policy is primarily analyzed from a housing perspective, not a criminal justice perspective. The community focus groups shed valuable light on the connection between housing policy and gang activity. It is strongly recommended that Chattanooga community leaders pay close attention to the potential impacts of any new housing policies on neighborhood disruption, quality of life and continuity. Community leaders need to engage residents in open dialogue about the range of problems concentrated in public housing, and what, if anything, can be done to address them.

Hispanic Gangs

The focus groups and surveys found few indications that Chattanooga has Hispanic gang problem. Law enforcement officials described concerns about Hispanic gang members from Dalton, GA resettling to Chattanooga. African American gang members were largely unaware of Hispanic gangs and knew little about their impact on neighborhoods. Overall, black gang members were not concerned about competition from Hispanic gangs.

However, middle and high school students, especially from the East Lake area, have noticed an emerging Hispanic gang population. According to federal immigration officials, Chattanooga does not have a major Hispanic street gang problem today. Officials estimated “two dozen” Hispanic gang members operating in Chattanooga, but the threat of deportation keeps much of

the activity underground. Some Hispanic gang members, for example, are getting tattoos in their mouths or blacklight tattoos to hide detection of their gang affiliation. The demographic analysis showed that East Lake and other neighborhoods in south and southeast Chattanooga have the highest concentration of Hispanic families. The gang suppression unit is monitoring these areas to gauge the growth of Hispanic gangs.

Implications

The demographic analysis revealed higher concentrations of Hispanic children in kindergarten and younger age cohorts. In addition, it showed that the median age of Hispanics is much younger than blacks or whites. In the future, Hispanics will make up larger proportions of the school population and the general population. Gang prevention efforts today should focus on Hispanic families and youth. Community leaders need to develop deeper ties to Hispanic communities to develop targeted programs that work. This will not be easy because many Hispanics distrust the government, police, and authorities.

Gang Impacts on Neighborhoods

Residents were asked about specific gang activities that occur in their neighborhoods. There was considerable overlap in responses and the most often mentioned activities were bullying, intimidation, drug sales, loitering, violence and fighting, robberies, break-ins, prostitution, shootings, and graffiti. Chattanooga residents reported that a growing number of activities involve revenge or retribution between rival gang members. Local gangs often fight over girls or relationship issues, and these confrontations sometimes include members of the same gang.

Gang members agreed that these activities take place, but they were quick to point out that not all neighborhood crime is gang-related. They reported that gang members are expected to “put in work” that includes robbery, selling drugs and home invasions. Many gang members talked about jumping other gang members or getting jumped themselves by rival gang members. Many reported that they had been shot at on the street.

A former Chicago public housing resident claimed that Chattanooga is more dangerous than Chicago. Her former home in a Chicago public housing facility was within a clearly delineated gang turf and as long as she minded her own business she was safe. In Chattanooga, the lack of formal turf boundaries allows for random encounters between rival gang members, thus increasing the potential for street level violence and harm to innocent bystanders.

On the issue of turfs, gang members differed in opinion. Some claimed Chattanooga is not “segregated” by turf. While certain areas of the city are more closely aligned with one gang than another, formal turfs are not recognized. Nonetheless, it would be unwise for a member of one gang to be caught walking alone in an areas predominately comprised of another gang.

Other gang members stated that turf boundaries exist and are enforced by gang members. According to them, if a known Blood were to enter a known Crip neighborhood, it could provoke a violent reaction. Some claimed that even non-gang members could be confronted if they inadvertently wore the colors of a rival gang in the wrong neighborhood.

Responses to the question of turf likely reflected individual gang affiliation. If turfs have been established, it suggests a much more organized gang presence in Chattanooga. Older community leaders explained that residents of south Chattanooga historically had little to do with residents of east Chattanooga. These rivalries today are more dangerous because of the proliferation of guns and gangs.

The closure of public housing complexes created friction by dispersing gang members into rival neighborhoods. Many gang members said the streets are getting “more violent... it’s getting worse.” Gang members reported that it’s easy to get guns. If you have the cash, you can get “whatever you want on the streets”—including AK-47s and other high powered rifles.

Older gang members (generally 22 and older) frequently mentioned the changing nature of the gang problem in Chattanooga. As many of them said, there are too many immature, volatile teenagers who carry guns. Several gang members said young members need guidance, but such leadership is missing because too many “big homies are in jail or dead.” Consequently, there is a power vacuum that immature gang members are eager to fill. A small altercation over a girl or a perceived disrespect can lead to a shooting. It can be concluded that the gangs of Chattanooga are rapidly becoming more sophisticated, organized, armed and dangerous. As one participant put it, “It’s like a religion with these kids.”

Living in Fear

One theme that emerged from neighborhood focus groups is that residents in high crime communities live in fear—fear for their children, fear for their property and fear for their lives. Older residents particularly, but not exclusively, stated that they do not feel safe leaving their porch. Some parents complained that they cannot let their children play in parks or other public areas because they are unsafe. One resident lamented, “criminals complain about their rights being violated by the police, but what about my right to live in a safe neighborhood?”

The Ochs Center conducted a non-random survey of community residents at the Carver Recreation Center. A total of 98 residents completed the survey (results of the survey are summarized in Appendix C). Twenty-five percent of respondents worry about their children joining a gang. The top three concerns reported by residents were gang activity, unemployment, and drug dealing.

The physical conditions of some neighborhoods contribute to their dangerous perception. Homeowners complained about unkempt, abandoned properties that attract youth and gang members. They stated that dilapidated properties host gang initiations, drug deals, prostitution and crack houses. Residents claimed that criminals rent multiple low-rent properties to avoid law enforcement and to run their enterprises. When the police target one area, the criminals simply relocate to another property or neighborhood.

Implications

Some cities, most recently Chicago, have implemented stronger and faster condemnation policies to address the issue of blighted properties and their impacts on community vibrancy.¹⁷ The

demographic analysis found high percentages of vacant properties in high crime neighborhoods. The City of Chattanooga could explore more aggressive policies to transition community liabilities into community assets. This would solve two problems: one, it would signal to law-abiding residents that the city is responsive to their concerns; and two, it would send a strong message to gang members that their activities will not be tolerated. New Orleans has also undertaken an aggressive blight removal strategy over the last couple of years. Additional research on Tennessee property law and eminent domain is required before moving forward with programmatic development.

Community Resentment

As previously stated, many residents expressed frustration because Chattanooga has had a long standing gang problem that, in their perceptions, was ignored by city leaders. Residents of high crime neighborhoods were adamant that the gang problem has been ignored. Additionally, some residents expressed anger that the demise of their neighborhoods has not been adequately addressed by city government, the school board, local business leaders or the church.

In some cases, the resentment is rooted in the perception and reality of long standing race and class issues. Residents made reference to the millions of dollars invested in downtown and along the riverfront that has not directly benefitted them or their communities. Some believe that the city's efforts to attract tourism and businesses have taken precedence over community reinvestment. While this perspective ignores the positive community impacts of business and residential growth in and near downtown, it remains divisive. In fact, some residents of the Westside believe they are being displaced in order to increase profits for land owners and developers.

Implications

The resentment manifests itself through public distrust and apathy. Many residents have quit believing in all promises from city leaders, summarily concluding them to be false. For this reason, the success of measures taken after the completion of the gang assessment is highly dependent upon tangible projects and programs that make positive, visible impacts on disadvantaged communities and children. Otherwise, community trust in local government will likely suffer more.

Law Enforcement and Trust

The topic of police effectiveness was raised in all focus groups, and the community has mixed opinions about the Chattanooga Police Department (CPD). Many participants praised the work of CPD and agree with Chief Dodd that arresting gang members will not solve Chattanooga's crime and violence problem. They believe the police are making honest efforts to improve neighborhoods and are an ally in the battle against gangs. The other perception of CPD is less flattering. Several residents complained that police profile young African American males, disrespect community residents, and fail to establish good relations with community members. As one mother explained, "I used to call the police but I don't any more. They treat me like I'm guilty."

Unfortunately, some residents in Chattanooga do not trust the CPD. The mistrust of law enforcement in our community is particularly widespread and was reported from a diverse group of residents. It contributes to the “don’t snitch” culture that is pervasive in high crime neighborhoods.

Many residents explained that the police often drive through their neighborhoods and disperse gang members, but the members immediately reconvene after the police leave. Several older residents reported that they are scared to leave their porches, call the police, or verbally reprimand youth for their behavior. These residents typically were supportive of more aggressive neighborhood policing that targets young males. Other residents complained that the police are slow to react to calls for service and seem to be unconcerned about problems in lower-income communities.

According to CPD, it receives approximately 220,000 calls for service per year. The volume of service calls makes it difficult to focus on the softer community relations side of policing. One resident pointed out that CPD suffers a lot of turnover as police officers are trained here but then move to accept higher paying positions in bigger cities. This disrupts continuity on the streets and contributes to the difficulty of building long-lasting street level relationships.

Residents and gang members complained about police profiling. Gang members frequently complained about the police “rolling up on us with guns drawn.” This is a likely consequence of the prevalence of guns on the streets. Older gang members said that police in the 1990s used to try to establish a rapport with guys on the corner, but that is lacking today.

Some residents were supportive of recently passed state RICO legislation targeted at gang members. Other community residents are wary of RICO and its potential to disproportionately remove African American males from their families. Some community groups and neighborhood leaders will probably not support gang intervention and prevention efforts as long as they are linked to strong suppression tactics like RICO.

The accusations against the CPD are *perceptions* gleaned from residents, many living in neighborhoods with a strong gang presence or high levels of crime. The Ochs Center did not investigate any of the allegations made in community forums. Because opinions about CPD range from highly positive to highly negative, it is difficult to make concrete conclusions about CPD’s actions. However, to some degree, perception is (or can become) reality. If a sizable group of residents in the community distrust the police, crime suppression tactics could be compromised. Rather than cooperating with police, some residents might choose to let the “streets take care of it.” For this reason, it is advisable for the CPD to explore community policing methodologies that focus on building strong community relationships with neighborhood residents and stakeholders.

Implications

The state of Florida recently adopted a comprehensive, state-wide gang policy that promotes the use of community policing techniques. The City of Boston has adopted a variety of community-based initiatives to improve the safety and quality of life in high crime neighborhoods. For

example, Operation Homefront starts with the premise that the family is the key to combatting youth crime and violence. The program works as follows:

“Home visits are conducted on a weekly basis via referrals from various Boston Police officers, Boston Public Schools, law enforcement agencies, community based service providers and clergy. Parents are informed about their son/daughter’s negative behavior and are educated on the warning signs of criminal and/or gang involvement. This collaborative effort sends a strong message to the students involved that their actions will not be tolerated at school, in the community and most importantly, in the home.”¹⁸

The Ochs Center is not necessarily endorsing Operation Homefront—it is merely one of many examples that could be adapted to meet the needs of Chattanooga. At a minimum, CPD should consider adopting programs that attempt to strengthen community relations and build community trust.

Criminal Justice System

The criminal justice system was frequently criticized as a “revolving door” where arrested offenders are quickly released back to their neighborhoods. Many residents believe the court system is too lenient on criminals, especially repeat offenders. However, most residents are not judges or lawyers and likely are unaware of judicial process, state statutes and how the severity of a crime and frequency of offense affects bail and sentencing. When a repeat offender who is out on bail commits a major crime, community residents are informed by the media.

One thing is certain: black males have disproportionate contact with the judicial system.¹⁹ The percentage of blacks in juvenile facilities and detention centers in Tennessee is much higher than the percentage of blacks in the general population.²⁰ And, high levels of youth incarceration and crime have negative impacts on school performance and employability. Most of the gang members interviewed experienced major school disruptions because of their involvement in criminal activities. The cycle of arrest, detention and release makes it extremely difficult to progress at grade level. Frequent absences work against developing school relationships, honing study habits and integrating into a learning culture.

According to the Hamilton County Juvenile Court, there were 5,564 juvenile petitions filed in 2011 compared to 5,768 in 2010. Petitions for “delinquent” (46 percent) and “dependent and neglected” (42 percent) made up 88 percent of all incidents. Sixteen and 17 year olds made up the highest percentage of total delinquent incidents in 2011, as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Delinquent Referrals by Age

Age	# of Incidents	Percent of Total
11	18	0.7
12	63	22.5
13	175	6.9
14	400	15.7
15	481	18.9
16	614	24.1
17	732	28.7
18	50	2.0
Others	17	0.7
Total	2,550	100

Source: Hamilton County Juvenile Report. 2011 Annual Report

Delinquent offenses occurred most frequently in Highland Park, Brainerd, Soddy Daisy, Downtown, East Brainerd, Hixson, East Chattanooga, and Ooltewah. The geographic spread of juvenile delinquent offenses shows that youth crime is not isolated in inner city urban neighborhoods. Table 4.2 lists delinquent offenses by incident location and the address of the juvenile defendant. Defendants most frequently lived in East Chattanooga, Highland Park, Hixson, Brainerd, Downtown, East Lake, East Brainerd, East Ridge, Soddy Daisy, and Ooltewah. Again, these data show that juvenile defendants live in urban and suburban neighborhoods. Both Hixson and East Chattanooga have a higher share of defendants who live in those communities than actual delinquent offenses that occurred in those areas. Only 9.4 percent of delinquent defendants lived in Highland Park, but 23.6 percent of offenses happened there.

Table 4.2 Delinquent Offenses by Incident Location and Defendant Address, 2011

Community	Offenses by Location		Offenses by Defendant's Address	
	# of Incidents	% of Total	# of Incidents	% of Total
Highland Park	603	23.6	228	9.4
Brainerd	172	6.7	186	7.7
Soddy Daisy	168	6.6	119	4.9
Downtown	159	6.2	183	7.6
East Brainerd	159	6.2	165	6.8
Hixson	152	6.0	217	9.0
East Chattanooga	132	5.2	308	12.7
Ooltewah	112	4.4	112	4.6
East Ridge	102	4.0	123	5.1

Source: Hamilton county Juvenile Court. Annual Report, 2011.

*7.3% of incident location zip codes were unknown/unreported at the time of filing.

In both 2010 and 2011, assault was the leading delinquent offense. Possession of a controlled substance was the second most common offense in 2010 and third most common offense in 2011. Oddly, the charge of “theft over \$500” jumped from 22 cases in 2010 to 197 in 2011.

Implications

The good news is that the number of juvenile offenses has not jumped dramatically in the last couple of years. However, the geographic dispersal of delinquent incidents and defendants underscores how widespread youth crime is throughout the community. As more suburban neighborhoods experience youth crime, it could heighten community sensitivity to emerging gang issues.

How can a community change the perception that the justice system is a revolving door?

Some states have implemented strong anti-gang laws to keep arrested gang members off the streets. The state of Florida has enacted statewide racketeering legislation that includes criminal gangs. The legislation is relatively new, but it represents a strong suppression tactic aimed at punishing gang members for their crimes. The Florida gang kingpin statute states:

“Any person who knowingly initiates, organizes, plans, finances, directs, manages, or supervises criminal gang-related activity commits a felony of the first degree, punishable by imprisonment for a term of years not exceeding life or as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084” (Fla. Stat. § 874.10, 2012).

Other states have also taken hard lines against gangs and gang-related crime. California gang statutes propose the following:

§ 186.22. (First of two; Repealed January 1, 2014) Street gang

- (a) Any person who actively participates in any criminal street gang with knowledge that its members engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal gang activity, and who willfully promotes, furthers, or assists in any felonious criminal conduct by members of that gang, shall be punished by imprisonment in a county jail for a period not to exceed one year, or by imprisonment in the state prison for 16 months, or two or three years” (California Stat. § 186.22., 2012).

Illinois statutes impose a prison sentence on street gang members found guilty of unlawful possession of a firearm. Similarly, the state of Georgia has enacted strong anti-gang legislation that effectively criminalizes gang membership (Georgia Stat. § 16-15-4). Such suppression tactics are controversial, but such laws would make it possible to end the “revolving door” by imposing harsher penalties on known gang members. Community dialogue is needed to determine if Chattanooga residents and leaders would support such strong measures.

Faith-based Organizations

In some community focus groups, the role of the black church in managing the gang problem was discussed. Individual meetings with community leaders also highlighted strengths and weaknesses of faith-based organizations. Overall, churches are working hard to change neighborhoods, yet conditions on the ground in some neighborhoods suggest that these efforts are not moving the needle.

A central issue with faith-based organizations is resource scarcity. There is a finite amount of funds available for programs and interventions in gang-entrenched neighborhoods. Church leaders are not necessarily united in their efforts and they sometimes compete with one another

for funding and publicity. This behavior does not promote an efficient allocation of resources to programs that are evidence-based; it also leads to programs that die off after the initial funding ends, furthering frustration in affected communities.

Some residents challenged black church leaders to “get out of the pulpit” and get out on the streets. There seems to be support for a more activist role by church leaders. The black church in Chattanooga seems to be in transition as young pastors are focusing on reaching kids on the street and older pastors playing the traditional role of leading the flock. Some gang members stated that church appeals to salvation are not strong motivators for youth. Church leaders could play a much stronger role in the streets as mediators, facilitators and violence interrupters. No one in the focus groups mentioned the role of the white church in gang prevention or intervention. However, some white majority churches are active in low-income communities and programs. They provide resources and volunteers for organizations such as YCAP. Others are partnering with The Bethlehem Center to provide community services, tutoring, and support. Community leaders could challenge other majority white churches to build partnerships with inner city churches that could provide additional fiscal and human capital in gang entrenched neighborhoods.

Implications

The critiques of black church leaders suggest that leaders could be more engaged in the community outside the walls of the church building. Church leaders could facilitate locally-based action to reclaim neighborhoods. They are well-suited to building neighborhood coalitions that are action oriented. Passive residents admonished city leaders to “do something.” Churches could be the agents who make something happen rather than relying solely on the police, elected officials or outside organizations.

Engaged church leaders could also play a valuable role in educating the business and nonprofit community on community conditions. They have relationships with gang members and could arrange interviews between gang members and community leaders. Public, business, and nonprofit leaders are all aware of the statistics in gang-entrenched communities, but one-on-one dialogue with gang members might provide needed context for understanding the roots of the gang problem.

Felons and Community Reentry

In some forums, discussions touched on incarceration and ex-offenders reentering society. Many of the male felons are fathers and after serving time they return to their communities with additional barriers to gainful employment. Many have not acquired skills in jail that enhance their employability in the mainstream labor market. Ex-offender status is a further stigma that complicates finding a job. In most cases, ex-offenders are thrust back into the communities that their former criminal behavior negatively affected. Without distinct pathways to the workforce, it is highly likely that ex-offenders will reconnect with their peer groups and engage in criminal activities.

Chattanooga used to have some bridge programs for returning felons. Chattanooga Endeavors, Inc. (CEI) provided relatively intense, evidence-based and time-tested services for 200-300 men and women a year who were let out of prison or sentenced to community supervision on felony charges. It also provided direct connections to the workforce for program completers via an alternative staffing agency. Because of funding cuts, Chattanooga Endeavors work readiness training and alternative staffing services are no longer available to returning offenders.

Chattanooga does not have any halfway housing for the largest segment of the returning prison population—men in state custody. The Salvation Army serves only federal prisoners. The Board of Probation and Parole has not approved any new housing programs. The lack of housing programs coupled with decreased employment programs means that the largest segment of Chattanooga’s returning prison population is left generally to their own means after they leave jail.

As many gang members reported, older ex-cons who come back to the community are a big problem. They build relationships with teenagers who are seeking role models, and they can provide new economic opportunities to young wannabes. Young gang members listen to the older leaders and “think, ‘I’m already in it, so I might as well be full-fledged’ and they get sucked into the lifestyle.”

Twenty six ex-offenders were surveyed and asked about gangs in Chattanooga. The full survey results are available in Appendix D. Respondents generally agreed that gangs are a problem in Chattanooga. They listed family problems, power, and boredom as the top three reasons why kids join gangs. The most frequent types of gang activities referenced by ex-offenders were selling drugs, fighting and recruiting new members. Five responded that they had witnessed a drive-by shooting. According to the survey, it is not difficult to obtain drugs or weapons in Chattanooga.

The gang assessment did not delve into the availability of counseling or mental health services, but the repeated exposure to violence and death mentioned by ex-offenders and gang members could have lingering mental health impacts.

Implications

It is critical that community stakeholders—especially the business community—create innovative programs that give ex-offenders a real second chance. If returning offenders cannot be plugged into mainstream society, they are likely to sabotage ongoing gang prevention and intervention efforts. Ex-offenders returning to the neighborhood often provide new insights on how to make more money for the gang. Similarly, at-risk youth need summer jobs and employment opportunities to develop job and life skills. If at-risk youth can access vocational training opportunities or gain exposure to legitimate means of economic independence, the number of youth attracted to the gang lifestyle might be reduced.

A business leader in a North Georgia community recently reported that a major employer had 300 jobs available that are unfilled because of failed criminal background checks and drug tests.

These situations represent opportunities to build new partnerships with businesses that are willing to invest in non-violent ex-offenders.

The Use of Social Media

School-aged participants in the assessment frequently mentioned the use of social media in gang recruitment and marketing. Like most young people, gang members are technologically savvy and they use Facebook and other social media to brag about their exploits, glorify their illegal lifestyles, and plan activities.²¹ It is important to keep in mind that not all gang activity is criminal. Gang members often cited gang membership as a primary means of meeting adolescent needs for peer acceptance, status and identity.

Students and parents complained about the prevalence of cyber-bullying. The Hamilton County Public Health Department has conducted in-depth research on bullying among school-aged children and found that it is prevalent in all neighborhoods, independent of gangs or crime rates. Bullying of any form can contribute to a child's desire to join a gang. Gang members often said that their gang "has my back." Cyber-bullying is not a gang-specific problem; it affects children throughout the community and is perpetuated by gang members and non-gang members alike.

What Can be Done to Stop Gang Violence?

Community residents were also asked for input on what types of programs and actions the community should take to combat gangs. Few participants could provide detailed answers to the question *what should we do as a community to fight gangs?* As national research makes clear, there are no silver bullets that can dismantle gangs and end gang violence in the short run. Many residents in focus groups talked about the need for school prayer, more corporal punishment and stronger families. These responses highlight local concerns that juveniles need traditional structures, accountability, discipline and stability.

Many residents expressed support for more law and order; they often blamed the justice system for a revolving door where the "police lock them up, but the courts just let them back out on the street again." As referenced earlier, community residents have mixed opinion on police tactics. Some believe the police are too harsh in their methods, fueling community anger and alienating youth. Others believe the police are not aggressively tackling the problem of gangs.

Community residents had more difficulty pinpointing operative programs in the community that are having a positive impact on youth decision-making. Parents in lower-income neighborhoods repeatedly stated "give them something to do" as a substitute for gangs. This vague prescription was given without identifying existing services in their neighborhoods, financial resources, or identifying who should be responsible for giving youth something to do. This is an important point. Some residents place the burden of "doing something" squarely on the shoulders of local government, police, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations. Residents frequently asked "what are they going to do about it" without acknowledging the critical role that parents, guardians and ordinary citizens must play in developing a child's value-system, creating boundaries, participating in educational endeavors, and organizing safe play environments.

Building parental capacity and the need for better parenting skills was mentioned as an adult-centered strategy for combating gangs. Breaking the cycle of “children having children” was another theme that resonated throughout the community. Residents highlighted the need for males to be more actively engaged in child-rearing and providing children strong role models. These concerns are not new and the issues have been studied in depth since the publication of the Moynihan report in 1965 that warned about the perils of urban poverty.²²

The YCAP program was frequently mentioned by professionals in the community as an exemplary youth intervention program. YCAP takes a holistic approach to child development. Youth are referred to the program by the juvenile justice system. Each child has clear expectations and parents are expected to participate in program events. During the school year, program participants are picked up from school and brought to the YCAP center on Central Boulevard. The facility is designed to resemble a home; it has a kitchen, game room, and a living room. Upon arrival, participants are debriefed on their day. Again, the focus is on replicating a family experience. Following that, students have access to counseling services to assist kids in anger management and behavioral problems. An hour is then devoted to homework or tutoring, followed by a home cooked group meal. The YCAP center also includes boxing rings and participants are encouraged to engage in sports. The program provides wrap-around services and participants are in a nurturing and learning environment from after school until 9PM in the evening. During the summers, participants are actively engaged in camping, sports, gardening and other outdoors activities.

The late William Julius Wilson argued that what middle class white citizens regard as pathological, might actually be rational behavior in areas of concentrated poverty. "Parents in segregated communities who have had experiences [with discrimination and disrespect] may transmit to children, through the process of socialization, a set of beliefs about what to expect from life and how one should respond to circumstances. ... In the process children may acquire a disposition to interpret the way the world works that reflects a strong sense that other members of society disrespect them because they are black."²³ If Wilson is correct, and researchers disagree on the merits of his arguments, the gang problem is one symptom of a larger systemic malady. It suggests that efforts to change behavior in some neighborhoods will encounter cultural obstacles that require generations to change.

Community forum participants also highlighted the need for job training and better career pathways for residents in lower-income neighborhoods. To change culture, children need to know that if they play by established society rules, achieve in school and delay gratification, they will be rewarded with decent jobs and upward mobility. The U.S. has invested billions of dollars in thousands of programs since the 1960s to alleviate poverty. The rise of the African American middle-class is one example of the return on that investment. However, as the book *The Truly Disadvantaged* explained, too many residents have not accessed the opportunities potentially available to them; they are stuck in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty and diminished prospects where blight and disinvestment is the norm. In the absence of a functional legal economy, black market activities and crime fill the void.

Education is Key

Education professionals interviewed as part of this assessment stridently argued that early intervention and education are keys to changing behaviors. Residents also mentioned the importance of high quality education in preparing youth for better futures. Literacy is strongly correlated with juvenile delinquency, failure to complete school and gang membership.²⁴ Education attainment levels for prisoners in state and local jails are much lower than for the general public.²⁵ Translating this knowledge into actionable policies and programs will require high levels of collaboration between educators and other community stakeholders. A potential problem in targeting at-risk children is current education policy dogma that focuses on academic proficiency as measured by state tests. The importance of showing proficiency on tests might mask real weaknesses in the development of critical thinking skills desired by employers.

The Significance of Education

While almost everyone who participated in the assessment identified education as the key to solving the gang problem, few people were able to offer concrete programmatic recommendations for improving school performance of at-risk youth. About 49 percent of public school students in Hamilton County—3rd through 8th grade—rated proficient or advanced in math and 45 percent were proficient or advanced in reading (2011-12 Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program results). Given the fact that state proficiency benchmarks are notoriously low, these results are disappointing.²⁶ Future TCAP scores will reflect more rigorous proficiency standards.

In response to the TCAP performance report, a Hamilton County Board of Education member said “Student performance at some schools is ‘a culture thing . . . Until we get the parents on board systemwide, we are going to be spinning our wheels.’”²⁷ Blaming families and parents for poor performance is unacceptable. Maintaining high expectations for all students and schools is a cornerstone of emerging research on student performance.

School data reveal racial differences in participation in more advanced academic programs and in disciplinary outcomes, as shown in Table 4.3. White students made up about 60 percent of the overall Hamilton County public school enrollment compared to 32 percent for black students in the 2010 school year. Yet, white students made up 80 percent of the gifted and talented program, 81 percent of calculus enrollment, and 71 percent of physics enrollment. Black and Hispanic students participated in advanced math and science classes at lower rates than white students. Likewise, black students had higher rates of suspension and expulsion than white students. Roughly 245 black students were reportedly expelled in the 2010 school year. The database does not permit tracking of these 245 students after they were expelled. Without an education, their odds of success in the employment market are extremely limited. School leaders reported that Tennessee’s zero-tolerance law is largely responsible for most student expulsions. Students caught with drugs can be expelled for up to a year under the law. School leaders should reevaluate expulsion policies and implement best practices in school discipline and drug intervention to keep as many troubled students on track to graduate as possible. The racial patterns in Hamilton County are similar in other school districts across the country.

Table 4.3 Racial Differences in Program and Disciplinary Outcomes: 2009-2010

Race	Enrollment				Discipline		
	Overall	Gifted & Talented	Algebra 1 in 7th or 8th Grade	Calculus	Physics	Out of School Suspension	Expulsions
White	59.8%	80.4%	69.4%	81.0%	70.7%	36.6%	29.7%
Black	32.3%	12.6%	25.9%	11.9%	24.2%	60.6%	66.2%
Hispanic	5.7%	2.5%	2.0%	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%	4.1%
Total N	42,030	1,990	735	210	495	3,925	370

Source: U.S. Department of Education. Office of Civil Rights. 2009 District Reports.

Data-driven Intervention

National experts have identified risk factors most associated with dropping out of school, but the research has been unable to identify education programs that achieve strong, sustained positive impacts.²⁸ The cold reality is that the barriers to education success start in infancy. Interventions are post hoc attempts to level the playing field between children exposed to rich learning environments and those who are not. It is not a coincidence that children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds suffer more summer learning loss than other children.²⁹ This exacerbates learning gaps in both reading and math.

Public schools collect a tremendous amount of data on individual students in all grade levels. This information needs to be strategically mined to identify the most at-risk students. Once identified, these children could be given individualized interventions that target particular learning disabilities, emotional problems and behavioral issues that interrupt learning. School counselors, if given the freedom to counsel students instead of managing operations, could also play a vital role in interventions.

Parents in Hamilton County also deserve access to aggregate data at the school level. At present, most parents are aware of school test score performance, but they lack school-level details on parental involvement, student mobility, student race & ethnicity, student attendance, and student discipline to name a few. To facilitate more informed decisions by both parents and all local policy makers, it is recommended that The Hamilton County Department of Education develop a data dashboard that can easily be accessed online. School-level data that should be included in the dashboard include racial and ethnic composition; free and reduced price lunch status; student mobility; student attendance; student disciplinary actions by type and student race; AP classes offered, AP tests taken, and AP tests passed; student achievement data (TCAP, ACT, EXPLORE, PLAN); teacher attendance; teacher experience; average teacher pay; teacher tenure; parental involvement; and, parental education attainment if available.

Changing School Demographics

The Hamilton County public school system is undergoing tremendous socioeconomic transition. At present, about 60 percent of students receive free and reduced price lunches (FRL). School enrollment reflects an influx of Hispanic residents to the area. Table 4.4 shows trends in

Hamilton County school enrollment by race and ethnicity between school years 2006 and 2010 by neighborhood type: urban, suburban or rural. The percentage of black students in urban schools has remained relatively stable, but it has modestly grown 3.4 percentage points in suburban schools and 1.4 percentage points in rural schools. The percentage of Hispanic students has almost doubled in urban schools and steadily gained in suburban and rural schools. The percentage of white students has declined in all locales. The percentage of students receiving FRL's increased from 39 percent to 47.5 percent in suburban schools and from 40 to 52 percent in rural Hamilton County schools. The increase in diversity and poverty in suburban and rural Hamilton County schools could contribute to the perception that gang activity in schools is growing.

Table 4.4 Changes in Hamilton County School Enrollment by Race, Ethnicity and Free or Reduced Price Lunch Status: 2006-2010

Locale	Black Students		Hispanic Students		White Students		FRL	
	2006	2010	2006	2010	2006	2010	2006	2010
Urban	58.4	57.7	3.7	7.3	35.9	33.0	69.3	71.9
Suburban	14.8	17.2	2.9	4.7	80.9	76.1	39.2	47.5
Rural	6.1	7.5	1.8	2.3	91.0	89.0	40.2	52.4
Total	35.9	34.8	3.0	5.7	59.4	57.6	53.2	58.7

Source: U.S. Department of Education. Common Core Data.

Community residents also complained about the failure of schools to prepare students for the workforce or postsecondary education. National data show that high percentages of high school graduates require remedial coursework in college, and employer surveys highlight the mismatch of high school graduates skills to the workforce.³⁰ In 2011, 15 percent of Tennessee High School graduates were deemed college ready in all four ACT subject areas: math, English, reading and science compared to 24 percent of high school graduates in the US.³¹

Many residents, especially African Americans, strongly supported more vocationally based education and training. They did not diminish the importance of college readiness for those students who have the requisite abilities and desire to finish college, but they contended the focus on college has not borne fruit in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty. Access to college should be available for those students with the preparation and skills needed to be successful, but many concerned citizens said “we need jobs that pay a living wage.”

The Challenge of Jobs

Community residents repeatedly stressed the need for jobs in lower income communities to provide economic opportunities to youth other than gang or criminal activity. Children in low income communities often look up to men who have cash, cars and nice clothes. The most immediate means of attaining those goods is through emulating the actions of those role models—joining a gang and engaging in criminal activities. Almost every gang member who

was interviewed explained that gang activity was the most immediate way of satisfying their material and emotional needs. Yet, several gang members also realized that gainful employment would have kept them busy and potentially out of trouble. Most of the gang members interviewed had never held a steady job in the legitimate economy.

Throughout the community, there is strong agreement that a robust economy is needed to provide youth needed economic opportunities. Moreover, community leaders and stakeholders focused on schools as the primary avenue for the development of employable skills. The focus on education is warranted; the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts slow labor force growth between now and 2020. Occupations that require a Master's degree are projected to grow the fastest during this decade. For high school graduates, occupations that include an apprenticeship are expected to grow the fastest.

Appendix E provides details on the 20 occupations that are predicted to grow the most by 2020. Six of those occupations require a bachelor's degree or higher and 10 occupations require a high school diploma or less. Many of these jobs are in the health care industry, for example personal care aides, and pay about \$10 per hour. However, several skilled trades in the construction industry—brick masons, pipe fitters, and glaziers—are projected to grow at a fast pace. These types of jobs offer immediate opportunities for less educated young adults to earn livable wages.

Many policy makers are focusing on the real need to produce more highly educated college graduates to meet the needs of businesses. Chattanooga, for example, is instituting a new secondary school that primarily focuses on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). National reports have documented the weaknesses of the U.S. school system in producing enough STEM literate graduates in both high school and college.³² In addition, numerous reports have highlighted the failure of high schools to produce college ready students.³³ Other studies have reinforced the notion that there is a mismatch between high school graduates and job skills.

Some recent research questions the assumption that high school graduates lack the skills necessary to perform well in the work place. Employers often want employees who require no additional training, but this is not a realistic expectation.³⁴ The Chicago Federal Reserve Bank and others have analyzed the skills mismatch theory and found little evidence to support it.³⁵ This debate is important because neighborhoods most affected by gang activity have high levels of unemployment and low levels of educational attainment. In the short run, ex-offenders, high school dropouts, and students who are not ready to go to college need jobs.

Unfortunately, many of these individuals have little job experience and criminal records that complicate their job search. Many African American professionals lamented the lack of focus on vocational education for high school students who are uninterested in postsecondary education.

The Manufacturing Institute reported in 2011 that 5 percent of manufacturing jobs were unfilled due to a shortage of qualified candidates.³⁶ In this same survey, employers reported that their number one recruiting tool was “word of mouth” (52 percent). Low-income communities are less likely than other communities to have informal ties to employers, leaving potential applicants out

of the loop. Employers are seeking individuals who have critical thinking skills and who can “solve problems.”

Chattanooga is fortunate that Chattanooga State has developed partnerships with local employers to train skilled workers. Building on their success, new partnerships are recommended to develop the skills of at-risk youth and to provide ex-offenders meaningful employment opportunities. Many citizens expressed concerns about recidivism and the negative impact of ex-offenders returning to low-income neighborhoods. The Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce and other local business organizations could play an active role in working with local employers interested in training and hiring at-risk youth and ex-offenders.

The location of jobs is a factor that needs to be considered when designing programs to lower unemployment. As Table 4.5 shows, the number of private sector jobs in Chattanooga zip codes declined by 6,791 between 2000 and 2010. Zip codes that added jobs were 37405, 37409, 37416, 37421, 37363 and 37379. Many zip codes experienced large decreases in the number of jobs lost between 2000 and 2010. For example, zip code 37404 in East Chattanooga shed 1,606 jobs; 37406 that includes Amnicola shed 1,072 jobs; 37407 that includes Rossville Boulevard lost 1,535 jobs. Many of the neighborhoods that are most impacted by gang violence have experienced a net decline in the number of jobs available nearby. This type of structural economic decline contributes to growing blight, abandoned structures and community decline.

Table 4.5 Private Sector Job Change by Zip Codes, 2000-2010

Zip Code	Year				Change	
	2010	2009	2005	2000	Net	Percent
37402	18,534	19,103	24,602	20,084	-1,550	-7.7%
37403	9,144	9,152	11,020	9,417	-273	-2.9%
37404	10,960	11,284	13,253	12,566	-1,606	-12.8%
37405	8,923	8,864	7,860	8,473	450	5.3%
37406	7,528	7,578	7,700	8,600	-1,072	-12.5%
37407	5,165	5,412	5,560	6,700	-1,535	-22.9%
37408	4,713	4,846	5,137	4,878	-165	-3.4%
37409*	1,919	1,719	1,797	1,669	250	15.0%
37410	1,240	1,238	1,197	1,564	-324	-20.7%
37411	6,293	6,463	Na	7,028	-735	-10.5%
37412**	4,971	5,176	6,230	na	-1,259	-20.2%
37414	213	181	276	649	-436	-67.2%
37415	5,820	5,864	5,930	7,070	-1,250	-17.7%

37416	6,209	5,827	5,756	4,783	1,426	29.8%
37419	5,538	5,109	8,712	8,916	-3,378	-37.9%
37421	36,489	43,108	36,433	31,024	5,465	17.6%
37422	857	1,069	1,242	2,898	-2,041	-70.4%
37424	97	97	141	308	-211	-68.5%
37450	697	782	926	955	-258	-27.0%
37363	4,957	4,995	4,225	3,809	1,148	30.1%
37379	2,371	2,182	2,157	1,808	563	31.1%
TOTAL	144,648	152,058	152,159	145,199	-6,791	-0.4%

*Data in row labeled 2000 are from 2002.

**Data in row labeled 2005 are from 2006.

Source: U.S. Census Community Business Patterns.

It is important to keep in mind that “jobs” alone will not solve the problem. Most of the gang members interviewed have never held traditional jobs. When asked to explain their life plan for the next 5-years, most could not articulate an answer. Similarly, most did not have a firm grasp on how much money a job would have to pay to meet their needs. In some communities, it is likely that many soft skills that businesses take for granted—showing up on time, staying on task, following protocols, and respecting authority—are not deeply rooted. The demands for better jobs and opportunities must be countered by sincere efforts to develop employable traits. As one gang member explained, “Why should I work all week at McDonalds for \$200 when I can make that much in two nights?” Granted, this perception ignores the high risks and costs associated with criminal activity, but it illustrates a mindset that values short-term gain and excitement over long term goals and employability.

Community Knowledge & Action

Policy makers and community leaders are tasked with passing legislation and funding decisions that positively affects the lives of children and parents and improving neighborhood quality of life. Community residents expressed frustration that leaders are not truly engaging the community on the issue of gangs and gang prevention. It seems that community residents want more direct communication and contact with elected officials, department heads, and government leaders.

The research conducted for this report provides a snapshot of community perceptions that require attention. Leaders are urged to engage community residents in more open and honest dialogues about the host of community development problems that produce gangs. Individual interviews with gang members were compelling. Contrary to public opinion, the gang members interviewed were not dumb, lazy or unmotivated. Many of them are intelligent, articulate, entrepreneurial and fully aware of environmental, familial, social and education interactions that affect street level outcomes.

Policy makers and community stakeholders will use this comprehensive gang assessment to develop new prevention, intervention and suppression policies and programs. It is recommended that community leaders participate in interviews with gang members to fully grasp the gang problem. Interviews can be organized through church leaders, detention centers, or through the Gang Taskforce. The breadth of information conveyed in interviews is superior to census data, maps, and blue ribbon task forces. Interviews put a human face on the gang problem.

Other community leaders—including non-profits, foundations, and civic organizations—would likely learn more about the social and fiscal conditions in neighborhoods if they could talk directly with gang members. Churches could be an excellent resource to link civic leaders to gang affiliated youth and parents. Community leaders should visit the YCAP facility on Central Avenue and witness a program that is making a positive impact on the lives of youth and their families. In general, policy leaders need to engage in field reconnaissance before making hasty policy decisions about gangs.

A focusing event is an action or outcome that is so shocking that it rivets community attention on a neglected problem. The 2011 Christmas Eve shooting was a focusing event for Chattanooga. In too many cases, focusing events provoke strong rhetoric, prayer vigils, condemnation and media attention. Too often, the event fades from the collective consciousness of the community without being adequately addressed until another focusing event occurs. The community perceptions section of the comprehensive gang assessment concludes that residents want to break the cycle of talk and inaction.

Chapter 5

Community Resources

Chattanooga is fortunate to have several organizations that provide services within the community. Many of these are non-profits funded by United Way, area foundations, or private donations. Several churches also have outreach programs focused upon at risk youth. Government organizations such as Parks and Recreation, the Chattanooga Hamilton County Public Health Department, and the Public Library also maintain programs to address family and community problems that may impact the decision to join a gang.

Based upon school surveys and community focus groups, a number of issues have created an increase in people joining gangs. These include teen pregnancy, a lack of parenting skills, academic problems at a young age, the need for jobs and job training programs, and the need for more recreation and activity programs. Focus group members observed that in the past programs to address these needs were available but that many have been discontinued. Additionally, the people that need to know about existing programs are often unaware of them or fail to access them for some other reason, such as the lack of transportation. One focus group participant noted that programs need to be available for those who are falling behind and not just for the successful since “they already know what they need to do.”

The community resources data are incomplete. Ochs Center staff members canvassed existing programs and talked with leaders of several non-profits to determine what programs are operating throughout the city. In this process, it is likely that many worthwhile programs were not captured during the inventory process. The assessment is an ongoing process, and community leaders are encouraged to contact the Gang Taskforce to report additional programs that are making a difference in Chattanooga.

Overall, there are numerous programs that attempt to build capacity in low-income neighborhoods—many of those are targeted to youth. Churches are engaged in community outreach and mentoring through a variety of programs, as well. Most of the programs have not been evaluated to determine if they are achieving their goals.

Table 5.1 lists some key resources that address at-risk youth in the area. This is not meant to be inclusive of all social programs that may provide services that touch on the gang problem. Since the decision to join a gang is influenced by a number of factors, from family issues to behavioral, educational, and economic problems, virtually every social service organization in Hamilton County could be listed as a potential source to address this concern. The United Way of Greater Chattanooga’s State Wide 2-1-1 Resource Network, for example, lists 780 programs within a 30 mile radius under the search “Chattanooga.”

The organizations listed in Table 5.1 represent the beginning of a core group of services to address gang issues in Chattanooga. These organizations have different visions, funders, and constituencies, so they may be unaware of one another or have not worked together on a specific issue. As is true of many areas, services available to at risk youth in Chattanooga are somewhat fragmented. It would be helpful to find a means of creating a dialogue between these

organizations to understand how they can work together to combat gangs in the region. The city has taken a step in this direction by convening a Literacy Task Force to this end.

The United Way’s State Wide 2-1-1 network is another source for programs available in the community. It may be accessed at:< <http://www.uwchatt.org/www/docs/1232/>>. Importantly, Chattanooga’s community resources represent one of the great strengths the community possesses in effectively dealing with current and future gang issues. Below are some suggestions for drawing upon this strength:

- Utilize existing service providers to create specific programs to help those in gangs get out of them. There is a lack of resources specifically targeted towards gang members and gang exit strategies
- Perform a service audit of existing services to review such factors as location, effectiveness, funding and financial health, and staff training/knowledge related to gang activity
- Perform a management audit to determine whether services, especially those operated or funded by the city and county, are meeting their missions related to youth
- Convene key service providers from several organizations to create a network to address gang prevention and gang membership
- Create an interactive resource guide for the community to use in addressing gang related issues and behavior
- Use service providers to address the underlying issues contributing to gangs (teen pregnancy, lack of parenting skills, jobs and job training, etc.)
- Develop program evaluation metrics to measure the impact of programs in attaining their goals

Taking the above steps will require some time and effort, but they represent an important step in targeting and coordinating already existing resources against the gang threat.

Table 5.1 Chattanooga Area Programs Serving At Risk Youth

Program	Description
100 Black Men of Chattanooga, Inc.	Seeks to improve the quality of life and enhance educational and economic opportunities for African American youth, particularly young black males. Web site address: http://www.100bmchatt.org
A Better Tomorrow	Helps at-risk youth discover their purpose through life skills, development and mentoring. Key components of programs include goal setting, money management, conflict resolution, and gang prevention and intervention. Web site address: http://www.abettertomorrowinc.org
AHEAD (Chattanooga State)	Provides tools and resources to help participants become self-sufficient. Concentrates on career goals and personal and professional development. Web site address: http://www.chattanoogastate.edu/ahead
Bethel Bible Village	Faith based organization providing a home for children of families in crisis. Web site address: http://www.bbv.org
Bethlehem Center	Faith based agency providing programs to use in character development, education and leadership. Web address: www.thebeth.org
Big Brothers Big Sisters of	Offers mentoring programs for youth. Web site address: http://www.bbbschatt.org

Greater Chattanooga	
Boys and Girls Clubs of Chattanooga	Meets developmental needs of youth in five core areas: Character and leadership, education and career, health and life skills, sports and fitness, and the arts. Web site address: http://www.bgcca.org
Chattanooga Endeavors	Works with recently released prisoners to prepare them for work, support them in their job search, and offer limited opportunities for remunerative work training. Web address: http://www.chattanoogaendeavors.com
Chattanooga Public Library	Provides reading programs for children and teen agers. Web site address: http://www.lib.chattanooga.gov/childDpt/childPrgms.html
Children's Home - Chambliss Shelter	Seeks to meet childcare needs of the community. Web site address: http://www.ch-cs.org
East Chattanooga Improvement, Inc.	Provides leadership and direction for one of the region's most challenging communities for crime, health, housing, and economic development. Web site address: www.ecimprovement.org
First Things First	Seeks to strengthen families in Hamilton County through education, collaboration and mobilization. Programs include teen classes, marriage enrichment, and parenting skills. Web site address: www.firstthings.org
Girls Inc.	Provides educational and hands-on in-school, afterschool and school break programs for girls ages 6-18 from diverse backgrounds across Hamilton County. Web site address: www.girlsincofchatt.org
Goodwill Industries	Provides a youth advantage and employment program to at risk youth. Focuses on mentoring and career planning schools. Web site address: http://goodwillchatt.org/programs/youthadvantage
Head Start of Chattanooga	Provides comprehensive child and family development services. Web site address: http://chattanoogaheadstart-earlyheadstart.com
Help us Grow Successfully (Hamilton County Health Department)	A home-based prevention and intervention program that provides services to prenatal/postpartum women, children from birth through age 5, and parents/guardians of these families. Web site address: http://health.hamiltontn.org/CMS/HUG.aspx
Hope for the Inner City	A faith based organization that partners with local churches and other organizations to improve targeted communities. Focus areas include adult literacy, dental care, housing, relief, and youth leadership. Web site address: http://hope4theinnercity.org
House of Refuge	A faith based residential ministry primarily helping African American Men overcome life controlling addictions so that they can successfully re-enter society as productive citizens. Web site address: http://chattanoogahouseofrefuge.org
On Point	A youth development organizations working with youth to increase critical thinking and improve self-worth. Web site address: http://www.liveonpoint.org
NAACP of Chattanooga	Ensures political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons. Assists Youth Councils and College Chapters in the achievement of NAACP goals. Web site address: http://www.chattanooganaacp.com
Parks and Recreation Department	Provides leisure and recreation activities for children and adults. Operates 17 neighborhood community centers. Offers activities for children and teens, including teen camps. Web site address: http://www.chattanooga.gov/parks-and-recreation/recreation27

Partnership for Family, Children and Adults	Offers a range of programs to all ages. Services include building stable lives, financial counseling, pregnancy counseling, group care, foster care placement, and adoption services. Web site address: www.partnershipfca.com
Read 20	Promotes literacy skills for early childhood, in an effort to create a community of readers, and in support of Hamilton County's community literacy goals. Web site address: www.read20.org
ReStart	Provides adult education in support of getting a GED. Web site address: http://www.restartchattanooga.org
Signal Centers	Strengthens children, adults, and families through services focusing on disabilities, early childhood education, and self sufficiency. Web site: http://www.signalcenters.org
Stop the Madness	A faith based organization focusing on youth violence prevention. Offers a summer youth enrichment camp. Web site address: www.stophemadnessinc.org
The Salvation Army	Offers education and athletic programs to youth through its community centers. Web site address: http://www.csarmy.org/programs_youth.asp
Urban League of Greater Chattanooga	Enables African Americans and other disadvantaged persons to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power, and civil rights. Provides after school, summer/spring break, and Saturday programs to students who score at proficient or advanced levels in reading and math. Also provides a career center and job training. Web site address: http://www.ulchatt.net
Y-CAP	A YMCA program that works with students between the ages of 10-14 that have been referred through the juvenile court or school systems. Provides tutoring, mentoring, and counseling on weekday afternoons. Web site address: http://www.ymcachattanooga.org/programs/teens/y-cap
YMCA YES Program	The YMCA's Youth Empowered To Succeed program assists at-risk youth (ages 17-22) in Hamilton and surrounding counties with career guidance, academic tutoring, adult mentoring and leadership development. Web site address: https://www.facebook.com/ymcayesprogram#!/ymcayesprogram

Appendix A

Census Tract Demographics 2000 and 2010

Tract	Population Total		White Population		Black Population		Hispanic Population	
	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010
4	3,407	3,143	90	123	3,265	2,936	19	20
6	2,765	3,003	2,539	2,781	154	106	24	48
7	3,498	3,810	3,153	3,506	239	116	45	109
8	1,264	1,348	613	832	563	400	20	44
11	1,848	1,774	257	494	1,412	1,086	137	169
12	3,472	3,513	393	382	3,029	2,990	19	77
13	2,150	2,064	617	518	1,256	1,070	193	415
14	2,521	2,066	1,082	706	1,113	878	221	419
16	3,024	2,481	759	391	2,101	2,001	92	22
18	2,891	2,741	1,622	1,886	1,045	627	131	130
19	4,611	3,959	134	227	4,334	3,558	82	101
20	1,763	1,211	99	517	1,516	540	108	106
23	1,349	1,492	937	742	334	438	30	277
24	3,823	4,256	3,090	2,271	480	949	132	880
25	4,118	4,773	2,180	1,578	1,730	2,382	84	682
26	2,065	2,734	689	555	1,045	1,182	293	930
28	3,766	3,832	3,077	2,741	519	814	82	135
29	2,728	2,662	1,025	1,021	1,596	1,513	27	55
30	2,085	2,380	1,230	1,065	636	912	100	285
31	1,346	1,708	847	1,032	457	606	21	43
32	3,480	3,385	474	449	2,942	2,824	31	49
33	6,694	6,477	1,647	1,229	4,926	4,995	31	113
34	3,877	4,343	2,784	2,449	763	985	116	736
101.01	5,720	5,947	5,487	5,536	87	163	41	108
101.03	3,227	3,556	3,107	3,398	53	44	30	55
101.04	3,560	3,952	3,433	3,813	45	34	20	39
102.01	2,351	3,414	2,312	3,315	6	16	9	28
102.02	3,800	4,284	3,497	3,999	224	177	29	38
103.03	2,831	2,942	2,749	2,830	22	24	36	45
103.04	4,745	5,412	4,633	5,180	28	51	33	64
103.05	2,396	3,090	2,350	3,020	10	9	18	21
103.06	2,839	3,817	2,741	3,614	50	44	17	99
103.07	5,570	5,668	5,485	5,472	11	28	22	66
104.11	5,925	6,630	5,653	6,118	131	171	35	114
104.12	4,882	5,126	4,714	4,815	36	95	48	96
104.13	3,859	3,935	3,702	3,678	24	77	37	62
104.31	6,390	6,944	5,704	5,761	267	455	75	342

104.32	5,499	6,323	5,089	5,733	114	181	81	133
104.33	4,857	5,095	4,282	3,855	279	708	122	363
104.34	1,697	1,897	1,634	1,856	11	8	29	9
104.35	5,551	5,817	5,079	5,039	215	327	72	249
105.01	6,061	6,255	5,524	5,322	219	505	126	228
105.02	2,764	3,071	2,344	2,549	268	235	64	171
106	2,947	2,834	2,686	2,503	137	124	54	113
107	2,918	2,747	2,481	2,299	248	181	108	165
108	4,376	4,120	3,658	3,284	481	369	135	329
109.01	1,368	1,457	1,247	1,251	77	93	8	23
109.02	986	1,007	935	929	8	15	11	32
109.03	5,287	6,108	4,278	5,014	637	607	106	120
110.01	1,622	1,781	1,592	1,751	0	0	4	16
110.02	6,420	6,819	6,305	6,567	10	21	42	101
111	6,441	6,444	6,294	6,204	13	17	56	109
112.01	4,717	8,321	4,347	7,203	150	347	114	429
112.03	4,873	6,235	4,139	4,803	191	404	295	630
112.04	4,468	5,055	4,062	4,446	57	84	206	332
113.11	6,139	7,268	4,679	4,985	1,125	1,527	120	450
113.14	4,547	5,057	3,729	4,004	592	617	92	251
113.21	3,997	6,599	3,430	4,936	279	722	48	248
113.23	4,636	5,463	4,150	4,305	284	773	46	133
113.24	3,609	3,989	3,237	3,313	208	336	34	113
113.25	4,552	5,475	4,035	4,383	298	598	50	145
113.26	3,435	4,485	2,939	3,467	269	531	77	158
114.02	6,060	5,802	2,473	1,695	3,398	3,783	48	163
114.11	3,463	3,910	2,277	2,131	1,049	1,526	46	120
114.13	7,797	7,813	6,517	5,814	1,015	1,544	90	185
114.42	2,394	2,716	2,273	2,148	18	373	24	65
114.43	4,997	5,664	3,763	3,612	855	1,466	129	247
114.44	3,698	3,813	625	571	3,016	3,117	20	48
114.45	3,314	3,704	2,200	1,913	914	1,288	46	310
114.46	3,090	3,194	2,712	2,359	208	422	38	212
114.47	5,353	7,951	4,993	6,850	181	540	73	297
116	5,761	5,605	5,370	4,677	120	403	68	305
117	4,382	4,341	3,948	3,615	259	411	55	178
118	6,218	6,481	5,925	5,319	77	522	57	381
119	1,769	1,706	1,539	1,281	163	268	14	110
120	1,930	1,832	1,865	1,761	42	22	6	12
121	5,279	5,725	5,152	5,392	14	79	27	69
122	3,517	2,908	113	134	3,318	2,697	50	23
123	4,623	4,609	1,697	1,433	2,787	2,963	43	67
124	3,367	5,092	1,553	3,402	1,639	1,433	51	129

Source: Census 2000 and 2010 SF1 files

Note: Census tracts 9801 and 9802 are not included in the analysis--they are non residential.

Socio-Economic Conditions by Census Tract

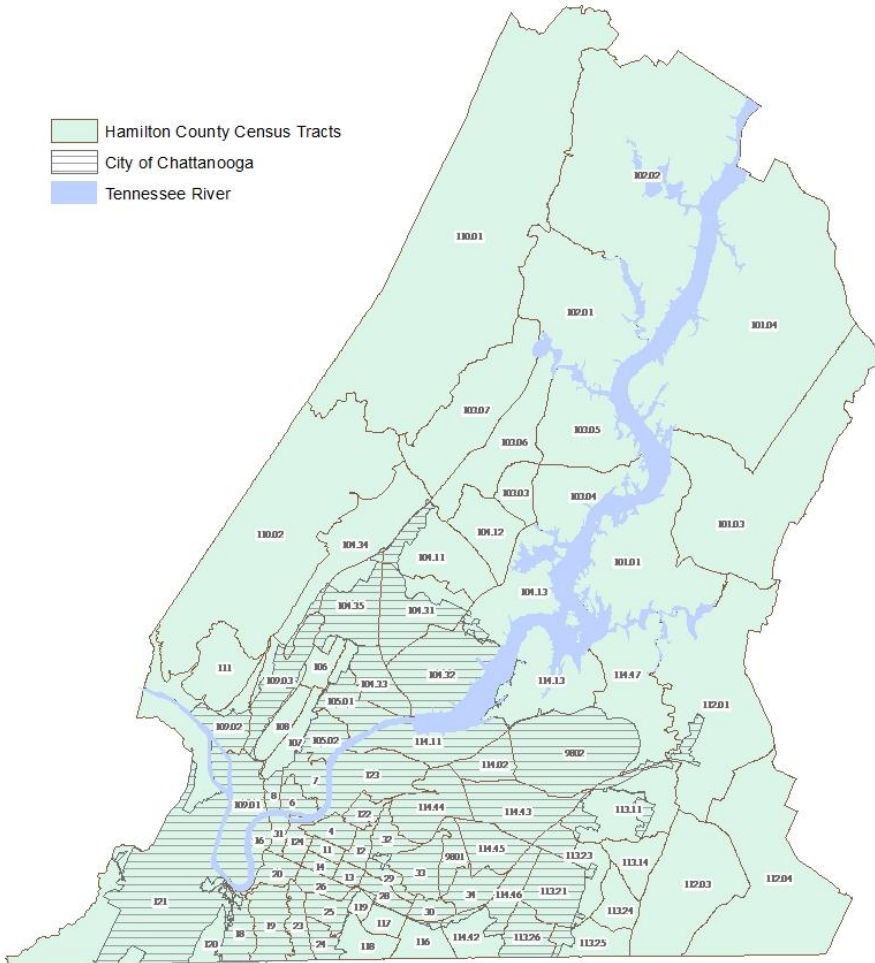
Tract	Unemployment			Households		Population Ages 5-19		
	Rate	Males	Females	Receiving SNAP	In Poverty	Median Income	Black	White
4	16.3	9.5	19	51.8	32	\$21,823	22.00%	1.80%
6	8.6	16.6	0	0	13.3	\$52,679	0.60%	7.70%
7	5.6	7	4.6	38.5	13.4	\$68,598	0.20%	12.40%
8	16.3	8.2	32.3	58.5	28	\$27,917	7.00%	8.40%
11	20.6	21.5	17.2	42.4	36.2	\$16,344	7.20%	0.50%
12	28.3	32.8	24.3	80.8	33.1	\$23,894	22.20%	0.30%
13	8.9	13.3	3.2	65.1	31.1	\$25,787	9.10%	8.00%
14	14	32.3	3.1	46.8	25	\$28,456	11.50%	3.80%
16	26.4	31.8	27.5	26	61.6	\$9,277	15.10%	0.00%
18	13.2	15.3	5.7	33.3	7.2	\$42,171	3.40%	8.20%
19	33.8	47.8	18.8	62	52.2	\$15,245	28.10%	0.40%
20	21.2	4	29.6	47.2	50.3	\$16,156	24.40%	0.00%
23	17.5	13.3	21.4	25.5	26.9	\$26,689	3.10%	7.10%
24	27.1	29.4	24.9	65.1	29.3	\$26,208	5.20%	9.10%
25	22.2	21.1	15.9	60.6	42.3	\$19,641	12.00%	5.00%
26	12.3	16	4.9	39.8	34.8	\$23,649	10.50%	4.70%
28	6.8	5.3	6.8	73.1	10.8	\$45,066	6.60%	10.10%
29	16.9	14.5	9.9	76.3	29.8	\$38,750	11.00%	4.30%
30	5	1.6	8.4	64.7	23.3	\$40,238	15.10%	1.90%
31	18.5	23.5	0	0	38.3	\$22,273	0.50%	1.20%
32	18	21.1	8	48	20.4	\$32,725	22.20%	1.50%
33	7.7	7.3	5.1	65.3	12.5	\$37,687	16.50%	1.80%
34	9.5	7.2	10.3	47.9	15.7	\$35,958	5.20%	5.70%
101.01	6.8	7.2	8.1	90.8	12	\$54,299	0.00%	17.50%
101.03	3.5	0	4.3	27.6	7.5	\$58,163	0.70%	14.00%
101.04	8.3	3.2	11.9	14	5.3	\$44,939	0.00%	19.70%
102.01	3.2	6.4	0	0	5.1	\$62,300	0.00%	15.60%
102.02	9.9	6.2	10.2	29.8	11.1	\$41,344	0.00%	16.00%
103.03	8.6	7.5	10.1	71.9	8.8	\$46,823	0.00%	22.80%
103.04	8.3	7.5	7.7	80.8	9.8	\$67,823	0.30%	20.70%
103.05	10.5	13.7	3.7	0	1.5	\$59,750	0.00%	19.00%
103.06	7	7.8	2.7	85.7	11.2	\$47,632	0.20%	22.00%
103.07	8.3	9	6.1	24.5	9.6	\$40,529	0.00%	14.80%
104.11	4.5	2.9	4.5	38.7	5.3	\$68,257	1.30%	17.40%

104.12	8.6	6.6	3.4	85.3	9	\$52,854	0.90%	24.00%
104.13	6.2	2.8	8.2	62.9	3.7	\$83,269	0.50%	17.80%
104.31	6.8	6.8	3.8	51.3	8.1	\$60,687	0.40%	14.80%
104.32	0.4	0	0	0	5.3	\$68,420	0.90%	16.30%
104.33	10.8	11.5	10.6	68.4	16.5	\$39,375	2.40%	9.20%
104.34	6	5.7	3.4	0	12.3	\$51,250	1.40%	10.90%
104.35	10.8	3.3	16.9	70.8	10.2	\$48,793	0.00%	10.80%
105.01	7	8.5	5.3	91	10.7	\$49,343	3.70%	11.00%
105.02	4.6	6.1	2.1	81.9	5.9	\$58,239	1.00%	11.20%
106	7.7	6.5	6.2	55.7	11	\$34,504	0.00%	12.70%
107	10.5	10.9	11.8	79	14.6	\$31,500	2.10%	8.40%
108	7.2	8.5	5.1	44.9	21.5	\$31,801	2.80%	11.10%
109.01	7.5	0	16.3	48.9	17.2	\$32,647	0.00%	7.90%
109.02	12.5	0	8.3	0	16.2	\$21,172	0.00%	13.30%
109.03	6.1	9.4	3.4	63.6	11.7	\$35,905	3.30%	12.60%
110.01	12.4	19	4.6	30	8.7	\$45,660	0.00%	19.70%
110.02	3	4.3	0.7	95.5	4.5	\$77,938	0.00%	21.80%
111	0.4	0	0.9	0	2.9	\$84,236	0.00%	21.90%
112.01	6.1	6.4	5.8	51.4	13.4	\$72,614	0.80%	12.30%
112.03	13.2	14.6	7.8	23.1	9.7	\$70,196	5.10%	17.60%
112.04	2.9	0.5	5.8	45.5	8.7	\$53,444	0.00%	16.90%
113.11	5.8	5.9	3.9	20.5	9.7	\$54,219	2.40%	7.50%
113.14	5.5	3.4	5.2	70.5	5.3	\$79,113	4.40%	15.40%
113.21	3	2.4	4.3	55.2	6.5	\$60,031	1.10%	11.60%
113.23	4.1	4.9	2.3	46.7	5.7	\$71,089	4.30%	13.50%
113.24	8.6	7.6	8.5	0	2.3	\$109,306	0.90%	19.00%
113.25	0.8	0	1.9	0	2.2	\$91,600	1.40%	14.10%
113.26	2.8	3	1.3	100	8.3	\$63,685	1.40%	11.00%
114.02	5.3	5.2	6.2	81	12.7	\$41,630	17.50%	1.60%
114.11	19.4	14.4	20.3	46.9	13.2	\$41,449	6.80%	3.60%
114.13	12.2	15.9	6.8	50	3.9	\$59,951	7.40%	15.10%
114.42	7.7	6.7	6.7	67.6	4.3	\$45,056	7.70%	12.20%
114.43	11.3	8.1	12.4	79.3	17	\$35,453	6.20%	12.30%
114.44	5.9	11.5	3.3	52.2	29.9	\$27,771	17.40%	1.50%
114.45	9.3	11.5	1.5	76.8	11	\$35,000	7.40%	3.00%
114.46	3.6	4.4	0	89	7	\$50,619	5.30%	8.10%
114.47	2.6	1.2	3.5	26.1	8.7	\$66,643	2.40%	19.00%
116	7.2	3.4	12.1	47.2	13.3	\$34,177	0.60%	13.60%
117	7.1	3.8	1.9	65.2	8.8	\$42,887	4.70%	6.40%
118	7.9	8.9	7.9	89.7	11.6	\$43,735	1.60%	15.00%
119	7.4	2.8	12.2	50.9	15.3	\$29,352	4.00%	7.90%
120	3.6	3	3.8	0	3.5	\$115,147	0.00%	22.60%
121	8.2	10.6	3.9	66.8	8.7	\$53,598	0.00%	11.70%

122	23.1	22.6	21.6	63.5	49.4	\$13,991	25.20%	0.00%
123	27	33.2	21.8	62.7	26	\$27,844	10.20%	8.10%
124	19.4	16.6	12	0	28.8	\$23,049	12.70%	26.00%

Source: American Community Survey, 5-year Estimates 2006-2010

Hamilton County Census Tract Map



Appendix B

Student and School Surveys: Additional Data Tables

Table A. Student Respondent Demographic Profile with Gang vs. Non-Gang Affiliation

Respondent Characteristics	Total Student Respondents (n=5057)	YES ¹ Gang Affiliated (n=762)	NO ² Not Gang Affiliated (n=3557)	NOT SURE ³ (n=93)
Percentage of total respondent population: <i>(12.7% DID NOT respond to gang affiliation questions)</i>	100.0	15.1	70.4	1.8
Gender				
Male	51.0	62.7	47.2	32.3
Female	49.0	37.3	52.8	67.7
Race				
African American	51.3	57.7	48.1	56.3
White	32.3	22.6	36.2	25.3
Mixed Race	7.3	8.0	7.0	6.9
Hispanic	5.8	6.9	5.5	8.0
Asian	1.6	1.2	1.8	1.1
Native American	1.0	2.4	0.7	2.2
Other	0.8	1.0	0,7	2.2
Current Grade Level				
Sixth	14.0	13.3	13.8	11.8
Seventh	12.3	14.2	12.0	11.8
Eighth	12.5	16.4	11.9	7.5
Ninth	18.2	20.0	18.1	17.2
Tenth	17.1	15.8	17.1	18.3
Eleventh	15.1	12.3	16.2	16.1
Twelfth	10.8	8.0	11.5	12.9
Current Age				
Minimum	9	11	9	11
Maximum	19	19	19	18
Mean (Standard Deviation)	14.83 (SD=1.99)	14.75 (SD=1.88)	15.0 (SD=2.00)	15.0 (SD=2.00)
Age Joined Gang ⁴				
Minimum		1		4
Maximum		19		15
Mean (Standard Deviation)		11.61 (SD=3.25)		10.0 (SD=3.00)

*“n” = number of students who responded to a specific question-this was a voluntary survey- participants were not required to answer 1=Student indicated “Yes have been involved,” and/or “Yes am currently involved,” and/or answered affirmatively to 75% or more of gang involvement questions, 2=Student indicated “No have NOT been involved” and “NO am NOT currently involved” on 3=Selected “not sure” yet responded affirmatively to 25% or less of gang involvement questions, 4=Student indicated “born into the gang” Independent t-tests conducted on this data found all comparisons significant ($p \leq .05$).

Table B. HCDE Employee Survey Respondent Characteristics

Respondent Characteristics HCDE Respondents (n=819)	Percent
Age	
15-24 years	1.9
25-34 years	16.7
35-44 years	23.9
45-54 years	27.3
55-64 years	26.4
65 years and over	3.8
Gender	
Female	78.1
Male	21.9
Race/Ethnicity	
White	85.3
Black	10.1
Mixed Race	2.2
Hispanic	0.9
Asian	0.8
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	0.6
Location of Employment	
Specific School Building	83.4
Central Office	16.6

Table C. HCDE Employee Focus Groups Participant Characteristics

HCDE Focus Group Participant Characteristics	
Gender	Percent
Female	71.9
Male	28.1
Age	
Under 25	3.1
25-34	21.9
35-44	25.0
45-54	12.5
55-64	37.5
Race/Ethnicity	
Caucasian/White	53.1
African American	43.8
American Indian or Alaska Native	3.1
HCDE Position	
Teacher	40.6
Transportation	24.9
Specialist	21.9
Central office	9.4
Administrator	3.1
Location	
School Building	59.4
Service Center	28.1
Central Office	9.4
Central Office Support	3.1
Student Population	
County-wide	40.6
Inner City	21.9
Suburban	18.8
Urban	15.6
Rural	3.1
Grade Levels work with	
PreK-12	31.3
PreK-5	28.1
9-12	21.9
6-8	12.5
6-12	3.1
Adults	3.1
Number of years @ HCDE	
Minimum	1
Maximum	35
Mean	10.03

Table D. Parent Focus Group Participant Characteristics

Parent Focus Group Participant Characteristics	Percent (n=11)
Gender	
Female	90.9
Male	9.1
Age	
25-34	45.5
35-44	18.2
45-54	18.2
55-64	18.2
Under 25	0.0
65 and over	0.0
Race/Ethnicity	
African American	100.0
Number of Children in household	
One	27.3
Two	36.4
Three	18.2
Four	9.1
Five	9.1
Number of Children enrolled in HCDE	
One	27.3
Two	36.4
Three	18.2
none	18.2
Child(ren)'s grade level	
Elementary School (K-5)	31.8
Middle School (6-8)	22.7
High School (9-12)	45.5
Child's school population	
Inner city Chattanooga	38.5
Other Chattanooga communities	30.8
Chattanooga suburbs	7.7
Did not answer	23.1

Table E. HCDE Middle School Disciplinary Data

HCDE Middle School Discipline Report School Years: 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 (*data from school yr. 2007/2008 not available)						Difference from 2010/2011 to 2011/2012	Percent of Change from 2010/2011 to 2011/2012
Response	School Year	Grade Level					
		6	7	8	Total		
None	11-'12	5	2	9	16	13	433.33%
	10-'11	0	0	3	3		
Change of Attire	11-'12	2	3	4	9	7	350.00%
	10-'11	0	1	1	2		
Payment	11-'12	1	2	0	3	3	300.00%
	10-'11	0	0	0	0		
Other	11-'12	188	308	252	748	558	293.68%
	10-'11	18	50	122	190		
M-Team Meeting	11-'12	17	12	8	37	21	131.25%
	10-'11	1	4	11	16		
Work Detail	11-'12	32	21	29	82	46	127.78%
	10-'11	1	5	30	36		
Remanded to an Alt. Educational Setting	11-'12	86	93	84	263	137	108.73%
	10-'11	6	28	92	126		
In-School Suspension	11-'12	1119	1047	879	3045	1578	107.57%
	10-'11	110	364	993	1467		
Detention	11-'12	362	391	453	1206	619	105.45%
	10-'11	46	145	396	587		
Saturday School	11-'12	50	57	70	177	82	86.32%
	10-'11	2	26	67	95		
Out-of-School Suspension	11-'12	900	895	949	2744	1238	82.20%
	10-'11	267	473	766	1506		
Bus Suspension	11-'12	99	90	83	272	116	74.36%
	10-'11	45	56	55	156		
Expelled	11-'12	11	15	39	65	25	62.50%
	10-'11	3	10	27	40		
Warning	11-'12	230	197	178	605	141	30.39%
	10-'11	106	120	238	464		
Written Assignment	11-'12	11	7	6	24	0	0.00%
	10-'11	4	4	16	24		
Unknown Action	11-'12	121	144	88	353	-1	-0.28%
	10-'11	47	73	234	354		
Notice to Parents	11-'12	135	143	128	406	-130	-24.25%
	10-'11	182	191	163	536		
Conference	11-'12	136	145	118	399	-134	-25.14%
	10-'11	160	178	195	533		
Corporal Punishment	11-'12	8	1	1	10	-5	-33.33%
	10-'11	4	2	9	15		
Sent Home Remainder of Day	11-'12	13	26	15	54	-36	-40.00%
	10-'11	38	28	24	90		
Class Schedule Change	11-'12	0	3	4	7	-5	-41.67%

	10-'11	3	6	3	12		
Outside Activities Denied	11-'12	2	6	2	10	-36	-78.26%
	10-'11	18	22	6	46		
Tobacco Education Group	11-'12	0	0	0	0	-2	-100.00%
	10-'11	0	0	2	2		
Withdrawn	11-'12	0	0	0	0	-2	-100.00%
	10-'11	2	0	0	2		

Table F. HCDE Middle School Incident Data

HCDE Middle School Incident Report School Years: 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 (*data from school yr. 2007/2008 not available)						Difference from 2010/2011 to 2011/2012	Percent of Change from 2010/2011 to 2011/2012
Infraction Count	School Year	Grade Level					
		6	7	8	Total		
Aggravated assault of teacher/staff	11-'12	0	0	0	0	-1	-100.00%
	10-'11	0	0	1	1		
Non-Lethal firearm	11-'12	0	0	1	1	-1	-50.00%
	10-'11	2	0	0	2		
Possession of handgun	11-'12	0	0	1	1	-1	-50.00%
	10-'11	1	0	1	2		
Sexual Assault	11-'12	1	0	2	3	-3	-50.00%
	10-'11	0	2	4	6		
Assault of a Student	11-'12	28	19	22	69	-54	-43.90%
	10-'11	30	44	49	123		
Unknown Incident Type	11-'12	100	90	69	259	-193	-42.70%
	10-'11	37	211	204	452		
Other Threat	11-'12	45	35	35	115	-15	-11.54%
	10-'11	25	45	60	130		
Bullying	11-'12	93	80	56	229	-7	-2.97%
	10-'11	58	97	81	236		
Aggravated assault of a student	11-'12	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
	10-'11	0	0	0	0		
Possession of weapon other than firearm	11-'12	8	7	3	18	1	5.88%
	10-'11	5	4	8	17		
Sexual Harassment	11-'12	26	26	25	77	9	13.24%
	10-'11	19	25	24	68		
Fighting	11-'12	311	222	209	742	87	13.28%
	10-'11	184	255	216	655		
Assault of a teacher/staff	11-'12	7	3	7	17	2	13.33%
	10-'11	1	7	7	15		
Theft	11-'12	40	35	30	105	19	22.09%
	10-'11	26	27	33	86		
Rules Violation	11-'12	2764	2958	2846	8568	2043	31.31%
	10-'11	948	2464	3113	6525		
Vandalism/Damage of property	11-'12	21	22	20	63	24	61.54%
	10-'11	11	15	13	39		
Possession, use, or distribution of illegal drug	11-'12	4	18	27	49	30	157.89%
	10-'11	2	6	11	19		
Bomb Threat	11-'12	1	2	0	3	2	200.00%
	10-'11	0	1	0	1		
Possession, use, or distribution of alcohol	11-'12	6	8	16	30	22	275.00%
	10-'11	0	2	6	8		
Possession of explosive, incendiary device	11-'12	2	0	2	4	3	300.00%
	10-'11	0	0	1	1		
Possession of a rifle or shotgun	11-'12	0	0	0	0	NA	NA
	10-'11	NA	NA	NA	NA		

Table G. HCDE High School Disciplinary Data

HCDE High School Discipline Report School Years: 2007/2008, 2010/2011 and 2011/2012							Difference from 2010/2011 to 2011/2012	Percent of Change from 2010/2011 to 2011/2012
Response	School Year	Grade Level						
		9	10	11	12	Total		
Corporal Punishment	11-'12	3	0	2	0	5	2	66.67%
	10-'11	1	1	1	0	3		
	07-'08							
Remanded to an Alt. Educational Setting	11-'12	271	173	159	107	710	182	34.47%
	10-'11	128	141	151	108	528		
	07-'08	241	135	73	50	499		
Tobacco Education Group	11-'12	14	36	34	19	103	20	24.10%
	10-'11	3	5	30	45	83		
	07-'08							
Detention	11-'12	798	705	646	271	2420	96	4.13%
	10-'11	571	466	660	627	2324		
	07-'08							
Withdrawn	11-'12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
	10-'11	0	0	0	0	0		
	07-'08							
Other	11-'12	253	217	169	69	708	-30	-4.07%
	10-'11	232	181	188	137	738		
	07-'08							
Saturday School	11-'12	247	220	169	125	761	-60	-7.31%
	10-'11	131	205	261	224	821		
	07-'08							
M-Team Meeting	11-'12	25	14	10	7	56	-5	-8.20%
	10-'11	21	20	17	3	61		
	07-'08							
Expelled	11-'12	64	53	31	19	167	-21	-11.17%
	10-'11	74	55	30	29	188		
	07-'08	74	54	31	14	173		
Change of Attire	11-'12	2	2	0	1	5	-1	-16.67%
	10-'11	0	3	3	0	6		
	07-'08	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		
Conference	11-'12	248	195	147	60	650	-143	-18.03%
	10-'11	275	177	191	150	793		
	07-'08							
Out-of-School Suspension	11-'12	1199	897	593	316	3005	-883	-22.71%
	10-'11	1280	1087	826	695	3888		
	07-'08	1314	756	409	272	2751		
Work Detail	11-'12	46	43	46	44	179	-56	-23.83%
	10-'11	42	71	54	68	235		
	07-'08							
Sent Home Remainder of Day	11-'12	33	16	11	9	69	-27	-28.13%
	10-'11	38	18	27	13	96		

	07-'08							
Warning	11-'12	273	187	140	95	695	-278	-28.57%
	10-'11	388	240	184	161	973		
	07-'08							
In-School Suspension	11-'12	909	472	346	232	1959	-1081	-35.56%
	10-'11	1282	739	694	325	3040		
	07-'08	331	124	70	54	579		
Class Schedule Change	11-'12	3	4	1	2	10	-9	-47.37%
	10-'11	7	8	2	2	19		
	07-'08							
Bus Suspension	11-'12	24	31	18	6	79	-123	-60.89%
	10-'11	91	71	32	8	202		
	07-'08							
Notice to Parents	11-'12	106	57	37	10	210	-338	-61.68%
	10-'11	212	194	88	54	548		
	07-'08							
None	11-'12	4	12	6	2	24	-40	-62.50%
	10-'11	9	17	29	9	64		
	07-'08							
Written Assignment	11-'12	9	6	1	4	20	-81	-80.20%
	10-'11	60	23	9	9	101		
	07-'08							
Unknown Action	11-'12	71	48	50	18	187	-837	-81.74%
	10-'11	358	329	196	141	1024		
	07-'08							
Outside Activities Denied	11-'12	2	0	0	0	2	-14	-87.50%
	10-'11	4	6	1	5	16		
	07-'08							
Payment	11-'12	0	0	0	0	0	-6	-100.00%
	10-'11	1	5	0	0	6		
	07-'08							

Table H. HCDE High School Incident Data

HCDE High School Incident Report School Years: 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 (*data from school yr. 2007/2008 not available)							Difference from 2010/2011 to 2011/2012	Percent of Change from 2010/2011 to 2011/2012
Infraction	School Year	Grade Level						
		9	10	11	12	Total		
Aggravated assault of a student	11-'12	0	0	0	0	0	-1	-100.00%
	10-'11	0	1	0	0	1		
Sexual Assault	11-'12	0	0	0	0	0	-3	-100.00%
	10-'11	2	1	0	0	3		
Unknown Incident Type	11-'12	88	53	47	11	199	-244	-55.08%
	10-'11	207	103	61	72	443		
Bomb Threat	11-'12	0	1	0	1	2	-2	-50.00%
	10-'11	2	1	1	0	4		
Sexual Harassment	11-'12	8	9	3	1	21	-20	-48.78%
	10-'11	26	4	3	8	41		
Assault of a teacher/staff	11-'12	10	5	7	0	22	-15	-40.54%
	10-'11	15	10	4	8	37		
Other Threat	11-'12	54	22	12	4	92	-62	-40.26%
	10-'11	88	36	11	19	154		
Theft	11-'12	46	20	10	6	82	-33	-28.70%
	10-'11	35	42	22	16	115		
Bullying	11-'12	51	13	13	1	78	-26	-25.00%
	10-'11	75	14	10	5	104		
Assault of a Student	11-'12	29	8	7	4	48	-14	-22.58%
	10-'11	41	9	8	4	62		
Vandalism/Damage of property	11-'12	14	9	7	3	33	-7	-17.50%
	10-'11	20	8	9	3	40		
Fighting	11-'12	219	135	79	35	468	-88	-15.83%
	10-'11	210	162	102	82	556		
Rules Violation	11-'12	3963	2994	2347	1281	10585	-1175	-9.99%
	10-'11	3640	3582	2514	2024	11760		
Possession of weapon other than firearm	11-'12	8	4	7	1	20	-1	-4.76%
	10-'11	10	5	6	0	21		
Aggravated assault of teacher/staff	11-'12	1	0	0	0	1	0	0.00%
	10-'11	0	0	1	0	1		
Possession, use, or distribution of illegal drug	11-'12	66	37	26	19	148	14	10.45%
	10-'11	34	44	26	30	134		
Possession, use, or distribution of alcohol	11-'12	5	10	5	20	40	12	42.86%
	10-'11	6	7	5	10	28		
Non-Lethal firearm	11-'12	2	0	0	1	3	1	50.00%
	10-'11	0	0	0	0	2		
Possession of explosive, incendiary device	11-'12	1	0	2	0	3	2	200.00%
	10-'11	0	1	0	0	1		
Possession of handgun	11-'12	3	2	2	4	11	9	450.00%
	10-'11	1	0	1	0	2		
Possession of a rifle or shotgun	11-'12	0	0	1	0	1	NA	NA
	10-'11	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA		

Appendix C

June 2, 2012 Resident Survey Result Summary

On June 2 community residents were surveyed at a “Future is Ours” event located at the Carver Recreation Center. The survey consisted of 17 questions. The hardcopy survey was completed by 98 residents of the city and the county. Approximately two thirds were females and one third males. There were 79 African Americans and 19 Whites. The majority of those responding to the education question had high school, some college, or completed college. Below are results to the gang related questions:

- 66% feel that there are gangs in their community
- 25% felt that their children are in danger of joining a gang
- Most felt that gang activity had either remained the same or increased in the past year
- The top three concerns respondents had about their community are gang activity, unemployment, and drug dealing
- The top three problems that gangs present are increases in violent crimes, drug crimes, and weapons crime
- Top reasons for gang activity include a lack of activities, family and friends being in gangs, the need to feel love or a sense of belonging, school problems and family problems.
- The top three things that should be done in the community are mentoring, programs/recreation, and jobs
- The most important organization for dealing with gangs is the police. The least important is the office of youth and family services
- Many were not specifically aware of how their community has responded to gangs.
- Respondents were split on their level of satisfaction with their community’s response to gangs
- Among the top three activities that respondents were willing to do to help deal with gangs are participating in neighborhood outreach, becoming a youth leader, and mentoring

Appendix D

Ex-Offender Survey Results

Twenty-six Individuals recently convicted of an offense were surveyed concerning their experience and opinions concerning gangs in the community. Responses are as follows:

Demographics

- Age range was between 18 and 57 with an average of 31
- 15 were male, 6 female, and 5 did not respond to the gender question
- 16 were African American, 4 Caucasian, 2 mixed
- 19 had children and 7 did not; the number of children was from 1 (4) to 6 (2)
- 14 of the 26 checked that they were employed
- Of those responding to place of residence, most appear to live within the Chattanooga city limits

Education

- 8 had completed high school and 11 completed between 8-11th grades. 1 had a GED
- Marks in school tended to be mostly C's with some B's and C's and some C's and D's
- 11 had dropped out of school and 16 had been either suspended or expelled

Gang Association and responses

- 5 have family members in gangs and 17 do not; family members indicated were brothers, cousins, and nephews
- 2 responded that they are currently gang members, but a total of 4 responded to the questions for gang members
- 3 responded that their most recent rank in a gang is leader; 1 responded core leader, and 2 sometime members
- Reasons for joining or associating with a gang include a friend was in the gang (1), was forced to join (1), for money (2), due to a family tradition (1), or beliefs (1).
- One joined a gang at 10 years of age and another at 9
- 1 is in a gang to feel respected and 4 responded that the gang was like a family
- 1 answered yes to thinking of ever leaving the gang
- Reasons for leaving a gang were moving (1), getting married (1), becoming a parent (2), family responsibilities (2), obtaining a job (1) and recreation/sports program (1)

Gang Activities

- 17 responded that gangs were a problem in their community
- The top three causes for gang activity were family problems (11), power (11), and boredom (9). Poverty (8), family or friends being in gangs (8), and the need to feel loved/sense of belonging (8) also scored relatively highly
- Selling drugs (13), fights between gang members of different (12) and gang recruiting (9) were the most frequent types of gang activities that respondents had witnessed while in school. 5 indicated that they had seen a drive-by shooting and 8 that they had witnessed

gang intimidation. These numbers were similar to what respondents had witnessed in the last year.

Drugs, alcohol, and illegal activities

- Responses to a question concerning how easy it would be to get a handgun were: very hard (5), somewhat hard (1), somewhat easy (7), very easy (3), do not know (3), no response (7)
- Responses to ability to get drugs were: very hard (4), somewhat hard (1), somewhat easy (2), very easy (14), do not know (1), no response (1)
- 10 responded that they had used alcohol in the past year, and 6 that they had used or tried drugs
- 6 had threatened someone in the last year and 3 had shoplifted

Addressing the gang problem (open ended question)

- Among suggestions were more activities, more community togetherness, and jobs
- Some also suggested getting gang members off of the streets and putting them in jail

Appendix E: Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupation Predictions: 2010-201=20

Occupation	Percent Change	Number of new jobs added	Wages (May 2010 median)	Entry-level Education	Related Work Experience	On-the-job Training
Personal Care Aides	70	607,000	\$19,640	Less than high school	None	Short-term on-the-job training
Home Health Aides	69	706,300	20,560	Less than high school	None	Short-term on-the-job training
Biomedical Engineers	62	9,700	81,540	Bachelor's degree	None	None
Helpers--Brickmasons, Blockmasons, Stonemasons, and Tile and Marble Setters	60	17,600	27,780	Less than high school	None	Short-term on-the-job training
Helpers—Carpenters	56	25,900	25,760	Less than high school	None	Short-term on-the-job training
Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	52	41,700	29,710	Associate's degree	None	None
Reinforcing Iron and Rebar Workers	49	9,300	38,430	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Apprenticeship
Physical Therapist Assistants	46	30,800	49,690	Associate's degree	None	None
Helpers--Pipelayers, Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	45	26,300	26,740	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Short-term on-the-job training
Meeting, Convention, and Event Planners	44	31,300	45,260	Bachelor's degree	Less than 1 year	None
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	44	23,400	64,380	Associate's degree	None	None
Occupational Therapy Assistants	43	12,300	51,010	Associate's degree	None	None
Physical Therapist Aides	43	20,300	23,680	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Glaziers	42	17,700	36,640	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Apprenticeship
Interpreters and Translators	42	24,600	43,300	Bachelor's degree	None	Long-term on-the-job training
Medical Secretaries	41	210,200	30,530	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Moderate-term on-the-job training
Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	41	116,600	60,570	Bachelor's degree	None	None
Marriage and Family Therapists	41	14,800	45,720	Master's degree	None	Internship/residency
Brickmasons and Blockmasons	41	36,100	46,930	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Apprenticeship
Physical Therapists	39	77,400	76,310	Doctoral or professional degree	None	None

End Notes

¹ Promise Neighborhoods Research Consortium. Prosocial Attitudes, Skills and Behaviors. < <http://promiseneighborhoods.org/outcomes/pro-social-attitudes-skills-behaviors/> > (Accessed June 16, 2012).

² Fournier, Ron and Sophie Quinton. *How Americans Lost Trust in Our Greatest Institutions*. The Atlantic, April 20, 2012. < <http://promiseneighborhoods.org/outcomes/pro-social-attitudes-skills-behaviors/> > (accessed April 22, 2012).

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⁴ Lose, Friedrich and David Farrington. Direct Protective and Buffering Protective Factors in the Development of Youth Violence, *Am J Prev Med* 2012;43(2S1):S-18.

⁵ Putnam, Robert B., Karl B. Frederick, and Kaisa Snellman. *Growing Class Gaps in Social Connectedness among American Youth, 1975-2009*. Harvard Kennedy School of Government; Saguaro Seminar. July 12, 2012. < <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/saguaro/research/inequality.htm> > (accessed July 16, 2012).

⁶ Settersten, Richard A. Worry More about Under-involved Parents. The New York Times, Room for Debate. July 12, 2012. < <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2012/07/14/when-parents-hover-and-kids-dont-grow-up/worry-more-about-under-involved-parents> > (accessed July 16, 2012).

⁷ Cook, Phillip J., Bruce A. Lawrence, Jens Ludwig and Ted Miller. The Medical Costs of Gunshot Injuries in the United States. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1999, vol. 282, no. 5: pp. 447-454.

⁸ The mean is the average of the data. All data points are added together and then divided by the number of data points. Extremes in the data can sway the average. In the data from the CPD gang ages were listed as young as 3 and as old as 78. The median is the data point that falls in the middle when the data are arranged lowest to highest.

⁹ The demographic changes in the metro region indicate a growing presence of Hispanics. Based on the data received from the CPD, there is little evidence that Hispanics gangs are operating in the Chattanooga area.

¹⁰ It is difficult assess the rate at which gang crime is increasing versus the impact that better reporting of gang activity is occurring. Although the data indicate increasing frequency of gang activity over the years, better intelligence gathering and focus on gang activity by the CPD has lead to improved data tracking in recent years.

¹¹ ArcMap 10 was used to map and spatially analyze the data. Out of the 1883 records, 47 failed to geocode for a geocode rate of 97.5 percent. To identify hotspots in this report, the Getis-Ord G_i^* test was used. A block may have many incidents of crime but the G_i^* identifies a hotspot when nearby blocks also have high incidents of crime. Both the 95 percent confidence interval, areas that are orange, and the 99 percent confidence interval, areas that are red, are reported. For hotspot maps, data were aggregated to the census block level to protect neighborhood confidentiality. Census blocks can conform to city blocks in urban areas but in more rural areas they maybe larger. For the most part census blocks boundaries tend to follow roads, rail lines or water entities. Because the data for the hotspots analysis are aggregated by year, the use of them should be towards policy and programs. With precise data, hotspot analysis can be used on a timely basis to direct policing resources.

¹² Kelling, George L. and James Q. Wilson. Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety. The Atlantic, March 1982. <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1982/03/broken-windows/304465/> (accessed August 8, 2012).

¹³ If a weapon code was entered, the codes 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 were recoded into a firearm variable.

¹⁴ The CPD provided Ochs Center with raw crime data for the city. These data have duplicate entries and addressing issues that make geocoding and analyzing the data difficult. Because it was difficult to assess which data were valid and which were duplicates or reporting errors, this section does not compare gang crime to overall crime in Chattanooga. For example, homicide (UCR code 09A) has different measures depending on the database consulted. In a year in which the number of homicides increased, 2008, no homicides were attributed to gang activity. This would be a change from the previous year and the following year.

Table: Differing database information

Year	Crime Files	Gang Activity File	Number reported to TFP by CPD
2007	16	6	16
2008	32	0	20
2009	22	5	11
2010	31	6	20
2011	44	3	25
Total	145	20	92

Note: Beth Burger, "Chattanooga Police Department recorded 25 homicides in 2011," *Time Free Press*, January 2, 2012. <http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/2012/jan/02/chattanooga-police-department-recorded-25-homicide/>

Table: A general comparison of UCR data to gang data.

	Year	UCR	CPD
Robbery	2007	524	0
	2008	511	8
	2009	535	4
	2010	512	7
Burglary	2007	2385	1
	2008	2849	5
	2009	2987	3
	2010	2680	9
Motor Vehicle	2007	1033	2
	2008	1088	0
	2009	913	2
	2010	836	0
Aggravated Assault (13A)	2007	1382	5
	2008	1285	13
	2009	1187	20
	2010	959	12

¹⁵ The National Gang Center. Frequently Asked Questions. <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/About/FAQ#q15>

¹⁶ Sharkey, Jill D., Zhanna Shekhtmeyer, Lizbeth Chavez-Lopez, Elizabeth Norris, and Laura Sass. *The Protective Influence of Gangs: Can Schools Compensate*. Aggression and Violent Behavior, 16 (2011): pp. 45-54. <<http://www.goccp.maryland.gov/msac/documents/gang-studies/gangs-in-schools/Sharkey-2010.pdf>> (accessed August 3, 2012).

¹⁷ City of Chicago. Official Press Release. Mayor Emanuel Announces Initiative to Prevent Gang Activity In and Around Vacant Buildings. July 9, 2012. <http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/mayor/press_room/press_releases/2012/july_2012/mayor_emanuel_announcesinitiativetopreventgangactivityinandaroun.html> (accessed August 3, 2012).

¹⁸ City of Boston. Initiatives. < <http://www.cityofboston.gov/police/about/initiatives.asp> > (accessed July 22, 2012).

¹⁹ U.S. Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency and Prevention. Disproportionate Minority Contact. <<https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/228306.pdf>> (accessed July 6, 2012).

²⁰ Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth. Disproportionate Minority Confinement. <http://www.tn.gov/tccy/dmc.shtml> (accessed August 3, 2012).

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²² Office of Planning and Research. United States Department of Labor. The Negro Family: The Case for National Action. March 1965. <<http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/history/webid-meynihan.htm>> (accessed June 16, 2012).

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