

COUNSELORS' AWARENESS OF GANGS AS A PREDICTOR  
OF PROACTIVE VS. REACTIVE COUNSELING STYLES.

By

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**Abstract**

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Counselors' Awareness of Gangs as a Predictor of Proactive vs. Reactive  
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This paper examines what school guidance counselors in training at UW-Stout know about ethnic gangs. An opinionated response form was including in the true and false questionnaire developed by the investigator was distributed to 40 graduate students in the school counseling programs. This questionnaire was developed to assess the level of knowledge about ethnic gangs among school counselors for possible future use to address areas of deficiency about gang knowledge.

This paper outlines gang history, interventions, myths, facts, counseling styles and the school counselors' role in relating to these counseling styles. These gang topics were used to develop the questions for the questionnaire.

The purpose of this study was to assess counselors' awareness of gangs as a predictor of proactive vs. reactive counseling styles. This information can help to discover those areas of information about gangs in which these graduate students are deficient. Research suggests that the school counselors in training tended to be more proactive than reactive, however they also scored low on the gang knowledge questionnaire.

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

Human beings are social beings. Whatever their age, people like to come together in-groups. It is through groups that we meet many of our basic needs, such as food, clothing, and shelter. Groups also meet other needs, such as education, security, belongings, and other meaningful purposes. Groups give us a form of identification that being an individual can't give us. Being part of a group is a normal and healthy behavior that we exhibit as social beings.

Not all groups are healthy however. Groups can be dangerous, destructive and unhealthy. Increasingly we are seeing people becoming involved with groups called gangs. "Gangs are groups of people who form an allegiance for a common purpose commit violent, unlawful or criminal activities" (Westrick, 1995, p. 3).

From the 1920's to the present day, gang activity has not only increased and intensified; it has done so with senseless crime and violence. Gangs generally have a leader or groups of leaders who issue orders and benefit from their power. Gang members may also wear their colors, tattoos or other logos and identifying marks on their bodies. Many gangs also adopt certain types of hairstyles and communicate through the use of hand signals and graffiti on walls, streets, schoolwork and school property. It must be understood that it is not illegal to be in a gang and indeed many adults are currently involved in activities that meet Webster's definition for a gang. Webster defines a gang as a group of people associated together in some specific way.



Many gangs of today, especially young gangs, break the law to provide the financial means for gang activity or to further the gang's reputation on the streets. With gangs come the destructive behaviors such as drug dealing, homicides and other violent acts. Gang members vary in race, sex, religion and socio-economic backgrounds. In this study, the history of different ethnic gangs will be described such as Hispanic, African-American, Asian and Caucasian street gangs.

Schools are another institution affected by gangs. Gangs in schools influence students and teachers in many ways. Students are intimidated and pressured to join gangs because they have to worry about personal and family safety. This is one of the main ways that gangs expand and take power. Teachers are also influenced by gang activity in schools. There is often a power struggle between the teacher and gang members, which can cause safety issues for the teacher. Getting back our schools from gangs is a key factor to a successful future for our youths. This important topic because the future of our youth is affected by gangs. We need to examine the negative behaviors and try and to figure out the thoughts behind the actions. The stereotyping of gangs by society is another area that needs to be objectively examined.

There are many benefits that can result from doing this study. The first is to establish an awareness of what gangs are and the activities that are involved. This study will look at interventions that can be implemented to control gangs. These interventions would include dress codes, training the staff which would deal with curriculum topics and first line of defense for the staff. The staff needs to learn how to protect themselves because it was mentioned before there is a power struggle and bodily harm might result from this struggle.

Many future counselors are unaware of what gangs are and feel that it only happens in urban areas. To the contrary, gangs can exist almost everywhere.

This study will provide a basis for a gang prevention curriculum that would be beneficial to graduate school counselors. It is important for future counselors to have this type of updated curriculum to use in their schools. This curriculum would deal with interventions, counselor's roles, and problems with counselor's knowledge that lead to stereotypes. These areas will be addressed to help counselors become aware of gangs; to help them with prevention of gang activity, or help control a problem that might already exist.

In the guidance and counseling program, we hear largely positive things about schools and only a few negative things, none dealing with gangs. There are no classes to teach us about gang prevention and there is no curriculum to teach us prevention in our schools. This study will help educate graduate school counselors about the gang problems in their schools.

A review of literature shows the history of the different racial gangs. It also indicates a link between proactive counselor's ability to deal with gang activity in their schools. Research also shows that more gang activity occurs in schools where counselors are poorly prepared to deal with the problem. Therefore the research hypothesis for this

study is that counselors that are proactive in their approach towards gangs are much more prepared to deal with gang activity than counselors who are reactive in dealing with gang activity.

Statement of the problem

The purpose of this study is to determine the level of gang knowledge measured by the gang knowledge inventory for guidance counselors who differ along proactive vs. reactive behavior sets.

### Null Hypothesis

There is no statistically significant difference between level of knowledge counselors who are proactive in dealing with gang activity to the counselors who are reactive in dealing with gang activity.

### Definition of Terms

Proactive Counselor: A counselor who sets up curriculum and guidelines to deal with problems that does not exist at the moment.

Reactive Counselor: A counselor that reacts to certi(tsnhtis22ntor)-170.7aft3( knowl)-12.11.5cts16n

## Review of the Literature

In order to better understand the problems of gangs in our schools we must first see how they originated. Street gangs in America vary in ethnic backgrounds such as Hispanic, African-American, Asian, and Caucasian gangs. Regarding gangs, more information exists describing the history and evolution of ethnic gangs in California than other states. It is important to focus on the history of these different ethnic gangs because it can give us some insight on the future.

### **Hispanic Street Gangs**

Hispanic gangs began forming in California during the early 1920's. They started as a looseknit group bonding together for unity and socializing in the barrios (neighborhoods) where the same culture, customs, and language prevailed. "Gang members ranged from fourteen to twenty years old. Property crimes such as burglary and vandalism were their crimes of choice"(Anderson, 1993, p.63). These gangs had no formal structure or leadership. They were very defensive of their barrio, and they would protect it with a vengeance. Gang fights occurred between rival gangs as a result of disputes, turf differences or transgressions. Often their weapons included knives, guns, chains, clubs, rocks, and bottles. "The commission of a crime became a way of gaining status with the gang. Imprisonment in the California Youth Authority or the California Department of Corrections earned a gang member great status with the other gang members." (Sanders, 1994, p.32)

By the 1980's, these gangs began targeting their communities and surrounding neighborhoods with drive-by shootings, assaults, murders, and other vicious crimes. Violence has become a way of life for these gangs. The gangs developed some organization and structure, and leaders emerged from the ranks of older gang members who had been stabbed or shot in gang fights or released from prison. "Known as veteranos, these gang leaders began to recruit new members and train them in gang-related criminal activities" (Yablonsky, 1992, p.43). They continued to be turf oriented, and gang fights progressed to gang wars. Yablonsky (1992) states that the age span for gang members widened, encompassing male youths ranging from twelve to twenty-five years old, who were willing to fight and die for the gang. Most of the gangs require new members to commit a crime, such as stealing a car or committing a burglary or robbery, before becoming a gang member.

As the Hispanic gangs evolved, they established unique trademarks such as tattoos, hand signs, monikers, and graffiti.

"Elaborate tattoos depicting the initials or name of the gang symbolized loyalty to a particular gang. Hand signs formed the letters of the gang's initial. Monikers were names assumed by or given to a gang member. Intricate graffiti marked the gang's territorial boundaries and served as a warning to rival gangs" (Sanders, 1994, p.39).

Gang members used these distinguishing characteristics to demonstrate gang unity, strengthen participation and challenge rival gangs.

Curtis (1997) states the Department of Justice estimates that there could be as many as 95,000 Hispanic gang members in California today. Located in all of the major metropolitan cities, these gangs vary in size from a few members to several hundred.

"The gang members range in age from twelve to forty years old, and many are second -or

third- generation gang members"(Curtis, 1994, p. 15). Taylor (1995) found that adult Hispanic gang members recruit and use juvenile gang members to commit crimes or carry weapons because juveniles are subject to less severe sentences compared to adult offenders. Recruitment of the new gang members often requires the member to commit a drive-by shooting or some other form of felonious assault. Loyalty to their gang usually extends to their death. Reliance on tattoos, hand signs, and graffiti continues to enforce the gang's presence, these symbols are frequently used to threaten rival gangs besides endorsing their own gang.

"Their criminal activities now range from robberies, burglaries, grand thefts, vehicle thefts, receiving stolen property to assaults, batteries, drive-by shootings, and murders. They are becoming involved as entrepreneurs in the selling of narcotics-- particularly PCP, Mexican tar, heroin, methamphetamine, and marijuana"(Curtis, 1994, p.388).

The gangs' arsenals have expanded to large caliber handguns, shotguns, and automatic weapons and with powerful weapons, comes more violent crimes.

"Hispanic gang members were responsible for approximately 80 gang- related drive-by shootings in Stockton, California during 1991"(Whyte, 1993 p. 23).

"The EastsideLongos", a Hispanic gang in Long Beach, California has been involved in a gang war since October 1989 with the "Tiny Rascal Gangsters", a

Cambodian gang also located in Long Beach and in several other parts of the state including Fresno and San Diego. Drive-by shootings and assaults between these two gangs have resulted in sixteen killings this far"(Sanders, 1994, p.52).

Law enforcement is an increasing target of gang violence. "Hispanic gangs in the Los Angeles area, such as the "Harbor City" and the "Crazy" have attacked both on and off duty police officers"(Whyte, 1993, p.31). A few of the gangs are now beginning to recruit non-Hispanic gang members, and some Hispanic gang members are joining

different ethnic gangs. Various Hispanic gangs are uniting with other ethnic gangs, usually from the same neighborhood. This affiliation allows them more neighborhood protection from rival gangs. Hispanic female gangs are starting to evolve exclusive of the traditionally male-dominated Hispanic gangs. Sanders (1994) states that some of the female gang members such as the "Fresno Bulldog Babes", are participating in drive-by shootings, auto thefts and assaults.

### **African-American Street Gangs**

African-American gangs began forming in California during the 1920's. They were not territorial, rather, they were loose associations, unorganized, and rarely violent. They did not identify with graffiti, monikers, or other gang characteristics. These early gangs consisted generally of family members and neighborhood friends who involved themselves in limited criminal activities designed to perpetrate a "tough guy" image and to provide an easy means of obtaining money. Moorem (1994) wrote that from 1955 to 1965, the African-American gangs increased with larger membership and operated primarily in south central Los Angeles and Compton. This was partly due to more African-American youths bonding together for protection from rival gangs. It was not until the late 1960's when the Crips and Bloods, the most violent and criminally active African-American gangs originated. "The Crips began forming in southeast Los Angeles by terrorizing local neighborhoods and schools with assaults and strong-arm robberies. They developed a reputation for being the most fierce and feared gang in the Los Angeles area" (Moorem, 1994, p.37).



Other African-American gangs formed at about the same time to protect themselves from the Crips.

"One such gang was the Bloods, which oriented in and around the Piru Street area in Compton, California; thus some Bloods gangs are referred to as Piru gangs. The Bloods, which were outnumbered at the time by the Crips three to one, became the second, most vicious African-American gang in the Los Angeles area"(Johnson, 1993, p. 18).

Both the Crips and the Bloods eventually divided into numerous smaller gangs (or "sets") during the 1970's. They kept the Crips' and Bloods' (Piru) name, spread throughout Los Angeles County, and began to claim certain neighborhoods as their territory. Their gang rivalry became vicious and bloody. "By 1980, there were approximately 15,000 Crips and Bloods in and around the Los Angeles area"(Taylor, 1995, p. 169). The gangs ranged in size from a few members to several hundred and had little, if any organized leadership. The typical age of gang member varied from fourteen to twenty four years old. "Initiation into a gang required the prospective member to "jump in" and fight some of the members already in the gang. Another initiation rite required them to commit a crime within the neighborhood or assault rival gang members"(Moorem, 1994, p. 80). They remained territorial and motivated to protect their neighborhoods from rival gang members. They established unique and basic trademarks such as colors, monikers, graffiti, and hand signs.

"The color blue was adopted by the Crips as a symbol of the gang recognition; red became the color of the Bloods. Monikers such as "**Killer Dog**", "**12-Gauge**" and "**Cop Killer**" often reflected their criminal abilities or their ferociousness as gang members"(Johnson, 1993, p. 22).

Graffiti identified the gang; hand signs displayed symbols unique to the name of their gang. It was not unusual for members to flash hand signs at rival gang members as a

challenge to fight. They took great pride in displaying their colors and defending them against rival gangs. They were willing to die for their gang, especially in defense of their colors and neighborhood. It was not until the early 1980's that the era of the drive-by shootings began. Moorem (1994) points out that gang members became involved in a variety of neighborhood crimes such as burglary; robbery; assault; and the selling of marijuana, LSD, and PCP.

The issue of gang involvement in narcotics trafficking was generally considered to be of a minor nature prior to the 1980's. "By 1983, African-American Los Angeles gangs seized upon the availability of narcotics, particularly crack as a means of income. Crack had supplemented cocaine as the most popular illicit drug of choice"(Moorem, 1994, p.88). Prime reasons for the widespread use of crack were its ease of conversion for smoking, the rapid onset of its effect on the user, and its comparatively inexpensive price.

"The migration of African-American Los Angeles gang members during the 1980's to other United States cities, often for reasons other than some vast gang-inspired conspiracy resulted in the spread of crack sales and an abundant wave of violence"(Taylor, 1995, p.185).

This spread of crack sales can be traced back to the gang members' family ties in these cities and to the lure of quick profits. These two reasons provided most of the inspiration and motivation for the migration of gang members.

Crips and Bloods gangs and their members in narcotics trafficking display diversity, which allows for different levels of involvement from narcotics distribution by adolescents to the more important roles of supervising the narcotics sales. In the past, an individual's age, physical structure, and arrest record were often principal factors in

determining gang hierarchy; money derived from narcotic sales soon became the symbol, which now signified power and status.

### **Asian Street Gangs**

Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian gangs represent the bulk of the Asian criminal street gang problem in California. It was not until the late 1970's, that Vietnamese gangs began to emerge, followed by Laotian and Cambodian gangs in the early 1980's.

"Asian gangs ranged in size from five to two hundred gang members; and their crimes included residential and business robberies, auto thefts and burglaries. Rarely were they involved in drive -by shootings. The gang members varied in age from fifteen to twenty five years old, and the older gang members were usually the leaders"(Chan, 1994, p.8)

Early formation of Asian gangs was loose -knit, and the gang members did not associate with each other on a continuous basis. They had little, if any, loyalty to a particular gang. Le (1996) points out that unlike Hispanic and African-American gangs, Asian gangs began with no unique characteristics such as tattoos, hand signs, or graffiti. They had no names for their gangs, and weren't organized or turf oriented. "By 1985, the Vietnamese gangs committing organized auto thefts, extortion's, firearms violations, home- invasions robbobiers, witness intimidation's, assaults, and murders"(Lam, 1994, p. 5). Members frequently used some type of weapon during the commission of their crimes. "Vietnamese gang members began targeting their own communities with ruthless and vicious crimes and would often travel to various Vietnamese communities throughout the country to commit these crimes"(Lee, 1997, p.14).

The Laotian and Cambodian gangs remained predatory. They became turf oriented, and their crimes were random property crimes, usually involving some form of robbery or burglary.

" The Department of Justice estimates there could be as many as 15,000 Asian gang members in California today. They are still principally representative of Vietnamese, Laotian, and their members vary in age from thirteen to thirty five years old"(Takaki, 1989, p.74).

They continue to terrorize and prey upon their communities with violent crimes, occasionally resulting in murder. They have increased their traveling patterns from coast to coast committing these crimes. Their growing level of mobility and violence has made them a national crime problem.

### **Caucasian Street Gangs**

Caucasian gangs have been forming in California for decades. Early Caucasian gangs were orientated around motorcycle gangs like the "Hells Angels". Today's outlaw motorcycle gangs are not considered to be street gangs but rather, organized crime groups. It wasn't until the late 1980's that the Skinheads were identified as the primary source of white street gang violence. They were characterized by their shaven heads and white-supremacy philosophy and for the most part, they were scarce in members and unorganized. "Skinheads formed as racist gangs and were not turf oriented nor profit motivated. Their crimes ranged from vandalism and assaults to murders. Generally, targets of their crimes included non-white, Jewish, homeless, and homosexual individuals" (Hamm, 1993, p.243). Confrontations between the Skinheads and their targeted victims were often random, but they usually ended in serious injury or death to

the victim. The age of the Skinhead gang member varied from early teens to mid 20's. Both males and females belonged to the gang; and their weapons included baseball bats, knives, fists and steel-toed boots.

Similar to other gangs, Skinheads resort to graffiti, hand signs, and tattoos as typical gang characteristics.

"Common graffiti includes swastikas and lightning bolts. Most of the graffiti is used to deface property rather than indicate gang territory. Hand signs include both the Nazi salute and formation of the letters "w" and "p" for white power. Tattoos include swastikas, Nazi flags, hooded Ku Klux Klansmen and the letters S.W.P. for Supreme White Power and W.A.R for White Aryan Resistance" (Moore, 1993, p.200).

Skinheads began to establish associations with some of the more tradition white-supremacy groups such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and the White Aryan Resistancy (WAR). Gang members would travel throughout the United States to attend KKK and WAR rallies, cross burning marches, and demonstrations. "Skinheads have attended the annual meeting of the Aryan Nations' Church, a Neo-Nazi organization in Idaho linked to The Order, a former domestic terrorist organization. Skinhead gang members identify with the imprisoned and deceased Order members as "prisoners of war" and "martyrs" in the white-supremacist movement"(Moore, 1993, p.202). "Skinheads from California were residing Portland, Oregon, during December 1988 when the Portland Skinheads used a baseball bat to beat to death an Ethiopian immigrant to death. The Oregon Skinheads were arrested and convicted for the murder, and the San Diego leader of WAR was indicted by a federal grand jury and found guilty of inciting violence by encouraging them to commit murder"(Samsom and Groves, 1995, p.783). Skinheads from California were sent to Oregon to teach those Skinheads how to commit violent crimes against minorities.

Taylor (1995) states that the California Department of Justice estimates there could be as many as 5,000 Caucasian gang members in California today. The Skinheads with approximately four hundred members remain the most violent of the Caucasian gangs. Although minimal in numbers, their potential for violence is significant. Skinheads and other white supremacy groups, remain racially motivated instead of being territorial or inspired to commit crimes for profit. They are still loose-knit and unorganized, but there is some evidence that a few of the gangs have developed an internal gang structure. Conley (1995) points out that some of these white-supremacy gangs have printed and distributed membership applications, dues, established rules and regulations. "The application for the American Front Skinhead gang implies that if a member betrays the organization, the punishment is death by crucifixion"(Hamm, 1993, p.244). These racially motivated gangs are growing by recruiting new members everyday. They are just as dangerous as territorial gangs and are a major concern to the United States' war on crime.

In order to gain a better understanding of gang mentality, the following definitions are presented. They are considered the "**Three R's**" of gang culture:

- (1) **Reputation/Rep.** - This is the main motivation of gang members. A reputation extends not only to each individual, but also to the gang as a whole. In some groups (gangs), status is gained within the gang by having the most "juice" (power) based largely on one's reputation. While having "juice" is important, the way that particular member gains the "juice" is just as important. Many gang members freely admit crimes and past gang activities to others in order to boost their sense of significance. In many gangs, to become a member, you must be "jumped in" by members of the

gang. This means that the person is beaten up until the leader calls for it to end.

Afterwards, all gang members embrace one another to further bond the member's togetherness as a social family. Young gang members, whether hardcore or associate, will talk of fellowship and the feeling of sharing and belonging as their reason for joining a gang.

**(2) Respect;**

This is something everyone wants and some gang members carry their desire for it to the extreme. Respect is demanded not only for the individual, but also for one's gang, family, territory, and many other things real or perceived in the mind of the individual associated with the gang. Some gangs require, by written or spoken regulation, that the gang member must always show disrespect to rival gang members. If a gang member witnesses a fellow member failing to disrespect a rival gang through hand signs, graffiti or a simple stare-down, they can issue a "violation" to their fellow posse member and he or she can actually be "beaten down" by their own gang as a punishment.

**(3) Retaliation/Revenge**

In gang culture, no challenge goes unanswered. Many times, drive-by shootings and other acts of violence follow an event where the other gang was perceived as being disrespected. A common occurrence is a confrontation between a gang and single rival gang member. Outnumbered, he departs the area and returns with his fellow gang members to complete the confrontation to keep his reputation intact. This may occur immediately or follow a delay for planning and obtaining the necessary weapons to complete the attack. Many acts of retaliation are the result of bad drug

deals or a power struggle about drug territory. "In gang banging, today's witness is tomorrow's suspect, is the next day's victim" (Curtis, 1994, p.390).

### **Risk Factors for Antisocial Behavior**

Research shows that most antisocial behavior develops from combinations of risk factors associated with individuals families, schools, and communities. The same factors apply across races, cultures, and classes and their effects are magnified if the child is exposed to many different factors. Antisocial behavior evolves over the course of childhood, often beginning in the preschool and elementary years and peaking in late adolescent/early adulthood. Direct, early intervention can halt its progress; once firmly established, antisocial patterns become more difficult to change and can persist into adulthood.

#### **Individual**

"Impulsivity; the inability to adopt a future time perspective or to grasp future consequences of behavior; the inability to delay gratification; the inability to self-regulate emotions, especially temper; the need for stimulation and excitement; low harm avoidance; low frustration tolerance; central nervous system dysfunction; low cortical arousal; a predisposition to aggressive behavior; low general aptitude or intelligence; exposure to violence and abuse (as either a victim or a witness); alienation; rebelliousness; association with deviant peers; favorable attitudes toward deviant behavior ; peer rejection; alcohol and drug abuse; and early onset of aggression or problem behavior"([WWW.IDONLINE.ORG](http://WWW.IDONLINE.ORG), 1998, P.2).



## **Family/Societal**

"Economic depravation and employment that limit access to food, shelter, transportation, health care, etc.; parental history of deviant behavior; favorable family/community attitudes toward deviant behavior; harsh and/or inconsistent discipline; poor parental and/or community supervision and monitoring; low parental education (especially maternal education); family conflict; disruption in care giving; out-of-home placement; poor attachment between child and family; low community attachment and community disorganization, as evidenced by low parental involvement in schools, low voter turnout, and high rates of vandalism and violence; parental alcoholism; social alienation of the community; availability of drugs and guns; high community turnover; and exposure to violence, including violence in the home, community and media" ([WWW.IDONLINE.ORG](http://WWW.IDONLINE.ORG), 1998 P.2).

## **School-Based**

"Academic failure beginning in elementary school; poor Academic aptitude test scores, especially in reading in grades 3 and 4; lack of commitment to school; lack of belief in the validity of rules; early aggressive behavior (in grades K-3); lack of attachment to teachers; low aspirations and goals; peer rejection and social alienation; association with deviant peers, including grouping antisocial children together for instruction and/or punishment; low student/teacher morale; school disorganization; ineffective monitoring and management of students; and poor adaptation to school, as evidenced by retention and attendance rates, assignments to special education, and student reports of not liking school, lack of effort, alienation, and punishment"([WWW.IDONLINE.ORG](http://WWW.IDONLINE.ORG), 1998, P.2).

Chronic school failure demoralizes children, can cause loss of status and rejection by peers, destroys self-esteem, and undermines feelings of competence. As a result, it can undermine a child's attachment to teachers, parents, school, and the values they promote. It also generates hopelessness and children cease to believe that their efforts make a difference in outcomes. "For delinquent youngsters, school is not a place of attachment and learning, but of alienation and failure" (Sanders, 1994, p.74).

### **Psychological Factors For Joining Gangs**

Many parents, teachers and other adults today have a difficult time in understanding the attraction of today's youth to a gang. If the family or community is to be successful in combating gangs, they need to understand several **psychological** factors regarding adolescent development.

**\*The need for affiliation.** Adolescents are in a stage of development in which fashioning a personal identity is a primary goal. Lale (1992) points out that this has been a major problem for immigrant families whose children are caught between two cultures with opposing value systems and incompatible behavior standards. Often these adolescents seek an identity by joining gangs with similar backgrounds of their own. A gang member may appear to have more loyalty to the gang than with his or her own family.

**\*The need for achievement.** The American Dream has included the idea that achievement is the way out the ghetto. Parents in these circumstances however, may be unable to be role models and help their children be successful in school. Lale, (1992) points out that many gang members were not successful in school due to learning disabilities or special education needs that were not diagnosed. Once children have failed in school and drop out, their chances to be successful, productive citizens are greatly reduced. At this point, the gang can offer a social network of friends, income, and a chance for them to "make it" that the larger culture does not.

**\*Lack of self-responsibility and an openness to outside influences.** Lawson (1994) points out that adolescents question adult authority and the emotional dependence

they have on their parents, who they regard as controlling and lacking in understanding. During this turbulent and rapidly changing period of their life, many adolescents are unable or unwilling to turn to their parents for help.

**\*Risk-taking behavior.** Adolescents tend to believe that they are invincible and that nothing can harm them. These beliefs make risks seem non-threatening and, worse, a necessary part of their lives. Children raised in deprived environments are at risk for seeking high levels of stimulation. Lale (1992) points out that seeking stimulation often involves breaking the law and incurring risks that may even be life threatening.

**\*Low self-esteem.** Adolescents whose self-esteem has been damaged by peer rejection, school failures, may find a new identity and self-worth in a gang. When an adolescent has no activities, which provide a sense of accomplishment, gangs can provide acceptance, a substitute family and a way to succeed.

**\*Lack of positive role models.** Power and fame are major factors in motivating adolescents to become gang members. Often, gang members believe that money and weapons can give them power and fame they believe in a society that discriminates against them. They view their struggling parents as powerless people unable to show their children how to achieve the good life, while they view a veteran gang member, who drives a flashy car, carries a beeper, and wears expensive clothes as a role model for success.

**\*Boredom.** In many neighborhoods where gangs exist, there are no recreational activities to meet adolescents' needs. Churches, schools, and private facilities are not open to the youth because of fear of violence and destruction of property. School dropouts who are unemployed or young people with nothing to do after school are good

candidates for chronic boredom. As soon as boredom sets in, hanging out with the neighborhood gang becomes an attractive alternative.

Gangs are a major problem in some of our U.S. schools. This research will cover many issues dealing with gang activity and prevention within our schools. Some of these issues include the public concern about gangs, school intervention, and counselor's roles in dealing with gangs, problems with counselor awareness and, stereotypes.

This issue will be examined to limit and prevent gang activity from occurring or expanding in our schools.

There is a growing public concern about gangs and gang activity in the United States. Taylor (1995) states that among the middle class population of Chicago, the gang problem around the city is the number one concern on their minds. These people are being harassed on their way to work and do not feel safe in their own homes. This fear trickles down to the safety of their children and the problems they face with gangs in their schools. Samson and Groves (1995) conclude fifteen percent of the 1,311 Americans surveyed during May and June 1995 for the annual Phi Delta Kappa poll on education said, "the biggest problem faced by their local public schools were violence, fighting and gangs. This violent behavior usually exhibited by gangs is intimidating the students and teachers as well and is causing a strain of the learning process.

Gangs were thought of as an urban problem, only happening in the big cities such as New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago. Goldstein and Huff (1993) point out that the two most notorious gang names in the United States are the Crips and the Bloods. They are important not only because of their size, their violence and their involvement in drug distribution, but also members of their gangs have been showing up in nearly every part

of the nation in the past five years. "What began as a Los Angeles problem has quickly evolved into a nation wide problem impacting scores of cities from coast to coast"(Goldstein and Huff, 1993, p.121).

The public's concern about the gang problem in the United States can be justified. Gang crime such as dealing drugs, homicides, theft, bodily harm to others and other destructive behaviors can justify why gangs are on the minds of Americans. Los Angeles for example has been recording an average of five hundred to seven hundred gang-related homicides per year. Curtis (1994) states that about half of the victims of gang-related homicides in Los Angeles continue to be innocent citizens, including children. Violent gang assaults are called "paybacks," in which a rival gang would retaliate against another gang. This is where the innocent victims usually fall victim to the stray bullets that were intended for the other gang member.

Concern promotes action by the people who are affected by gang activities. The neighborhood gets involved and forms neighborhood watch groups to help each other detect suspicious activities. More police on the streets to patrol the neighborhoods would also cut down on crimes. Programs like Take Back The Streets are implemented to help get kids off the streets and gives them something else to do rather than roaming the streets. Schools are also taking action by having extra curricular activities for students to give them a positive sense of belonging. For example, basketball, football, baseball, drama clubs, and other group activities can be useful in helping young people develop teamwork and positive leadership skills. Conely (1995) points out that students who have after school extra curricular activities are four times less likely to join a gang.

Schools are coming up with various types of interventions to help them deal with gang activity. The first intervention deals with dress codes. Gangs have distinctive clothing and symbols that designate their affiliations. Children have been murdered simply because they were wearing the wrong color hat, handkerchief, or shoelaces and were mistaken for the enemy.

"The BK (British Knight) logo is a fashionable way to advertise one is a Blood Killer (a loyal Crip who will kill or has killed Bloods) in a gangland that is not that far removed from Hollywood or Rodeo Drive"(Spergel, 1995, p.31).

You have to be very aware of the colors of clothing and the symbols that they represent because as you see BK meant something else than British Knights. Dress codes are mandatory in many U.S. schools because of the growing gang violence that is associated with dress style. Administrators enforce these laws to help prevent gangs and gang activity in schools. Whyte (1993) points out that it is not the clothes causing the problem in the schools, it is the behavior of these youths that are causing the potential gang activity. This is true because we need to change behaviors first and then worry about changing the dress style. Gang members could wear uniforms in a certain way to symbolize their gang affiliation and that would create the problem all over again.

The second intervention would include training the staff in defense techniques. Teachers and other staff members are putting their safety in jeopardy every time they come to school. They encounter this gang member's everyday and power struggles may occur. These power struggles may result in bodily harm to the teachers and

therefore defense techniques are essential. These techniques may include holding and pinning maneuvers. You don't want to cause bodily harm to the student because the less violence, the faster the problem will decrease.

The counselor has a main role in preventing and controlling gang activity in his or her school. Kunjufu (1992) points out that having gang prevention curriculum and preparing staff for gangs ahead of time will almost eliminate gang activity from happening in your school. A main problem for counselors is that they do not have the adequate knowledge about gangs. Moore (1994) suggests that many counselors are ignorant and do not believe gangs are in their schools. Many suburban guidance counselors believe that gangs are an urban inner city problem and that it will not affect the school that they work in. When they notice that there is a gang problem, they are unprepared and do not understand why they have this problem. Masey (1995) argues that counselors who are proactive have fewer problems compared to counselors who are reactive. The more prepared you are the easier the problem is to identify and potentially solve.

The counselor's lack of knowledge brings about stereotypes. Here are some stereotypes and facts about gangs.

**Myth: Gang/drug violence is a male, urban, minority problem.**

**Fact: Gang/drug violence is both a male and female problem that occurs in white communities and communities of color, both urban and suburban (Johnson, 1993, p. 8).**

**Myth: Gang members usually make huge amount of money for themselves through selling drugs.**

**Fact: Gang members may make lots money, but most of the money isn't theirs. It belongs to someone else, usually the person they are dealing for. Because drug dealing is against the law, the money is made through violence and criminal behavior (Johnson, 1993, p.9).**

Gangs are a growing problem in U.S. schools today. Public concern is high and action is being taken to prevent and control gang activity in our schools and neighborhoods. Schools are using various types of interventions to control gangs in their schools. Counselors need to prepare and educate themselves in order to get rid of stereotypes that are brought about due to lack of knowledge.

The purpose of this study was to discover if counselors' awareness of gangs is predictors of proactive or reactive counseling styles. The methodology, subjects, instrumentation, analysis of data and limitations of the research are discussed in chapter III.



## Chapter III

### Methodology

#### Population and subjects.

The subjects consisted of 40 graduate school counselors from UW-Stout in Menomonie, Wisconsin. The majority of the students were Caucasian males and females from the summer session of the Guidance in Elementary and Career Counseling classes.

#### Methods for gathering data/Instrumentation.

The data was collected by a questionnaire. The subjects were handed questionnaires that consisted of fifty questions. The first ten questions dealt with opinionate questions; they ranged from 1 being strongly disagree to 8 being strongly agree. The next forty questions consisted of true, false and don't know answers. These questions dealt with mainly historical and some behavioral questions of Hispanic, African American, Asian and Caucasian gangs.

#### Data collection.

The data was collected by Dr. Dutch Van Den Huevel and the researcher. Dr. Van Den Huevel distributed the gang questionnaires to his Guidance in Elementary and Career Counseling summer session classes. The subjects would complete the questionnaire and put the results in a large white envelope, which was later collected by the researcher. In order to have protection of the human subjects in this research, the researcher wasn't present when the data was collected. This method helped prevent researcher bias. The instructor handed the researcher the completed forty

surveys by leaving them in his mailbox. Protection of human subjects was also ensured through the consent form on the front page of the questionnaire. The consent form educates the subjects about the researcher intentions for this study. It also communicates to the subjects that participation is optional and that they can withdraw at anytime during the study and will be respected with no coercion or prejudice.

#### Analysis of data.

The data was processed and analyzed using SPSS version 8.0. The questionnaire was dismantled into five sections and every question was analyzed thoroughly.

The first section focused on opinionated questions dealing with gangs. These questions were intended to see if the school counselors in training were proactive or reactive. The scale ranged from 1 being strongly disagree to 8 being strongly agree.

The ten questions were identified as either being proactive or reactive. Reactive

questions were reclassified as proactive or reactive. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 1. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 1.

false, (D) don't know. In scoring this questionnaire (D) don't know was considered to mark as wrong. Scale scores were summed for each ethnic group.

### Limitations.

In doing this study some strengths that helped develop this thesis included easy availability to the subjects once the gang history and activity questionnaire were developed. Some weaknesses of the methodology included ask too many questions about history and not enough questions related to the immediate behavior of gangs. Many of the subjects who participated in this study lacked knowledge about historical facts pertaining to gang culture and activity. Consequently, there were a lot of "don't know" answers. These responses were counted as wrong answers in the scoring of the questionnaires.

The lack of ethnic diversity among the subjects that were used was also a weakness in the validity of the study. The majority of the subjects were Caucasian ranging from mid twenties to late fifties. There were a few Asian- Americans but no representation of other minority groups (Hispanic and African-American). The researcher feels that demographics played a big role in dealing with the diversity of subjects. The target population included UW-Stout graduate school guidance counselors k-12. The majority of the students that attend UW-Stout and that are in the graduate program of guidance and counseling k-12 are Caucasian. UW-Stout's location is in Menomonie, Wisconsin which makes it difficult to find equal representation for each of the four ethnic groups that were being tested. If the researcher conducted this study at UW-Milwaukee for example, there would be more of a diverse group.

### Summary

In doing the study there were not enough minority subjects to test the hypothesis adequately in non-white groups. There were some interesting results from the subjects that were used from UW-Stout. These results will include a brief statement of the plan of the study and procedure, the evidence that supports or fails to support the hypothesis (includes tables) along with unanticipated findings will be discussed in chapter IV.

## Chapter IV

### Results

Table 1 indicates that relatively little was known about African-American and Asian gangs. With a total of ten items, the mean for African-American gangs was 3.20 with a standard deviation of 2.27. The total of ten items for Asian gangs included a mean of 3.43 with a standard deviation of 2.55. The results show that the school counselors in training knew less than fifty percent of the answers to the questions dealing with African-American and Asian gangs.

Table 1 indicates more knowledge about Hispanic and Caucasian gangs. The total score of the ten items dealing with Hispanic gangs showed a mean of 4.53 with a standard deviation of 2.29. Knowledge of Hispanic gangs was greater than that of African-American and Asian gangs, but it still scored less than fifty percent. The ten items dealing with Caucasian gangs showed a mean of 5.68 with a standard deviation of 2.21. This was the area in which the graduate school counselors got over fifty percent of the questions correct.

The mean of the proactive counselor scores was 61.23 out of 80 points. Most school counselors who participated in this study tended to be more proactive than reactive. The proactive score indicates that five percent or two people would qualify as reactive. For proactive responses ninety five percent or thirty-eight people would fall into this category.

**Table 1**

**Means and Standard Deviations of Gang Knowledge Scales and Proactive  
Counselor Rating.**

<u>Scale</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Maximum Possible Score</u>
Total Hispanic	4.53	
	(2.29)-Standard Deviation	10
Total Caucasian	5.68	
	(2.21)-Standard Deviation	10
Total Asian	3.43	
	(2.55)-Standard Deviation	10
Total African-American	3.20	
	(2.27)-Standard Deviation	10
Proactive Counselors score	61.23	
	(11.13)-Standard Deviation	80

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N = 40

Table 2

**Correlation's Among Proactive Counselor Rating and Gang Knowledge****Scales**

	Total Hispanic	Total Caucasian	Total Asian	Total African-American
Proactive				
Counselor Score	-.02	.20	-.03	-.09
Total Hispanic		.28	.49**	.68**
Total Caucasian			.47**	.41**
Total Asian				.64**

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**Note: \*,  $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$**

Table 2 illustrates the proactive counselor score was not related to any of the four gang knowledge categories. The four-gang knowledge score were highly interrelated if the subjects were knowledgeable of one ethnic gang; they were usually knowledgeable about other ethnic gangs. Conversely, those groups that were ignorant of one particular ethnic gang were universally ignorant towards the other ethnic gangs.

**Summary**

The research suggests that school counselors in training have more proactive counseling attitudes than reactive. The mean proactive counselor score was 61.23 out of 80 points. This indicates that ninety five percent of the sample tended to be proactive. If

one group had knowledge about one ethnic gang then that knowledge was demonstrated throughout the questionnaire. Those who were ignorant in knowledge demonstrated that ignorance universally. Finally the research investigator will provide a conclusion to this study and implications of this research for future investigation.



## Chapter V

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The research suggest that school counselors in training at UW-Stout showed to have more proactive type of counseling styles rather than reactive in answering the questions in the questionnaire. However, no support for the hypothesis linking counseling style to knowledge was found. This may be due to the fact that gang knowledge scores were low. Which, in turn, may have resulted from asking too many historical questions.

A few subjects demonstrated knowledge about all ethnic gangs. More commonly however, if the school counselors were ignorant about one particular gang then they were universally ignorant. These results suggest that more education about gangs is needed to help future counselors deal with this growing problem.

#### Future Implications

Because gangs are, by definition, organized groups and are often actively involved in drug and weapon trafficking, their mere presence in school can increase tensions there. It can also increase the level of violence in schools, even though gang members themselves may not be directly responsible for all of it; both gang members and non-gang members are arming themselves with increased frequency. Students in schools with a gang presence are twice as likely to report that they fear becoming victims of violence than is reported in schools without gangs (Trump, 1993). This is where school counselors need to intervene early and demonstrate either a proactive rather than reactive counseling style to deal with the gang problem in their schools.

Some effective interactions for combating gangs in school include:

- 1. Targeting students vulnerable to gang recruitment for special assistance, particularly through the use of peer counselors and support groups. Mentoring, conflict resolution programs, and tutoring can also be particularly effective.**
- 2. Establishing moral and ethical education.**
- 3. Educating all school staff about how gangs develop and how to respond to them.**
- 4. Offering programs for parents on gangs and how to deal with them as a parent. Present the information in a culturally sensitive manner, and in a variety of languages, to reflect the diversity of the school or community.**
- 5. Offering educational programs for the students about gangs, their destructiveness and how to avoid being drawn into them.**
- 6. Providing regular opportunities for students individually or in small groups to discuss their experience in school and make future plans that offer hope and personal rewards.**

Though the above steps offer no magical solution for eliminating gangs, they offer valuable interventions that may make gangs appear less attractive and prepare individual students to more effectively resist gang pressure to join them

This study provided some useful information about what school counselors in training know about gang knowledge. The research provided information that would help professor's structure their lectures concerning gang knowledge. They can focus on areas of relative weakness concerning graduate student's information about gangs in the school-counseling program. Professors in the school-counseling department could implement course work to address areas of relative weakness concerning gangs for school

counseling students. This research could also be expanded to include investigation of teachers, parents, and other school professionals about their knowledge of gangs.

Training could be tailored to address areas of relative weakness concerning their knowledge about gangs and focus on identification of gang activities in their school.

### Recommendations

Recommendations for changes in organization would include a wider range of subjects. A limitation of doing research at UW-Stout is the lack of diversity it offers. If the research were conducted at UW-Milwaukee, the results would probably be different because of the diverse population of students they have at UW-Milwaukee. The subjects at UW-Stout in the guidance and counseling program are predominantly Caucasian.

The research suggests that the majority of the subjects surveyed showed proactive counseling styles. There would have to be a greater sample of reactive type counselors to adequately test the hypothesis. One way that can be brought about is to have a larger and more diverse sample size. A sample size of at least one hundred would probably show more reactive responses to the questionnaire. Including practicing counselors would add to the validity of future studies.

Finally, the questionnaire could be enlarged to include more thorough information about the behavior of gangs. The questions focused on too many historical facts and these facts might not be relevant in dealing with current gang behavior. The research suggests greater responses to the questions that dealt with the behavior of gangs rather than the history. More updated information about today's ethnic gangs would prove useful in designing a more accurate questionnaire. It would be interesting to continue this study in a school district to see what secondary teachers know about gangs? This information

could help administrators in their district to identify areas of relative weakness of schoolteachers training regarding gangs. They could then set up training to address those areas where teachers lack knowledge about gangs.

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[WWW.IDONLIN.ORG](http://WWW.IDONLIN.ORG), 1998,P.2.

## Gang Problem Questionnaire

### Instructions

Please respond to the following questions using the scale provided below. We are interested in how you feel personally, not how you think others feel or what is politically correct to say.

<b>Strongly</b>								<b>Strongly</b>
<b>Disagree</b>								<b>Agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Being that gangs are so unpredictable, it is best to wait to see what activities arise to plan an appropriate response.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Strategies aimed at preventing gangs in schools are largely ineffective.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Gang prevention handbooks are an effective tool in educating faculty and staff about various signs of gang activity.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Local agencies can provide updated information regarding gang activity.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Immediate response to gang presence is not always the best approach.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Education curricula should be employed to prevent gang activity.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Classroom activities to identify gang characteristics are a useful preventative approach.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Police departments are frequently too busy to become involved in school problems with gangs.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Police cannot help with school-related gang activity until a crime has been committed on school property.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Each school should put together an internal task force aimed at preventing gang activities.

## Gang History and Activity Questionnaire

### Instructions

Gang activity has become a central concern to students, parents and school administrators. We are interested in assessing how much people like you know about gangs. The following questions regard gang history and activity in our country. Please respond to the questions below using the following response choices.

**T = True F = False D = Don't Know**

### Hispanic Gangs

1. \_\_\_\_ Hispanic gangs began forming in California during the early 1920's.
2. \_\_\_\_ Hispanic gang members re female youths ranging from 14 to 20 years old.
3. \_\_\_\_ The Department of Justice estimates there could be as many as 95,000

Hispanic gang members in California today.

4. \_\_\_\_ Criminal activities of Hispanic gangs now range from burglaries to murders.
5. \_\_\_\_ As Hispanic gangs evolved, they established unique trademarks such as tattoos, monikers and graffiti.
6. \_\_\_\_ Elaborate tattoos depicting the initials or name of a gang symbolized disrespect to a particular gang.
7. \_\_\_\_ Monikers were names assumed by or given to gang members, they were only given for a short period of time.
8. \_\_\_\_ Hispanic gang members are becoming involved as entrepreneurs in selling of narcotics, particularly PCP, Mexican tar, heroin, methamphetamine and marijuana.
9. \_\_\_\_ The gangs' arsenals have expanded to large caliber handguns, shotguns and automatic weapons.
10. \_\_\_\_ Hispanic gang members will not attack rival gangs in defense of their turf.

### African-American Gangs

1. \_\_\_\_ African-American gangs began forming in California during the 1920's.
2. \_\_\_\_ Early African-American gangs were territorial and violent.
3. \_\_\_\_ From 1955 to 1965, African-American gangs increased with larger membership and operated primarily in New York and California.
4. \_\_\_\_ In the late 1980's the Bloods and Crips were originated.
5. \_\_\_\_ The Crips began forming in southeast Los Angeles by terrorizing local

neighborhoods and schools with assaults and robberies.

6. \_\_\_\_ The Bloods originated around the Piru Street area in Compton, California.
7. \_\_\_\_ Some Crips gangs are referred to as Piru gangs.
8. \_\_\_\_ By 1983, African-American Los Angeles gangs seized upon the availability of narcotics, particularly crack as means of income.



9. \_\_\_\_ The migration of African-American Los Angeles gang members during the 1990's to other U.S cities, often for reasons other than some vast gang-inspired conspiracy, resulted in the spread of crack sales and violence.
10. \_\_\_\_ Money derived from narcotic sales became the symbol of down fall and destruction for African-American gangs.

### **Asian Gangs**

1. \_\_\_\_ Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian gangs represent the bulk of the Asian criminal street gang problem in California.
2. \_\_\_\_ In the late 1940's Vietnamese gangs began to emerge.
3. \_\_\_\_ Laotian and Cambodian gangs began to emerge in the early 1960's.
4. \_\_\_\_ Asian gangs ranged in size from 5 to 200 gang members.
5. \_\_\_\_ Asian gang crimes involved auto thefts, residential and business robberies and burglaries.
6. \_\_\_\_ Asian gang members varied in age from 10 to 40 years old.
7. \_\_\_\_ Older Asian gang members were usually the leaders.
8. \_\_\_\_ Early formation of Asian gangs were loose-knit and the gang members associated with each other on a continuous basis.
9. \_\_\_\_ Asian gang members had high loyalty to a particular gang.
10. \_\_\_\_ Unlike Hispanic and African-American gangs, Asian gangs began with no unique characteristics such as tattoos, hand signs or graffiti.

### **Caucasian Gangs**

1. \_\_\_\_ Early Caucasian gangs were originated around motorcycle gangs like the Hells Angeles.
2. \_\_\_\_ In the late 1960's the Skinheads were identified as the primarily source of Caucasian street gang violence in California.
3. \_\_\_\_ Their shaven heads and white-supremacy philosophy characterized Skinheads.
4. \_\_\_\_ Skinheads formed as racist gangs and were turf oriented or profit motivated.
5. \_\_\_\_ Skinheads crimes ranged from vandalism and assaults to murder.
6. \_\_\_\_ The age of the Skinhead gang members varied from early teen to mid forties.
7. \_\_\_\_ Targets of the Skinheads include non-white, Jewish, homeless and homosexual individuals.
8. \_\_\_\_ Skinheads do not resort to graffiti, hand signs and tattoos as typical gang characteristics.
9. \_\_\_\_ Hand signs include both the Nazi salute and formation of the letters W and P for White Pride.
10. \_\_\_\_ Common graffiti includes swastikas and lightning bolts.













