

YOUTH GANGS ON YOUTH GANGS

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The views expressed in this study report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Solicitor General or the Department of Justice Canada.





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Introduction

"Wake up and look around. Look at what everything is turning into." (Tim, 16)

Youth gangs/groups are not a historically new phenomenon in Metropolitan Toronto, nor are they unique to North America. In England, Japan, and Hong Kong the phenomenon of gangs is centuries old. Gangs have been reported in many countries of Europe, Asia, Africa, South America, and in Australia, in communist countries and capitalist democracies.

It is likely that there are some similarities between youth gangs/groups of today and those of decades and centuries past. Marginalization, poverty, and disenfranchisement is a common experience among youth of most societies, especially young persons who are members of "out" groups such as the lower class or ethnic and religious minorities. Using non-sanctioned or illegal means to meet sustenance and other material needs is universal where grinding poverty is present. However, a majority of young people involved in gangs/groups today are not living in poverty nor are they all from marginalized groups in Canadian society.

It is hard to determine conclusively if youth crime and violence, for whatever reason, is truly a serious and growing problem. A recent Canadian study reveals that between 1986 and 1991 violent offence charges for youth 12 - 17 increased by over 106% (Canadian Social Trends, 1992). However, violent crime represents only about 15 % of all youth crime. Most youth crime involves property offences.

It is important to keep in mind that these statistics on violent youth crime are based on police charge rates only, so it is hard to know how much of this is murder and rape and how much is schoolyard pushing and shoving. Without a more detailed analysis of these figures it is difficult to say whether actual incidences of violence per capita are increasing or have become more serious or whether the police are simply laying more charges in response to political pressure and public out-

rage that adolescents be held more accountable for their behaviour.

On the other hand the Yonge Street "riots" in Toronto on May, 4, 1992 were certainly a watershed event unique in Canadian history. Though teens were not the only participants in the beatings, looting and destruction of private and public property, they represented a significant proportion. This disturbing public spectacle by youth of all backgrounds should serve as a "red flag" and focus our attention on what young people are trying to say to the adult world they often feel so alienated and excluded from.

There is also evidence to suggest that, at a minimum, there has been an increase over the past few years in the level of violence used by youth, particularly gangs/groups and especially in or around schools. For example:

1. Youth involved in violent acts and gang/group activity are getting younger in age. It is not uncommon now to find students in grades 1 or 2 committing serious acts of violence.
2. Girls are becoming more directly involved in gang/group assaults. and are using weapons such as knives, though most attacks are ,against other girls either as individuals or in gangs/groups;
3. The presence of guns and gun replicas in schools, and the widespread presence of other weapons;
4. School Boards are reporting an increase in verbal and physical assaults on teachers and vandalism of teachers' cars and other property;

5. The individual schoolyard bully has been largely replaced by a group of youth who commit assaults and thefts, i.e., swarmings;
6. Students are reporting that they often do not feel safe at school or while walking to school;
7. Extortion and drug dealing is becoming a routine part of the school day in some communities;
8. Intruders have become a serious problem for many schools.

These points, some anecdotal and some supported by School Board studies and other research, suggest that something, beyond media influence alone, has happened in the past several years to increase the level of violence. Perhaps most unsettling is the fact that an overwhelming number of students feel safe in school only part of the time or not at all (Ryan, Mathews, and Banner, 1993a).

Putting the "is-it-a-real-increase-or-more-reporting" debate aside for a moment it is time for all caring members of the public and the wider youth-serving community to acknowledge that we are not dealing effectively with the youth violence problem we already have. Though communities large and small in the province of Ontario are slowly starting to wake up to the fact that they have a problem with youth violence and youth gang/group activity, especially in schools, there still is much more work to be done.

The most important first step a community can take to address this phenomenon is to avoid making uninformed and hasty decisions. Strategies based on political pressure and quick-fix reactions are likely to waste precious human and financial resources. Social problems such as youth gangs/groups and youth violence are complex and should be given careful thought and analysis. Police, School Boards, social services, and parents can all address specific issues but no single group can solve the whole problem in isolation from the wider community.

But what do we really know about youth gangs/groups and on what information should we, can we, base strategies for intervention. Very little research has ever been done on gangs/groups in Canada and there is virtually none available on the phenomenon as it exists in its current historical context. The American literature on gangs, deviance and delinquency provides some insights but it is fragmented and based largely on the "detached" observations of social scientists.

- An Overview of Related Literature

Two challenges surface immediately when one attempts to organize a framework to explain this phenomenon: (1) finding a theory to explain why young people join gangs and (2) finding a definition of "gang/group" and "gang/group activity".

One of the earliest studies of gangs by Thrasher (1929) provides a simple definition:

"an interstitial group originally formed spontaneously and then integrated through conflict." Shaw and McKay (1931) of the Chicago School sought to demonstrate and measure a protocol for treatment intervention and prevention of delinquency in Chicago neighbourhoods with high youth crime. The essence of their model is that delinquency is a normal part of slum life and that the vast majority of crimes are committed with other males in a group or gang. They maintain that gang members are trained by their peers to become offenders and that this is a predictable course of events in a slum neighbourhood.

Tannenbaum (1939) adds to Thrasher's model by including factors external to the gang/slum that facilitate group cohesion and explain the process of "escalation" in the seriousness of gang member's crimes; in effect, they "graduate" from less to more serious criminal activity. The gang becomes more cohesive as it encounters reaction from the larger community. According to Tannenbaum, the more disapproval and opposition the group receives from adults, police, or community representatives, the more the group evolves toward the development of a consciousness of

being a "gang".

Tannenbaum frames the problem of gangs as a clash between two perspectives and value bases, those of the youth and those of the broadest community. Young people see their activity as interest, fun, excitement, and mischief. The community sees it as crime in need of punishment and control. Tannenbaum feels that gang involvement is preferred by members not because it is appealing in and of itself, but because the pressures and motivation towards more socially acceptable behaviour are less attractive or weak.

Whyte (1955) views gang formation as a response to poverty and a lack of opportunity. He feels the "corner gang" forms to aid and assist individual members. Mutual support, childhood connections, and living in close proximity make this type of gang cohesive and give its members a feeling of solidarity.

Lemert (1951), an early "labelling theorist", distinguishes between two types of deviance, "primary" and "secondary". Primary deviance is basically the commission of any act that is outside societal norms but has not been labelled by the person, or the actor has not been caught and labelled by an authority of the state or other outside person. Secondary deviance applies to those behaviours that are "found out", i.e., when the person self-labels the act as deviant or others exercise formal legal actions or other punishments and penalties. Secondary deviance attaches a "label" to a person and in his interaction with society acquires a stigma and criminal or negative self-image that leads to a self-fulfilling prophecy of continuing deviance (see also Becker, 1963; and Erikson, 1964).

Cohen (1955) "strain theory", Merton (1957) "anomie theory", Cloward and Ohlin (1960) "differential association theory" and Spergel (1964) all focus on class and make the claim that gangs grow out of frustration trying to achieve the status and material goals of wider society or arise as a reaction to mainstream urban culture. Gang members accept the material goals of their society but use nonsanctioned or illegal means to attain those goals.

Cohen talks about a "subculture of delinquency". In his view, lower class youth are exposed to middle class values and aspirations but do not have the means to achieve them. In rebelling against middle class norms, a delinquent subculture is set up in opposition. Their dislocation in society results in frustration which leads to the development of gangs and an organized and legitimized structure for dealing with their frustration.

Cloward and Ohlin's "differential opportunity" model differs from the others in the claim that class alone cannot predict delinquency. Lower class youth need an opportunity to access, or live in a neighbourhood with, an established gang or criminal subculture. They see gang formation as a "nonconformist alternative" for alienated youths. Gang members support each other and help solve shared problems or frustrations.

Merton (1957) talks about striving towards success as a national (American) goal, something to be obtained through hard work, saving money, and education. According to Merton, people who do not have access to legitimate means to achieve this goal choose nonsanctioned means, sometimes crime.

Jeffery (1959) offers a theory of "social alienation". In essence, he views the rise of crime as a result of the breakdown of social cohesion in small, interdependent communities and a product of urbanization where there is anomie, anonymity, and isolation. People become criminal when they have few or no satisfying interpersonal relationships with others.

Haskel (1961) offers a "reference group theory". The gang member, a youth, experiences himself as inferior to the adults in his family in terms of income earnings, prestige, and job skills. These feelings of inferiority along with a lack of social competence push the youth toward the street and peers who feel the same way. Peers validate the youth's experiences and give him/her opportunities

to win approval and recognition.

Reckless (1961) writes about a "containment theory" which suggests there is a "tension" between forces moving a person toward or away from crime. "Pull factors" are outside the individual (delinquent peer group) and draw the youth away from social norms of law abiding. "Push factors" are within the individual (hostility, aggression) and push him/her towards crime. External containment (non-offending family, friends) and internal containments (internalization of law-abiding norms) keep the youth out of trouble. When one or both of the containment forces are weak the chances of offending increase.

Strodbeck and Short (1964) write about the role of "chance" in gang related activity. They claim that perhaps some gang or group behaviour is motivated less by criminal profit and more by a need to take risks. When the risk-taking behaviour results in police and court involvement, usually an unintended consequence, it should be distinguished from other types of willful criminal gang activity.

Matza's (1964) "drift theory" attributes more agency or individual choice to delinquent youth. His theory offers a "soft determinism" and suggests that a person is neither totally free nor totally controlled by his society. Matza maintains that most delinquent youth drift in and out of crime in a directionless path and but remain a part of larger society. He feels that youth learn to be delinquent from others but are not compelled towards crime or to be committed to delinquent norms.

Bandura (1977) suggests that behaviour is learned by observing others, i.e., "social learning". Perceptions of reward or punishment for the observed actor reinforce, maintain, or extinguish behaviours. Thus, delinquent youth learn to be delinquent when they observe someone benefiting from illegal behaviour.

Hirschi's (1969) "social bond theory" suggests that all humans are anti-social by nature and that everyone is capable of committing delinquent acts. He feels that delinquency is neither learned nor follows from having insufficient means to achieve material gains. Instead, Hirschi maintains that delinquent behaviour arises in the absence of values or beliefs discouraging it from arising and from poor social attachments. In essence, people will not conform to the predominant social values if they have not learned to do so through reinforcement and attachment to the values of their nonoffending significant others. Without these bonds and reinforcements, youth are more likely to commit deviant or delinquent acts

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Sutherland and Cressy's (1970) "differential association theory" suggests that youth become delinquent and learn and develop their values, criminal behaviour, and beliefs from interaction with others in an intimate and small group. They feel class is not the essential issue and that the motivation to commit crimes does not come from the need to pursue status' or material gain per se but rather from the fact that the person possesses more definitions of actions favorable to violation of the law than towards compliance with the law.

Quinney (1974) offers a radical theory which explains crime as the result of class struggle and the marginalization of youth. He feels that the motivation toward crime comes from perceived inequities in the distribution of a nation's wealth and the lack of power of youth. The state and those who control capital have a vested interested in maintaining the existing social and economic order through law. Gang activity is how young people attempt to escape from this economic bondage.

Tomson and Fielder (1975) believe that gangs give members an identity and provide social activity, friendships, material benefits, and a sense of belonging. They also feel that youth in gangs accept the dominant culture's material goals but use aggression to obtain these goals.

Some writers talk about the "addictive" nature of deviant subcultures and lifestyles, and the influence of media created youth consumer culture on youth crime and delinquency (Mathews, 1989;

and England, 1967).

Other theorists offer positivistic or "medical models" and suggest there are predisposed "born criminals" (Ferri, 1901) with discernible body types and temperaments (Sheldon, 1949) *at* genetic and hormonal predispositions towards aggression in males, i.e., those with an extra "Y" chromosome.

Some studies in social psychology suggest that people in groups take their cues for behaviour from others (Darley & Latanne, 1968). For example, all members of a gang/group involved in a "swarming" would take their cue to get involved from others around them. If there is laughter and no obvious concern on the faces of others for the victim or the criminal nature of the attack, members will tend to become involved. When a gang/group commits an offence responsibility can be divided proportionally among the number of people present, significantly watering down personal accountability (Latanne & Darley, 1968).

One study suggests that the anticipated ends of group activities may not be as strong a motivator as stimulus properties of the targets and cues to aggression in the environment such as the presence of a weapon (Berkowitz & LePage, 1967). Also, the presence and influence of peers, especially among younger adolescents, can arouse some young people to become involved in behaviours they would not engage in alone. Peer pressure and the diffusion of responsibility may account for the alarming number of gang/group sexual assaults that occur in high schools in Metro Toronto (Mathews & Stermac, 1989).

The delinquency, deviance, gang, and social psychology literature reviewed above provides a variety of perspectives on gangs/groups. Though not exhaustive, this sampling of the literature helps point out the complexities in trying to define this phenomenon. The biological, psychological, social, situational, and family influences discussed in the literature provide us with pieces of a puzzle that in various combinations can help shed light on why young people become involved in gangs/groups and deviant or criminal activity. However, there is no single theory or definition that can account for the pluralistic or heterogeneous gang/group phenomenon in contemporary Canadian society.

Much of the literature is deterministic in its theoretical orientation; literally, poverty or some other "pathology" in the individual causes him/her to become deviant. There is little appreciation in this view for interaction effects between individuals and their society, individuals and social institutions, or the vulnerability factors that put young people at risk of becoming involved in gangs/groups. A deterministic view focused on poverty cannot account for middle class youth involvement in gang/group activity or explain why all persons living in poverty do not become criminals.

Almost all the research is American and focuses on lower class youth living in poverty. However, according to police, school officials, and social workers most of the gang-related activity in cities in southern Ontario involves middle class youth - as victims and perpetrators. The majority of these gang/group members come from intact families, and have access to material comforts, career pathways, part-time jobs, and other supports. Also, writers who feel that class conflict and poverty are prime motivators driving gang/group activity would have difficulty justifying the paltry take of most swarmings - a single jacket, pair of boots, or lunch money.

However, despite the fact that most of the research is American, it is still useful in helping us understand OUF own situation and may even provide a glimpse into our future. Many social trends that start in the U.S. eventually move north. If we can learn from the mistakes and experiences of many American cities, we may be able to start planning prevention efforts early and avoid some of the serious youth gang problems they are now facing.

A recent Canadian study views street gangs as a subcategory of "street youth". The two axis model developed in the study locates street gangs on a continuum of gradually escalating levels of commitment to crime while on the street or in the street community-(Brannigan and Caputo, 1993). The

model also identifies time spent on the street as a factor influencing a young person's decision to become involved in illegal activities, a view supported by other Canadian research (Mathews, 1989).

Much of the literature focuses on organized gangs with a definable membership and norms, or on those groups that are fiercely territorial, strongly ethnic, class, or neighbourhood based. These patterns of association and identification are not as evident in the youth gangs/groups in Toronto. There is great heterogeneity both within and between Toronto's youth gangs/groups (Mathews, 1990b). Some are ethnic-based, while others have mixed racial membership. The majority of members are male, though most gangs/groups are mixed gender. There are a number of all male gangs, and a few that have female members only.

Gangs/groups in Toronto have, for the most part, a fluid membership. Gang/group names have become relatively meaningless and change from week to week, month to month. Young people can be in several gangs/groups at the same time, all in different parts of the city. Gang/group members can range in age from minors to adults. In fact, it is advantageous to have young offenders and minors in a gang/group organized for criminal purposes. Minors are frequently used to carry out illegal activities because if caught they are rarely, if ever, prosecuted.

Little attention is paid to the wide developmental differences between young, middle and older teens. The social pressures and motivation to join a gang/group and participate in illegal activity will almost certainly vary according to a young person's level of maturity. For example, peer pressure typically has a greater influence on younger teens.

Most research on youth gangs/groups focuses on explanations of why young people get involved (vulnerability factors). A strong case could be made for shifting the research emphasis to why young people do not get involved (protective factors). Gang-proofing and other prevention strategies could benefit from the input of young people on both sides of the issue.

There is growing debate about the potential role of the media in stimulating youth to commit violent acts and in "creating" the gang/group phenomenon. Commercial and cable television, films, adolescent consumer culture, rock videos, and popular music all offer a high-powered and overwhelming "neural diet" of gratuitous violence, dehumanized sex, murder, rape, and greed. Few teens possess the media literacy and critical thinking skills they need to help sort through these messages. It should come as no surprise that vulnerable young people, desensitized to the feelings of others after a lifetime of exposure to violence as entertainment on television programs and in films, act out in an aggressive and violent manner. It really is more of a surprise that a larger number of young people are not involved in such criminal and other illegal activities.

Above all, we need to be careful not to indict all young people based on the violent and criminal actions of a few. With all the media attention being given to teens involved in gang/group activities, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that most young people are concerned, law-abiding citizens. Unnecessary panic caused by media-created and erroneous impressions of "rampant" youth violence can make many adults "youthphobic". Youthphobia, or fear of youth, either as individuals or in groups, has led to the murder of innocent or mischievous teenagers in the United States, when panicking adults misunderstood their actions and reached for their guns before asking questions.

What is most conspicuous by its absence in the literature is the perspective of the young people themselves. If we are to move closer to a more comprehensive understanding of the youth gang/group phenomenon it is essential to solicit the views of young people involved. Their experientially based "expert" knowledge will provide us with an "everyday understanding of problems" (Furnham, 1988) and furnish us with insights that will contribute in important ways to making intervention and prevention more relevant for youth. Any comprehensive response strategies developed to address youth gangs/groups and youth violence that are not pro-youth and do not include the voices and input of youth will likely fail (Mathews, 1992).

In consideration of the above, Youth Gangs on Youth Gangs was undertaken to provide young people with an opportunity to add their voices to the discourse on the phenomenon. The study focuses on a range of youth gangs/groups whose common characteristic is involvement in illegal activities. The intention of this report is to stimulate and broaden discussion of the issues that will likely have an impact on problem definition and the development of a comprehensive response strategy. It is intended to be primarily descriptive and is written for a wide readership. Categories and subheadings used to report the data are based on themes which emerged from participants' responses to questions on the interview guides. Because of the small sample size, findings in the study should be considered exploratory and tentative, a modest beginning to understanding, and not an exhaustive analysis of the phenomenon. Also, it is important to keep in mind that the voices of children under the age of 12 and developmentally delayed youth are not included in the sample and thus their stories remain untold .

- Method of Enquiry

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to define the phenomenon of youth gangs/groups in its current manifestation in Metropolitan Toronto and southern Ontario and provide information for use in the development of appropriate policy and program responses and, ultimately, structural and systemic changes in the delivery of service to victims, gang/group members, and "at risk" and non-offending youth.

Study Objectives

1. Elicit the thoughts and feelings of young people involved in youth gang/group activity and add their voices and perceptions to both the literature and the current public and media discourse on the phenomenon as it exists today in Canadian society.
2. Compare and contrast the perceptions of youth gang/group members with those of the adult professionals, school officials, police, and social workers who are closely associated with them on a daily basis.
3. Use information obtained in the study to develop conceptual models that will assist government, police, school officials, and youth service providers in better understanding youth gang/group involvement and gang/group crime and violence.

Research Design

The research was not intended as an "objective" analysis of youth involved in gangs/groups but as a documentation of these young people in interaction with their society> each other, and the institutions that serve them. The study was intended to be exploratory and descriptive, a record of the perceptions and experiences of youth

"expense" who, as social actors, live their lives more immediately immersed in the phenomenon.

A qualitative approach to the research based on personal narratives and responses to a semi-structured interview was chosen in order to allow for more richness in the data. Use of a control group consisting of youth not involved in youth gangs/groups was proposed in a revised design of the study but, for financial reasons, was not possible to include at this time.

Self-reports in the form of responses to interview questions are of course open to challenge with respect to veracity, exaggeration, and impression management. However, the candidness of responses and the richness and detail provided in virtually all interviews suggests youth participants were sincere in their desire to be honest and help government and youth service providers understand youth gangs/groups and find ways to support and assist other young people involved. All

youth were connected with a social worker or police officer or school administrator who could verify any information provided in the interviews, and, because of their contact with the law, their offences were a matter of record.

Study Advisory Committee

A study advisory committee was formed to aid and support the process of the research. The committee consisted of representatives from the federal Department of Public Security (formerly the Solicitor General), the federal Department of Justice, the Ontario Ministry of the Solicitor General, the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General, plus a school principal, social worker, social service agency administrator, and two police officers. Committee members provided feedback on the research and questionnaire design, provided contacts with youth involved in gangs/groups, and reviewed early drafts of the report.

Study Participants

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide. Interview guides were piloted and reviewed after the first three interviews. No changes were felt to be necessary. Each participant was given an opportunity to provide any additional thoughts, feelings, or information not covered in the interview guide. Questions used in the interviews were designed to elicit participants perceptions of the youth gang/group phenomenon and ideas concerning how we as a society can respond. All interviews with participants were audiotaped and transcribed.

Youth Interviews. Because of the seriousness of some of the crimes committed, the greatest difficulty in conducting the study was finding former or present youth gang/group members who would be willing to speak candidly about their experiences. Trust is always a major issue in the lives of these young people and so it was necessary to approach youth participants through an intermediary, an adult they knew and who could explain the intention of the study and encourage them to participate. The youth were told that their participation in the research would be of assistance to other young people in similar difficulties

The young people in the study were located through school administrators, social workers, and police officers. Youth participants either self-identified or were identified by others as belonging to a gang/group. Most had criminal convictions and 6 had spent time in custody. Since the completion of the interviews, two young people have returned to custody on new charges.

The youth participants cannot be considered a random or representative sample of all youth gang/group members or typical of any particular gang/group type, a situation which limits the generalizability of the study findings. They do, however, represent the membership of a significant cross-section of the most common configurations of youth

gangs/groups and come from a variety of cultural backgrounds. One youth was the former founder and leader of a Skinhead group.

A total of 12 youth, 11 males, 1 female, ranging in age from 14 to 21 were interviewed. The age breakdown was as follows: 2 were 14 years old, 1 was 15, 2 were 16, 3 were seventeen, 1 was 18, 2 were 19, and 1 was 21. Youth participants had to be current or former gang/group members while young offenders. Their length of involvement in gangs/groups ranged from 1 to 7 years.

Youth participants were given an explanation of the study's purpose. All were guaranteed anonymity and informed about the limits of confidentiality; if they disclosed abuse of a minor or mentioned they had committed or were planning to commit a capital crime or serious injury against a named person. They were also informed of their right to refuse to answer any question or stop the interview at any time. They were asked for permission to tape the interviews. None refused. No participants refused to answer any questions.

Interviews with the young people took place in a wide variety of settings: a shopping mall food court, police station, parents' homes, a school nurse's office, a school guidance office, a social work

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agency, a principal's office, and an open custody facility for young offenders. Interviews ranged in length of time from 45 to 90 minutes.

Adult Interviews. Interviews with adult key informants (7 police officers, 7 school officials, and 3 social workers), 2 parents of gang/group members, and 2 adult victims were conducted in private homes, police stations, school offices, social work agencies, and a secure custody facility. Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to two and a half hours. All police officers were of Detective rank and all involved in dealing with gangs/groups and street crime. School administrators were drawn from Boards of Education in Metropolitan Toronto and other cities and communities in Southern Ontario. All adult key informants were selected on the basis of their first hand knowledge of and experience with youth involved in gang/groups. In order to broaden the study's perspective interviews were conducted with adult victims of youth gangs/groups.

Adult interviewees were given an explanation of the purpose of the study and guaranteed anonymity. Participants were informed of their right to refuse to answer any question or to stop the interview at any time. None refused. Interviews were taped and transcribed.

Data Analysis

Transcripts from participant interviews were analyzed for patterns and trends that

could aid in the development of a conceptual model of gang/group involvement and youth gang/group crime and violence and in the testing of an exploratory typology of youth gangs/groups. Ethnograph, a computer software program for analyzing text-based data, was used in the early stages of the analysis.

Key Terms Used in the Study

Since our attempts to find appropriate responses or solutions will depend heavily on the definitions we use, it is important to be as inclusive as possible in formulating Our definitions and concepts for analysis. However, given the complexity and fluid nature of youth gangs/groups and youth violence as it exists today in Canada, any simple definitions should be accepted with caution.

There are essentially three key terms or concepts that will be used in the study that have imprecise definitions; "gang" or "gang/group", "youth", and "gang/group activity". The term "gang/group" is used in the study to avoid the criminal stereotypes and exaggerated media images usually associated with the term "gang" and to capture the idea of a continuum ranging from a "group of friends" who hang out and occasionally get into trouble with the law to more serious organized "criminal group" associations.

Some gangs/groups consist of members ranging in age from 8 to 21 years or older hence the term "youth" cannot be limited to a strictly legal definition of "young offender". Use of the term "youth" in the study also takes into account individual developmental considerations since some young persons 18 to 21 years of age will identify with younger peers or seek supports and services from community-based youth-serving agencies. However, an upper age limit of 21 years was used for purposes of the study.

The term "gang/group activity" is used to refer to behaviour considered illegal under the *Criminal Code*. A case could be made for extending the term to apply to anti-social acts, intimidation, sexual harassment, and gestures, jokes, or comments that could reasonably be expected to cause harm or arouse fear in another person. Also, because of the stereotypes attached to the term "gang", *multiple perpetrator youth crime and violence*, might be a better term for use when discussing the gang/group phenomenon and gang/group activities.