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Community Crime Project: Planning Study and Preliminary Measures

Minnesota Planning, Criminal Justice Center

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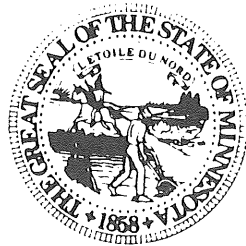
Chicano Latino Affairs Council

Council on Black Minnesotans

Council on Asian - Pacific Minnesotans

Indian Affairs Council

STATE OF MINNESOTA



November 1996

MINNESOTA PLANNING is charged with developing a long-range plan for the state, stimulating public participation in Minnesota's future, and coordinating activities with state agencies, the Legislature and other units of government. The Criminal Justice Center at Minnesota Planning provides criminal and juvenile justice information, conducts research and maintains databases for policy development.

This Community Crime Project Report was prepared by Criminal Justice Center staff members: Ray Lewis, Susan Roth, LaLonnie Erickson, Daniel Storkamp and Carol Mickolich Weber. Additional Minnesota Planning staff at different phases included Ann Jaede, Diane Marsh and Richard Fong.

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November 1996

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Note: Each community report is preceded by a letter from the director of the respective council. Results from the Council on Black Minnesotans survey will be added when available.

SUMMARY OF THE COMMUNITY CRIME PROJECT

In 1991, Minnesota Planning released a report entitled, *Minnesota Milestones: A Report Card for the Future*, which provided a long-range plan for the state. One of the state's goals is to have communities that are safe, friendly and caring. To measure progress toward this goal, a statewide survey of experiences and perceptions regarding crime is conducted every three years. However, the number of survey responses from Minnesota's communities of color were too small to provide meaningful information.

To gain more complete information about all citizens' experiences and perceptions of crime, Minnesota Planning began to investigate the possibility of conducting a crime survey specifically for communities of color. Minnesota Planning staff enlisted the help of the state's four minority councils to discuss ways to gather a more representative sample from the communities of color.

The Criminal Justice Center received funding from the Office of Drug Policy and Violence Prevention in April 1996 to explore the possibility of conducting such a survey. Minnesota Planning in turn contracted with the Chicano/Latino Affairs Council, the Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans, the Council on Black Minnesotans and the Indian Affairs Council to conduct background research on crime within their communities.

Unedited reports from each of the communities are attached. Results from one council's project are being tabulated and will be added when complete. Underlying this project is a commitment to have community-based researchers gather information about their community from service providers, organizers and others. It is intended that the information will be used by the community and policy-makers.

KEY FINDINGS

- All four communities expressed a willingness to address crime and justice related issues and to help develop culturally appropriate solutions, if funds were available to implement their ideas. The councils found a preference to work within communities strengthening culturally-based options for prevention.
- The council directors expressed overall support for an initiative looking at the role of communities of color in developing crime and justice policy and programs, but they had mixed support for a larger crime-related survey. Youth violence and gang involvement are priority topics across all communities that do not need more study and research before actions are taken to reduce the scope of the problem.
- Focus groups, discussion circles and person-to-person contacts by community members were identified as the best methods to gather information about crime and justice related issues. These methods address some of the concerns about language barriers and cultural familiarity, the sensitivity of the topics and mistrust of government agencies. Yet, people want to know why the information is being collected and how it will be used.

The original goal for a focused survey among Minnesota's communities of color included building a starting point for obtaining crime and justice data to plan services and prevention strategies. The differences in perceptions of the justice system held by members of different races is important, but little research has been conducted on this topic in Minnesota. The results also might help to evaluate the effect of community mobilization using existing programs and organizations by merging state, local and community resources to address citizen's identified needs. Results were intended to document gaps in needs, address specific perceptions and achieve a unified community strategy by working together with the four communities on common problems and approaches.

Similar themes came from all four communities:

- youth and family breakdown is a common concern
- culturally competent and specific solutions with a prevention focus are needed
- distrust of the criminal justice system and government "help" is an underlying problem
- disproportionate representation of communities in media crime coverage produces negative perceptions of the community
- achievements within communities of color receive little recognition

Each community also has specific issues that require consideration for a larger survey or in developing programs:

- African American population is primarily urban
- Asian youth do not have major drug trade involvement nor national gang ties, but threaten to call 911 in response to parental discipline, language barriers
- American Indian sovereign relationship with government, tribal laws and courts, separate reservations and rural/urban differences
- Chicano-Latino seasonal and migrant workers, language barriers

A message from this project is to strengthen families, rather than laws and a growing criminal justice system that is distrusted. A focus on crime and victimization is only one approach to addressing root causes of family breakdown. Improvements within the overall health, economic, education and employment conditions that are community based and culturally centered would be more effective and provide a sense of hope. Finally, the media should shift its focus to highlight cultural strengths and traditions that support family and community efforts to prevent problems.

Community Crime Project Overview

This project was an initial effort on the part of Minnesota Planning and the Chicano/Latino Affairs Council, the Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans, the Council on Black Minnesotans and the Indian Affairs Council to gather crime-related information, perceptions and experiences from Minnesota communities of color.

Key to the project is that crime related issues be identified and interpreted by members of the community. Two primary questions that the project attempted to answer were: 1) should any larger survey be initiated to gather crime and justice information from Minnesota's communities of color, and if so, 2) how to gather information and use it to address community-developed solutions to prioritized concerns?

The directors of the councils developed a list of activities to be conducted for the project:

- Determine the community's willingness to participate in a crime and justice related survey.
- Identify and contact key individuals, community leaders and service providers to get their input, insights and feedback.
- Identify priority crime and justice related issues in the community.
- Determine how to gather opinions about priority issues in the community.
- Identify how to report results.
- Identify how information can be used by the community and policy-makers.
- Identify how to evaluate the process.

Key Findings

The following findings are taken from the attached reports submitted by the directors from the four councils and from planning meetings held during the project. The information was gathered during the summer of 1996 through focus groups, interviews and discussions among members of the community. These findings attempt to summarize the results from the above activities from the four communities, yet cannot include all details and aspects from the project and each report.

Determine the community's willingness to participate in a crime and justice related survey.

All four communities expressed a willingness to address crime and justice related issues and to help develop culturally appropriate solutions if funds were available to implement their ideas. Some people involved in the various focus groups and interviews had taken part in previous surveys and reports, but the lack of feedback from majority organizations or results from those experiences reduced their willingness for future involvement with traditional agencies.

Identify and contact community leaders and service providers to get their input, insights and feedback.

The researchers' personal networks which were based on prior relationships with individuals and organizations were identified as key. Although these reports highlight specific and common concerns, they cannot completely reflect the multiple facets and diversity within each community.

Identify priority crime and justice related issues in the community.

Youth violence and gang involvement are viewed as an immediate crisis within all communities. All of the councils cited family breakdowns or the growing gap between young people and parents and elders in the community as a cause for increases in youth violence. They identified a need to build bridges through programs and activities that reinforce positive cultural norms and traditions.

Crime is a problem in all communities, but not necessarily the most pressing one. Crime needs to be viewed as a symptom of deeper family, community and institutional problems. In addition, they found that crime reduction should be addressed with a wider range of opportunities that increase health, education, jobs, housing and income levels, rather than simply with more laws and prisons. Stronger families and communities were recommended as the preferred way of addressing the crime problem. Family and community leadership are seen as key elements in reducing the impact of crime, but changes within the larger society are also required. Other adults saw law enforcement and the legal system as too lenient with kids and not supporting parents.

One priority is to remove or reduce institutional barriers to reduce mistrust and perceived unfairness. Communities feel overpoliced but underprotected. An example of institutional change might be liaisons or people to translate the formal actions and processes of the justice system. Furthermore, all portions of the justice system need to continually examine the diversity and cultural educational levels of their personnel.

Solutions that start within communities are more likely to be successful than ones imposed from outside agencies and institutions. Yet, these sectors need to follow through on commitments to continue focusing and responding to needs and solutions identified by the communities. Appropriate methods and processes should be tailored for each community that explore causes and solutions and to implement programs that respond to these concerns. Common methods can start with the suggestion provided by one of the participants:

“Approach people in treatment or corrections facilities and ask “what do you think are needed to help change the attitudes of young people?” Ask the elders the same, ask the young people what they really care about that can help change things. Define it so it can be presented in a form that people can understand and be able to share in it. Listen to the success stories. Find out what was it that made a difference to turn a person around. I think a survey should ask what can you do? What can we do?”

Determine how to gather opinions about priority issues in the community.

One of the objectives of this project was to document the strengths and weakness of various methods to gather perceptions and experiences with crime and the justice system. Focus groups, discussion circles and person-to-person contacts by community members were identified as the best methods to gather information about crime and justice related issues. In addition to language and cultural familiarity, researchers can address the mistrust of government agencies and the sensitivity of the topic by explaining the purpose of the work. Discussion circles that may include offering of food in accord with cultural values were recommended, while mail-in or telephone surveys were discouraged.

Trust, secrecy, fear and language are key barriers affecting the quality of data gathered. Data gathering efforts should be best handled through the resources of the community. Well recognized and community-involved individuals can tap into existing relations for face-to-face communication. Interviews or structured dialogs can be held in familiar and informal environments to promote ambience. Explaining the purpose of the project and the intended use of the information promotes cooperation. One major recommendation from this planning project is to hire people and agencies from the community to gather and interpret the findings.

People want to know why the information is being collected and how it will be used. Feedback is key to building trust about the process. A follow-up discussion with participants of the findings, and a copy of the community report or resulting actions is needed to ensure continued participation and build trust in the process.

Identify how to report results.

Small group sessions within each community were identified as a method of getting information back to the communities for further clarification of issues and developing solutions to reduce the impact of crime. A follow-up discussion with participants of all communities of the results and resulting actions is needed to ensure continued participation and build trust in the process. Mainstream media, council newsletters and community-based media such as public television or radio also could be used to inform community members.

Identify how information can be used by the community and policy-makers.

In general, communities wanted to help themselves by transmitting and reinforcing cultural norms for prevention, early intervention and alternative sanctions for young offenders. Cultural pride, self-esteem, positive role models and opportunities for constructive action are seen as needed to reduce anti-social behavior. Some community nonprofit leaders identify themselves as having the responsibility for providing services, but limited power to make or influence decisions because of their relationship to state and local government agencies, decisionmakers and funders.

The information can be used to call for efforts to increase representation, cultural sensitivity and respect within justice organizations and agencies. Community generated information could also be used to support continuing reforms in judicial and law enforcement systems to increase fairness.

Information could be used to develop solutions and programs, provide technical assistance and improve responses to community issues. These projects and initiatives have more resonance

when initiated and focused within specific cultures. Suggested or ongoing projects include:

- Increase the availability of community liaisons and ombudsmen for the Southeast Asian community for contacts with government service areas such as education, social services and criminal justice. A lack of understanding of the differences between formal laws, rules and standard operating procedures alienates the community while the gap between generations is in part driven by disparities in language abilities.
- Strengthen the Martin Luther King, Jr. nonviolent institutional child development pilot program which provides interdisciplinary community violence prevention and intervention programs. The pilot program provides services to institutions such as elementary and secondary schools, social service programs and agencies, youth programs and services, juvenile delinquency programs and residential treatment facilities.
- Extend the hours for youth and families both among criminal justice and social service providers in the Chicano-Latino community. This would give these community members a more convenient mode for accessing services when they need them. Since calling the police, or engaging "the system" is a last resort for some people, an alternative is community-operated justice systems based on indigenous methods which reinforce and enforce community norms.
- The American Indian community described examples of the Mille Lacs community- building efforts using recommendations provided by tribal members and the revamping the Red Lake juvenile justice system to increase parental involvement. Traditions such as rites-of-passage ceremonies and community involvement enhance hope and respect for youth and their communities.

Solutions that come from within communities are more likely to be successful than ones imposed from outside agencies and institutions. Programs could better match identified needs if community members had the resources to pull together data from information collection systems, and ideas generated from discussion or focus groups and larger forums. Community-based organizations could serve as the intermediary between grassroots people and various levels of government to reach consensus. Public agencies could assist through technical assistance involving information sharing, capacity building and evaluation. This model needs to incorporate the natural strengths of the community and provide the ability to respond quickly once a consensus is reached on the problem and what community members think needs to be done.

Identify how to evaluate the community crime process.

None of the reports specifically addressed how a project like this one should be evaluated. Yet at the planning meetings, council directors and community researchers said that state funding and acceptance for the planning project concept was a positive first step. Participation from all four councils representing non-traditional communities in Minnesota demonstrated a common concern and interest. The effort of community members asking people for their input was itself seen as helpful. Future signs of success may include specific legislative recommendations, awareness and support of additional community-focused initiatives.

Recommendation from the Council Directors

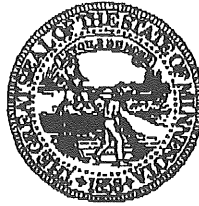
Each council director was asked to recommend whether or not a larger survey project should be done, and if so, how to proceed. As a result of this planning project, the council directors jointly agreed that a minority focused policy-analysis and development effort should move forward. There was mixed support for a larger survey without the designation of resources to implement community-driven solutions. One comment was that "Research for the purpose of research is hollow." It was recommended that specific funding should be sought for community-based prevention, intervention and pilot programs, rather than simply gathering more information through a survey.

Funding for a two-part larger project should be sought.

Funding should be sought for developing and documenting community-based solutions for specific crime related problems. One common priority issue across all communities is a focus on ways to reduce youth violence and gang involvement. These problems are seen as an immediate crisis in the communities and do not need additional studies or surveys before action is taken to build the capacity within communities to intervene early.

Funding for community-focused research and continued dialog about policy research and program evaluations should be sought. The council directors and researchers at the September 1996 Community Crime Project meeting did not endorse a larger crime victimization study as a priority within the communities of color, but expressed support for further work on processes to give communities of color a stronger voice in policy-making and funding decisions.

Support was voiced for a broader strategic approach that simultaneously involves some community-based action component. Prevention strategies are needed that support cultural strengths by passing on traditions, values and knowledge between elders and youth. Restorative justice principles that hold the offender accountable to the state, the victim who has been harmed and the community which has been disrupted were cited as appropriate method for addressing crime and justice in a wider context.



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September 18, 1996

To: Ray Lewis
Minnesota Planning

From: Joe Day *Joseph B. Day*
Executive Director

Re: Crime Survey

The methodology that the Indian Affairs Council employed in the survey was to grass roots focus groups. Gathering data from the grass roots people, we heard of concerns regarding crime come from personal experience and observation on the subject. Also not part of the survey are two initiatives by the Leech Lake and Mille Lacs Reservation. Their initiatives began more than a year ago and are funded by internal and external sources aimed at crime reduction.

It is our opinion that listening to the persons that are directly impacted by crime is the best source for collecting data. It is also important that the analysis of the data be fed back to those who participated in the focus group. Also it is important to seriously consider their suggested solutions to address crime in our respective communities, driven by community members. The gap between the elders and parents with the young people needs to address this gap is perceived to be the beginning of the end to cultural preservation and identity, and is very worrisome to the elders.

The next step is to help the communities to help themselves and to begin reforms in the judicial and law enforcement systems that are fair to our community as well as user friendly.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Perceptions of Crime in the American Indian Community
Summary Report
August 30, 1996

Prepared by John Poupart and Andriana Abariotes
American Indian Research and Policy Institute

Introduction

The American Indian Research and Policy Institute (AIRPI) was contracted by the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council to provide documentation of the experiences with and perceptions of crime within Minnesota's American Indian community. AIRPI worked with the Indian Affairs Council and other community members to develop a research strategy to gather information from community leaders, service providers, and individuals about the issue of crime in our community. This research project was conducted between June 15, 1996 and August 30, 1996. It is part of a larger effort to document perceptions of crime in minority communities sponsored by MN Planning and the Department of Public Safety.

Two primary researchers, John Poupart, President of AIRPI and Andriana Abariotes, Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, conducted the data gathering and wrote this summary report. Questions regarding the research content or process should be direct to AIRPI at (612)644-1728.

Methodology

Four focus groups were conducted to gather information from members of the Indian community. These focus groups were held in Mille Lacs, Duluth, Minneapolis, and St. Paul. Four local individuals assisted AIRPI with recruitment for the respective focus groups. Participants in the focus groups were provided a gratuity of \$25 in appreciation for their time devoted to focus group participation. (See Appendix A for a list of participants.)

A series of questions were developed and distributed at the focus group meetings. (Appendix B) An introduction to the project and review of the "Troubling Perceptions" report compiled by MN Planning was a component of each focus group. Broadly defined, the focus group participants answered the questions: Is there a crime problem? What are your perceptions of the crime problem? What have been your experiences? How would you conduct a survey/gather information from the Indian community about crime?

Findings

Key Theme:

Participants in the focus groups identified a common theme of self-reliance and community problem-solving in relation to crime issues. Many participants articulated a need for the

Indian community to look inward to solve problems plaguing all Indians whether they be living in the urban area or on the reservation. To address this need, participants eluded to the return of and reliance on their cultural base of traditions, values, and practices.

We have summarized many of the participant responses into four categories. These categories include perceptions and attitudes toward crime, experiences with crime, potential solutions or community responses to crime, and recommendations for research within the Indian community.

Perceptions of Crime:

Participants in each of the focus groups stated that they believed crime was an issue in their community regardless of an urban or reservation setting. However, the participants perceptions diverged between the reservation and urban areas in terms of the nature and scale of crime.

- **There is more concern about property crime vs. crimes to persons on the reservation. In urban areas, there is more concern about crimes to persons and violent crimes like assault and murder.**

In Mille Lacs:

"There is lots of vandalism."

"There is a correlation with 'huffing' and teen vandalism. The teens are bored and they look to property crime."

"I think it (vandalism, property crime) relates to anger. Indians aren't used to change. One thing that used to get me mad is the change that was going on the reservation."

"Anger feeds into the domestic violence that we see (on the reservation). Unfortunately, they (perpetrators) aren't held accountable in this court system. There is a huge docket of cases and lots of bargaining takes place."

"There is lots more juvenile crime. They [youth] know how to use the system. They use it against the parents. They're not held accountable. When you were a kid and your parents were whistling for you, you had to go. People held you accountable. The community was holding kids accountable. Because of kids knowing how to manipulate the system, they're taking a lot of parenting power away from the parents. There are a lot of good parents up here."

"Some [parents] are enabling the kids by not holding them accountable when they

break something or steal something. They're enabling the kids. There's an acceptance to let others pay for it (the property damage)."

However, a special note was made that crime is getting worse on or near the reservation.

"Crime is getting more serious in nature: Assault and felonies. It used to be petty misdemeanors. I see kids who have no empathy for what they do."

In Duluth:

"It [crime] is an issue in our community. A big issue. There are a lot of people we know who have been a victim of crime. Both crimes against Indians and Indians involved in crime. Examples are a drive-by shooting, a torching. The other day a young Indian girl was stabbed. There is gang activity. Two people were found left dead for a long time. Nobody is checking up on one another."

"Crimes are becoming more violent."

"Indians are becoming more noted by the larger community. Central Hillside is no longer the central rental areas for people of color. It's spreading and people are becoming more aware. The reasons for this is partly due to the growing population and part of it is perception. As the community becomes more diversified, people think crime is related to that. The socio-conditions aren't being noted."

In Minneapolis:

"Now we have this [drug] crack, and it's getting worse and worse. People are struggling. The [Phillips] neighborhood, I don't feel safe in it, especially for my daughter. She's 16. I'm worried about her. All the crime. The big fluctuation of all these people coming here. They don't have the services for everyone. There's a section of our community who need our help, the 17-21 year olds."

"It's the 'down' people trying to keep each other down. I see people busting on each other if you worked hard. In my neighborhood they don't bother me because I'm not black, but if I was, they'd be coming down on me. In the Phillips neighborhood there's more jealousy. I try to keep things to myself. My savings account, etc. I see the gangs and wonder where their parents? I saw a kid break out a window and then pee in it. Then I saw his mother yell at him but it was abusive. Sometimes the parents are as bad as the kids. Some of the parents are on crack. Not everybody. There's the fear, too. In Powderhorn, they were scared of the kids. They're teenagers--they're just little boys--they're big, but they're little...you know."

"The fear is for violent or personal crime."

Participants in each of the focus groups agreed that the media plays a large role in the perceptions of crime. Many participants stated that the news media is creating the fear of crime in the white community. However, for people of color, actual victimization may be more of a reality than just a fear. Indian focus group participants personalized their perceptions of crime based on real occurrences for themselves as individuals or as a community. The statements they offered were not formed from a detached observer perspective.

- Much of the discussion focused on news media and how American Indians and people of color are poorly portrayed. Discussants felt that crime was presented by the media as violent in nature and that people of color were overly represented in these kinds of news stories. It is believed that this kind of news coverage contributes to racism.

In Duluth:

"When a crime is committed, when it's done by someone outside of a community of color you don't hear "John Doe of white community did..." You do hear "John Doe Indian did..."

"The local media has an impact and feeds into the perception of crime."

"Indian to Indian crime doesn't get much coverage. Indian to white crime gets more. We need to look at what's positive for us as Indians, like people speaking the language. We have a storyteller right here. We need to acknowledge what we still have. Even through this format here."

In St. Paul:

"One of my concerns as I look at crime is when I pick up the newspaper and watch the news, I see it everywhere. With youth, I see Indian youth in the prisons and other juvenile detention programs. As an individual, it's hard to respond. I think it needs a whole community to reach out to the youth."

"They [media] show every crime done by a person of color. We send our kids to private schools. My son is at Cretin. He's starting to develop those prejudices toward Blacks and Hispanics (and Native Americans). I asked him why you think that--he said, 'well, it's on the news every night.'"

"There are lily white newscaster's here. They only show the pictures of the people of color. I have to sit with my son and watch the news to temper what he's getting from the media so that he doesn't suffer from the same self esteem problem I had."

"When we were talking about the media, what about when the white woman killed

her two kids and said that a Black guy did it. Everyone believed her."

"If you do a survey, go to the media. That's all they talk about: killings and shootings and robberies."

"They always talk about poor people who commit crimes. Non-Indian, non-Black,...White collar crime--it's a huge crime that goes unreported. The only think we hear about is Chip Wadena, Indian casino crime."

"This huge crime [white collar] that is committed causes lots of burden for tax payers. Have them [the media] investigate those crimes."

In Minneapolis:

"The reporting and the news media is dominated in cultural bias. This burns me. You always see the person's picture and the mug shot. You never see the picture of the guy who commits the white collar crime. You never hear about the Club Med that guy goes to rather than Stillwater. Seeing people of color always in this position adds to diminishing the self-esteem for kids. The stuff printed in the newspaper disseminates more fear, anger, and disillusionment. It makes people of color feel more inferior. For the dominate culture, it sends more conflicting messages. The cop who was caught beating people gets his job back. If that was a person of color, that would never happen. Now, we have a black judge getting beat up for speaking out. Kids see these messages. It internalizes a lot of anger. Growing up, young people are trying to make decisions, fight between right and wrong. I think the messages that we're fed fuels anger and conflict. I'm no conspiricist, but it is put out there and its deliberate. To separate the haves from the have nots. It's not just one race. America is filled with all kinds of people. It's a classism. People forget where they come from. To keep people apart, to keep them separated. Keep them killing each other and then everything is fine."

In Mille Lacs, there was specific attention given to the urban influence on the reservation and it's connection to crime.

"We have the urban influence here big time. Anishinabe are a caring people. In order for us to start caring we have to have a strong social service system. You know that people don't believe one way and then act another. How can you raise your kids if you don't have any beliefs? When there is a storm, my kids go to get the tobacco. You need a strong system, you need people dedicated to having the strong social service system. It needs to come from higher up. It is the same thing with crime. If someone breaks the law he needs to be held accountable."

"For those who work in the trenches, we're so close to the Cities. There used to be a big split between the urban and the reservation kids. There is a big urban influence.

A lack of pride and education is also present. Trying to bridge both worlds is still hard for Indian kids."

Significant discussion about juvenile crime was raised in each of the focus groups. Participants noted the changing nature in the crimes, the growing number of crimes, and the ability to deal effectively with the youth. They also related several reasons for why they think juvenile crime is on the rise and becoming more violent.

- **There was an expression of concern that Indian youth have lost a connection to Indian traditions and values of the community. There is a growing gap in the ability to transfer knowledge and understanding between the youth and elders. This has had an effect on the level of respect the youth holds for the community, the elders, and themselves as Indians.**

In Mille Lacs:

"You need to get at the issue of pride. It's really hard to change the mind of a 15 year old. I don't know how many kids know the history of Mille Lacs and what Mille Lacs is doing today. It's the only reservation that's doing [community] building today. When kids feel better about themselves, they're going to want to work."

In Duluth:

"I think the children need to see more elders in the schools. The white kids get stroked all the time, our kids don't. My son gets home and says 'everyone else got a star, why didn't I? I worked hard.' They feel this. No hugs, no pats on the back."

"They go out and look for it-- i.e. gangs."

In Minneapolis:

"My son gave me the observation the other day. He's twenty three. He said 'I feel like I always have to be on-guard.' There is a lot of pressure to get involved in petty crime, drugs, and drinking. I feel that same way too. For young people, they always have this feeling of being on-guard. They want to keep away from that, yet they have to deal with it all the time. At my age, I feel that way. He said that 'it's the neighborhood I live in.' If it's the hard core crime, shootings, knifing, etc., there's also softer crime. The pressure to get involved in petty things. He was associated with some kids who stole a snowblower one time. They threatened him with going up to 'totem town.'"

"There aren't any elders coming out to talk with us about the traditions and the culture. I know [the culture], but these guys [youth present] don't know. I feel that they don't believe me if I tell them. They would listen to someone else that this is

the way to live. My grandkids don't have the language, the traditions. I'm in the middle and I'm worried. President Clinton is talking about values in the schools, but at the same time they won't let us talk about or practice Indian spirituality. We don't even get to practice our own culture."

"When I wasn't looking for the cultural stuff, I then started stealing stuff. I lost connections to some of the leaders. I went to the crime, the drugs, did the time. I was locked up for 9 months. I feel like no one cares. Why should I give a ____?"

In St. Paul:

"I'm second generation in the Cities. My mother moved from the rez. She went to the boarding school and then returned but there were no jobs on the rez. When we moved down here we didn't get to hear about the culture and the traditions. I would get it when I would go up to the rez from my grandparents. We're two or three generations in the city. This is going to have an effect. The youth don't have anyone to teach the traditions, especially if the parents are drinking."

"I'm aware of what is happening at Little Earth. I was listening to stories of a woman who lives there. She was telling me about her children. My overall feeling about what's happening to Native American youth--being attached to youth, there's been a break down in our traditions and cultures. As Indian people, personally I feel that has had an effect on the youth and their respect for themselves and for the elders. In some of the programs I work with, that's what we're trying to do, bridge the youth back to the community."

"I think it relates to respect. I worked with a lot of youth involved in City, Inc. These kids, specially boys, come from some hard families: abuse and neglect. A lot of them want that goodness in their lives, but it's just not there. By working with them, we did a lot of cultural things. They started respecting themselves. They started going to school. The older people may be lost. I don't think that they'll come around. But the younger ones are looking for it. I think it can change."

Experiences with Crime:

Many of the participants in the focus groups offered experiences they have had personally and those of family members with respect to crime. Some of these experiences are as victims of property related crimes or assaults. A few of the participants offered their own criminal activity they had engaged in previously.

- **The focus group participants' perceptions of crime are often based on real life experiences. Also, their understanding of what it means to be "safe" may differ from that understanding held by the majority community.**

In Mille Lacs, when asked if you feel safe in your community, participants stated:

"I've never thought about it that way. Once my tires were slashed, cut up. We [her husband and she] live by ourselves."

"I walk these roads every night, and I don't feel afraid at all."

"I live in Onamia. I suppose the property issue is present. You have to lock up everything."

"Crime has changed since the time of my parents. There were only a few people that you knew who went to jail. I became a parent at 15. Now our kids are 22. When my daughter gets in trouble I tend to back her up because I wasn't there for her when she was younger. I tend to stick up for her. Because I was young then. It was a tough time to grow up in the late 60's and 70's. There was a lot of activity with AIM, etc. Now there are gangs. Their [current teenagers] parents are young in their 30's and 40's. We never thought it would be our fault."

In Duluth:

"I came from Minneapolis, and I feel safer here. There were a lot of children doing crimes down there."

"I've been a victim of crime. Native kids broke into my house. I feel violated and I live alone. There was a pick-up truck parked on the street. There was a guy in the box and when the lights pulled in front, the guy pulled down. I went and called 911. Before I was a victim, I would have gone up and asked him what he was doing."

"I think there's a fear of getting hurt if you stop and get involved. We've moved from the Central Hillside to the north--Mesaba. The largest cocaine bust in Duluth happened across the street from us. Young kids (late teens) were busted. They were in from Detroit trying to set up a market. The kids are a good barometer of what's going on."

"Now we have insiders doing things, committing crimes. I'm more worried what I would do to the perpetrator. I have a seven year old daughter. We live across the street from a park. I'm worried about her getting abducted. I have off-street parking. I can see my truck parked from my window. I saw kids trying my doors, so I went outside to confront them. They show no fear."

In Minneapolis:

"Yesterday my purse was stolen. I didn't really care because I didn't have any money in it. But then I was worried because my keys were in there and they would

have had my address. There were kids at home. I was worried about them."

"I have a fund, my get away fund. The people on crack, dealing crack have moved south. I moved south and they moved south. I'm upset with the fact that people aren't watching their kids. They have 8 year old kids watching the younger kids. That bothers me."

"About five years ago, I could walk from my grandmother's house. Recently, I'd wait for a bus and once got clubbed on the head. If you walk out after eating pizza, you get shot at. There are drive-by shootings in the daytime."

"I won't go out of my house at night if I'm not in a car. I didn't know that this guy who came in put a gun in my face. I had known him for along time. Last year my mother almost got killed by two young Indian guys and a young woman."

"We have a clique of friends that have these good experiences [parents who cared, cultural activities]. Those who haven't had good experiences are trying to take it out on those who have."

"Some Indian parents are out there and they care. But sometimes our community is picked on by others. My son was in school and he was doing well. He was more cultural; he would drum in his spare time. He would get picked on by the other kids because he didn't do what they did. He was tortured spiritually, physically, and emotionally. There was the start of the gang--the naturals."

In St. Paul:

"One of the questions 'do you feel safe in your community?' No, wherever we go I lock my doors so no I don't feel safe. But I don't feel safe with law enforcement either. I have relatives who are in the [criminal justice] system and they are treated poorly. I consider myself a successful person and I'm treated poorly. I can't imagine what it would be like for the poor or a single women with children. They must really be treated poorly."

"I feel really bad to hear that ____ [a participant] was assaulted by Indian youth. What's wrong here? Indians shouldn't be beating on other Indians."

"Do I feel safe in my community? No, we're getting ready to move to a white neighborhood. I'll feel more safe there. Not for myself personally, but for my family, for my son."

"Then you'll see the other side of racism. I have an African American friend who moved to a white suburb. She eventually had a cross burned on her lawn."

Many participants expressed their perceptions of why crime is occurring in their neighborhoods and community.

- **There are pressures to commit petty crimes when no alternatives for economic security or recreation exist.**

In Duluth:

"Juvenile crime is growing. Indian youth are showing up in the system. They are pulled out of homes and placed in out of home placements and in institutions for Indian youth. It's tied to the drop-out rate. I see a lot more Indian kids getting into trouble because of not being in school."

"There is disfunction. I raised my nephews for awhile. We were sticking with the rules, and they wanted to go back to their mom. The one made a comment like, 'we're back where we fit in.' They steal for their clothes, etc. They do what their friends are doing. There was a lot of crime in my family, and there aren't a lot of good role models."

In Mille Lacs:

"Another thing is kids walking around with bb guns. They're also going into the casino. [I'm afraid] they might get shot by the police because the bb gun pistols look like guns."

In Minneapolis:

"Now, there is more pressure to get involved in crime. In respect to the elders, I feel like I'm becoming an elder myself. There is a responsibility to teach the children and to learn how to take care of the children. Crime in my view is something that may happen, but it's not a tragedy. Maybe it's something that I can try to prevent it in my son's life. My unlawful detainer--I have to deal with that--it's a housing crime, but it's not the same as shooting someone."

"In the neighborhood, it's streets smarts. There are a lot of people who are out there who commit crime to support their family: "The five finger discount." I don't think people really have a problem with that."

"There are really tight cliques in the neighborhood [Phillips]." That's how trouble starts. They [youth] are fighting among themselves, between these cliques."

"Peer pressure is tough especially when there is a negative twist to it."

In St. Paul:

"I'm from Mille Lacs. I lived there most of my life. I'm 18 years old now. I've lived in foster homes down here. I go to pow wows, but there hasn't been any other learning of the traditions. I've been a victim of crime and I've been involved in gang banging. People judge me because of what I'm wearing. I wear rags and people think I'm in a gang. They try to jump me. But I just sit there and don't respond to them. It's in their mind."

"I think that there are not only expectations for Indian people and non-Indian people, but also by gender. My brother came down and had a rag on his head, and some guy said "who are you with?" This guy tried to offer him drugs and then pick a fight."

● **Participants perceived that alcohol and drug abuse plays a significant part in criminal or destructive behaviors.**

In Duluth:

"I don't think there is a lack of role models, but that it's not all pulled together. At UMD, there were some good people, lots of people who were sober. We need to look at basic things like drug use and abuse that adds to crime. If there isn't anyone to help the kids and step in, the teacher isn't going to do it."

"I have family members that do the crime and go in and out of prison. They do the sweats and the spiritual thing for a little while. After awhile they lose it, and start drinking and then go back into prison."

"Being Indian isn't an excuse for committing a crime. When I've been naughty--I have done things like shoplifting, riding in a stolen car, a little property crime--it was under the influence of alcohol. Working in legal assistance, I have found they all come in with alcohol related crime."

In Mille Lacs:

"I had been shown the evidence room one time. It's filled with beer - Bud."

"People are passing their problems. The message given to the kid is why should I behave?"

In Minneapolis:

"The attitudes that are coming in here. It's hard to avoid. Young people are so smart. I think that's why they turn to drugs. They know there aren't a lot of alternatives."

"The crime is with boys and girls. There were girls who came after me and then they didn't feel like it was effective. Then they sent the guys over. It stopped after I started pressing charges. I think it's related to the drug use. It's hiding the pain."

In St. Paul:

"Alcohol does add to crime too."

"When younger Native Americans steal cars, they do it when they're drunk."

Participants not only expressed their experiences with crime but also with law enforcement. In many ways, these experiences impact how and whether participants feel safe in their communities.

- While there is fear of crime, especially violent crime, there is also distrust of (or apprehension toward) the criminal justice system including the police, the courts, and corrections.

In Duluth:

"I remember going to an African American group in the Twin Cities. Somebody asked 'who here has not been frisked at least once?' Hardly anyone raised their hands. There were 200 people in the room."

In St. Paul:

"As a minority in the Twin Cities, the authorities, the police, the different agencies that affect my life, don't always have my best interests in mind. You said something about relatives. I don't think we have any relatives in jail right now. But about 30 years ago my cousin came down from Mille Lacs, she was here for a week. She was found down along some railroad tracks half nude. She was last seen leaving a bar with some white guys. That crime has gone unsolved. I just feel left with that. The police are there to contain us, not to serve us. I was with my brother and we were pulled over by 6 squad cars. We fit some description of guys that stole some stereos. They realized it wasn't us and let us go."

"I've been in prison and I have relatives that are in prison. When I think about crime, and Native Americans, I always think about racism and the prejudice that push you and bounce you into activities. There are some successful people. Like the people who are around the table. Even though I'm unemployed, I think of myself as a successful person. I've been sober for 15 years. But what people aren't talking about is racism. I'm worried for my kids. I don't think we're past the racism. I live over on the West Side. There have been 5 killings over there. One Hispanic guy got

shot in the face over there walking down the street. I think about how unfair the justice system is for people of color. In Frogtown, etc."

"Police brutality. There were two twins--Lakota boys. One was involved in a murder. His brother was picked up on the south side of Minneapolis. When they found out what his last name was the police picked him up and took him to the river and beat on him. He also was beat by the homeless that live down there. He was beat twice."

"I haven't been here that long. On the rez, you see the white people look at you. In stores they follow you around. People are following you to see if you'll steal something."

"It's like what the young man said about people following you. They used to call it Indian knocking. Police brutality."

"Watching the news and the case where the police threw those guys in the back of the trunk. Those police thought that nothing was wrong with that. It hasn't changed. It's getting worse. For the youth, it's only going to get worse."

Potential Responses to Crime:

Throughout the course of discussions, participants identified ideas and activities as responses to crime in their communities. While no explicit question was asked about solutions to crime, participants offered their perceptions of what works and doesn't work.

- **Members of the Indian community are less likely to engage in public policy resolutions to problems and are more likely to seek out their own community resources to address crime and other issues.**

In Mille Lacs:

"I think that this community is small enough to have a good form of communication, especially to deal with these issues."

"I'm not saying that it's the parents responsibility--it is. If there are two social service workers and a large case load, there is too much work to be the saviors. There is a prevention program. I think there can be collaboration."

"It [community responsibility and service] comes out of caring. Alcoholism, poverty, and oppression: the effects of those are throughout generations. The casinos are helping, but it's fighting 100 years of these negative effects. In 10 years, there may be more things in place."

"There's a lot of hope in this community."

In Duluth:

"I think the same things that don't work for the majority community, don't work for us. Enforcement is not the answer. Building prisons, etc. I commanded narcotics enforcement on the border, it's like pissing in the wind. Enforcement is not the answer to the drug problem."

"I see statewide, or across the country, some of the problems are being dealt with by building more prisons. When Perpich said, "when we build a prison, we put a prisoner there." We spend money to clothe, feed, and educate people while they're in there."

"Sentencing to service - work crews, intensive supervision, electronic monitoring, restorative justice, all of this has been created in the last few years. When the training for this is done, there's a sea of white faces. It's a job program for whites."

"Not only do the dominant culture have contributions to policy making--we're just not as loud as the others."

"The youth need somewhere to go home to [after treatment, punishment]."

In St. Paul:

"My daughter was involved in the DARE program at school. They had a softball game at Wilder Park. That park is getting rougher. With the police officer there and showing that they are not all bad, it showed the kids that they're concerned. The officer tried to get the parents involved. They had a summer program for the kids to stay out of mischief. My daughter is going to camp. They can hang out with kids and not get into trouble. I thought that the officer coming out into the community was a positive thing. They have a lot of officers coming out to the rec centers. My younger kids want to get involved next year. They go to Valleyfair."

● **Shaming by elders or the community for a criminal act was a historic traditional means of deterring future crime. There are signs that this may be changing with the younger generation.**

In Mille Lacs:

"Our situation here - how Indians used to take people out and say good-bye as punishment. One Indian killing another, they were sent out. The white government wanted a steeper punishment. That created the crimes policy for reservations."

"Shame used to be the biggest thing. That would be good enough. The sentencing circle, I think it would be a good thing. I haven't drank in a while. When we would fight [domestic fight] they would come to take a man to jail. When you get to jail, it's you against the judge--against the white man. The woman wants you out. The man should go in front of the elders to tell them why he beat her up --it's the shame."

"For youth, they have to go before that person and say that you broke their window to see how that elder looks at you. That shame works to deter behavior--perhaps [better] in this community."

In Duluth:

"In an urban community, I see some shunning going on. 'You did wrong and I'm not going to tolerate that.' Here in Duluth, because the population is scattered, we're a close community but not in proximity."

In Minneapolis:

"In terms of Indian programming in the prisons, we can't just bring in the pipes and ceremonies into the institutions. They're [prisoners] in there for a reason. We need to get at these issues we're talking about."

In St. Paul:

"I've been in Red Wing and Stillwater. I was smart enough to get out and lucky enough to do it. I went back to hear what the elders were saying. 'Stop trying to be a white guy. Indians don't do that.'"

"Violence with alcohol. Violence with weapons ups the violence. I had a grandmother who would talk with me if I did something wrong. She would say 'only dogs fight.' She shamed me. I never did it again."

"Respect goes back to the question, 'do we have standards for the community?' We need to go back to the youth and develop these standards. We can work with agencies who are working with youth and teach these standards."

Research and Survey Methods:

During each focus group, time was set aside to discuss how to ask Indians for their input to crucial public policy issues. Two processes were identified as introduction to this part of the discussion: the 1993 MN Planning survey and this process for identifying issues within the Indian community. Many of the comments were directed toward improving both types of information gathering techniques, but discussion circles were preferred.

- **Focus groups are preferred and culturally appropriate. However, brokers who are Indian should be utilized in order to expedite the building of trust between the American Indian community and the wider community.**

"I think that listening is the biggest point. Even tribal government information goes to top officials, but the people on the front lines aren't being asked. Those in the suits and ties are being told. People who work in the trenches--those are the people you should talk to. Those are the ones who see the good and bad."

"Honestly? I don't know. I think it's a good thing for people to get together to talk, but there are a lot of meetings. Where is it for the kids? There are a lot of meetings, but you don't see things getting done. [For example] why aren't there more street lights [in Mille Lacs]? There needs to be more action."

"I think it would be good to go down to the county court system to see how many cases there are and the outcomes. Go to the courts officer in the juvenile justice system. Talk with people here: chemical dependency counselors, domestic violence counselors; learn about recidivism. Listen to the success stories. Find out what was it that made the difference to turn a person around. The individuals here can tell you those stories."

"I hope these young people [at the focus group meeting] will be able to learn something from us as older people. Be able to do some public speaking--come out of their shell."

"I hope we bring elders to the table. A lot of people have been talking about it today."

- **Mail-in or telephone surveys should be discouraged.**

"In terms of statistics, this community [Duluth] doesn't keep a good track of Indian people. We don't even know how many Indians live here. The reason why I mention this I went to a conference about under-representation in the census. The American Indian population doesn't even show up as a blip on the census."

"I think for a survey--I don't know if it's going in the track you're thinking--it should ask what can you do? What can we do? Start at that end, not corrections."

"If we wanted to survey people, I think you could sample half of the Indian families of inmates."

"In person. Especially for older people."

"Personal interviews, you need to find people possibly in programs to find other people."

"You can't do telephone interviews because people don't have telephones. Even while putting this meeting together, I couldn't reach people."

"Are people who commit crimes involved in the survey? Are they asked about why they do it?"

"Maybe there's a way to approach guys who are in the treatment or corrections facilities. And ask them 'what do you think are needed to help change the attitudes of young people?' Ask the elders the same; ask the young people what they really care about that can help change things. This is an issue that the Native American community is concerned about. Go about defining it so that it can be presented in a form that people can understand and be able to share in it. Something like that whole area of crime, you have to see the environment that fostered it. It's being looked at, but not in a way that people feel that they can do something about it."

"To measure the crime, I would hire people to interview individual people. I don't think going to the third precinct [police station] you would get an accurate picture. It's not the same information that you would get in Bloomington. The reports are different. You could give a focus group of people documenting things they see, like gun shots. Then you could compare with the police reports."

"A telephone survey would eliminate a lot of people from the survey."

"With mail surveys you're not going to get the returns. With interviews if you stand in one area and hope that people come by, you're not going to have a random sample. You can't go to the phone book and pick out Indian names."

"I would use multiple methods. Maybe each of these items. Mail, telephone surveys, interviews. Focus groups."

"Hire people from the community."

"Send surveys to organizations. Send three copies. A lot of people use organizational address if they're moving around."

● **An offering of food in accord with cultural values should be made available to participants of surveys, focus groups, interviews, etc.**

"This is probably an expensive way of doing this. We get money for coming here today. For me, I hear about food. If you have something like this for more people, combine it with a feast: have fry bread, hot dish, etc. Then you're going to get

more people to come. It's a respectful way to ask people for their help and their information."

"At pow wows, have a table. Have people fill them out there or have people interview them."

"It's about giving something back to them. If you're asking something of someone, then you need to give something back to them. I think food is a big thing."

Other comments about the research process:

"When they put together instruments like this (report), the title alone "Troubling Perceptions" is problematic. We have a crime problem--whether it's white, black, Indian, etc. We have to deal with it. If we do the report again, what are we going to do with it? As a student, I see that we research and research things, then we compartmentalize things. That is the police's job, that's the courts' job. There is no personal responsibility to it. As a community and nation we do this."

"My first comment is my initial reaction to MN Planning and their efforts to do their research. I'm glad that you called to respond. The driver's license issue. Having been involved in different initiatives in St. Paul, these meetings tend to be dominated by white middle class individuals that are making decisions that effect predominately people of color. In my work on these issues, the people who tend to be behind these things are the least likely to be effected by the crime and violence. We're never at the table to talk about it."

Appendix A

Gordon Boswell
Cheryl Boyd
Donna Burr
Mary Carson
Bertha Cleveland
Leon Cook
Robert (Bob) Davis
John Day
Dan Dethmers
George Dick
Karen Driver
Marlene Driver
Don Eubanks
Monte Fronk
Leslie Gibbs
Michael Gillespie
Karen Gladfelter
Mervel Jones, Jr.
Martin Matthew Kegg
Dawn Klatt
Chris Knutson
Jessica Kramer
Lavonne Lee
Vanessa Littlewolf
Amy Neadeau
Tara Neadeau
Rosalie Noonday
Benny Rider
Jeff Sagataw
Lesley Smith
Shawn Sutton
Bret Thompson Lookingback
Ann Thompson Lookingback
Lorenzo Tuttle
Elleraine Weyus
Rose Wind

Appendix B

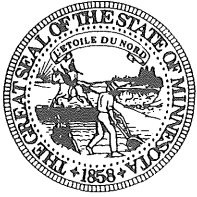
I. Introduction

Background to project and outcomes (i.e. why we're here)
How we conduct the focus group process

II. List of Questions

The group can choose where we want to start and add to the list of questions:

- Do you think there is a crime problem in _____?
If so, how do you think it impacts the Indian community?
- Do you think it (i.e. the nature of crime, who commits crime, who are victims of crime) has changed over time? If so, how?
- Do you think that crime is dealt with effectively by:
 - police
 - tribal courts
 - state/federal courts
 - criminal justice system
 - the Indian community
 - the majority community
- Do you think American Indians' perceptions of crime have changed; are equal to actual victimizations? Are perceptions important in dealing with crime? Why?
- Do you feel safe in your community? Have you ever felt safe in your community?
If not, why? (both questions)
- Do you think there are appropriate and effective services for crime victims?
Provided by tribal government, state/federal government, the community.
- Do you have any other opinions about this issue that you would like to share?
- If you were to assess how Indians perceive crime, how would you do it?
Interviews, mail survey, telephone survey, focus groups, etc.
- There was a survey conducted by the MN State Planning agency. Did they ask the right questions?
- Are we asking the right questions today?



STATE OF MINNESOTA
Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans

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Ray Lewis
Research Analyst
Criminal Justice Center
MN Planning
658 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55155

September 31, 1996

Dear Mr. Lewis,

We would like to thank MN Planning for the opportunity given the four councils of color to conduct a field study to explore community perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system. We feel that the collaborative effort was worthwhile and that the results will help us frame policy directions on these issues. We also would like to thank you personally for your role as facilitator in convening the meetings and guiding us through the process. We appreciated the opportunity to meet with other directors and field researchers to explore common ground and cultural differences.

The enclosed final report from the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans on the Community Crime Project can be summarized as follows. The data was obtained through two rounds of interviews and focus groups with directors and staff from the various organizations servicing the Asian community, community leaders, probation and law enforcement officers, and Asian youth at Boys Totem Town. We found that research under the umbrella of the Council gave us quick entry into the field through the various Asian servicing organizations. The results confirmed our suspicions that the community would perceive youth gangs as the leading problem.

Our research sheds further light on the problem of youth gangs. Gangs are perceived as resulting from a breakdown in family communication between the generations, an undermining of parent authority, and problems of differing rates of cultural adjustment across the generations. Our research perspectives are set in a complex framework of cultural adaptation and social maladjustment. Some of the problems can be traced to a breakdown in the traditional family structure. In many families the children and teenagers have become Americanized faster than the parents. The role of the parents in the traditional family has not been reinforced here; in fact we can say that it has been undermined by institutions such as the schools, social workers, law enforcement and probation officers.

In our report we discuss our findings on community perceptions of the criminal justice system under three main areas of concern - a perception of the legal system as too harsh on parents, but too lenient on youth, a legal system lacking in support for parents, incidents of undue police harassment and cultural insensitivity.

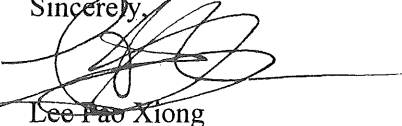
Many of our policy directions seem to point to the schools as places to initiate changes and programs that address the 'crime' problems. We found that some of the problems of gangs could stem from a lack of safety and security in the school and housing projects.

- schools need to provide a safer learning environment
- gang activity would be curtailed by involving teenagers in more constructive after school activities
- schools & community need to take a more active collaborative role in providing classes about Asian Pacific culture, arts, history, heritage and language
- Agencies need to focus on rebuilding family strengths not undermining family values.

Our report met the goal of aiding MN Planning assess how to apply survey research in the community. There was an overall preference voiced in the community for action focused initiatives rather than surveys. We do not recommend the use of telephone surveys or mail back questionnaires in our community. Our suggestions for gathering primary data in the Asian Pacific Community are based on informant responses to questions in our interviews and from our experience conducting the exploratory research itself. Issues of trust, illiteracy and language barriers would severely limit the effectiveness of large scale surveys but research on these topics is feasible through the council researchers and/or through the resources of the community based Asian organizations. Data can be collected using the trusted, bilingual program staff who have demonstrated access to the community. We also comment on how focus groups were an effective and efficient way of gathering data because they minimized the demands on staff time.

We submit our final billing for a project completed and we look forward to further collaborations of this nature. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Lee Pao Xiong
Executive Director

Appendix B

I. Introduction

Background to project and outcomes (i.e. why we're here)
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**Council on Asian - Pacific Minnesotans
Community Crime Project Final Report**

Presented to Minnesota Planning

November 1996

by

**David B. Zander, Principal Investigator
Keith Zarich, Intern Field Researcher
Lee Pao Xiong, Executive Director & Project Supervisor**

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Introduction:

This report was commissioned by the Minnesota Planning.. The fieldwork was completed over the summer of 1996, beginning in May, with the bulk of the interviews conducted from mid June to early August and ending with a rough draft scheduled for August 30, revised second draft September 23, and this final report for October 31.

The four councils of color had been asked by the Minnesota Planning to do community based information gathering in a collaborative effort between Minnesota Planning and the councils. The goal was to produce a report outlining what the problems were with regard to crime in the different minority communities.

I. Research Methodology

This study focuses on the occurrence of crime in the Minneapolis and Saint Paul metropolitan area, and some additional input from Rochester and Worthington, Minnesota. The Asian-Pacific Community Crime Project report is based on a field study using ethnographic research methods. The research was conducted by the council's staff research analyst trained in anthropological fieldwork, assisted by an urban geography intern. In the first phase of the report we interviewed thirteen executive directors of the Southeast Asian Mutual Assistance Associations. The interviews took place in various offices of the Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs) and other sites in and around Minneapolis, Saint Paul, Rochester and Worthington. In addition to interviews with thirteen of the executive directors, we interviewed some of the program staff working in the Mutual Assistance Programs, one youth specialist, a prominent leader of a Hmong scout troop, several probation officers, and two police officers.

The Council of Asian Pacific Minnesotans has close ties with these community based service organizations. The bilingual/bicultural staff of these MAAs were an important element in the data gathering. We found that the executive directors and staff from the Mutual Assistance Associations were very articulate and had given a lot of thought to the issues and responded well to our questions based on their experiences as service providers to the families and youth from the Asian Pacific community. Each of the Mutual Assistance Associations has a slightly different focus. Some cover a wide range of services and focus on several ethnic groups.. Others specialize in such services as working with youth of a particular ethnicity such as Lao or Hmong. Worthington does not yet have an MAA organized but we were able to talk to community leaders from the Lao community.

We also ran four focus groups. Two were comprised of staff from two of the larger Mutual Assistance Associations. One was with the executive director and staff of the MAA in Rochester which services all the refugee and immigrant groups there, including Cambodian, Vietnamese, Sudanese and Russian. These focus groups consisted of twelve persons in each, making a total of twenty four participating. In order to gather viewpoints from the more diverse Asian Pacific community, the council executive director and principal investigator facilitated another focus group comprised of seven female Filipino, Chinese, Hmong, Japanese, Malaysian, and Vietnamese community leaders. We were thus able to obtain information from a more diverse group than the primarily Southeast Asian staff of the MAAs. Our intern ran one smaller group with five Southeast Asian juvenile offenders at Totem Town.

In the interviews we asked the same set of questions of each interviewee. The interviews were comprised of a set of open ended questions and covered the agreed upon areas - community perceptions of crime, community assets to combat the problems, and community perceptions of the criminal justice system (see appendix one). The principal investigator and internist conducted several interviews together and observed each other's work to ensure similarity in methods of data gathering. Each interview lasted from 45 minutes to an hour. The open ended questions allowed each interviewee to expand on each topic. The field notes from the interviews were written up and the work of the two researchers was then coded and analyzed. The report was structured around a format developed in collaboration with the other Councils and the Minnesota Planning, although this format surprisingly was not strictly adhered to by the other councils when they wrote up their reports. We used the format to respond to the agreed upon topics and wrote up the following community perspectives on crime, the criminal justice system (section IV A and IV B) and community solutions (section V).

II. Appropriate methods for gathering information on crime in the Asian-Pacific Community

Information gathering within the Southeast Asian community poses some challenging language problems. This is especially so with the elderly legal immigrants whose language skills often give rise to misunderstanding and miscommunications. This is less of a problem with the younger generation who have received formal schooling here in the US. Our interviews were conducted using an interview schedule that included questions on the most effective way to conduct a survey in our communities. The data from our field study points to a definite conclusion about effective and ineffective ways to gather data. Trust, secrecy and language barriers are key issues affecting the quality of data gathered.

• Strengths and weaknesses of different methods of gathering data:

The responses to our inquiries indicate that a larger study of crime in the Asian-Pacific community would need to resolve these basic issues of trust, secrecy, low levels of English speaking skills and literacy.

a) telephone or mail back survey forms

Mailed surveys would most probably not be returned, even if they were in the language of the potential survey respondents. Telephone surveys are faulted by a combination of these key factors - lack of trust, secrecy and language barriers.

• Suggested protocols for gathering primary data:

I often see research sometimes as being too intellectual and something to be discussed in committee, but they really don't connect with the community, and the people have such good ideas and answers if we could only provide a forum for them. (Program manager)

Information could be gathered if the researcher was known and trusted, and spoke the language of the informant. We concluded that further data gathering efforts from the Minnesota Planning Department should best be handled through the resources of the community based Asian organizations. An appropriate research methodology would be to use the existing community based organizations with staff known to the community, trusted, who have access to the community, and who are equipped with the necessary bilingual skills for working with people with low level English speaking skills.

We should go and talk with parents who have teenage kids, who want to understand, who have ideas.
(Hmong)

Should Minnesota Planning consider further research in the Asian populationm our study indicates that the language barrier, distrust of survey intentions, and varying literacy levels makes surveys an ineffectual tool. However, executive directors of the Mutual Assistance Associations said that given modest funding support, they would be able to provide bilingual staff who could go out into the communities, door to door, face to face.

A strong asset in the Southeast Asian community appears to be the willingness of its leaders to want to solve the issues facing them. The interviewees were open to the questions asked and responded with a willingness to cooperate directly and indirectly to find a solution to the crime issue.

• **Focus groups**

Focus groups are the best way to conduct research. With focus groups, you get an energy from each other and also people listen to the kids. Focus groups through community based organizations is where the answers come from. (experienced community facilitator)

We found that the focus groups were a very effective way of gathering data. We also found that they were a less intrusive way of impacting a busy agency - running a focus group with their staff was a time efficient way of gathering data without imposing extra demands on their staff time. On several occasions we asked to be included on the agenda of their weekly staff meetings and thus participated in a regularly scheduled meeting. This was effective in that the time was already allocated and the program supervisors did not have to jostle everyone's schedules around for a special meeting time. It also eliminated having to schedule twenty four different individual interviews. The staff in the agencies seemed to enjoy the experience. It resembled a kind of mini-workshop or in-service training, a chance to listen to each other, learn from each others caseloads and to brainstorm solutions to the identified problems. In a large group of twelve, of course, we found several members more vocal than others. One of our recommendations is that at the conclusion of the group, the facilitator asks for a closing comment from everybody present. We found this concluding closure effective as this procedure provided an opportunity for the quieter, younger or more shy person to give their input.

On one occasion when we went to interview a program manager, she came in with some notes and said, "I took your questions to our staff meeting this morning and I have everybody's input."

How and what to research in the Asian Pacific Communities:

There is no doubt in our minds that the Asian-Pacific community recognizes that crime is the product of some deeper seated problems within their respective groups. Our study suggests that the beginnings of youth crime as a problem starts in the pre-teen and teenage years, and escalates from youth hanging around in groups to youth gangs. It is debatable whether Minnesota Planning can conduct useful research on this topic. The community wants the problem to be solved at a community and household level. The need is thus for *proactive planning* not surveys (Zarich 1996). In order to carefully design such a plan, there perhaps is a role for Minnesota Planning but it would require careful collaborative projects with the community based organizations and community leaders.

Survey research is perhaps too crude or alien a research tool to gather information from a people who are rich in their use of metaphor, symbolism and images (see section on recommendations from community researchers below).

III. Comments on large scale surveys:

If there is an in-depth study, how many more kids will be killed for God's sake? Or end in jail? Too much is escalating, you've got to take action, you've got to do something.

(Southeast Asian Coalition staff member)

We don't need any more surveys. Our community has been surveyed to death! We need action.

(Focus group Vietnamese participant)

Research is very valuable, very important, but at the same time, money needs to be put into the communities so things can take place simultaneously.

(Program manager/Youth Specialist).

Is a larger survey necessary? If so how should it be done? If the leaders in the Asian-Pacific community were to choose how money was to be spent, they would be overwhelmingly in favor of funding crime prevention initiatives and pilot programs rather than doing more surveys. There is a sense of urgency and concern about the current situation which they see as deteriorating fast. The community is rich in suggestions and talented resources for tackling problems but low in funds to implement programs and services. They would rather fund after school activities for teenagers, run programs to tutor and help youth with homework, develop more sports activities, sponsor social and cultural events and opportunities, run parenting education classes and address the needs of their community.

Given that there is no doubt that crime is the product of some deep seated problems within their respective communities, the community needs support in solving the problems at household and community levels. Crime starts in the pre-teen and teen-age years, and escalates to gang crimes. Here are some research areas that might assist the Asian Pacific community in proactive planning.

- interviews with new/potential gang members, (at risk youth, on the fringe, raw recruits)
- interviews with older gang members, the core group who recruit the younger
- interviews with past gang members, for example the married "escapees"
- applied research designed to improve community-police relations

The next set of heading were suggested by the planning team

Working hypothesis/context

Our working hypothesis concerned the methodology rather than a hypothesis about crime in the community. It was our assumption that ethnographic fieldwork would work, given the usual procedures of negotiating entry into the field, establishing a role for the field worker, making contacts in the field etc. This proved to be the case - because of our role under the umbrella of the Council, we were able to gain quick entry into the field (through the Mutual Assistance Associations). We were extremely satisfied with the quality of the data from our informants.

Expectations/reality

The quality of the data gathered in this exploratory study exceeded the expectations of the researchers. We found our informants articulate and knowledgeable about the issues discussed. Our fieldwork yielded rich data. However we were also conscious of the fact that we were privileged in the sense that we had overcome two key factors - trust and language barriers. The executive directors had a good command of the English language and were able to communicate well, drawing on a deep knowledge of their communities. Using a conservative figure that each of our executive directors heads an agency that serves on average a thousand families, we felt that their answers to the questions in our interviews drew on their knowledge of over thirteen thousand families in the Asian Pacific community.

General/specific

Some of the problems identified such as family breakdown, loss of control over the youth, and problems with the criminal justice system may prove to hold across the four communities of color. However, each has a specific cultural context and there are probably differences across each of the cultures. For example, the problem of family breakdown and the rise of juvenile gangs in the Asian-Pacific community has a significant historical context that may differ from that of the other communities.

We are interested to see if other councils will report on parents' frustration with 'the kids call 911' response in their communities. We are interested to see whether parents are now afraid to discipline their kids, whether kids manipulate and threaten their parents with the "I'll call 911" scare tactic in other communities. Will we find similar incidents and magnitude of the problem in the Chicano/Latino population? We have some supplementary evidence from the Filipino-American community. It will be interesting to track what happens with the newly arriving Sudanese and Tibetan refugee families in relation to their youth and involvement or non-involvement in juvenile gangs and crime. Similarly we are wondering if the data gathered in the Black American community will reflect a similar problem, given their longer history of assimilation and acculturation.

We found evidence suggesting a definite cultural clash between the values of the school psychologists and child protection workers and minority parents trying to discipline and control children. The underlying conflict is brought strongly into focus and conflict around the traditional use of corporal punishment.

The increase in the phenomenon and violent activity of juvenile gangs seems to occur across the four communities of color. Yet there are certain cultural specific differences. For example, there are conflicting reports as to whether the Southeast Asian gangs are networked nationally. Some community leaders think the Twin City Asian gangs are local and without such strong connections to the drug traffic. A police official we interviewed, however, contradicted that assessment. We are not sure at this point, given the limits of our time in the field, whether he has an accurate grasp of the system, or whether his expressed opinion reflects the worldview of the police. This is a point that could be explored further and verified or refuted through interviews or surveys with older known gang members.

Are these gangs national, with ties to the West Coast or East Coast?

The gangs are local, except when friends move. Not too dangerous. Gangs just for fun, to frighten the adults. They go to parties, act out, any social gathering, come free. (Lao PTA)

The pattern of gangs in the Southeast Asian communities seems to have a particular historical evolution and is shaped by the cultures in which they occur. This point will be elaborated on below.

IV. Community perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system

These two sets of perceptions warranted sub-headings of their own. The bulk of our findings fall in these two areas. Crime was perceived as a problem of youth gangs, which in turn had resulted from a breakdown in family communication between the generations, an undermining of parental authority, and problems of cultural adjustment. The main criticism of the criminal justice system was that it was too lenient on kids. There was also the problem of poor community-police relations.

A. Community perceptions about crime

Our informants identified youth gangs and the breakdown of traditional roles in the family as the two most serious problems

Our first question was designed to see how people perceived community:

How would you describe your community?

Closed, isolated, with lots of crises, children and parents not being able to communicate in a respectful way. Cultural gaps, generational gaps. Lao people not being able to participate in political areas, or even local politics. They are isolated. (Lao Assistance Center)

The problem in this community is parents not being able to lead, they are not leaders. The roles are reversed. Because children know the system, the language, better than their parents. And they can manipulate their parents. (Lao PTA staff)

This response from one of our early interviews with a youth specialist, foreshadows what we were going to discover about crime. The roots of crime are embedded in a larger pattern of cultural disintegration manifest in the breakdown of the family.. This is a point we will return to again throughout the study. for in every interview we were directed to this problem. Discussion of crime were not embedded in discussions about drugs or sex. They focused on dramatic changes that had occurred in the Asian Pacific families as a result of their coming into contact with a different culture. Many interviewees from around the state said that the inability of parents to discipline their children in traditional ways (i.e. corporal punishment) should be considered at the fore in this study.

I think the number one issue in the Asian Community is that the parents are trying to maintain their old ways and the kids have grown up so fast they are running circles around the parents. The system is trying to do the right thing by trying to educate the kids and keeping them safe, but because the parents aren't up to speed with English, our customs, our laws, junior and missy run circles around them. The parents are scared and don't know what to do.. If I had a nickel for every time a parent told me, "Here you take my kid. He is bad and you won't let me handle him the way I know how, so you take him." (Minneapolis Police Officer)

A key finding is that parents are frustrated because they don't know how to deal with their kids. If their kids won't listen to them, they are unsure of what they can do. There are stories in the community of people taken to jail for hitting their kids. More and more kids misbehave without consequence. There is a stark contrast between the way kids were dealt with in Asia compared to the way they are dealt with here in the U.S.

I'm not condoning the criminal activity on the parent's unwillingness to change, but the parents have learned what they have learned back in Laos. And there, you almost never see anyone being abused by their parents, but they do use physical punishment. But I don't want to call this abuse. To me abuse is when a parent physically punishes a child for no reason at all. Hmong parents only use corporal punishment when there is a major violation by the child. If the parents were to be given a little lee-way to discipline their own children, it could help.

(Hmong Probation officer, Ramsey County Corrections Department)

Youth gangs are perceived as the major crime problem in the Asian Pacific community.

'Gangs' is the most serious problem. Among young people this problem has grown. Its increased so rapidly. An increase in their violence. (Hmong)

Executive directors are aware of the seriousness, the nature and size of the problem. To support his point, the above informant referred to a study done in Ramsey County that compared the number of juvenile offenses from 1989-94. He said the figures showed 19 arrests for 1988, rising to 400 arrests per year by 1994.

Our findings about juvenile gangs could be a whole study in itself. The following four sections summarize the four main points.

From groups to gangs: the evolution of a social problem

Not every group of kids hanging out together, or riding around together in a car is a gang. We feel it is necessary to make a distinction between the two terms and to also explore these different but related aspects of juvenile social behavior. There is a tendency for the public to perceive of any group of kids as a 'gang' whereas all they are doing is socializing and hanging out with their peers. Yet often these groups of kids are treated by law enforcement officers as though they were 'gang members'. This causes considerable outrage and resentment in the community, and among the groups of youths.. The way the social life of juveniles is organized and how these social processes relate to crime is an important dimension of the problem, one not easily researched by survey techniques and needing a lot of time by ethnographic field research. We had cause in this study to reflect on our own experiences growing up, how the life of a teenager veers between good and delinquent behavior and how such behavior is often strongly influenced by the norms of the group of peers with which we were hanging out.

A director of an Mutual Assistant Association in Rochester was hesitant to describe a gang problem there. Several directors in the Twin Cities described the early origins of what are now gangs in the processes of youth banding together for survival and protection in a hostile environment.

In the projects they saw their parents tending gardens, having stones thrown at them, spit on.

(Hmong MAA)

When they go to school, they are the minority group. They affiliate with gangs, because they want to, not that they are pushed into the gangs. (Probation officer)

Informants described how the kids found that there was safety in numbers and how they needed to band together to protect themselves and their relatives from other ethnic groups, of the tension in the projects, the poor neighborhoods into which they had been thrust, and in the schools.

The function of the groups seems to be that initially they formed for protection, security and status. Initially they were for protection from other students - Caucasian, Hispanic, Black. They formed groups to protect themselves from other groups.

What we see is these kids are finding their family social support system in other Asian kids, and if they are not getting (support) at home and not from the mainstream, they find their own social support groups...this is usually within gangs.

(Hmong probation officer).

Recruitment and entrapment

They don't play individually like the Caucasian kids., they recruit unlike the Caucasians., and then one thing leads to another, that creates a network of delinquent problems.

(Hmong police officer)

The youth are the people directly involved, but it is the older crowd that's in charge. If something happens, it is the youth that stays behind and gets taken to the detention center...then the leaders say to the kids who are in the detention centers, "We will take care of you and your family when you are in custody"... this gives a lot of credibility to their cause. (Vietnamese)

It is not clear exactly how groups transform into gangs characterized by criminal activity. But at some point a transformation did and still does occur. The process seems to be something like this:

a) kids hang around socialize

kids tend to naturally just hang out together with those of their kind. Whether North of the State Capitol or in Rochester, you can see any day, groups of 12- 13 year olds just hanging around the small grocery stores.

b) kids start to drink beer, get high on drugs, joy ride in cars

c) kids without cars start to steal cars just to joyride

I have a cousin who has two sons who are very much into criminal activity. Stealing is a way of life for these two. They steal cars to joyride. (Lao PTA)

d) kids find few serious consequences to criminal activity as juveniles

From the responses of the parents recorded below, we found out that the kids find that even if they are arrested they are released the next day. They shrug this off as of no consequence. (see laws are too lenient).

e) more criminal activities creep in.

What kinds of crimes do the gangs commit?

Burglary, some kind of collaboration between the Lao, Hmong, Vietnamese. For example, there's a party, relatives come to the party, the following day there's a robbery. (Lao PTA)

f) the groups transform into gangs with a social structure

- g) older kids in the gangs recruit the younger kids in
- h) the kids find that they cannot leave
- i) they become enmeshed in patterns of criminal activities
- j) if they marry, they are allowed to exit from the gang

But this (gangs) is not the bad thing, because it is important for them to have the social support network, but it is the criminal activity we don't support. (Hmong/Lao)

To try to gain more insight into the perspectives of the kids, in our research we attacked this problem by interviewing Southeast Asian juvenile offenders at Totem Town. We felt that we needed more of the insider's perspective. Although we have not managed to interview senior gang members, we felt that we did gain access to informants from the culture of youth gangs at a mid-point in the spectrum, or passage from raw recruit to older gang leader.

Our conclusions at this point are very tentative. Based on such a short time in the field for our investigations we can only sketchily describe some of the context in which crime is occurring. But our preliminary findings based on exploratory research has opened up some interesting avenues for further study. For example:

- the process by which this phenomenon of ethnic social youth groups evolved (or devolved!) from protective strategies (rooted in racial tension between the new immigrants and older existing minorities) into criminal activities.
- how and why inter-ethnic rivalries (e.g. Asian versus Black) further degenerate into intra-ethnic rivalries (Hmong in Minneapolis versus Hmong in St. Paul, Cambodian Reds versus Blues) that have begun to terrorize their own communities and festive events

Lao versus Lao, it's hard. They have no solution, when we talk to the police department.
(Lao executive director)

We have only touched on the process of gang socialization. There is of course much literature out there. The good news from the Southeast Asian community seems to be that unlike some of the other ethnic gangs, there is an exit point other than death. When we asked one director how he obtained his information, he explained that adults talked, later when they were older, about what they had done as kids. wazzu

When they marry, they stop their illicit behaviors.
How old are they when they marry?
22, 23, 24.

Car thefts as a criminal activity attributed to juveniles and how it relates to loss of parental discipline in the Asian Pacific community

A probation officer told us that auto theft is most popular and most of them are under driving age.

I have a cousin who has two sons who are very much into criminal activity, stealing is a way of life for these two. They steal cars to joyride. These kids repeatedly stole their parents' car. The parents called the police several times, but the police did nothing about it. The last time the kids

took the car they crashed into a parked car.. When the father found out about the car, he was very angry. When the children got home he took out a stick and started hitting one of the children on the back of the leg. When the police arrived they arrested the father for abuse.

(Probation officer)

But the older group of juveniles are stealing cars, for economic reasons. They are stealing to sell the property.

Guns and juveniles:

One executive director had very strong views about solving the problem that he faced every day in working closely with youth. Stated simply, it was an issue that could be solved legislatively: by getting the guns off the street- getting guns out of the hands of youth.

It's easy to deal with the problem we have of youth and violence, if we tell the legislature, STOP THE GUN MAKING!! (Hmong MN Pacific Association)

To what extent are guns a problem in the Asian - Pacific community? Executive directors told us that kids had easy access to guns in their community. Police spoke about gun shop robberies almost as a rite of passage into the gang culture. In our focus groups, the young staff members confirmed that the guns were out there on the black market, illegally sold out of the trunks of cars. Directors estimates of costs of buying a weapon on the black market ranged from very cheap (\$25) to \$150-300.

Our study raised an interesting cultural perspective about guns. One director referred to the effects of the war 'back home' in Laos.

Most of the parents were exposed to the war, every house had guns, shooting was just for fun, but now, the kids try to copy. (Lao)

There were also stories of how some of these kids had been soldiers and had killed people in Asia.

There was an incident at Central High where a kid suddenly leaps over a table. Fighting, kicking. All the teachers were surprised. Yet he was a trained soldier. Had killed people. (Hmong director)

Like returning Vietnam vets who over react, some of these kids may well carry a burden of grief and trauma. Some of them and their fathers may suffer from post traumatic stress disorders. If this is operating, even in the kids, that may well explain some of their more violent outbursts.

We were frequently told that Asian-Pacific kids had experienced a lot of violence just trying to go to school. It became routine to hear that the executive directors themselves could recall being beaten up by other kids daily. Several of them had gone on, driven by the need for self protection, to earn black belts in martial arts and self defense. Something is seriously wrong with the school system and needs to be addressed: children have a right to a safe, secure environment in which to learn. This is not being provided. Instead, our children are involuntarily placed in environments that teach them self-protection. The schools themselves can be blamed for making their students vulnerable to gang related recruitment.

Family breakdown as a contributing cause of juvenile crime:

Is crime the most important issue in your Southeast Asian community?

No, I think the number one issue in the Asian community is that parents are trying maintain their old ways and the kids have grown up so fast they are running circles around the parents. (Hmong probation officer)

Throughout our interviews and focus groups we heard a common complaint that the parents felt unsupported by the legal system in their efforts to control their kids. Time and time again in different locations we heard the phrase, 'they call 911.' Many parents and families in our Asian-Pacific community perceive that there is no support in the American legal and criminal justice system for the Southeast Asian parents. We heard that the parents feel hopeless, and have given up. This was a very disturbing finding. The main issue concerns a clash between mainstream professionals and minority, traditional and cultural forms of discipline which involved corporal punishment, hitting, beating, slapping kids. Schools teach the kids about physical abuse and how to call 911. Child protection workers are seen as unsympathetic or adversarial. We have arrived at a situation wherein schools and community, supposedly partners in the education and socialization of children, have become opponents. The schools have played a negative role in th

Family breakdown has occurred as an unexpected side effect of teaching children their rights. These were some unexpected findings of just how complex it is for the newly arriving parents to retain control over their children. Traditional cultural patterns of family authority have broken down.

We were startled to learn how destructive a role the formal schools play around issues of discipline and respect for parental authority. If we had naively assumed that schools and parents were working together on the education of the children, we received a rude awakening. We found that the concern in the schools for teaching children their rights, a concern to stop child abuse, had had an unanticipated negative side effect in the Asian Pacific community, not on the intended target, the child abusers, but on the whole fabric of parents in other cultures trying to raise their children in positive ways. Schools have undermined the very fabric of relationships between parents and children.

How does this relate to crime?

The parents are frustrated because they can't punish or teach their kids the way they know how because the kids call 911. So in trying to do the right thing, the system has actually circumvented the parental control over the kids. (Youth program coordinator)

We heard this plaintive response, "the kids call 911" throughout the community, in many of our interviews and focus groups.

Cultural adjustments: difficulties in adapting to a new system

Not that they want to not adapt to the culture, but...back in their country, there is no need for the government to intervene, because a child would not get out of control. Parents had the final authority over a kid. Because of that, parents complain about the role of the courts in the child's life and the parent's life because they feel it is intrusive. (Lao)

One informant summed up the cultural breakdown as a shift away from the positive values that families had brought with them:

Look at what was working before people came here. People had a lot of values for family and community. But now kids here, are expected to leave home. Parents don't want responsibilities of taking care of kids beyond a certain age. Kids move. No ties with their parents. No sense of community. And even if new groups form, it's based on skin color. Teachers in the schools should value what worked....then see if they want to talk about 911. We are destroying leadership, parents relations with kids,.

Secrecy: a dysfunctional way of coping

The parents want to settle the matter individually or with relatives, but they do not want to come together with other community members and air their dirty laundry. (Hmong)

Many of the parents approach me and ask me what they can do to help their child....they want to help, but feel helpless. (Lao family counselor)

At this point there seems to be more a sense of hopelessness, frustration and despair rather than any effective grass roots ways of coping. Some of the ways of coping could be seen as dysfunctional - hiding the problem, cloaking the issue in secrecy, saving face.

Most of the Hmong parents are not used to the system yet. They feel powerless as far as discipline is concerned. Even some of the executive directors seemed to feel frustrated by the sudden escalation in the problem and the lack of ways of coping. We will list their strategies and ideas below in a separate section (See section V).

Fear

Fear is related to secrecy. People may talk about the problem behind closed doors, but not openly in the community.

*Do people talk about crime openly in the community?
No, for fear of retaliation. (Vietnamese)*

The director gave an example of a business owner who had had his business broken into but would not talk about it openly to others, because of fear he would be victim of further gang revenge.

However, there was also a sense that the fears were not very grounded, more based on rumor or 'hearsay' than actual knowledge or verified experiences with crime: One informant quoted a Hmong proverb to illustrate this point.

The wind is louder than the thunder. (Hmong)

IV. B. Community perceptions of the criminal justice system.

In our interviews with community leaders we asked about their perceptions of the criminal justice system. Their responses indicate that there are a number of serious problems. An analysis of their responses revealed a consistent set of themes throughout the communities and geographical locations. For example, the responses from our informants in Rochester matched those of South and North

Minneapolis, St. Paul and conversations we have since had with Lao parents in Warroad, Minnesota. We discuss our findings under three main areas of concern

1. Perceptions of the legal system as too lenient on youth, but too harsh on parents.
2. Descriptions of the legal system as lacking in support for parents who discipline their kids
3. Descriptions of police cultural insensitivity and harassment.

Perceptions of the legal system as too lenient on kids, too harsh on parents:

If the police caught my kids, why don't they keep the kids in jail? They are released the next day. (Lao)

Too lenient, especially for juveniles. At 12 or 13 some kids are getting pregnant, and committing rape. They must be considered as adults. They are feeling more and more comfortable with the law because they are feeling that little will be done to them. (Vietnamese)

Most of my parents seem to think the law is too lenient for these kids...some think the law is too harsh...this attitude is from the parents who stick up for their kids and who see their kids as good kids, not criminals. (Hmong probation officer)

Parents in the community blame the law enforcement system as too lenient. They blame the legal system for being too lenient. They want more consequences. We heard instances of kids who had stolen cars eight times with no consequences. The kids circulate this information to each other and come to not care about the consequences of committing criminal acts when there are no long term effects.

The kids to a certain extent believe the law is not harsh enough too. But they have this belief if you are under the age of 16, nothing is going to happen to you. So that is why you see kids 12 years old carrying guns and so on. But once they are into adulthood, and they pull the trigger and suddenly they are facing life in prison, they feel differently. But its not much of a deterrent to them. (Community Coalition Youth Specialist)

A legal system lacking in support for parents who try to discipline their kids.

Parents need to have more control over their kids. The kids will just call 911 and the parents will be in trouble. (Vietnamese)

As outlined above, in the section on family breakdown and cultural adjustments, most Hmong parents are not used to the system yet. They feel powerless as far as discipline is concerned. Some have had very negative experiences trying to get help from law enforcement officers. For example,

The kids repeatedly stole their parents' car.. The parents called the police several times, but the police did nothing about it. The last time the kids took the car, they crashed into a parked car. When the father found out about his car, he snapped (went into a rage). When the children got home, the father took out a stick and started hitting the children in the back of the leg. The police then arrived and ended up arresting the father for abuse. (Hmong probation officer).

The parents also feel no support from the child protection workers, courts, police officers and lawyers. They would like the police department and the community itself to crackdown on individuals housing runaways.

The parents believe the law is not tough enough. Kids stay out late and cause trouble. Parents don't like that. (Lao PTA director)

The law is too lenient, especially for juveniles... at 12, 13 some kids are getting pregnant, and others committing rape. They must be considered adults. They are feeling more and more comfortable with the law because they are feeling that little will be done to them.

(Vietnamese Social Services director)

Yet in addition to finding that the legal system is too lenient on the kids, in another sense it is seen as too harsh on the parents, or too intrusive. The parents seem caught between wanting the laws to be tougher, yet finding it more application too tough or intrusive.

Back in their country there is no need for the government to intervene, because a child would not get out of control...parents have the final authority over the kid...Because of that, the parents complain about the role of the courts in the child's life, and the parent's life, because they feel it is intrusive. (Hmong)

They seem caught in a dilemma that seems unsolvable. Their solutions at the level of 'impossible possibilities':

But.....allow special authority to the Hmong parents to discipline their own kids...if they are in favor of corporal punishment for instance.. (Hmong)

It was surprising to us to find that the parents seemed to be living in a situation of fear. Not fear of crimes per se, but fear of the law,

But in terms of discipline, parents are afraid of the law, and the law sets them up to be manipulated by their kids, who understand the system better than their parents. And this in turn leads to situations of parents feeling apathy, and hopeless in the face of overwhelming changes. In the Mutual Assistance Associations there is much talk about confronting this problem through parent education, one could almost say parent reeducation, so that, in time 'parents would understand the laws of this country as "their law"'.

Descriptions of police cultural insensitivity and harassment.

They do not understand our culture. It happened to me once last year, I had parents turn in a gun. The following day, ten squad cars surrounded the family house. That's not our way. By doing that they frustrated our community. They kicked the door in. Now, nobody wants to collaborate. (Lao)

There was a fight, all the white kids were ferried out the back door. The police chief admitted that reading the police reports - "it doesn't make sense."

Situations like the above point to a lack of collaboration between the police and the community organizations. The actions of the police led to a breakdown of trust between them and the police, and

endangered the links between the Mutual Assistance Associations and the families they serve. When we asked the director if he had complained to the police about the raid, he said he had, but his contacts in the police department denied any responsibility for the raid, claiming another unit enacted the police raid.

They feel discrimination from the police. The Southeast Asian is always wrong. (Lao)

In general, the responses to our questions tend to indicate that the communities throughout the state, both urban and rural, are critical toward the police. The overall perception is that police tend to be racist and unfair when dealing with the Asian -Pacific population.

They are prejudiced. You can just be hanging around the projects playing cards, and you get messed with. (Hmong teenager)

They think you can't look at the police on the street in the face., that you can't talk to the police. They are afraid. One cause is the police not responding to Asian calls. Sometimes these people come to the agencies and say, "This happened to me two days ago." And sometimes this is too late. When you call the police, they say this is not an emergency call, and they give you other numbers such as the crime victims number, or someone else. People think when you commit the crime, the police will do their job. When you are being victimized, they don't see the police as responsive to their needs and phone calls. This is true, I've been there. I have worked here in this community for over ten years and I have seen it. (Hmong agency director)

As with other aspects of the immigration experience, language problems play a large part in presenting barriers to immigrants obtaining their full equal rights in the legal system

A lot of the Cambodians are afraid of the law in this country. They do not know what is going on. ...language problems. (Rochester IMAA)

V. The search for solutions: What people say will help

The community focus groups and interviews provided a number of interesting perspectives.

The need for Ombudsmen

We need ombudsmen between the community and the legal and child protection services and the court. (Rochester Mutual Assistance Association focus group)

Strengthening the role of the Mutual Assistance Associations

We found that the community based Southeast Asian Mutual Assistance Associations were active not only in coming up with suggestions but also in implementing their ideas: their staff were playing a key role in trying to maintain positive links with the kids, trying to provide parent education in the context of devastating cultural changes. Their efforts stem from an overall attempt to provide solutions to the problems that they have identified.

The adults should act as role models, try to use correct words, no swearing, slang. That's the way we show respect. Let them see, let them hear. (Cambodian)

We need to restore the communication between parents and children. (Lao)

We educate the parents too. We tell them, "Don't believe you are dragging behind the kids, you are ahead. Learn parent skills." (Lao, Rochester)

People are also critical of the court system in relation to minorities:

That the judgement went against them because of their race or nationality, that's how the justice system is perceived in the community. (Rochester)

Their case loads are too high, so accept a plea. They have problems understanding the legal system (Rochester).

We were told that there were good and bad defenders, but that even with a good attorney, people felt that the attorney's priorities were to move their caseloads, to close cases, to use plea bargains as a way to move things along faster. The MAA staff however, felt that their clients had sometimes confessed to crimes when they were innocent. The Asian Pacific community did not understand the technicalities of the law.

Solutions depend on how the problem is defined.

The problem of crime in the Southeast Asian communities has been defined in the context of a rapidly changing cultural adjustment, in which, as Margaret Mead, the distinguished American cultural anthropologist, observed, the traditional system had been stood on its head, the children were learning faster than their parents, and it is they who are leading the way forward into the future.

This has lead to the problem of no respect. Many of our informants said that the children had lost respect for their parents. The children had become the communicators, translators of the new rules, teachers of the new system, technology, values, copiers of alien choices.

The Mutual Assistance Associations were tackling the problem of no respect in a variety of ways.

How do you get respect back?

*We teach Lao culture. How good our culture is. We should educate them about our culture.
(Lao director)*

Mutual Assistance Associations are trying to teach respect for their culture, cultural values. All over the city we found children being taught traditional dance, music, languages, arts, dress and costumes, and traditional customs. Many of the adults are working overtime to help children hang on to their cultural traditions. Their goal is to establish a renewed sense of respect for their cultures, a sense of positive identity and cultural pride.

When I asked some of the younger service providers why they have succeeded, they came up with a surprising validation for the cultural work. They praised parents who were strong role models, parents who had a foot firmly placed in both cultural worlds, mothers who had gone to college, held jobs in the mainstream, yet who were developed in some form of cultural arts such as weaving or dance and making traditional costumes.

Youth intervention:

Keep the kids busy, a safe place, sports center, music classes, language classes, they do not know Lao culture. They do not know American culture. They think it is (wearing) baggy pants. (Lao director)

Tougher families, not tougher laws. (Rochester)

Parent education

The majority of the Hmong parents are not themselves well educated We need to get the parents educated on the Criminal Justice and Legal System. (Hmong)

There was a concern for more parental involvement. We have to educate the parents more and more about the lives of their children. We need more parents are not keeping in touch with the lives of their children. Encourage the parents to attend parent-teacher conferences. Cut down on truancy. There is a very important new role for the school here, a new angle on cultural diversity.

We should influence the curriculum. Teach them about loyalty to their family, about morals, dress codes.(Hmong)

Parents must be more involved with their kids. Monitor them at school, at play, know who they hang out with, know how school is going, attend parent teacher conferences.

more support for the parents

For example, the Southeast Asian Community Coalition for Youth and Families, an organization set up to service many of the MAAs with youth programs and grant writing, has had success with meetings where parents and children take a look at problems within their families. This, and the recent drama productions on inter-generational conflicts indicate some of the ways agencies are trying to reestablish a dialogue and a communication between the generations again.

VI. Recommendations

Grass roots people

The breakdown of the family unit, loss of parental control over children and the increasing prevalence of youth gangs are the top problems. The solutions and suggestions concern how laws are seen to be applied unfairly and how they work against the cultural norms of the parents. In the case of corporal punishment, law officials need to work more with the parents than against them.

Educate the law officers on cultural norms

The law enforcement officers are also seen as racist. Some of the incidents described suggest that immigrant populations are unduly singled out for police harassment.

Educate the law enforcement officers in cultural diversity.

There is also much work needed to be done with bringing the Asian Pacific public into a dialogue with the media. There was a concern about making sure that mainstream media coverage of minorities not always be so negative. They inflame public sentiment with their headlines. (focus group)

*Get rid of the negative/distorted perceptions in the media
Educate the white community about the accomplishments of the immigrants*

the kids perspective

More work needs to be done here to understand the gangs from the insider's perspective. The kids do not seem a great source of solutions. As Lee Pao Xiong commented, "That's why they are in Totem Town."

the parents

The whole issues of lack of adequate adult literacy classes and parent education surfaced here. The lack of ESL seems a primary factor underlying so many of the problems in the community. The problems of communication between the generations are rampant in the community. The parents don't think they are in control. They give up. The kids are leading the parents.

The kids say, let's go to Valley Fair. Why you take me to these community events? (Lao Assistance Center)

The community of older people needs to interact more with the children, and with each other., with American society, to have more fun together.

*Youth - they have no connection to the elders
We don't have any connection with the old people. (Hmong Youth Specialist)*

Front-line workers - agency staff, youth specialists, family counselors, probation officers

The probation officers had an interesting perspective on how the Hmong community is organized and how that impacts crime. They thought that juveniles in the mainstream community, and in the other Asian groups, are not as organized as the Hmong kids. In dealing with the juvenile issue in the Hmong community, they said a lot of it has to do with how the community is organized.

This informant believes that if they didn't organize the way they do now, the amount of delinquency would be much smaller:

Fewer guns, shootings, assault, gang shootings, rival gangs shooting at each other.

Strengthening the role of the Mutual Assistant Associations

*I like to look at issues, I like to look at the cause of the problem. The best way to solve a problem is to get to the root cause of it. I have come to believe that there is no leadership. We have a major void. Nobody is (held as) responsible. The system does not give individuals or groups rights to have power over their children. The power has been taken away from them.
(MAA Assistant Director, Vietnamese)*

The above informant defined the problem in terms of leadership. He felt that the MAAs had an uneasy relationship to the state and county offices, and to the legal system. He wanted a more secure legitimate role for the MAAs other than a non-profit. They had the responsibilities for providing services, but no legitimacy.

Responsibility without power is a hollow word.

The Mutual Assistance Association need designated funds, designated to the issues. They want their needs addressed specific to their population, not part of a larger parent education program. Fair distribution and allocation of funding seems to be a major grope in the MAAs. They try to provide the services but they need funding to maintain the programs.

"If there's a pile of money, they, the mainstream, just gobble it up!"

Perhaps the final answer is summed up in this quote from a very astute executive director. His comments seem to sum up the arguments presented in this report:

My thoughts, final comments, are directed to the legislature. The answer to crime problems is not tougher laws. What I think the answer is, is strengthening families, not laws.
(Rochester focus group - concluding comments)

They recommend the establishment of liasons, ombudsmen to intervene in child protection and law enforcement services.

We need some person to be a bridge, to bridge the gap, a gap bridger. If we don't have some persons, then we have no resources.

MAAs felt that this would be a very cost effective way to move cases along and improve the legal system.

Community researchers

As anthropological (ethnographic field) researchers our task has been to gather and mirror the views of the community with a minimum of interpretation. That said, there are certain conclusions that can be drawn, trends noticed, themes validated across the interviews.

In a meeting of Adult Literacy and English as a Second Language (ESL) providers recently, a woman spontaneously commented on how wonderfully rich and vivid she found the Southeast Asians in their use of imagery, stories, and proverbs, even when conversing in English as a second language. Her comment caused us to reflect on a number of times in our interviews when we were struck by similar experiences. We had informants use rich metaphors which we then needed to explore and probe to fully unravel the rich layers of meaning. Three examples:

Community similes and metaphors:

My community is like a coconut. It's hard to reach. A hard shell. Yet good and soft inside.
(Lao Youth Specialist)

Parent roles

*The rain comes from the roof to the ground (The parents are the roof over the child, sheltering them, screening them from the bad. But now its all turned upside down.)
(Lao family counselor - Rochester)*

When we explored this image with her, she used it to say that the parents are the source of knowledge, wisdom, values. The rain flows down from them to their children. But in America, the process has been turned upside down. In America the parents are less able to protect their children. Frequently the young Asians are getting blamed. For example, we heard that in the Rochester schools, the principal blames the Asian teenagers for causing incidents, holds them responsible, when the kids are only trying to protect themselves. The kids accuse the parents of not helping them in these confrontations in the schools:

Are you going to help me if I have problems?

But traditionally, in the Vietnamese culture, the parents had plenty of power and authority and respect, even over 18, 19, 30 year olds. But in America, the fundamental basis of family power, power in the family, has shifted away from the parents.

But when we come to America, I was facing the law. And how the American culture is so completely different. The children here can do anything they want. The children 18 plus leave home. The kids want to get money faster.

Fear and rumor

The wind is louder than the thunder. (Used to describe parents' fears - that they are sometimes based too much on rumor (the wind), and the rumors tend to exaggerate the severity of the problem, kid's violence (the thunder).

(Hmong probation officer)

On repeating a phrase that we had heard from one Lao informant in Rochester, to another Lao director in North Minneapolis, he instantly knew the meaning and interpretation for the phrase. He wrote the phrase in Lao, then talked about its meaning. To explain further, he drew a hut on stilts, with a thatch roof, and a central rain guttering and explained how the roof shelters those underneath. The metaphor describes how everything comes at the children, the good and the bad. Good parents, like the roof and rain guard, protect them, filter off the rains, see to it that their children only learn the good.

Regarding the conflict around the use of corporal punishment, the principal investigator was reminded of an incident in the Bahamas out-islands where a Bahamian mother would say to her child's teachers, "I want you to beat my child, teacher. Beat him." and how frequently in walking through a settlement, one would see a child come running out of a house, chased by a mother wielding a thick leather strap or belt. Times have changed. But old methods die slowly and we are not convinced that the modern theorists have offered any easily grasped alternatives to parents trying to hold on to their children and raise them appropriately in a rapidly changing cultural, social, technological and economic world.

Anthropologists have known for over fifty years that the process of socialization was changing radically. Previously children had learned from the adults. Traditions were handed down through the culture. But

by the mid- twentieth century things started to fall apart. The children were learning faster than their adults. This is a scenario that has had a devastating effect on the Asian-Pacific families.

VII. Dissemination of Findings:

Within the Asian Pacific community there exists an adequate organizational structure for circulating the findings from these studies. Executive directors said that they would be able to channel the results of the study to their constituents.

What I have done is try to get people to come to a workshop, translate, tell them about the citizens in general, describe the situations in general (Lao)

We also have the council newsletter and access to the local media through press releases. We have found several of the local Asian business newspapers willing to publish articles. These are read by a larger number of people in our community. We also have access to Hmong and Cambodian programs on TV and Radio.

Asian Pacific Community Perspectives on Crime: Scope of the Problem and Recommendations

The four advisory councils have been asked by the Minnesota Department of Planning to do community based information gathering, in a collaborative effort to reach a consensus on what the problems are with regard to crime. We are seeking your input as to what needs to be done, what works, what some of the major issues about crime are for individuals, youth, elderly, families, neighborhoods, and for the Asian Pacific community as a whole. We are wanting your input into our study and your insights will be important in helping to shape future policy.

Interview questions / Discussion Items

- how would you describe your community? (Lao, Cambodian, Hmong, Vietnamese, mixed, other ethnic groups, age of clients served by your service organization, etc.)
- what are the most serious problems related to crime facing this community?
- what is your experience with crime in the community and how has it affected you?
- what are some of the ways people cope with crime?
- what community assets are available to reduce crime, fear of crime and adverse consequences of crime?
- how do people in the community perceive crime - how do they talk about it?

Perceptions of the criminal justice system

- what are some of the positive and negative experiences people have with the criminal justice system?

Recommendations

- What would you recommend to improve the ability of individuals, families and community to reduce the effects of crime?
- how can we effectively provide, use, enhance community assets and strengthen the community's ability to deal with crime?

Appropriate Research Methodology

(what insights do you have on how to research crime issues in your community?)

- how to ask questions about crime?
- what methods would be most appropriate for a larger study of these issues
 - in person or telephone interviews
 - written surveys
 - neighborhood or other small group gatherings
- how to discuss findings?

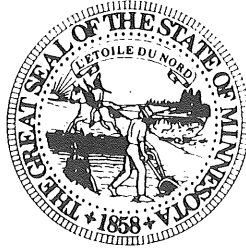
Referrals

- do you know of others in your community who we should contact to gain input into this study?

CHICANO LATINO AFFAIRS COUNCIL

STATE OF MINNESOTA

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MEMORANDUM

To: Ray Lewis, Minnesota Planning

From: Margarita Zalamea, Chicano Latino Affairs Council

Re: Crime Study

The Chicano Latino Affairs Council, in conjunction with Minnesota Planning, conducted a study about crime in the Latino community. The Council subcontracted the work to Jose Verdeja and Juan Martinez. The study was very successful in that it gave members of the Latino community an opportunity to express thoughts and feelings about crime, its causes, and its impact on Latinos.

According to the study, some of the major issues affecting the Latino community are crime, gangs, graffiti, poverty, and racism. Poverty, in many cases, leads to criminal activity. Regarding juvenile crime, the study points out that, "kids supplant what is missing with anti-social behaviors." Most of the times what is missing is self-esteem, positive role models, and opportunities for constructive activities. The study also makes clear that prevention, not incarceration, is the key.

Suggestions about how to reduce crime include: provide good educational opportunities and jobs that pay a living wage (provide real alternatives and options to crime); establish crime prevention

programs that target high-risk youth during the right times of the day, when youth and families can access those services at their convenience and when needed (most agencies provide services from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., when most people are working and children are in school); combat child abuse vigorously (violence breeds violence).

This report is only the first step in understanding crime in the Latino community. A more in-depth study is recommended. That study should include interviews and focus groups with Latinos who live in Greater Minnesota, in cities such as Moorhead, Crookston, Worthington, and Willmar, to name just a few. Further, that report should include a section which enumerates concrete solutions to crime within the Latino community, including specific legislative initiatives.

The Council thanks Minnesota Planning for coordinating this project, and for its technical assistance. The Council looks forward to working with Minnesota Planning on future projects.

Crime and Justice: The Chicano-Latino Community's Perspective
by Jose Verdeja and Juan Martinez, Principal Investigators

For Chicano-Latino Affairs Council
and Minnesota Planning - Criminal Statistics Division

Interviews and Focus Groups conducted
June, July, and August 1996

August 24, 1996

Definition of Community:

The Latino community is defined as those individuals who originate themselves or are descended from individuals of Caribbean, Central American, or Latin American countries. The primary focus of this pre-study are Latino persons who live within the seven county metro area. There were also Greater Minnesota interviews. The predominant Latino sub-group in Minnesota is of Mexican origin.

According to the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation Report, Minnesota Latino Needs and Resources Assessment (May 1995), the Latino population is growing in Minnesota. The 1995 estimate of Latinos is 66,600 with an estimated 18,000 seasonal and migrant workers bringing the total Latino population to about 85,000.

About 68 percent of the Latino population resides in the seven county metro area (Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington Counties). Twenty-one percent live in Saint Paul and 15 percent live in Minneapolis. Outside of the Metro area, the largest concentrations of Latinos live in Willmar, Albert Lea, and Moorhead. For recent data or information about the various aspects of the Latino community, please refer to the Wilder Report.

The Wilder Report provided three major implications of its survey findings. These findings were often repeated by the individuals and groups that were interviewed. In general, they spoke of equal access, removing ignorance, and economic opportunity. Those findings are:

- Improving educational access and attainment is critical for improving the economic capacity of Latinos in Minnesota.

- Understanding and respecting the contributions of Latinos to Minnesota's economy and culture is crucial for preventing or reducing the widespread discrimination reported by Latinos throughout Minnesota.
- Finally, options and resources for settlement and community building must be improved.

William Morrish and Catherine Brown in Minnesota Monthly (July 1996, pg. 126) state that there are five physical features that shape neighborhoods. Those features are:

- Homes and Gardens
- Community Streets (auto and pedestrian)
- Neighborhood Niches (ex., El Burrito and Boca Chica)
- Anchoring Institutions
- Public Gardens (i.e., green space)

The significance of this list is that many have commented on the fact that the West Side of St. Paul, with a high concentration of Latinos, has a "cohesiveness" and vitality about it. The above list is a way of putting these somewhat nonverbal sentiments into words. However, according to a West Side community focus group, the top three positive things the West Side has to offer are:

- Networks & collaboratives - organizations talk to each other.
- Relatively low crime.
- Sense of community.

Methods:

Process

Several persons and groups of persons within and outside the Latino community were identified. The persons were selected based on several criteria. In general,

persons were selected for their current connection to the Latino community. Persons selected represented the depth and breadth of persons connected to the Latino community. The specific criteria were:

- persons working in the Latino community
- persons working for the Latino community
- Latino persons from the Latino community (residents)
- Latino persons in formal positions in the Latino community (leaders)
- Latino persons in informal positions in the Latino community

We sought and spoke with these key informants because we felt the study of crime and justice issues would be best addressed by a wide variety of individuals. We interviewed individuals from many aspects of the community: officials, residents, service providers, youth, etc. We also supplemented this qualitative data with studies conducted by reputable, national research organizations.

The report is also decidedly systemic in its approach to the topics of crime and justice. A systemic perspective states that actions produce outcomes or have consequences. Over time, these outcomes and consequences are discernible and measurable. They tell us whether we are moving closer to the desired state of being or moving away from it. If we are moving away from the desired state, then we must change the actions we take.

Behavioral models are not relied upon to explain crime and justice in this report. This report points out that the crime and justice policies that are popular currently, have the opposite effect in terms of reducing crime. One such policy of handing out longer prison time produces worse criminals at the end of often abbreviated sentences.

The study began with the knowledge that the Latino community is a people-

oriented culture. Therefore, the first step was to develop a rapport with community individuals who were being interviewed. Impersonal, indirect, or one-time data collection methods were not likely to work. Face-to-face communication was essential. However, the use of a well-recognized and community-involved individual(s) was absolutely imperative. Being able to tap into pre-existing personal relationships was vital to the success of the project. The rapport must be genuine and long-lived.

The interviews were recorded on audio or video cassettes. The use of audio and video cassettes was to ensure a true record of the interviews. The audio and video cassettes lent themselves to later playing and viewing for a more objective retrospection. Moreover, the use of video lent itself to picking up voice tones, non-verbal cues, and body language that may have been unheeded during the interview. This recording of individuals could not have been accomplished in many instances had there not been a personal relationship outside of the study.

Questions asked

The use of the term "question" is somewhat of a misnomer given the approach that was used and the reliance upon personal relations. Although questions were asked, the general approach was to come together as persons dialoguing around a common theme(s) of concern. Every attempt was made to speak with individuals in familiar and informal environments. In Chicano-Latino culture the phrase that best describes this approach is "ambiente." Ambiente is similar to atmosphere in English, but it also means peer-to-peer camaraderie or friendly intercourse in a comfortable and secure setting. Coming in primarily as a researcher with questions would have been extremely counterproductive. So it is not whether questions were asked, but what role the investigator assumes in asking those questions.

Nonetheless, there were several general questions that were explored. They were:

- How has crime or justice affected the community?
- What type of crime seems to be of the most concern?
- How do you see the police?
- How do you see the criminal justice system?
- What do you think can be done about crime or justice issues?
- What are the current obstacles?
- What do you hope for?
- What does the future look like to you if the current situation continues?
- What would you be willing to do to change the current situation?
- How would you like things to be?
- What do you think the problem is?
- Why is this happening? or How did this happen?
- What would you need to....?
- What is the end result you see? For yourself? For the situation?
- If you could change one thing about the situation what would it be?
- What would you do differently about the situation?
- What has worked to remedy or better the situation in your opinion?

Please note that not all questions were asked of all persons interviewed. This allowed for the dialogues to develop naturally and the questions or topics to be explored spontaneously. There were other influencing factors such as the individual's disposition in an interview format. Many of the persons with whom we spoke took the "verbal ball" and ran with it; other persons had to be coaxed along with questions during the interview.

Moreover, the modality of communication was a gathering and sharing of information, thoughts, and feelings. Again, this would be more characteristic of a loosely structured dialogue than a rigid interviewing. Although the term interviewing may be used, the reader should think, structured dialogue.

Topics Covered

The topics that were covered were based upon a previous gathering of West Side citizens. According to this earlier focus group, the top three priority issues facing the West Side are:

- Crime
- Gangs
- Graffiti

Other topics that were also explored were: court system, probation system, social services system, police-community relations, community-based services, state and federal level policies, and Latino community culture.

Of course the first three issues fit in with the nature of this study nicely. Crime is the top concern although the West Side has a relatively low crime rate.

Protocols for primary data collection:

Expectations - Researchers

As investigators we expected to tap into the rich knowledge and intelligence base of the community. We were not disappointed. Although interviews occurred at separate times, locations, and conditions, we s, we heard practically the same thoughts, ideas, and sentiments expressed by those interviewed. My personal expectation was that the report would rediscover common sense approaches that promoted more security, less anxiety, and defensible positions. The latter point being made in the face of a growing punitive mentality among a certain segment of the population and policy-makers.

Expectations - People

For the most part, the persons that were interviewed expected that their thoughts and ideas about crime and justice would not only be heard, but heeded. Many times community persons are interviewed and they never see any follow-up or outcomes based on the thoughts they shared with interviewers. Many persons feel used and offended by classical data gathering methods.

Findings

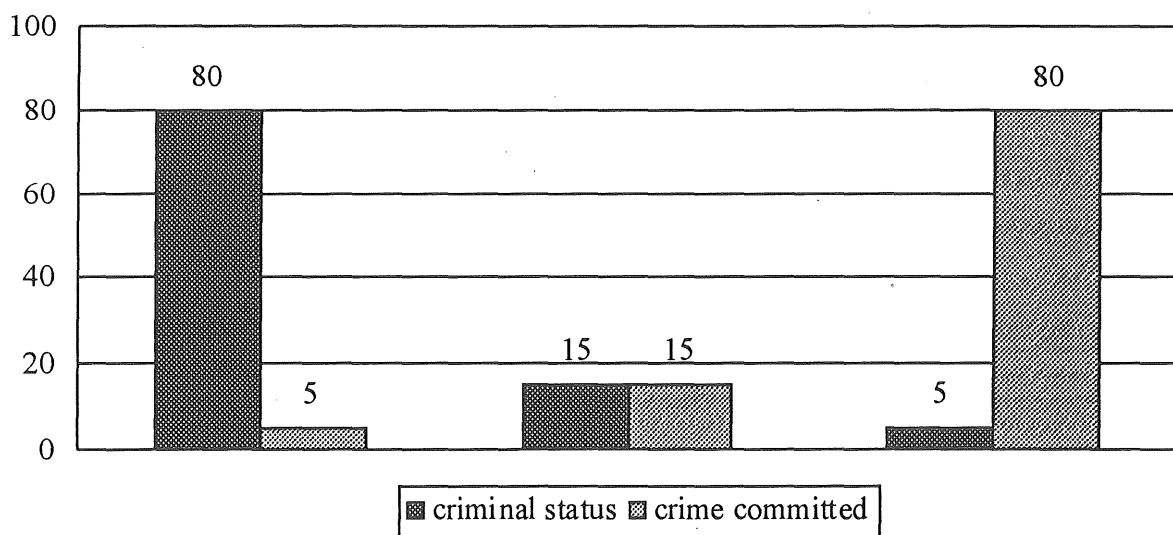
Meredith Voquelund

The interview with Meredith Voquelund, the anti-graffiti Saint Paul police officer provided an intriguing model for dealing with juvenile crime. Her approach is four-fold. First, the graffitier is identified. Second, after the graffitier is caught he/she is assessed. Third, the graffitier is made to face the moral and legal consequences of his/her act of vandalism. This third step can include meeting with the victim and

working to restore the damaged property. This third step is more extensive because it may involve contacting the offender's parents, relatives, and respected members of the community. It is truly a process to mobilize shame against the individual in a manner that makes him/her fully appreciate all of the various dimensions of his/her actions. Fourth, the individual is monitored for any continuation of their vandal activity. This fourth step then circles back to the first step where any new graffiti is associated with a certain individual's graffiti tag or style.

Ross Lundstrom

The interview with Ross Lundstrom, Saint Paul's Deputy Chief of Police, presented us with the following model of juvenile crime:



The dark gray bars, from left to right showing 80%, 15%, and 5% respectively, represent the percent of youth by level of criminal involvement. The dark gray bar (five percent bar) on the right represents "hard core" or very crime-involved juveniles.

These are the juveniles who may be too far gone to be remedied by services or too costly to turn around. The dark gray bar on the left, represents everyday youth with little or no criminal involvement. Moreover, any criminal involvement is minor or petty in nature. The juveniles in the middle were termed by Deputy Lundstrom as "recruitable" or "gang member wannabes." These middle juveniles are being recruited actively by the hard core group.

The light gray bars show an estimate of the crime being committed by each group of juveniles. Clearly the hard core group is committing the most crimes. These are the individuals who are active criminals. The middle group may be committing fifteen percent of the crime. Therefore, the middle group and hard core group added together, 95 percent of the crime is being committed by these two groups alone.

Youth crime in perspective and the primacy of poverty

Despite the above assertions about youth, there is a need to put juvenile crime into perspective. A "1994 Gallup Poll found that the average American adult believes that youths commit 43 percent of all the violent crimes in the US, while the true figure is only 13 percent."

Holhut goes on to say that age alone is not an indicator of violent behavior. Neither are violent media, drug use, or gun ownership sole predictors of violence among youth. Holhut states, "There is one factor that is consistent, and is rarely discussed: poverty." Moreover, "The recent rise in violent crime is so clearly founded on social conditions, not age-group demographics, that experts and officials have had to strain mightily to ignore or downplay them."

Mike Males' book, The Scapegoat Generation: America's War on Adolescents,

seems to dispel many of the so-called myths, similar to the last sentence above, surrounding youth violence. Males dispels the myth of violent teens, violent media contribution to teen violence, and gun proliferation. Males makes a convincing case for the poverty factor causing crime.

"The biggest difference between the US and the rest of the industrialized world is youth poverty and the extreme disparities in income between the rich and poor. According to the 1995 Luxembourg Income Study, the US raises three to eight times more children in poverty than other Western nations and has the largest and fastest growing income gap between the richest five percent and the poorest five percent." (Holhut, pg. 2)

Poor people are not inherently violent, but poverty is a major life stressor. Males points out that the murder rates during the Great Depression were extremely high, "peaking in 1933 at 9.7 murders per 100,000 (by comparison, the 1993 rate for [sic.] 9.5 per 100,000)." (Holhut, pg. 2)

Males adjusted for poverty and found that the crime rate for 13-19 year olds is almost the same as the crime rate for people in their 40s, and is lower than for people in their 20s and 30s. He also did an adjustment for the number of people, by race, living in poverty. Again he found that, "non-whites have a crime rate similar to that of whites at every age level." (Holhut, pg. 2)

Lastly, Males states, "It would stand to reason that if poverty were reduced, the rate of violent crime would also be reduced." (Holhut, pg. 2)

Judge Manuel Cervantes

Judge Manuel Cervantes stated that in his estimation 60 percent of all crime can be categorized as either misdemeanors or gross misdemeanors, i.e., traffic violations or

assault. In other words, anyone can be a criminal at any time. It is only a matter of degree. People are concerned about personal and property security. White collar crime, although it may cost in the tens or hundreds of millions, is remote and invisibly impacts everyone. Embezzlement of thousands or millions of dollars makes for good press, but few people associate the crime with their daily lives.

Judge Cervantes was asked about the prejudice in the Court Systems Report. He said that he had been part of the task force that produced the report. The report had about 250 recommendations. He is now on the implementation committee, which is working on the Second District level to implement the recommendations. Judge Cervantes said that the Interpreter Program was an early success of the implemented recommendations.

There are two major areas of recommendations that have not seen the same movement. Those two areas are the employment and education of court personnel. There is inadequate representation of all citizens, in terms of ethnicity, race, and culture, among court personnel.

The education of court personnel is not receiving a lot of attention at this time. New hires, regardless of background, should be asked about their experiences in dealing with diverse persons. Candidates of course will try to put their best foot forward, but the hiring process should examine the type, length, frequency, and genuineness of their diversity experience(s). Their own diversity would also be examined.

Artie Martinez

Noted trial attorney Artie Martinez also spoke of the court system. He spoke of

the disparity of justice between Latinos, Blacks, and Asians - essentially non-whites. For example, the selection of juries is part-and-parcel to the court system. Yet, very few juries are representative in terms of racial and ethnic diversity. Despite this deficiency in racial/ethnic representation, class also plays a greater role in the lack of participation on juries. Poverty can hinder participation on juries in a number of ways. The most practical example is that poor people earn more money on the job than with the jurors' stipend. Jury duty is therefore a luxury of the middle-class or affluent. Therefore socio-economic disparities do not discontinue at the courtroom doors. As defendants, poor people can't afford the legal representation of their choice. Their reliance upon case overloaded public defenders puts them at a distinct disadvantage in the courtrooms.

Gilbert De la O

Mr. De la O is a man who works with many individuals involved in the criminal justice system. Mr. De la O mentioned that there was a pattern he saw among the youth and young adults with whom he dealt in his work. First, there was a lack of a strong, positive role model in the household. Second, parents may contribute to the youth's crime because of the parent's own crime involvement. This second point can be seen as the presence of a negative role model(s). Third, there is poor parental supervision in general.

When asked about alternatives to the typical criminal justice approach, Mr. De la O said that calling upon criminal justice officials should be the last resort. The problems are best solved in the community, by speaking with parents, involving the church, and other respected community persons. According to Mr. De la O, self-esteem, cultural pride, and a deep knowledge of their cultural heritage may help to dissuade some youth from a life of crime too.

Mr. De la O believes that community corrections and policing looks good on paper, but doesn't work in actuality. More Latino police officers will be more effective; although they are still "blue," they are culturally appreciative. Other authority figures are ineffective in the Latino community because of language barriers mostly.

The Corrections Department - Joan Fabian, Jon Hayes, and Bob Hansen

Representatives of the Corrections Department were also interviewed. They were Joan Fabian, Jon Hayes, and Bob Hansen. They stated that there are a lot of new programs for youth. They also have two probation units that operate from 9 p.m. to 2 am in order to accommodate individuals and stifle crime-time involvement or roaming. They estimate that probation programs are 3% to 5% comprised of Latinos. Despite this seemingly low percentage of Latinos, they are trying to make their programs more culturally specific and sensitive.

When probed about the time frame for probation services, all of the interviewees stated that the probation department has not been a traditional 9 to 5 operation. For instance, staff are on 24-hour call, two offices are open until midnight, there are Saturday hours, and Alcoholics Anonymous volunteers also provide their programs on Saturday to accommodate probationers who want to attend this program.

Interpretation is still a problem. The interviewees stated that translation is still a "whole system" problem. Although there are some staff that speak Spanish, interpretation is still dependent upon family or friends.

The Probation Department's goal is to make a probation department without walls. That is to say that they are strongly interested in working with community

groups around the issue of working with those on probation. The Council of Churches Restorative Justice was spoken of as an example of a community program that rests on community involvement. The community center concept like Neighborhood House is another example of how juveniles and the community can interact around probation needs. Restorative Justice is a philosophy that says we must bring both the offender and the victim back to the state in which they were before the crime was committed. In addition, for the offender, it is an opportunity to restore his/her standing in the community. The Probation Department is trying to promote the Restorative Justice Model over the old "Just Desserts" model of criminal justice. There needs to be more community-based solutions, community involvement, and community partnerships.

These corrections people said that there needs to be more resources devoted to prevention efforts. It is vital to "get kids" before they get into the criminal justice system too deeply. Additionally, you can't solve "kids" problems by running them through the criminal justice system first. That path to services often leads to bigger problems and hardening of youth. Further, the probation department is not in the position to deal with housing or employment problems. What is needed is that the Latino community support change, promote proper behavior, and has the true support of the authorities.

Jose Koehler

Jose Koehler is a man who has been there. He is a man who has experienced a life of crime and then incarceration. When asked what is needed to put things in motion to help diminish the crime and violence, especially among youth, Mr. Koehler did not hesitate in saying hope. Many children and youth are growing up in poverty, household turmoil, single-headed households, etc. Many youths are seeking to be validated by joining gangs. Also, each ethnic group has experienced the phenomenon

of gangs during a certain stage of their collective social transitional process. What is usually common among these gangs, no matter what era or ethnic group we talk about, is that they often spring from impoverished environments. They are unfailingly from the poverty stressed strata of society. The systems of power, privilege and prestige are in fact mimicked by the youth subculture. There is materialism, fear, and a need to belong somewhere.

America's punitive attitude is not going to work. According to Mr. Koehler, America is the largest penal colony in the world. Many of those who are incarcerated are people of color. This contradicts America's slogans of liberty and freedom. Youth must be shown love, caring, and sincere good will. Moreover, you must give youth opportunities. Police are still rousting youth. Officers should come to the neighborhoods during non-crime-time to make connections, build trust, and rapport with youth.

Everything around some youths' life is ugly. They are growing up in ugliness. The socio-economic system is producing a master and servant class. Folks need to be given a decent living. They should be given the opportunity to derive pleasure from doing good things, not the false pride of being bad or tough. According to Mr. Koehler, kids supplant what is missing with anti-social behaviors.

Mr. Koehler asserted that no single agency or segment of society can address the crime problem; any anti-crime undertaking must be done in collaboration with the broadest segment of participants possible. Mr. Koehler somewhat lamented the fact that persons such as himself and Jose Verdeja (principal investigator), would like to transfer their knowledge and experience about dealing with youth to others as a way of helping youth achieve.

Mike Garza and Ann Briseño

We also interviewed Mike Garza and Ann Briseño. Mr. Garza works with the Legal Aid Society and Ms. Briseño with the Riverview Economic Development Association (REDA). Ms. Briseño stated that many of the local businesses, especially the bars, have gotten together for mutual assistance. Many see the West Side as a place to come to for its Latino fare, goods, and services. The businesses have a stake in the perception of the West Side as a safe and friendly place to come to for Latino products and ambiance.

The businesses are also working to identify and keep track of so-called trouble-makers. This is especially true of the local bars, night clubs, and restaurants. Persons who are disruptive in one location are identified and other businesses are called and informed about those persons' disruptive behavior. Many of the local businesses feel that this mutual assistance process helps them to avoid problems in the future.

Mr. Garza, who has worked throughout the State for several years, has an atypical view of crime and justice issues. Mr. Garza firmly believes that people should face the legal consequences for their behavior. However, he has also seen the inequities of the court system first hand. Judges, prosecuting attorneys, defending attorneys, enforcement authorities, and other court staff have all been too quick at times to take advantage of cultural and language differences, legal naiveté, and misplaced trust to process cases - often to conviction.

Mr. Garza said that Latinos, although sometimes deserving of some form of punishment, are treated in a heavy-handed manner. Moreover, it seems that the Napoleonic Code applies to Latinos, i.e., guilty until proven innocent. Therefore,

without the legal resources to contest charges, Latinos are often convicted of crimes by default.

TNT - Youth Organization

TNT Program Director, Roberto Diaz, and Youth Coordinator, D.J. Thielen, were interviewed regarding crime issues. TNT represents a model for youth to be given an opportunity to do community service. The time spent doing this community service is time spent in a structured and positive way. This program also provides services to youth that participate in its programs. TNT works with youth from 2nd grade to 12th grade, as well as "at-risk" youth. When asked "what would you do about crime and justice issues facing youth", Roberto responded that he would like to see the issues faced by youth dealt with in a preventative manner. That is to say, don't wait for youth to get into trouble to give them services or counseling; instead give them help and support before they get into trouble. D.J. Thielen echoed similar sentiments about getting youth involved in positive community service and getting them needed services.

Context

Context can be seen in two ways basically. The first is the context for this study. The second is the context in which crime and justice issues are discussed. The context for this study are well known; the Minnesota Planning Department - Criminal Statistics section put out a survey of crime and justice attitudes and did not receive a representative response from several communities. They sought to remedy the situation by approaching the State Councils of color to assist them in gathering the input of the respective communities.

The second take on context can be described as how people felt about the topics of crime and justice. Moreover, how those two topics are discussed, their significance, and the thoughts and reactions that were provoked by their discussion. Too a large extent, there were no surprises in what people said or felt about crime and justice. Many persons felt that the crime and justice issues were and are presented in lopsided discussions. The discussions are either about the perpetrators of crime or, less frequently, the victims of crime. There are very limited discussions about the causes of crime, institutional injustices, and social injustices. In several of the interviews there were examples given of how Latinos could not count on getting a fair shake from authorities or the legal system itself.

Both from the interviews and research, the consistent theme was poverty. Many of those interviewed said that if you want to reduce, if not end, crime get people a good education, get people jobs that pay a living wage. In short, give them real alternatives and options to crime.

Again, it is vitally important that crime not be viewed in strictly behavioral terms. There are systemic forces that work to produce the fertile ground for crime. However, this should not be taken as a liberal view of crime or criminals. Everyone interviewed said that individuals should have to face the consequences for their actions or behaviors. However, they all recognized that these individuals were **made** and **not born** criminals. The systemic forces are interdependent forces. Therefore we must discuss them along with our discussion about crime.

The definition of poverty is also too narrow. Currently, poverty is defined in nutritional terms. However, the definition of poverty should be expanded to include

such terms as poverty of power, poverty of privilege, poverty of social justice, poverty of social status, poverty of equity, poverty of humanity, and poverty of spirit.

Criminal Justice:

Attitudes

In the article, "Indigenous Ways Are Restorative Justice Models," Ada Pecos Melton states,

"Indigenous systems are mostly based on customary laws, traditions, and practices that are orally passed down. In these systems, the process is mostly non-adversarial and involves intimate participation by the accused/offender and victim, their families, relatives and friends."

This sentiment was repeated in several of the community groups that were interviewed. At the Concord Square tenants' meeting, several of the women mentioned that calling the Police was the action of last resort. Gilbert De la O also mentioned that engaging the "system" is the last resort for some people. Often, well-known community persons would be called upon to mediate or resolve a dispute. In their minds many of the situations in the neighborhood were not so much about crime per se, but about a lack of respect ("respeto") for commonly accepted community norms. For example, public drunkenness or drinking in front of children is considered lacking respect for oneself and the community.

Perceptions

Several persons stated that when the police show up, feelings of insecurity and tension increase. According to one woman who was interviewed, the police tend to

overreact to minor situations and “someone gets cuffed and taken away.” Yet the underlying cause of the conflict goes unaddressed.

Several persons spoke about the bad treatment they received at the hands of authorities. They perceived the authorities as disregarding the rules, acting arbitrarily, and acting carelessly. Some authorities have even gone as far as issuing challenges to persons to “try and do something about it.” Such a negative encounter with authority figures has a universal effect on Latinos. Trust is the first victim.

Several persons also expressed annoyance over what they perceive as overly negative press and reports about the Latino community. The positives of the Latino community are not newsworthy enough it seems, but let one bad thing happen and the community is identified by that incident for a long time afterwards.

Several persons also expressed their annoyance about studies that, regardless of whether the authors did so intentionally or unintentionally, cast the Latino community in a bad light. Many of the studies start off by using a deficit or dysfunction model, i.e., what the Latino community doesn’t have or doesn’t do right. These type of studies along with the profusion of negative media stories and images, mutually reinforce the perception in the greater society that Latinos as a whole are a societal liability. Latinos are to be *dealt* with and not *worked* with as equals when solutions are sought or implemented.

Experiences

During an interview in Fargo/Moorhead, three individuals stated that a police presence not only caused apprehension, but was seen as part of a larger systemic effort

to oppress the Latino community. Although unconfirmed by direct observation, these individuals reported that there is a County Sheriff at each of the four corners of a park frequented by Latinos.

Recommendations:

"Solution (sic.) must come from the community, initiated and directed at the neighborhood level. A multifaceted and integrated approach is essential. This means enhanced law enforcement at the neighborhood level coordinated with improvements in social and economic environment and improvements in physical infrastructure and design. Stress is on prevention. (From Safe City News, Winter 1995)

There are several recommendations which can be gleaned from the interviews. They are in no rank or order:

- Better educational opportunities.
- Better economic opportunities (i.e., living wage jobs).
- Add community-operated police and justice systems before the formal police and justice systems, i.e., recognize, honor, and truly support indigenous methods of handling crime.
- Provide services when they are most preventative, i.e., to the young.
- Provide services during the right times of the day, when youth and families can access those services at their convenience and when needed.
- Related to the above recommendations, have funders stipulate that at least 25% of an agency's budget will go to providing services outside of the typical 8 am to 4 pm workday time-frame.
- Reestablish community-founded, sponsored, and practiced rights-of-passage.
- Combat child abuse vigorously.

Moreover, Ramsey County Community Corrections 1997 Budget Presentation

showed three things that work for juvenile and adult offenders in Corrections. Those three things were:

- Higher-risk cases should get the most service.
 - Effects of treatment (reduction in the risk of recidivism) are greatest for these cases.
- Treatment should focus on dynamic risk factors most directly related to reduction in recidivism.
 - Examples include:
 - Changing attitudes toward employment, authority, feelings, and peers;
 - Providing self-control and self-management skills;
 - Targeting substance abuse;
 - Promoting familial affection and parenting skills.
- The treatment selected should be the one most likely to influence the specific need and be matched to the offender's learning style.
 - Examples include:
 - Firm but fair use of authority;
 - Anti-criminal modeling and reinforcement;
 - Concrete problem-solving skills;
 - Role playing
 - Providing resources and verbal guidance. (1997 Budget Presentation, pg. 25)

Some other research findings

Getting tough on crime doesn't work

Minnesota ranks 37th in violent crime rate per 100,000; 49th in federal and state prisoners, rate per 1,000 population; and 34th in child abuse cases reported. As we will see later in this report, it is critical not to get on the "lock them up and throw away the key" bandwagon. Clearly, individuals committing anti-social, criminal, or violent acts

have to face the consequences for those acts. However, "...getting tough doesn't work. States such as California, Texas, and Oklahoma have tried all of these remedies and all three states have seen record increases in violent crime." (Holhut, pg. 3) If Minnesota pursues this path of getting tough on crime, we will assure ourselves of more crime - not less.

Prison and Prison Mentality

"Every prison is an island." (Reich, pg. 109) In such isolated environments the social realities are forged and conform to the actors with the strongest wills. A collective band, demonstrating any semblance of order and internal discipline, within a chaotic, unprincipled environment gains momentum. Nature and people despise a vacuum. Some prisoners actively and vigorously impose their will upon other prisoners. These militant, politicized prisoners tend to assume the "gorilla," role, i.e., an aggressive inmate who uses violence to get what he wants from others. (Reich, pg. 109) We will look at this issue in further detail in the next section.

Violence Begets Violence: Prison Cultural Norms

A Star-Tribune article by Misti Snow summarizes Dr. James Gilligan's book, Violence: Our Deadly Epidemic and Its Causes, (Grosset/Putnam, 1996). Dr. Gilligan proposes several theories worth noting. The first is that the "underlying theory pervading our criminal justice system: the theory of rational self-interest...according to this premise...all we have to do to prevent violent crime is threaten violent people with imprisonment and capital punishment." Further, Gilligan says that there are only four things wrong with this theory, "It is totally incorrect, hopelessly naive, dangerously misleading, and based on complete and utter ignorance of what violent people are really like." Moreover, "an approach rooted in retribution and punishment actually increases rather than decreases the incidence of violent crime."

A study by Dennis J. Stevens, "The impact of time served and custody level on offender attitudes," found, among other things, that:

- "Some criminologists have argued that incarcerating offenders for long periods of time helps control crime. This argument is based on the belief that potential offenders will weigh the pains of severe punishment and refrain from criminal behavior. As a result, the American criminal justice system is generally imposing longer prison sentences than in the past.
- However, violent crime rates continue to escalate. It is equally arguable, therefore, that long prison sentences fail to improve crime control. After all, most inmates are eventually released without serving their full sentence.
- More importantly, the concept of prisonization suggests that the longer inmates are confined, the stronger their identification with inmate norms and values and the greater their difficulty in adjusting to life once released.
- Further, a prison environment deprives the individual of liberty, worldly possessions, access to heterosexual relationships and personal autonomy. Since inmates share these deprivations, they tend to band together to reduce their individual pain." (Stevens, pg. 1)

Child abuse and violent crime: a strong link

Practically all violent criminals have had childhoods packed with physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Dr. Gilligan says that the abuse suffered by these individuals is "off the scale." The article says that in 1991, the Minnesota Legislative Child Protection Study Commission estimated that 95% of Minnesota prisoners who committed violent crime were abused as children. Moreover, these are people who have grown up in extreme poverty, homelessness, and racial discrimination.

Succinctly, Dr. Gilligan's theory is that violence is caused by shame. In order for violence to occur, three other conditions need to be present. They are:

- The individual doesn't see himself as having nonviolent means to gain respect or find justice.
- The shame and humiliation are so overwhelming they threaten to destroy the person's sense of self.
- The violent impulses stimulated in all of us by feelings of humiliation are not inhibited by guilt, remorse, empathy, or love.

"Arenas of Hell"

Dr. Gilligan describes maximum security prisons as "arenas of hell." Prisons are hell for two basic reasons: first, the regimentation and human rights violations committed by the prison staff. The other source of hell is of course other prisoners who have not ceased criminal activity simply because they are incarcerated.

Much of Dr. Gilligan's theories about the connection between violent crime and child abuse seem to be corroborated when one looks at the State Rankings -- Crime table produced by the Census Bureau. Although correlation does not mean causality, nonetheless one must consider seriously the striking correspondences found on this table. For example, Florida, excluding the District of Columbia, ranks first in violent crime rate per 100,000; 13th in federal and state prisoners per 1,000; and 4th in reported child abuse cases. North Dakota on the other hand, ranks 50th in the violent crime rate per 100,000; 50th in the federal and state prisoners per 1,000; and 47th in the number of reported child abuse cases.

Serious crimes continue behind bars

Stephen Donaldson's article, "Prisons, Jails, and Reformatories," states, "The prison subculture is characterized by a rigid class system based on sexual roles." Within this system, the "men" establish the values and behavioral norms of the entire prisoner population; "convict leaders, gang members, and the organizers of such

activities as the smuggling of contraband, protection rackets, and prostitution rings must be "men." "...[I]nmates bring their street attitudes with them into prison."

(Stevens, pg. 3)

A very real part of this class system is forcible rape. Virtually every young male will be tested upon entering confinement to see if he will fight to maintain his "manhood." Such a system of brutality creates two classes of prisoners: the "men" and their "punks." Therefore, the 90 percent of all prisoners that are eventually released from prison are well-practiced exploiters or victims who will seek to victimize in turn.

Imprisonment versus prevention

Arthur Kim, in his article, "Prisons Cut Theft, Not Violence," (The Daily Californian, 1995) states that University of California at Berkeley Researchers showed that each additional year a person spends in prison prevents three property crimes, but only 0.2 violent crimes. Echoing what Judge Cervantes said earlier, Law Professor Franklin Zimring said, "Decreasing burglary is not nothing, but on the other hand, many more people I know are worried about being shot, hit over the head, or raped."

Zimring said that California's three strikes crime measure intended to put repeat criminals in jail longer, will not result in significant drops in violent crime. These findings are confirmed in RAND's study of California's Three Strikes Law. The study, "Diverting Children from a Life of Crime: Measuring Costs and Benefits" can be partly summarized in the following chart:

Program Effectiveness and Cost Parameters

	Visits and	Parent	Graduation	Delinquent
Parameter	Day Care	Training	Incentives	Supervision
Pilot prevention rate (%)	50	60	70	10
Effective prevention rate for juveniles crime (%)	24	29	56	8
Effective prevention rate for adult crime (%)	9	11	50	8
Target ratio	2	2	3	4.5
Cost per participant (thousands of dollars)	29.4	3.0	12.5	10.0

All of the table parameters should be self-explanatory except for the targeting ratio. The targeting ratio is the ratio of the crime in the group participating in the program to that in the population as a whole.

The RAND study states,

“When combined with other information on crime rates and criminal careers, the data in the table permit estimates of how many serious crimes would be averted over the lives of all program participants. These estimates can be expressed in terms of serious crimes prevented for every million dollars spent on each program.” (RAND, pg. 3)

The bar graph showing the number of serious crimes averted per million dollars is hard to re-create here without the raw data, but the graph clearly shows that 3 out of 5 of the early interventions (in order of serious crimes averted: graduation incentives, parent training, and delinquent supervision) are more effective than “Three Strikes” in averting serious crime. In fact, graduation incentives were 5 times more effective in averting serious crimes than “Three Strikes.” Clearly, this is food for serious thought since according to Deputy Chief Lundstrum, juveniles accounted for 56% of the arrests

for Part I offenses in St. Paul.

Definitions of "Manhood"

The subject of manhood seemed to be an implicit or explicit reference in the literature. Men commit the most crimes. On the streets, manhood is defined in terms of flesh, frightening, and fighting. There were references to proving one's manhood, often in anti-social, exploitive, or violent acts. In prison, taking away another's manhood by gang rape was a way of amplifying one's own manhood, albeit through a homosexual act.

Many street youth saw going to prison as a right-of-passage. This perverted ambition speaks to the utter lack of other options in these youths' lives. In fact, prisons have become an "alternative higher educational institution." The education is not reading, writing, and arithmetic, but an education in greater criminal mentality. Once in prison these youth have two choices they must face: get tougher and more criminal or get punked. Either way, it is highly probable, that their return to society will not be without further criminal incidents.

Communities must therefore take back or reestablish the rites-of-passage to adulthood, especially manhood. Communities must reestablish the ceremonies, rituals, and traditions whereby youth are recognized by the community as responsible, contributing adults worthy of the community's honor and respect.

Recidivism

As Dr. Gilligan asserted, our criminal justice system and associated policies are self-deceiving. Moreover, they are irrational and counterproductive to the ends we

would truly like to reach. We falsely believe, perhaps from a middle class perspective, that criminals are making these rational, almost economic, calculations based on assumed risk of being caught, the likely punishment, and the possible reward of a particular crime. This type of skewed reasoning then says if you make the penalties harsher, the criminal will be deterred from committing crime. Even if crime deterrence is supplanted by draconian punishments just for the sake of punishing criminals only, with no pretense of rehabilitation, we still have to deal with that individual at some point in time. As a society do we want to deal with a more hardened and crafty criminal or would we rather turn the criminal around by educating them. "We know that the single most effective factor which reduces the rate of recidivism in the prison population is education, and yet education in prisons is the first item to be cut when an administration 'gets tough on crime.'"

You can still punish criminals without having to dehumanize them in the process. Alternative incarcerations have proven to be more effective than prison or jail time. For example, the News-Times (April 26, 1996) reported that alternative incarceration means less recidivism. The five-year study of 2,000 criminals who committed similar crimes, conducted in Connecticut, showed that 52 percent of alternative incarcerated individuals remained arrest-free after two years.

Community Policing

William A. Niskanen, chairman of the CATO Institute, wrote an article entitled "CRIME, POLICE, AND ROOT CAUSES." The article is quite lengthy, but here are some of the major findings:

- “An increase in police appears to have no significant effect on the actual rate of violent crime and a roughly proportionate negative effect on the actual rate of property crime.
- An increase in corrections employees appears to have no significant effect on the violent crime rate and a small positive effect on the property crime rate.
- Crime rates are strongly affected by economic conditions. For example, an increase in per capita income appears to reduce both violent and property crime rates by roughly proportionate amounts.
- Crime rates are also affected by demographic and cultural conditions. For example, the violent crime rate increases with the share of births to single mothers.” (Niskanen, pg. 1)

Once again, we see that the typical approaches to crime, i.e., more police, more courts, longer sentences, and no rehabilitation services simply do not work. If our goal is to produce more criminals for the prison industry, then we are on the right path. However, the policies expressed and pursued so far have as their stated goals: less crime, more personal safety, and more property security. Yet, ironically, these policies seem to be giving us *more* of what we don’t want.

Researchers

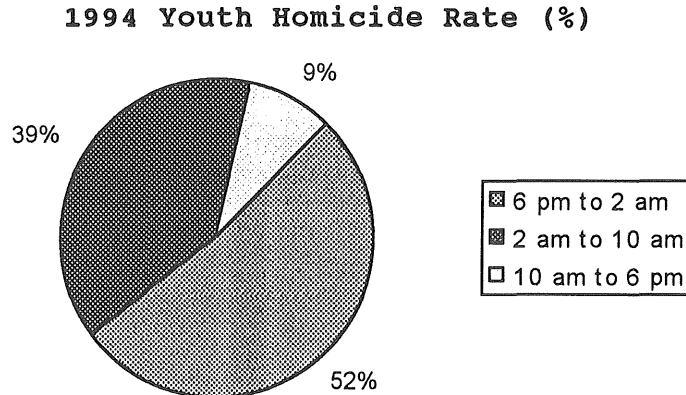
Delivering the services at the right time and right time frame

Appendix C: “List of Ideas” of the Alternatives to Incarceration Report listed 25 ideas. Although not listed in rank order, the top five ideas were:

1. Target intervention services at families who are at high risk, when they are young.
2. After-hours drop-in center for youth to operate from 10:00 p.m. -- 4:00 a.m.

3. Developing a reporting/intervention center for categories of less serious juvenile offenders.
4. Advocate for significant intervention in the availability of guns.
5. More alternative schools for children with high-risk needs for highly structured settings.

According to the 1994 Youth Homicide Report, 52% of youth are being killed between the hours of 6 pm and 2 am (see chart below). Again these are hours that are beyond the typical workday. Except for some probation officers, all case managers and social workers are home and unavailable to youth and their families. Obviously, the situation is more pronounced on the weekends. Youth or family crisis has to wait until the next working day.



The other 20 ideas (from the Alternative to Incarceration Report), along with the first five listed above, have several common themes: target interventions early, provide interventions in the right time-frame, be proactive, provide resources and services as needed for prevention efforts, eliminate poverty, educate youth both formally and informally, distinguish between levels and types of crime, and provide real alternatives

to a life of crime for youths.

The key idea though is that services should be provided when youth can avail themselves of those services. Practically all service providers work 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. or a typical work-week. In order for youth or adults to take advantage of those services, they would often have to take time off from school or work. Therefore, service providers disrupt the very things that many see as vital to a person's livelihood. Perhaps, agencies and their funders should stipulate that at least 25% of their resources be provided in a manner and time-frame that accommodates their clients' lives and not vice-versa.

Protocols

In the Stansfield and Dennis book, Race and Ethnicity In Research Methods, each author examines race and ethnicity in different research contexts. All see the current language of race and ethnicity as not only being of limited use, but in several instances perpetuating gross social injustices and inequalities. They restate in their own way that unexamined class, cultural, or philosophical biases, on the part of the researcher, leads to research which only averts uncomfortable thoughts and, ironically, genuine and generalizable findings.

Stansfield and Dennis state as a central issue of Race and Ethnicity in Research Methods that,

"...conceptualizations of research problems and interpretations of collected data in racial and ethnic research often have been preceded by a priori ideological and cultural biases that determine the production of 'objective knowledge.'" (pg. 4)

Stansfield's discussion on the "Fallacy of Homogeneity" and "Fallacy of Monolithic Identity" are essentially two sides of the same coin. Whether you are perceived to be the same internally or be externally undifferentiated leads to the same treatments and considerations.

"What is most interesting, and this is finally the point of all this, is to observe the continuation of folk wisdom-derived dogma in professional social science circles specializing in racial and ethnic studies despite empirical evidence to the contrary."

Chris Argyis' Ladder of Inference model provides an excellent example of how biases can insidiously take over research. Meanings -- personal and cultural and philosophical -- are added to the data that is selected from what is observed. In turn, the data that is selected from what is observed is a reflexive loop that connects one's beliefs about the world with the data they select.

The volume tackles many tough issues with respect to the many issues faced in conducting race and ethnic studies. The main one of course is the self-deceiving notion that one can be objective, especially in studies involving race and ethnicity. It calls for all social scientists, concerned with the issues of validity and reliability in race and ethnic studies, to examine their own personal and cultural biases. Any hidden paradigm greatly affects studies if not addressed thoroughly.

Some concluding remarks

There is a wave of intolerance to crime and punitiveness sweeping America. Too many persons, policy-makers, and politicians think we can "build our way out of

crime and especially violent crime." Their idea of locking them up and throwing away the key is popular and, at best, misguided. Several reputable research institutions, both in the United States and Canada, have debunked many of the anti-crime policies expressed so far. For example, the RAND research organization showed that providing graduation incentives averted over five times (250) the serious crimes per million dollars than California's Three Strikes Law (a little over 50 serious crimes averted). The CATO Institute showed - not surprisingly - that crime rates are *strongly* affected by economic conditions. They say that an increase in per capita income appears to reduce *both* violent and property crime rates by a roughly proportionate amount. It seems that policy makers can come up with the resources to build more and bigger prisons, but claim their own poverty when social programs seek funding to establish or expand their services.

Many people would be surprised to know that crime, especially violent crime, doesn't discontinue merely because a criminal is in prison. Getting even tougher on these incarcerated individuals to curb their criminal predilections creates even more violent prisoners according to one Canadian study. Heavy monitoring called Intensive Supervision Probation Programs or ISPs as a model for probation are counterproductive to curbing crime as well. This approach is largely punitive in orientation. This was another Canadian study, but of two American probation departments. One was in Massachusetts and the other in New Jersey who were using the ISP model of probation. These studies showed that there was no discernible improvement in the delivery of so-called better justice; there was a doubling of probation costs; there was a reduction in public safety; there was a significant contribution to prison overcrowding; and there was no effect on offender recidivism.

Current thinking and policies about crime and justice are demonstrably getting

us less safety, security, and peace-of-mind. Although, very appealing on the surface because of their seeming decisiveness about dealing with crime once and for all, these policies have done and continue to do more harm than good. As with other issues crime has become the "collective sublimation" of hard to pinpoint frustrations and anguish of the middle class mostly. Unfortunately, this distracts us from looking at problems systemically. It is easier and more safe to attribute societal problems such as crime to behavior problems or just plain evil people than to look at the societal forces that turn ordinary people into criminals. Yes, the individual is free to choose, but as a society are we given enough things to choose from?

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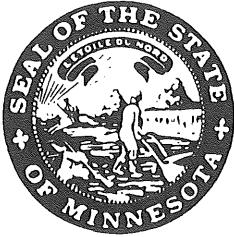
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STATE OF MINNESOTA
COUNCIL ON BLACK MINNESOTANS

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September 10, 1996

The Council on Black Minnesotans is pleased to present the following report on gathering African and African American opinions on issues relating to crime, violence, and law enforcement in our state.

These issues are of critical importance to Minnesotans of African descent, and are further complicated by the widespread feeling in this community that its opinions, experiences, and concerns are seldom fully considered by policymakers, the media, or the general public.

At the same time, the present effort to collect and measure Black opinion on these sensitive issues has been very well received in this community. The mere fact that special efforts to gather this information were exerted from within the community has generated new interest in finding solutions to the problem of violent crime.

The Council on Black Minnesotans anticipates that the results of its survey, "African American Perspectives on Crime and Justice in Minnesota," will help in the formulation of specific initiatives to reduce community violence and restore community faith in the criminal justice system.

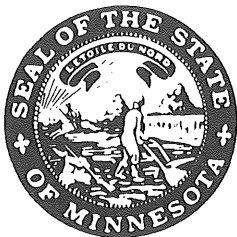
We hope that the Community Crime Project comes to represent an important first step in a larger process of engaging communities of color in a productive and continuing dialogue with Minnesota's policymakers, as well as with one another.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Lester R. Collins".

Lester R. Collins
Executive Director

LRC/SJK/ddc



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Community Crime Project: Planning Stage Report to Minnesota Planning *August 1996*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Council on Black Minnesotans ("CBM" or "the Council") submits this report on survey techniques on issues relating to crime, violence and the criminal justice system in the African and African American community to Minnesota Planning. This report and the activities it describes are part of a larger effort to determine strategies and techniques for measuring public opinion and experience with these issues among Minnesota's communities of color.

The Council appreciates this opportunity to apply its extensive experience and concern with these issues to a systematic effort to gather and interpret data relevant both to the development of public policy initiatives reflecting community input, and to the education of Black Minnesotans.

The CBM is in hope that this report, in conjunction with the similar reports submitted on behalf of the other communities of color, can lead to the larger-scale effort necessary to follow through on the issues and objectives identified in the Council on Black Minnesotans' section of this report.

II. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Minnesota Planning's broad goal, as stated at the outset of the project, is to identify common concerns about crime and justice within and across the four principal communities of color in Minnesota: Native American, Asian-Pacific, Chicano-Latino, and Black. In the next phase of the Community Crime Project, it will undoubtedly be useful to select certain points of common concern and experience for direct comparison across communities, but for Planning Stage purposes, the Council has concentrated upon the identification and assessment of crime and justice related issues within the Black community.

In doing so, the CBM early adopted two sets of intermediate objectives to be observed and furthered in the course of a comprehensive survey effort: process-oriented objectives, and content-oriented objectives.

A. Process-Oriented Objectives.

It is widely known that African American rates of crime victimization, arrest, and incarceration in Minnesota are much greater than the proportionate size of the state's Black population. While this fact raises many questions and carries a broad variety of implications, for present purposes it is sufficient to recognize that issues of crime and justice -- in terms of both victimization and perpetration -- are matters of considerable sensitivity to many African Americans.

Attempts to gather information on such volatile issues without the direction of culturally specific guidance, can raise suspicions among potential respondents as to the data-gatherer's motive and the data's end use. Special care therefore must be taken to ensure maximum community cooperation by effectuating the following objectives:

1. Promote community confidence in data-gathering techniques and in purposes to which the information will be used.
2. Make data-gathering accessible to a widely representative sample of African and African American opinion and experience.
3. Accurately reflect the full range of opinion on matters of interest to the Black community.
4. Suit the content of questions to format and audience.
5. Present survey results honestly and credibly in a variety of formats and media, both to educate policy-makers about the community's opinions and concerns, as well as educate the Minnesotans of African heritage about the findings.

B. Content-Oriented Objectives.

An essential point of departure for any effort to collect and measure public opinion is the development of specific survey objectives. Precisely what information is to be sought? Ideally, the content of the survey will coincide with the interests and concerns of the response sample. To this end, the Council formulated the following content objectives:

1. Identify primary African American community concerns about crime, violence, and law enforcement.
2. Identify the nature and extent of the community's experience with crime and violence, as well as variations within the community's experience.
3. Identify the community's perceptions concerning media characterizations of

community relations and violence.

4. Identify African and African American experiences with police and the criminal justice system.
5. Identify specific behaviors which may correlate with heightened risk of victimization or perpetration in the Black community.
6. Demographically describe subgroups at increased risk of victimization or perpetration.
7. Cross-tabulate demographic factors with reported experience and impact in order to refine understanding of data.

III. DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY AND GEOGRAPHIC AREA

The 1990 Census counted about 95,000 persons of African descent in Minnesota, a figure likely to be understated. Of these, over 98 percent lived in urban areas, while only about 70 percent of the total state population lived in urban areas. About 90,000 African and African Americans lived in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, reflecting 95 percent of the state's Black population.

The concentration of Black Minnesotans in central cities as opposed to suburbs is even more striking. About 77 percent of Black Minnesotans living in an urban area lived in the central city of a metropolitan area. About 68,000 African and African Americans lived in Minneapolis or St. Paul in 1990. By contrast, only 29 percent of Minnesota's urban whites, and only 20 percent of all white Minnesotans, lived in a central city.

With 95 percent of Minnesota's African Americans living in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, and 71 percent of the state total residing in the central cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, survey planning and content development activities concentrated on these urban communities.

The impact on Africans and African Americans of crime and violence will therefore reflect intensely urban attitudes and experiences, far more so than for any other Minnesota group. Questions and formats for data-gathering reflect this characteristic, and can even take advantage of it in distribution, collection, and expanding the response sample.

IV. METHODS AND PROCESS

The CBM has extensive experience with engaging a broad range of African American input on issues of crime, violence, and fairness in law enforcement. This continuing colloquy has taken many different forms and has been applied in various ways, ranging from the

development of legislative initiatives, to engaging community resources in violence prevention campaigns, to helping individuals with particular problems relating to crime, the police, or corrections. In a sense, the Council on Black Minnesotans' activities over the years in these areas have resembled a continuing focus group with a shifting cast of participants. To a great extent, the Council has drawn on this experience and the resulting relationships in framing issues and formats for the Community Crime Project.

A few examples of such activities over the years that have shaped the emphasis of the present project include:

- the 1988 Black-on-Black Crime Forum, sponsored by the CBM, the first major local effort to mobilize African American energies to stem the rising tide of community violence.
- the Stop the Violence Coalition in the early 1990's, representing a broad range of community resources devoted to crime and violence issues and improving the responsiveness of police and prosecution to African American concerns.
- the Alternatives to Violence Coalition, an effort led by the Minneapolis Foundation to identify community organizations willing and able to reduce violent crime and to secure the funding necessary to support their work.

The CBM also has considerable experience in presenting African American views on issues of crime, violence, and criminal justice to the legislature and other policy forums. Examples of such policy initiatives include:

- Participation in the Juvenile Justice Advisory Task Force, 1994-95, an attempt to find new solutions and resources to meet the rapid growth in juvenile crime.
- Task Force on Minority Community-Law Enforcement Relations, 1996, an effort to find ways of improving cooperation and understanding between police and communities of color.
- The Martin Luther King, Jr. Nonviolent Child Development Pilot Program, a new legislative mandate to the CBM for developing and improving the delivery of violence prevention and intervention services to school-age children.

As a practical matter, issues of crime, violence, personal security, and fairness in law enforcement have long been of paramount concern to the Council on Black Minnesotans and our constituency. While theories of causation and proposed solutions vary widely within the community, the Council's extensive concentration on these issues, which covers

more than a decade give us a solid point of departure for measuring and interpreting the opinions, recommendations and experiences of our constituents.

Nevertheless, the CBM has sought culturally competent sources for outside advice and comment in designing and formulating survey topics and approaches. The current survey strategy reflects input from many individuals and groups, including the local chapter of the National Black Child Development Institute (an umbrella group representing over two dozen community and grassroots agencies), church leaders, community advocates specifically concerned with crime and violence prevention as well as police relations, and ordinary citizens, all to ensure an appropriate, accurate and user friendly instrument as well as guaranteeing proper breadth of inquiry.

Preliminary drafts of survey materials were developed with the benefit of such input, and then were circulated to and vetted by a representative cross-section of community members.

Preferences as to methods and strategies emerged in the course of the ensuing discussions in order to effectuate the goals and objectives identified in Section II above. The main values to bear in mind were accuracy of results, community confidence, breadth of participation, and utilization of data.

V. SPECIFIC DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

The CBM's overall survey strategy has evolved into a phased approach combining a written questionnaire, telephone surveys, and focus groups. To this point, only the written questionnaire has been developed. The other phases will be performed to a large extent on the basis of the written survey findings in a future stage of the present project.

Although the CBM originally intended to undertake telephone and focus group surveys at the same time as the printed questionnaire, considerations of time and expense revealed the impracticability of multimedia surveying during the Planning Stage.

However, in view of the various advantages and drawbacks of each survey medium, the Council has determined that a large-sample written questionnaire will make an excellent foundation for future survey efforts on either a larger or a more refined scale. Before describing the survey strategy in detail, the relative advantages of written questionnaires, telephone surveys, and focus groups will be discussed.

A. Written Survey -- Advantages and Disadvantages.

Several aspects of the written survey technique especially recommend it. Its potential for eliciting detail, its ease of tabulation and measurement, and its relative privacy all make the written questionnaire highly suitable for obtaining information as to actual experience and a limited range of attitudes and beliefs.

It is also more cost effective, in terms of sample size and scope of data, than either focus groups or telephone surveys. Sample integrity is easily established by comparing the demographic data obtained to known values. Cross-tabulation of data can yield remarkably detailed information in terms of specific questions and demographically defined subgroups.

There are several drawbacks to the written survey as a data-gathering technique, however, both generally speaking and in terms of the African American community. Some people are uncomfortable or not fully competent with written materials. The specific phrasing of questions, or even the order of presentation, might antagonize the respondent and undermine the validity or credibility of the exercise. Especially in the African American community, where some people have little reason to regard official attention in any form as a positive thing, the very fact of a governmental survey can be viewed by some with suspicion, especially as to the ultimate use of the information.

We expect the written survey results themselves to bear out to some extent the hypothesis that in these days of public disaffection with and distrust of official authority, the African American community is especially alienated. Much of the community feels paradoxically overpoliced yet underprotected. The CBM has seen that the implications of this belief pattern can often lead to a deep cynicism with even benign public policy initiatives, including the present survey effort.

At the same time, the Council on Black Minnesotans encourages all policy-makers to recognize that the African and African American community includes the broadest imaginable range of experience, attitudes, and beliefs; it would be a grave mistake to regard it as a homogeneous mass. In recognizing this variety of experience and opinion within the community, the CBM plans to capture and quantify responses that accurately reflect this variety, but at the same time identify with some specificity those elements of the community with more extreme experience or views.

B. Telephone Survey -- Advantages and Disadvantages.

While originally seen as a primary survey technique, considerations of time, expense, and question selection make the solicitation of opinion by telephone more appropriate as a follow-up to the written survey effort.

Advantages

The advantages of telephone surveying are its ease and convenience for the respondent, and the instantaneous nature of response and tabulation. People who may not be comfortable with printed materials can participate fully in opinion research over the phone.

Challenges

Telephone surveying has many drawbacks:

- a.) The cost -- a ten-question survey administered to 500 households could cost \$6,000 or more.
- b.) Phone surveys cannot economically elicit detailed opinions on more than a few questions. Beyond a few minutes, the time necessary to conduct the survey will more likely represent an imposition upon the respondent's convenience or patience.
- c.) Sample integrity can present problems in the African American community. The census tract data most often used as a sample source either will skew toward low-income and less educated persons of African descent in less privileged neighborhoods, or will require expensive and time-consuming screening to locate individuals of African heritage in neighborhoods where African and African Americans do not live in large numbers.

The best use of phone surveying for the sake of the present project would be to solicit responses to those questions on the written survey that yielded confusing, suspicious, or ambiguous results as an accuracy check. For that purpose, a sample as small as 300 or 400 households could be an effective means of gauging the reliability of selected written questionnaire results. In the present project, formulation of phone survey questions should await results of the written survey in order to maximize the utility of this polling technique.

C. Focus Groups -- Advantages and Disadvantages

Given the Council on Black Minnesotans' virtually continuous discussion of the issues presented by the Community Crime Project with a broadly representative range of leaders and constituents within our community, it was determined that little new information would likely be gained from focus groups as a primary medium of inquiry for present purposes. This is not to say that focus groups will not be a valuable information source at a subsequent Project stage.

The Council regards focus groups as principally valuable for illustrating, refining, or qualifying the bare quantitative data yielded by more objective survey methods. Degrees of opinion can be tested in a focus group setting, and nuanced responses to subjective questions can be captured more effectively than either written or telephone surveys will readily elicit.

Thoughtful responses to complex or long multiple-choice questions can also be gathered more effectively and reliably in a focus group setting. Additionally, the relative strength of a given response can be determined, at least to an extent, by

observing whether and how focus group participants influence one another's opinions in the course of the session.

Finally, focus groups are probably the best single source of anecdotal information that can go far to explain the thoughts and feelings that might underlie the objective opinions revealed by a larger quantitative sample.

Meanwhile, focus groups present a number of shortcomings as a survey method, especially as a first line of inquiry. Sample size is necessarily limited; the ideal number of participants is about twelve, and the difficulties of conducting larger sessions become insurmountable at about twenty. Given these numbers, additional difficulties arise with respect to sample composition.

It would take six or eight different sessions, each selected for relative homogeneity, to do minimal justice to the breadth of opinion and experience on Project issues in the African American community. Alternatively, if each focus group session were to be assembled with an eye toward diversity of age, sex, experience, and income, fewer sessions would be necessary, but at the concomitant risk that some of the participants would feel inhibited from expressing the true range of their opinions and experience. Particularly on volatile issues such as those raised by the Community Crime Project, where people can be expected to have strong opinions and feelings, some participants might perceive pressure to suppress nonconforming ideas in the presence of one or more dominant personalities.

The Council on Black Minnesotans recommends that focus groups be assembled with a view toward maximizing the breadth of opinion, belief, and experience that can be gathered by this means. This would entail convening six or eight separate sessions, each representing a different segment of the Black community, with the following offered merely by way of examples:

- 1.) College-bound youth,
- 2.) Church-going elders,
- 3.) "At-risk" youth,
- 4.) People employed in the professions,
- 5.) Single parents, and
- 6.) Residents of public housing.

The Council would expect to find considerable diversity of opinion and experience within each such group, but would also expect a higher degree of intragroup comfort and candor within each setting.

VI. SURVEY FORMULATION AND DISTRIBUTION

In light of the discussion above concerning Community Crime Project objectives, methods, and processes, the actual formulation of the Council's written survey was relatively simple. Questions were selected to gather a wide range of African American opinion on the issues of crime, violence, and criminal justice as they most directly affect the community. Care was taken to phrase questions clearly and fairly; the objective is to receive honest information, not to confirm presupposed views. Copies of the questionnaire are submitted with this Report.

The Council's survey format was loosely patterned after MN Planning's 1995 Crime Survey. The questionnaire is 71 questions in length, and 4,000 copies will be distributed in September 1996. Approximately ten of the present survey's substantive questions duplicate or closely resemble questions presented by MN Planning. The demographic information sought, however, is virtually the same.

The differences between the substance of the questions asked by MN Planning and those by the Council reflect the differences of experience and concern found to exist between the highly urbanized Black community in Minnesota and the general population of the state. Distribution of the Council's survey is much different from the 1995 MN Planning survey. Rather than conducting the survey by mail to a randomly selected sample, the Council expects that a tripartite distribution system will yield a response sample of sufficient size and diversity to afford reliable results. The Council survey will be distributed in the first week of September in three different ways: 1,000 copies distributed among four to six African American churches; 1,000 copies distributed to about ten community centers frequented by African Americans, and 2,000 copies handed out on the street at locations with high levels of African American foot traffic. At least one of the community centers will be an alternative high school for African American youth. Different colored survey covers will identify whether a given survey came from a church, community center, or sidewalk handout. It is expected that at least 1,000 completed surveys will be returned within one week of distribution; while churches and community centers will have facilities to collect completed surveys, all copies are printed for business reply return mail.

The demographic information sought in the surveys will enable the Council to determine whether the sample returned and tabulated fairly represents the African American community.

Data entry of the returned surveys will be performed by the InterTechnologies Group of the Department of Administration, while tabulation of the data will be performed by a private opinion research firm. Data interpretation will be undertaken in the Fall of 1996.

VII. CONCLUSION

Participation in the Planning Stage of the Community Crime Project has been a valuable

experience for the Council on Black Minnesotans and is expected to prove useful for Minnesota's Black community in a variety of ways.

Data gathered and accurately interpreted on the experiences of our community on topics of crime and/or violence may be appropriately directed for the development of specific initiatives devoted to crime prevention, victims' and witnesses' services, and improved police-community relations.

Such data can also lead to a stronger Black community, thus improving the quality of life for all Minnesotans. The Council on Black Minnesotans regards its present survey efforts as a first step in a larger, more sustained attempt to identify and measure the opinions and beliefs relative to crime and violence.

A significantly higher commitment of resources will be necessary to execute all of the survey strategies discussed in this report. If any or all of them are to be pursued, however, it is essential to bear in mind that community cooperation and candor will depend to a great extent upon confidence in the motives and techniques of the survey and the utilization of the information gathered.

The input of persons of African descent is essential to the success of the survey. The community's direction and participation in the survey contents and method will be essential to the integrity and utility of subsequent data-gathering efforts.

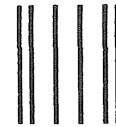
Lester R. Collins
Executive Director

AFRICAN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES
ON CRIME AND JUSTICE
IN MINNESOTA

1996 Survey

Council on Black Minnesotans

COUNCIL ON BLACK MINNESOTANS
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Agree Disagree

1 2 3 4 5 Lots of people want to do something against violence, but we need better leadership.

E. YOUR CHARACTERISTICS (confidential, for analysis only)

59. What year were you born? _____

60. Are you _____ male, or _____ female?

61. What is your race? _____

62. Are you Hispanic? _____ Yes _____ No

63. Please check the one category that describes your education:

_____ Less than 9th grade _____ Some high school

_____ High school graduate or GED _____ Some college

_____ Still in high school _____ Still in college

_____ College graduate

_____ Graduate or professional degree

64. How long have you lived in Minnesota? _____ years

65. If not born in Minnesota, where were you born?

66. If you moved to Minnesota, where did you move from?

African American Perspectives on Crime and Justice in Minnesota 1996 Survey Instructions

This Survey is designed to collect the views of African Americans in Minnesota on issues of crime, violence, law enforcement, and the fairness of the criminal justice system. The results of this Survey will help us learn more about how African Americans are affected by these problems. Your help in answering the questions in this booklet will help us and your community find better solutions to these problems.

YOUR ANSWERS ARE STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL. Your name will not appear anywhere in this survey or anywhere in the results. It will be impossible to identify you for any purpose.

Please take a few minutes to read and answer every question. If you're not sure exactly what we mean by words like "violence" or "community" in any particular question, just answer the questions based on what those words normally mean to you. If you need more space to answer a question, or if you want to add comments, feel free to use the last page of the booklet, or any available blank space.

Please mail this Survey booklet back to us **as soon as possible**. You don't have to use a stamp.

If you have any questions, please call the Council on Black Minnesotans at (612) 642-0811. Thanks once again for your participation.

Agree Disagree

1 2 3 4 5 Longer sentences for violent criminals would help make my neighborhood safer.

1 2 3 4 5 Police helicopters in my neighborhood would make me feel safer.

1 2 3 4 5 African Americans can't expect to get justice in the court system as it is now.

1 2 3 4 5 More police cars in my neighborhood would make me feel safer.

1 2 3 4 5 Most police are trying to help my community, but a few police are just out to get us.

1 2 3 4 5 A few police are trying to help my community, but most police are just out to get us.

D. CRIME AND VIOLENCE REDUCTION STRATEGIES

55. Are you involved in any neighborhood or community violence prevention activities?

_____ Yes _____ No

56. (If you answered NO to Question 55) Do you know of any neighborhood or community groups that you could join to help prevent violence?

_____ Yes _____ No

4. Does concern about crime prevent you from doing things or going places?

_____ Yes, often _____ Not much

_____ Yes, sometimes _____ Never

5. Are you concerned that you personally might be a victim of a violent crime?

_____ Yes, often

_____ Yes, sometimes

_____ Not much

_____ Never

6. Are you concerned that any member of your family might be a victim of a violent crime?

_____ Yes, often

_____ Yes, sometimes

_____ Not much

_____ Never

44. In your opinion, how well do the courts protect your community?

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair

☐ Poor ☐ No opinion

45. In the last three years, have you been unfairly stopped by the police?

☐ Yes, repeatedly ☐ Yes, once or twice ☐ No

46. In the last three years, have you been insulted by the police?

☐ Yes, repeatedly ☐ Yes, once or twice ☐ No

47. In the last three years, have you been physically assaulted by the police?

☐ Yes, repeatedly ☐ Yes, once or twice ☐ No

48. In the last three years, has anyone in your family been arrested?

☐ Yes ☐ No

49. In the last three years, has any of your friends been arrested?

☐ Yes ☐ No

11. In the NEXT three years, do you believe violent crime in your community will:

☐ Get better ☐ Stay about the same

☐ Get worse ☐ Can't even guess

12. Do you believe that violent crime among African Americans is a bigger problem than it is among most other groups in Minnesota?

☐ Yes ☐ Not sure ☐ No

13. For you, what's the ONE main source of information about violent crime?

☐ TV ☐ Daily newspaper

☐ Other paper/magazine ☐ Radio

☐ Family/friends ☐ Other:

14. Do you own a gun?

☐ Yes ☐ No

15. If you DO own a gun, for what purpose?

☐ Hunting or sport ☐ Protection

☐ Protection and sport ☐ Other:

34. In the last three years, have you witnessed an argument involving THREATS of violence?

____ Yes ____ No

35. In the last three years, have you been involved in an argument that led to ACTUAL violence?

____ Yes ____ No

36. In the last three years, have you witnessed an argument that led to ACTUAL violence?

____ Yes ____ No

37. Has anyone close to you been a homicide victim in the last three years?

____ Yes ____ No

38. Has a homicide taken place in your immediate neighborhood in the last three years?

____ Yes ____ No

39. Do you know any children who have been directly affected by the homicide of someone close to them?

____ Yes ____ I don't think so ____ No

20. Do you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements:

(Circle 1 if you AGREE STRONGLY, circle 5 if you DISAGREE STRONGLY. Circle 2, 3, or 4 for "in between" opinions.)

Agree Disagree

1 2 3 4 5 Carrying a weapon helps protect a person from becoming a victim of violence.

1 2 3 4 5 Young people learn to be violent from violent surroundings, family, and friends.

1 2 3 4 5 The local news media exaggerate the amount of violent crime in the African American community.

1 2 3 4 5 Young people learn to be violent from TV, movies, music, and video games.

1 2 3 4 5 Most violent crime in my community is caused by people who recently moved from other big cities.

1 2 3 4 5 In general, TV shows, movies, and popular music realistically and fairly describe inner city violence.

B. EXPERIENCES WITH CRIME AND VIOLENCE

21. In the last three years, have you been robbed?

____ Yes ____ No

COUNCIL ON BLACK MINNESOTANS

October 1996

**Martin Luther King, Jr. Nonviolent Institutional
Child Development Pilot Program**

A new Minnesota law authorizes the state Council on Black Minnesotans to plan, design, and implement a Pilot Program for the development of coordinated violence prevention and intervention services for school-age children. Participants from a broad range of disciplines and community resources will form a services network, share information, and identify effective strategies to meet the challenge of rising youth violence in our communities.

1. Violence Prevention Programs. The Pilot Program will solicit, support, and coordinate long-range community violence prevention programs for school-age children. Right now, we favor two approaches to violence prevention services.

First, we seek the participation of groups who can deliver and reinforce effective antiviolence messages to children aged 10 to 16 whose life circumstances heighten their risk of exposure to violence, either as victims, perpetrators, witnesses, or secondary survivors. Such primary prevention efforts may apply widely differing approaches, including just as examples:

- school-based antiviolence curricula,
- family support and parent education programs,
- youth mentoring programs,
- after-school arts, sports, and recreation programs,
- street-level conflict avoidance and resolution training.

Particular need exists for the culturally competent delivery of antiviolence and prosocial messages to young people of color. Ideally, working relationships will form between hands-on practitioners, researchers, and policy makers, so that the effectiveness of all can benefit from the experience of each.

At the same time, we need effective secondary prevention services for those young people who have identified themselves by their own behavior as running the greatest risk of becoming either the victims or the perpetrators of violent crime. --

A starting point for secondary violence prevention efforts would be working with young people who have become involved with the juvenile justice system. Last year, in Minneapolis alone, there were about 1,100 juvenile arrests on charges ranging from simple assault and weapons offenses (780 arrests) to rape and homicide (49 arrests). These are the young people in greatest need of violence prevention programs.

There are nearly 100 organizations in Hennepin and Ramsey Counties who work with these youth. We hope to encourage and develop cooperative arrangements between many such groups in order

to maximize the benefit of their work with these young offenders.

2. Violence Intervention Programs. Here, we are addressing the full range of needs and services that arise when violent crime touches children's lives. Examples of violence intervention services include:

- emergency financial support,
- improved delivery of medical care,
- trauma or grief counseling,
- witness protection,
- help with police and the legal system,
- family foster placement of surviving or abused children,
- crime victim reparations.

We are now assembling an inventory of the public and private sector institutions that offer services to those victimized or indirectly affected by community violence, particularly homicide. We are identifying service gaps so that unmet needs can be addressed. The objective here is to make sure that available services can be accessed and delivered efficiently and sensitively, as well as to find ways to meet genuine needs that are not covered by existing programs.

An important feature of the Pilot Program's enabling legislation provides that government data on individuals, including youth and their families, will be confidential data as defined by state law, but may be shared among participating agencies for Pilot Program purposes. This will allow providers of violence intervention services to work with one another, as well as with youth, in an atmosphere of mutual trust.

3. Program Coordination and Support. While the Pilot Program's main objective is to help participating agencies develop and implement violence prevention and intervention programs for youth, the Pilot Program also expects to:

- help with participants' training and staffing needs,
- develop a clearinghouse for sharing information,
- match services and strategies to youth needs,
- promote interdisciplinary cooperation in service delivery,
- identify and provide financial support to participants.

The Council on Black Minnesotans will be able to work with potential participants in the areas of program content, service coordination, and funding. The Pilot Program's current funding does not allow for high levels of financial support to member agencies, but the sooner the Council can identify organizations willing to participate in the Pilot Program, the sooner it can identify and pursue additional funding sources that may provide more substantial financial support for participants.

History of the Community Crime Project

In 1991, Minnesota Planning released a report entitled, *Minnesota Milestones: A Report Card for the Future*, which provided a long-range plan for the state. One of the goals is to have communities that are safe, friendly and caring. To help measure progress toward reaching this goal, it was decided that a statewide survey of experiences and perceptions regarding crime would be conducted every three years. The 1993 survey was the first to measure the two *Milestones* indicators: the percentage of people who have been crime victims and the percentage of people who feel safe in their community on a statewide basis.

Although steps were taken to obtain a high response rates from community of color residents on the first crime survey completed in 1993, the sample received was not large enough to be considered representative. The 1993 Minnesota Crime Survey used a random sample of people selected from the drivers license or state issued identification database to measure the experiences, expectations and perceptions of crime on a statewide basis. Even though a larger number of names from Hennepin and Ramsey county residents were selected in an attempt to gather enough responses from communities of color, not enough responses to the mailed survey were received to permit detailed analysis and to accurately describe the thoughts and experiences relating to crime from the communities of color's perspectives.

To prepare for the follow-up survey in 1996, Minnesota Planning staff enlisted the aid of the four statutorily designated minority councils in Minnesota. The Indian Affairs Council, the Chicano/Latino Affairs Council, the Council on Black Minnesotans and the Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans and other members of the communities were asked to review the 1993 survey in preparation for the 1996 follow-up study. The intention was to explore ways to gather a more representative sample from community of color members on the 1996 survey. Because a large piece of the puzzle was missing and resulted in an incomplete picture of all Minnesota residents' experiences and perceptions of crime, Minnesota Planning began to investigate the possibility of conducting a crime survey specifically for communities of color.

How to shape a survey project, even the survey questions, are key issues in surveying community members. At one meeting a basic question was raised of "why should we buy into a project where you have already defined the problem." If the project does not originate from the community, and if the identified topic is not a high priority, it is unlikely to be seen as helpful or accepted within the community.

The project expanded the focus from a crime victim survey to a survey which addressed broader issues of crime. This allowed community members to decide what are the most important problems rather than having a state agency decide what the main topics should be. Overall, the focus remained on experiences and perceptions of crime and justice within the community, but shifted from victimization and perceptions of safety to a wider scope of key crime and justice issues, as well as willingness to participate and appropriate methodology. The larger community focus survey was scaled down to a planning project because of the available funding, time

constraints and uncertainty of how such a project would be welcomed within the communities. The planning project was envisioned to begin answering why, who, what, when, where, how and cost questions for a minority-focused survey conducted by community members.

After discussions about the availability and usefulness of information about crime within communities of color, an interagency agreement between Minnesota Planning and the Office of Drug Policy and Violence Prevention to pursue a planning study was signed in April 1996. The Criminal Justice Center at Minnesota Planning agreed to perform a preliminary assessment of crime and the justice system in Minnesota's communities of color and to explore the possibility of conducting a larger community survey. Four separate interagency agreements were prepared in May, which gave the councils the option of performing the work themselves or subcontracting with researchers from their community.

The sensitivity of examining the topic of crime and race in modern society requires members from that community to be involved from the start. The councils are knowledgeable of the resources that would be needed within their communities to implement the planning study and to provide an objective and balanced view of whether a larger crime and justice survey project would be appropriate.

Minnesota State Councils

The four statutorily designated councils invited to participate in this project are the official liaisons between members of their respective communities and state government: the Indian Affairs Council, the Chicano/ Latino Affairs Council, the Council on Black Minnesotans and the Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans. Although the specific duties vary somewhat, one of their duties is to "perform or contract for the performance of studies designed to suggest solutions to problems in the areas of education, employment, human rights, health, housing, social welfare and other related areas." Other common duties are to advise the Governor and the Legislature on issues confronting the community and ensure access to benefits and services provided to people in the state. These councils also make legislative recommendations to improve economic and social conditions and serve as a conduit to state government for community organizations. They serve as a referral agency, implement programs to solve problems where authorized and publicize the accomplishments and contributions of members of their communities.