AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Title: Latino Youth, Gangs, and Community Activism: A Case of Advocacy Anthropology.

Abstract approved:
Joan E. Gross

A social issue of great importance in contemporary society is the involvement of youth in gangs. Youth involvement in gang activity has dominated the national media and the minds of public policy makers in contemporary society. In this thesis I examine how Latino and Chicano youth sub-culture, language, dress, and style, has been first, misinterpreted and secondarily reconstructed, as a criminal subculture by public policy makers, local law enforcement officials, public school administrators, and the general public. The construction of Latino and Chicano youth subculture as criminal has occurred through the process of labeling. In this process culture and crime have become intertwined where specific cultures and their members are perceived and then reclassified as criminal subcultures.

This thesis provides a case study of the process of labeling in a community located in the Pacific Northwest. The community where this research project was conducted has undergone tremendous fluctuations in its population demographics. These changes have led to underlying tensions and conflicts between the various ethnic and linguistic groups represented in the community. It is within this context that the issue of youth gangs must be analyzed.

The specific purposes of thesis are to: provide the theoretical framework to view the social discourse of youth gangs; document and analyze the community context which has contributed to the emergence of the social discourse of youth gangs; to document how culture, style, and crime have become intertwined to
inaccurately characterize Latino and Chicano youth sub-culture as gang culture; to
document and analyze how the social discourse of youth gangs has been
constructed as a moral panic; and to provide possible solutions from applied
anthropology.
Latino Youth, Gangs, and Community Activism: A Case of Advocacy
Anthropology

by
Tina M. Kabarec-Quiroz

A THESIS
submitted to
Oregon State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

Master of Arts

Presented December 4, 2001
Commencement June 2002

APPROVED:

Major Professor, representing Applied Anthropology

Chair of Department of Anthropology

Dean of Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Tina M. Kabarec-Quiroz, Author
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Context</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture, Style, and Crime</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Panic</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Media</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solutions from Applied Anthropology</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preface

This research project was carried out from August of 1996 to July 1997. My motivation to pursue this research project has stemmed from personal interest and concern about Latino and Chicano youth residing in the city of Breverton. The city of Breverton has experienced a dramatic shift in the composition of the population with an increase of Latino residents. It is in this context that the social discourse of gangs has risen and that has ultimately led to the construction of Latino and Chicano youth subculture, by local city officials and school administrators, as a gang subculture. This has negatively impacted the status of Latino and Chicano youth in the community who have come to be perceived by the larger public as gang members based on their style, dress, and language. To give the reader a better understanding of the context in which this research project has emerged I will start by recounting how I became involved.

After living in the city of Breverton for many years, my family and I moved an hour south of Breverton to a university community. Although the university community supported an environment of diversity, there was not much diversity that the city directly faced in terms of large ethnic minorities and those from different socio-economic classes. The city is a fairly homogenous one, not only racially but also socio-economically. Our year in the community passed uneventfully when in May of 1996 we began to consider purchasing a home. For a variety of reasons, of which I will not elaborate on here, we shifted our focus and search back to the city of Breverton.

We purchased a home and settled in the northeastern section of the city. We selected the northeastern section of Breverton because of its high concentration of Latinos. We had made the commitment that our children would have close ties culturally and linguistically to the Latino community. The shift after a year in the university community to the more conservative, but much more ethnically and linguistically diverse city of Breverton, provided a sharp contrast.
After most of the paperwork to purchase our home was completed, I drove past the property. As I drove past, I was shocked to find that the whole side of our garage had been covered with blue graffiti. Initially I was upset, but as time wore on, I began to think what would motivate someone to go through the back alleys of the neighborhood at night spraying homes with graffiti? Local residents felt it was the work of youth gangs. The stylized markings that were left by youth in the community were a shout to be heard, to have a voice and a place in a community that they have been traditionally excluded from. I interpreted this as a means of protest against a system that they were not included, but excluded from on a daily basis. As a solution to the graffiti problem my husband and I, after much discussion, decided that we would ask local youth to paint a mural on the garage and fence that faced the side of the alley. Through the mural project I met youth who were members of local gangs and it was as a result of our relationship that I became interested in the social discourse of youth gangs in the city. This was the beginning of my research topic. As I began to become more and more immersed in the research topic, it was necessary at one point to stop being the anthropologist and to become a community activist, as others and I began to see the detrimental effects that gang policy in the city of Breverton would have on Latino and Chicano youth. The primary issue that became apparent, was that Latino and Chicano youth were becoming more and more marginalized in the city of Breverton. What was more problematic was that through this process of marginalization the sub-cultural style, dress, and language of Latino and Chicano youth had become criminalized in the city through the issue of youth gangs. It was at this point that I began to develop my thesis. It shifted from youth who were already actively involved in gangs to the precursor of gang involvement, marginalization in the community based upon cultural misunderstandings of style, dress, and language.

This research project has challenged my perceptions of community, social change, and ethics, and ultimately my role as a cultural anthropologist in the community where I conducted the research. An important lesson that came out of this research project was a broader understanding of the ethical issues in doing
anthropological research, and how the research project and the role of cultural anthropologist are affected by these ethical considerations. When I began conducting research on youth gangs I had met a woman who lived in the Sherwood neighborhood, the neighborhood that I lived in, and the neighborhood where the research was initially conducted. This woman associated closely with youth in the community who were self identified, as well as documented by the local law enforcement agencies, as gang members. For the first three months of research, I relied on this woman for information about gangs. As I became more involved in the social discourse of youth gangs in the community, I became aware that the woman who had been serving as my main informant was also an informant for the local police department and regularly gave tips to the police about gang activity. When I mentioned this to her she stated that yes she was an informant for the police department and that she played both sides of the fence, meaning that she was involved with the youth and yet was an informant for local law enforcement agencies. Although I believe some of the youths had their suspicions about her dealings with the police, they hadn’t confirmed this, and many of them still hung out at her house. The problem was that the woman initially presented herself as an advocate for the youth, but as time wore on it became obvious that she was interested in maintaining her relationship with local law enforcement officials and the youth were the means by which she was able to maintain this relationship.

On receiving this new information I needed to make a decision, what were my obligations as a cultural anthropologist and the ethics that it raised? I had already gained the trust of the youth, and then found out that they were being used as pawns as the women negotiated with local law enforcement officials for special privileges I was beginning to feel that I should break off the relationship with this woman when the last straw finally came; she came down to our home and asked if she could use our telephone to make a call. Of course I said yes. She made the call, and it turned out that she was using our phone to make a call to the local police department about a youth who had allegedly been involved in a shooting, that ended in a fatality, at a dance an evening earlier. She didn’t want to make the call at her home because many
of the youth who were at her house visiting her daughter were friends of the young man who had been involved in the shooting. I decided after this last incident that it was time to break off the relationship with this individual. The situation had become extremely complicated and dangerous. This is an example of an issue that is raised by Russell Bernard who addresses the issue of informants; he states that informants must be selected carefully and that many times anthropologists have not selected informants wisely. He states it is not uncommon for key informants to be considered outsiders in their own community and in many ways they are also considered to be deviant by other community members (Bernard 1994:166-170). This was a mistake that I made at the beginning of this research project and that I since learned from.

The following events helped shape my research topic: my dealings with the informant, meeting youth who were involved in gangs, participation in local discussions of youth gang issues, and review of the media and their treatment of gang issues in the city of Breverton. It became apparent that the research question wasn't as much directly related to youth who had already been documented as gang members, as it was the process by which city officials had begun to label youth as gang members based on cultural misinformation. In essence, the city further marginalized Latino and Chicano youth in their attempts to label and correct what they viewed as deviant or at risk behavior. The youth who I interviewed in the community who had already become involved in youth gangs described this process of marginalization in the community, which forced many of them into gangs initially. The city’s attempt to rid the community of gangs was creating an environment from which youth gangs emerge-targeting and labeling particular youth as “at risk” for joining gangs. This is when my research question shifted from that of youth who were already involved in youth gangs to that of the labeling of youth at risk for gang involvement based on cultural misinformation.

Another issue that impacted my research topic and my role, as a cultural anthropologist was that of confidentiality. As I completed my research project and as the battle with city officials came to a close, Latino activists confronted me with
another question. They wanted to know why I had to use pseudonyms in my thesis? Before I had time to answer they asked me again, “Do you feel uncomfortable printing the names of city officials who supported the creation and distribution of the gang manual?” As an anthropologist, I am always concerned about protecting the identity of those individuals who have been traditionally marginalized in society. But what were my responsibilities to protect the identity of those who held positions of power and privilege in the community? Those who are accustomed to not being held accountable for their actions based upon their status and position? Those who do much of their work behind closed doors without the input of the average citizen? The Latino activists planted a solid and legitimate question in my mind. This is a question that we must think of as anthropologists conducting research. We have traditionally protected the identity of those who are in less powerful positions in society, but what are our responsibilities to those individuals who are in positions of power in the community? If they are abusing that power should they be exposed or should they be protected? How does this relate to social change in the community if we are not able to directly address these issues and hold public officials accountable for their actions?

As the above example demonstrates there are many decisions to be made as we as cultural anthropologists conduct fieldwork. Many times these decisions are not addressed, or cannot be fully understood inside academia. I am grateful for the opportunities that this research project has given me to reevaluate my own ethics as they relate to cultural anthropology. This experience has even more concretely established my views of the role and responsibility of cultural anthropologists, and it is my hope that this research project will demonstrate the value of anthropology to the larger community as a means of providing input that can serve as a catalyst for positive social change in our communities.
Latino Youth, Gangs, and Community Activism:
A Case of Advocacy Anthropology

Chapter I

Introduction

A social issue of great importance in our contemporary society is the involvement of youth in gangs. Youth involvement in gang activity has dominated the national media and the minds of public policy makers in our contemporary society. As the United States struggles with youth gangs, this same issue has also come to dominate social discourse in Breverton.

In this thesis I will examine how Latino and Chicano youth sub-culture, language, dress, and style, has been first, misinterpreted and secondarily reconstructed, as a criminal subculture by public policy makers, local law enforcement officials, public school administrators, and the public. The specific purposes of this thesis are to: 1). Provide the theoretical framework to view the social discourse of youth gangs in the city of Breverton. 2). To document and analyze the community context which has contributed to the emergence of the social discourse of youth gangs. 3). To document how culture, style, and crime have become intertwined to inaccurately characterize Latino and Chicano youth subculture as gang culture. 4). To document and analyze how the social discourse of youth gangs in the city of Breverton has been constructed as a moral panic. 5).

---

1 Breverton is a pseudonym that will be used to protect the identity of the community and its members.

2 The terms Latino and Chicano are used interchangeably in this document. Generally the term Latino refers to anyone from Latin America. The term Chicano can have two different meanings. The first is someone of Mexican ancestry born in the United States (Mexican-American). The second meaning is more political in its orientation and is associated with a specific lifestyle and philosophy promoting Latino and Chicano peoples and causes in society.
To provide a look at possible solutions and the application of anthropology in this particular thesis.

The foundation of my anthropological research draws from contemporary research in sociology that focuses on the intersection of crime and culture. Contemporary research on the intersection of crime and culture has emerged from the field of sociology and has been redefined as cultural criminology (Ferrell & Sanders 1995: 3). The focus of this theoretical orientation is the documentation and the articulation of how culture and crime have become interwoven. In this thesis, I am focusing specifically on Latino and Chicano youth subculture that has been constructed as criminal through the enforcement of specific rules. This process is referred to as labeling, and in this process culture and crime have become intertwined (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994: 80). Specific cultures and their members are perceived and then recategorized as a criminal subculture in the eyes of public policy makers, local law enforcement officials, school administrators and the larger public. In the case of Breverton, the sub-cultural group that has been defined and categorized as deviant is that of Latino and Chicano youth, and includes the following cultural components: style, dress, and language. This research project draws from the work of contemporary authors and researchers such as Howard Becker, Dick Hebdige, and Stuart Hall.

Howard Becker has contributed to the body of work on culture and crime in his studies of deviance and his text, Outsiders: The Study of the Sociology of Deviance. According to Stuart Hall, the work of Howard Becker laid down the foundation for further studies in deviance and provided a shift in sociology from viewing deviance as a naturally occurring phenomenon to viewing deviance as labeling. This is what is seen in the city of Breverton, where local law enforcement officials, school administrators, and city officials labeled the Latino and Chicano subculture as deviant. This has been documented by Stuart Hall and is described as the power of one group to label the actions of another group as deviant. Stuart Hall states, "the text which, at least for us [sociologists], best signaled the 'break' in
mainstream sociology and its subsequent adoption, by many sociologists working in
the field of deviance, subcultural theory or criminology—originally in America, but
rapidly, in this country [Britain] too of what came to be known as an interactionists,
and later a ‘transactional’ or ‘labeling’ perspective” (Hall & Jefferson 1975:5).

This shift according to Hall was “. . . the viewing of the social action as process
rather than an event, for example, and crucially, the idea that deviance was a social
creation, a result of power of some to label others” (Hall & Jefferson 1975:5). It is
my hypothesis that it is this process of labeling that is at work in the city of
Breverton. As moral entrepreneurs have labeled Latino and Chicano youth
subculture as criminal and deviant without cultural knowledge of the Latino and
Chicano Community. Brian Roberts addresses the issue of labeling or transactional
theory, he states that the shift in labeling theory is that it is no longer the emphasis
on the internal world of the specific sub-cultural groups but on the intersection
between the groups (Hall & Jefferson 1975:249). Again, as is seen in the city of
Breverton where the interaction is between Latino and Chicano Community
members and their Anglo-Saxon counterparts. In further analysis of the social
discourse of youth gangs in the city of Breverton, the conflict and tension among
the two segments of the population representing various points of view and
perspectives related to youth gangs can be clearly documented. There were clear
divides in the community of how the problem of youth gangs should be dealt with.

It did become, however unfortunate, a dynamic of us versus them. In describing
and explaining this dynamic the authors state,

. . . the dominant society did not calmly sit on the sidelines
throughout the period and watch the subcultures at play. What
began as a response of confusion -caught in the pat phrase,
‘generation gap’-became over the years, an intense, and intensified
struggle. It was therefore, from the first, accompanied by the
feelings of diffused and dispersed social anxiety. The boundaries of
society were being redefined, its moral contours redrawn, its
fundamental relations transformed (Hall & Jefferson 1975:71).
In addition to the authors above, Dick Hebdige also contributed greatly to the study of deviance and sub-cultural groups. The main premise of the work of Dick Hebdige that I will explore in this thesis is concept of, “the idea of style as a form of refusal.” The author states that,

So the tensions between dominant and subordinate groups can be found reflected in the surfaces of the subculture—in styles made up of mundane objects which have a double meaning. On the other hand, for those who erect them into icons, who use them as words or as curses, these objects become symbols of the forbidden identity, sources of value. The meaning of subculture is, then, always in dispute, and style is the arena in which opposing definitions clash with the most dramatic force (Hebdige 1979:2-3).

In this thesis, when I come to the section discussing the gang manual and how the sub-cultural style, dress, and language of Latino and Chicano youth became criminalized through the construction of the gang manual, the words of Dick Hebdige become particularly meaningful. Especially his concept of the double meaning, styles of dress, symbols, and language that had at one time held positive connotations to Latino and Chicano youth became, after the social discourse of gangs criminalized. This occurred as a result of opposing points of view and perspectives. To further clarify this point Hebdige states when discussing the significance of sub-cultural style that, “The struggle between different discourses, different definitions and meanings within ideology is therefore always, at the same time, a struggle within signification: a struggle for possession of the sign which extends to even the most mundane areas of everyday life” (Hebdige 1979:17). He states the incorporation of objects into sub-cultural style that, “These ‘humble objects’ can magically be appropriated: ‘stolen’ by subordinate groups and made to carry secret meanings which express, in code, a form of resistance to the order which guarantees their continued subordination” (18). Hebdige also states that while it is important to view the subcultures in isolation, it is important to view them in opposition to agents of social control since they are generally set up in
opposition to these organizations (Hebdige 1979: 73). “Each sub-cultural instance represents a solution to a specific set of circumstances, to particular problems and contradictions” (81). While style can be seen as constructed in opposition to agents of social control, style also serves as a mechanism in the maintenance of social cohesion for the sub-cultural group and its members. Through style, sub-cultural groups define and maintain their social cohesion and their resistance to the dominant society (85). Dick Hebdige states that,

Sub-cultures represent ‘noise’ (as opposed to sound): interference in the orderly sequence which leads from real events and phenomena to their representation in the media. We should therefore not underestimate the signifying power of the spectacular subculture not only as a metaphor for potential anarchy ‘out there’ but as an actual mechanism of semantic disorder: a kind of a temporary blockage in the system of representation (Hebdige 1979: 90).

He goes on to state that the violations of ‘codes’ by the sub-cultural groups carry considerable amount of “power to provoke and disturb” that subcultures also carry “forbidden contents” reminders of class consciousness, and consciousness of differences (Hebdige 1979: 91).

As we look at this process, it is imperative that we examine the social and cultural context in which these cultures are embedded. Cultural groups and the individual members of these groups are caught in the constructs of ethnicity, class, and gender that come together to define their everyday experiences and contact with other community members. In the context of Breverton, Latino and Chicano youth and their reaction to the criminalization of their subculture that although they were aware of the criminalization campaign, many did in fact adopt a stance of resistance and continued to flaunt the styles that were on the verge of becoming criminalized in the community. Given the cultural context and demographic changes it is in this context that we must view the words of Hebdige. In a sense, Latino and Chicano youth were disrupting the social order. I also believe the youth in the community
are aware of their power to disturb others through style, dress, and language and that they use this to empower themselves in a community in which they have been traditionally marginalized.

These researchers of crime and culture not only examine the cultures themselves, but also the legal and political aspects that construct these subcultures as criminal (Ferrell & Sanders 1997: 6). The authors’ state, “The criminalization efforts of legal and political campaigners display again the power of cultural forces; in criminalizing cultural and sub-cultural activities and campaigning for public support, moral entrepreneurs and legal authorities manipulate legal and political structures, but perhaps more so structures of mass symbolism and perceptions” (Ferrell & Sanders 1997: 6).

Stanley Cohen made a major contribution to the study of youth subcultures and deviance with the concept of the moral panic. Cohen describes the way that contemporary social issues can become constructed as a moral panic in society. Moral panics occur in a society when there is a heightened and exaggerated concern about a particular social issue. His work specifically refers to the construction of the mods and rockers, a youth subculture in London during the 1960s, as a moral panic. Based on youth sub-cultural style, and initially, one highly publicized incident by the media, the youths recognized as mods and rockers were constructed as deviants by agents of social control, the media, and the public and thus began the criminalization campaign against them. Ultimately, the construction of the mods and the rockers as deviants led to their representation to the larger public as a ‘moral threat’ to the greater public good therefore a moral panic arose in which the mods and the rockers represented a threat to the moral order of the community.

“Rules of morality and systems of law do not merely evolve in a natural, non-concious, ‘grassroots’ fashion; rather they emerge, are institutionalized, and become influential in a society as a result of enterprise-somebody doing something to make sure that they take hold and are enforced” (Goode & Ben Yehuda 1994:80).
Not only have specific sub-cultural behaviors been constructed as criminal, so have individuals in the community been defined or labeled as criminal or deviant. Through this process of defining specific subcultures as criminal and deviant there is also the need to designate specific individuals in these sub-cultural groups as deviant, and this is done through the formation of rules that codify specific sub-cultural behaviors as criminal (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994:80). In summary, through this process, culture and crime have become intertwined, specific subcultures and their members are perceived and then reclassified as criminal subcultures in the eyes of public policy makers, local law enforcement officials, public school administrators and the public.

Rulemaking is a part of this process of criminalization. Becker problematizes specific scenarios of the rulemaking process. He states that rules are created identifying certain behaviors as deviant, and as a result behaviors that are not considered deviant by sub-cultural groups end up being designated as such given these cultural misunderstandings. Becker gives us an excellent example of how this can occur. He describes to us the possibility of mislabeling a youth as a deviant given that he or she has innocently been hanging out with members on the fringe of a particular deviant group. One evening this youth is picked up, by local law enforcement officials, with the members of the deviant group, and is therefore also labeled as deviant and finds her way into the official statistics as a deviant (1963:21). This process is at work in the city of Breverton, and works to further marginalize Latino and Chicano youth in the city with detrimental and devastating consequences. The process of labeling youth as deviant has to be done by someone in the community. Howard Becker explains this process to us when he discusses the role of moral entrepreneurs.

Howard Becker originally defined the term moral entrepreneurs as those individuals in the community who bring to the attention of the general public the wrong doings of the deviant group. Moral entrepreneurs are described as having humanistic overtones; they consider themselves humanitarians in that they are
attempting to rid deviants of their criminal behavior for the good of themselves as well as the good of the community (Becker 1963:147-63). Becker states that without the moral entrepreneurs the moral panic would not exist. Someone has to bring to the attention of the general public the wrong doings of the deviant group. Becker states, "A person with an interest to be served publicizes the infraction and action is taken; if no enterprising person appears, no action is taken" (1963:122-128). Howard Becker states that in essence social groups create deviance by labeling it as such, by establishing the rules and guidelines that are then in turn violated by the deviant group (9). As has been noted by sociologists, the creation of moral entrepreneurs involves issues of economic power and influence in the community. Those that are the rule makers generally have a considerable amount of power and prestige. The rules by which youth are made to follow generally are conceived and drawn up by older and more established individuals in the community. Generally, middle-class individuals are determining the rules for those in the lower socio-economic groups. Men have traditionally developed the rules for women in the society and ethnic and racial minorities have generally had their rules developed by members of the Anglo-European society. He states,

Differences in the ability to make rules and apply them to other people are essentially power differentials (either legal or extralegal). Those groups whose social position gives them weapons and power are the best able to enforce their rules. Distinctions in age, sex, ethnicity, and class are all related to differences in power, which accounts for the differences in the degree to which groups so distinguished can make rules for others" (Becker 1963:17-18).

Jeff Ferrell states that while specific sub-cultural groups are constructing a cultural identity for themselves, others are at the same time constructing that identity as a criminal subculture. He states that this process is intertwined with other variables like power, race, ethnicity, and social class (Ferrell 1995:169). Howard Becker also brings into focus the role of ethnic background, class, and
occupational background that affect the rule making process. He states that the establishment of rules is not an easy endeavor. There are many competing interests and various perspectives and points of view on any given subject (ethnicity, class, and occupational orientation) affect which rules evolve. Also the history of the participants who engage in the rule making process is carried with them and can further add to an already heterogeneous mix. Finally, the perspectives and the lived experiences of the given participants can affect the process of rule making and many times there is a tremendous amount of conflict involved in this process (Becker 1963:15). These factors that are mentioned by the authors above have intertwined to further impact Latino and Chicano youth in the city of Breverton.

Although it does not appear to exist in contemporary research, there is another process that may be added to the study of youth sub-cultural groups and their construction as deviant by agents of social control—that is the labeling of community activists’ behavior as deviant. After beginning this research project, I became involved with a group of Latino and Chicano community activists opposed to the distribution of the gang manual. The gang manual was developed by an administrator in the Breverton School District that included “indicators” such as style, dress, tattoos, and language of youth involved in gangs. Not only were the Latino and Chicano youth in the community labeled as deviants and criminal but also community activists actively participating to dismantle the gang manual. The gang manual was developed by an educator in the Breverton School District, and was to be used in the public school system to help identify youth involved in gangs. This came about due to the fact that the majority of the community activists did not carry traditional views of deviance and youth subculture and this therefore placed them in opposition to status quo concepts of deviance and sub-cultural groups. The community activists challenged the positions of power that city officials and agents of social control held in the community. The process of labeling participants in opposition to the gang manual as deviants was an attempt to discredit and marginalize community activists’ perspectives and their input in the formation of
public policy. Some of the terms that were used by the moral entrepreneurs were, "militant, confrontational, aggressive, trouble makers, radical, and uncooperative."

In the case of gang policy in the city of Breverton, initially a split could be seen according to one's ethnic background. As time wore on the GPIC and others who had a vested interest in the production and distribution of the gang manual brought in Latinos. This therefore, eliminated any notions of ethnic unity among the participants. Divisions could then be seen more in terms of socioeconomic standing and occupational orientation as opposed to ethnicity, which created alliances among many participants overriding ethnic loyalty as economic and occupational concerns became primary.

Contemporary sociologists have provided the theoretical framework for the social discourse of youth gangs in the city of Breverton. I hope that this case study of the social discourse of gangs will shed additional light on the construction of moral panics in contemporary society, and how these moral panics can act to detrimentally impact youth in the community. Anthropological insight into this issue and the use of anthropology in a contemporary urban setting demonstrates how cultural anthropology has been used to provide a catalyst for social change in the direction of public policy formation and its impact on youth subculture, in this case, Latino and Chicano youth. Anthropological research can provide significant input in promoting social change in our communities. In addition, this case study also raises questions about the creation of public policy and rules regarding youth subcultures, and the effectiveness and application of anthropological methods and knowledge in their creation. Ultimately, I hope that this case study will provide insight for communities across the nation that are grappling with these issues.

Research Methodology

The data for this project were gathered through participant observation. "Participant observation provides the opportunity for a wealth of information and is the foundation of cultural anthropology" (Bernard 1994:136). The benefits are that
the cultural anthropologist gains information from both the formal and informal worlds of the community (Roberts 1975:246). Through participant observation cultural anthropologists are not “detached observers of the lives and activities of the people under study, but also participants in that round of activities” (Crane and Angrosino 1992:64). Given the nature of this research project it was inevitable that participant observation would play a large role in the research methodology. Much of the research that was conducted was based on the role of advocacy to put an end to the distribution of the gang manual in the city of Breverton. Russell Bernard makes a distinction in the role of the anthropologist and participant observation. He states that there are two roles in fieldwork that the cultural anthropologist can take: that of participating observer or that of observing participant (138). The distinction between the two is that the participating observer remains at some distance from the subjects, which she or he is studying as an outsider. The observer participant on the other hand becomes actively involved in the research project as an insider. During the course of this research project I was in the role of the observer participant. I knew as I began my research project that I would be advocating social change for Latino and Chicano youth in the community. I knew that my thoughts on the research project could not be set at a distance, as an outsider, but that my research was from a more subjective viewpoint. I participated in strategies to eliminate the distribution of the gang manual with other Latino and Chicano leaders in the community, I worked to apply pressure to city officials supporting the use of the gang manual, and finally I went to see an attorney with other Latino community members to put a stop to the distribution of the gang manual. In essence, I was involved in advocacy anthropology.

Advocacy anthropology is defined as, “Anyone engaged in the planning or implementing change is, in a sense, advocating particular goals and a particular way of life” (Howard 1993:72). The author states that by the cultural anthropologists taking the stance of an advocate for the community it does not mean that the community does not have the ability to speak for itself, only that the
anthropologists see the need to advocate for basic human rights. This is what occurred as I became more and more involved in this research project. There was the immediate need to put a stop to the distribution of the gang manual, since its distribution would negatively impact Latino and Chicano youth in the community. I then made the shift in my research project from that of the cultural anthropologist, to that of an advocate.

In combination with participant observation the following methodologies were used: semi-structured interviews, informal and formal conversations, and archival research of local media. During the course of the research project I attended city council meetings, Community Progress Team (CPT) meetings, neighborhood association meetings, and GPIC Gang Prevention and Intervention Committee (G.P.I.C.)³. Many of these meetings, in particular with the GPIC, were tape recorded out of necessity as the controversy grew in regards to the gang manual. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with the following groups: local law enforcement officials, public policy makers/advisors, documented⁴ Latino youth gang members, Latino leaders, and non-gang affiliated youth in the community. Given the nature of the topic and the group of informants it was not feasible to set out with a series of pre-structured interview questions. In soliciting information from youth, it becomes extremely important that interviews are conducted in a way that is going to put them at ease. Conducting highly formalized interviews with a series of pre-fabricated questions would not have been constructive in this particular research project.

Phase 1: Archival Work and Participant Observation

During the first stage of the research project I collected and reviewed articles from the local newspaper related to youth gangs in the community. During the course of this research project, media coverage of gangs and gang related

³ Pseudonym
violence increased in coverage in the local media. As the controversy grew in regards to gangs, so did the coverage of gang-related issues in the local media. As I will outline in the following chapters this is to be expected when operating on the premise that a moral panic is being constructed in the community. One of the indicators of this occurring is the fact that more media coverage is devoted to the specific social issue, in this case youth gangs. As the research project continued, and the battle over the distribution of the gang manual, there were more and more articles that began to appear in the local newspaper related to youth gangs. I also kept track of, and included these articles in my thesis.

In addition to the collection of articles written by the local media, I attended city council meetings, GPIC steering committee meetings, a gang conference, lecture series, and meetings held by Latinos Unidos Siempre (L.U.S) a Latino youth group sponsored by La Peña, a local social service program and provider serving the Spanish-speaking community in Breverton. Participant observation and informal conversations were also used to gather data on issues important to Latino youth at La Peña Community Center.

Phase II: Semi-structured Interviews

The second component of this research project was conducted with the various stakeholders in the city of Breverton on gang issues. Representatives from each of the following groups were interviewed during the course of this research project: local law enforcement officials, city officials, local school district employees, non-gang affiliated youth, and documented gang members.

I also conducted informal interviews with community members. I selected the Sherwood Neighborhood to conduct informal interviews and participant

4 The term documented refers to youth who have been documented by local law enforcement officials as being a gang member and are listed as such on law enforcement records.
5 A Gang Conference was held by the GPIC as training for youth workers, corrections personal, parents, and community members.
6 Pseudonym
7 Pseudonym
observation. The Sherwood Neighborhood has special significance for two reasons: it has long been considered a hot bed for gang activity, and it is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the city of Breverton with a large population of Latino and Chicano community members. I have a special relationship with the Sherwood Neighborhood since I am a homeowner in the community and I teach ESL (English as a Second Language) classes at the bilingual elementary school in the neighborhood.

The purpose of this ethnographic research then is to examine the intersection of culture and crime and how public policy formation and the media have come together to affect Latino and Chicano youth in the city of Breverton.
Chapter 2

Community Context

In contemporary society as we begin to experience changes in the ethnic and linguistic make-up of our communities, it is imperative that we gain a better understanding of the factors that shape our perceptions of those groups whose cultural and linguistic orientation are different from the dominant culture. This case study on the social discourse of gangs is an example of a city suffering from growing pains, of a city whose racial, and cultural make-up has been in a dramatic state of transition (Anderson 1990: 7). The cultural and linguistic transition occurring in the city, has led city officials and agents of social control to use stereotypes of Latino and Chicano youth subculture, and specifically style, dress, and language, and to construct these youths as a criminal subculture or gang culture. I will demonstrate how the social discourse of gangs, in the city of Breverton, has constructed Latino and Chicano youth subculture as deviant and criminal through the formation of gang policy. To accurately examine this process we need to have a better understanding of the cultural and historical context of the city. The examination of this process directly relates to the larger social and cultural changes occurring in the city.

Breverton has experienced a dramatic increase in Spanish-speaking residents. The composition of the city has been steadily changing with this increased migration of Spanish-speaking residents. Many businesses now cater to Spanish-speaking clientele by advertising in Spanish, and carrying products that are popular with local Latinos. One supermarket in Northeast Breverton claims to be the supermarket of the Spanish-speaking community since a large percentage of the products are imported from Mexico. Almost everything in the store is bilingual, English and Spanish, and it is not unusual to see signs posted in both Spanish and English in other markets and businesses in this section of the city. Many Anglo-European community members view this as catering to the Spanish-speaking
community, and from reading the local editorial section of the newspaper; there is a tremendous amount of tension between the two communities. This tension is reflected in letters that appear in the editorial section of the local newspaper particularly related to the issue of language. The letters tend to address issues of language and culture and are written overwhelmingly by Anglo-European community members. Public debates concerning dividing lines between the racial, ethnic, and linguistic make-up of community members have arisen as the landscape of the city begins to change with increased migration.

The local editorial section of the newspaper can be used to gauge feelings and tensions among the Anglo-European community and the recently arriving Latinos and Chicanos now residing in the city. Feature articles in the local paper have shaped the image of the Latino and Chicano for public consumption by the larger non-Latino community. These articles have generally worked to reinforce already existing stereotypes of the uneducated, poor Latino. Recent articles provide a forum for topics such as bilingual education, the high drop out rate for Latinos and Chicanos in the public school system, immigration issues, and police brutality are a few of the social issues that the city has been grappling with in recent years.

City leaders have made halfhearted attempts to address the issue of racism and discrimination in the city. A series of Breverton Speaks up forums have recently taken place at the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). The primary objective of these forums has been to involve local community members in discussions and approaches aimed at addressing the racial climate in the community. There has yet to be any significant public policy changes or concrete evidence of changes in social attitudes since most of those in attendance are the already converted, in essence it's preaching to the choir. But through these meetings there has been oral testimony given by minority community members of the racial discrimination and tension they have experienced in the city, providing further proof that the city must come to terms with its changing ethnic composition.
and the increased tension among minority community members and their Anglo-European counterparts.

During these sessions at the YWCA for the Breverton Speaks Up Forums minority community leaders in the city of Breverton were invited to speak on a panel to discuss incidents of racial discrimination and their perceptions of the racial climate in the city. An especially disheartening view of racial discrimination was told by one of the African-American panel participants. She described what she was going to teach her son when he turns 16, “I want him to know to keep his hands on the steering wheel and his wallet on the dashboard.” The hope in the eyes of this parent of an African-American male was that the police wouldn’t think that her son was reaching for a weapon as he reached into his pocket or glove compartment box to get his drivers’ license. Other minority leaders described how they are subjected to requests that generally would not be asked of their Anglo-European counterparts. One Latino community leader stated that on many occasions he has been asked for proof of his legal residence since living in the United States, while his Anglo-Europeans counterparts had not been subjected to the same requests. Minority community members also commented on their frequent stops by local law enforcement officials based on their ethnicity, which some have called, “driving while Hispanic”. The panel of minority community leaders further demonstrates the racial climate in the city, at least as perceived by minority residents living in the city, and their day-to-day experiences with racism.

An article with a similar theme appeared on February 28, 1997. The headline read, “Report: Oregon police, businesses harass Hispanics.” An advocacy group for the state released a report of climate in the state for Latinos. The primary concern of Latino community members living in the state was the constant need to demonstrate that they did have legal residence. This done through the presentation of their immigration papers or green card made at the request of local law enforcement officials. These requests for documentation were usually conducted when local law enforcement officials stopped a vehicle for a minor traffic violation and then requested immigration papers or a green card. The article described other
incidents of racial discrimination in the state such as: racial slurs made to Latino and Chicano youth by other high school students, contractors refusing to pay workers and justifying their actions by claiming they were undocumented, and crank calls to Latino families from community members stating that they were the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). The article also stated that city and state police officials deny that there are such abuses present in their departments. Statements were taken from local law enforcement officials denying the charges (Alan Gustafson & Richard Aguirre 1997: 1a-2a). This just further demonstrates the discrepancies in perceptions of what is occurring in the community. Latino and Chicano community members are aware of these abuses and yet their Anglo-European counterparts really don’t understand that these things do occur regularly to minority community members.

Another indication of the racial climate in Breverton has been the use of deadly force by the Breverton Police Department. Four fatal shootings of Spanish-speaking residents have occurred in the past few years and many believe that the police department used excessive force in these situations. Since the shootings have occurred, there has been public outrage from local Latino community members. Many in the community felt that these shootings were racially motivated. Although there have been formal investigations into each of the shootings, all of the police officers involved were cleared of any wrong doing. Because of this, there is still skepticism in the minds of minority community members that justice has been served. This has impacted the relationship between the local police department and minority community members. The public outrage that occurred as a result of the shooting, has led to the formation of an oversight committee consisting of community activists and law enforcement officials. This step has gotten the Breverton Police Department to begin thinking critically about racial attitudes, internally, over the past year making them more accountable for their actions. Yet after attending a community meeting held by La Peña, a social service agency which addresses the needs of the Spanish-speaking community, the main themes that emerged from local Latinos were: mistreatment by local law
enforcement officials, police brutality, immigration law reforms, recent deportations of undocumented workers by the INS, and parental concerns about issues in the public educational system, specifically the high drop out rate of Latino and Chicano youth.

A Latino organization that works in the state on immigrant rights published a report in 1998 detailing abuses experienced by members of the Spanish-speaking community. The primary categories of discrimination identified by the organization were the following: 1). Police Harassment, 2). Discrimination by Businesses, 3). Exploitation of Workers, 4). Threats and Harassment by Individuals, 5). Abusive Behavior and Policies in Government Agencies, 6). Discrimination in Schools, and 7). Denial of Health Care (Brier, Ramirez, and Dash 1998: 9). The authors’ state that the largest segment of the research findings were that many Latinos had suffered at the hands of local law enforcement officials and related agencies across the state. Many of the complaints were a result of Latinos being stopped and pulled over by law enforcement officials for minor traffic offenses, then asked to show proof of their legal status in the United States (Brier, Ramirez, and Dash 1998:9-12).

Many Latinos also commonly experienced discrimination by businesses. They reported that they were asked for green cards while other non-minority community members, using the same community services, were not asked for identification (Brier, Ramirez, and Dash 1998: 9-13). I know from personal experience that this has occurred. My husband and I went to our local bank to deposit our checks and withdraw money for the weekend. When I approached the teller, I was not asked for any identification. When my husband, who is Mexican, approached the teller he was asked to show his driver’s license. He asked the teller why he was required to provide personal identification when I had gone through the same line and was not asked for identification. The teller did not have an adequate answer and we eventually asked to speak to the bank manager. The bank manager defended the position of the teller and stated that it is bank policy to request identification. I had never in the past been asked for identification during my visits
to the bank even though this was bank policy. In the past couple of years the bank has begun to hire bilingual tellers to address the needs of its growing Spanish-speaking clientele, and hopefully the hiring of these personnel will lessen the incidents that we experienced. Business should consider to rethink their policies since it is marketable to serve both the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking community. If situations like what happened to my husband continue to occur, Spanish-speakers and other community members are less likely to seek services from those institutions. The bottom line in this case is loss of valuable profits.

Exploitation of workers is another area in which Latino community members are negatively impacted in the state. Given the long history of migrant workers in the state and their undocumented status many agricultural growers have used the status of undocumented Latinos to keep the wages low and their profits high. According to the study, Latinos were routinely fired without just cause (Brier, Ramirez, and Dash 1998:9-13). Their legal status only further compounded their experiences and their rights in fighting for any compensation due to lost wages. Through the ESL classes that I teach at the local community college, I have been told by many students that they have not received their pay checks based on their undocumented status and because of this they have been reluctant to demand their pay.

The fourth category that was identified by the authors was of threats and harassment by individuals. It was reported that many Latinos had suffered from racial slurs in their communities. Many in the public perceive Latinos as receiving welfare benefits, and feel that, "they are taking over the state and how they should go back to where they came from" (Brier, Ramirez, and Dash 1998:9). From personal experience I have also been affected by this treatment from Anglo-European community members. One incident occurred during the summer of this year. I was speaking to a friend of a neighbor who lives a house away from us. This friend spends a lot of time with this particular neighbor. One afternoon I was walking by, and we struck up a conversation as we had on many occasions in the past. Somehow the conversation shifted to a discussion of affirmative action (I
should have known better when the subject came up to shift to another topic but, of course, my better judgment didn’t kick in until it was already too late). I could see immediately that we had different views on the topic, but continued the conversation anyway. The man became personal and he said that my husband, who is Mexican, had gotten his job because of affirmative action and that he didn’t know what he was doing. (My husband was a computer programmer at a university south of Breverton.) He also stated that the second job my husband had just gotten (He took a second job in order to pay some of our expenses) he had taken from “Americans.” He then proceeded to say that I should go back from where I came, which according to him was Mexico. When I informed him that in fact I was born in the United States and that I am a U.S. citizen he still insisted that I return to Mexico to work on problems in my “own country.” Unfortunately my two small sons watched this entire exchange and also my reaction as I left the scene in tears very upset as the other neighbors watched in silence at what had occurred. I was ashamed to come out of my home thinking that all the neighbors had the same opinion of my family and me. According to the study, what I experienced happens daily to Latino and Chicano community members. I can tell you that I was hurt deeply by the remarks that this ignorant individual made and I can only imagine how others feel when this happens to them on a daily basis. On a related topic the report also states that many Latino youth have experienced racial slurs in the public schools from white students (Brier, Ramirez, and Dash 1998: 9). Again, if I experienced pain from the incident that occurred to me that was racially motivated, and I have the intellectual maturity and an understanding of the historical circumstances that have led to such behavior, I cannot even begin to imagine the emotional trauma that Latino and Chicano youth experience when they find themselves in similar situations. These exchanges can dramatically affect Latino and Chicano youth when they are already in a difficult stage of their lives.

Other categories of discrimination, experienced regularly by Latinos in the state, were: abusive behavior and policies in government agencies and denial of healthcare. This report clearly documents the systematic abuse of Latinos in the
state and the current climate that can be found at all levels in the community. It is one thing that these abuses are found in the general public, but that they are legitimized in our social structure and institutions is unforgivable. In reviewing this report we need to ask ourselves what this climate is doing to minority youth who reside in our communities, unfortunately we already have the statistics on the phenomenal rate of high school dropouts and the incarceration for minority youth in the juvenile justice system in the United States. Our heads should hang with shame at the failure we have brought to these children.

Examples of how the legitimization of racial stereotypes have come to find their way into the every day experiences of Anglo-Europeans in the community can be seen in many of the informal exchanges that I have had with community members during the course of this research project. The initial contacts for this research project came from the Sherwood Neighborhood where I was living. The Sherwood Neighborhood is not only interesting because of its ethnic diversity but the neighborhood has also long been considered one of the most crime-ridden sections of the city. The combined effect of ethnic diversity and the history of criminal activity have created an interesting environment for the development of a social discourse on gangs.

It is through the Sherwood Neighborhood that I began to meet people who actively participate in the politics of the larger city. Many issues began to emerge as I spoke to community activists, one of which was the topic of youth gangs. The perceptions of community members about minority youth, particularly Latinos and Chicanos, and their perceived involvement in youth gangs in the city was overwhelming and is something that I focus on in my thesis. The comment was made to me by one of our city officials who works as a liaison between the city and the Sherwood Neighborhood that, “There is the perception in the neighborhood that certain ethnic groups are responsible for crime in the community” (Fieldnotes December 16, 1996). This statement summarizes the conversations that I had with many community members in the Sherwood Neighborhood and appears to be the general consensus.
This information is the result of a recent conversation that I had with one of my neighbors. This neighbor has lived in the neighborhood for over twenty years and has managed to fix up her house very attractively. We were discussing a recent painting project when she mentioned that she had been passively looking for another home in a better neighborhood. She later confided that her parents had been applying pressure for her to move since on their last visit there was a gang-related murder of a young woman in the alley just five blocks from where she lives. Even though this incident occurred over two years ago it is still used by community members as a point of reference to indicate the continued “threat” of gang violence in the neighborhood.

Another incident occurred as my two sons and I were taking a walk with a neighbor boy. As we walked around the neighborhood, we saw two police cars come out of the alley. My son commented, “There are some cops,” and the neighborhood boy chimed in, “Yeah, there are a lot of gangbangers around. That’s why there are a lot of cops.” When I asked what did he mean by gangbangers he wasn’t able to give me a concrete answer, but the topic of gangs and their proliferation in the community dominated ensuing conversations.

The sister of this same youth was at our home one evening when we were discussing their upcoming move to an area on the Westside of Breverton. I asked her if she was excited about moving? She said there were some good things and some bad things about it. I asked her why her family was moving since they had a nice large home in the neighborhood. She told me, “You know the neighborhood is not that good. There are gangs that live in the alley and kill people.” Her father had sold their home to his sister and he said that she wanted to get a guard dog. Because of the perception of the neighborhood as a high crime area many homeowners have large dogs that they use as a measure of safety when walking the streets of the neighborhood, and to guard their homes at night. Elijah Anderson in his text, Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community states that this is a strategy used by community members where a large dog is thought of as a possible weapon (1990: 226).
Other neighbors share the same perceptions of the community and the presence of gangs in the neighborhood. One weekend afternoon I was talking to a neighbor across the street when she remarked that there were many gangs in the neighborhood, I didn’t comment on this but made a mental note and the conversation continued. Later we were discussing the activities at another home on our block and she mentioned that the previous evening she had heard a lot of loud music and drunken behavior coming from the home. She told me that the youth who lived in that home were gang members. How she came to this conclusion I wasn’t exactly sure but I went on to state that another neighbor had told me that they were renting the home. She said, “Oh good, then maybe we can get them out of the neighborhood.”

To further emphasize the feelings and perceptions in the community I would like to describe what occurred during one of our ESL classes at the local elementary school just a few blocks from our home7 in the Sherwood Neighborhood. The community outreach person from the elementary school mentioned that they had had some problems on the school grounds. This sparked my curiosity since I was aware that many youth who play basketball on the courts located on the school grounds in the evenings are Latino and Chicano youth. The community outreach person said that there had been illegal drug activity (which I was never aware of even though I have spoken to many of the youth who play basketball in the evening and would have been aware if they were either using or selling drugs.) How the school official concluded this I had no idea since she was terrified of the youth and never had any personal exchanges with them. She also said that youth who play basketball had been urinating on the school property. When I mentioned this to one of the community activists in the Sherwood Neighborhood his response was, “And they [school officials] would never dream of putting in a port-a-potty for the youth on the school grounds while they play basketball.” This was actually the problem, not that the youth wanted to destroy school property but that they were out on the grounds so long that they at some

7 I teach ESL at the local elementary school to monolingual Spanish-speaking parents.
point needed to use the restroom and there were none available on the school grounds. Instead of installing a port-a-potty the contrary occurred, the school district hired a security guard to patrol the school grounds during the evenings to keep the youth “in line.” What has occurred is that this has, temporarily at least, driven many youth away from the basketball courts in the evenings. When I further questioned this to the community outreach person she stated that the Sherwood Neighborhood was not the only school to hire a security guard but that they had also hired a security guard in “felony flats”. This further demonstrated her stereotypes and perceptions related to ethnicity and socio-economic class since felony flats refers to the area immediately surrounding the state penitentiary, another lower income and high minority population neighborhood. This demonstrates preconceived notions carried by various community members based on the socio-economic and ethnic composition of neighborhoods in the city of Breverton.

The stories, which I have told you, were told to me by Anglo-Europeans. In the Anglo-European community there is a heightened awareness and sensitivity to gang activity in the city and those who are identified, as being gang members are Latino and Chicano youth. Style can many times determine if a youth is identified as a gang member. Latino youth who dress in oversized shirts with stylized drawings depicting low riders and phases like, “Good Times Bad Times”, were more likely to be identified by community members as gang members.

Throughout the course of this research project I also spoke to many Latinos and Chicanos. Our conversations were not dominated by discussions of gang activity, in fact most of the conversations that I have had with Latinos residing in the Sherwood neighborhood and elsewhere in the city did not mention gangs or gang-related crime. The exact opposite, many times conversations are devoted to ethnic and linguistic racism that minority community members experience. This is really at the heart of this research project that there are very different perceptions in the community based on ethnicity, class, and age. Another interesting indicator of the feelings and the hysteria in the community around the issue of gangs came
about during our annual neighborhood block party. Neighbors from the community come together to take a stance against crime. Young and old participated in the activities. This particular year there was a rumor that a young man was carrying a pistol. The “pistol” turned out to be a lighter in the shape of a pistol. The police were called in and frisked the young man and eventually took him off to talk with his parents. Although many participants knew that the youth did not have a pistol, the rumor flew around the block party that the young man did in fact have a pistol in his pocket. Even though the rumor had started in the English-speaking community it shifted to the Spanish-speaking community and many women could be overheard speaking about the youth with the pistol (Field notes August 4, 1997). Nothing materialized as a result of this incidence but it was later revealed that another youth had brought a toy gun to the block party, which probably on hindsight wasn’t a very intelligent thing to do but didn’t necessitate the response that was given by community members. I think the point is, that it was believable for community members living in this neighborhood that the youth would have a pistol because it seemed to fit into their perceptions of the neighborhood and gang activity. Jeff Ferrell states,

As a recent mass media report on ‘gangsta rap’ noted, For the gangsta rappers...guns are symbols of toughness and arrogance, the necessary elements of ghetto survival. For wannabes cultivating a street-wise image, the implied menace of a pistol jammed into the waistband of baggy jeans is more a show of style (Ferrell 1995:177).

The sensationalism that the local media uses in covering these events further feeds the perceptions and fears in the community.

These informal conversations and incidents are just some of the indicators of the attitudes held by community members and how the social discourse of gangs is constructed in the city of Breverton. More importantly, how this affected the perceptions of the public and their views of minority youth residing in the city, and the city’s attempts to decrease gang activity and violence in the community. All of
which is embedded in the larger social and cultural context and demographics changes in recent years. Due to the perception of an increase in gang activity in the city, public policy advisors began to formulate and implement punitive public policies aimed at curbing gang violence in the community. Two punitive public policies that have been implemented by city officials are a day curfew and a gang manual.

The day curfew was identified as a high priority by the Breverton Gang Prevention and Intervention Committee¹ (GPIC). The goal of the day curfew is to reduce gang recruitment and activity in the city. The curfew prohibits youth between the ages of seven to eighteen years of age, who have not graduated from a high school, from being in public places, unless accompanied by a parent or guardian, during normal school hours. The Breverton city council unanimously passed the day curfew on April 28th, 1997, even though there was widespread opposition and testimony against adopting the ordinance among community members. Implementation of the daytime curfew has met with the following arguments; how will it affect minority community members who are more likely to be stopped by local law enforcement officials? Do local law enforcement agencies have the personnel to effectively address the needs of minority language groups in the community (i.e. bilingual/bicultural officers)? Being stopped randomly by local law enforcement agents will not serve in establishing positive relationships with the larger minority community, and might even have a negative effect on an already tense relationship with local law enforcement officials.

Another example of punitive public policy that was recommended by the GPIC was the introduction of a gang manual. Theoretically the gang manual was to be used as a resource for public school employees, and people working with youth who are considered to be at risk for gang involvement or other criminal activity. The objective of the manual was to assist those people not familiar with the characteristics and identifiers of gang-involved youth so that they would be able to intervene prior to any involvement. The manual was a tool to identify those

¹ Pseudonym
youth. Unfortunately much of the information, included in the gang manual, was inaccurate and operated on stereotypes and racist ideology.

It was believed by many that each of these public policy measures would affect minority youth more than their white counterparts given a lack of cultural competency of local law enforcement officials and public school employees. Also, as I have attempted to demonstrate, the current racial climate in the city has community members sensitized to youth gangs. Many of the community members have not had any meaningful contact with minority members of the community and shape their perceptions on a foundation of ignorance leading to the mislabeling of minority youth as gang members.

In summary, in examining the formation of gang policy in the city of Breverton it is imperative to understand the larger social cultural context from which it has emerged. The formation of gang policy has been created in this climate of fear and cultural misunderstanding and research has shown that the burden of gang policy generally falls unjustly and inappropriately on young men and women of color. Young men and women of color are more likely to be identified as gang members than their white counterparts (State of Oregon 1992: 13). In providing an anthropological perspective to the formation of gang policy in the city of Breverton and its affect on Latino youth identity, there is the hope that gang policy can be formulated with a heightened awareness and sensitivity to issues of ethnicity, race, and culture therefore eliminating the tendency to criminalize sub-cultural groups in the community.

The social discourse of gangs has been constructed in a city that is undergoing dramatic shifts in its racial composition. This has led to cultural misunderstandings by city officials, and public policy makers as they construct policy to deal with the issue of youth gangs and gang-related activity in the city of Breverton. The racial climate in the state and more specifically in the city of Breverton can be directly related to the social discourse of gangs in the city and the cultural ignorance with which these conversations take place. It is the way that racial tensions and cultural misunderstandings have gained a voice and gradually
how stereotypical responses to Latino and Chicano youth subculture have found their legitimization through the formation of public policy in the city, the public school system, the media, and the perceptions of the larger public constructing Latino and Chicano youth subculture as a criminal subculture.
Chapter 3

Culture, Style, and Crime

Contemporary research on the intersection of crime and culture has emerged from the field of sociology and has been redefined as cultural criminology (Ferrell & Sanders 1995:3). The focus of this theoretical framework is the documentation and articulation of how culture and crime have become interwoven. Specific types of behavior have been constructed as criminal in this process and the enforcement of specific rules has necessitated that particular individuals within the community be defined or labeled as deviants. This process is referred to as labeling (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994: 80). Through this process various subcultures have been reconstructed and reclassified as criminal by what the authors term moral entrepreneurs (Ferrell & Sanders 1997:3). It is within this theoretical context that I will examine the phenomenon of the moral panic of youth gangs in the city of Breverton, and how this has directly led to the criminalization campaign that has negatively impacted Latino and Chicano youth in the community. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, Latino and Chicano youth and their subculture have become designated as a criminal subculture in the city of Breverton.

The authors state that the connotations of various symbols can have different meanings based on the cultural group or the context of the interpretation. Social scientists in their analysis refer to the powerful significance of symbols, and the ways in which these symbols are mediated in the community. This process has occurred in the city of Breverton, where symbols that once held positive connotations to Latino and Chicano youth now take on negative meaning and criminalized status to agents of social control and the general public. This process will be demonstrated through analysis of the gang manual, and the ensuing debates in the community as a result of misinterpretations of style, language, and dress of Latino and Chicano youth in the community.
Style Wars

"I cannot wear any baggy clothes, since I am Hispanic, they [school officials] will think I'm in a gang or something." This was stated by a female Latina who is a junior at one of the local high schools in Breverton (Fieldnotes July 2, 1997). The young woman's statement is a reflection of the emphasis that is placed on style and gangs in the city of Breverton. Unfortunately, the emphasis on style and crime negatively impacts youth of color in the community, and since Latino and Chicano youth are the largest minority population in the city, the detrimental effect on these youth has been severe.

The methods that agents of social control use to determine whether or not a youth is involved in gangs is indicated through a conversation I had with a security officer who patrols a local elementary school in the Sherwood Neighborhood. I was at the school with my children and some neighborhood children and as we were walking through the school grounds I noticed the security officer in the school parking lot writing down license plate numbers. I asked her if she had to record all of the car license plate numbers as they pulled into the parking lot, she stated, "Yes she did." She explained the rationale behind the policy, which was, in the case of a gang-related shooting she would have the car description and license plate numbers to give to local law enforcement officials. I asked her what types of problems they had had at the school in the past. She said, "Oh, vandalism and gangs." I asked how do you know if the kids who come to the school are gang members? She stated, "By their dress and tattoos."

The security officer was identifying youth as gang-involved, a very serious accusation, based on style and dress. Unfortunately, this is not a new phenomenon. The importance that agents of social control have assigned to dress and style is not restricted to contemporary society. Style and dress have played a part in stigmatizing those who have dressed outside of societal norms since the beginning of time. Erving Goffman, in his text Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity, states that dating back to the Greeks there has been the use of body designs that signaled that there was something unusual or bad about the moral
status of the individual who bore the sign (1963:1). Goffman goes on to emphasize the importance of first impressions. Certain assumptions are made based on the physical appearance of an individual; assumptions are made regarding the person's status, and his or her classification in society. First appearances can be powerful classificatory symbols based on the public perceptions of styles and dress. This can act to place the individual in an undesirable category. This, in turn, is the way in which social identities are constructed to a large degree in society (1963:1-3).

Dick Hebdige states that style can be read as a sign, and that even the styles that are worn by more conservative members of society can also signify something in that they are, "expressing normality as opposed to deviance" (Hebdige 1979:101). He states, "As a symbolic violation of the social order, such movement attracts and will continue to attract attention, to provoke censure and to act, as we shall see, as the fundamental bearer of significance in subculture" (Hebdige 1979:19). Hebdige goes on to state that,

This is what distinguishes the visual ensembles of secular subcultures from those favored in the surrounding cultures. They are obviously fabricated . . . . They display their own codes, or at least demonstrate that codes are there to be used and abused. In this they go against the grain of a mainstream culture whose principal defining characteristic, according to Barthes, is a tendency to masquerade as nature, to substitute 'normalized' for historical forms, to translate the reality of the world into an image of the world which in turn presents itself as if composed according to 'the evident laws of the natural order' (Hebdige 1979:101-102).

Agents of social control have begun to focus on the style and dress of Latino and Chicano youth and have labeled such dress as a possible indicator of gang involvement. While Latino and Chicano youth have constructed their social identities in a way that has social meaning for them, agents of social control have reinterpreted and reconstructed those styles and symbols as criminal and gang-related. Jeff Ferrell states that style is the link between the formations of a cultural identity and is a, "concrete element of personal and group identity, grounded in the
everyday practices of social life” (Ferrell 1995:170). According to Ferrell, “Style is in this sense embedded in haircuts, posture, clothing, automobiles, music, and the many other avenues through which people present themselves publicly” (170). The classification and stereotype of Latinos and Chicanos based on style and dress is not something new to contemporary society, Latinos and Chicanos in the 1940s, also fell victim to a criminal campaign in the United States during the era of the Zoot Suit. One author articulates the importance and the significance of the Zoot Suit to both African-Americans and Latinos during the 1940s, “The zoot suit is more than an exaggerated costume, more than a sartorial statement, it is the bearer of a complex and contradictory history” (Cosgrove 1984:39). The author continues to describe the significance of the zoot suit,

These youths were not simply grotesque dandies parading the city’s secret underworld, they were ‘the stewards of something uncomfortable’, and a spectacular reminder that the social order had failed to contain their energy and difference. The zoot suit was more than the drape-shape of the 1940s fashion, more than a colorful stage prop hanging from the shoulders of Cab Calloway; it was, in the most direct and obvious ways, an emblem of ethnicity and a way of negotiating an identity. The zoot suit was a refusal to concede to the manners of subservience (Cosgrove 1984:40).

Ferrell states that this form of rebellion and the refusal to passively accept your marginalized position in society has long been overlooked and the relationship between fashion and social action. The author uses the example of two contemporary social activists, Chicano activist Cesar Chavez, and Malcolm X, who as a direct result of their participation in the Zoot Suit Riots during the 1940s linked fashion and social action. The author goes on to the state that the Zoot Suit Riots during the 1940s had dramatic effects for numerous minority youth in U.S. Society. What started as a backlash against the Zoot Suit and the suit’s flagrant disregard of the rationing of material during World War II, became a statement against oppression and the equality to Latino and Chicano youth. Rodolfo Acuña in his text, Occupied America: The Chicano’s Struggle Toward Liberation, states that the
Zoot Suit Riots of the 1940s signify a time when civil rights violations were prevalent and a time when many gente decente (decent people) turned their backs on the civil rights violations to the Pachucos. Acuña also states that to many the Pachuco began to symbolize the Chicano resistance (Acuña 1972: 207).

Cosgrove states that for disadvantaged youth in the 1940s the zoot suit was used as a means to flaunt their frustration with a social structure that they were not a part of. Rather than hide their dissatisfaction with society, they openly expressed their hostility with their form of dress-the zoot suit” (1984:41). The zoot suit drew both praise and persecution depending on the cultural group it had originated from. To agents of social control the zoot suit was associated with delinquency and was a “moral and social scandal in the eyes of the authorities” (43). This same stance, one of rebellion and refusal to conform, can also be seen in contemporary society among Latino and Chicano youth. Throughout the course of this research project I had an opportunity to speak to many youth in the community who were very much aware of the emotional responses that their chosen styles brought about in the community and among agents of social control, but as their predecessors had done, they too developed a stance of rebellion and refusal to conform. Many even began to incorporate this refusal to conform into other contexts such as youth groups, where the same forbidden symbols and images to the general public became the chosen symbols to represent youth groups and student organizations and clubs. Joan Moore was one of the first to state the importance of Pachuco style to agents of social control and the negative ramifications of such style and the criminalization campaign that came as a result. Pachuco style and the label of gang member or deviant became one. As the Pachucos were stigmatized and their behavior and dress criminalized in the 1940s based on cultural misinformation the same phenomenon has also come to affect Latino and Chicano youth in contemporary society. We will see this at work in the case study of the city of Breverton.

As social scientists have continued to explore the relationship between style and perceptions held in the community, and specifically agents of social control,
there continues to be a relationship between style and criminalization campaigns. In an attempt to control gang behavior, many local law enforcement groups and school districts have begun to identify and then restrict what they perceive as gang related attire. One social science researcher examined the relationship between documented gang members and their probation officers and exchanges related to style and dress (Miller 1997:213). Miller illustrates the importance and the significance of gang dress to probation officers in their attempts to control probationers’ affiliation and involvement with youth gangs. Miller takes us through a journey of contested symbols, which are in constant negotiations between the probation officers and the youth who are in their charge. In her analysis, Moore emphasizes the importance of style and dress to group solidarity and cohesion and also the construction and presentation of the self for public consumption (217). Minority youth are especially impacted because the need to present one’s self in a specific style and dress in the local community is a matter of survival in many inner city communities. Youth need to dress in the urban uniform or fall victim to violence and persecution in their own communities. This social reality places them in a catch 22 (Anderson 1990:178). While style, dress, and tattoos can signify social cohesion they also, according to Miller, signify social divisions in a community therefore uniting and dividing the community simultaneously (Miller 1997:217).

One youth, with whom I had an opportunity to speak to over the course of this research project, struggled with these same issues with his probation officer. As described by Miller, the youth stated that he was not able to wear the Dickies brand of clothing (this was one of the stipulations of his probation) since it was considered to be part of gang culture and an indication that he was still involved with gangs. This youth experienced firsthand this cultural catch 22 since he had to live within a specific social reality that in many ways dictates what is and is not socially acceptable in terms of style and dress, and yet he was pressured by his probation officer to adopt a style and dress that they felt was socially acceptable for his reincorporation into society. This almost predetermined that the youth was
bound to fail since the conditions of his probation did not match his social reality. Other youth (and not necessarily those that had already been involved with the juvenile justice system) had expressed similar experiences with local law enforcement officials and public school administrators. Many felt they had been harassed in the public school system based on their choice of dress and the color of their skin.

Many Latino and Chicano youth in the community have adopted the style of wearing loose fitting pants and tee shirts depicting low riders and drama masks that represent good times and bad times airbrushed on the backs of their tee shirts. These tee shirts have come to symbolize to the community, youth who are associated or involved with gangs. I spoke to one retailer, located in one of the city’s malls in Northeast Breverton, who carries a wide variety of tee shirts in his shop. He said, that many of the other retailers had openly expressed their dissatisfaction that he continued to carry shirts depicting low riders with airbrush designs because they felt that by carrying such a product he was encouraging a deviant element in the mall, meaning Latino and Chicano youth and youth of color. During one of our conversations the owner pulled out a shirt from the backroom, on the back was an eagle with the words Brown Pride that were written in Old English lettering. (This stylized writing has also become criminalized and has come to represent gangs to law enforcement officials and public school employees.) The owner said, he was no longer able to carry the tee shirts since an employee who worked at the shop in the past stated that there were two gangs in the community whose names begin with Brown Pride. Here a term that in the past brought about positive connotations and connections to the civil rights movement and social equity for people of color, in contemporary society became criminalized. This demonstrates the power that misconceptions and cultural ignorance of style, dress, and language have in shaping perceptions. Jeff Ferrell states that, “In Denver, Los Angeles, throughout the West, young Latinos and Latinas wear t-shirts designed by local artists which reflect their ethnic heritage” (Ferrell & Sanders 1995:174). Throughout the United States and in Breverton, these t-shirts have come to
represent, to many, a youth who is either gang-associated or already involved in youth gangs, assumptions all of which are based on cultural misinformation and ignorance.

The intersection of ethnicity, gender, age, and class and the stereotypes associated with them are manifested in a gang manual that was to be distributed and used in the Breverton Public School System. The gang manual was divided into a series of sections, each listing the various factors believed to lead to gang involvement. The gang manual included the indicators that school administrators and law enforcement officials would use to determine if, in fact, a youth was involved in gangs.

The Gang Manual

The gang manual that was developed by a Breverton School Administrator is an excellent example of cultural ignorance, stereotypes, and racism in a written document. The importance of style and dress and its criminalization found its manifestation and legitimization in the gang manual. This manual was to be used in the public school system as a tool for public school employees and other officials who work with at risk youth. The manual was to be used to identify youth in the public school system that are either involved or have the potential for involvement in youth gangs. Fortunately, many Latino and Chicano community members felt that what had been identified in the gang manual as indicators for gang involvement only further perpetuated racist stereotypes and cultural misinformation, and legitimized their existence in the manual.

A section of the manual titled, “Profile of Hispanic Gangs,” lists the risk factors for involvement in gangs. According to the manual if you are Latino or Chicano between the ages of ten and twenty-five, and are either male or female you are at risk for becoming a gang member (Novotney 1997:40). This was particularly offensive to the Latino and Chicano Community. With the increasing drop out rate of Latino and Chicano youth in the public school system, it is imperative that we create an educational environment that is inclusive, as opposed to exclusive. Many
Latino and Chicano youth have already clearly articulated their discomfort in the public educational system, and feelings of persecution by school administrators and the perceptions that administrators feel these students are destined for failure. Community leaders and activists stated that this attempt to deal with the issues of gang activity in the city further targeted Latino, Chicano, and youth of color. Unfortunately, perceptions held by school administrators and local law enforcement officials about Latino and Chicano youth have become self-fulfilling prophecies for many.

To gain a better understanding of the gang manual and the battle that was a direct over its distribution. We need to look more closely at the document itself. The manual was divided into the following sections: language, dress, tattoos, and graffiti.

**Language**

My first glimpse of the manual happened by accident. A woman who worked with gang-affiliated youth brought a copy over to my home. Since she herself did not speak Spanish or have a cultural understanding of the culture she didn’t see the potentially harmful effect that the manual would have on the Latino and Chicano youth. When I first saw the manual and specifically the section titled, Hispanic Gang Terminology, I sat down at our dining room table and cried. The words that I recognized were common Spanish words used by Latinos and Chicanos in everyday conversations. The “Hispanic Gang Terminology” was comprised of Spanish and Chicano English words and phrases (Penfield & Garcia 1985:1). Although linguists have stated that Chicano English in contemporary society has less than high status, I don’t believe that anyone was prepared for the criminalization of Spanish and Chicano English in a manual depicting it as Hispanic Gang Terminology. A linguistic anthropology professor stated that the listing of Spanish and Chicano English as Hispanic Gang Terminology was nothing less than linguistic racism. The main concern of the depiction of Spanish and Chicano English as a possible indicator of gang involvement, was that teachers and
administrators in the public school system, who are overwhelmingly monolingual English-speakers, would not have the linguistic or cultural knowledge foundation to determine if the language that youth were using actually tied them to gang activity or designated them at risk. In the section on language, it was stated that, they [gang members] will often greet and speak to each other in the Spanish language. This is the overwhelming majority of youth who have grown up in homes that are either entirely monolingual in Spanish or bilingual in Spanish and English. As you can see, the odds were that youth from Latino or Chicano ethnic and linguistic background would almost by default be considered at risk, or documented as gang members.

The following are examples of some of the terms that were included in the gang manual that were listed in the section of the manual as “Hispanic Gang Terminology”:

- Alrato: Later
- Aztlan: Former areas of the United States
- Barrio: Neighborhood
- Ese Vato: Hey Dude! Hey Man!
- Feria: Money/Change
- Gorra: Cap
- Gueros: Anglos
- Jefa: Mother/Boss
- Jefe: Father/Boss
- La Causa: The Cause
- La Ley: The law
- La Migra: Immigration
- La Raza: The Race
- La Raza Unida: The United Race
- Loco: Crazy
- Mojado: Wetback
There was another section of the gang manual that listed English words that were also believed to be indicators of youth at risk or gang involvement. The difficulty with this is that most school administrators, local law enforcement officials, and city employees are monolingual English-speakers. They are familiar with the language and context that distinguishes between youth that are or are not using "gang language." This is not the case for Spanish-speaking youth given that school administrators and local law enforcement officials lack knowledge of the Spanish language and culture. Their cultural, linguistic, and ethnic background would allow them to make those distinctions in English since they are grounded in their cultural and linguistic expertise. This is not the case with Spanish and Chicano English. An additional problem is that while law enforcement officials are documenting "gang-related style, dress, and language" gang members themselves are changing those styles, dress, and language. Styles, dress, and language are not static as non-gang members adopt these styles they again undergo transformations within gang culture.

Linguists have stated that Chicano English is a product of a specific cultural, and historical experience, and that the language is mainly spoken by Chicanos (Mexican Americans) (Padilla & Garcia 1985:2). Again the criminalization of Spanish and Chicano English is not something specific to contemporary society, but was also experienced by zoot suiters and Pachucos in the 1940s. In the 1940s, Pachucos generally spoke Caló. Caló has been traced back to the Mexican underground and originally can be traced to Spain (Padilla & Garcia 1985:11). Caló is used both to symbolize the Pachucos status as outsiders to more mainstream societal members, but also works to reinforce their in-group status and to affirm and solidify ethnic identity. Sociolinguists have determined that many
times Pachucos would use Caló to guard their dealings among each other in addition to keeping these dealings away from other community members. The same stigmatization and criminalization that occurred with Caló, among the Pachucos, can be seen in contemporary society and perceptions of Chicano English. The perceptions of the general population and their attitude toward Chicano English are not that far removed from the perception of Caló in the 1940s.

Chicano English is seen by many as inferior, and not only is the language itself stigmatized, but also those who speak the language. Latinos and Chicanos who use Chicano English have come to represent individuals who are not able to master either the Spanish or English Language, only a bastardization of both (Padilla & Garcia 1985: 69). The externalized effects of these attitudes have been documented thoroughly by researchers who have recorded that teachers generally are influenced by the speech patterns of their students. These speech patterns form the teachers’ perceptions of the child in the public school system. This has many times worked to negatively impact those students who are non-standardized English-speakers. Those who speak formal English or Spanish are perceived to have positive personality traits, as opposed to those who speak in a dialect who are perceived to have lower personality traits and intelligence. Based on these perceptions teachers base their academic expectations of students on language attributes (71-73). Unfortunately many Latinos and Chicanos have internalized these societal beliefs and believe that the use of Chicano English and informal Spanish demonstrates their inability to speak neither Spanish nor English proficiently. Thus completing the cycle of academic failure.

Linguists have proposed an alternative argument in their analysis of Chicano English. They view it as an ethnic contact dialect that reflects the experiences that Chicanos have experienced in society living between two worlds, North American and Mexican. Although poetry, novels, and plays have been written and published in Chicano English, the stigma is still very much attached to it in the general public and even among some youth in the Latino and Chicano community.
After viewing the gang manual and specifically the section on “Hispanic Gang Terminology” I decided to attend a GPIC meeting to voice my concerns. At the first meeting, I sat quietly getting a sense of the organization and its direction and policies regarding youth gangs in the city of Breerton. The three topics during that first meeting that I attended were: a brochure for the GPIC organization, tattoo removal, and the gang manual. It was mentioned during the meeting that final approval for the gang manual was in progress in one of the subcommittees of the organization and that it would be brought to the larger steering committee the following month. With that in mind my husband and I prepared to speak at the next GPIC meeting.

The following meeting, both my husband and I attended to voice our concerns over the use of the gang manual and specifically the section titled, “Hispanic Gang Terminology.” The steering committee politely listened to our testimony in regards to the representation of Spanish and Chicano English and its depiction as Hispanic Gang Terminology. Following our comments they stated that perhaps that was how my husband and I felt, but there were other opinions in the Latino Community that were different from ours, and that they were interested in hearing others’ comments. At this point, it was already very clear that the manual was to be finalized and they weren’t too concerned with any opposition that might come in the form of one or two disgruntled community members. At the conclusion of our first steering committee meeting, I really think the GPIC thought it wasn’t much of an issue, and that it would just go away and the gang manual would be printed and distributed without any changes. Instead, the following meeting was filled with Latino and Chicano community leaders in opposition to the gang manual. They openly voiced their concerns over the gang manual and its proposed printing and distribution. A battle ensued over the distribution of the gang manual for the entire summer. Eventually, after enough opposition to the manual and testimony from a broad sector of the community, the gang manual was permanently shelved. I will expand on the outcome and analysis of the meetings in
the next chapter since it is relevant to an anthropological understanding of the social discourse of youth gangs.

Dress

In addition to the section on language, the second portion of the manual that community activists were concerned about was the section on dress. A portion of this section was titled, “Profile of L.A. Style Gangs”. In this section it was stated that gang members wear oversized jackets, “saggin” or pants low on the hips, and “do rags” (bandanas). This is interesting since major department stores and retailers have since co-opted this urban style of youth subculture and these styles are regularly advertised and marketed in the media and department stores. When these styles are advertised by major department stores and worn by white youth in the community they are not criminalized, but when the styles are worn by youth of color they become stigmatized and criminalized. This unfairly and negatively impacts youth of color in the community. Social scientists have long been aware of this phenomenon. Sociologist Elijah Anderson in his text, Streetwise: Race, Class, and Ethnicity, describes this same phenomenon of criminalization in the African-American community in a city in the northeastern section of the United States where he conducted his research. He states that, African-American youth are negatively impacted when wearing the “urban uniform” of a sweat suit, hats, tennis shoes, and the use of boom boxes. But like Latino and Chicano youth, African-American youth are also caught in this cultural catch 22, adhering to their codes of style and dress for survival in their communities or adhering to the rules of law enforcement officials, school administrators, and public policy officials and risk being ostracized by their own communities. Elijah Anderson also states that, even when African-American youth adopt the styles of their white peers they are still viewed suspiciously in the community because the overriding influence of skin color, and ethnicity come into play (Anderson 1990:165).

To further illustrate the importance of style, dress, and ethnicity, Dick Hebdige illustrates the contradictory messages of sub-cultural style when he states,
Each subculture moves through a cycle of resistance and diffusion and we have seen how this cycle is situated within the larger cultural and commercial matrices. Subcultural deviance is simultaneously rendered 'explicable' and meaningless in the classrooms, courts and media at the same time as the 'secret' objects of sub-cultural style are put on display in every high street record shop and chain store boutique. Stripped of its unwholesome connotations, the style becomes fit for public consumption (Hebdige 1979:130).

Hebdige states that,

Subcultures are therefore expressive forms but what they express is, in the last instance, a fundamental tension between those in power and those condemned to subordinate positions and second-class lives (Hebdige 1979:132).

This demonstrates the importance of style in the construction of group and ethnic identity and the importance that agents of social control apply to style, and this in turn shapes the way that they interact with youth. Jeff Ferrell states,

Contemporary controversies continue to confirm the power of style. In cities across the country, minority kids risk getting shot, or pulled over by the police, for wearing—perhaps accidentally, perhaps with deadly purpose—a red shirt or bandana in a blue neighborhood. Others report police harassment based on the style of their cars or on the style and volume of the music that emanates from their big-bass car stereos (Ferrell 1995:173).

Many agents of social control also are not aware of the positive aspects of style as it relates to providing social cohesion within the group and acts as the, social glue that holds communities together (Ferrell 1995:176).

In the gang manual, the style and dress of Latino and Chicano youth subculture are further criminalized, and then listed as possible indications of gang-involved youth. But as members of the Latino and Chicano community already are
aware, style and dress must be placed within a cultural and historical context. It is not necessarily an indication of gang involvement, and could very well be misread if someone did not have the cultural knowledge and understanding of the nuances of the culture and context. As is the case with language, the same can be said for style and dress, since the overwhelming majority of school administrators and law enforcement officials are from white middle-class backgrounds they wouldn’t have the cultural knowledge and skill to make these subtle determinations.

Tattoos

As is the case with language and dress, tattoos have also become a point of contention between GPIC steering committee members and community activists. In the gang manual, one of the sections had a photograph depicting a young male with the name Herrera tattooed on his back. According to the author of the manual, this tattoo is another example of a possible indication of a youth who is either affiliated with or already involved in gangs. Quite to the contrary, Latino and Chicano community leaders testified that tattoos of this sort are a part of the Latino and Chicano subculture. Perhaps some of the youth who have tattoos might be involved in gangs, but we certainly cannot make a blanket statement that all youth who have tattoos are in youth gangs. Again the concern was that ethnicity, dress, and language would intersect to negatively impact Latino and Chicano youth. Community activists stated that these tattoos are a part of Latino and Chicano Culture, and since the Chicano and Latino Community stresses family, it is not unusual for many Latino and Chicano youth to tattoo their family names on their backs to demonstrate the importance and the significance of family. This has positive connotations in the Latino and Chicano Community and yet suddenly takes on negative connotations in the public and further becomes criminalized through the gang manual.

In addition to the youth with the last name of Herrera tattooed on his back, the gang manual also showed another drawing of a youth who had three circles in the shape of a triangle tattooed on his hand between the pointer finger and the
thumb. These three dots represent, *Mi Vida Loca*, which translates into English as, *My Crazy Life*. When I asked a Latina community activist what she felt the three dots represented and what was meant by *Mi Vida Loca* she stated that it was more or less the equivalency in English of, “shit happens”. As in the case of tattoos, the three dots do not necessarily indicate that a youth is involved in gangs. Many youth do have these dots and they in many ways have become a part of youth subculture. Again without the appropriate cultural knowledge, this style could be misread as an indicator of a youth who is involved in gangs, when many times it is nothing more than a conscious choice of style.

In addition to the above examples, the tattoo section of the gang manual listed other tattoos that are considered to be indicators of gang affiliation. We raised the question to representatives from the GPIC what would happen if in the past a youth had been involved with gangs, had gotten a tattoo, and then had gotten out of the gang for good but still had the tattoo. Based on the criteria of documentation in the gang manual, this youth would still be perceived by law enforcement officials and school administrators as a gang member, again the cycle of suspicion and marginalization, and self-fulfilling prophecy. The concern is that these youth would continue to be viewed as suspect by local law enforcement agents and local school officials based on the tattoos. They did not have any clear cut policy to deal with those instances and this was a major concern for Latino and Chicano community members who were aware of youth who had been gang involved and had since left the gangs but still had tattoos. The dilemma is that youth who were trying to get out of the gangs were already in a very difficult situation trying to break away from the gang lifestyle, their situation only become more difficult if they were constantly considered suspect and stopped by local law enforcement officials. The fear existed that they would be pushed back into the gang lifestyle.

Many youth have stated that they had been randomly stopped at two of the local high schools and were told to raise their shirts by the Vice Principal of the school. The Vice Principal then, according to witnesses, took pictures of the youth
and their tattoos on the school premises. These are a few of the instances that we are actually aware of, but many of these instances go unreported and there may be more that have occurred that have not been documented. This has raised many questions in the Latino and Chicano community about the environment in the public school system since the rights of these youth have been clearly violated. It is not a coincidence that youth of color drop out at an alarming rate nationwide and many social scientists have attributed this trend to the issues that have been raised in this research project.

**Graffiti**

Graffiti was another subsection of the manual, and is another way that local law enforcement officials identify gang activity in the local community. There has been a link made in the minds of local law enforcement officials and local community members that there is a direct connection between gang activity and graffiti. Jeff Ferrell in his text, *Crimes of Style: Urban Graffiti and the Politics of Criminality*, draws our attention to the fact that graffiti has typically been classified into various categories only, one of which is gang related. Much of the graffiti that is found in the community is the work of groups of taggers who are not affiliated with any gangs, but tag for excitement and the artistic elements that it provides. It has been stated that, the graffiti that is done by taggers is actually an artistic endeavor and is directly related to the Hip Hop Music and Culture, and is a form of creative expression. Although it is a criminal act to destroy public property, this type of graffiti doesn’t have any tie to gang activity. To further emphasis the distinction between graffiti taggers and graffiti that is done by gangs, Ferrell makes the distinction between what is considered to be the work of taggers and the work of gang-related graffiti. Ferrell defines the tagger as, “someone especially fond of or good at this activity.” Tagging is defined as, “the ongoing adventure of marking nicknames in and around the city” (Ferrell 1993:11). Ferrell studied graffiti in Denver, and states, that the graffiti that is found in the city is the work of taggers, fifty percent. While, fifteen percent of the graffiti can be tied to gangs and gang-
related activity (4). Yet in the city of Breverton there hasn’t been a clear distinction between graffiti that is the work of taggers and graffiti that is the work of gangs. Consciously or unconsciously, this serves to increase fear in the city, but at the same time increases funding for local law enforcement officials since there is perceived to be a “gang problem”.

An example of the controversy surrounding graffiti is well illustrated by an incident that occurred during a youth summit in the city of Breverton. The youth summit takes place annually in Breverton, and the sponsors asked youth to create graffiti murals as a contest for the summit. Youth agreed and the murals were displayed during the event. After the event, it was reported in the local newspaper, that graffiti had increased in the surrounding neighborhoods due to the summit and the mural contest. Needless to say this caused a great deal of headaches for the sponsors, who were only trying to ensure that the summit meet the needs of and appealed to youth in the community. It became very clear that graffiti is not considered to be a legitimate form of artistic expression in the community.

Another connection that has been made to connect graffiti and gangs is through a brochure that was developed and distributed by the city as a gang resource pamphlet. The cover of the brochure design was drawn to represent graffiti. The brochure was designed in gray, black, and red writing made to look like oozing blood. The use of these images on a city resource pamphlet further helps in solidifying the idea among community members that there is a strong relationship between graffiti and the presence of gangs. Of course, this creates a lot of unnecessary fear in the community and ultimately youth of color are the ones who are viewed as suspect gang members by the public, further marginalizing their position in the community.

Jeff Ferrell in his text and his analysis of graffiti and gangs states,

If we bother to look beyond carefully cultivated anti-gang hysteria, we can surely read in the gangs and their graffiti the experience of
being young, poor, and of color in a culture which increasingly marginalizes this configuration. They also reveal, from a different angle the ugly edge of a culture organized around economic and ethnic inequality. Research into these and other forms of graffiti writing can expose not only the dynamics of crime and culture, but the lived inequalities within which both evolve (Ferrell 1993:5).

Ferrell again draws attention to the larger contexts of history, economics, ethnicity, and gender, and how they intersect, affecting specific subpopulations in our society. While Jeff Ferrell was examining graffiti in Denver, he was at the same time exploring two other processes; hip-hop and national campaigns to criminalize and suppress it. He also states that,

both of these processes though, can themselves only be understood within the larger set of circumstances. These are the circumstances of injustice and inequality in the United States today: the domination of social and cultural life by consortia of privileged opportunists and reactionary thugs; the aggressive disenfranchisement of city kids, poor folks, and people of color form the practice of everyday life; and, finally, the careful and continuous centralization of political and economic authority (Ferrell 1993:15-16).

The legitimacy of what is, and isn’t art is further expanded on by Ferrell. He comments on graffiti as an art form stating,

The graffiti which they produce in this sense threatens not only the legal boundaries of private and public property and public space, but the political and aesthetic boundaries of legitimate-and even legitimately “alternative-art” (Ferrell 1993:41).

A graffiti artist comments on the art galleries and their relationship with the legitimization of art for public consumption. He states,

That’s what differentiates us [graffiti writers] from most people, and even artists, because the art galleries are the same thing-they edit what art the
public sees by choosing whatever their standard is of art. When you’re
doing graffiti, you choose your own vision . . (Ferrell 1993:42).

Ferrell states that in Denver the graffiti controversy has gotten its direction
and has been shaped by, “not just the politics of city government, but by the
economics of ownership and enterprise.” From the first, the clamp down has been
structured by and for the city’s business interests and property owners” (Ferrell
1993:110-111). Ferrell states that like Becker’s studies in social deviance, there are
moral entrepreneurs who in the case of Denver have been appointed by those in
positions of power and who according to Ferrell, “in the process of constructing an
anti-graffiti campaign, have at the same time constructed graffiti writing as a
crime.” Ferrell goes on to state that, “As Becker has argued, the moral crusades
which such entrepreneurs undertake lead not only to new definitions and
perceptions of the acts which they criminalize, but to the establishment and the
growth of formal rules and formal organizations as part of this criminalization
process” (Ferrell 1993:115-116).

To illustrate the point made by Ferrell, I will share an incident that occurred
at a local community college in Breverton. A guest artist was invited to speak
about her art to staff, students, and community members. Her artistic process
involved scraping off graffiti art, done by taggers, from public buildings, and then
rearranging the art to suit her tastes. She matted and framed her works, then
displayed and sold them in galleries nationwide. The graffiti art that was
predominately done by inner city youth of color, from lower socio-economic
background was considered illegal activity and would land them in jail. Yet this
woman, a white middle-class artist took the same work, redefined and legitimized
its value in the eyes of the public and turned it into “high art” for personal profit.
Very clearly the intersection of ethnicity and class came into play in this situation.

As was stated at the beginning of this research project, that the city of
Breverton is under going dramatic changes in terms of its ethnic and linguistic
composition. These transitions have affected the climate and the culture of the city.
It is no longer homogenous and as this occurs there is a struggle to define what are legitimate forms of cultural expression. It is in this context that we need to examine the issue of gangs and its impact on youth in the community. Other forms of art, generally considered legitimate, have come under scrutiny in the city of Breverton. One article appeared recently in the local newspaper about an alternative education program that serves Latino and Chicano youth. The summer project for youth was to search for information about Latino and Chicano cultural heroes as their assignment for a summer history class. After finding their cultural heroes, the class then developed the concept for a mural, which would be painted in the city of Breverton. At the time the article was printed there weren’t any takers for the mural. The class wasn’t able to find a business that would donate the space. It is my understanding that the mural was never painted and the work that was done by the students on Latino and Chicano history and culture was never recognized (Menefee 1997: 3c).

Another incident was told to me by a Latino community leader who ran a social service organization. He said that their youth group had wanted to paint a mural of Latino and Chicano Cultural Heroes on the side of the social service organization’s building. The group rents the space from a hotel chain, so they needed permission before they could go ahead with the mural. The business group declined the offer since the youth group had chosen Cesar Chavez as one of the images to appear on the mural. Cesar Chavez is viewed as a controversial figure to many, but to Latinos and Chicanos he is a cultural hero since he fought for the rights of farm workers. The youth group was told by the business that if they were willing to remove the image of Cesar Chavez they would be able to go ahead with painting the mural. The youth group declined the business’s offer and elected not to do the mural. These examples demonstrate that murals and graffiti have become areas of contestation between groups in the community who represent different cultural orientations and perspectives. These instances represent the very real struggles in the community of defining what is the culture of the community, and who are the community’s cultural heroes.
In addition to the gang manual as part of this process of criminalization, another aspect of this process of institutionalization was the Gangs 101 Conference. The same organization, the GPIC, which promoted the gang manual, was also the sponsoring agency of the Gangs 101 Conference that I had an opportunity to attend.

**Gangs 101 Conference**

I have included the Gangs 101 Conference in this chapter since the conference was a means of disseminating information about style and dress to the general public. The Gangs 101 Conference could have, just as easily, gone into the next chapter, "The Moral Panic," since the conference had elements that directly contributed to the construction of the moral panic in the city.

The Gangs 101 Conference was a one-day workshop sponsored by the GPIC. The workshop was marketed to professional, both public and private, organizations working with youth. Many of the youth had already been documented as gang members, and had entered into the juvenile justice system. The conference format was a lecture format. Seven presenters were scheduled to speak during the daylong workshop. Five of the seven presenters were affiliated with local law enforcement agencies and correctional facilities in the state. The problem with the composition of the presenters was that each of them more or less shared the same perspective with regards to youth and youth gang activity—from a criminal and juvenile justice perspective. One of the other two presenters was directly affiliated with the GPIC and had in the past served as a director for that organization. The other presenter also had a background in law enforcement, but was presently involved in social service. The composition of the presenter panel is of significance since this was a concern that had been raised by community members during the controversy of the gang manual and its distribution. The GPIC was heavy on the law enforcement perspective, but that this emphasis from law enforcement didn’t allow for depth of analysis or a broad perspective. Because of this one-sided perspective there was not adequate attention given to the social, cultural, educational, economic, and historical factors that led to the youths’
involvement in gangs in the first place. The law enforcement perspective, and juvenile perspective generally assigned blame to youth and their families without considering the social and historical context in which these people are embedded. The GPIC in having a membership that was comprised almost entirely of law enforcement officials did not allow for alternative perspectives. The creation of public policy by the GPIC, and its emphasis on law enforcement, made for policy that is much more punitive as opposed to preventative in its orientation.

It is interesting to note that three of the seven presenters focused primarily on style and dress as indications of gang affiliation. One presenter headed the La Raza program at the state’s correctional institution. This presenter was a Latino and while he did address the issue of ethnicity and race he did so in terms of style and dress, not the social and cultural factors that marginalize Latino and Chicano youth in the community. Although there was a great amount of detail and attention paid to style and dress, this presenter emphasized the importance of not stereotyping dress and commented that much of the hip hop clothing that was popular with youth should not be mistaken for gang attire. It was the cultural norm for Latino and Chicano youth. The lecturer then seem to contradict himself, by devoting an entire section of his presentation specifically to the style and dress of inmates in the correctional facility where he worked. This presenter went on then to state that they were experiencing many difficulties in the correctional facility related to dress. Apparently many of the inmates wanted to express their affiliation with a specific gang through their state-issued uniforms, and that this was causing problems for correctional staff. It is interesting to note that rather than dealing with some of the root causes of gangs, the correctional staff was more concerned with controlling the dress of the inmates. This short-term approach in the long run would prove unsuccessful since prisoners could adjust the symbolic meaning of their attire as correctional staff developed new plans to correct what they perceived as gang-related attire. Again the use of style and dress as a form of rebellion and refusal. This presenter emphasized the L.A. County Look that is believed to have
come out of the L.A. county jails where inmates “dress down”. The correctional official stated how correctional officers “came down” on inmates who were co-opting blue handkerchiefs to signify that they belonged to the Crips. The members who were affiliated with the Bloods were using red shorts under their pants and were wearing them low to show their red shorts underneath demonstrating that they were affiliated with the Bloods. Skinheads were also mentioned as part of his presentation and that they generally want to use clothing two sizes too small so that they would appear “buff”. Because of the controversy over style and dress, the correctional facility formed a taskforce to specifically deal with dress code violations. The corrections official commented that, “I think we’re doing it right, at least we haven’t been sued.” Again acknowledging the controversies with regard to developing public policy around issues of style and dress.

The next speaker was a police detective from the largest metropolitan area in the state. This officer specifically worked with Asian gangs, and to begin his presentation he asked members of the audience to list what they considered to be Asian communities. At this point it is interesting to note that even though the city of Breverton claims that the gang issue is not race specific the format of the workshop to a large degree was divided into racial categories, Latino, Asian, and skinheads. As with Latino and Chicano youth there was an emphasis on style and dress. Things such as baseball caps, which read Hmong Pride, tattoos on the back, and five dots as compared to the three dots used by Latino and Chicano youth. The five dots were said to represent the circle of life to Asian community members. By the way, there were not any representatives or presenters from any of the Asian communities present at the workshop to counter the opinions and perspectives of the presenter.

To further reaffirm that youth gangs are divided around ethnic categories the presenter actually stated that gangs were formed around racial lines although community activists were very clearly told by the GPIC that this was neither the

---

8 According to local area youth, “dress down” signifies when an individual has taken the time to press his/her pants and shirt with creases.
case nor the intention of the GPIC to perpetuate this idea. At this point the audience was shown slides of youth who were “thought” to be gang members by the police department. The officer even stuck in a disclaimer during the presentation stating that, “When I say he is a gang member, I mean we think he is a gang member.” I was very disturbed by this since this youth’s picture was being flashed across the state depicting him as a gang member when perhaps this was not the case. To further reinforce linguistic and ethnic stereotypes the presenter also commented that there is a risk for those youth whose parents are non-native English-speakers. Being an English as a second language instructor, I was very concerned that the connection was made between minority language speakers and the possibility for gang involvement by their children.

The fourth speaker also focused on style and dress, his presentation was about skinhead gangs. He was from the Marion County Sheriff’s Department. He began his presentation by emphasizing the use of Doc Marten’s by skinheads. A young woman in the audience began to state that, in fact, Doc Marten’s didn’t just signify the possibility that a youth was a skinhead, but that Doc Martens were popular with youth and a part of youth popular culture. This comment had the potential of seriously disrupting the presentation as other youth began to chime in. This type of open forum and discussion was not encouraged and was stopped immediately by the presenter. A member of the GPIC began to move around the back of the audience specifically behind the youth who had begun to speak out clearly giving the message that we were there to listen, not to participate.

The fifth presenter was a local police official from the city of Breverton. He is a member of the Breverton Gang Task Force for the local police department. The main objective of this presenter was to give information about the presence of local gangs. He relied on statistics to document the increase of gang members in the city. According to this individual, gang membership had jumped from three hundred members in 1994 to seven hundred documented members and four hundred associated members in 1997. At this point there were many gasps from audience members. Please remember the comment by one of the previous experts,
“When I say he is a gang member, I mean we think he is a gang member.” Local law enforcement officials document youth as gang members according to the following criteria; 1). Verbal admission, 2). Tattoos, 3). Clothing, 4). Associates, 5). Residence, 6). Cars. All of these criteria are immediately suspect since many of them are culturally biased. It was mentioned by one of the Latino activists that if there were ever an opportunity to review police records of youth documented as gang members, many would have wrongly been identified based on cultural misunderstandings.

During this presentation the audience was shown a film that showed Latinos on a summer night fighting. According to the officer they were gang members. It was stated repeatedly that gang violence and gang activity increase during the late spring and early summer. This was perfect timing since the conference took place during the month of April. This generated fear in the community of things to come and the increase of gang activity that everyone was anticipating in the upcoming summer months. To further generate fear in the community the officer began to run down a list of gangs in the community. He did not distinguish that many of these gangs which were comprised of one member or two had only been briefly in the area and then left. Given the list that was compiled you would think that every youth you happened to cross on the street was a gang member. One audience member even commented with her mouth wide open in disbelief, “I didn’t know that there were that many gangs in Breverton.” Motorcycle gangs and taggers were included in the category of gangs although they pose no threat to the community. Their inclusion in this category boosted the statistics so that it appeared that there were more gangs in the community than there actually were. This succeeded in communicating to the audience that there was an influx of gangs into the city.

The following speaker also contributed directly to this climate of fear with his presentation of “Stats & Management”. This individual also works for the Department of Corrections. He stated that many people who are not involved in gangs are now being impacted by gang violence. The emphasis on statistics perpetuated the perception that gang activity was on the increase rather than on the
decrease (which it is by the way). The presenter stated that the statistics that we know about are only about a third of the gang activity that is actually out there, further creating hype and hysteria in the community. Following this presentation, I asked the presenter if, in fact, gang activity was on the decrease in the city of Breverton, and if so why then was there such an emphasis on statistics documenting that gang activity was on the increase. Where was he getting his information? The chairperson of the GPIC, who was conducting the workshop, jumped in not allowing the presenter to answer the question and stated that yes, in fact, gang activity was on the decrease and that they had not meant to mislead any of the participants. The damage had already been done.

According to the authors Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda there were many components of the moral panic present in the Gangs 101 Conference. The Gangs 101 Conference contains four of the five elements of a moral panic and they are the following; 1). Concern, 2). Hostility, 3). Consensus and 4). Disproportionality. In the next chapter I will focus on the issue of concern in the community that I have already briefly touched on. In reviewing the articles from the local newspaper it can be documented that the topic of youth gangs for a long time dominated social discourse. The emphasis on youth gangs and gang activity in the community created a lot of concern among community members.

The second criteria of a moral panic, is that of hostility. According to the authors hostility is directed towards those who are believed to be involved in “deviant” behavior. They continue to state that many times there will be an emphasis on specific characteristics such as; age, race, socio-economic status, physical appearance, and geographic location (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994:33). The presenters mentioned all of the above, and there was special interest in the style and dress used by gang members. Another factor was that although the GPIC stated that they were not interested in breaking down youth gangs into ethnic categories, the conference was organized to emphasize divisions in ethnicity. The information that was given by the presenters focused on this topic and the presentations were broken down into ethnic categories, Latinos, Asians, and
Skinheads. This helped to further stereotype the "typical gang member" putting emphasis on style and ethnicity.

Although there wasn't consensus among all community members, those in the mainstream community felt that there was a "gang problem" and in that way they had reached consensus that something had to be done. This criterion of the moral panic is what Latino and Chicano Community activists took offense at. Those developing public policy felt that consensus had been reached, but community activists were concerned that this only took into consideration a sector of the population, and was not reflective of the entire population.

The fourth criterion is that of disproportionality. Goode and Ben-Yehuda emphasize the use of statistics and "facts" to generate fear in the community. They state that these "facts" and statistics are often disproportionate to the actual events in the community. When there is greater fear in the community than a threat that actually exists. The use of statistics in the Stats & Management portion of the Gangs Conference 101 fits well in their theoretical framework for determining if a moral panic exists in the community. Also the comment that, "the statistics really only represent one third of what is really going on in the community," gives the impression that the gang activity that is documented is only a fraction of the gang activity that is occurring in the city. The police officials' presentation from the city of Breverton also falls with the list of all of the gangs in the city of Breverton. This especially hit home with many of the audience members since many were from the local area. The support of the GPIC in sponsoring the Gangs 101 Conference helped to perpetuate fear in the community and the construction of a moral panic. Another conference that was sponsored by the GPIC had a very different message than the previous conference. It actually touched on many issues that community activists considered to be important and valid in the social discourse of youth gangs. I believe that the pressure that community activists applied prior to this conference may have influenced the GPIC and their selection of presenters for the following conference. The keynote speaker for the conference was Carl Upchurch. Carl Upchurch had served ten years in the state penitentiary for armed robbery.
Since his release he had done very well academically and had won national recognition for his work with youth gangs across the nation. His message was to look at the larger social and cultural context that gangs are a part of. He also emphasized the experiences of minority youth in society and how they were trying to grow with a rock on top of them. He cited the low expectations for minority youth by those in the educational system. Carl Upchurch got the point across that many times youth are labeled and therefore the labeling becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. He also stated that what we are presently doing is trying to find a way for youth to grow with the rock on top of them rather than trying to remove the rock. The same points that community activists had also made.

The next speaker Linda Erwin was from one of the area’s hospitals. Her focus was on guns and the damage that they inflict in the hands of youth. Again her focus was not necessarily on the individual behavior but on public policy that allows the purchase on hand guns, addressing the larger issue of gun control. Linda Erwin not only brought home the message about gun control, but also questioned the media and their depiction of violence and how that impacts youth and their perceptions of handling conflict.

The final speaker addressed the larger social and cultural issues and specifically the perceived lack of culture in the United States. The speaker used concepts from cultural anthropology and idea of rites of passage that were missing in the lives of youth in the United States.

The intersection and emphasis on style, dress, language, and ethnicity have come together to negatively impact Latino and Chicano youth in the community. Latino and Chicano youth have been, whether intentionally or unintentionally, categorized as deviants and criminal in the city of Breverton. Agents of social control have come to characterize Latino and Chicano youth as deviants in the ensuing controversy of youth gangs.
Chapter 4

The Moral Panic

Since researching the issue of gangs in Breverton, it is my proposal that the topic of youth gangs meet the criteria to be defined as a moral panic in the city. A moral panic is an event that occurs in a community that might normally go unnoticed by the majority of the population, but instead of going unnoticed it is often blown out of proportion, and then picked up by local media that acts to further exaggerate the incident until it becomes larger than life. Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance, is based on the work and research of Stanley Cohen on mods (modernists) and rockers during the 1960s in London, Britain. There were a series of small scuffles between the mods and rockers at a small seaside resort on England’s eastern coast. Events that would generally be considered minor became ammunition for the media and grew disproportionately to their importance and significance in society. This is just one example of the moral panic and in their book, Goode and Ben-Yehuda cite a series of historical events that qualify as moral panics by applying specific criteria in their analysis (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994: 22). In viewing the social discourse of youth gangs in the city of Breverton, I have applied the same criteria and it is my conclusion that the social discourse of youth gangs, meet the criteria to qualify as a moral panic.

Before analyzing the specific criteria of a moral panic, it is important to understand the theoretical orientation of the moral panic. The authors, Goode and Ben-Yehuda draw the distinction between the emergence of moral panics as natural phenomena or phenomena that are constructed by moral entrepreneurs. Moral entrepreneurs are individuals in a society that have something to gain by labeling the activities of others in society as deviant or criminal. Many times moral entrepreneurs are operating under the umbrella of morality, but their efforts are extremely detrimental to others in society.
The authors draw on the work of Wolfgang Friedmann in distinguishing between those moral panics that are perceived as emerging from the general public as a natural phenomenon and those moral panics that are constructed as the result of moral entrepreneurs. In this research project I subscribe to the latter, the perspective that moral entrepreneurs construct moral panics. This process, of first construction, and secondly the criminalization of specific behaviors has to be viewed in the context of culture.

The theoretical orientation of the moral panic emerging as a natural process is referred to as the grassroots approach. The grassroots’ approach views the emergence of perceptions of right and wrong as gaining momentum from the bottom, from the masses, then further gaining momentum from the bottom for movement to the top. In this perspective, the moral panic is viewed as the will of the people, and a result of a natural phenomena and that the public has reached consensus in regards to the moral panic (Goode & Bem-Yehuda 1994:33). The moral panic and the processes that shape it are viewed as a natural series of events. On the other hand, the other perspective is that of subjectivity, or the social construction of the moral panic and its associated behavior. The authors identify three things that are accomplished through this perspective. They are the following: 1). Legitimates certain acts as criminal and specific perceptions of what is right and wrong, 2). Designates one thing over the other as legitimate and respectful, and 3). Punishes one group over another for behavior that has been prescribed as deviant or immoral (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994: 78). The authors go on to state that, “The passage of laws raises the issue of who will criminalize whom” (78). They also state, “Criminalization is the explicit use of power to impose the view of one specific symbol-moral universe on other universes” (78).

In the case of Breverton, this is very clearly demonstrated. The issue of youth gangs and how the emergence of a moral panic is impacting Latinos and Chicanos negatively needs to be viewed within the larger context of power relationships in the city. As we know, youth and more specifically, youth of color are further marginalized and penalized under these community campaigns. Those
in positions of power are individuals who generally do not have a cultural understanding of Latino and Chicano youth and yet they are determining public policy for a city that is no longer homogenous, not only in terms of its population demographics, but also in its interpretation and perspectives of youth gangs.

To understand the two main theoretical orientations of the emergence of moral panics, it is important to understand the role that power plays in its construction. The issue of power applies in each of the five criteria that I will discuss later in identifying a moral panic. Power and its relationships in the community, and the shift of power in the community can be seen as a major factor in the social discourse of youth gangs in the city of Breverton. Those who have traditionally held positions of power in the city are losing their power, or at least perceive themselves as losing power in the city. People are truly concerned about their loss of power and status in the community. Instead of monolingual English-speakers being the norm, job announcements now are asking for those that have bilingual and bicultural skills. Debates over bilingual education are on going in the community. Specialty stores catering to minority community members are cropping up. There is no doubt about it; things are changing at a rapid pace. Understandably people are frightened and concerned about how those changes will affect them in the long run. Therefore, those grasping to hang on to their power and status naturally do not understand the needs or the perspective of emerging communities. Unfortunately, new community members become easy scapegoats. Those in power already understand the political system and have connections and relationships with people in very powerful positions at their disposal. It becomes very easy for them to wage their battle in constructing a moral panic. The authors address the issue of power in the construction of the moral panic by stating,

Let us emphasize a crucial point we made earlier about the relationship between morality and the law: the more power a group or social category has, the greater the likelihood it will be successful in influencing legislation which is consistent with the views, sentiments, and interests of its members, which its members support (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994: 82).
This is in fact what occurred in the city of Breverton. Individuals who already controlled much of the city were now developing and designing public policy around the issue of youth gangs. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the public policy that they were developing was operating on stereotypes and cultural misinformation, and if distributed would detrimentally impact Latino and Chicano youth in the community.

To understand the theoretical orientation and the role of power in a moral panic, it is important to understand the social and cultural context in which moral panics emerge. Although I have already laid out the cultural context of the city of Breverton and the importance of this context to the understanding of youth gangs I will elaborate on this point in this chapter. Stuart Hall has written extensively on the phenomenon of moral panics and addresses the emergence of moral panics as a symptom of a society that is undergoing dramatic changes; the boundaries of society are being redrawn. Through these changes comes social anxiety and he states, “When social anxiety is widespread but fails to find an organized public or political expression, give rise to the displacement of social anxiety on to convenient scapegoat groups. This is the origin of the moral panic” (Stuart & Jefferson 1975:72). As I have already documented at the beginning of this research project, the city of Breverton falls in this category. The population demographics of the community are dramatically changing. There has been an increase in the emergence of a strong Latino and Chicano population. This change in the demographics of the city has led to open hostility by Anglo-Saxon community members.

Now that I have outlined the theoretical orientation and the issue of power and its relationship to the emergence of moral panics we can now apply the criteria developed by Stanley Cohen in identifying moral panics. The criteria involve the reaction of five segments of society to qualify. They are the following: the press, the public, agents of social control, or law enforcement, lawmakers and politicians, and action groups (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994: 24). The involvement of each of
these segments of the population and the social discourse of gangs can be clearly documented in the construction of youth gangs as a moral panic in the city of Breverton.

The press and the media are the first segment of society that becomes involved in the emergence of the moral panic. This occurred in the city of Breverton in the reporting of youth gangs. I will lay down the general criteria and involvement of the media in the moral panic; then I will expand on the role of the media and its involvement in the moral panic in greater detail. As in the case of other historical events that have occurred, the moral panic becomes exaggerated and the significance of the event itself and its dissemination to the public becomes exaggerated and distorted, as Goode and Ben-Yehuda state, “newspapers ‘over report’ the events” (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994: 25). The choice of language used in the articles about moral panics, usually bring about specific emotional reactions as opposed to just reporting the news. Examples are words such as riots, destruction, and violence. All are used to bring about specific reactions to the events (25). In a moral panic the use of language only acts to reaffirm previously held beliefs and stereotypes. Therefore, the media only acts to reinforce fear and the perpetuation of the moral panic in the community at large. It is important to note that the reporting of the events in a moral panic can take on new meaning when reported by various newspapers, news stations, or radio programs in the community. For instance, in the case of Breverton, the reporting of the events that were the most sensationalized were reported by the mainstream English language newspaper. This newspaper reaffirms and justifies the position of those in power in the community whether, intentionally of unintentionally. If one of the Spanish language newspapers’ reports on the issue of youth gangs, their perspective is from a very different cultural orientation. They recognize that while youth gangs do exist, they need to be viewed in the larger socio-cultural context in which they are embedded. The audience of the Breverton City newspaper generally lacks the sophistication in its understanding of youth gangs and many times readily accepts the portrayal of Latino and Chicano youth as deviants and criminals. On the
contrary, local Spanish language newspapers understand the culture of Latino and Chicano youth subculture and readily understand the issue from a historical and cultural perspective. Community newspapers that have a progressive orientation and humanistic tone also are more comprehensive and holistic in their reporting of specific events in the community. When the reporting of the events is done by one of these sources they tend not to take on the sensationalism that they do elsewhere since there is greater understanding of the social, cultural, and historical context that have contributed to the issue of youth gangs in the community. This is just one example of the way in which the source that is reporting the moral panic can affect the reporting of the "facts" or the event.

Dick Hebdige states that when a subculture emerges it is generally accompanied by a "wave of hysteria in the press" (Hebdige 1979:92). He states that, "Style in particular provokes a double response: it is alternately celebrated (in the fashion page) and ridiculed or reviled (in those articles which define subcultures as social problems)" (Hebdige 1979:93). He goes on to state that,

in most cases, it is the subculture’s stylistic innovations which first attract the media’s attention. Subsequently deviant or ‘antisocial’ acts-vandalism, swearing, fighting, ‘animal behavior’--are ‘discovered’ by the police, the judiciary, the press; and these acts are used to ‘explain’ the subcultures originally transgression of sartorial codes (Hebdige 1979: 93).

This diametrically opposed relationship can be seen in the moral panic of youth gangs in the community. While in the gang manual, specific styles have been identified as gang-related, you only need to walk into your local department store to find the same styles in the youth department. In addition to this example, you can also walk out your front door to any local high school in the area and find the same styles on a diverse population of youth. It is here that ethnicity, class, and gender come to intersect effecting youth of color negatively as opposed to their
Anglo-Saxon counterparts. Local newspapers only work to confound this cycle of criminalization and social acceptance through their coverage of youth gangs.

Stanley Cohen addresses the importance of the media and his research on moral panics. He states that the role of the media in constructing a moral panic, “the mass media are the main agents of moral panics their very reporting of certain ‘facts’ can be sufficient to generate concern, anxiety, and indignation or panic” (Cohen 1973:432-433). The role of the media according to Cohen is to provide a medium for which is present a means of communicating and spreading a “Hostile belief and mobilizing potential participants” (Cohen 1973:453). “The presence of the media-actually, in the next day’s stories-gave police and the courtroom confrontations with the deviants’ ritualistic dramatic quality. These were arenas for acting out society’s morality plays” (Cohen 1973:457).

In summary Cohen states, “the societal reaction in general and the mass media in particular could plausibly be thought to have had the following sort of effects on the nature, extent and development of deviance; 1). Reinforcing and magnifying a predisposition to expect trouble: something’s going to happen. 2). Providing the content for rumors and the milling process, thereby structuring the something into potential or actual deviance; such as rumors or images facilitated deviance by solidifying the crowd and validating its moods and actions. 3). Creating a set of culturally identifiable symbols which further structured the situation and legitimized the action. 4). Spreading hostile beliefs and mobilizing the participants for action. 5). Providing the content for the deviant role-playing by transmitting the stereotypical expectations of how persons in particular deviant roles should act (Cohen 1973:457). These five effects that Stanley Cohen outlines can be documented in the research and analysis that I conducted in the city of Breverton on the subject of youth gangs and the construction of a moral panic.

In reaching his conclusions on the role of the media in the construction of moral panics, he based his work on the mods and the rockers in London during the 1960s. He demonstrates the role of the media in constructing the image of the mods and the rockers as contemporary folk devils. He states that the initial incident
in 1964 and the media coverage of that event set the tone and coming media coverage of the mod and rockers’ incidents for the future (Cohen 1973:263). Cohen states that the media acts as the main source for the general public and their interpretation of deviants and deviance in contemporary society (264). Unfortunate as it may be, the media have a dramatic impact in the way moral panics are perceived in the community. This was very clearly the case in Breverton. Latino and Chicano youth and their presence in the community became synonymous with gangs and gang violence. According to Cohen the media use various approaches in constructing the moral panic and the construction of folk devils in contemporary society. They are the following: exaggeration and distortion, prediction, and symbolization (Cohen 1973:265-277).

Exaggeration and distortion are used by the media through reports of the number of attendants at a particular event where an incident has occurred, the number involved in the violence, and the amount of violence that has occurred. Not only was the use of exaggeration and distortion used in the Gangs 101 Conference, as I outlined in the last chapter, it was also used in the media accounts about youth gangs. The media uses information to give the public a precursor of what’s to come, and uses predication to further create fear in the community. The message is, “well you think the situation is bad now just wait, if we don’t do anything it is only going to get worse.” For instance, in the situation with the mods and the rockers, the reporting of one incident is followed by the prediction that more incidents are sure to come just the time and the occasion are not yet known. The thought of impending doom in the community around the moral panic and the possibility of random violence only creates widespread panic in the community and can even reach a hysterical pitch.

The final component as observed by Stanley Cohen and the media in the construction of the moral panic is symbolization. Symbolization is the process whereby neutral symbols such as clothing style, job category, or entertainment take on negative connotations. They are removed from the neutral or favorable category to the unfavorable or negative category based on their association with the folk
devils and their representation in the media (Cohen 1973:265-272). Cohen relates that during the mod and rocker incidents many journalists and reporters were seen asking youth to pose as if they were getting ready to kick a window in, or were going to tip over a phone booth. This aided in creating the portrayal of the events as worse than the actual events themselves.

Stuart Hall drawing on the work of Cohen demonstrates the relationship between the media and the construction of the moral panic,

The routine structures of news production-impartiality and objectivity-direct the media in the first instance to outside, accredited sources. In the case of ‘deviant’ events, this, in practice, means the representatives of the Control Culture (e.g. police, judiciary, Home Office). Thus, news items are based in the reproductions of primary definitions presented by the Control Culture (Hall & Jefferson 1975:75).

Hall goes on to state,

Once the media have spoken in their voice, on behalf of the inaudible public, the primary definers can then use the media’s statements and the claims as legitimatizations (magically, without any visible connection) for their actions and statements, by claiming the press-via the press, public-support. In turn, the ever attentive media reproduce the Control Culture statements, thus completing the magical circle, with such effect that it is no longer possible to tell who first began the process; each legitimates the other in turn (Hall & Jefferson 1975:76).

The local media have played a large role in shaping public opinion in the city of Breverton. The media periodically carries stories covering gang activity in the community. During the legislation session the editorial section of the newspaper carried various articles about the potential of the threat of gangs in the community. Local law enforcement officials were quoted as saying that although gang activity had dropped in recent months there was the expectation that the gang activity and violence in the city would be on the rise during the summer months. This is very clearly the use of prediction that Stanley Cohen was referring to. This
tactic was successfully in the city of Breverton. The use of prediction and the efforts of the GPIC all came together to create fear in the community.

The use of the media to perpetuate hysteria in the community surrounding gangs can be seen in the media’s attention to a shooting said to be gang related by Breverton local law enforcement. The headline on the front page of the Breverton newspaper read, “Shooting kills one at Breverton Armory, Two men are arrested in the slaying after a Friday night dance.” The article describes the events that occurred the evening of the shooting. It is interesting that the reporters used the term “slaying” when describing the incident to further create sensationalism and hysteria in the city. Another term that was used to describe the shooting was, “shoot out”. This article created the appearance of the Old West where “shoot outs” and people were being slain in the streets. No one appeared to be safe in the city of Breverton. (Davies & Soto 1997: 2-16).

The local newspaper in the city of Breverton has played an important role in perpetuating the moral panic of youth gangs in the city. The increased and continued coverage of gang related activity in the newspaper has kept the public’s awareness and concern about the issue high. In turn this has worked to maintain, and many times increase public support of funding of the Gang Task Force of the Breverton Police Department, and the activities of the GPIC. Examples of the manipulation of the media are clearly demonstrated in a headline that appeared in the editorial section of the newspaper. It read, “Breverton Shooting of Bystander Shows Reality of Gang Violence.” The opening statement in the article reads, “A Saturday morning killing ripped away any comfort that Breverton residents may have felt from the city’s statistical decrease in crime” (Statesman Journal Editorial Section: 1997). To cement the idea in the public’s mind that gang violence is random and could strike anyone at anytime. The author states that many in the community have been indifferent to the gang issue believing that it is a Hispanic issue and ties gang-related violence to Latino youth by stating that, “After all the victim was a migrant worker from Mexico, a popular Mexican band was playing at the dance and according to police, the gunfire involved two fractions of a Hispanic
gang, the Brown Pride Raza and the Brown Pride Tokers.” It is clear who the folk devils in the community are, Latino and Chicano youth. The article goes on to state the importance of the general public’s support of local law enforcement officials’ tactics aimed at decreasing gang activity in the city. The article specifies the support in the contribution of money and volunteer time, and the support of new legislation aimed at curbing gang violence. This goes back to the criteria established by Goode and Ben-Yehuda, the process of legalization through the passage of legislation. The article further states the importance of the allocation of resources for the city of Breverton, the Breverton School District and the state legislature, “will either discourage or encourage the growth of gangs.”

On February 17, 1997, another article ran on the front page with the headline, “Police: Breverton Armory shooting is a warning sign of gangs.” The article quotes a lieutenant in the Breverton Police Department stating, “The community ought to be concerned” and “this places us up one more rung on the evolutionary ladder of gang activity in Breverton” (Davies 1997).

On February 18, 1997, another article appeared, “Gang clashes less frequent, more violent.” This article starts by stating that, “The fatal weekend shooting of a bystander outside a Valentine’s Day Dance came on the heels of growing gang violence in Breverton” (Parsons 1997). Although the author does acknowledge that in fact gang violence has dropped since 1994, the author quotes local law enforcement officials that gang-related violence has become more violent. A local law enforcement official is quoted as saying that, “We are seeing an escalation in weapons and the use of firearms.” Although gang-related crime shows a relative decrease, the article implies that the number of gang-related assaults and weapons crimes has jumped. A lieutenant in the Breverton police force is quoted as saying, “There seems to be a lesser concern for not only personal safety, but certainly the safety of the public.” Another officer from the sheriff’s department stated, “A fatal shooting like Saturday has always been a big concern we’ve had,” and “We hope it’s not an increasing trend.” The article further summarizes the risk to the community by stating that activities that draw large
numbers of young people have more potential for gang-related problems. Further criminalizing the activities of youth, which has become a national trend.

Another article that appeared in the local newspaper states, “Violence brings Armory’s entertainment fare under fire.” This article also appeared on February 18, 1997. This article ran with the above article to increase the awareness and concern of local residents to the threat of gang violence. The Armory has traditionally held dances with Spanish-speaking musical groups that have drawn Latinos from around the state. After the shooting in Breverton during a Valentine’s Day Dance, an organization was formed whose aim was to recruit “better” entertainment (Davies 1997). Many Latino and Chicano community leaders and activists took this as meaning groups that were not marketed to Latinos and Chicanos in the community. This change might be difficult, because those in charge of running the Armory are now making a profit since they began holding the dances for the Spanish-speaking community.

Another article on the security of the Armory reads, “Military shores up Breverton Armory security.” The article emphasizes the use of increased security at upcoming events (Gustafson 1997). Another article that ran adjacent to this article was titled; “Armory fight easily could have injured more.” A prosecutor was quoting as saying. “He was amazed more people weren’t injured by gunfire as they left the Breverton Armory dance early Saturday.” A Deputy District Attorney is quoted as saying, “We’re real lucky there were no other victims” (Davies 1997).

Another article that was particularly disturbing in its apparent manipulation of public opinion appeared February 20, 1997. The headline read, “2 Arraigned in death of Armory bystander.” The article gives detailed information about the arraignment of two young men charged with the death of a Breverton man during a shooting that occurred on Valentine’s Day at a local dance. Beside the article ran a picture of a man using a steam cleaner to erase graffiti off a local building. The picture implies that the graffiti is gang-related and I as already discussed in the previous chapter further cements in the minds’ of the general public that graffiti and gangs are intertwined. The caption read, “Assault on graffiti.” The city of
Breverton has been plagued by graffiti. The use of this image in close proximity to the article on the shooting at the armory cemented for many community members the connection between graffiti and gang activity. As Jeff Ferrell states, there are two types of graffiti found in the community, one that is gang related and the other that is the work of local taggers. Gang-related graffiti is generally much less prevalent. Most of the graffiti that is found in the community can be traced back to groups of youth who identify themselves as taggers and who have no connection to any local gangs. This is a very fine distinction that is made and is really beyond the comprehension of the majority of community members who view the issue of gangs and graffiti as interrelated and make a very superficial connection. Much of the graffiti that is found in the community is the result of taggers not related to any gang but whose primary purpose is to spread their logo across the city. The article that ran next to the photo reinforces the idea for community members that graffiti is related to gang activity. As a result, the connection has been established that the presence of graffiti in the community also signifies the presence of gang-related activity. The article does not state this directly but does imply this by running the two pieces together therefore subconsciously planting the seed within the larger community (Davies 1997).

Another article ran a month after the shooting read, “Gangs a daily battle in Breverton.” A subheading read, “The number of incidents has fallen, but officials fear warmer weather will bring further problems to neighborhoods.” This is what Stanley Cohen refers to as prediction; the impending doom that is believed can hit the community at any moment. With the article ran a photo of a Breverton woman holding her daughter and under the photo ran the caption that despite a drop in Breverton gang activity, she’s worried, “One of my children might become an innocent victim” (Larry Parsons 3-10-1997). The article flaunted the work of the GPIC and quoted many of the organizations committee members and listed the past “achievements” of the organization. The reporter took the time to outline the new proposed day curfew that had become a very controversial topic in the city with many community members coming out in direct opposition to the proposed curfew.
The article quoted one committee member from the GPIC as stating that although there had been a decrease in gang activity in the city of Breverton this was only due to the winter weather and that when summer came he was quoted as saying, "With the growth in Breverton and Sherwood, we are just going to see an increase in this type of behavior." Again the impending doom of things to come. The reporter also stated that he and other committee members were concerned that gang activity was becoming more and more violent. This was the same information that was a previous headline in another newspaper article. This further created a feeling of anticipation in the community and the impending gang violence predicted to hit the city during the summer. The article quoted community members saying that they have noticed a drop in recent months of graffiti. Again making the connection in peoples’ minds between gang violence and graffiti. The article also stressed the incidents that have occurred in Northeast Breverton where my husband and I lived during this research project. The reporter spoke to some community members.

Two of the community members were Anglo-Saxon and described an increase in gangs and gang-bangers. Given the racial tension and recorded perceptions of community members who live in the neighborhood where the interviews were conducted I would imagine that many Anglo-Saxon community members were describing Latino youth who live in the community dressed in *ropa floja* (literally translated loose clothes) and assume that these youth are involved in gang activity.

In this article, the reporter also interviewed a local storeowner who runs the neighborhood convenience store. This owner is a minority community member from the Asian community. His perceptions, according to the article, are much different than those held by the Anglo-Saxon interviewees. The storeowner is quoted as saying that he doesn’t feel the gang problem is that bad now, and that it certainly isn’t anything like it was in San José California where he had previously lived. With this article, which covered the first and second page of the newspaper, also ran a summer and winter gang log. The two logs detailed gang activity in the city of Breverton by giving detailed accounts of Breverton Police Department stops and contacts during this time. The reporter states that since January of 1996 the
city of Breverton has experienced 58 gang-related incidents a month. How many of these incidents were related to gang activity is not clear, but the extensive logs plant in the publics' mind the presence and threat from youth gangs. (Larry Parsons 3-10-97). In another article a Breverton police officer that serves on the Breverton Gang Task Force is quoted as saying, “I don’t think we’re losing” and “We’re pretty much treading water, maintaining the status quo.” Prior to this statement the reporter lists that the number of documented gang members in the local area shot up from two hundred and five in 1990 to at present seven hundred documented gang members. How these youth have been documented is still very questionable and therefore the figures given by the local law enforcement officials need to be viewed skeptically rather than just blindly accepted as factual representations. These articles clearly demonstrate the use of statistics and their exaggeration to further build hysteria in the community that eventually leads to the emergence of a moral panic.

The above article ran with two other articles also related to gangs. The first was titled, “Solutions: Students’ behavior can lead to ‘early warning’ letters to parents.” The article states that beginning in the fall parents will receive warning letters from the public schools and school-based police officers if their children are displaying gang-style behavior. Perceptions of gang-style behavior is really the main point of this thesis since much of what is depicted as gang-style behavior turns out to be a part of Latino and Chicano subculture.

One section of the articles that appeared in the local newspaper drew attention to ethnic divisions in local gangs stating that there has been an increase in the members of Hispanic and Asian-American gangs in the city. A city official and a GPIC committee member states, “We’re not looking for a community that drives people to gangs as a source of protection” “Overall we’re behind as a community when it comes to feelings of inclusion and equity” (Larry Parsons 3-10-97). Although this city official made this statement publicly, the main reason that youth do join gangs is because of feelings of marginalization. Although city officials feel that they are actively working on these issues many times their actions do not carry
much weight with minority community members since they lack cultural competency.

The following day another article ran in the editorial section of the newspaper, the headline stated, “Defeating gangs in Salem will take persistence, vision.” The article called for support of the police department by community groups, neighborhoods, and parents. The opening line reads, “Gangs are a daily, and sometimes deadly presence in Salem.” The article states that there has been a decrease in crime based upon the efforts the local law enforcement officials, community groups, social service agencies, and neighborhood association groups and goes on to state, “These efforts must continue because it will take persistence, money, time and creativity to keep Breverton’s schools, streets and homes safe from gang crime and warfare. Gangs thrive among apathy, fear, and complacency—emotions we cannot afford if we are to win the battle. And make no mistake, it is a battle.” The article goes on to list some of the preventative strategies that can be used to curb youth involvement in gang activity. Many of the suggestions appear to have been taken directly from the GPIC (Editorial Statesman Journal March 11, 1997). These types of articles only serve to further legitimize the perspective and actions of the GPIC and further exclude the voice and opinions of other community members with alternative perspectives.

Another way that the media have been manipulated by the GPIC is that they have directly called media representatives to cover events held by the GPIC. One such incident was the coverage by the media of the GPIC Gangs 101 Conference. The headlines read, “Expert: Abandonment central to gangs’ lure” (Parker: 1997: 1c, 7c).

Since the impending doom and threat of the gang-related violence did not materialize during the summer months, the local newspaper began to report stories from a city to the north of Breverton. The headline read on Tuesday June 17, 1997, “Portland’s summer gets deadly start” the sub-caption read, “After four gun deaths in eight days, residents worry about safety.” One of the four shootings was under investigation and was confirmed as gang-related the other four shootings were not
clear if they were also gang related and were still under investigation. The article stated that the mayor of Portland was planning on cutting back the gang unit of the local police department by half but that the mayor had now decided to rescind that order (Associated Press Portland: 1997).

Another article that appeared in the newspaper on Tuesday June 17, 1997, read, “Graffiti vandals mar new school.” $2000.00 dollars worth of damage had been done to a new school in south Breverton that had yet to open. The article detailed the damage that was done to the new school. Although this regularly occurred in North Breverton, there was never this type of media attention to one incident of graffiti and yet in the South Breverton area this became big news (Davies 1997: 1c). Another example of how the gang problem was radiating into areas once considered “safe”.

Another example of the use of the media by policy officials was demonstrated in the headline, “Tax cut endangers schools’ anti-gang program.” The article outlined the county’s possibility of losing five deputies as a result of a measure passed by the states’ citizens. The article stated that the city would lose their police liaison officers as a result of the cutbacks. This article appeared on April 26, 1997, while the state legislature was in session and two months after the city experienced the shooting in February that was said to have been gang-related. This information was still fresh in community members’ minds and the article attempted to link financial resources to the gang problem in Breverton. Perhaps community members would now support increases in funding to law enforcement officials based on fear even though the public had earlier elected to rescind the funding (Velaquez 1997: 1c).

These articles demonstrate the very sophisticated social discourse that was occurring around the topic of youth gangs. What is remarkable is the focus on the GPIC and their work and involvement in the social discourse of gangs. The local newspaper generally reported the news in a light that reflected favorably on the activities of the GPIC. In many ways, it seemed that the GPIC was creating news for the community to directly boost its credibility, and therefore increase public
support and opportunities for funding. These articles did legitimize their perspective and stance on the issue of youth gangs in the community. The paper did not include alternative opinions of organizations and community members working with gang-affected youth in the community. The GPIC was able to successfully manipulate the local media and maintain their position as the only “experts” on gang policy in the city.

Other articles appeared during this same timeframe in the local newspaper related to gangs for instance, “Police train landlords to spot drug dealers, gangs.” The article was primarily focused on drug dealers, the signs of drug use in an apartment complex or a rental property. But the article did address how to spot gang activity. The Breverton Police department and the State Multi-Family Housing Council sponsored the seminar. The use of gangs and drugs seems also to link youth gangs with drug activity, further reinforcing the belief in the public of the danger of youth gangs (Parker 1997: 1c).

Another article, which appeared in the editorial section of the newspaper read, “Drive-bys might cost you a car. A bill in the House provides for forfeiture of vehicles used in gun related crimes.” The article states that lawmakers and law enforcement officials are hoping that the proposed bill will make gang members contemplating a drive-by shooting rethink the idea because if they do there is the possibility of the threat of losing their vehicles. One law enforcement official is quoted as supporting the bill. While another officer is quoted as saying, “Honestly, when you look at the crime that is committed in a drive-by shooting, they are looking to kill somebody, If they are willing to risk life imprisonment or the death penalty for homicide, then I don’t think the chances that they are going to lose their vehicle is much of a threat to them”. Both of these articles further demonstrate how the moral panic becomes legitimized even though there weren’t any specific pieces of legislation that had been passed. In regards to the moral panic of gangs there were pieces of legislation that had been passed therefore meeting the criteria as outlined by Goode and Ben-Yehuda in determining if a moral panic exists in the community.
In this process of legitimization, the media have also been used to debate public policy decisions in the city of Breverton. One example is the proposed day curfew by the city. The daytime curfew was identified as a high priority by the GPIC. The goal of the daytime curfew was to reduce gang recruitment and activity in the city. The curfew prohibits youth between the ages of seven to eighteen years of age, who have not graduated from high school, from being in public places, unless accompanied by a parent or guardian, during normal school hours.

The issue of the day curfew first appeared in the Breverton newspaper on January 31, 1997. The headline read, “Breverton police suggest day curfew to counter gangs.” The opening line read, “Police officials want Breverton to adopt a daytime curfew law to cut down on gangs recruiting students who stray from school.” The article stresses the importance of the daytime curfew as a way of reducing gang recruitment and of keeping kids in school. Unfortunately, they fail to address the issue of an updated curriculum that would better mirror the kids’ experiences and therefore hold their attention, making school a much more meaningful and rewarding experience (Velazquez 1997: 1a, 2a).

The next article regarding the proposed daytime curfew appeared on April 15, 1997. The headline read, “Families leery about curfew idea.” This article opened with, “Parents and students warned the Breverton city council on Monday of possible pitfalls in a proposed daytime curfew.” The article was a detailed account of the previous evening’s city council meeting. The article states that although speakers representing both sides of the issue spoke, the overwhelming majority was opposed to the daytime curfew and expressed their concerns to the Breverton city council. Concerns of community members who gave testimony ranged from civil right’s violations of teens to further tension between police officers and minority community members, especially those from language minority communities (Williams: 1997 lc). How would monolingual English-speaking officers approach youth from minority language families, and successfully question them in regards to their activities. Latino and Chicano community members already knew the answer to that question that; Latino,
Chicano youth in addition to other youth from minority communities, would shoulder the burden of proof in these exchanges with local law enforcement officials.

The next article discussing the day curfew appeared in the April 28, 1997, edition. The headline read, “City council to discuss daytime youth curfew.” The opening paragraph states, “The Breverton city council tonight will discuss a controversial proposal to enact a daytime curfew for children ages seven to seventeen. The proposal that drew a barrage of opposition at a recent public hearing would prohibit school-age kids from being in public places during school hours, unless accompanied by a parent or guardian.” The article also states, “Many students and parents have come out against the plan, saying it infringes on students’ rights and fails to address the true causes of truancy” (Statesman Journal 1997: 1a). The Breverton City Council unanimously passed the day curfew on April 28, 1997, even though there was a tremendous amount of opposition to the proposed measure.

The April 29, 1997, front-page edition read, “Breverton to give daytime curfew a try.” Subheading read, “The council votes unanimously for the plan despite community opposition.” The article detailed the decision of the Breverton city council in their passage of the daytime curfew. The curfew was to take effect in the fall of 1997. In January, the council was to review the curfew to ensure that there weren’t any problems with the proposed measure. The article also detailed the involvement of the GPIC saying that the organization spearheaded the proposal. One community member is quoted in the article as saying, “I think they just walked all over the public opinion they heard last time.” The community member is concerned that the curfew could violate youth rights and also restrict their movement and freedom (Williams 1997: 1a, 2a).

The local media not only focused on issues of immediate concern to the city but also on similar issues impacting communities to the south. One article read, “Ban on gang activity draws support, legal challenges.” The article described the efforts of a community in Los Angeles to curb gang violence. The city served
notice to eighteen gang members that they were not to gather in groups of more than two anywhere in public in the neighborhood. Many have criticized the ban and others like it across the nation due to its unconstitutionality. This article ran with the photo of a child grasping her mother waist with a fearful expression. The caption read, “Giving comfort: A child hugs his mother as she talks about gang violence in the Franklin area of Los Angeles, the area that the 18th Street Gang calls home” (Associated Press 1997: 1c).

An article appeared in the May 7, 1997 edition of the Breverton newspaper with the headline, “Curfew law is too restrictive some teen’s say.” The article relates the feelings of local youth and their reactions to the daytime curfew. The article tells the story of one Breverton youth who is dismissed from school at 11:00 a.m. so that she is able to go to work. She is now concerned that if she happens to forget to carry her pass that she may be picked up by the Breverton Police Department for truancy. Another senior at a local high school also feels that the daytime curfew is much too restrictive and is concerned about the impact that it will have when it is implemented in the fall (Menefee 1997: 1c).

In closing Hebdige states that, “... the way in which subcultures are represented in the media makes them both more and less exotic than they actually are. They are seen to contain dangerous aliens and boisterous kids, wild animals and wayward pets” (Hebdige 1979:97). The use of the media in Breverton further demonstrates the point that Hebdige is making. Latino youth and their depiction in the media were used as a means to further marginalize them in the community members’ minds. They became the other, the exotic ones, infiltrating the community, and taking away the quality of life that had once been enjoyed but now was being replaced by violence and crime.

The examples from the local newspaper demonstrate the five effects that Stanley Cohen has outlined in his research on the effect on the media in the construction of the moral panic. Again they are: 1). Reinforcing and magnifying a predisposition to expect trouble, 2). Providing the content for rumors and the milling process, 3). Creating a set of culturally identifiable symbols that further
structure the situation and legitimize the action, 4). Spreading hostile beliefs and mobilizing the participants for action, 5). Providing the content for deviant role-playing by transmitting the stereotypical expectations of how persons in particular deviant roles should act. All of the above criteria can be found in analysis of the media and its response and articulation of gangs in the city. Therefore, in this respect the issue of youth gangs qualifies as a moral panic for the city of Breverton.

The public is the second criteria that determines whether or not there is a moral panic in the community. For a moral panic to exist, there needs to be public concern. This does not necessarily mean to suggest that all community members have reached consensus only that there is concern within a segment of the population. As is the case with the media, and their reporting of the moral panic, there is a divide in how the public views the issue of the moral panic and the issue of youth gangs. There are multiple perspectives and multiple realities of events and situations in the community and how they can be interpreted. In the city of Breverton, many local Latino community leaders and other community activists recognized that the youth gang issue was not the epidemic that it had been portrayed as in the local media. On the other hand, local law enforcement officials and some city administrators viewed the issue of youth gangs as an epidemic. This demonstrates very clearly that the city is no longer a homogenous one. This was one of the main issues that initially gave rise to the debate over youth gangs. Community members based upon their ethnicity, and occupational outlook had very different perceptions of what was actually occurring in Breverton in relation to youth gangs. The ethnic diversity that is emerging in the city places people with very different perspectives and points of view within the same community attempting to come up with some plausible solutions for the city and the livability for all of its community members. This has led to increasing difficulties in determining where the problems lie and what are acceptable solutions. While the authors address the issue, it also needs to be said that the public is not a homogenous body, but is actually very diverse.
Law enforcement and agents of social control are the next indicators to determine if there is a moral panic in the community has already been well documented in the previous chapters, and the involvement of local law enforcement officials in the construction of the moral panic. The authors state that efforts are intensified by local law enforcement agencies and they also begin to reach out into state agencies to strengthen their position in the emergence of the moral panic. Almost the entire GPIC Board of Directors has a background in law enforcement. Many are currently involved in a law enforcement agency or an agency dealing with juvenile justice issues. The majority of conferences and presentations conducted about youth gangs in the City of Breverton originated from the GPIC and a criminal justice perspective heavily influenced each of those presentations.

The fourth criterion to determine if there is a moral panic, is the role of politicians and legislators. Throughout the course of the controversy on youth gangs there were related proposals that came before the city council, one of which was a daytime curfew. Many community activists perceived this as a direct violation of the rights of youth within the community. Many of the activists who were actively working against the gang manual also testified against the daytime curfew. Although not a part of the legislative process but a part of public policy formation for the city, the Breverton School Board played a role in the moral panic. The emergence of the moral panic, and the controversy of the gang manual brought many related issues to the Breverton School Board Meetings during this same time. Community activists demanded that the school district deal more effectively with the issue of the rising drop out rate of Latino and Chicano students and other students of color in the district. One of the issues raised was the creation of a nurturing environment for all students, regardless of their ethnic or linguistic background. Many in the Latino community already knew that the issue of youth gangs and the labeling of Latino and Chicano youth as gang members in the public school system was unfair and had detrimental impact on the students in the long run. Unfortunately, the damage for many had already been done and many dropped out of the school system in the city of Breverton. Even though this research project
had begun years prior, the issue of Latino and Chicano youth and the high dropout rate is still reported on a frequent basis in the local newspaper. This continues to be an ongoing issue in the community and it does not appear that it will be resolved anytime in the near future. In conclusion, although there were not direct pieces of legislation passed, there were and still are many areas of public policy formation that directly deal with the moral panic and youth of color in the city of Breverton.

Action groups are another indicator of the emergence of a moral panic. Throughout the controversy of the gang manual in the city of Breverton, there were action groups that came together on various sides of the issue. Initially the gang manual and its creation were sponsored by the GPIC, which constitutes as one action group. Members of the Latino Community and other concerned citizens came together to dismantle the gang manual and stop its distribution in the public educational system. In the community there are different community action groups involved, each holding their own specific view of the causes and solutions of the gang issue in the city of Breverton. Just as the city itself is not homogenous, neither are each of the action groups that formed around the issue of youth gangs. This further reflects the diversity of the community in their perceptions and opinions of the gang issue. Each of these groups in the community, reflecting their opinions and perspectives, has formed an action group in response to youth gangs.

After determining if an event or situation in the community met the criteria for a moral panic, the authors, Goode and Ben-Yehuda, actually measure a moral panic by the following five factors: concern, hostility, consensus, disproportionality, and volatility (1994:33-41). Concern is defined as a "heightened level of concern over the behavior of a certain group or category and the consequences that that behavior presumably causes for the rest of the society" (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994: 33). The authors state that concern can be measured through a variety of sources such as: "public opinion polls, public commentary in the form of media attention, proposed legislation, and social movement activity" (33). As I have already outlined, the issue of youth gangs in the city of Breverton has already reached that fevered pitch. The reporting of the activity of youth gangs
by the local media has been exaggerated, creating a climate of fear in the community. Fear in the community and construction of a moral panic initially led to the formation of the GPIC in response to heightened public concern regarding the issue of youth gangs, and then finally the dissemination of information about youth gangs in the city of Breverton by local social service agencies demonstrates clearly the role of concern in the moral panic.

The second criterion in measuring a moral panic in the community is hostility toward the group or individuals that are believed to be engaged in the "deviant" behavior (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994: 33). The authors state that in the case of a moral panic there must be a behavior that is considered to place the rest of society at risk and there must be a specific group identified with that behavior (33). Many times the targeting of a group can lead to stereotyping by other community members. These stereotypes operate on identifying the "others" based on specific characteristics such as age, race, socio-economic status, physical appearance, and geographic location (33). This is clearly the case in the issue of youth gangs in the city of Breverton. The gang manual is a manifestation of these stereotypes and the hostility that it has generated toward Latino and Chicano youth in the public educational system and the community at large. Latino youth are now viewed as either youth at risk, potential gang members, or as already full-fledged gang members. Many community members that work with Latino and Chicano youth but who are not familiar with the culture, language, and style of the youth come to the conclusion that the youth are involved in gangs based upon stereotypes of language and dress. Here the intersection of ethnicity, gender, and age have come together to negatively impact Latino youth in the community and further the process of marginalization in the city of Breverton.

The third criterion in measuring a moral panic is consensus. The authors describe consensus as an overwhelming agreement or concern in the community that there is a real threat (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994: 34). The authors acknowledge that defining a moral panic in one society and in a specific historical period can be problematic since there are always opposing points of view. This is
very clearly the case in Breverton. While Latino and other community activists recognize that local law enforcement officials, social service agencies, and local school administrators have exaggerated the reporting of youth gangs, these groups on the other hand clearly feel that there is a serious problem with youth violence and more specifically gang violence in the community. So while there is consensus in the community on youth gangs there is a divide in perspective that hinges upon ethnicity, socio-economic class, and occupational outlook. As Benedict Anderson has stated we do in fact imagine communities. There are at times clear divisions in our perceptions of the reality of our experiences in our communities based on history, ethnicity, language, and culture (Anderson 1991:6). What one group might consider a threat another group might not consider being. In theory there should always be room for negotiation in regards to public policy issues and solutions, but in practice this does not always occur (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994:35).

Disproportionality is the fourth criteria by which to measure a moral panic. For the fourth measurement to exist, there must be greater concern in the community than there is a real risk of any threat to the community at large. The authors state that through the use of facts there is an exaggeration of the seriousness of the problem and its threat to the community (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994:36). Whether intentionally or unintentionally, the GPIC and the media misled the community. Their exaggerated use of statistics in conveying the occurrence of youth violence in the community led the public to believe that the presence of youth gangs was more prevalent than it actually was. Disproportionality can be seen in the conferences and presentations that were conducted and sponsored by the GPIC and their use of statistical information. The fifth and last criteria to determine if a moral panic exists in the community is that of volatility. The authors state that many times moral panics and the reactions to them become institutionalized. Through this process there are committees created, social movements, legislation, and increased enforcement policies to adequately deal with the “threat” to the community (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994:38-39). Also in the fifth criterion of volatility the moral panic emerges rapidly on the scene and quickly
escalates from there. Most of this research project was dedicated to this part of the process of constructing a moral panic.

Moral Entrepreneurs

In outlining the criteria and construction of a moral panic also focus on the issue of moral entrepreneurs and their role in the construction of the moral panic. If we hold to the premise that moral panics are constructed rather than naturally occurring phenomena there must then be a sector of the population that determines which situation or event qualifies as a moral panic and who is responsible, either intentionally or unintentionally for perpetuating the moral panic. In their discussion of the phenomena of moral panic authors, Goode & Ben-Yehuda describe the role of moral entrepreneurs in facilitating the emergence of the moral panic. Much of the moral panic can been seen as varying opinions on rules of morality and the boundaries which society identifies as boundaries on morality (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994: 66). The authors state that, "morality is relative geographically and culturally, historically and temporally, situationally, and subculturally" (67). This is clearly the case in the city of Breverton. As we have already discussed, the city of Breverton is experiencing a dramatic flux in the population of the community. With this flux have come different perspectives and perceptions of what are and aren’t appropriate boundaries for the city ranging from issues on education, language, law enforcement, and youth issues. The city of Breverton is no longer the homogenous city that it would like to believe it has been in the past. It is within this context that we need to view the emergence of the moral panic and moral entrepreneurs in this process.

Goode and Ben-Yehuda refer to the role that moral entrepreneurs play in constructing a moral panic. They are drawing on the work done by Howard Becker who first coined the term "moral entrepreneurs". Moral entrepreneurs are those individuals in the community who bring to the attention of the general public the wrong doings of the "deviant group". In the case of the city of Breverton the deviant group has been identified as Latino and Chicano youth in the community.
Becker states that without the moral entrepreneurs the moral panic would not exist. Someone has to bring the attention of the general public to the wrong doings of the deviant group. Becker states, “A person with an interest to be served publicizes the infraction and action is taken; if no enterprising person appears, no action is taken” (1963:122-128). Howard Becker states that, in essence, social groups create deviance by labeling it as such, by establishing the rules and guidelines that are then, in turn, “violated” by the “deviant” group (9). Becker also states that in complex societies the establishment of rules is not an easy endeavor. There are many competing interests and various perspectives and points of view on any given subject. One’s ethnic background, class, and occupational status affect the ways in which given rules evolve. The history, life experience, socio-economic class, and ethnicity of the participants who engage in the rule-making process is carried with them and can further add to an already heterogeneous mix. Unfortunately in the case of Breverton, the composition of the GPIC board, local law enforcement officials, and public school administrators was very much a homogenous group, homogenous in the sense of ethnicity, class, and occupational orientation. This was one of the main concerns of community activists in discussing the activities of GPIC. The concern was raised that the board did not reflect the diversity present in the community and not only as it related to ethnicity and culture but also the board’s orientation and perspective on juvenile justice issues. When the board did finally acknowledge that in fact they did lack representation in terms of ethnic composition they recruited local law enforcement officials of various ethnic backgrounds, but yet not recognizing that the ethnicity of these individuals took a backseat to their social class and occupational interests. This is clearly an example of the way in which different perspectives and lived experiences of the given participants, can affect the process of rule making. Many times there is a tremendous amount of conflict involved in this process (Becker 1963:15). The conflict that arose as a result of this process is further documented on the following pages.
The creation of moral entrepreneurs involves issues of economic power and influence in a community. Those who are the rule makers generally have a considerable amount of power and prestige. The rules which youth are made to follow generally are conceived and drawn up by older and more established individuals in the community without much consideration for the issues that affect the youth on a daily basis. Becker states that this can relate directly not only to lines of class but also to lines of ethnic and gender distinctions as well. Becker takes the example of youth in the society. Generally middle-class individuals are determining the rules for those in the lower socio-economic groups. This is what occurred in the situation in Breverton. Even when ethnic representation was present there were very clearly class lines drawn in the discussion of youth gangs in the city. And even more strongly it was felt that the occupational orientation of board members greatly affected the public policy decisions on the issue of youth gangs in the community. In addition to ethnicity, and class orientation, Becker also states that gender orientation can affect the rule-making process. Men have traditionally developed the rules for women in society. While the majority of the board members for the GPIC were males being that they are over-represented in law enforcement from a historical perspective, the key women that did serve on the board of directors were also coming from a law enforcement perspective therefore demonstrating again the overriding of other factors in lieu of occupational orientation. Gender and ethnicity played a role not only among decision makers but also among the affected youth. Young males, and more specifically young males of color were more likely to be detrimentally impacted by the rules that were developed by the GPIC. In addition to gender, another factor affecting the rule making process is that of ethnicity. Historically ethnic and racial minority groups have generally had their rules developed by members of the Anglo-European community. As I have already suggested, this did occur in the case of Breverton. Although as the battle continued the board of directors did begin to recruit members of varying ethnic backgrounds onto the board, their orientation was still
very much that which maintained the interests of those from the same occupational orientation—law enforcement. Becker states in closing that,

Differences in the ability to make rules and apply them to other people are essentially power differentials (either legal or extralegal). Those groups whose social position gives them weapons and power are the best able to enforce their rules. Distinctions of age, sex, ethnicity, and class are all related to differences in power, which accounts for differences in the degree to which groups so distinguished can make rules for others (1963:17-18).

Becker problemitizes specific scenarios of rules and rulemaking. He proposes the possibility that we can actually describe two similar situations in very different ways using different ways of defining behavior. For example, behavior that is not deviant can result in the labeling of "deviant" given these specific scenarios and misunderstandings. In the case of Breverton many misunderstandings can be directly related back to cultural misunderstandings and different perspectives due to occupational orientation. To even refer to these "misunderstandings" as misunderstandings somewhat diminishes the negative and detrimental effects they would have had on Latino/Chicano youth in the community and underestimates their seriousness. To further elaborate on this point Becker gives us an excellent example of how this can occur. He describes to us the possibility of mislabeling a youth as a deviant given that he or she has innocently been hanging out with members on the fringe of a particular "deviant" group. One evening this youth is picked up, by local law enforcement officials, with the members of the deviant group and as a result is also labeled as a deviant and finds his or her way into the official statistics as a deviant (1963:21). A community activist in the city of Breverton suggested that this was most likely occurring in the city and the statistical information that was being disseminated to community members was a misrepresentation of the number of youth who were actually involved in gang activity. It was even proposed at one point that we request disclosure from local law enforcement officials of the list of youth who had been
documented as gang members in the city. Many believed that youth whose names appeared on the lists were most likely not, in fact, involved in gang activity but perhaps in the past had associated with youth who had been involved in gangs. Many community activists felt that youth with Spanish surnames who chose to dress in a specific style would also appear on the list due to cultural misunderstandings and the interpretation of their style and dress as gang-related.

Moral entrepreneurs are described as having humanistic overtones; they consider themselves humanitarians in that they are attempting to rid 'deviants' of their criminal behavior for the good of themselves as well as the good of the community (Becker 1963: 147-63). This can be very clearly seen in the case of Breverton. Based upon participant observation and interviews conducted with members of the GPIC, I do believe that the overwhelming majority of the members of the board of directors did feel that they were making an important contribution to the quality of life in the city. There was a sense of moral superiority from which many were operating. The Gang Prevention and Intervention Committee of the City of Breverton is the main advisory board for the city on gang policy. In using the theoretical orientation of Howard Becker it can been seen and deducted that the GPIC of Breverton and its board of directors serve as moral entrepreneurs for the city of Breverton on youth and gang activity. This analysis came about as a result of my involvement with the dismantling of the gang manual.

In January of 1996, I began attending the monthly steering committee meetings of the GPIC. Although the GPIC states that they are an organization, which is comprised of members from a broad-based spectrum reflecting the population demographics of the community, in essence this is not the case. After attending various meetings it became clear that the organization was very homogenous in its composition, not only racially and ethnically, but also in terms of age, class, and occupational orientation. As I have already stated the occupational orientation was very heavy on the law enforcement and juvenile justice perspective. The membership composition of the GPIC dramatically reduced their understanding of issues facing minority youth in the community and
their cultural and linguistic knowledge and understanding of these communities. As a cultural anthropologist I am and as are other social scientists very much aware of the impact of additional factors and the context within the issue of gangs are raised. For example, history, culture, language, and their intersection worked together to impact youth in the community and the issue of youth gangs. As cultural anthropologists we are interested in the larger picture of the holistic perspective and how the interaction of all these factors impacts youth. The GPIC did not view the larger context within which youth gangs were emerging. Their main concern was on the punitive aspects of the issue. Without the cultural understanding, there were many decisions made based upon cultural stereotypes and preconceived notions about youth and their involvement in gang activity.

The board members who generally attended the monthly steering committee meetings were Anglo-Europeans from middle class backgrounds. Occupationally there was a high concentration of members who were affiliated with local law enforcement agencies either as corrections officers at the state penitentiaries or as police officers. The newly elected chairperson was a high-ranking police officer for the city of Breverton. Of course this person’s occupational background dramatically impacted their interpretation of gangs in Breverton. The composition of the board influenced and determined the methods that this organization took in approaching the subject of youth and their philosophy of gang intervention. The philosophy of the GPIC was one of a very punitive nature. Which can be clearly seen in their attempt to disseminate the gang manual in the public school system. They also were behind the effort to enforce a daytime curfew for youth in the community, a measure that was very punitive in its nature.

According to Goode and Ben-Yehuda in examining the issue of youth gangs within the theoretical framework that they have established, there is special significance that many of the members of the GPIC belong to local law enforcement agencies. The authors establish that there are three “levels” of society that are generally involved in the construction of moral panics. They are the following: the elite, the middle level, and the general public or grassroots. For this
research project we are primarily concerned with the actions of the middle level. The middle level is comprised of "local media, local police, professional organizations, and local and statewide educational associations" (1994:125). The GPIC steering committee membership roster indicates that seven of the eighteen steering committee members are directly affiliated with local law enforcement and correctional facilities. The other members are city of Breverton employees and one member is employed by the Breverton School District. The remainder of the members are community leaders from religious organizations, one from the Chamber of Commerce, and a deputy district attorney. When I first began attending the meetings I was very surprised to find the lack of ethnic diversity in the group. Three minority community members were listed on the membership rooster, two representing the African American community and one representative from the Asian community. This was disturbing since the review of the grant proposal for the formation of the GPIC stressed the importance of the GPIC as a broad-based community coalition. The assumption was that there was a broad cross representation of the community, ethnically, occupationally and in terms of gender represented in the group. Yet the steering committee itself was a very homogenous group. The composition of the GPIC did not readily encourage community input and participation. Attending the first steering committee meeting was a very intimidating process and I consider myself to be fairly familiar with the climate and culture of formal meetings. The intimidation factor, I believe, was present to discourage differences in opinions and perspectives on gang issues. It would be very difficult to bring together the various opinions and perspectives in the community and reach some type of consensus. It was and is much easier that everyone on the board for the most part shared the same perspective so there wasn't a tremendous need to get into in-depth discussions. This made conducting business much easier and "efficient" in the long run. The composition of the GPIC also brings into question the power structure of the committee. Social science

---

10 Throughout the duration of this research project I only saw the one African-American representative at the steering committee meetings. The other minority representatives were absent
research has documented the relationship between power and the passage of specific legislation and or public policy formation. Logically, those who are in positions of power have access to the media and key political officials who will generally support their agenda without little interference from the general public or grassroots organizations. Those who are in positions of power generally represent the dominant ideology and viewpoint of the more dominant and mainstream societal organizations (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994:82-85). This works to reinforce and secure the hierarchical nature of society and in this case the city of Breverton, maintaining the power, status, prestige, and clout that board members had grown accustomed to throughout the course of their residency and involvement in Breverton.

In conclusion, in the social discourse of youth gangs in the city of Breverton the GPIC and its board members constitute what social scientists have referred to as moral entrepreneurs. In the city of Breverton they are the ones who have constructed and disseminated information to the larger public about the presence of youth gangs in the community. Not only did they disseminate information but they also informed the general public what youth were and are considered to be at risk for gang involvement. In this case it is Latino/Chicano youth who have been designated as at risk in the city. This leads us into a discussion of the concept of folk devils and how moral entrepreneurs in the construction of a moral panic label a specific segment of the society as folk devils. This in turn forces those individuals who are labeled as folk devils further into the margins of society. Many times the process of labeling by moral entrepreneurs can also become a self-fulfilling prophecy for “folk devils.”

Folk Devils

“A folk devil is the personification of evil. Folk devils permit instant recognition; they are “unambiguously unfavorable symbols” (Cohen 1972:41). “Thus a division is made between ‘us’-good decent, respectable folk-and ‘them’-
deviants, bad guys, undesirables, outsiders, criminals, the underworld, disreputable folk ‘we’ and ‘they’” (Cohen 1972:11-12).

Holly Sklar in her article, “Young and Guilty by Stereotype,” addresses the plight of urban youth of color. She states,

“The stereotypical images of youth from the inner city “urban jungle” are teenage welfare mothers, savage gang members or wannabes”... “In shorthand stereotype, Black, and Latino boys mean dangerous ...” (Sklar 1993: 52).

These preconceived notions of Black and Latino youth as dangerous also carries through and finds its articulation in other community institutions, such as the public school system. This works further to isolate and marginalize children and youth who have been publicly at risk, and further perpetuates the internalization of society’s attitudes until they eventually become self-fulfilling prophecies (1993:53). This has been the pattern that has been experienced by Latino and Chicano youth in Breverton. Through the gang manual and the formation of public policy aimed at reducing the increase in gang activity in the local community, Latino youth have been constructed as the criminal element, or folk devils, in the community. It is perceived by many community members that they are directly contributing to the increase in gang activity in the city. In addition to city officials, school administrators and faculty in the educational system have reinforced the construction of Latino youth as folk devils. They have focused on the style, dress, and language of Latino and Chicano youth and have portrayed these cultural characteristics as being representative of gang activity and criminal deviance and, at the very least, as representative of youth who are at risk for gang involvement. Latino and Chicano youth in the city of Breverton have been constructed as contemporary folk devils as the moral panic of youth gangs has emerged in the city.

Specific subcultures throughout the history of contemporary societies worldwide have been constructed and have taken on the significance of folk devils.
Stanley Cohen and his research on the mods and the rockers successfully demonstrate this process and the construction of each of these groups as folk devils. Cohen states that there comes a time in the process of a moral panic that a word becomes symbolic of a certain status and then where the objects themselves become symbolic of that specific status, in this case-deviance (Cohen 1973: 272). Cohen states how other sub-cultural groups have also taken on the role of contemporary folk devils. One such group that specifically relates to this particular study is the Pachucos and the Zoot Suiters of the 1940s. Cohen states that the increased attention to the Pachuco’s style intensified by the media brought to the surface again feelings of “phobia and hatred” towards Mexican-American youth (Cohen 1973: 272). The film Zoot Suit by Luis Valdez also further elaborates on this period in history when being a Zoot Suiter in American society lead to the labeling of a contemporary folk devil in U.S society. In the film Zoot Suit, it is very clearly demonstrated how the intersection of ethnicity, gender, and age come to intersect to negatively impact Latino and Chicano youth. In the film after the war, it also clearly demonstrated how the style, dress, and dance of Pachuco youth were co-opted by Anglo-Saxon youth and how when Anglo-European youth co-opted these styles they were viewed as the latest fashion craze. Stigmas of the Pachuco style were only reinforced if a Latino or Chicano youth happened to be wearing the zoot suit. As social scientists have long documented, this phenomenon is nothing new to contemporary society and can been seen in various examples from history. Stanley Cohen stated, “that once a category has been identified in the media as consisting of trouble makers, the supposed havoc-wreaking behavior of its members reported to the public, and their supposed stereotypical features litanized, the process of creating a new folk devil is complete; from then on, all mention of representations of the new category revolves around their central, and exclusively negative, features.” The authors also state how the media reinforces stereotypes about the Latino community based upon language through the media. The authors state, “Stereotypic characterizations of Chicanos in both printed media
and the electronic media have been presented and sustained by a non-Chicano, usually Anglo, view of the world" (Padilla & Garcia)

One example has been documented by Stuart Hall, in which he describes the moral panics of the 1950s and 1960s in London. He states, "Each event was seen as satisfying a significant problem of youth as a whole. In this case crisis of authority, youth now played the role of symptom and scapegoat" (Hall & Jefferson 1975: 72). The same can be said for the city of Breverton for Latino and Chicano youth. They became the symptom and the scapegoats for the city. Within the context of Breverton and the social discourse of youth gangs, Latino and Chicano youth in the city have been constructed as folk devils just as the emergence of the moral panic has also been constructed. Language, style, and dress of Latino and Chicano youth have come to symbolize youth gangs and gang involvement to the larger general public and moral entrepreneurs. Howard Beck demonstrates the relationship between moral entrepreneurs and the creation of rules in a society and in turn how the creation of rules actually aids in the construction of folk devils. Upon being labeled as a deviant or a folk devil, the youth is caught and reprimanded accordingly and the treatment and the punishment itself might lead to more deviant behavior (Becker 1963: 35). This is the case that can be documented in the city of Breverton. For many Latino and Chicano youth they are very much aware of the label "at risk" and "deviant" and for many they have internalized these ideas and concepts of themselves as folk devils until they have become a self full-filling prophecy. This cycle has played itself out many times over in high dropout rates, and incarceration rates, and involvement with juvenile justice authorities for Latino and Chicano youth. Local law enforcement officials and many involved with juvenile justice issues would like to focus their attention on the family and the individual youth not recognizing that history and the social and cultural climate in turn impacts families and individuals in society either positively or negatively. Through this process, Becker states that the final move of the deviant or folk devil is to move into an organized group of deviants.
When a person makes a defined move into an organized group-or when he realizes and accepts the fact that he has already done so-it has powerful impact on his conception of himself. Members of organized deviant groups have one thing in common, their deviance. It gives them a sense of common fate, of being in the same boat. From a sense of common fate, from having the same problems, grow as a deviant subculture: a set of perspectives and understandings about what the world is like and how to deal with it, and a set of routine activities based upon those perspectives. Membership in such a group solidifies a deviant identity (Becker).

This is the case with many Latino/Chicano youth in the city of Breverton. Since the larger public has long ago identified these youth “at risk” and as they have entered and emerged from the public school system also carrying this label it becomes a “natural” move into the category of deviant and into criminal activity and behaviors. Therefore the cycle is complete.

**Militant Chicanos**

As Latino and Chicano youth have been labeled as folk devils and deviants in the city of Breverton so have the community activists and Latino and Chicano leaders and community activists in the community as we struggled to put an end to the gang manual. Again the power of labeling in this process and as those who held positions of power in the community and moral entrepreneurs attempted to construct Latino and Chicano youth as folk devils they also attempted to do the same with community activists who were in direct opposition to the gang manual. As they labeled youth as being “deviants” and “gang members” they, in turn, labeled others in opposition to the gang manual. Community activists were dismissed as being “uncooperative, rude, militant, confrontational, and radical.” The use of these terms to describe community activists in such a way served to discredit much of the work of community activists. At one meeting we were referred to as “militant Chicanos.” One Latino who held opposing views to the community activists group stated, “I’ve seen it before, man, the look of the Militant Chicano.” As we know the use of militant does not bring about neutral
connotations. The use of militant almost single handedly placed us on the outside margins and fringe of society. Implying that we were not “rational” in terms of attempting to build some resolution or consensus in the community on the issue of youth gangs. In this instance, I do believe the use of the term militant was used purposely to exclude our involvement in revisions to the gang manual. Others stated that we had used the tactics of a Mac Truck when getting the GPIC to reconsider the use of the gang manual. Again the use of Mac Truck implying that we were unwilling and uncooperative and would run over anyone and everything in our path to reach our goal. While it is true that we did have to resort to contacting an attorney during our struggle, I believe that it was the last resort of our group as we had already made heartfelt pleas to the GPIC and its board of directors and to no avail. We had run out of options and the ends justified the means since in this case the damage that would have been done to Latino and Chicano youth would have been irreversible.

One of the social service providers for the Latino community who had become especially active in the struggle received calls from other Latino community leaders stating that they were concerned about the activities that the group had been engaging in and the long term affect that it was going to have on the organization of which she was the co-director of. Subtle threats were made to the organization and its director that if the organization did not stop its direct opposition to the gang manual and the GPIC, it would suffer some of the ramifications, which would be detrimental to the organization and its future.

The social service organization, *La Peña*, was one of the few in Breverton that was willing to directly confront the issues of racism and discrimination in the community related to Latino and Chicano youth. The organization took a beating from Anglo-European community members for their position on and support of social issues. Rather than superficially engaging in these activities the organization took direct and controversial action where no one else was really willing to go for fear of losing county and state funding. Because of *La Peña*’s involvement, rumors began circulating about the social service organization and employees including the
organization's director. These rumors put a lot of pressure on the social service organization. At one point, the board of directors of the GPIC called the board of directors of the social service organization to organize a meeting to come to some resolution about the gang manual. My interpretation of this event was that the GPIC wanted the opposition put to an end and felt that they could strong arm their position by directly appealing to the board of directors. The GPIC said that they were concerned about the direction the organization was taking, citing the gang manual as an example. This controversy placed Latino and Chicano leaders from the social service organization against other Latinos leaders in the community who had chosen to support the GPIC. Based on the concern expressed by the GPIC board and their call to La Peña's board of directors, there was a special meeting called to take place between both parties. At the meeting accusations were made that community activists were behaving in a militant manner and that they were using approaches that didn't build consensus, but rather turned people in the GPIC off. The GPIC Board of Directors again used the terms “Mac truck”, and “militant.” The objective was to deflate the role the organization had taken in opposition to the gang manual, and to weaken the efforts of the overall effort to dismantle the gang manual. Although some in the social service organization were reprimanded, nothing substantial occurred to curb the organization's involvement. Luckily the employees and director of the organization had already taken a lot of heat on other issues that were controversial and they had become accustomed to these reprimands.

The social service organization had gotten the ear of the city's mayor who had long been considered an ally and had a history of supporting the Latino and Chicano community. The mayor attended one of the youth meetings at the social service organization at the request of the youth group. The purpose of the meeting was for the youth group to inform the mayor of the gang manual. It was at this meeting that the mayor was told of the gang manual and shown a copy of the manual. During this meeting he stated that he was very concerned about what he had seen in the manual and that he would support the dismantling of the manual.
and its distribution. This demonstrates the divide in the community, and although
the GPIC had in its corner many very powerful community members, the social
service organization and community activists had created a broad based coalition in
support of its goals.

Prior to the meeting with the mayor there had been other meetings that were
taking place secretly. Two Latino leaders that were working with the GPIC, called
the director of *La Peña*. One of the individuals was planning on running for sheriff
and the other had close ties to those in positions of power in the city. These
individuals planned on meeting with the director to “appeal” to his better judgment.
I was not included in this meeting until the director invited me, much to the
disappointment of the other two Latinos. The meeting could be described as a
“good ol’ boys meeting.” The Latino leaders felt that perhaps they could relate to
the director of *La Peña* on the premise that they were all “Latino men” and
therefore held common interests and beliefs about the issue of gangs and the efforts
of the GPIC. The meeting started with the two Latinos from the GPIC willing to
offer their services and “expertise” on gang issues to the director of *La Peña*. This
was the main theme of the meeting that they were the “experts” and that we were
not. Nothing was accomplished by the meeting since the director of the social
service organization saw through their attempts to weaken the coalition. This was
when the two Latino representatives from the GPIC decided that they would
contact the board of directors from *La Peña* when they were not able to make any
headway with the director, they then went over his head, but to no avail in the long run.

Part of the purpose of describing the community activities and the social
service organization and its director as militant was in a sense to discredit any
perspective that would be brought to the table by either group and also to plant the
seed in the minds of leaders in the city and county of the “trouble” that members of
the social service organization had caused for the GPIC. Many in the GPIC had the
ears and interests of those in power and could influence funding decisions for the
future directly reprimanding those that dared to oppose them.
Many of the conflicts and controversies revolved around the GPIC steering committee meetings that were held monthly. The GPIC had become accustomed to conducting their monthly meetings without public input. Those that were on the steering committee were generally in agreement with one another and opposing points of view were not represented or at least not vocalized. As I became more and more aware of the activities of the GPIC I invited various community activists and leaders to participate in the meetings and to give public testimony in opposition to the gang manual as well as other activities that the GPIC was involved in.

The Steering Committee Meeting Minutes became focal points of contention between the community activists and steering committee members of the GPIC. On numerous occasions those of us who were opposing the implementation of the gang manual were not sent the minutes. Many of us believed that this was a direct result of the inaccuracy of the recording of our comments during committee steering meetings. The steering committee meetings became part of the public record. If our comments and concerns were not accurately recorded in the minutes it could be said at a later date that the GPIC was not aware of our concerns. Therefore, the recording of the minutes became very important. As we became more adapt at challenging their minutes we eventually stopped receiving the minutes in the mail. This happened not only to myself but also to other community activists and leaders who had specifically requested the minutes. A professor of linguistic anthropology at one of the local state universities also attended and testified at several of the monthly meetings. After she testified, she requested that specific information that had been recorded inaccurately be revised and mailed to her after the revision of the minutes was complete. When she asked at the next meeting if the secretary had incorporated the revisions, the secretary stated that she had not received those revisions. Fortunately, I had a copy of three pages of minutes that the professor wanted revised and took the opportunity to read those aloud to the steering committee members at the next meeting. Of course this was not appreciated and at the following meeting, community activists and leaders were told that we could not
make any revisions to the minutes since this right was reserved for members of the board of the GPIC. We continued to pursue the issue of the gang manual at the GPIC Steering Committee Meetings and they became more and more tension-filled. The community activists began to feel the need to tape record the meetings since there had been so many discrepancies in what had actually been said and taken place at the monthly meetings. The tape couldn’t be challenged if there were more “misunderstandings” in the future.

Other community activists have noted the same phenomenon. In the text, *The Struggle for Community*, the author states that his own struggle in a community development project that, “Meetings which had been conducted with an informal tone of inquiry and debate became much more formal. For the first time attention began to be seriously paid to such things as Robert’s Rules of Order. Points of order began to fill the meetings” (Heskin 1991:55). The same phenomenon also occurred when we attended steering committee meetings for the GPIC. Roberts Rules of Order were used to control the perspective of the dominant ideology, that of the GPIC Board Members. It was a form of power to be able to control and record what was occurring in the minutes of the steering committee. The board of directors of the GPIC basically could mold and construct their perceptions of reality that would later become part of the public record for public consumption.

After a particularly nasty exchange at one of the steering committee meetings, at the next meeting, the chair, a local law enforcement official, wore his uniform at the meeting. Perhaps it was only coincidental, but my interpretation of this act was that if he was not able to maintain control over community activists opposing the gang manual he would attempt to do so through intimidation. The use of the uniform was a direct reference to his authority as a police officer. During this meeting, the format and the layout of the tables and chairs were changed. The meeting room in the past had been placed in the shape of a U with the open area consisting of chairs for community members, placed so that we could actively participate in the meetings. At the following meeting the seating arrangements
were also placed in a U but with the chairs for the community members placed along the closed section of the U rather than the open section. So the community members were facing the backs of the steering committee members. We were in essence physically and symbolically locked out of participating in the steering committee meeting. Also during this same meeting, steering committee members were given name tags symbolizing that they had the “right” to participate in the meeting whereas community members were not. These changes in the meeting format further emphasized our position as outsiders. When I asked about these changes, the chairperson stated that they had always used these procedures, but that in the past couple of months they had grown somewhat lax and they were reinstituting the “old” format. I spoke to another community member who had been attending the meetings for over a year and I asked her if this was in fact the format that they had used, she said no she had never seen them do something like this before. Again in my interpretation I believe that these strategies were incorporated to further limit and exclude participation of community members with opposing perspectives. At the start of the meeting I mentioned that this format was not conducive to community participation, and that, in fact, it gave us a very strong message that we were not welcome at the steering committee meetings. The chairperson stated that this was not the intent but just that they were reinstating their “old policy.” I thought this was very ironic since in the mission statement of the organization they stated that they want and have a broad-based community representation active in the GPIC. Perhaps this is only when the community happens to agree with their particular agenda and perspective on the issue of youth gangs.

There was also a separate committee formed to specifically deal with the review of the gang manual. Since the gang manual was supported by the GPIC it fell under their jurisdiction to review and revise the manual in a subcommittee of the GPIC. When my husband and I specifically asked about the place and time for the subcommittee meeting, we were denied that information. We subsequently did receive the meeting time and place later from another source. The point of
contention during this meeting was that originally it had been stated that members
of the subcommittee would be given two weeks to review the manual before
meeting to discuss changes. In actuality community activists received their
manuals three days in advance of the subcommittee meeting. When my husband
and I attended that meeting, I called this to their attention, adding that the meeting
should not continue since two weeks had not be given to review the manual. The
same anthropology professor who had been actively involved with the review of
the gang manual pointed out this error to the GPIC Board, and further pushed to
hold them accountable to the timeframe they had specified. The person who was in
charge of organizing this meeting was embarrassed since she had called prestigious
community members to attend the meeting. They were busy individuals who had
taken time to attend this meeting that was now going to be canceled. The meeting
was canceled and rescheduled so that all members would have adequate time to
review the manual as had originally been intended. They had instituted Roberts
Rules of Order and now we were using those same rules to our advantage that had
been used against us in the past. Probably because of incidents such as this, many
of us were no longer receiving the steering committee’s minutes.

Another incident where the steering committee minutes came in handy was
in documenting a statement that was made by a school district employee. When
asked about the gang manual, the employee stated that, “The School District did an
extensive cultural review before sanctioning the manual.” We later checked out
this statement and even requested to see a copy of the “extensive cultural review”
that the school district had done according to this school district employee. This
statement was raised at the next steering committee meeting and the person who
made the statement quickly backed away from it and stated that she had not made
any such comment, although it appeared in the minutes. Another committee
member stepped up to bat to take the blame for the comment, and stated that was
what she thought she had heard said, but perhaps that was not an accurate recording
of the statement in the minutes. That was the end of that.
After we had made many recommendations for revisions of the minutes at the next meeting we were told that since we were not on the steering board committee for the GPIC we could no longer make any recommendations for revisions of the minutes and that this could only be done by the GPIC committee members.

Additional controversies that emerged from these monthly meetings are too many to list in this thesis. It became very clear that the steering committee meetings and minutes were a struggle for power and representation. The backlash that was experienced by the community activists, are an indication of how tense things had become in the community.

In conclusion, the same tactics that were used to marginalize Latino and Chicano youth in the community were also used by GPIC Steering Committee Members to discredit the input of community activists. These types of strategies only further build discontent and exclusion in the community. It needs to be recognized that as the population demographics change in the community so should the representation of alternative perspectives that are representative of all community members.
Chapter 5

The Media

As I have already documented, the social discourse of gangs in the city of Breverton qualifies as a moral panic. To further elaborate on the phenomenon of the moral panic it is important that we have a clear understanding of the role the media plays in perpetuating the moral panic in the community. Dick Hebdige specifically focuses on the ways that the media manipulate the perceptions of the community. Dick Hebdige states that when a subculture emerges it is generally accompanied by a, “wave of hysteria in the press” (Hebdige 1979:92). As I have documented in the previous chapter, this is what occurred in the city of Breverton. Hebdige states that, “Style in particular provokes a double response: it is alternately celebrated (in the fashion page) and ridiculed or reviled in those articles which define subcultures as social problems” (Hebdige 1979:93). He goes on to state that, “in most cases, it is the subculture’s stylistics innovations which first attract the media’s attention. Subsequently deviant or ‘anti-social’ acts—vandalism, swearing, fighting, ‘animal behavior’—are ‘discovered’ by the police, the judiciary, the press; and these acts are used to ‘explain’ the subcultures originally transgression of sartorial codes”(Hebdige 1979:93).

Stanley Cohen elaborates on the role the media plays in perpetuating the moral panic. He states, as he describes the role of the media in constructing a moral panic, “the mass media are the main agents of moral panics... their very reporting of certain ‘facts’ can be sufficient to generate concern, anxiety, and indignation or panic” (Cohen 1973:432-433). The role of the media according to Cohen is to provide a medium for communicating and spreading a “hostile belief and mobilizing potential participants” (Cohen 1973:453). “The presence of the media—actually, in the form of cameras and reporters, symbolically in the form of the next day’s stories—gave police and the courtroom confrontations with the deviants
ritualistic dramatic quality. These were arenas for acting out society’s morality plays” (Cohen 1973:457). In summary Cohen states, “the societal reaction in general and the mass media in particular could plausibly be thought to have had the following sort of effects on the nature, extent and development of deviance; 1). Reinforcing and magnifying a predisposition to expect trouble: “something’s going to happen.” 2). Providing the content for rumors and the milling process, thereby structuring the something into potential or actual deviance; such as rumors or images facilitated deviance by solidifying the crowd and validating its modes and actions. 3). Creating a set of culturally identifiable symbols which further structure the situation and legitimized the action. 4). Spreading hostile beliefs and mobilizing the participants for action. 5). Providing the content for the deviant role-playing by transmitting the stereotypical expectations of how persons in particular deviant roles should act (Cohen 1973:457).

Stanley Cohen in his work on the mods and the rockers in London during the 1960s demonstrate the role of the media in constructing the image of the mods and the rockers as contemporary folk devils. He states that the initial incident in 1964 and the media coverage of that event set the tone and coming media coverage of the mod and rockers’ incidents for the future (Cohen 1973:263). Cohen states that the media acts as the main source for the public and their interpretation of deviants and deviance in contemporary society (Cohen 1973:264). As can be seen the previous chapter this also occurred in the city of Breverton. During a specific time when this research project was carried out there was a heightened awareness in the community to gang activity and much of it can be attributed to the media. As I have documented there was a period of time when the local media in the city of Breverton focused daily on the issue of youth gangs. According to Cohen the media use various approaches in constructing the moral panic and the construction of folk devils in contemporary society they are the following; exaggeration and distortion, prediction, and symbolization (Cohen 1973:265-277).
Exaggeration and distortion are used in the media through reports of the number in attendance at a particular incidence, the number involved in the violence, and the amount of violence that has occurred. Prediction is used by the media as a precursor of what’s to come, for instance, in the situation with the mods and the rockers the reporting of one incident is followed by the prediction that more incidents are sure to come just the time and the location are not yet know. This also occurred in the city of Breverton, and many times the media would allude to the fact that more violence was on its way. There was the thought of impending doom in the community around the moral panic, and the random violence of the folk devils. The final component as observed by Stanley Cohen, is the role of the media in the construction of the moral panic and the criminalization of certain symbols. Symbolization is the process were by neutral symbols such as clothing style, job category, or entertainment take on negative connotations, so they are removed from the neutral or favorable category to the unfavorable or negative category just based on their association with the folk devils and their representation in the media (Cohen 1973:265-272). This is really the starting point for this thesis, since the premise of this thesis is that the subculture style, dress, and language of Latino and Chicano youth moved from the neutral category to the unfavorable category in the city of Breverton. In summary, Dick Hebdige states that, “... the way in which subcultures are represented in the media makes them both more and less exotic than they actually are. They are seen to contain dangerous aliens and boisterous kids, wild animals and wayward pets (Hebdige 1979:97). Again in the same can be seen in the case of youth gangs and their portrayal in the media.

Stuart Hall draws on the work of Cohen and demonstrates the relationship between the media and the construction of the moral panic,

The routine structures of news production-impartiality and objectivity-direct the media in the first instance to outside, accredited sources. In the case of ‘deviant’ events, this, in practice, means the representatives of the Control Culture (e.g. police, judiciary, Home Office). Thus, news items are based in
the reproductions of primary definitions presented by the Control Culture (Hall & Jefferson 1975:75).

This goes directly to the situation in Breverton where the GPIC and local law enforcement officials and viewed as credible while social scientists, educators, and community activists, are sidelined and silence in the social discourse of youth gangs. In the previous chapter we discussed the role of power in the community the use of the media in the construction of the moral panic relates directly back to the issue of power. Hall goes on to state, “Once the media have spoken in their voice, on behalf of the inaudible public, the primary definers can then use the media’s statements and the claims as legitimations (magically, without any visible connection) for their actions and statements, by claiming the press-via the press, public-support. This is what occurred in the city of Breverton and the social discourse of gangs. In turn, the ever attentive media reproduce the Control Culture statements, thus completing the magical circle, with such effect that it is no longer possible to tell who first began the process; each legitimates the other in turn” (Hall & Jefferson 1975:76).

The local media have played a large role in shaping public opinion in the city of Breverton. The media periodically carries stories covering gang activity in the community. During the legislation session the editorial section of the newspaper carried various articles about the potential threat of gangs in the community. Local law enforcement officials were quoted as saying that although gang activity had dropped in recent months there was the expectation by local law enforcement that gang activity and violence in the city would rise during the summer. Stanley Cohen stated, “that once a category has been identified in the media as consisting of trouble makers, the supposed havoc-wreaking behavior of its members reported to the public, and their supposed stereotypical features litanized, the process of creating a new folk devil is complete; from then on, all mention of representations of the new category revolves around their central, and exclusively negative, features.” The authors, Padilla and Garcia state how the media reinforces
stereotypes about the Latino and Chicano Community through the media. The authors state, “Stereotypic characterizations of Chicanos in both printed media and the electronic media have been presented and sustained by a non-Chicano, usually Anglo, view of the world” (Padilla & Garcia).

The use of the media to perpetuate hysteria in the community surrounding gangs can be seen in the media’s attention to a shooting that was said to be gang related by Breverton local law enforcement. The headline on the front page of Breverton Newspaper read, “Shooting kills one at Breverton Armory, Two men are arrested in the slaying after a Friday night dance.” The article describes the events that occurred the evening of the shooting. It is interesting that the reporters used the term slaying to describe the incident and the use of slaying falls into the category of exaggeration since it was later reported that the gun went off accidentally. In another article the term shoot out was used to describe the shooting. Again the reporters appear to be describing the incident in a sensational and exaggerated fashion (Janet Davies & Kaly Soto 2-16-97).

The local newspaper in the city of Breverton has played an important role in perpetuating the moral panic in the city by bringing to voice the GPIC perspective that has dominated the majority of the stories in the local paper. The local newspaper in the city of Breverton has contributed and perpetuated the rise in of the moral panic related to gang activity. A headline in the editorial section of the newspaper reads, “Breverton shooting of bystander shows reality of gang violence.” The opening statement in the article reads, “A Saturday morning killing ripped away any comfort that Breverton residents may have felt from the city’s statistical decrease in crime” (Editorial Statesman Journal 2-18-97). The author states that many in the community have been indifferent to the gang issue believing it is a Hispanic issue and the author ties gang related violence to the Latino Community by stating that, “After all the victim was a migrant worker from Mexico, a popular Mexican band was playing at the dance and, according to police, the gunfire involved two fractions of a Hispanic gang, the Brown Pride Raza, and the Brown
Pride Tokers.” The article goes on to state the importance of the general public’s support of local law enforcement officials tactics aimed at decreasing gang activity in the city. The way that the article specifies the support is the contribution of money, volunteering of time, and then goes on to link the legislative session and their allocation of resources to the city of Breverton, the Breverton School District and the Legislature, “will either discourage or encourage the growth of gangs.”

On February 17, 1997, another article ran on the front page with the headline, “Police: Breverton Armory shooting is a warning sign of gangs.” The article quotes a lieutenant in the Breverton police department stating, “The community ought to be concerned” and “this places us up one more rung on the evolutionary ladder of gang activity in Breverton” (Janet Davies 2-17-97).

Another article reads, “Gang clashes less frequent, more violent.” This article starts out by stating that, “The fatal weekend shooting of a bystander outside a Valentine’s Day dance came on the heels of growing gang violence in Breverton” (Parsons Feb. 18, 1997). Although the author does acknowledge that in fact gang violence has dropped since 1994, the author also states that local law enforcement officials state that gang related violence has become much more violent. A local law enforcement official is quoted as saying that, “We are seeing an escalation in weapons and the use of firearms.” Although gang related crime has shown a relative decrease, the article states that the number of gang related assaults and weapons crimes has jumped. A lieutenant in the Breverton police force is quoted as saying that, “There seems to be a lesser concern for not only personal safety, but certainly the safety of the public.” Another officer from the sheriff’s department stated, “A fatal shooting like Saturday has always been a big concern we’ve had,” and “We hope it’s not an increasing trend.” The article summarizes the risk to the community by stating that activities that draw large numbers of young people have more potential for gang related problems.

Another article that was particularly disturbing in its apparent manipulation of public opinion, appeared February 20, 1997. The headline read, “2 Arraigned in
death of armory bystander.” The article gives detailed information about the arraignment of two young men charged with the death of a Breverton man during a shooting which occurred on Valentine’s Day at a local dance. Beside that article ran a picture of a man using a steam cleaner to erase graffiti off a local building. The picture implies that the graffiti is gang related therefore the reasoning behind running the picture with the article of the gang shooting and the youth. The caption read “Assault on graffiti.” The city of Breverton has been plagued by graffiti. In the community where we are presently living there is graffiti, which can routinely found in the back alleys and on public buildings in the area. The one thing which most residents are not aware of is that most graffiti is not necessarily connected to gang activity. Most of the graffiti seen in the community is the result of taggers who are not related to any gang but whose primary purpose is to spread their logo across the city. The article that with the photo gives the community the perception that graffiti is related to gang activity, therefore, the connection is established that the presence of graffiti in a community also signifies the presence of gang related activity. The article does not state this directly but does imply this by running the two pieces together therefore subconsciously planting the seed within the larger community (Janet Davies 2-20-97).

The use of the media in setting a specific agenda with the public was also seen as the social discourse of gang emerged in the city of Breverton. The GPIC was instrumental in their use of the media in shaping public opinion about gangs in the city. The GPIC also successfully used the media to facilitate it’s agenda with the public and to gain favorable reviews of the work they were doing eventhough much of that work was being contested during this same time that the positive articles ran in the local newspaper. During this time the GPIC was receiving quite a bit of heat related to some of its public policy recommendations to the city and the public school system, specifically the use of a gang manual and a day curfew proposed for city youth.
An article, which ran a month after the shooting read, “Gangs a daily battle in Breverton.” A subheading reads, “the number of incidents has fallen, but officials fear warmer weather will bring further problems to neighborhoods.” This is what Stanley Cohen refers to as prediction; the impending doom, which is believed, can hit the community at any moment. With the article ran a photo of a Breverton women holding her daughter under the photo ran the caption despite a drop in Breverton gang activity, she’s worried, “One of my children might become an innocent victim” (Larry Parsons 3-10-1997). The article praised the work of the GPIC and quoted many of the organization’s committee members relaying back to the community the work they have been involved in. The article listed the past achievements of the organization and quoted many of the members of the committee. The reporter also took the time to outline the new proposed day curfew, which had become a very controversial topic in the city with many community members coming out in direct opposition to the proposed curfew. The article quoted one committee member from the GPIC as stating that although there had been a decrease in gang activity in the city of Breverton this was only due to the winter weather and that when summer came he was quoted as saying, “With the growth in Breverton and Sherwood, we are just going to see an increase in this type of behavior.” The reporter also stated that he and other committee members were concerned that gang violence was getting more and more violent. This was the same information which was a headline a previously in another newspaper article. This further helped create a feeling of anticipation in the community and the impending gang violence that was predicted to hit the city during the summer. The article quoted community members saying that they have noticed a drop in recent months of graffiti. Again making the connection in peoples minds between gang violence and graffiti. The article also stresses the incident that have occurred in Northeast Breverton the community where myself and my husband currently live. The reporter spoke to some community members two of the community members who were Anglo-Saxon described an increase in gangs and gang bangers. How
these community members can distinguish a gang member from other youth was not clear. Given the racial tension and recorded perceptions of community members who live in the neighborhood where the interviews were conducted I would imagine that many Anglo-Saxon community members were describing Latino youth who live in the community who are dressed in *ropa floja* (lazy clothes meaning big clothing) and assume that these kids are involved in gang activity. In this article the reporter interviewed a local storeowner, who runs the neighborhood convenience store. This owner is a minority community member from the Asian community. His perceptions, according to the article, are much different than those of Anglo-Saxon community members. The storeowner is quoted as saying that he doesn't feel the gang problem is that bad now and that it certainly isn't like it was in San José California where he recently moved from. In addition to this article, which covered the first and second page of the newspaper also ran a summer and winter gang log. The two logs detailed gang related activity in the city of Breverton by giving detailed accounts of Breverton Police Department stops and contacts during this time. The reporter states that since January of 1996 the city of Breverton has experienced 58 gang related incidents a month. How many of these incidents were related to gang activity is not clear but the extensive logs do plant again in the publics' mind the presence and threat of youth gangs to the community (Larry Parsons 3-10-97).

As I have already stated the article above ran with two additional articles related to gangs. The first was titled, "Solutions: Students' behavior can lead to 'early warning' letters to parents." The article states that beginning in the fall parents will receive warning letters from the public schools and school based police officers if their children are displaying "gang-style behavior." The idea of gang-style behavior has also come under fire especially from Latino community members since much of what was depicted as gang-style behavior turns out to be what traditionally has been a part of the Latino culture and community (see manual section in the chapter *Style Wars*). A Breverton police officer who serves on the
Breverton Gang Task Force is quoted as saying, “I don’t think we’re losing” and “We’re pretty much treading water, maintaining the status quo.” Prior to this statement the reporter lists that the number of documented gang members in the local area shot up from 205 in 1990 to at present 700 documented gang members. How these youth have been documented is still very questionable and the figures given by the local law enforcement agency need to be carefully evaluated. A section of the article is also related to ethnic divisions in the gangs. Stating that there has been an increase in the members of Hispanic and Asian-American gang members in the city. A city official and a GPIC committee member states, “We’re not looking for a community that drives people to gangs as a source of protection” “Overall we’re behind as a community when it comes to feelings of inclusion and equity.” Although this city official states this yet Latino leaders and I have received a very cool reception at the GPIC meetings and this has been a constant area of contention with other community members and the GPIC (Larry Parsons 3-10-97).

The second article that ran on the front page of the newspaper the above two articles detailed the death of rapper B.I.G. in a drive by shooting. Again contributing to the hysteria in the community and the evidence of what has occurred in Los Angeles can also occur in a community like Breverton.

The following day another article ran in the editorial section of the newspaper the headline stated, “Defeating gangs in Salem will take persistence, vision.” The article stated the need for support for the police department by community groups, neighborhoods, and parents. The opening line reads, “Gangs are a daily, and sometimes deadly presence in Salem.” The article states the there has been a decrease in crime based upon the efforts the local law enforcement officials, community groups, social service agencies, and neighborhood association groups. The article states, “These efforts must continue because it will take persistence, money, time and creativity to keep Salem’s schools, streets and homes safe from gang crime and warfare. Gangs thrive among apathy, fear, and complacency-emotions we cannot afford if we are to win the battle. And make no
mistake it is a battle.” The article goes on to list some of the preventative strategies that can be used to curb youth involvement in gang activity. Many of the suggestions appear to be taken directly from the GPIC since many of the recommendations on the list also appear in presentations organized by the GPIC. (Editorial Statesman Journal March 11, 1997).

Another way that the media have been used is by the GPIC. The media has been called to cover events held by the GPIC. One such incident was the coverage by the media of the GPIC Gangs 101 Conference. The headlines read, “Expert: Abandonment central to gangs’ lure.” A member of the GPIC was given coverage during the Gangs 101 Conference. The main premise was that youth, and particularly male youth, were drawn to gangs as a result of a break in their family structure and particularly their attitudes toward females how this connection was then made back to their relationships with their fathers was quite unclear both in the presentation (which I attended) and also in the newspaper article. One question that I asked the presenter was how was the way that masculinity was constructed by gang affected youth any different than the other experiences of young males in society in general. The presenter did not respond but acknowledged that that was a good question as he went on with his presentation. Again the GPIC seems to be more interested in the individual characteristics of the gang members and those of their families rather than the societal effects that have constructed masculinity (Rhonda Parker 4-20-97).

As the impending threat of gang related violence during the summer didn’t materialize, the local newspaper began printing other stories from a city to the north of Breverton. The headline read on Tuesday June 17, 1997, “Portland’s summer gets deadly” start sub caption read, “After four gun deaths in eight days, residents worry about safety.” One of the four shootings was under investigation and was confirmed as gang related. The article also stated that the mayor of Portland was planning on cutting back the gang unit by half but that the mayor had now decided
to rescind that order and maintain the unit has it was but did not state that it was in direct reaction to the slayings (associated press Portland 6-17-97).

Another article, which appeared in the newspaper on Tuesday June 17, 1997, read, “Graffiti vandals mar new school.” 2000.00 dollars worth of damage had been done to a new school in south Breverton that had yet to open. The article detailed the damage that was done to the new school. Although this regularly occurred in North Breverton there was never this type of media attention to one incident of graffiti and yet in the South Breverton area this becomes big news (Janet Davies 6-17-97).

Another example of the media use by policy officials was shown in the headline, “Tax cut endangers schools’ anti-gang program.” The article outlined the county’s possibility of losing five deputies as a result of a Measure passed by the states’ citizens. The article also stated that the city would lose their police liaison officers as a result of the cutbacks. This article appeared on April 26, 1997, while the state’s legislature was in session and two months after the city experienced the shooting in February that was said to have been gang related. This information was still fresh in the community member’s minds, as the article appeared linking financial resources to the gang problem in Breverton.

Another article that appeared during this same timeframe in the local newspaper related to gangs read, “Police train landlords to spot drug dealers, gangs.” The article was primarily focused on drug dealers and the signs of drug use in an apartment complex or a rental property. But the article did also address how to spot gang activity. The Breverton Police department and the State Multi Family Housing Council sponsored the seminar. The use of gangs and drugs seems also to link youth gangs with drug activity further creating the belief in the public of the danger of youth gangs to the public (Rhonda Parker 1-13-97).

Another article, which appeared in the editorial section of the newspaper read, “Drive-bys may cost you a car: A bill in the House provides for forfeiture of vehicles used in gun related crimes.” The article states that lawmakers and law
enforcement officials are hoping that the proposed bill will make gang members contemplating a drive-by shooting that if they do there are the possible threat of losing their vehicles. One law enforcement official is quoted as supporting the bill. While another officer is quoted as saying, “Honestly, when you look at the crime that is committed in a drive-by shooting, they are looking to kill somebody,” “If they are willing to risk life imprisonment or the death penalty for homicide, then I don’t think the chances that they are going to lose their vehicle is much of a threat to them” (Kyle Henley).

These articles demonstrate the very sophisticated social discourse that occurred around the topic of gangs. What is also remarkable is the focus on the GPIC and their involvement in the gang issue. The local newspaper generally reported the news in a light favorable to the activities of the GPIC. In many ways, it appeared as if the GPIC was creating for public consumption to directly boost its creditability in the community and to reaffirm its position as one of authority on the topic of youth gangs and thereby increase its opportunities for funding. The newspaper articles failed on many occasions to include alternative opinions and perspectives of various organizations also working with gang affected youth in the community. Through the media the GPIC was able to successfully manipulate social discourse of youth gangs and maintain credibility and their position as experts on gang policy in the city of Breverton therefore successfully eliminating any controversies in the community about the gang problem.

The local media have been used to debate public policy decisions in the city of Breverton related to youth issues and more specifically youth issues to indirectly curb gang violence. One example is the proposed day curfew by the city of Salem. The daytime curfew was identified as a high priority by the GPIC. The goal of the daytime curfew was to reduce gang recruitment and activity in the city. The curfew prohibits youth between the ages of seven to eighteen years of age, who have not graduated from high school, from being in public places, unless accompanied by a parent or guardian, during normal school hours.
The issue of the day curfew first appeared in the Breverton newspaper on January 31, 1997. The headline read, "Salem police suggest day curfew to counter gangs." The opening line read, "Police officials want Breverton to adopt a daytime curfew law to cut down on gangs recruiting students who stray from school." The article stresses the importance of the daytime curfew as a way of reducing gang recruitment and of keeping kid's in school (unfortunately they don’t address the issue of an updated curriculum that would better mirror the kids experiences and therefore hold their attention making school a much more rewarding experience) (Alma Velazquez).

The next article regarding the proposed daytime curfew appeared in the April 15, 1997 newspaper. The headline read, "Families leery about curfew idea." This article opened with, "Parents and students warned the Breverton city council on Monday of possible pitfalls in a proposed daytime curfew." The article was a detailed account of the previous evening's city council meeting. The article states that although speakers representing both sides of the issue spoke the overwhelming majority was opposed to the daytime curfew and expressed their concerns to the Breverton city council. Concerns of community members who gave testimony ranged from civil right's violations of teens to further tension between police officers and minority community members especially those from language minority communities (Anne Williams).

The next article discussing the day curfew appeared in the April 28, 1997, edition. The headline read, "City council to discuss daytime youth curfew." The opening paragraph states, "The Breverton city council tonight will discuss a controversial proposal to enact a daytime curfew for children ages seven to seventeen. The proposal, which drew a barrage of opposition at a recent public hearing, would prohibit school-age kids from being in public places during school hours, unless accompanied by a parent or guardian. The article also states, "many students and parents have come out against the plan, saying it infringes on students’
rights and fails to address the true causes of truancy” (no author just states Statesman Journal).

The April 29, 1997, front page edition read, “Salem to give daytime curfew a try. Subheading read, the council votes unanimously for the plan despite community opposition. The article details the decision of the Breverton city council in their passage of the daytime curfew.” The curfew will take affect fall of the 1997-1998 school year. In January, the council will review the curfew to ensure that there aren’t any problems with the proposed measure. The article also details the involvement of the GPIC saying that the organization spearheaded the proposal. One community member is quoted in the article as saying, “I think they just walked all over the public opinion they heard last time.” The community member is concerned that the curfew could violate youth rights and restrict their movement and freedom in the community (Anne Williams).

The local media not only focused on issues of immediate concern to the city but also on similar issues, which were impacting communities to the south. One article read, “Ban on gang activity draws support, legal challenges.” The article describes the efforts of a community in Los Angeles to curb gang violence. The city served notice to eighteen gang members that they were not to gather in groups of more than two anywhere in public in the neighborhood. Many have criticized the ban and others like it across the nation due to its unconstitutionality. This article ran with the photo of a child grasping her mother waist with a fearful expression her face. The caption read, “Giving comfort: A child hugs his mother as she talks about gang violence in the Franklin area of Los Angeles, the area that the 18th Street Gang calls home” (The Associated Press, Statesman Journal July 11, 1997).

The Breverton city council unanimously passed the day curfew on April 28, 1997, even though there was tremendous amount of community opposition to the proposed measure.
An article appeared in the May 7, 1997 edition of the Breverton newspaper with the headline, “Curfew law is too restrictive some teens say.” The article relates the feelings of local youth and their reactions to the daytime curfew. The article tells the story of one Breverton youth who is dismissed from school at 11:00 a.m. So that she is able to go to work she is now concerned that if she happens to forget to carry her pass that she may be picked up by the Breverton Police Department for truancy. Another senior at a local high school also feels that the daytime curfew is much too restrictive and is concerned about the impact that it will have when it is implemented fully.

In determining that a moral panic exists in the city of Breverton, it is important to understand how the media perpetuates a moral panic in the community regarding the social discourse of youth gangs. It is my belief that while tracking the social discourse of youth gangs in the city of Breverton it is very clear that the media played an active role in disseminating information from the GPIC into the community about youth gang activity and in turn that the increased coverage of the issue of youth gangs further created a climate of fear and panic within the city.
Chapter 6

Solutions from Applied Anthropology

At the conclusion of this thesis it is my hope that the reader will see the importance of applied anthropology to contemporary social issues. Breverton is not the only community in the United States undergoing dramatic changes in its population. This is occurring across the nation, and as our communities begin to shift, in terms of their ethnic and linguistic make-up it is important that their governing boards, both public and private, reflect the ethnic and linguistic diversity present in the community. This very clearly was not occurring in the city of Breverton, and is one of the main reasons why the response to the social discourse of gangs was so strong in the community.

At the beginning of this research project I was initially interested in researching the involvement of Latino and Chicano youth in gangs. As I began to get involved in the issue of youth gangs in the community my research topic shifted and I realized that the larger issue was the marginalization of Latino and Chicano youth in the community based on cultural stereotypes. It is from this point that I began my research project and it is also from this point that I will lay out possible solutions.

Since this research project was conducted, there have been some changes that have occurred in the city. There has been a tremendous amount of pressure from Latino and Chicano community leaders to gain equal representation in both public and private organizations in the city. It has been difficult for the general public to understand why so many Latino and Chicano community members are concerned about equal representation in the community. I can tell you why, because Latino and Chicano youth are detrimentally impacted by the lack of representation. An article in the local newspaper stated that Latino youth drop out of the public school system almost three times the rate of their Anglo-European counterparts, and across the nation Latino youth are less likely to finish college
compared with other ethnic groups (Debra de Yambert 1997: 7c). This is not due to lack of intelligence or motivation, but as cultural anthropologists, we look to the larger social and cultural institutions.

This is why Latino and Chicano community members are especially interested in the social discourse of youth gangs. They realize it is just another barrier that contributes to the negative experiences of Latino and Chicano youth and keeps them from realizing their long-term goals and success in society.

The social and cultural institutions in the community are embedded in the cultural context of the community. In the second chapter of this thesis I dealt specifically with the community context in the city of Breverton. In the city there is a lack of support for youth of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds in the city’s institutions. Not only is there a lack of support, but this lack of support has directly led to public policy formation that is not inclusive, and in the case of the gang manual, racist. Changes in the population demographics have led to cultural misunderstandings among community members. These cultural misunderstandings, as a general rule, have negatively impacted people of color. Social scientists in their research have long documented that youth of color have been negatively impacted by public policy formation constructed by Anglo-European community members. A solution to this problem is to hire more people of color in the community to act as advocates for minority youth. The only problem with this solution is that many times organizations state that they want to hire employees who act as advocates for social change, and then are surprised when the newly hired employees raise questions and concerns that challenge existing policies.

We need organizations that are not afraid to restructure their policies and procedures and who are truly committed to change that will better serve the needs of all community members. Many organizations and institutions in the city have begun to hire members from minority communities in their structure. Time will tell if this makes on public policy formation more equitable.
In viewing the issue of youth gangs it is important that we view it within its cultural and historical context. In Chapter 3: Culture, Style, and Crime, I have documented the negative impact that cultural misunderstandings have on interpreting style, dress, and language in the community. Which again, in most cases, negatively impacts minority youth. Instances of racism and cultural ignorance should decrease with greater representation of diversity in our public and private institutions. But this only is a short-term and immediate response to problems of inequity in the community. A long-term solution is to begin in the public school system focusing on a diverse curriculum for our younger students that change patterns of enculturation. Children who are exposed to a broad and diverse curriculum in our public school system are more apt to have a greater understanding of ethnic communities that differ from than their own. Latino and Chicano adults and youth, have been pleading for ethnic studies classes in the public educational system for years. Unfortunately this topic is highly controversial. Latino and Chicano youth and community activists aren’t only calling for ethnic study classes in the public school system, but that these classes are a part of the main curriculum and not just offered as electives. I have to agree with and support this proposal, since I have had direct experience with the benefits in educating both minority and non-minority students in the community college system. I teach introductory cultural anthropology courses at a local community college. Throughout the course of my teaching experience I have had the opportunity to incorporate into my classes, resources that are meaningful to Latino, Chicano, and Anglo-European students. Students in the Cultural Anthropology 103 class watch the film Zoot Suit by Luis Valdez, a Chicano playwright. The film is written about the Zoot Suit Riots in the 1940s during World War II. The film portrays the experiences of Latino and Chicano youth during this time, and how they become ostracized and marginalized in their communities due to misinterpretations of style, dress, and language. Correlations can be made to what is occurring in contemporary society. The documentation of Latino and Chicano youth has roots back to the beginnings of our
history in the United States. If we are able to view contemporary social issues within a historical context they become more powerful and meaningful to contemporary discussions of social issues. Also by placing contemporary social issues in their historical context, it is hoped that history will not repeat itself. This has worked in the cultural anthropology class and Latino, Chicano, and Anglo-European students readily see the connection between history and contemporary society. Yet many of them have told me that they were not even aware that some of these issues, such as the Zoot Suit Riots, had occurred in U.S. history. They were not exposed to the Zoot Suit Riots while in elementary, middle, or high school. Aren’t we doing a disservice to all of our students if we do not provide them with this information? For this reason I would encourage school districts to seriously consider incorporating ethnic studies classes into their main curriculum, operating on the principal that we aren’t just doing our minority students a disservice, but also the Anglo-European students in our lack of a balanced cultural and historical perspective.

Education also needs to occur in our public and private institutions. The gang manual was developed to be used as a tool to assist individuals working with youth who are considered “at risk.” The problem with the development of the gang manual was that it did not incorporate multiple perspectives into its orientation. This lack of cultural representation created a document that was culturally lopsided and biased toward an Anglo-European perspective of the world. This perspective and its articulation in the gang manual unnecessarily placed the burden of proof on minority youth in the community and specifically Latino and Chicano youth. From an anthropological perspective the recommendation is that organizations, whether they be public or private make sure that they have participants from diverse backgrounds in creating public policy. By diverse backgrounds, I don’t mean just ethnic and linguistic groups, but also people of different occupational and philosophical backgrounds. In taking such an approach it might be more time
consuming to reach consensus, but the final product will be more inclusive and representative of the community and its population.

Also related to the above topic is the whole process of labeling youth "at risk". Many youth that I had an opportunity to speak with in the community are very much aware of this label. Unfortunately, this label can act as a self-fulfilling prophecy to many youth in the community. It is recommended that we begin to move away from the labeling of youth "at risk" since it automatically places them at a psychological disadvantage. The same power that comes from labeling youth as gang members comes into play when labeling youth "at risk". One of the primary concerns that Latino and Chicano community activists had with the gang manual was that it identified "Mexican-American" youth within a specific age group at risk for gang involvement. Spanish-speaking parents want their children to be proud of their ethnic and linguistic identity, and feel that being from a different ethnic or linguistic group, and do not automatically place their children "at risk" and should not be seen as doing so. The labeling of "at risk" implies that there is a deficit in the individual, family, or ethnic group. Again the factors that determine if a child is "at risk" are culturally biased, and operate on inequalities in the representation of various cultural, socio-economic, and linguistic orientations. The labeling of youth places the burden of proof on the youth and the families and does not critically examine the social and cultural context in which they are embedded. As cultural anthropologists we have a responsibility to shift public discourse back to the larger social and cultural contexts of which they are a part as opposed to the "blaming the victim" stance that many would like to take.

The last section of my thesis dealt with the media and their role in creating a moral panic in the community. As I stated in the body of the research paper, the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking newspapers represented the issue of youth gangs and Latino and Chicano youth participation in youth gangs from very different orientations. The English-speaking newspapers unnecessarily sensationalized the issue where as the Spanish-speaking papers carried articles that
were more balanced in their perspective. If the media were able to rely on broader resources, as opposed to just a few, it might help in balancing the perspective and how it is articulated to the general public. When Latino and Chicano activists were quoted in the English-speaking newspaper, the tone and the presentation was much more argumentative, discrediting the perspective and input of activists. The solution to this particular problem is more difficult to deal with since these are editing decisions in the newspaper over which we have no control. Community members that are interested in alternative perspectives do pick up newspapers with alternative points of view, but this usually is just preaching to the choir. Many times the main source of information is that of the local newspaper. Community activists can and do write articles to the editorial section of local newspapers and this might be at least be one strategy to counter the mainstream perspective. When issues of great importance as in the case of youth gangs, community activists can organize a write in campaign submitting editorials to the local newspaper allowing for a more balanced perspective of the issues facing the community. Another strategy is that community activists and others follow the lead of the GPIC and also build close relationships with reporters. There are direct advantages in creating these relationships since they are a source of direct access to the media and the general public in disseminating information.

In conclusion, during the course of this research project there were many issues circulating in the community around Latino and Chicano youth. The community demographics were dramatically changing, schools were and still are struggling with ways to deal with incoming student populations from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. There have been strides made in the community to work on these issues and the city's public and private sectors do seem to be making a sincere effort to resolve these issues. But there is still along way to go before we will see a measured amount of success and it is important that these efforts continue.
It is important to view the long-term consequences and especially the outcomes as they relate to Latino and Chicano youth and their performance in the public educational system. Activists will be looking at drop out rates, incarceration rates, and the documentation of Latino and Chicano youth as gang members as the years go on. As there is more representation from Latinos and Chicanos in the public and private sector hopefully, these instances will begin to decrease.

It is my opinion that at the conclusion of this research project the methods and theory of cultural anthropology had a direct impact in stopping the distribution of the gang manual. Cultural anthropology provided the necessary framework in which to view the social discourse of gangs. Cultural anthropology also provided the structure necessary to build a case to halt the distribution of the gang manual in the community. It is also my belief, in this case, cultural anthropology served as a catalyst providing a rally point for social change. In my mind, this is the greatest contribution of cultural anthropology.
Bibliography

Acuña, Rodolfo  


Anderson, Benedict  

Anderson, Elijah  

Becker, Howard  

Bernard, Russell  

Bourdieu, Pierre  

Brier, Jonathan, Ramon Ramirez, and Robert Dash  
Cohen, Albert

Cohen, Stanley

Cosgrove, Stuart
“The Zoot Suit War.” Radical America Vol. 18 No. 6 (39-50).

Davies, Janet
“Graffiti vandals mar new school: damage to the new Leslie grounds is expected to cost about $2,000 to fix.” Statesman Journal 17 Jun. 1997: 1c.

Davies, Janet and Soto, Kaly. “Shooting kills one at Salem armory: two Salem men are arrested in the slaying after a Friday night dance: other dances also ended in violence.” Statesman Journal 16 Feb. 1997: 1a, 2a.


Ferrell, Jeff

Ferrell, Jeff and Clinton Sanders eds.

Fetterman, David
Garofalo, Reebee
“Hip Hop or Highschool: An Abbreviated History for Students” Radical America Vol. 18 No. 6 (27-34).

Goffman, Erving

Goode, Erich and Nachmand Ben-Yehuda

Gustafson, Alan

“Military shores up Salem Armory security: the fatal shooting at a recent concert leads to a review of security measurement.” 19 Feb. 1997: 1c.

Gustafson, Alan and Aguirre, Richard R.

Hagedorn, John

Hall, Stuart, and Tony Jefferson eds.

Hebdige, Dick
Heskin, Allan David


Howard, Michael

_Contemporary Cultural Anthropology._ Harper Collins, 1933.

Menefee, Tonya

“Curfew law is too restrictive, some teens say: but police and schools welcome Salem’s daytime rule, which begins in the fall.” _Statesman Journal_ 7 May 1997: 1c.

Miller, Jody A.


Moore, Joan


Novotney, Dave


Parker, Rhonda

“Expert: abandonment central to gangs’ lure: absent fathers share the blame for their sons’ attitudes, a seminar is told.” _Statesman Journal_ 20 Apr. 1997: 1c, 7c.

Parson, Larry

“Gangs a daily battle in Salem: the number of incidents has fallen, but officials fear warmer weather will bring further problems.” _Statesman Journal_ 10 Mar. 1997: 1a, 2a.

“Portland’s summer gets deadly start: after four deaths in eight days, residents worry about safety.” 17 Jun. Statesman Journal 1997: 1a, 2a.

Penfield, Joyce and Jacob L. Ornstein-Galicia


Sanders, Clinton Ed.

Sklar, Holly
“Young and Guilty by Stereotype.” Z Magazine 1993 Vol. 6 No.7/8: 52-61

Turner, Ralph and Samuel J. Surace

Velazquez, Alma
“Tax cut endangers schools’ anti-gang program: Marion County may have to reassign deputies who teach classes.” Statesman Journal 26 Apr. 1997: 1c.

“Salem police suggest day curfew to counter gangs: the proposed city ordinance will be considered next month.” Statesman Journal 31 Jan. 1997: 1a, 2a.

William, Anne

Yambert de, Debra