

Acknowledgments

This book brings together papers on the theory behind, evidence for, and nature of community approaches to addressing the youth gang problem. The papers were written in honor of Irving A. Spergel, who spent a long and productive career developing scholarship and testing intervention approaches to address this problem. Spergel is a well-known gang and community intervention scholar who has had significant influence on the field during his long tenure. Having worked with gang youth while at the New York City Youth Board and having studied with Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin at Columbia University in the 1950s, Spergel came to the University of Chicago in 1960 to join the faculty of the School of Social Service Administration. He was named the George Herbert Jones Professor in 1993, and in addition to an influential body of published scholarship, he is the principal architect of a comprehensive community-based model that has been adopted by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention as the Comprehensive Community-Wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression. Over the course of his career, Spergel has played many roles—youth worker, scholar, teacher, program designer, evaluator, mediator, activist. He embodies a particular orientation to scholarship in the world, and a particular drive to build knowledge that has a real and practical effect on critical social problems of the day.

The book is based on papers delivered at a Festschrift held at the University of Chicago in honor of Irving A. Spergel upon his retirement. The Festschrift itself was an effort to generate dialogue (in the spirit of Spergel's scholarship and engagement in the field) among a broad range of people involved in various ways with youth gangs, gang intervention, and community practice. The event provided an opportunity to raise, consider, and debate some of the key issues and important (and underexamined) points of contention among people oriented toward the problem from significantly different perspectives, including the police, city government, community leaders, faith-based institutions, schools, community youth workers, researchers, and, to some extent, youth themselves.

Many of the papers are based on presentations given at the Festschrift; others were written after this event to round out and enhance the coherence and completeness of the volume. Thanks go both to the contributing authors whose work is assembled here and to the other participants and organizers of the symposium and the production of this book, including James Burch, Roberto Caldero, Robert Fairbanks, Luis Gutierrez, Waldo Johnson, Malcolm Klein, Jeanne Marsh, Barbara McDonald, Charles Ramsey, Emilie Schrage, Bill Sites, Jamie Stanesa, Randolph Stone, Herman Warrior, Father Bruce Wellem, Celeste Wojtalewicz, Phelan Wyrick, Dan Zorich, and the many people who work with young people in communities in Chicago in a broad range of roles who participated actively in the discussions that the presentations generated, lending their perspective, wisdom, and understanding of challenges to the debate.