

Community Wisdom Narrative: Consejos Report

An overview of findings from the Oxnard Family Power Project violence prevention efforts in Oxnard. Funded by generous support from The California Endowment.

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Over the course of several months in 2007 and 2008, the Oxnard Family Power Project served as a catalyst for community dialogues around the issue of youth and gang violence. The Project sought to engage the community – from grassroots to policy makers – in structured dialogue to identify the causes of violence and to develop strategies for transforming communities utilizing a multi-sector, collaborative, asset-based approach. The process of engagement involved a popular education model specifically designed to be culturally relevant for the Latino community who formed over 90% of the participants. The voice of the community is “heard” through this document through years of experience, revealed fears, and new found hope.

A common “learning” that was revealed through this process was that the multiple forces that contribute to the ongoing cycle of violence requires that residents, youth, government, and business collaborate in an “everyone participates approach” to end the cycle of violence and to create safer communities. Finally, that was the challenge presented by youth who participated in the project, that everyone needs to find and do their part to make Oxnard safe for all.

This report is written for everyone who serves or lives in Oxnard, and for communities throughout the nation, who share a concern about violence in communities and desire to create safe, healthy neighborhoods where youth and families can flourish. The report presents a number of complex ideas and recommendations that arose out of community conversations. It is the Project teams hope that the reader will identify with one or two ideas that can be pursued within families, with community involvement, and incorporated within the work of organizations. We humbly request that the reader read the report in its entirety to glean insight from the community wisdom captured within these pages. Then finally, we invite you to participate in transforming the violence through action and continued dialogue.

Introduction

During 2008, the Oxnard Family Power Project organized and facilitated over a dozen Learning Circles to discuss the causes of violence and solutions for preventing violence, especially as it relates to youth. Learning Circles were composed of groups of concerned persons brought together for facilitated conversations designed to tap personal experience, to clarify common concerns, and to determine how to address the issues surrounding violence. The Circles included adults in targeted neighborhoods, parents and teachers, youth, and service providers who work with youth and families.¹ Policy makers and law enforcement participated in a final Learning Circle in May 2008. Over the course of several sessions participants expressed their thoughts and feelings about violence, ideas about how to prevent violence, and the vision they hold for their communities. This report represents an attempt to synthesize the community wisdom that emerged from these discussions. The report is divided into four sections: I) The Learning Circle Experience, II) Understanding Violence and the Solution, III) Community and

¹ Participants included males, females, youth, and adults from mixed cultural backgrounds. The majority ethnic background was Mexican American and Latino with some African American, Asian, Native American and Caucasian participants. The main geographic location for the Learning Circles occurred in South Oxnard with the exception of one service provider Learning Circle located in North East Oxnard.

Cultural Assets and IV) *Consejos*: The Community's Counsel for Follow-Up Action. (The project was evaluated by Dr. Jamshid Damooei, PhD, professor at California Lutheran University and the report is available upon request.)

I. The Learning Circle Experience

The intent of this section is to provide a general understanding of the Learning Circle process. Beginning in October 2007, the Oxnard Family Power Project began hosting community conversations utilizing a popular education approach called *Razalogia* meaning "knowledge of and for the people" (Vargas, 1984)². Utilizing this approach over two dozen group dialogues were facilitated in which participants shared their thoughts about the causes and effects of violence, and community resources that could be used to prevent violence. 14 of the sessions were constructed as Learning Circles that aimed to develop a shared vision for solving the problems identified through discussion. The ideas shared by participants were documented in meeting summary reports. Periodically, staff would synthesize these reports and share them with the groups to determine how accurately their ideas were being captured. Finally, the staff reviewed all the meeting summaries to discern the community's most common counsel and insights on violence prevention. The Project team decided to name these *consejos*, meaning the counsel or advice. In this case, the community *consejos* is directed to all who care about preventing community violence.

So that the reader can appreciate the rich dynamics of the Learning Circle dialogues, the following recalls one of the earliest: On a drizzling evening in February, eleven community residents, mostly parents, sat in a circle in a small community center sharing their thoughts in Spanish and English about community violence, while their children both sat and occasionally ran in and out of the room. They were brainstorming causes of violence, when a resident shook his head and said, "I don't want to sound corny, but I think it's the lack of love that causes violence." After a few moments of silence, one woman, then another thanked him for his words. The women also added that the problem is "men don't do their part within the family to teach love." While thanking the men who were present, they felt it was important to pose the question, "Why is it so hard to get men to come to a meeting such as this one?" The conversation continued.

By evening's end the group underscored that violence is not just related to physical acts that cause bodily injury, but also to the emotional injury that is caused by lack of sensitivity and respect, a form of violence practiced by various institutions. The mono-lingual Spanish speakers expressed that they felt belittled and unwelcome when institutions, particularly schools, didn't have someone in the front office who speaks Spanish. Participants also felt a lack of sensitivity and respect when Mexican-American children are not taught about the positive aspects of their culture in school. This omission of education denies youth an opportunity to develop self-esteem through cultural pride. As the dialogue continued, the parents also shared feelings of pride when their children did well in school. Education and respect were clearly important to the parents in the room. They expressed appreciation when teachers put in extra time to work with their children. As participants were sharing these ideas, staff documented these on easel sheets to validate the thoughts expressed by the participants as important knowledge and to ensure that their ideas were accurately represented. One of several positive outcomes from this meeting was that several of the men stated they would be more vigilant in communicating with their children to lift their self-esteem.

Early in the development of the design of the Learning Circles, it was decided that to best tap into the community's wisdom for preventing violence, the groups should first clarify

² Roberto Vargas. **Razalogia: Community Learning for a New Society**. Oakland, CA: New World Associates, 1984.

their vision of their "ideal community." This vision could then be used to provide a context as to why violence prevention is important. The vision ultimately expressed by the Learning Circle participants was synthesized as follows: *The people of Oxnard strive to be a community that values all cultures and supports the success and well-being of all children, youth and families.*

The vision of a vibrant community included several ideals that were repeatedly expressed by participants:

- *Healthy and happy families.* Families have all of what they need to be successful and happy.
- *Safe, enjoyable and caring neighborhoods.* Neighborhoods where people, businesses, agencies, churches and schools encourage concern for each other and the well-being of the community.
- *Multicultural respect.* Everyone recognizes that all people are worthy of respect and responsible to make our nation a wonderful place to live for all people.
- *Valuing life.* All people, young and old, are valued so they in turn value themselves, each other and life.

With clarity of vision the Learning Circles were prepared to address the following basic questions: What have we experienced or seen as the effects of violence? What are the causes of violence? What resources does our community have that could be used to prevent or transform violence? And, finally, what needs to be done to prevent violence?

II. Understanding Violence and Strategies for Change

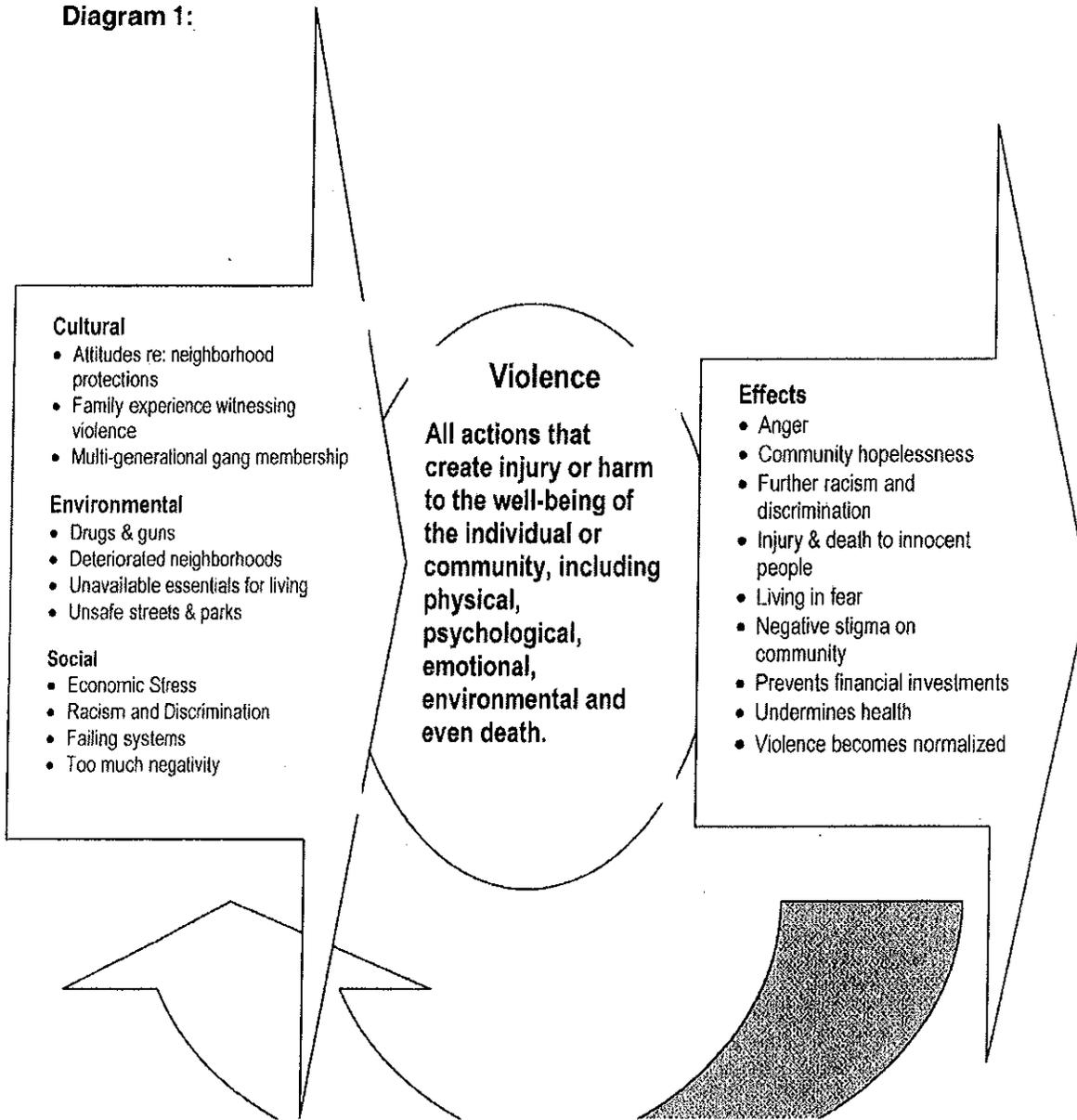
Many of the Learning Circles began with participants sharing about themselves and whether and/or how they have been affected by violence. Deep levels of sharing were reached relatively quickly due to the safe environments that were created in the Learning Circles. From these conversations several significant understandings of violence emerged, as well as important *learnings* regarding potential solutions.

First, we must understand violence. When most of us think of violence, what immediately comes to mind is the physical harm caused in the home by a parent abusing his spouse or children, or the violent behavior of gang members that result in the senseless shooting, injury and killing of others. Learning Circle participants repeatedly stated that violence is more than this. In essence, they said that to understand violence we must acknowledge the various influences that encourage violence as acceptable behavior, and the multiple effects violence has that perpetuates further violence and demeans quality of life.

Diagram 1: The Fuller Picture of Violence, was developed to illustrate the understanding of violence as it evolved from conversations. First, note the definition of violence. Violence involves all individual, group and institutional actions or inactions that create physical, psychological, emotional, environmental injury or harm to the well-being of the individual or community, including death. This was not the Project's original definition of violence, yet it emerged from the comments of our participants who felt violence includes not just what occurs in people's homes or by gangs, but by institutions who fail to fully respect or serve the community, e.g., media glorifying violence, failure of institutions to employ bilingual personnel or immigration raids that leave children without their parents were seen as violence against the community. Participants would include "inaction" as a possible source of violence, e.g., parents not expressing love to their children, or our government not providing necessary services within the community. Diagram 1 also captures what was repeatedly stated by many of the Learning Circles, that there exists a cycle of violence in which violence begets more violence.

The Fuller Picture of Violence

Diagram 1:



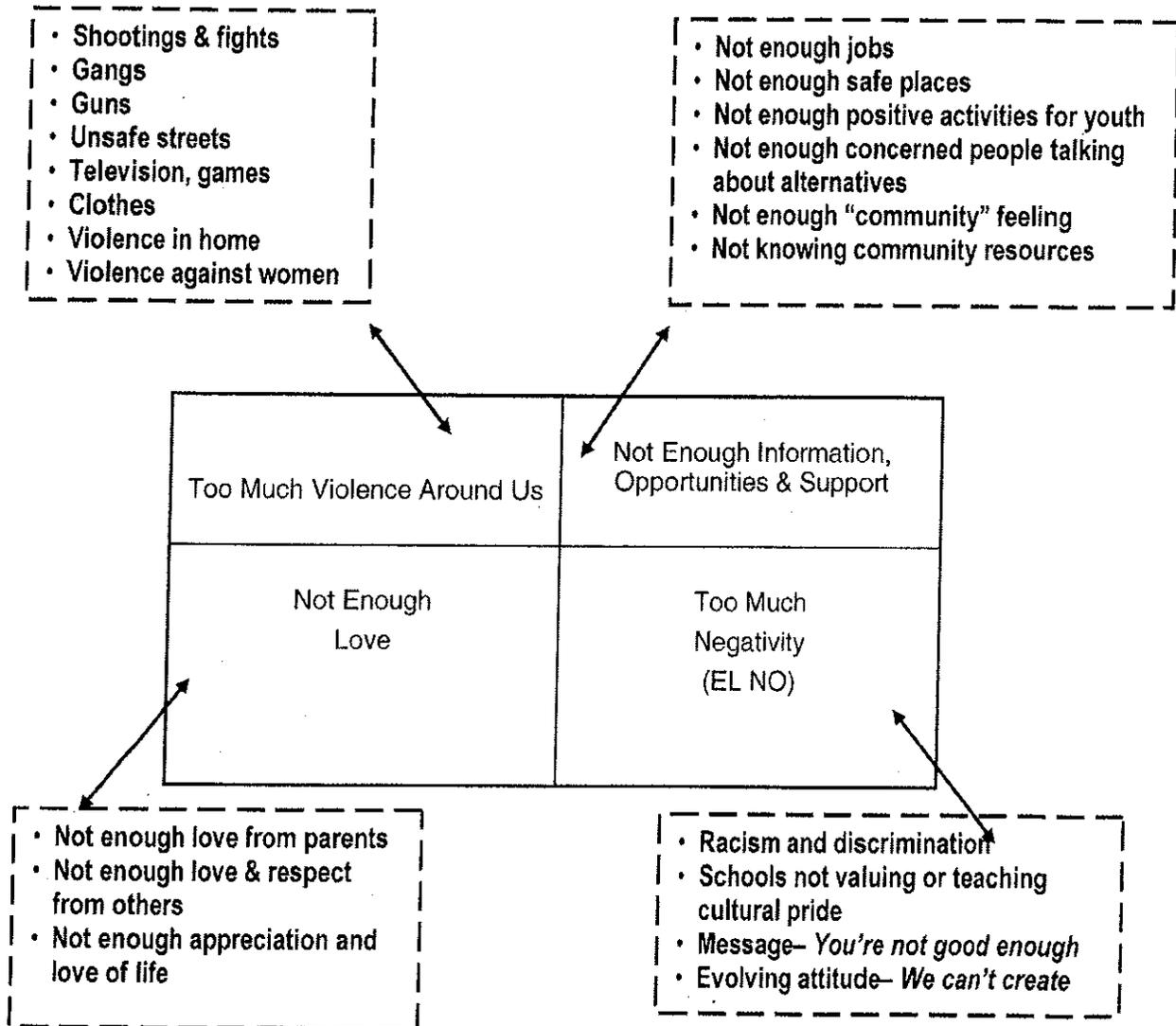
Affects of violence begets more violence

Viewing the Causes of Violence

In response to the question of what causes violence, the Learning Circles typically generated long lists, yet in time it became evident that particular items served as major categories for the multiple causes of violence. What evolved was a community framework for viewing the causes of violence illustrated in *Diagram 2*.

Diagram 2: Community Framework for Viewing the Causes of Violence

Here the framework is used to organize input from youth at the local Boys & Girls Club.



The Social Forces that Contribute to Learning Violence

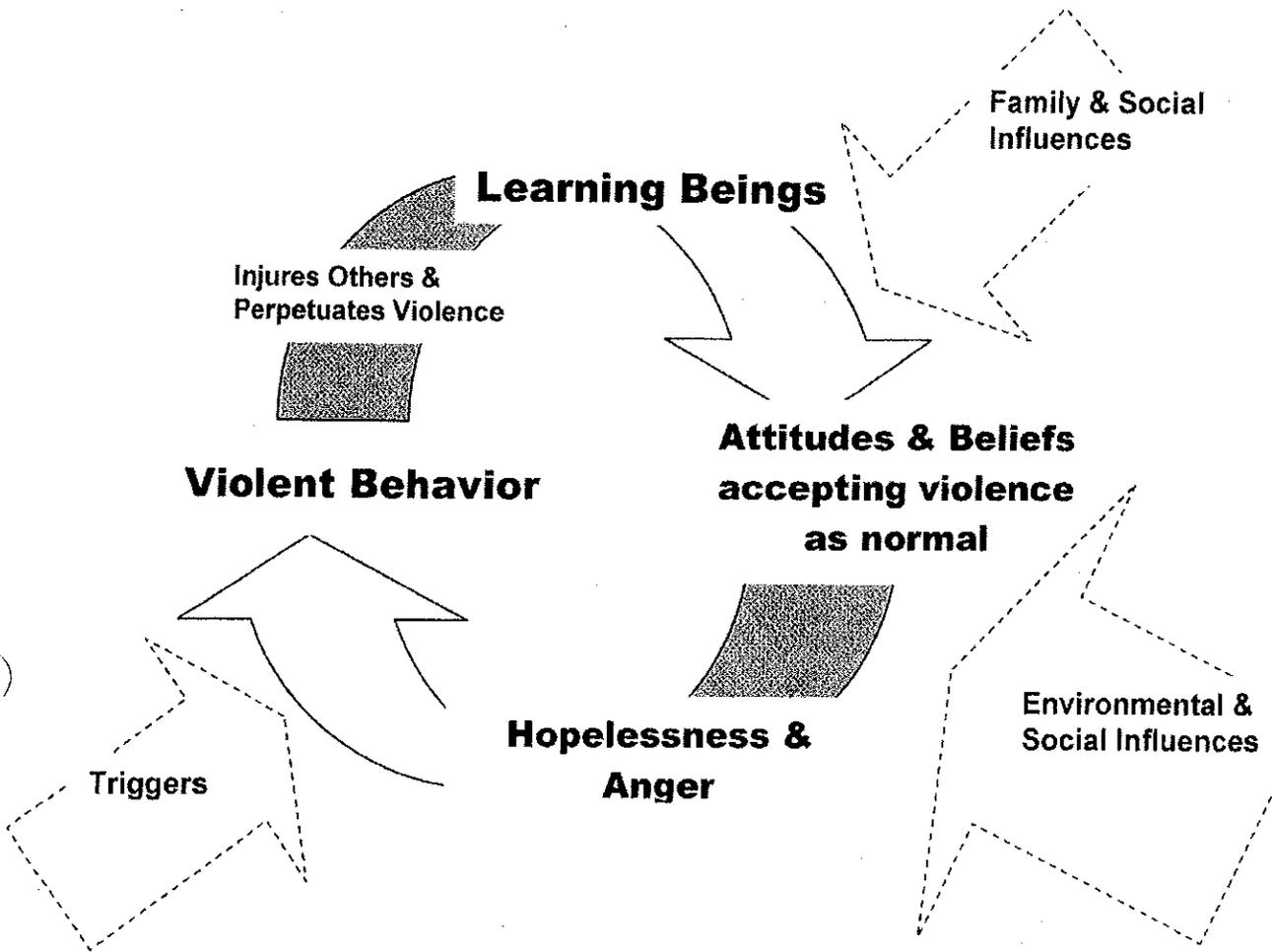
To develop strategies to transform the cycle of violence it is essential to understand the process by which violent behavior is learned. In evaluating the data provided by the Learning Circles, a model was developed to illustrate how violent behavior is learned and the role various social forces have in normalizing violence.

Diagram 3: Learning the Acceptance of Violence illustrates how violent behavior often stems from the interaction of learned beliefs and challenging social conditions. Together, they create the conditions for individuals in which the combination of alcohol, drugs, peer pressure, and available guns can trigger violent behavior. This view is based on the recognition that all humans are learning beings and that violent behavior becomes more prevalent as a person or community learns to accept violence as normal.

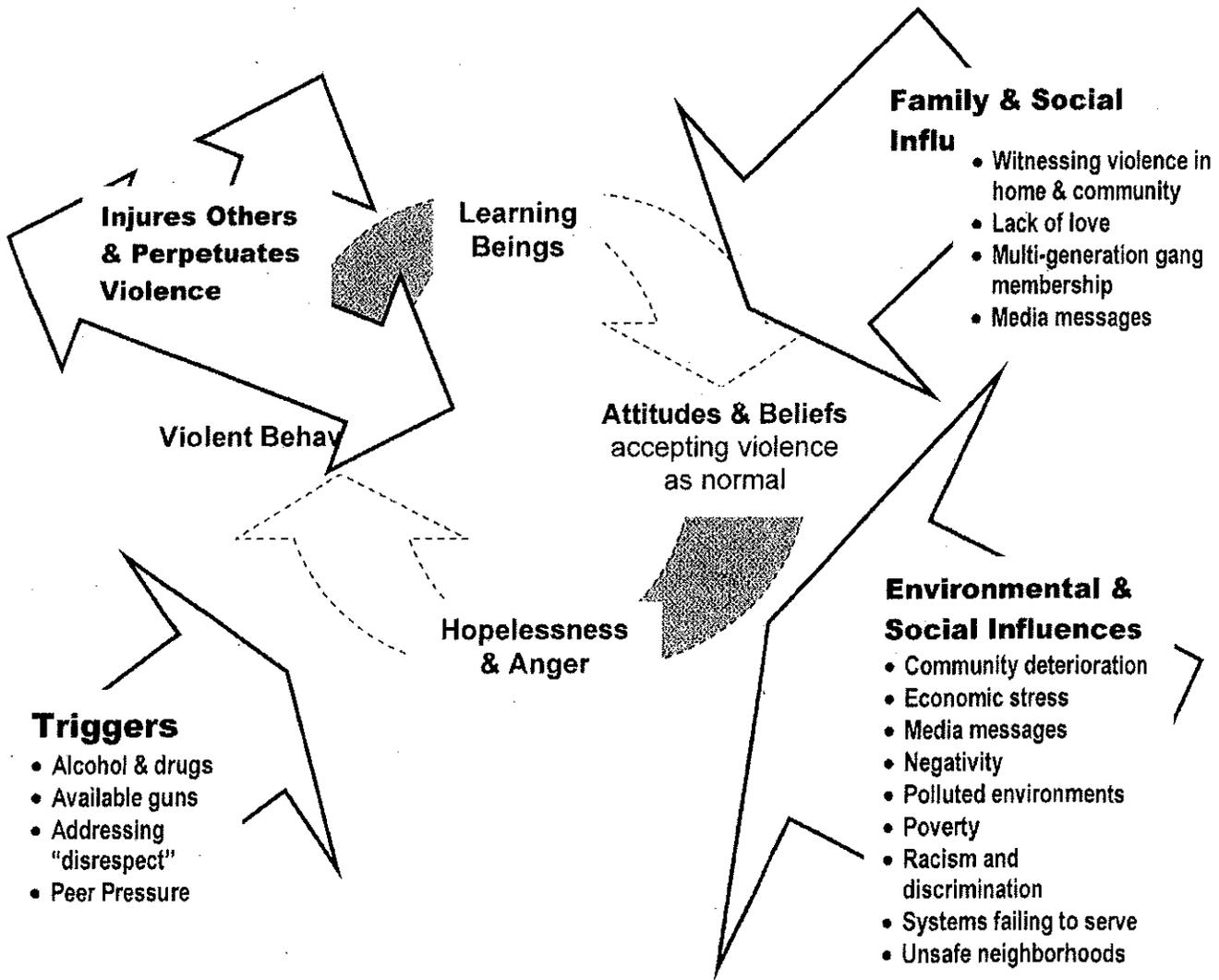
Using Diagram 3, consider a youngster, the learning being. When children witness violence within home and community and are daily bombarded by the media messages glorifying violence they are more apt to develop an attitude and mindset viewing violence as acceptable behavior, especially if these messages are not actively countered by family and others. As they grow older and encounter lack of opportunity, racism, discrimination and a fragmented community life combined with inadequate family support, the result can become frustration, hopelessness and anger. These emotions make a young person more vulnerable to be influenced by the combination of alcohol, drugs, guns, peer pressure and certain gang values. Various environmental, social or cultural triggers can then result in violent behavior. This violence not only causes injury to others, but serves to foster increased violence as it continues to create the environment of violence.

When we turn to *Diagram 4: Mapping Contributors to Violence*, we view a more comprehensive map of the various cultural, environmental and social forces influencing the learning and acceptance of violence. The importance of documenting these forces is that it begins to indicate necessary strategies to *interrupt* the learning, normalization and triggers of violence, such as the need to change the conditions undermining family and community well-being, and to develop positive messages and mentors to transform the view of violence from acceptable to unacceptable.

Learning the Acceptance of Violence
Diagram 3:



Mapping Contributors to Violence
 Diagram 4:



Strategy and Solutions for Transforming Violence

Once clarity surfaced regarding the multiple causes of violence, there evolved the idea of a general strategy for preventing violence, which we call the “everyone participates” approach. If we again refer to *Diagram 4*, we note the tremendous early influence family has in shaping the attitudes, beliefs and self confidence (or not) of our children. We also note the massive influence that society has upon our youth vis-à-vis the media, community environment, education and employment opportunities (or not), and cultural and institutional racism. No single or combination of agencies can solve these problems on their own. Real violence prevention requires a positive, hopeful, *everyone participates* approach that recognizes that the goal is long-term and actions to prevent violence are ongoing.

While a number of specific actions were identified that can be meaningful to prevent violence and will be presented in Section IV, there was also realization of the necessity for an overall attitude or strategy for violence prevention which is illustrated in *Diagram 5: The Everyone Participates Approach*. This approach begins with the positive orientation that “we can make difference” and “change is doable”. Its intent is to transform the norm that violence is acceptable and to address the multiple social forces undermining individual and family well-being that foster the attitudes and conditions for violence.

As illustrated in *Diagram 5*, interventions are necessary in families to inspire and guide parents, older siblings and adults to be the influence of love and guidance necessary within our families and communities and to create a *por vida* (for life and love)³ attitude among youth and others. Equally necessary is for all people and institutions who participate in the community in any form, from city workers to local businessmen or school administrators, to also be part of the solution. Everyone must do their part to mindfully support the community to achieve and become its best so that the outcome is increased optimism and determination by youth and others to turn from violence with more courageous behavior to serve self and community. As part of the process, families and community participants must unite in multiple forums to develop the power to influence the positive changes required in the community. Everyone must do their part to advance community well-being and prevent the violence.

Again, while specific action recommendations or *consejos* (counsel) were developed on how this can be done, several general principles were identified the Project team as key to the “everyone participates” approach.

- *Positive and hopeful.* We must remain optimistic that positive changes are doable. The attitude that “youth won’t listen” and “violence will never end” is unacceptable. Optimism is necessary to inspire creative problem-solving.
- *Transform the cultural norm that violence is acceptable.* The task is large, but everyone must do what they can do to counter the idea that violence in any form is acceptable.
- *Involve the youth.* Of paramount importance is to involve the youth in any conversations and planning about community development or problem-solving. They are the ones being most affected and they often have more of the experience, passion, creativity and energy to make solutions happen.
- *Tap into the resource of cultural wisdom.* Repeatedly, we heard that cultural pride and wisdom is a necessary part of the solution. The values of familia, being mutually supportive, needs to be reinforced as well as the value of being multicultural and

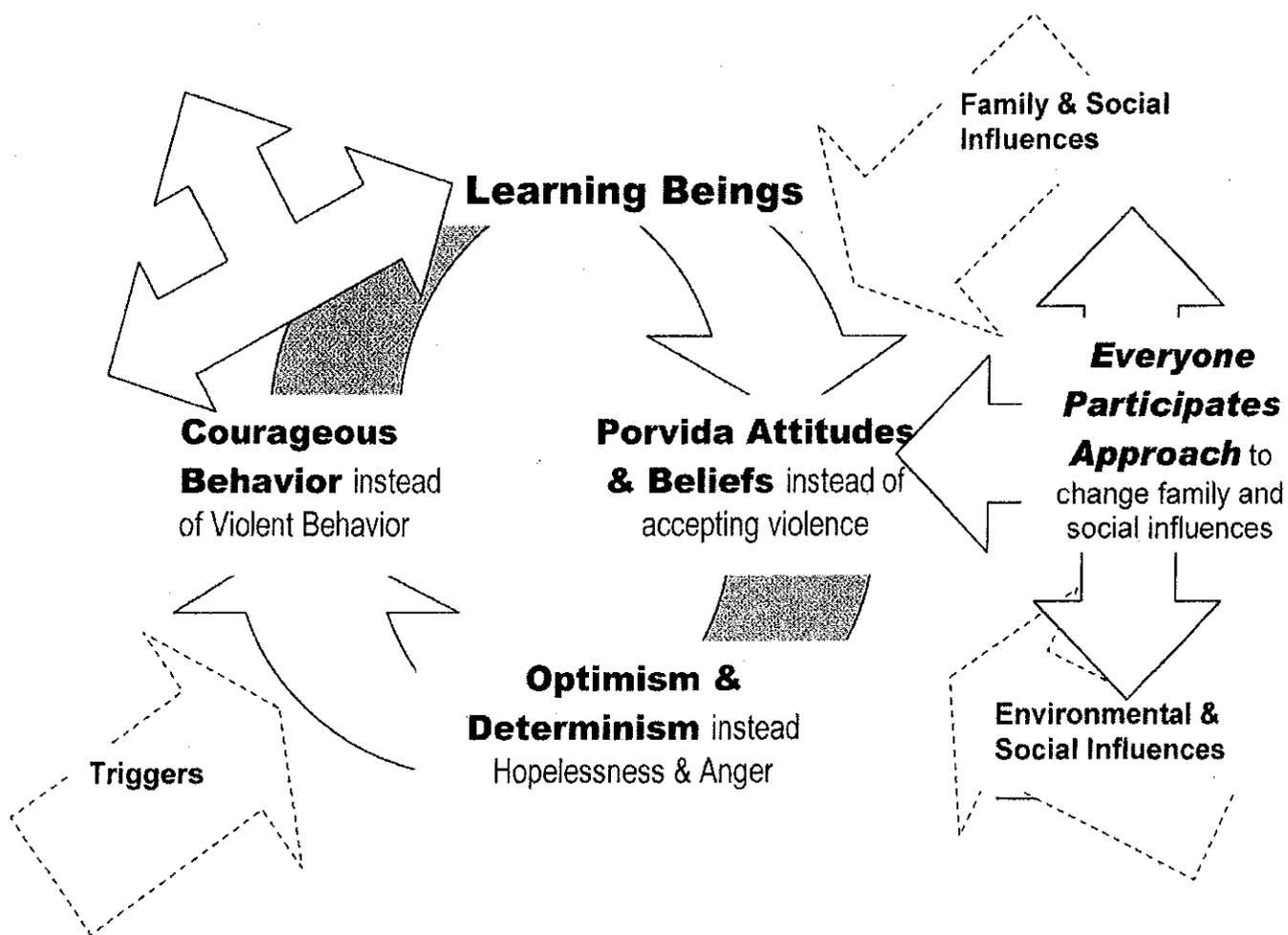
³ While “por vida” literally means “for life”, Vargas has used the term “porvida” to mean “for life, love and justice” to identify a universal attitude and commitment that resides among caring people of all cultures. Note Roberto Vargas, *Family Activism: Empowering Community Beginning with Family and Friends* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2008)

bilingual. The next section will elaborate more on community and cultural assets to transform violence.

- *Everyone builds community.* Everyone must accept the responsibility and be equipped with the skills for communication and community building. Violence prevention requires families, agencies and organizations knowing how to communicate and problem-solve individually and collectively.

Everyone Participates Approach

Diagram 5:



III. Community & Cultural Assets to Transform Violence

As we have noted, any comprehensive strategy to prevent violence must interrupt the learning process of accepting violence and must also address the social conditions that support violence. To create positive change in these conditions requires the involvement of all the community's resources and assets. These include the affected people as individuals, families, cliques (natural networks of friends and family members) and *comunidad* (community), as well as community partners who serve as resources in the community such as agencies, churches, and businesses. All these of these assets must be mobilized to create the attitudinal change, community improvement, and social support required to prevent violence and create healthier communities.

To be able to understand the assets that are available in the Oxnard community, we went to our Learning Circle participants. Their responses included lists of traditional resources, people and places – agencies, churches, organizations, and schools; and lists of non-traditional resources such as various “groups” of people, as well as cultural values and traditions of the Chicano, Mexican-American, Mexican, Latino and indigenous cultures.

The lists of assets that were identified are categorized and summarized in the outline below. It is important to note that because of various limitations, this area was not sufficiently developed. Therefore, these outlines should be considered only a beginning list that requires elaboration by more members of the Oxnard community. More community conversations are required, as well as an asset inventory that can comprehensively identify all available community resources, and then how to involve them in supporting positive community change.

Community Assets

- *Agencies and organizations who focus on serving the Oxnard community, e.g., Arts for Action (youth involvement), Centro Mujer (leadership development), El Centrito (tutoring, computer labs), CAUSE (developing collaboration among organizations), El Concillo (parent education).*
- *Agencies and organizations that focus on serving youth and/or families.* Repeatedly, young people cited the significance some organizations and their staff in keeping them positive, particularly the Boys and Girl Clubs, The Keys Program at Café on A, City Corps, Inlakech Cultural Arts Center, Interface Children Family Services, Probation Agency, City of Oxnard Recreation and Community Services and after-school programs. Many youth cited the Boys & Girls Club as the only place they can go to and feel safe.
- *Churches.* There are some churches who have active ministries and outreach programs to serve victims of violence and to prevent gang involvement., e.g. Victory Outreach, Santa Clara Catholic Church, Amistad Christiana, Clergy Council, etc.
- *Experience.* Within the community there is history and a multitude of skills that could be shared by residents. These assets are not being sufficiently utilized through shared learning experiences or mentoring, e.g., history of Oxnard, gardening, tree grafting, fixing cars, quilting, cooking, cultural healing practices
- *People.* Our greatest resource is the people of our neighborhood, their experience and commitment to each other and community betterment. This includes:
 - Grandmothers taking care of their grandchildren and willing to take actions to keep their neighborhood safe, e.g., quilting on corners to reclaim their neighborhood
 - Ex-gang members committed to drawing youth away from gang life styles. They share their experience, counsel the young, and even adopt young people as informal family.

- Youth and the 20yr+ generation who want to make a difference in their community.
- People sharing their resources, like the person who has a home audio studio which he is making available to young people desiring to develop positive music.
- People in recovery who seek to be involved in community service, i.e. people involved in 12 step programs, etc.
- Retired persons, in particular professionals such as fireman and police officers.
- *Schools.* Within most schools, there are teachers who are highly committed to making a difference for their students, often working overtime to make a difference (e.g., Haycox Elementary School, Hueneme High School, E.O. Green, etc.). Some schools serve as community centers.
- *Places and organizations.* Swap meets, neighborhood festivals, community colleges, libraries and sports leagues can provide opportunities, knowledge, and spaces for activities.

The important conclusion is that people, places, and organizations experience and capacity are an untapped resource in the community.

Cultural Strengths & Values

While no value or tradition can be considered universal to all people of any particular cultural group, some communities have developed or value particular practices or traditions that they consider positive virtues of their community culture. Upon asking regarding what cultural strengths or values of their Chicano, Mexican-American or Latino community experience can be drawn upon to strengthen healthier families and to prevent violence, the conversations surfaced a variety of ideas – from *familia* (caring of each other) and *comunidad* (mutually supportive) to valuing beliefs and practices including that of working hard, responsibility for caring for family, and self esteem that is built from a sense of cultural pride. Cultural assets include:

- *Appreciation for culture.* As many Mexican-Americans live in-between several cultures, there is often a heightened appreciation for cultural diversity. There are cultural practices that should be maintained from the Mexican or Latino ancestry as there are practices to be learned from the dominant USA society.
- *Cultura cura.* Learning about our cultural roots can provide multiple levels of healing. It can foster greater personal and community self-esteem, as there is also specific knowledge for emotional and physical healing.
- *Comunidad.* The idea of being connected with others and together sharing relationships, space, and responsibility to care about each other.
- *Familia.* The idea of feeling connected to everyone that you care about or cares for you; and the practice of being supportive of family and friends.
- *Giving back.* The idea that our current success as individuals or as a community is based upon what others contributed earlier to support the family or improve community conditions. Consequently, there is a sense of personal responsibility to return back to the family or community, the support one received.
- *Having each other's back.* The idea and practice of truly supporting the well-being and success of close family or friends.
- *Indigenous wisdom for positive living.* A combination of ideas and practices that indicate a responsible way of living that honors the warrior and healer spirit. An important community resource is the work being done by Yvette Hinojosa-Espinoza who has developed a youth curriculum called "Breaking the Cycles, Mending the

Circle" which is based upon indigenous teachings and rituals for positive ethnic identify formation.

- *Murals.* Murals are a traditional way of validating our history, cultural, aspirations and struggles. Dependent on how they are developed, they can foster community connection, learning about one's history, and community pride.
- *Responsible parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles.* Among many families there is a deep sense of responsibility to the family by mother, father, grandparents, aunts and uncles. Their commitment is to ensure the children are cared for and supported *so they may acquire opportunities to better their own lives.*
- *Working hard.* Many of our community pride themselves in their ability to labor as hard and long as necessary to ensure their ability to economically support their families.

IV. Consejos:

Community Advice for Follow-up Action

Learning Circle participants proposed that any groups or city agencies concerned about preventing violence and advancing community well-being should further evolve these *consejos* and support their advancement. The *consejos* were framed into several major action commitment areas that could facilitate the prevention of violence in Oxnard. These areas include: 1) Empowering parents and youth to pursue success; 2) Encouraging a vibrant community life; and 3) Institutional support for healthy families and communities. Within each of these areas participants identified what we called their *consejos* (counsel/advise), 3-4 specific goals or strategies which should be considered in future action plans. The following summarizes the community *consejos* and the next few outlines describe elaborate on each recommendation.

Consejos to Prevent Violence and Advance Community Well-Being

I. Empower Parents and Youth to Pursue Success

1. Parent Education for Family Success
2. Activities to Encourage Youth Success
3. Life Skills for Survival and Success

II. Encourage a Vibrant Community Life

4. Support an Interactive Community Life
5. Ensure Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods
6. Build Community Power
7. Prevent Gang Membership

III. Institutionalize Support for Healthy Families and Communities

8. Active Engagement of Business and Faith Communities
9. Employment
10. Effective Community Policing
11. Increase Collaboration Among Service Providers
12. Institutions Supporting Multicultural Respect

The Consejos

I. Empower Parents and Youth to Pursue Success

1. Parent Education for Family Success

Parent involvement is essential to foster the values and practices that can counter violence and encourage success. Equip parents with the tools required to develop positive and supportive relationships with their children.

- Parent education is essential to assist parents fulfill their role as a primary teacher for their children, providing them essential understanding and skills to foster positive values and healthy families.
- Parent trainings should include:
 - i. How to give love and develop the esteem of our children
 - ii. Preparing children and family for success
 - iii. Understanding the current realities of children and youth
 - iv. How to use a computer and text messaging
 - v. How to identify when our children are having problems
 - vi. How to promote respect, tolerance and diversity appreciation
- Parent trainings should be available in places and times that are convenient for parents. The following consejos were suggested:
 - Schools require a mandatory parent education workshop and other optional workshops. Workshops should be scheduled when parents are available—after work and/or on weekends
 - Businesses to endorse and support parent education—perhaps even host parent education courses at work during lunch hour.
 - Service agencies provide lobby education via DVDs on subjects essential to families. Probation currently provides DVD in lobby regarding drug use prevention. Expand the topics shown to include such items as raising healthy families, etc.
 - Make tapes and CDs on parent education available in Spanish and English
- Organizations that could provide or co-sponsor these workshops can include service agencies, community organizations, churches, youth sport organizations, and schools.

2. Activities to Encourage Youth Success

Continue expanding the multiple community and school programs directed to encouraging youth development and success

- After-school programs. Institute and expand after-school programs at school sites and in neighborhoods that foster personal development, mutual respect and community spirit, i.e. programs that teach teens how to interact with each other in positive ways. These program can include:
 - After-school leadership and service clubs, e.g., environmental club to clean neighborhood and beaches
 - After-school workshop programs that teach essential survival skills like cooking, computer skills, or involve the opportunities to work with art, poetry, creative writing and other expressive mediums. Parents could be involved in teaching these classes.
 - Career development program that include speakers that develop a sense of job options for students
 - Cultural clubs that foster self-awareness and appreciation of personal culture.
 - High school peer advisor or buddy program between middle and high schools, e.g. high school students serving as pen pals with middle school students.
 - Field trips opportunities to enhance students' appreciation of local resources, e.g., beach, museums or military base
 - More sports opportunities that provide scholarships or sponsor youth who can not afford to pay for uniforms etc.

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- Sponsor activities that foster school spirit, e.g., organize and develop a mural project inside schools, sponsor “family fun days” at the school
- Youth development. Support and expand programs that are specifically directed to enhancing youth personal and leadership development.
 - Expand programs such as the Keys Program at Café on A that provide youth an opportunity to develop themselves and a sense of community responsibility.
 - Expand programs such as the Boys and Girls Clubs that provide youth a safe space for interacting with other youth while encouraging their pursuit of education
 - Expand City Corps to include more youth who live in neighborhoods that are highly impacted by violence
- Youth involved in developing programs. All programs directed for youth should have youth involved in all facets of their development to ensure successful programs and to encourage leadership development.
- Cultural awareness. Schools develop cultural programs that use cultural awareness to enhance self-esteem, community appreciation, and multi-cultural understanding.
 - Year-long calendar of cultural activities and programs that foster understanding of different cultures, e.g., African-American Heritage Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, Days of the Dead, Gay Awareness Month, etc.
 - Support the development of student cultural clubs that can assist in developing awareness of their cultures by sharing dance and music.
 - Use specific cultural traditions like Days of the Dead to foster understanding of how various cultures honor their ancestors.
 - Organize activities that involve parents providing lessons on the best of their cultural traditions.
- Volunteer programs. Develop more volunteer opportunities for youth to engage in community service (as a voluntary option and not associated as a punishment requirement).
- Partnerships. Encourage partnerships between schools and community resources to provide or support after-school activities that advance personal learning, community service and parent involvement (The idea of using schools as community hubs after school is over by having them remain open later into the night came up a number of times.)
- Probation. Develop specific activities and programs for youth on probation that tap into skill building rather than just picking up trash.

3. Life Skills for Survival and Success

Many people take for granted the essential knowledge and skills they have for achieving success. These survival knowledge and skills must be made accessible to all, particularly youth, immigrants and adults who may not have these skills to keep a job.

- Basic job etiquette for youth and adults. Ensure youth and adults develop basic job etiquette to be able to secure and be successful as an employee. Training should include:
 - General success skills—goal setting and planning.
 - How to get a job and succeed at it.
 - How to communicate to your employer.
 - Understanding employer’s expectations.
 - Essential reading skills.
 - Citizenship
- Youth training sites. Training for youth survival and success could occur at multiple sites, including schools, youth centers, probation centers, etc.
- Survival skills for immigrants. Ensure recent immigrants develop understandings for achieving success. Training should include:
 - General success skills—goal setting and planning.

- Managing and spending your money.
- Parenting for successful children.
- Knowledge of available support resources
- Community networking for survival and success
- Essential English skills
- Sites for adult training. Training immigrant adults could occur at multiple sites, including adult education programs, community agencies, churches, schools, etc.

II. Encourage a Vibrant Community Life

4. Support an Interactive Community Life

Support neighborhoods becoming enjoyable communities where people interact and support each other.

- Vibrant neighborhoods. Increase community spaces like plazas or community activity rooms, and make better use of parks, schools and other communal areas for promoting community connection and spirit, e.g., families taking walks together, people getting together for sponsored activities at the parks or schools, street vendors and public music encouraged at the parks, etc.
- Interactive neighborhoods. Provide incentives and training on how to initiate projects that bring neighbors together to know each other and collaborate.
- Youth neighborhood councils. Provide training on the benefits and “how’s” to develop neighborhood councils. Initiate the organization of youth neighborhood councils that can plan for activities that support neighborhood clean-ups, family connections and teen involvement.
- Agency collaboration. Encourage increased collaboration among service agencies and organizations to better coordinate their services and build community, i.e., institute newsletters that highlight the various agencies serving particular communities, organize bi-monthly agency gatherings to share information, issues and resources, etc.
- Local resources. Encourage the operation of necessary resources and services within community walking distance, such as affordable grocery stores, youth centers, etc.

5. Ensure Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods

Ensure that our neighborhoods are physically safe and clean places that welcome community life.

- Ensure environmentally safe neighborhoods. The city engage in a neighborhood safety assessment and then respond with appropriate repairs which can include:
 - Providing dumpsters to clean neighborhoods and fixing street potholes
 - Providing for necessary street lights i.e. provide solar energy and add lights in the alleys, parks, parking lots and streets
- Safe places. Plan for the availability of safe places for children, youth and families to gather.
- Murals instead of alcohol ads. Initiate a community safety and health campaign that have existing tobacco and alcohol ads replaced by murals and other positive cultural messaging
- Immigration safe zones. Negotiate with the appropriate authorities areas that are safe from immigrant raids such as parks, buses, and grocery stores.

6. Building Community Power

Addressing the inequities that foster violence and advancing the changes required for healthier communities requires local residents to participate in organizing efforts to develop community power for positive changes.

- Community building. Develop within Oxnard an ongoing campaign to encourage community building and community responsibility—we are all here to make our community safe and healthy for all!
- Community advocacy. Encourage all persons working with “struggling communities” to foster a sense of personal, family and community power—we all

Attachment #4

have the power to achieve greater personal and community success. Get people involved in community organizations or community advocacy efforts that are seeking community improvement.

- Skill development. Develop among all families basic understanding and skills that enhances their ability for community self-help organizing. This can include learning about the following:
 - How to network with family, friends and neighbors to support each other.
 - Computer technology and the use of the web. This will enable more residents or parents to communicate with each other via the web.
 - Citizenship responsibilities, including electoral voting.
- Leadership training. Support current community organizations that provide leadership training and community organizing, i.e., Centro Mujer, Arts for Action, CAUSE, etc.
- Target leadership training or facilitation services. Specific neighborhood and school parent organizations could use training and consultation support for their activities directed to advancing positive community changes.

7. Prevent Gang Involvement

A concerted effort is necessary to counter gang membership. For many youth the messages to join gangs surrounds them "24/7"; it's a daily experience involving pressure from family role models, peers, coercion, need to make money, and a desire to belong to a group. All strategies directed to preventing gang membership must realize this context.

- Mentorship programs. Design programs in which older veteran ex-gang members serve as street mentors talking and coaching young adults about why to avoid membership or how to make the break. Young adults in turn are necessary to mentor and coach even younger youth beginning at 7 and 8 years old. Provide paid mentorship position for these street educators.
- Support and expand existing alternatives. Youth need to see alternatives to gang membership, .e.g., employment opportunities, affiliation with positive organizations, leadership development. Create local sites for the Boys and Girls Club and expand such programs as the Keys Program and Café on A.
- Research and replicate model programs. Other communities have developed programs that have demonstrated their effectiveness in deterring youth gang membership. Survey these programs and develop Oxnard's model. Suggested programs to investigate included: Father Boyle's program in Los Angeles, Barrios Unidos in Santa Cruz, and Rebeca's House in Gilroy.

III. Institutionalize Support for Healthy Families and Communities

8. Active Engagement of Business and Faith Communities

Find win-win strategies to more fully engage businesses and faith communities in initiating and supporting activities that encourage youth success

- Facilitate business and community collaboration. Bring business and concerned community people together to develop win-win strategies that support business success and community well-being. Identify ways communities can support business who serve the community in the following ways:
 - Provide apprenticeships, internships and jobs for local residents and youth.
 - Provide incentives or rewards for youth making positive changes in their lives, e.g., scholarships to participate in dance studios, music, karate, and sports, or transportation vouchers
 - Provide onsite parent training workshops for their employees
 - Provide space and support for youth and family activities. e.g., making space available for periodic youth activities.
 - Provide mini-grants to churches and organizations directly involved in community education to prevent gang involvement.
 - Provide families and youth discounts to their services, e.g., batting cage, dance studio, golf, etc.

- Boycott businesses selling products depicting or glorifying violence. Meet with the owners of those stores selling clothes, music, video games and other products glorifying violence to request a ban on selling such items. If stores don't comply, engage in a community boycott. Example many stores sell t-shirts promoting violence (e.g., saying "Death before Dishonor"). Youth and parents often do not have many choices in the clothing they buy at stores that offer more affordable prices.
- Facilitate landlord and community collaboration. Bring landlords together to identify win-win strategies that support maintenance of their property and safe neighborhoods.
- Encourage increase community and youth involvement by churches. Appreciation was expressed for faith community who are doing outreach in the community and having face-to-face conversations with youth and families to prevent gang involvement. The desire expressed for all churches included the following:
 - Increase community service ministry from the pulpits. Greater encouragement of congregations to stand up against child abuse, domestic violence, street violence, and social injustices.
 - Provide youth opportunities to do community service requirements in activities that teach them skills and involve community service (activities beyond janitorial duties), e.g., office skills, telephone outreach, visiting senior center, working with younger children, etc.
 - Provide parent workshop on how to encourage successful families and youth, and how to respond to troubled youth.
- Research best practices. Other communities have models for business and church involvement. Survey those models and apply to Oxnard.

9. Employment

Fundamental to countering community violence is youth and adults having the means to earn an income. Develop programs that prepare our community for essential employment and entrepreneurship.

- Skill development and jobs are essential. To create a positive life attitude and deter gang involvement jobs are essential.
- Partner with business community. Collaborate with business community to create training opportunities and jobs. See Consejo #2. Establish positive relationships with business to promote a win-win situation by asking the business community what we can do for them.
- Community members teach marketable skills. Encourage adults (parents, uncles, aunts, older siblings and grandparents) to serve as mentors and teach young people their skills, e.g., auto repair, baking, cooking, plumbing, typing, etc.
- Increase access to existing apprenticeship & training programs. Survey local training programs and explore how to make more accessible to youth, e.g., community college programs, fire and police training programs, programs on the military base, ROP, etc.
- Provide certificates of completion. Existing life and job skills training program to provide certificates of completion that could be used by youth to promote themselves as they apply for jobs. Interface currently provides such a program. Connect with businesses and establish agreements to give added consideration for employment to those who present a certificate of completion from the training programs.
- Develop skill development summer camp. Develop a summer program that provides basic employee skills, particularly employment common-sense, communication and computer technology.

10. Effective Community Policing

The Police provide an important service of safety to the community. In this position, they have an opportunity to build healthier police and community relationships to

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establish trust through effective use of *conocimiento* (getting to know each other better). Acknowledging that a power differential exists between the police and the community and recognizing the importance of addressing the need for institutional change to gain cultural competency and proficiency is an important aspect for transforming the violence. This transformation can occur with consistent training of officers and hiring more bilingual officers committed to community engagement and support.

- Develop trust relationships between community and police. Police department continue emphasis on developing community relationships. Utilize bilingual foot patrol officers that walk neighborhood and develop one-to-one relationships that foster community understanding and trust.
- Cultural training for officers. "Provide training to work with our people." Training should address such issues as the following:
 - How to view people beyond stereotypes.
 - How to develop rapport and trust (use of *conocimiento* and respect).
 - How to work with family systems.
 - How to address power differential between officers and civilians.
 - Understand the impact of "generational poverty" or the dynamics of EL NO. For example, a person may have tremendous difficulty maintaining eye contact given their generational experience of poverty or being victim of the myriad of social messages that communicate "no vales", you have no value.
- Emphasize the parent involvement approach. Among first or youthful offenders, seek to involve parents rather than the criminal justice system.
- Provide training on community resolution skills. Provide community training on conflict resolution skills so that involvement of police is the "last resort".
- Research best practices in community policing and restorative justice. Investigate how the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program and Teen Courts could be applied in Ventura County. Also, explore the application of the National Alliance on Mental Health training model for officer training. The model involves members of the target community providing the training.

11. Increase Collaboration Among Service Systems

Our service agencies could better serve our community if they transcended the old philosophy of the single-handed approach for the partnership approach. This was the expressed desire of all persons representing their various agencies.

- Bi-monthly forum for agencies. The purpose of the forum would be for agencies to stay current on each others services, support each other and seek resolution to address their concerns. The forum could also be used to learn best practices from each other.
- Agency collaborative planning. Use the agency forum to facilitate periodic discussion on priority concerns, e.g., how to we best serve the Spanish speaking, support youth success or prevent violence.
- Agency and community forum. Organize a regular agency and community forum where the community is provided information about services and discussions can be facilitated regarding joint concerns.
 - Schedule regular forum meetings at accessible community sites.
 - Utilize the swap meet to provide a regular booth for community service information. Also, optimize the use of other possible venues, such as the Farmers Market or community festivals.
- Emphasize a shift of service philosophy. Most agencies operate from a paradigm of how can they best serve the community as opposed to how "we" (the multiple agencies) can better serve the community. Emphasize increased communication and collaboration among agencies and providers.
- Ensure bilingual information and services. All agencies and programs serving Oxnard should maintain the capacity to serve Oxnard's Spanish speaking population. A specific request from one Learning Circle was that the City of

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Oxnard provide more literature in Spanish for their recreation and youth programs. Appreciation was also expressed for the courteous and helpful bilingual, bi-cultural staff at the Recreation and Community Services Dept.

12. Schools that Support Student Success & Community Multicultural Respect

The Latino community and greater community must engage in increased respect for the people of all cultures. Schools and parents are essential to advance education on multicultural respect. These consejos were generated in Learning Circles that included parents, youth and school administrators and teachers.

- Plan for enhancing multicultural respect. School administrators, teachers and PTSA's (Parent, Teacher and Student Associations) join together to develop programs to encourage multicultural respect and understanding among students and parents. Multicultural training would include increasing sensitivity to differences regarding class, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation.
- Programs for students dedicated to multicultural learning and acceptance. Institute classroom, afterschool, and school community activities that foster multicultural acceptance, e.g., develop a full year school calendar of multicultural activities which includes an annual week of programs dedicated to multicultural learning and acceptance, monthly performances or workshops focusing on different cultural group or diversity themes, e.g., Black History Month, Gay awareness week, etc.
- Programs for students to motivate personal development. Institute regular and ongoing motivational programs for the students including guest speakers, service and cultural clubs, after-school learning activities, etc.
- Training for parents. Schools partner with other service agencies to provide parent training to increase their ability to teach positive values to their children and support the school and life success of their students.
- Training and support for teachers. Schools provide teachers the opportunity to plan together and develop their skills for building student self-esteem, using cultural events for community building, developing respect for differences, teacher-parent communication, and handling challenging students.
- Community spirit. Schools and PTSA's integrate "community building" as an overarching goal to their activities in which all activities are planned to encourage community spirit among students, teachers and parents.

Appendix I

Causes of Violence

Cultural Causes (related to cultural or informal life realities)

- Attitudes regarding differences and neighborhood protection. Animosity towards outsiders, turf issues, and peer pressure results in violence to others.
- Feelings of anger and frustration. Periodic or chronic frustration stemming from injustice, oppression, and personal and collective powerlessness.
- Insufficient respect for self, others and life. Stemming from insufficient love within family or support by others to develop healthy self-esteem
- Multi-generational gang membership. Some family networks have been so engaged in gang affiliation over generations that it becomes the accepted norm for the upcoming generation.
- Witnessing violence. Experiencing abuse, neglect, and violence at home, community, schools, and through the media creates a general acceptance of violence.

Environmental Causes

- Drugs and guns. Unchecked availability of drugs and guns.
- Neighborhoods in need of revitalization, e.g., deteriorated housing, blight, insufficient street lighting, overcrowded conditions, and too much trash.
- Polluted environments. Low income communities are targeted by industry for toxic dumping, e.g., LNG and Jalasco
- Segregation by economics and ethnicity. These condition make people feel less valued
- Unsafe, empty streets and parks. The result is unwalkable neighborhoods and lack of community connection.
- Unavailability of essentials for basic living, e.g., not enough bus stops, high cost of food, unsafe and unclean school bathrooms
- Not enough places and spaces for youth activities.

Social Causes (related to systems)

- Cycle of violence in which violence begets violence. Whether it's domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, elder abuse, community violence, anger at oppressive systems, or violent gang behavior it perpetuates greater violence.
- Economic strains. Economic stress creates unemployment, frustration, segregated communities, and requires parents to work multiple jobs undermining their ability to serve their families.
- Racism, homophobia and all forms of discrimination and oppression breed fear and feelings of separation and disconnection within families, communities and society at large.
- Systems fail to serve the poor and people of color, e.g., agencies, business, banking industry, government, health care, police, schools
- Too much negativity. Negative messages from media, family, peers, and institutions which undermines the value of life and undermines people's sense of personal and community power to create positive changes.

Effects of Violence

- Anger. People feel anger and want to retaliate. "People blame each other's kids instead of looking out for them". "You get angry knowing our tax dollars are wasted in prisons".
- Community hopelessness. Ongoing violence makes one feel that nothing will change. Violence undermines pride in one's home and property, which in turn decreases property values.

- Fear. Living in fear—"I'm scared", "I'm tired of the violence", "It makes me sad." "I can't go out at night." Fear of leaving the house, of walking in one's neighborhood, of any group of teens who just may be hanging out.
- Injury and death to innocent people. You can get shot just being at the wrong place at the wrong time. You lose family and friends.
- Lifeless neighborhoods. Feeling and acting like a "prisoner in one's own home". People don't go out to be and create a neighborhood feeling.
- Negative stigma on community. Generates a negative impression of certain communities in Oxnard as not being safe places to live.
- Prevents financial investments in the community. Concerned about violence, tagging, graffiti, and vandalism, small and large business might fail to invest in the community.
- Racism and discrimination. Violence breeds more racism and discrimination as people of color or other marginalized groups are stigmatized as being violent. Creates more separation and fear.
- Undermines health. Lack of exercise by youth and adults as there is fear to be out in their neighborhoods.
- Violence becomes normalized and accepted. Social norms are formed as children, youth and adults become desensitized to violence through their exposure to violence in the media, video games, television, witnessing violence at home, school and community etc.