ALL EYES ON US: A Documentary Film Project
About Stockton’s Violence and Crime Prevention Strategies
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For over a decade, Stockton California has struggled with an inconsistent battle with crime, which included violent crimes such as murders and rapes (fig. 1.1), but in 2012 it had reached a record-breaking level in homicides. Forbes Magazine listed Stockton number eight in their 2012 annual report “The 10 Most Dangerous U.S. Cities,” and listed it as the second most dangerous city in California. Although there are many contributing factors to the violent crime spree, it was the local government’s lack of financial management that has taken most of the blame.

I propose to make a documentary film that will show the struggle and tribulations of a community that is in desperate need of change, and their fight to regain a sense of security. The film will consist of first-hand accounts from people living in the midst of a city that is overwhelmed by violence. I intend to interview politicians, law enforcement officers, victims, residents, and criminals. This will give a number of community members an opportunity to voice their opinion on issues such as; what contributed to the increase of violence, the impact crime has had on their lives, and what they are doing to make a change in their community. I also plan to go in-depth into Stockton’s crime prevention plan, which has had a positive impact during their 2013 crime intervention campaign. Although it is too early to acquire and compare 2012 and 2013 statistical data from law enforcement agencies, I have found mapping reports illustrating homicide cases (fig. 1.2 and 1.3). This will show a significant change in homicide rates and provide a better understanding of why there is a need to capture such transformation on film.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murders (per 100,000)</td>
<td>32 (13.1%)</td>
<td>30 (12.9%)</td>
<td>36 (14.2%)</td>
<td>37 (13.9%)</td>
<td>40 (14.6%)</td>
<td>41 (14.8%)</td>
<td>37 (12.8%)</td>
<td>29 (8.8%)</td>
<td>24 (8.2%)</td>
<td>33 (11.3%)</td>
<td>49 (18.8%)</td>
<td>58 (19.7%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rapes (per 100,000)</td>
<td>130 (53.4%)</td>
<td>114 (45.5%)</td>
<td>144 (58.0%)</td>
<td>141 (55.8%)</td>
<td>155 (56.4%)</td>
<td>108 (38.3%)</td>
<td>109 (38.7%)</td>
<td>102 (35.2%)</td>
<td>105 (35.3%)</td>
<td>112 (38.2%)</td>
<td>82 (28.1%)</td>
<td>107 (36.5%)</td>
<td>90 (30.5%)</td>
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Figure 1.1 (from City-Data.com)
Literature Review

Long before Stockton declared bankruptcy, it already had an alarming history of crime that only kept on intensifying year by year. So what exactly happened that escalated the violence in this city? In order to answer this question we have to understand violence; identify cultural factors that could have contributed to the violence; get a basic understanding of gangs; and see what actions (or failures to act) on the city’s part may have contributed to the high 2012 crime rates. The focus of the documentary will be centered on violent crimes, so it is important to properly identify violent behavior and how it is developed. Elizabeth Englander, author of *Understanding Violence*, points out that violence and aggressive behaviors are two separate behaviors/actions:

Violence must be distinguished from aggressive behavior. *Violence* is aggressive behavior with the intent to cause harm (physical or psychological). The word intent is central; physical or psychological harm that occurs by accident, in the absence of intent, is not violence.... The first step in understanding risk of violence must come in understanding where and when violence occurs. We are coming to realize that by far the most common type of violent behavior may occur not in the streets, but in the family. (Englander, 4)

Englander suggests that violent behavior is learned at home and that victims of abuse,
broken homes, and poverty, commit most of the crimes. While Domestic violence is rarely reported and even more rarely punished, it clearly plays an influential role in molding young minds and behavior.

Most experts agree that violent behavior is a learned behavior. The authors of *Cultural Factors in Delinquency* write, “it is now largely agreed that delinquent behavior, like most social behavior, is learned, and that it is learned in the process of social interaction” (Gibbens and Ahrenfeldt 94). But violence is not always learned at home. It is important that parents be involved in their children’s everyday life. But it is not enough to instill proper behavior at home; when children step out of the house they are in danger of learning bad behavior from their peers. Adolescents tend to hang out with kids they can relate to, for instance, those with similar interests or of the same ethnic background. Some teens may join an athletic team, some join an after school program in order to find others they can connect with; unfortunately, many of them find this connection within street gangs.

Gang membres have been the largest contributors in violent crimes for the city of Stockton. A study based on a 1994 census showed that Stockton, with a population of 210,943 had 140 different gangs. In comparison with the city of Chicago, which had a population of 2,783,726 only had 125 different gangs (Landre, Miller, and Porter 27,28). The authors of *GANGS: A Handbook for Community Awareness* argue that in order to reduce gang activity, a community-based control is needed:

No single group or organization has the scope to prevent all of these factors, but combined with other organizations, some degree of control can be exercised over gang activity and growth. Many anti-gang programs around the country do succeed in reducing and controlling gang problems. The most successful programs tend to be:

1. **Community-based**, involving up to eight “special interest” subgroups: Service groups, parents, youth, schools, business, government, law enforcement, media.
2. **Long-term**. These programs are not short term or dependent upon discretionary annual funding.
3. **Need-based**. Programs should address and meet the realistic needs of youth in the community and be inclusive of all groups and activities (Landre, et al., 202).

Community members claim that Stockton failed to fully implement any of the programs listed above prior to the 2013 intervention. According to one of my participants, instead of spending money on drug and gang task units, the city spent millions of dollars trying to revamp downtown, which later forced the city to go bankrupt. In *Leisure as a context for youth development and delinquency prevention* the authors highlight the importance of leisure as a context for human development as well as for prevention of risky behavior, including crime and delinquency (France and Homel 271). Stockton, on the other hand, closed many of the leisure programs and recreation centers, which included several parks, a YMCA, and other community programs.
Research Methods

Through documentary filmmaking I will try to explore the crime intervention program or tactics being used by the city of Stockton, in order to share it with other cities. My study will be based on qualitative research. The main method that will be applied to collect the data will be through qualitative research interviews. The interviews will allow the viewer to gather better understanding of human behavior by getting different opinions from participants that are living within such conditions. Applying this method allows the viewer and the interviewee to connect in a more personal level as it gives the viewer insight into subjective understanding. According to Seidman “The best stories are those which stir people’s minds, hearts, and souls and by so doing give them new insights into themselves, their problems and their human condition” (Seidman, 8).

1.4 Screen shot while editing preliminary research footage
Methods/Procedures/Participants

My study utilizes the documentary film format and will employ several different methods of investigation. Five different approaches will be used in order to collect the essential information I need for the film. The methods in use to collect my data include:

1. Interviews
2. News media recourses
3. Official reports, articles and libraries/librarians
4. Law enforcement interaction
5. Community observation

For the interviews, participants will be selected from groups defined by one of the following criteria:

1) Participants must be residents of Stockton or have moved away during 2012 or 2013 due to the violence.
2) Participants must be employed by the city of Stockton (government officials, law enforcement, or educators).
3) Participants must be from other law enforcement agencies that were brought in to help with crime reduction (CHP officers or Marshals).

The objective is to interview a variety of participants with different backgrounds and perspectives in order to get a broad representation of the problem. Once they are chosen they will be asked a series of fixed, and open-ended questions, which could be modified according to the participant. The questions will be asked as followed:

a) What is your name (if the participant chooses not to be anonymous) and how long have you lived in Stockton?
b) In your opinion what was the cause of 2012’s crime escalation?
c) Have you or someone you know been a victim of crime?
d) In what way has the violence affected the community?
e) What do you think needs to be done in order to reduce the crime?
f) What efforts are being implemented in order to lower crime?
g) What advice do you want to give the viewers watching this film?

Since most of the filming will take place after 2013, news and media reports will be of significant importance for collecting stories and reports prior to this production. Official reports, statistics and articles will be gathered from the Stockton Police Department, the FBI Unified Crime Report website and academic resources. Police interaction will involve recording tactical meetings and riding with police while on patrol and/or serving warrants. Capturing police activity on film will be crucial in order to understand the crime prevention interventions that are being put into practice. The final method that will be used in the movie is to observe the community, which entails collecting secondary footage, B-roll footage as it is known, will include town hall meetings, church gatherings, city landscapes, and neighborhood scenery that will be
incorporated into the interviews.

Relevance

Modesto also made the Forbes’ list “10 Most Miserable Cities in the U.S. to Live in.” It is a matter of time before it makes it to the most dangerous list. I feel that my research on Stockton is important because other cities, like Modesto, can take the documentary and apply it as an effort to prevent similar circumstances. According to many experts, crimes follow similar patterns, yet it takes billions of taxpayers’ money to come up with solutions that do not work. I believe that a well-documented plan that can be easily accessible and modeled by other cities is needed. For instance, San Jose California, which is listed as one of the safest cities in America, has no written model of their crime prevention strategies in which other cities can possibly follow.

Scope Of Project

The research proposal is to develop a documentary film that can be easily attainable to the masses. The documentary will constitute a different exploration into the relationship between Stockton’s crime and its residents. I hope my findings will reinforce the importance of the opinions of its residents and that national policy makers will recognize the role ordinary folks play in aforementioned issues such as violence, crime prevention and law enforcement. In producing this documentary, I will attempt to demonstrate a significant reduction in violent crimes as the city of Stockton, its residents, and the state of California all work together in order to finally change its history of criminal violence. With the help of social media I hope this film reaches millions of viewers and that it will perhaps serve as an educational tool. To get an idea of the possible response this film would receive, I uploaded a three minute rough trailer on Youtube. The results were astonishing, after one week the short video received over 2100 views before switching it to private viewing.
References


