

Pulling Levers on Gang Violence in London and St. Paul

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Abstract

This chapter compares and contrasts two focused deterrence pulling levers strategies in two cities, 4000 miles apart: London, England, and St. Paul, Minnesota. Based on qualitative interviews with key stakeholders in both cities and analysis of secondary data, the chapter examines program efficacy, issues of fidelity in Group Violence Intervention, innovation in transforming theory into practice, and context-specific challenges to directing gang-violence cessation. The community-police nexus in gang intervention and possible “spillover effects” of focused deterrence strategies on vicariously treated gangs are discussed. The chapter explores how and why “pulling levers” failed in London but succeeded in St. Paul, with implications for research, policy, and practice.

Keywords

Focused deterrence
Gangs
Group violence intervention
Problem-oriented policing
Pulling levers

16.1. Introduction

Offenders and victims of homicide and gun violence are disproportionately members of small, readily identifiable, street groups (Decker and Pyrooz 2010), many of which satisfy the Eurogang definitional criteria (Klein and Maxson 2006). All gangs are groups, but not all groups are gangs. Gangs may be “qualitatively different” groups (Klein and Maxson 2006, pp. 11–12), but the group processes and honor code of the street underlying the cyclical, reciprocal, and retaliatory nature of violence perpetrated in furtherance of all street groups “warrant special attention”

(Papachristos 2009, 2012, p. 49; Anderson 1999; Decker et al. 2013). Such is the logic behind Group Violence Intervention (GVI), a well-documented gang violence reduction strategy, consistent with problem-oriented policing models (Goldstein 1990), that began life as “Operation Ceasefire” in Boston in the 1990s (Braga et al. 2001) and now is codified by the National Network for Safe Communities (2013).

In the neo-classical criminology tradition (Cornish and Clarke 1986), GVI is a focused deterrence or “coerced abstinence” strategy comprising various tactics (Kleiman 2009, p. 40). GVI begins with a problem analysis, such as a systematic review of all violent incidents and an audit or mapping of all violent groups in any given jurisdiction (see Papachristos 2012). Once the key players are identified, coordinated law enforcement action against the most violent group follows in an effort to demonstrate to other groups that violence will not be tolerated (National Network for Safe Communities 2013). Next, community moral voices and social service providers partner with law enforcement to engage directly with violent group members (and through them, their associates) in a “call-in,” or face-to-face meeting, at a venue of civic importance (Kennedy 2011).

The call-in is perhaps the most famous GVI tactic, to the extent it is commonly misrepresented as the entire strategy (for a discussion, see Kennedy 2011). At each call-in, group members receive three direct, mutually reinforcing messages. First, police and prosecutors communicate that future violence in furtherance of the group will be met with swift, severe, and certain consequences, in part because the entire group will be held accountable for violence perpetrated by any one member. In other words, if one group member violates the terms of the ceasefire, law enforcement will *pull* every civil and criminal *lever* available (e.g., outstanding warrants, probation and parole violations, open cases) to dismantle the entire group (Braga and Weisburd 2012a, b; Kennedy 1997). Second, community representatives articulate why violence is morally reprehensible and henceforth unacceptable. In doing so, they clarify and reinforce the community’s standards, aspirations, frustrations, and expectations, but also reintegrate group members back into the community on the condition of nonviolence. The strong presence of police and community working together, moreover, “heighten[s] the perceived risk of apprehension” and sanction (Braga and Weisburd 2012b, p. 349). Third, social service providers inform group members that genuine help is available for those who want it, thus facilitating an honorable exit from street life via counseling, employment, education, and training (National Network for Safe Communities 2013).

GVI has been criticized for exaggerated claims of violence cessation, a lack of durability, and failure to address root causes of violence (Fagan 2002; Rosenfeld et al. 2005). However, from the original “Boston Miracle” (Papachristos et al. 2007, p. 226) to initiatives in Minneapolis (Kennedy and Braga 1998), Indianapolis (McGarrell et al. 2006), Chicago (Papachristos et al. 2007), Stockton (Braga 2008), Cincinnati (Engel et al. 2013; Tillyer et al. 2012), and even Glasgow (Deuchar 2013), there is “strong empirical evidence” for GVI’s effectiveness (Braga and Weisburd 2012b, p. 25). This chapter contributes to this evidence base by exploring GVI variations in Saint Paul, Minnesota (USA), and London, England (UK). True to Eurogang traditions (Klein 2006), this study is based on comparisons. The central question is whether or not Saint Paul and London implemented GVI-like focused deterrence with reasonable fidelity to its core principles. To this end, findings are organized around these principles: (1) problem analysis; (2) demonstration enforcement action; (3) community moral voices and social services; (4) the call-in; and (5) maintenance and ensuring program integrity (National Network for Safe Communities 2013). The chapter concludes with discussion of the two case studies and implications for future gang and group violence intervention efforts.

16.2. Policing Gangs in Saint Paul

The City of Saint Paul is Minnesota's capital and its second largest city with a population of approximately 290,770 (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). Saint Paul's resident population is 55.9 % non-Hispanic White, 15.7 % Black, 15 % Asian, 9.6 % Hispanic/Latino, with 3.8 % being of other or mixed races. Within Saint Paul, 22.8 % of residents live below the poverty level. The Saint Paul Police Department (SPPD) is a full-service medium-city police department with approximately 600 peace officers and 200 non-sworn employees (Criminal Justice Information Services 2013).

Like most major cities in the United States, Saint Paul has a problem with violent street groups that affiliate along racial or ethnic lines. Some of these gangs may officially associate with or unofficially identify with large Chicago- and Los Angeles-based gang franchises (Howell 2012). Increasingly, however, traditional gangs are splintering off into smaller "cliques" and crews running a few blocks (Williams 2015). Saint Paul has approximately 30 gangs that adhere to the consensus Eurogang definition, according to police sources (see Bumgarner et al. 2016). The actual number of gangs and gang members in Saint Paul is unknown because there has never been a community-wide gang assessment in the city. Minnesota once had an interagency gang unit, the Metro Gang Strike Force, and a gang database, GangNet, but both famously collapsed in 2009 following officer-involved improprieties (Aba-Onu et al. 2010; Ellison 2011; Huff and Barrows 2015). Since then, SPPD has maintained a stand-alone gang unit but has lost the will and mechanism to tag incidents as being "gang related" within their Records Management System (RMS).

16.3. Policing Gangs in London

London is the capital and most populous city of England and the United Kingdom and a leading financial and cultural center. According to 2011 Census estimates, 60 % of London's eight million inhabitants are White, 20 % are of Asian and mixed-Asian descent, 15 % are of Black and mixed-Black descent, 5 % are Mixed race, and 1 % are Arab. Approximately 35 % of Greater London's population was born outside the UK and 28 % of its population lives in poverty. London Boroughs are 32 subdivisions of Greater London for local services, each with their own Borough Councils. London's Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), the territorial police force responsible for law enforcement in Greater London, comprising approximately 30,000 sworn police officers and 18,000 non-sworn employees, is divided into Borough Operational Command Units that are directly aligned with each of the 32 Boroughs (Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime 2015).

Like Saint Paul, London has gangs, but only in recent years were they formally acknowledged (for a discussion, see Densley 2013). According to unpublished MPS intelligence, there are 186 recognized gangs in London, comprising approximately 3600 gang members; however, the MPS definition is broader than the consensus Eurogang definition, including, for example, organized criminal networks. Fifty-eight gangs are considered particularly active, accounting for two-thirds of offenses where a named gang has been identified as being involved (Greater London Authority 2015). MPS data show 1306 "gang nominals" (i.e., individuals police suspect of gang involvement based on arrest and conviction data, corroborated and uncorroborated intelligence, and social media or CCTV content) currently subject to judicial restrictions such as civil gang injunctions, electronic tagging, or supervision on probation (Greater London Authority 2015).

16.4. Method

This exploratory study compares and contrasts GVI-like initiatives in Saint Paul and London. The data are derived from qualitative interviews with a purposive sample of 13 key stakeholders from both cities (seven in Saint Paul and six in London), including representatives from law enforcement, the community, and social service providers. One limitation of the data is interviewees provided only a retroactive account of the two interventions. The sampling technique also inherently introduces subjective forms of bias. Data therefore are triangulated with media reports, published statistics, and, in the case of London, the first author's earlier ethnographic fieldwork in the gang industry (see Densley 2013). David M. Kennedy, Director of the Center for Crime Prevention and Control at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the National Network for Safe Communities, was also interviewed twice via telephone for his perspective on the two interventions. Kennedy has worked with stakeholders in both St. Paul and London to evaluate GVI efforts discussed herein.

The interviews were semi-structured and conversational in nature, averaging 90 min in duration (range: 30 min to 3 h), and undertaken in a neutral setting of the interviewees' choosing. Interviews were designed to explore GVI processes in Saint Paul and London, including problem profiles, tactics used, and perceived strengths and challenges. All interviewees gave informed consent, but to maintain confidentiality, they are identifiable only by city code and interview sequence number (STP for Saint Paul or LON for London). Interviews were not recorded, but rather, the authors took extensive written notes throughout, which we independently coded then compared using NVivo qualitative data software to reach a high degree of inter-coder reliability. Findings are examined below vis-à-vis the objective principles of GVI and the practical experience of GVI in other jurisdictions (see National Network for Safe Communities 2013).

16.5. Findings

16.5.1. Problem Analysis

16.5.1.1. St. Paul

In early 2011, SPPD's Gang Unit noticed an escalation in retaliatory violence between local factions of two rival Latino gangs—18th Street and Sureños 13. Intelligence from social media and a confidential informant also indicated the 18th Street Gang was poised to initiate a large number of girls into their ranks through a process that included sexual assault (Gottfred, 2011). Immediate intervention was needed. Utilizing gang intelligence and criminal records, officers decided to target the active members of the gang. In the past, SPPD had served warrants on the gang's so-called "frequent flyers" (STP 3) that resulted in arrests, but traditional enforcement had failed to reduce violence long term because gang members were rarely caught with anything that would warrant lengthy detention and the juvenile status of offenders all but precluded correctional incapacitation. In this context, and inspired by a talk they had attended on the Boston Gun Project 1 year earlier (STP 2), the Gang Unit desired to serve a different kind of warrant; one that would include a search, but in lieu of automatic arrest, an invite to dinner at a local community center for conversation about the need to stop the violence now before it was too late.

Initially, the Gang Unit's unorthodox plan to search but not arrest gang members drew criticism from SPPD administrators. The approach was perceived as "soft on crime" and out of sync with the instant gratification of traditional enforcement strategies (see Gervais 2011). As one interviewee noted, the "touchy feely approach is tough for some cops to digest" (STP 3). In recognizing that enforcement had thus far failed, however, the administration eventually approved the program. By identifying the most violent group and the most violent individuals within the group, moreover, they had conformed to GVI principles.

16.5.1.2. London

In response to an uptick in teenage homicide in 2007 and 2008 (see Hallsworth and Young 2008), delegations of senior police officers and seasoned social service providers took the 8000 mile round-trip journey from London, England, to Cincinnati, Ohio, and High Point, North Carolina, to observe GVI and its sister program, Drug Market Intervention (see Kennedy and Wong 2012), in action. Many returned to London sold on the benefits of GVI, but sketchy on the details, and keen to rewrite the strategy to conform with the “paradoxical” (Klein 2001) false narrative that London gangs and American gangs were fundamentally different (i.e., London gangs were fluid and armed with knives and American gangs were structured and armed with guns). In so doing, practitioners discounted important *similarities* between violent groups, such as “pluralistic ignorance” in respect to group norms (e.g., supposedly not caring about going to prison or being violently victimized) (Kennedy 2011; Matza 1964), to emphasize trivial *differences* between them, such as their size and ethnic composition. The rush to “be first” or “take credit” for London’s GVI incarnation, moreover, placed interested parties in conflict with each other. What followed was a “myopic” focus on the “call-in showpiece” at the expense of other aspects of the GVI strategy and “wasted time” reconciling differences in organizational structures, professional values, and accountability and reporting mechanisms across key stakeholders (LON 3). The result was isolated, individualized, GVI efforts that never truly “got off the ground” (LON 4).

To compound the problem, group violence in London transcended Borough boundaries (Densley 2013; Pitts 2008), but GVI was funded and administered on a per Borough basis. The Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), for example, sets the direction and budget for the MPS on behalf of the Mayor, which is operationalized at the Borough level. Likewise, gang “nominals” in London are placed on Borough-specific gangs “matrices”—that are not uniform across Boroughs. Some Boroughs include juvenile gang nominals, for example, while others do not. As a result, GVI at times engaged the “wrong people” and neglected the complex *group* dynamics motivating and sustaining *group* violence (LON 3). Indeed, in some Boroughs, practitioners worked only with select (or, LON 1 said, “accessible and amenable”) people, which prompted change on an individual level, but not on a group level where it was most needed.

16.5.2. Demonstration Enforcement Action

16.5.2.1. Saint Paul

Unlike many other Minnesota police agencies, SPPD had never engaged in a “warrant sweep strategy” (STP 2) of serving multiple suspects in multiple jurisdictions in the same day prior to 2011. This was a large-scale logistical undertaking and officers wanted to proceed with caution because it was something different to present to the courts. The supporting affidavit included standard language explaining what the searches would be for, and who the individuals were in the search with their legal names and street names. The affidavit provided a history and problem profile of the 18th Street Gang, both its origins in Los Angeles and its incarnation in Saint Paul, where there was a schism and now two different sects. A Judge known for his support of the Latino community reviewed the affidavit and “approved and issued the warrant authorizing the searches of the homes” and the call-in in lieu of immediate arrest (STP 2).

A multi-agency team of local and federal law enforcement served the warrants, executed the searches, and informed the gang members that if they attended the scheduled “notification” 48 h later, they would avoid

arrest (STP 1). Police provided suspects and their families with a letter signed by the Gang Unit Commander outlining the structure and purpose of the call-in and SPPD's intention to provide childcare and food as incentives for full participation. Parents were also told translators and members of the Mexican Consulate (see below) would be present and available to answer questions. Officers had parents fill out a form with their commitment to attend, specifying the size of their party and childcare needs. The home visits, in turn, enabled law enforcement to subtly verify home addresses and ascertain levels of parental support and risk at home. Some parents were surprised to learn about their child's involvement in gangs and most were appreciative of the personal and proactive approach taken. Search warrants, a tool so often confrontational, thus became a mechanism for collaboration.

16.5.2.2. London

The MPS launched the new Trident Gang Crime Command—an expansion of Operation Trident, which focused exclusively on shootings in the black community—in February 2012 with a series of coordinated police raids that resulted in 515 “gang-related” arrests and the recovery of small quantities of guns, knives, and drugs. However, none of this was in the name of focused deterrence. Instead, it was business as usual—general deterrence through demonstrated enforcement action, not unlike the infamous Operation Hammer suppression effort in Los Angeles (see Klein and Maxson 2006). Of the 515 people arrested in London, only 254 were charged, which implies there was insufficient evidence against 233 of them and more rigorous problem analysis was needed (Metropolitan Police Service 2012). The absence of any “focused” demonstration enforcement action was tied to the fact that, in further deviation from GVI principles, GVI in London has been less about violence reduction and more about “redemption” or “personal transformation” (D. Kennedy, personal communication, February 17, 2015). Indeed, consistent with individualized risk and protective factor approaches to crime reduction (Higginson et al. 2014), social service providers in some instances tried pulling people out of gangs with promises of employment, education, and training, “without any police input whatsoever” (LON 1).

16.5.3. Community Moral Voices and Social Services

16.5.3.1. Saint Paul

The 18th Street Gang primarily comprised youth from undocumented Latino families that either avoided police contact for fear of deportation or lacked the cognitive academic language proficiency (in some cases, basic interpersonal communicative skills) in English necessary to participate in community conversations. Many gang members often served as “cultural liaisons” between their parents and the outside world, enjoying a degree of impunity, which made engagement difficult (STP 3). In an effort to boost community and parental cooperation in GVI, therefore, the SPPD consciously sought out community moral voices, eventually finding them at the local Mexican Consulate. The Mexican Consul herself attended the call-in and addressed all attendees in Spanish. She assuaged community concerns by defining GVI not as an immigration enforcement mechanism, but rather a violence reduction effort (although she stressed immigration enforcement could occur if group violence continued). Her office also offered expedited services to families such as Mexican passport application and renewal, all of which played a significant role in “getting community buy in” (STP 6).

Another key partner was the Neighborhood House's Gang Reduction and Intervention Program (GRIP), a social service initiative that steers young people away from gangs and crime toward a brighter future. The

Neighborhood House is a landmark social service agency where people can meet over Latin American cuisine to learn about Latino culture and celebrate friendship and personal responsibility. GRIP includes weekly meetings with speakers and field trips, free gang-tattoo removal (plastic surgeons and nurses donate their time to perform the laser treatments), tutoring, boxing lessons, social support systems and volunteer work in the community, and the program's director put his own moral voice behind the SPPD. Other community activists offered intervention services and attended the call-in to address the gang members directly.

16.5.3.2. London

GVI was part of the Government's response to the 2011 Summer Riots, which began after a controversial black death in police custody but were largely (wrongly, see Densley and Mason 2011) blamed on gangs. Given many young people cited resentment of police in general, and the tactical use of frequent "stop and search" in minority communities in particular, as precipitating factors in their riot participation (Lewis et al. 2011), the need for reconciliation between law enforcement and the community was paramount.

Unfortunately, it never fully occurred. In their haste to apprehend those involved in the Summer 2011 disorders—an operation that resulted in nearly 5000 arrests and over 1000 custodial sentences—the MPS neglected to acknowledge the role of policing in past and present injustice and how it is was a hurdle to the promotion of community trust. One interviewee (LON 2) accused the MPS of conducting stops without "reasonable suspicion" and making arrests without "probable cause."

If gangs are typically neighborhood-based (n.b., neighborhoods do not necessarily correlate with administrative Borough boundaries) and principally a reflection of the ethnic composition of those neighborhoods (Densley 2013), GVI can inherently result in disproportionate minority contact (see Kempf-Leonard 2007). Disproportionate minority contact is controversial at the best of times, but in the context of the 2011 riots, GVI felt like yet another malicious, deliberate, "attack on black youth" by a conspiratorial government, using the same precedent of "fast-track justice" (LON 4). The GVI focus on whole group accountability also evoked the Joint Enterprise doctrine in British law, which controversially allows the justice system to press charges against people for crimes that they did not commit if they knowingly assisted or encouraged the crime and disproportionately affects black and minority ethnic communities (see House of Commons Justice Committee 2012). Taken together, community moral voices opted out of the conversation.

16.5.4. The Call-In

16.5.4.1. Saint Paul

The call-in was staged at a place of civic importance that appealed to the local Latino community—the Neighborhood House, a vibrant community hub that since 1897 has provided a safe space for immigrants, refugees, and low-income populations. Police posted flyers around the neighborhood to raise awareness and provided food and free childcare during the event to encourage families to attend. In addition to the Mexican Consulate, key members of the local Latino community, the county prosecutor, and agents from the FBI and ATF all attended the notification event. While no formal agreements were in place, the presence of federal agents "almost gave the illusion of federal involvement" (STP 1), which was beneficial from a deterrence standpoint.

About 70 people attended the call-in, including 17 of the 22 invited gang members, which surpassed all expectations. SPPD had prepared an exhibit showcasing the members' involvement in the gang, including photographs. The federal agents spoke first, proclaiming they were now aware and interested in this group's activities, and future violence may receive greater federal attention. Next, a Latino SPPD officer spoke to the group. Having grown up in the neighborhood, the officer told his life story, about how he achieved success and how violence contrasts with the moral obligations of the Latino community. Other officers then spoke to the group, and "laid out their case" (STP 2) against the gang members. The County Prosecutor spoke next and announced he had enough evidence to prosecute, but would prefer not to if gang members could change their behavior, consistent with the lever-pulling philosophy of GVI.

16.5.4.2. London

In January 2012, Enfield Borough police staged a high-profile call-in at Wood Green Crown Court; the setting was intended to reinforce the gravitas of gang crime. Consistent with GVI theory, the Court was a locale of civic importance, but critics argued it was "far from unthreatening" and "insensitive to the community's history with the criminal justice system" (LON 4). In contrast to the Neighborhood House in Saint Paul, for example, the court setting created an inherent status divide. Perhaps this is why people stayed away. Media coverage of the Enfield call-in suggests gang members were "outnumbered by journalists" because only one-third of offenders invited (i.e., ten people) actually bothered to show up (Davey 2012). This attendance rate, however, was an improvement on a previous call-in in a different Borough, where, in a departure from the *group* principle of GVI, "serious gang nominals"¹ from *rival* gangs were intentionally invited to the same call-in, which subsequently "erupted into chaos and violence" and was abandoned after a service provider was stabbed (LON 2).

In the transcript from the 2012 Enfield call-in, one of the law enforcement representatives is quoted as saying, "We know where you live, who your families are, where you go to school. ... If your parents are on benefits we might be coming to see if they are lawful" (Davey 2012). This language is consistent with Operation Ceasefire in Boston and other GVI efforts (see Kennedy 1998). However, the Enfield officer adds, "You may think you belong to a big gang, you may be 50 people, even 100, but we have 32,000 in our gang. It's called the Metropolitan police" (Davey 2012). This latter statement further alienated community moral voices because it reinforced the view of police as the "biggest gang"—a theme which emerged frequently during research into the 2011 London riots (see Lewis et al. 2011). According to one subject, the last thing the community wanted to hear was law enforcement celebrating its likeness to the violent group in question (LON 1).

Perhaps most surprising about the Enfield call-in was the absence of a deliverable social service message. Instead, the participants endured a long lecture about the realities of gang crime and the prospect of jail time and were told simply to "Go away and think about it" (Davey 2012). According to one interviewee who worked on this and other London Borough call-ins, however, the focus in other instances of GVI was too far over on the social service side, to the extent some gang members were told to "take the job or face the consequences" (LON 2). The implication is London struggled to maintain the "appropriate balance" between the "carrot and stick" (LON 1), despite the fact research suggests the *offer* of the carrot and the *threat* of the stick alone can be enough to change behavior (Kennedy 2011).

16.5.5. Maintenance and Ensuring Program Integrity

16.5.5.1. Saint Paul

SPPD Gang Unit officers checked in with the subjects and their parents 30 days after executing the original demonstration enforcement action of search warrants, and again 60 and 90 days later. They also had parents fill out progress reports and verify responses via interview. After 30 days, officers agree the call-in was still fresh in the minds of the gang members. Community moral voices continued to reinforce or “retail” (Kennedy et al. 2001) the message that violence would incur consequences and social service providers continued to monitor social networks for signs of impending action. This loss of anonymity disrupted the gang’s activities: “People begin seeing ghosts,” STP 1 observed. “They think every black SUV parked outside is a police undercover vehicle waiting for them to slip.” At 60 and 90 days, however, interest began to wane and follow-up visits became more confrontational. Nevertheless, street violence declined sharply, not only for the 18th Street Gang, but also their rivals, the Sureños. Indeed, inspired by the perceived success of GVI, SPPD had prepared an affidavit to go after the Sureños, but never processed it because retaliatory violence ceased. This observed cessation supports the hypothesis that GVI in Saint Paul created a “spillover” of crime cessation beyond the directly affected group (Braga et al. 2013, p. 22).

Despite a lack of empirical gang-crime data related to the intervention, both murder and aggravated assault rates in Saint Paul declined significantly in 2011, the year GVI was conducted, which gang unit interviewees partially attributed to desistance in internecine violence between 18th Street and Sureños gang members. The year 2011 was the only year in recent times where both homicides and aggravated assaults in Saint Paul were both well below the standard deviation. Of course, myriad variables could account for this decline—one limitation of ad hoc GVI is that program evaluation is not built in.

Of the 22 gang members targeted, six agreed to participate in GRIP, all of whom desisted from gangs and self-report their school attendance and performance improved following the intervention. It is not known whether the other gang members sought other community services, in part because some service providers were “territorial” over their work and did not readily share information with police (STP 5). SPPD interviewees complained they felt left “out of the loop” on what was going on, since they did not receive any qualitative updates beyond their own 30-60-90 day home visits. However, quantitative police data suggest only two of the 22 targeted gang members struggled with serious violence recidivism. One spent time in a residential juvenile facility and another moved to a different metropolitan area, where he was shot and killed (Burnes 2013). Three years later, all others were “off the radar” (STP 7).

Apparent success aside, this was a one-time initiative, which brings the maintenance principle of GVI into question. SPPD reticence toward nontraditional enforcement and turnover within the Gang Unit, which rarely is a permanent assignment, are possible explanations. So too is the concern that GVI cannot be implemented citywide because it is labor-intensive and Black or Hmong communities in Saint Paul also struggling with gang violence lack the collective efficacy of the Latino community, which research in other cities suggests is a common misconception (see Kennedy 2011). Further, political forces are minimizing Saint Paul’s gang problem, rather than celebrating the fact the City “is on the cutting edge of combating it” (STP 2).

16.5.5.2. London

At the time of this writing, in Spring 2015, London is going back to the basics of GVI. MOPAC are providing £200,000 funding for “Operation Shield,” which will be run in partnership with the MPS and three pilot

Boroughs—Haringey, Westminster, and Lambeth—chosen for their well-established gang programs (Greater London Authority 2015). Shield will enable the MPS Trident team and local authorities to bring civil or criminal sanctions to “known gang members” if any supposed gang member carries out a serious crime. Penalties range from “recall to prison, gang injunctions banning them from parts of the capital or mixing with their associates, mandatory employment training courses or ejection from social housing. The offender who triggers action will be fast-tracked through the criminal justice system for swift sentencing” (Greater London Authority 2015). Shield will also incorporate social service providers and community moral voices. From the £200,000 funding, MOPAC have approved the support and advice of David Kennedy and the National Network for Safe Communities to a maximum value of £50,000.

16.6. Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter has presented a tale of two cities: one, Saint Paul, which reduced violence in a manner commensurate with GVI core principles despite only cursory understanding of the principles; and two, London, which consciously tried to implement GVI but for myriad reasons was unable to adhere to the essence of the strategy. “We should not be too critical of London,” says David Kennedy; in fact many of the “mistakes” highlighted above were “perfectly predictable” and “exceedingly common” among cities trying to implement GVI for the first time and without explicit guidance and support from those who have done it before (personal communication, February 17, 2015). Perhaps this is what makes the Saint Paul case all the more remarkable—it was produced ad hoc and after only a 2-h introduction to GVI strategies during a conference presentation (STP 2). Whether or not the Saint Paul case constitutes a true GVI example is of course debatable. Kennedy points to the fact Saint Paul only ever called-in one group, for instance, as an example of circumventing a core focus on violence reciprocity (personal communication, February 17, 2015). Nevertheless, the case provides a number of useful takeaways for those interested in disrupting the “cycle of gang violence” (Decker et al. 2013, p. 384).

The architects of the Saint Paul intervention largely adhered to GVI principles. First, gang officers had significant knowledge about who the key offenders were. They had accordion files on different gang members and targeted the most prolific offenders for warrant service and call-in. Second, they collaborated with other agencies to serve warrants and secure attendance at the call-in. They used the County Prosecutor to ensure stronger prosecution against future violence. They mobilized community leaders and service providers such as GRIP to offer education, employment, and training to gang members to help them desist from violence and, eventually, the gang. They utilized the services of the Mexican Consulate to mitigate fears of deportation and unlock some of the failed narratives associated with disproportionate minority contact that had alienated police from the Latino community in the past. “Navigating the illegal population and turning it into an advantage... [by engaging] the Mexican government” (D. Kennedy, personal communication, April 8, 2014) was essential to garnering Latino community support in Saint Paul. They planned and conducted a call-in session with all the aforementioned parties, where the gang members were confronted, threatened, and offered services. And while the collaboration with the FBI and ATF were not as formalized as other lever-pulling programs, the mere presence of federal agents provided a credible impression that the federal government was taking an interest in their activities and that future repercussions could be far more serious. This call-in not only used the *carrot and stick* options of services or enforcement, but also gave the community a forum to express their intolerance of this group’s violence (National Network for Safe Communities 2013).

Many other lever-pulling focused deterrence programs utilize working groups comprising many different stakeholders including academics (Kennedy 2011). These working groups can take months to implement a program and thousands of dollars in seed money. One novel aspect of the Saint Paul intervention was that it was created ad hoc by a few police officers because of an urgent need to intervene in an impending violence event. Despite the tight timeline and limited budget, this was “a well thought out... strategic... high quality... focused call-in” (D. Kennedy, personal communication, April 8, 2014). Utilizing community leaders and individuals who were familiar to and with the community showed genuine interest in the community and their group violence problem. SPPD’s ability to create and successfully execute GVI in short order serves as an example of good problem-oriented policing that may provide guidance to other agencies that encounter an urgent situation which needs immediate action. Saint Paul could move faster than London because it was not hampered by competing funding priorities or community concerns of basic police incivility.

Moving forward, however, both cities need to formalize relationships with key stakeholders and form a collaborative work group for future programs. SPPD officers expressed concerns about the possible conflict of interest with some of the other organizations working with the gang members because they benefit from keeping clients and can be very territorial over what they are doing with that individual. Greater transparency could increase interagency accountability. Academic oversight, moreover, would help guide and evaluate police efforts, which, in turn, can establish sustainable evidence-based best practices that transcend one simple “operation.” This starts with a full citywide assessment of current gangs and gang members codified into an electronic database that can be updated and utilized by future gang officers. These data can be used to implement problem-oriented best practices, build stronger criminal cases against offenders, and obtain future program funding through reprioritization of budgeting and potential grant awards.

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¹ A phrase reserved for “reds” on the gangs matrix, the official police list that names individual gang members and classifies them from most to least violent, “from red to amber to green” (LON 1).