



## EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF THE CEASEFIRE OPERATION IN BOSTON

The “pulling levers” strategy in Boston significantly reduces gun related gang violence for youth by 31%.

In the 1990s, Boston suffered a sharp rise in youth homicides due to gang violence. While gangs represented less than 1% of youth between the ages of 14 and 24 in Boston, they were responsible for 60% of youth homicides within the city. To reduce gang related youth homicides, Boston implemented Operation Ceasefire in 1996.

The strategy was one of “pulling every lever” where the goal was to not simply target the individual committing a criminal offence, but to target the entire gang through every legal approach available in order to “disrupt street drug activity” (115). At the same time, a Ceasefire Working Group was formed to send a clear message that violent justifications, such as retaliation against other gangs, would not be tolerated. Coordinated efforts by outreach youth workers, probation and parole officers, and later church groups and community members, complimented police and justice system efforts to send the no-tolerance message and add intervention and deterrence efforts to reach youth in gangs.

This type of “pulling levers” strategy is based on a deterrence theory which posits that crime is deterred when the cost of the crime exceeds its potential rewards. The clear message to the community regarding no-tolerance of any violence adheres to a general deterrence theory to society, while punishment to the individual observes the specific deterrence theory that a person can expect certain punishment

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based on particular actions. Boston’s Ceasefire Operation encapsulates both facets of deterrence by directing efforts towards community communication and incorporating community members in the program while at the same time addressing individual wrongdoing.

Past efforts to evaluate the Boston Ceasefire program has met with skepticism due to methodological issues and questions regarding other possible reasons for declines in youth homicide rates. To address these issues, the authors of the current study conducted a more comprehensive evaluation of the program. To determine the impact of the program, computerized data from the Boston Police Department (BPD) for

Homicide by Firearm and Assault and Battery by Means of a Deadly Weapon—Firearm (ABDW—Firearm) incidents between 2006 and 2010 was collected. The details of each incident were coded and analyzed to determine if it was a gang related violent incident or not. This data, along with information from stakeholders, was used to conduct a comparative analysis between Ceasefire affected gangs and non-treatment gangs in Boston by using propensity scores.

Results for the 16 Ceasefire treated gangs and 37 matched comparative gangs show significant differences between the two groups. Treated gangs demonstrated a 31% reduction in total shootings compared to matched gangs. Treated gangs demonstrated significantly less shootings and less victimization by gun violence than matched gangs. These findings indicate that Ceasefire treatment is successful in reducing gang related violence.

While the Ceasefire program shows positive results in being able to reduce gun related violent behaviour in treated gangs compared to non-gangs, the authors noted a number of limitations and avenues for future research. For example, the program was also designed to deter violence in gangs that were not directly treated, yet this was not examined in the current study and the authors recommend it should be addressed in order to ascertain if the program has ‘spillover’ deterrence effects for non-treated gangs. Also, empirical examination of criminal behaviours for individuals within treated gangs is recommended. This would allow for an understanding of how “pulling levers” programs that target gangs may influence individual cognitive processes with regards to criminal decision making and behaviour. Such research could help determine if there is a tipping point in these types of deterrence programs for when it reaches the desired impact point and influences not only the gang at a group level, but individuals at a discrete level as well. Lastly, the authors recommended further research to better understand the success of the program and how to maintain it.

Braga, Anthony A., David M. Kennedy, Elin J. Waring, and Anne Morrison Piehl. (2001). “Problem-oriented policing, deterrence, and youth violence: An evaluation of Boston’s Operation Ceasefire.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 38(3), 195-225.

## EXAMINATION OF DRUG SUPPLY SEIZURES AND RELATED HARM IN AUSTRALIA

The impact of law enforcement drug-supply reduction operations on drug related harm is mixed.

Part of Australia’s drug policy includes the use of law enforcement to employ drug supply control and reduction strategies in order to “create a scarcity of illegal drugs in order to reduce drug use and drug-related harm” (1). This type of policy is based on the Risks and Prices Theory (RPT) of drug markets (Reuter & Kleiman 1986; Caulkins & Reuter 1998) which postulates that the high risk of illicit drug production/cultivation, trafficking, and use can create a scarcity of supply and that this in turn leads to higher prices for illicit drug use which will decrease drug related harm due to scarcity of the drugs. Empirical research shows support for RPT, indicating that the high costs for illegal drugs results in decreases in drug consumption and related harm such as drug related robberies and thefts.

Although rises in drug prices can reduce drug-related harm, there is little evidentiary support that law enforcement strategies to reduce drug supply and arrest drug suppliers results in decreasing drug related harm. The aim of the current study was to address this lack of information by determining what relationship exists between law enforcement drug supply seizures and supplier arrests and any influence they have on emergency department (ED) admissions for drug use/possession, use and possession arrests, and the commission of related offences of robbery, theft, and assault by drug users.

New South Wales (NSW) was the focus of the study because it suffers from one of the largest drug markets in Australia for the three types of illicit drugs focused on. Heroin, cocaine, and amphetamine type substances (ATS) were chosen due to their prevalence and frequency within illicit drug markets and arrests in Australia. Data on monthly drug seizures and arrests between July 2001 and June 2011 were obtained from the National Illicit Drug Reporting Format (NIDRF) system maintained by the Australian Crime Commission. Monthly arrest data in NSW on drug

use/possession, theft, robbery, and assault were collected through the NSW police database. Data on ED admissions for heroin, cocaine, and ATS were collected from the NSW Department of Health. A time series analysis was conducted using three police drug supply seizure and supplier arrest operations to examine the impact of these operations on ED admissions, user/possession arrests, and drug related offences.

Findings indicate that when drug supply seizure and supplier arrest operations are implemented, there are numerous significant effects. Specifically, increases in cocaine seizures resulted in a significant rise in arrests for cocaine use/possession within the same month. Cocaine supplier arrests resulted in a significant increase in cocaine related ED admissions two months later. Similar outcomes were found for ATS seizures and supplier arrests which resulted in significant increases in ATS user/possession arrests. These findings suggest that increases in cocaine seizures and ATS seizures and supplier arrests result in an increase in drug supply rather than a reduction, as indicated by the rise in use/possession arrests.

The results for heroin seizures and supplier arrest were mixed. Seizures of heroin supplies were negatively related by weight to number of use/possession arrests in the same month (i.e., as weight of supply seizure increases, arrests for use/possession decreases). Also, it was found that as the number of heroin supplier arrests goes up, heroin related ED admissions go down two months later. Despite the inverse relationship, contrary results were found. For example, increases in heroin supply seizures, when not examining weight alone, showed an overall increase in use/possession arrests in the same month and increases in heroin supplier arrests resulted in increases in heroin ED admissions in the same month. Therefore it is unclear if supply reduction operations result in an increase in heroin supply or a decrease based on the mixed findings. Meanwhile no significant relationship was found between illicit drug supply reduction measures by law enforcement and trends in drug-related offences of robbery, thefts and assaults.

The overall results indicate that supply reduction operations may not have the impact in harm reduction desired. Caution, however, is suggested by the authors when interpreting these results as it could be a case of the study methodology not capturing the variables that best address harm reduction and the factors at play. The authors suggest that it is possible drug manufacturers create stockpiles or produce/cultivate an overflow in anticipation of expected seizures. Another issue is that the flow of drugs may need to have a significant interruption by focusing on high-level drug suppliers, which the current study could not identify. Therefore the main recommendation for future research on the impact of drug seizures and reduced supply operations is to find ways to differentiate between high- and low-level drug suppliers. This will allow researchers to examine if targeting high- versus low-level suppliers carries different harm reduction effects when controlling illicit drug supply.

Wan, Wai-Yin, Don Weatherburn, Grant Wardlaw, Vasilis Sarafidis, and Grant Sara. (2014). Supply-Side Reduction Policy and Drug-Related Harm. Paper from the National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund.

Associated Papers:

Caulkins, Jonathan, and Peter Reuter. (1998). "What Price Data Tell Us About Illicit Drug Markets," *Journal of Drug Issues*, 28(3) 593- 612.

Reuter, Peter, and Mark Kleiman. (1986). "Risks and Prices: An Economic Analysis of Drug Enforcement." In N. Morris and M. Tonry (eds.), *Crime and justice: An annual review of research*, 7, (pp. 289-340). Chicago: Chicago University Press.

## MORAL DISENGAGEMENT AND YOUTH GANGS IN THE UK

Dehumanization plays a key role in violent offending for youth gang members and use moral disengagement techniques to a significant degree greater than non-gang youth.

Men under 30 are the highest at risk population for violence in England and Wales, with an overwhelming proportion of violent offending perpetuated by gangs. To better understand the pathways towards violent offending, social cognitive theories regarding moral disengagement are looked to for explaining criminal behaviours. These types of moral disengagement strategies include *moral justification* whereby one rationalizes that the ends justify the means, *euphemistic labelling* wherein language is used to

make amoral behavior more palatable (e.g., little white lie), *diffusion of responsibility* where accountability is dispersed among the group rather than allocated to the individual, *distortion of consequences* whereby an individual and/or group minimizes the harm they have caused, and *dehumanization*, where victims are no longer viewed as people but as sub-humans who deserve to be treated like inferiors, among others. These techniques assist an individual to engage in criminal behaviour by creating cognitive justifications for the behaviour and assisting the individual in rationalizing actions taken that are counter to society's morals and norms.

A robust amount of research exists that has examined moral disengagement and criminality, demonstrating the predictive influence of employment of moral disengagement techniques in criminal offending. However, little research exists that has examined gang behaviour in this context. The aim of the current research article was to empirically examine “the extent to which moral disengagement strategies play a facilitative role in violent behavior carried out by gang-involved youth” (753).

A total of 184 males were recruited from youth centers and one secondary school in London, UK. All participants filled out the *Eurogang Youth Survey* (Weerman et al., 2009) and the *Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement Scale* (Bandura et al., 1996). Youth were considered members of a gang if they met all four criteria of the *Eurogang* definition: “(a) youthfulness—that is, all members of the group were under the age of 25; (b) durability—the group had been together for more than 3 months; (c) street orientation—responding “yes” to the item “Does this group spend a lot of time together in public places like the park, the street, shopping areas, or the neighborhood?”; (d) group criminality as an integral part of the group identity—responding “yes” to the items “Is doing illegal things accepted by or okay for your group?” and “Do people in your group actually do illegal things together?”” (754). Furthermore, violent crime was assessed based on participants' answers to the following questions: “hit someone with the idea of hurting them,” “attacked someone with a weapon,” and “used a weapon or force to get money or things from people” (754).

Results indicated that 25 youth were gang members according to the *Eurogang* definition. Significant differences were found between gang and non-gang youth. Specifically, gang members showed significant differences compared to non-gang youth in having clear leaders, symbols, initiation rituals, and affiliated clothing. No significant differences were found for gender roles, regular meetings, or tattoos between gang and non-gang youth. Additionally, gang youth were found to have engaged in violent behaviour over the past six months to a significant degree compared to non-gang youth.

Findings indicated that a total of six out of the eight strategies for moral disengagement varied significantly as a function of gang membership. The analysis showed that gang members were significantly more likely than non-gang youth to employ *moral justification*, *euphemistic language*, *advantageous comparison*, *displacement of responsibility*, *attribution of blame*, and *dehumanization*. No significant differences were found between the two groups for *diffusion of responsibility* or *distortion of consequences*.

Mediation analyses were run on moral disengagement techniques and violent crime. Results showed that dehumanization was the only technique to have a significant mediation influence on violent crime. This finding indicates that dehumanization is a significant partial link to gang members committing violent crime. Therefore it can be seen that dehumanization plays an important facilitative role for individuals of gangs to commit violent offences.

Although the other moral disengagement techniques did not display a mediating role when engaging in violent behaviour, the fact that gang members employ the majority of these techniques to a significant degree compared to non-gang youth suggests that these techniques play an important role in gang membership. Future research exploring the methods to which these moral disengagement techniques influence various criminal and antisocial behaviours could shed light on the various cognitive strategies used by youth to commit crimes. This type of research could in turn

inform which cognitive areas could be focused on for treatment manageability and success.

Alleyne, Emma, Isabel Fernandes, and Elizabeth Pritchard. (2014). "Denying Humanness to Victims: How Gang Members Justify Violent Behavior," *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 17(6), 750-762.

## THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP REMOVAL ON MEXICAN DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS

Leadership removal practices are associated with an increase in homicides in Mexico.

According to government figures, nearly half of all murders in Mexico are connected to illicit drugs (652). The Mexican government, under the Calderón administration, has adopted a policy to remove leaders of drug trafficking organizations (DTO) in efforts to stem drug related violence. Removal can include capture and imprisonment as well as execution. This policy has met with some controversy as some argue that the policy has increased drug related violence, pointing to the fact that the current administration has seen a rise of over four times the amount of drug-related murders than the previous administration. Others argue that the rise in violence points to its success. However, the increase in civilian murders is a growing concern.

To ascertain the impact of removing DTO leaders, the author examined data from December 2006 to December 2010 from the *Reforma* dataset. This is a verified database that contains DTO related homicides and drug related violence in Mexico. Leadership DTO removal was ascertained using open-source database searches to verify as precisely as possible the time and method of removal (captured or killed). The data was then analyzed to determine any "changes in violence after a leader's removal in his organization's home state versus the state in which he was actually removed" (656). The focus on the leader's DTO home state compared to the state in which the leader was removed is based on the hypothesis that if the violence is retaliatory in nature (i.e., motivated by revenge), it will be directed at law enforcement and civilians in the state of removal. If the violence is a power shuffle within the illicit drug market, then the violence is hypothesized to be focused on the DTO's home state as

a result of the leadership removal servicing as a "signal mechanism" that a vacuum of power needs to be filled.

A total of 415 additional deaths were attributed to DTO leadership removal in Mexico during the observed time period of the study. The results indicate that violence not only increases substantially after the removal of a DTO leader, but that the rise in deaths occurs primarily in the state that is the base for the removed leader's DTO. This is consistent with the author's theory that the removal of a leader heralds instrumental violence, a "single mechanism" to others to vie for leadership of that DTO. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that killing DTO leaders predicts higher levels of violence than capturing DTO leaders. Additionally, the author examined the levels of violence when a leader of a DTO was removed due to government placed \$30m *peso* and \$15m *peso* bounties on them. The larger bounty (\$30m *peso*) DTO leader removals were associated with increases in violence, but to a lesser extent than other methods of leader removal. The results for \$15m *peso* bounty removal were too inconsistent for interpretation.

The results infer that Mexican policy of DTO leadership removal results in higher levels of homicide, highest when the removal is achieved by killing the leader. The author theorizes that leadership removal serves as a signal to subordinates within the DTO to commit increased levels of violence in order to prove their qualifications to move up the chain of command. In other words, the removal of a leader, particularly their death, creates an incentive to DTO members to commit increased levels of violence in order to improve their station within the organization. A leader's death may result in increased violence over other forms of removal because a captured leader may still return to the organization, lessening any competition for moving up the hierarchy by DTO members.

As a result of these findings, the author makes four policy recommendations. First, the Mexico government could consider encouraging the US, among other countries, to alter their drug policies. For example, it is not yet known how the recent decriminalization of Cannabis in certain states in the US may affect drug

related violence in Mexico. Second, the Mexican government could consider publicizing its reasons for its different DTO leadership removal strategies since it is clear that the different methods lead to different results (i.e., bounties on leaders lead to lesser increases in violence than killing them). Third, law enforcement could consider providing incentives to DTO members for information on their superiors in a bid to decrease competition when a vacuum is created. Lastly, broader policies could be created in Mexico to lessen unemployment in order to decrease DTO membership incentives, as well as increasing effective strategies for law enforcement to boost civilian confidence in the government and decrease the growing issues with rises in vigilante groups combating DTOs.

Dickenson, Matthew. (2014). "The Impact of Leadership Removal on Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations," *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 30(4), 651-676.

## HONESTY OF GANG MEMBERS WHEN ASKED IF THEY ARE IN A GANG

Self-identifying as a non-, current, or former gang member is a good predictor for level of gang involvement.

Due to the controversy over how gangs and gang membership is identified in research, the authors examined how well self-nomination predicts level of gang embeddedness. Most research on gang membership depends on official data and surveys or self-reports. Therefore, a great deal of gang membership research relies on the importance of individuals answering a simple question honestly: "Are you a gang member?" or "Have you ever been in a gang?" (597).

Due to the reliance of self-identification (also called "self-nomination") to determine gang membership, a number of studies sought to assess the reliability and validity of self-nomination in research. Most research points to the validity of self-nomination in gang membership. Findings indicate that a more restrictive definition creates more reliable results in differentiating between gang and non-gang delinquent youth.

The authors discuss how self-nomination is not a static or a linear progression, meaning that individuals that choose to disengage may find themselves from 'have been in a gang' to re-engaging fully as a gang member due to strong ties with other gang members. Consequently, the attempts to disengage from a gang can sometimes vacillate and may do so more than once before a gang member can fully disengage from a gang. Due to this struggle, this can lead to false positives in research (i.e., "individuals who claim to no longer be in a gang, but still engage in gang-related activities"; 597). False negatives (i.e., individuals that say they are a member of a gang "but no longer engage in gang-related activities") also exist (597). These false positives and negatives create greater challenges for researchers to obtain valid results.

The aim of the current study was to determine how well self-nomination can predict gang embeddedness. Interviews were conducted with 621 individuals in 2011 that were either on probation or parole or had accessed an outreach program in 2011. The samples were from five US cities: Cleveland, OH; Fresno, CA; Los Angeles, CA; Phoenix, AZ; and St. Louis, MO. A graded response model for gang embeddedness was developed by the authors. Control variables included demographic characteristics, gang related variables such as gang organization and duration of gang involvement, and theoretical variables such as low self-control. Validity of self-nomination was evaluated by analyzing the relationship between different levels of gang membership – non-member, former, and current, with gang embeddedness.

The results show that self-nomination is a very good predictor of gang embeddedness. Self-nomination was the strongest predictor of gang embeddedness compared to other variables and was the strongest predictor for former gang members compared to non- and current members. Meanwhile variables such as *offending variety* and adherence to the values 'code of the street' were significant predictors of gang embeddedness as well. The variable *low self-control* showed no relationship with gang embeddedness. The overall results for self-nomination did not change significantly when controlled for demographic variables such as age or ethnicity, indicating that self-

nomination is a valid form of predicting gang embeddedness across different backgrounds.

Based on the implications of their findings, the authors recommend that prevention, intervention, and suppression programs need to focus on individuals that self-nominate as current gang members. Targeting former or non-gang members could create risk and deviancy for those two groups through negative labelling and exposure to high-risk peers. By targeting former members, intervention programs and police attention may instead only reinforce the gang identity from which that person is trying to disengage.

Two areas of research are recommended by the authors. First, longitudinal analyses should be conducted to identify time-stable differences between non-, current, and former gang members. Second, investigating different methods of recording self-nomination to determine any bias that results from the form of self-nomination used, such as self-report, interview, questionnaire, is highly recommended.

Decker, Scott H., David C. Pyrooz, Gary Sweeten, and Richard K. Moule Jr. (2014). "Validating Self-Nomination in Gang Research: Assessing Differences in Gang Embeddedness Across Non-, Current, and Former Gang Members," *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 30(4), 577-598.

## DEBUNKING THE TAXATION -CONTRABAND TOBACCO MYTH

Factors such as organized crime, not increase in tobacco taxes, may precipitate illicit tobacco markets.

The tobacco industry has long argued that increases in taxation of their product results in increased contraband. Meanwhile numerous studies demonstrate that increased tobacco taxation helps to reduce tobacco related harm by deterring smoking uptake, reducing tobacco consumption, and increasing smoking cessation (3).

Cigarette contraband is a global public health issue, but previous research demonstrates that factors other than taxes contribute to increases in illicit tobacco markets. For example, organized crime is considered a major contributing factor in illegal tobacco smuggling. In Canada, organized crime contributed to 90% of

smuggling in the 1990s. Other factors that precipitate tobacco contraband include misconceptions regarding 'legal' purchases of cigarettes from First Nations' reservations, yet it is illegal to purchase lower cost cigarettes from reservation venues. Other contributing factors include a lack of strategic law enforcement focused on tobacco contraband and absence of public messaging to convey not only the health hazards of smoking, but also the legal consequences of tobacco contraband.

To ascertain if taxation increases tobacco contraband, the authors reviewed relevant research literature and analyzed data from the Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey (CTUMS) 2008-2012 in order to ascertain estimates of Ontario smokers and contraband use. The results were compared with Royal Canadian Mounted Police data reports and national data on the 2014 cigarette tax.

Previous studies from several European countries, including the United Kingdom, show that increased taxation of tobacco reduces consumption and does not result in increased contraband. Furthermore, when taxation increases are done in combination with anti-contraband measures, contraband is controlled.

Results in the current study indicate that across Canada, increases in tobacco taxes do not result in increased contraband. More specifically, Ontario and Quebec have two of the lowest tobacco tax increases, with Ontario having the lowest tobacco tax in Canada, yet both provinces show the highest rates of contraband compared to other provinces and territories that have had high tax increases, such as British Columbia and Alberta. Furthermore, Quebec has had three tax increases since implementing a new policy to counteract tobacco contraband by the ACCES committee (Actions Concertées pour Contrer les Économies Souterraines) which was established in 2001 for the purpose of reducing contraband. Despite the three tax hikes, results show that tobacco contraband has remained fairly stable. These findings indicate that tax increases are not a significant driver for illegal tobacco markets.

Additional findings on Ontario cigarette consumption demonstrate that tax increases only result in a brief

increase in Canadian consumers travelling to the US to buy cigarettes, and then it tapers off again. Also, tobacco tax increases are associated with decreases in consumption in Ontario, thus decreasing tobacco related harm. These results are in line with conclusions from previous studies.

The findings of the current report indicate that increases in tobacco taxes result in decreases in consumption and do not increase tobacco contraband. Therefore, these results suggest that higher rates of tobacco contraband in Canada and related deaths are the primary result of organized crime and other factors such as misconceptions regarding purchases of cigarettes from First Nations' reservations, ease of access to contraband on highways, and lack of strategic law enforcement, rather than increases in tobacco taxation. Based on these findings, the authors recommend that increases in tobacco taxes, combined with strategic and increased law enforcement, could result in increased tobacco tax revenue, decreases in tobacco related harm such as consumption, and a curb in tobacco contraband.

Zhang, Bo, and Robert Schwartz. (2015). What Effect Does Tobacco Taxation Have on Contraband? Debunking the Taxation-Contraband Tobacco Myth. Special Report from the Toronto: Ontario Tobacco Research Unit.

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