“WHAT WORKS” IN REDUCING COMMUNITY VIOLENCE: A META-REVIEW AND FIELD STUDY

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Thank you:
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Evidence-informed policy

Evidence-informed policy is policy informed by the best evidence and data available

- **Opportunities**
  - Improvements in accuracy, objectivity, consistency, transparency

- **Risks**
  - May not be reliable, i.e. internal validity
  - May not be generalizable, i.e. external validity
  - Has programmatic bias, doesn’t speak to systems
“To date, no meta-reviews have included the full range of programs that are intended to prevent youth violence; additionally, no meta-reviews have used both quantitative and qualitative approaches.”

Matjasko et al., 2012
Violence defined

The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against another person or group that results in physical injury or death.
Bullying
Family/IP
Community
Gang
Organized
State

Rarely lethal
Occurs in private
Involves few
Spontaneous
Expressive
Common

Frequently lethal
Occurs in public
Involves many
Planned
Instrumental
Uncommon

Violence described
The Effects of “Pulling Levers” Focused Deterrence Strategies on Crime
Anthony A. Braga and David L. Weisburd

Effective correctional treatment and violent reoffending: A meta-analysis
Craig Dowden and D.A. Andrews
Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

Effective correctional treatment and violent reoffending: A meta-analysis
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The Effects of Cognitive-Behavioral Programs for Criminal Offenders
Mark W. Lipsey, Nana A. Landenberger, Sandra J. Wilson

Firearms Laws and the Reduction of Violent Crime: A Systematic Review
Robert A. Hildre, PhD, MPH, Egl Bitikeda, MD, Alex Gree, MD, MPH, Mindy T. Park, Alexa Liberman, PhD, Ric Moschetti, B.D., MPH, Susan Ryden, PhD, Karin Turin, B.D., J.D.
Task Force on Community Preventive Services

Introduction
Although rates of firearm-related violence in the United States have declined since the peak in the early 1990s, in recent years firearm-related violent crimes have increased.

The Task Force on Community Preventive Services (the Task Force) is conducting systematic review of scientific evidence about the effectiveness of firearm laws in preventing violent crimes. The findings of this systematic review of firearm laws in preventing violent crimes are consistent with the conclusions of a review by the National Research Council and IOM, which found that firearm laws are effective in reducing violent crime.

For more information about the Task Force, visit www.thetaskforce.org.
Meta-review methodology

- Searched leading databases, journals, grey literature in Americas, Caribbean and Europe
- Focused on community violence and rigorous evidence
- Identified 43 eligible reviews aggregating 1,435 individual studies
Meta-review highlights

Violence is “sticky,” i.e. highly concentrated among small number of *places, people, and behaviors*

- In Boston, 70% of shootings in 5% of city
- In 5 Latin American cities, 50% of homicides in 1.6% of blocks
- In most cities, 0.5% of population causes 75% of homicides
- Guns, gangs, alcohol all strongly associated with violence
Meta-review highlights

Place-based strategies
- Hot spots and broken windows policing moderately effective, community policing not effective
  - Targeting, problem-solving, legitimacy important
- CPTED, urban renewal strategies only modestly effective

People-based strategies
- *Focused deterrence, cognitive behavioral therapy very effective* ✓
- Family-based strategies moderately effective
- School-based strategies, vocational training effectiveness unclear
- RNR rehabilitation effective, “control” strategies for juveniles not

Behavior-based strategies
- Firearms enforcement moderately effective, guns buybacks not
- Drug treatment effective, drug enforcement not
- Targeted gang enforcement effective, gang prevention not
Field study
Field study methodology

Conducted fieldwork in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, U.S.

- 51 semi-structured interviews
- 22 individual site visits
- additional field observations and supporting document review
Field study highlights

In the U.S., met with leadership, management, and staff from leading evidence-informed interventions

- Hot spots policing
- Focused deterrence
- Streetwork
- Cognitive behavioral therapy
- Family-based services (GRYD YSET)

Common themes:

- “Go where the violence is”
- “Meet them where they’re at”
- No “business as usual”
- “Stay true to the model”
- “Use the data”
- “You win with people”
Field study highlights

In El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, met with broad range of subjects

- Government officials
- Local law enforcement
- Community leaders
- Faith-based leaders
- Service providers
- USAID, INL officials

While passion and commitment was impressive, anti-violence efforts are hampered by 3 basic “incapacities”

1. Inability of state to administer fundamental justice-related tasks, i.e. impunity
2. Lack of effective collaboration, coordination
3. Absence of useful data and statistics
WHAT WORKS IN REDUCING COMMUNITY VIOLENCE:
A META-REVIEW AND FIELD STUDY FOR THE NORTHERN TRIANGLE
Elements of effectiveness

#1 Specificity
Elements of effectiveness

#2 Proactivity
#3 Legitimacy

Elements of effectiveness
Elements of effectiveness

#4 Capacity
Elements of effectiveness

#5 Theory
Elements of effectiveness

#6 Partnership
Focused deterrence, cognitive behavioral therapy, and the elements

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Concentration Principle

• Most strategies – two-thirds of total examined – associated with modest or moderate effects

• Even most effective strategies not capable of reversing highest rates of community violence alone

• Given this, success may lie in accumulation of individually modest but collectively robust programmatic effects
Concentration Principle

• Interventions focusing on highest risk places, people, and behaviors generate strongest effects
  • True for policing (Braga, 2015), gang reduction (Gravel et al., 2012), youth violence prevention (Matjasko et al., 2012); adult and juvenile recidivism reduction (Hollin, 1999; Lipsey and Cullen, 2007)
  • Limbos et al. (2007) examined 15 randomized controlled trials of anti-violence interventions - 2 of 6 (33%) primary, 3 of 7 (43%) secondary, 2 of 2 (100%) tertiary prevention interventions effective in reducing violent behavior
Concentration Principle

• Community violence displacement is generally minimal, impact to surrounding areas more likely to be positive
  • “[O]ver 30 years of research evidence on this topic… suggests that crime relocates in only a minority of instances” (Johnson et al., 2014)
  • **Note**: organized crime more capable of relocating

• **Coordination corollary**: concentrated programmatic effects must be aligned and coordinated with one another
  • The “comprehensive” conundrum
Implementation Imperative

• Sound implementation essential to intervention effectiveness
• Determining appropriate program dosage or intensity is critical
• In the Northern Triangle, adaptation of interventions developed in different (usually U.S.) settings crucial
Evaluation Imperative

• Recent study indicates 7% of security-related programs in Latin America feature strong evaluation component with positive findings; 57% feature no evaluation whatsoever

• Absolutely essential to improve both quantity and quality of evidence and data

• Cumulative knowledge-building critical moving forward
Report recommendations

Governmental and nongovernmental funders, typically free from day-to-day operational responsibilities, have opportunity and responsibility to think and plan for the long term.
Report recommendations

R1: Recognize centrality of violence reduction to further development to the region and plan accordingly.

R2: Transition to evidence-informed approaches incrementally but purposefully and in consultation with local stakeholder.

R3: Build internal and external capacity for evidence-informed violence reduction.

R4: Invest in evidence and data, with an emphasis on the cumulative development of knowledge.
Conclusion

“The efficiency of crime prevention can be greatest when resources are concentrated on the power few units… Further support for this principle (and its key assumption) can come from a systematic review of all possible evidence.”

Sherman, 2012