THE IMPACT OF THE GRYD INCIDENT RESPONSE PROGRAM ON GANG RETALIATIONS

Responses by the GRYD Incident Response Program Triangle Partnership cuts gang-related retaliations by 41% and improves public safety in communities historically impacted by high levels of gang violence.

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The GRYD Research Brief Series highlights the accomplishments of the GRYD Office and its community partners as they implement the GRYD Comprehensive Strategy.[1] The current research brief examines the impact of the GRYD Incident Response (IR) Program on retaliatory violence following an incident of gang violence. The GRYD IR Program plays an integral part in Los Angeles' approach to public safety by creating and supporting innovative, relationship-based policing responses to violence. Our investment in community intervention workers, our creation of a systematic response protocol across partners, and our commitment to a deeply collaborative approach support violence reduction while also building a sustainable foundation for lasting peace in the communities GRYD engages.

ANNE C. TREMBLAY, JD
GRYD DIRECTOR

Violent retaliation is a tragic fact of the way gangs interact.[2] A chance encounter between rivals, insults exchanged at a social gathering, or gang members seeking to put in "work" for the gang can easily generate a shooting. A shooting often demands retribution, which if not sought quickly may do lasting damage to the reputation of the individual gang member and the gang as a whole. While tit-for-tat cycles of retaliatory violence seem all too common, the routine pattern that they follow may offer intervention opportunities.

Violence interruption starts with the premise that a gang-related crime has a high probability of triggering a retaliation. Responding quickly with services and efforts to quell rumors in the aftermath of a shooting or homicide may diffuse tensions and stop the seemingly inevitable retaliation. Yet there are fundamental challenges facing the evaluation of violence interruption programs. The practical and ethical barriers to fielding randomized controlled trials of violence interruption mean that causal effects are difficult—some would say impossible—to infer. Therefore, this study uses novel statistical techniques of observational field data to:

- Model the risk of retaliation arising from gang-related crimes considered on a per-event basis.
- Estimate how the risk of retaliation changes for events that prompted actions by the GRYD Incident Response (IR) Program compared to events that did not prompt actions by the GRYD IR Program.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON EFFECTIVENESS OF GANG STRATEGIES

Street-level interventions have been part of comprehensive delinquency prevention programs dating back to at least the 1930s and 1940s with the Chicago Area Project, the Crime Prevention Commission of the New York City Police Department, and the Group Guidance Section of the Los Angeles County Probation Department.[3-6] These early efforts focused on building community capacity to manage problems for themselves and training specialists to deliver social programing directly to gangs.[7] There was keen recognition these specialists needed to be "streetwise young men" able to speak to the gangs on their own terms, if they were to have any impact.[8]

Interventions to reduce gang violence became more explicit following the alarming increases in violent crime throughout the United Sates in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The Boston Gun Project, also known as Operation Ceasefire (now the National Network for Safe Communities' Group Violence Intervention), started in 1996. It sought to prevent gun violence through a balance of targeted enforcement and delivery of social services to a small subset of individuals who were responsible for a large fraction of all violent crime. A key part of Operation Ceasefire was a focused deterrence or "pulling levers" strategy. A message of zero-tolerance was delivered directly to chronic gang offenders, backed up by credible threats of legal sanctions. A different effort the Chicago CeaseFire Program (now CureViolence), established in 2000, took the view that violent crime is contagious and therefore, like an infectious disease, preventable if you can stop its spread[9] Chicago CeaseFire pioneered the use of community members—streetwise young men and women—as "violence interrupters" who were tasked not only with responding to incidents as they happen, to stop retaliation, but also negotiating more lasting peace between rivals.

These gang violence intervention programs have faced their fair share of criticism. Some of the earliest street-worker programs either had no demonstrable effect, or were associated with an increase in the delinquency associated with gangs.[10] Reviews of these programs have concluded that social programming delivered to gangs as a group can increase gang cohesion and thus their ability to direct violence outwards.[6] The "pulling levers" strategy had a dramatic impact in Boston, but has proven difficult to replicate in other locations. Without substantial buy-in from and cooperation between various political, financial, law enforcement and community groups, it is difficult to mount complex strategies for countering youth violence.[11] Evaluation of violence interruption programs in Chicago and elsewhere have produced mixed results.[9] The lack of formal organization and oversight of street worker efforts has presented substantial challenges for both evaluation and building capacity.[12,13] Some conclude that street worker interventions in general, and violence interruption in particular, are doomed to fail if there is no coordination between law enforcement and civilian street workers.[14]

STREET OUTREACH WITH A NEW TWIST: THE GRYD INCIDENT RESPONSE PROGRAM

The GRYD Incident Response (IR) Program plays a critical part in GRYD's attempt to interrupt violence in the communities it serves. The fundamental purpose of the GRYD IR Program is to reduce retaliation following a violent incident by using the GRYD Triangle Partnership and Incident Response (IR) Protocol. The GRYD IR Program Triangle Partnership forges connections and relationships between GRYD Community Intervention Workers (CIWs; i.e. a mix of community members and former gang members who are able to influence gangs in the GRYD Zones); GRYD Regional Program Coordinators (RPCs); and the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). These connections and relationships facilitate and sustain effective communication and collaboration between these three entities. The GRYD Triangle Partnership is unique relative to previous intervention efforts because it combines the assessment and intervention strategies of CIWs, the investigative and targeted suppression strategies of law enforcement, and the social work and community organizing principles of crisis intervention via GRYD RPCs. The interaction among these entities affirms the roles and boundaries of each while adding flexibility to each entity's response to gang violence, and, thereby, providing stability and sustainability as they work collectively to reduce gang violence.

The GRYD IR Protocol outlines the actions taken by GRYD RPCs and CIWs as members of the Triangle Partnership once they receive notification of a violent incident—both in the short-term (e.g., responding to the scene, making calls to dispel rumors, etc.) and the long-term (e.g., assisting with funerals, treatment services for the family, etc.). Setting baseline expectations facilitates a seamless response to incidents, allowing the members of the GRYD Triangle Partnership to focus on the incident itself rather than re-negotiate their expectations of one another at the time an incident occurs.

Once a violent incident occurs, the GRYD IR Protocol is initiated. The incident is reported to all members of the GRYD Triangle Partnership and they immediately work toward rumor control and crisis intervention. Rumor control is defined as disseminating accurate information as quickly and widely throughout the community as possible. Crisis intervention requires CIWs to respond quickly to engage members of the community in order to prevent additional violence.

The GRYD IR Program is not notified for all violent incidents by the LAPD, and for each incident received, action may or may not be taken depending on the timing of the notification and the circumstances of the incident. Thus, the events (i.e., incidents) examined in this study fall into four possible categories:

- **Not Notified:** Crimes where the GRYD IR Program was not notified of the crime and the GRYD Triangle Partnership was not activated. This does not preclude CIWs independently sourcing information about and acting in response to such events on their own, but the GRYD IR Program has no record of such activity if it occurs.
- **Notified:** Crimes where the GRYD IR Program was notified of the crime and the GRYD Triangle Partnership was activated. This is a necessary condition for the GRYD Triangle Partnership to formally take action, but it does not guarantee such action. The GRYD IR Program maintains a record of notified events.
- **No Action:** Crimes where the GRYD IR Program was notified, but no specific and immediate action was taken by the GRYD Triangle Partnership in response to that crime.
- **Any Action:** Crimes where the GRYD IR Program was notified, and the GRYD Triangle Partnership took at least one action in response. Such actions may include communicating with relevant parties via phone or email; making visits to the scene of the crime, the impacted community, or a hospital; canvassing the neighborhood for information; or engaging in activities to control rumors.

As shown in Table 1, the GRYD Triangle Partnership is activated more often for homicides (81.3%) than aggravated assaults (7.3%), and more often for gang crimes (34.6%) than non- gang crimes (2.1%).

Table 1. Numbers of incidents in the South Los Angeles study region 2014-2017 by notification status.

	GRYD IR PROGRAM NOT NOTIFIED	GRYD IR PROGRAM NOTIFIED	TOTAL INCIDENTS	PERCENT NOTIFICATION
TYPE OF CRIME				
Aggravated Assaults	14,740	1,153	15,893	7.3%
Homicides	83	361	444	81.3%
GANG RELATED STATUS				
Non-Gang	12,462	265	12,727	2.1%
Gang	2,361	1,249	3,610	34.6%

RESEARCH METHODS

DATA

The GRYD Incident Response (IR) Program is currently active in 23 GRYD Zones across the City of Los Angeles. The analyses presented here concentrate on the ten GRYD Zones immediately south of Freeway 10, which form a continuous region of GRYD IR Program coverage (Figure 1). Eight of the GRYD Zones (excluding Newton 1 and 2) are part of the Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD) South Bureau. Henceforth the combined ten GRYD Zones will be referred to as the South Los Angeles study region.

Data used in this study were sourced from the LAPD and GRYD Office. The LAPD collects information on the time, location and incident characteristics for reported crimes in their jurisdiction. The GRYD Office records this information in addition to details of any responses taken by the GRYD Triangle Partnership.

Analyses are limited to aggravated assaults and homicides occurring between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2017 (Table 2). Over this four-year period there were 50,967 aggravated assaults and 1,034 homicides citywide. In the South Los Angeles study region, there were 15,893 aggravated assaults and 444 homicides, representing 31.2% and 42.9% of the citywide total, respectively. Gang crimes comprise a large fraction of all violent crimes. For the City overall, 7,466 of the aggravated assaults (14.6%) and 639 homicides (61.8%) were gang related. In the South Los Angeles study region, 3,267 aggravated assaults (20.6%) and 343 homicides (77.3%) were gang related (Table 2).

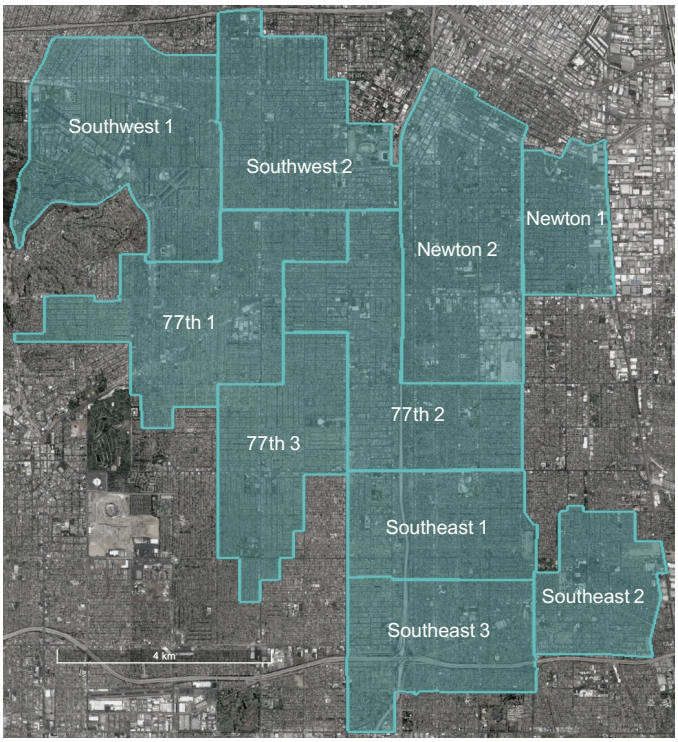

Figure 1. GRYD Zones in the South Los Angeles study region.

Table 2. Numbers of aggravated assaults and homicides citywide and in South Los Angeles study region 2014-2017 by notification status.

	CITYWIDE	SOUTH LOS ANGELES STUDY REGION	PERCENT OF CITYWIDE TOTAL
AGGRAVATED ASSAULTS	50,967	15,893	31%
Percent Gang Related	14.6%	20.6%	---
HOMICIDE	1,034	444	43%
Percent Gang Related	61.8%	77.3%	---
GRAND TOTAL	52,001	16,337	31%

Table 3. Non-gang and gang-related crimes in South Los Angeles 2014-2017 by the type of action taken by the GRYD IR Program Triangle Partnership.

	NON-GANG				GANG-RELATED			
	NO ACTION	ANY ACTION	TOTAL	PERCENT ACTION	NO ACTION	ANY ACTION	TOTAL	PERCENT ACTION
AGGRAVATED ASSAULTS	57	153	210	72.9%	128	815	943	86.4%
HOMICIDE	12	43	55	78.2%	24	282	306	92.2%
TOTAL	69	196	265	74.0%	152	1,097	1,249	87.8%

The focus of the current study is to contrast the statistical patterns associated with crimes where the GRYD Triangle Partnership took any action compared with those where they took no action. The GRYD Triangle Partnership preferentially took action in response to more serious crimes (Table 3). For instance, the GRYD Triangle Partnership acted in response to 72.9% (n=153) of non-gang aggravated assaults, but 92.2% (n=282) of gang-related homicides brought to their attention.

QUANTIFYING THE RISK OF RETALIATION*

The central premise behind the GRYD IR Program is that rapid, targeted response to community needs by the GRYD Triangle Partnership reduces the risk of retaliation. To assess whether the GRYD Triangle Partnership interventions worked to reduce retaliations, the risk of retaliation associated with individual crimes was measured. Statistical models commonly used to study earthquakes were used to accomplish this task. The risk of retaliation following any gang-related crime can be measured in the same way that the risk of "aftershocks" following any earthquake is currently measured. For example, normal everyday events such as a chance encounter on the street with a rival, or a hostile exchange of words at a party, can translate into a shooting. This would be a "background" non-retaliatory crime in the same way that an unexpected earthquake is not an aftershock. A retaliatory shooting may therefore follow, ultimately setting off a sequence of tit-for-tat reprisals.

Figure 2 shows conceptually how risk jumps immediately following a crime, increasing the risk of a retaliation. Driving that risk back to baseline levels is of paramount importance to preventing retaliation. There is a narrow window of opportunity to disrupt a retaliation following each event. If the GRYD IR Program is able to impact risk levels, then it is expected that there will be fewer retaliations following events with an intervention compared to events where interventions did not occur.

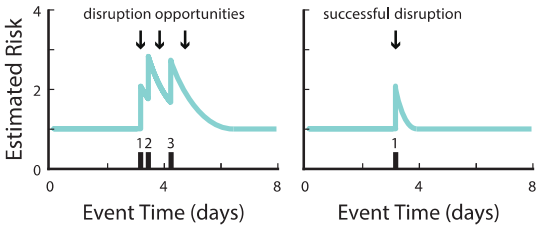

Figure 2. Statistical model of the risk generated by crime events and the expected impact of the GRYD IR Program.

RESULTS

When the GRYD Incident Response (IR) Program Triangle Partnership took any action, it reduced gang-related retaliations by 41.2% (Table 4). On average, there were 45.6 retaliations for every 100 gang-related crimes not exposed to any action by the GRYD Triangle Partnership compared to 26.8 retaliations for every 100 gang related crimes responded to by the GRYD Triangle Partnership.

Table 4. Estimated number of retaliations per 100 gang crimes by the action taken by the GRYD IR Program Triangle Partnership.

	RELATIONSHIPS PER 100 GANG CRIMES
NO ACTION	45.6
ANY ACTION	26.8

HOW MANY RETALIATIONS DID THE GRYD INCIDENT RESPONSE PROGRAM PREVENT?

Classifying the events based on underlying risk suggests that a total of 1,074 background gang-related violent crimes and 440 gang-related violent retaliations occurred in South Los Angeles between 2014-2017. We estimated the number of retaliations that would have occurred in the absence of GRYD Triangle Partnership actions based on these estimates.

Based on these estimates, more than twice as many retaliations would have occurred in the absence of the GRYD Incident Response (IR) Program (Table 5). The analysis suggests that there were 109 fewer gang-related retaliatory homicides over the four-year period and 349 fewer gang-related retaliatory assaults. On an annual basis, approximately 27 retaliatory gang homicides and 87 retaliatory gang aggravated assaults were prevented per year.

*For a more detailed description of the analytic methods used for this study, please contact Jeff Brantingham at branting@ucla.edu.

Table 5. Estimated number of background gang-related crimes and retaliations estimated under observed and counterfactual conditions.

	BACKGROUND	RETALIATION	TOTAL	CJ SYSTEM SAVINGS
OBSERVED	1074	440	1514	
COUNTERFACTUAL	1074	898.7	1972.7	
CRIMES PREVENTED	0	458.7	458.7	$45,930,076
N HOMICIDES PREVENTED	0	109.4	109.4	$42,911,618
N AGGS PREVENTED	0	349.3	349.3	$3,018,458

SUMMARY

Gang violence has a devastating impact on communities. Cities have a substantial interest curbing gang violence by reducing the size and influence of gangs. This is a long-term goal that forms a major part of the GRYD Comprehensive Strategy. Cities must also focus on the immediate challenge of stopping gang shootings and homicides for the gangs that exist today. As with chronic health problems, preventative measures do not eliminate day-to-day health care needs. The GRYD Incident Response (IR) Program is focused on today's gang violence by seeking to disrupt the conditions that trigger gang retaliations.

The GRYD IR Program was associated with a 41.2% reduction in gang-related retaliatory homicides and aggravated assaults in the South Los Angeles study region from 2014-2017. This reduction translates into 27 fewer retaliatory homicides and 87 fewer retaliatory assaults on average each year. The number of homicides in the South Los Angeles study region alone would have been nearly 25% higher without the crimes prevented by the GRYD IR Program Triangle Partnership.

The full impact of the GRYD IR Program on individuals and communities is difficult to quantify. Focusing on the fiscal impact alone, the estimated savings to the criminal justice system from prevented gang retaliations amounts to approximately $11.5 million per year (in 2018 dollars) (Table 5).

These results are both impressive and encouraging. It is important to remember, however, that the GRYD IR Program operates under real-world field conditions. The substantial impact of GRYD Triangle Partnership actions on decreasing gang-related retaliations may be confounded with other processes. The most significant worry might be that the GRYD IR Program Triangle Partnership somehow "cherry picks" crimes and therefore the apparent effect is simply the result of selection bias. While it is impossible to rule this out, the evidence indicates that the GRYD IR Program is most likely to be notified and to take action in response to more serious crimes; thus, if there is a selection bias it is toward crimes where the risk of retaliation is actually higher and we should expect lower overall success.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE GRYD IR PROGRAM

The GRYD Triangle Partnership arguably plays a substantial role in the success of the GRYD IR Program. A long-standing criticism of civilian street-level interventions is their lack of sufficient organization and oversight. It is unclear how much is being done, where and when. There is a tendency to believe that the lack of organization and oversight is a necessary cost of business; that the ability to act as "free agents" is what gives Community Intervention Workers (CIWs) their "license to operate" in the community and secure respect from the gangs they are trying to influence. GRYD's Triangle Partnership shows that this is a false dichotomy. CIWs are able to ensure that their activities do not overlap with law enforcement precisely because of the systematic exchange of information. The effectiveness of the GRYD IR Program may be due in part to the ability to direct specific actions to more events without duplication of efforts.

However, improvements can be made to the GRYD IR Program. Specifically, a large number of events come to the attention of the Los Angeles Police Department but fail to activate the GRYD Triangle Partnership. For example, there were nearly two times as many gang-related violent crimes (n=2,361 vs. n=1,249) that did not come to the attention of the GRYD IR Program in the South Los Angeles study region over 2014-2017 (Table 2). The impact of the GRYD IR Program could have been significantly higher overall if some of these events were exposed to action by the GRYD Triangle Partnership. It must be asked, however, whether current resources are sufficient to respond to that many more events. To include these crimes would entail adding nearly 1.7 gang-related notifications per day to the GRYD

Triangle Partnership over the South Los Angeles study region. At present, the GRYD Triangle Partnership actively responds to approximately 0.88 events per day in the South Los Angeles study region.

A much smaller fraction of events were known to the GRYD IR Program but were not acted on. In general, these events were judged to be of relatively low risk based on evaluation of the information available about the crime at the time of notification. As the analyses show here, however, these crimes without a response generated nearly twice as many retaliations as those exposed to actions taken by the GRYD Triangle Partnership. These results show that increasing notifications to, and actions taken by, the GRYD Triangle Partnership could have a significant and immediate impact on reducing additional retaliations. The capacity presumably exists to do so. For example, there were only 221 violent crimes where the GRYD IR Program was notified but did not take any recorded action (Table 3). This amounts to one additional event per week requiring action from the GRYD IR Program.

MOVING FORWARD

This study raises at least two critical questions for future consideration and research. The findings from this study prompt further exploration into how the GRYD IR Program makes such a positive impact. Specifically, future research should explore how the GRYD IR Program Triangle Partnership potentially improves upon earlier street outreach models.

Additionally, further process evaluation is needed to understand how and why some events do not trigger responses from the GRYD Triangle Partnership. The mandate of the GRYD IR Program is to respond to gang-related violent crime to reduce the chance of retaliation. This is dependent upon quickly identifying gang-related crime and injecting that information into the GRYD Triangle Partnership. Yet, the task of identifying gang-related crime is very challenging in itself. Many events may only be recognized as gang-related well into the investigative process, and long after the GRYD Triangle Partnership actions would make a substantive difference. Adoption of a systematic "scoring" or "quality control" system to identify likely gang-related crimes, which is agreed upon and used by all members of the GRYD Triangle Partnership, could streamline and make more reliable the notification process. This could go a long way toward increasing the capacity of the GRYD IR Program to respond to events.

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