

# “Pulling Levers” Strategies to Prevent Gang Violence

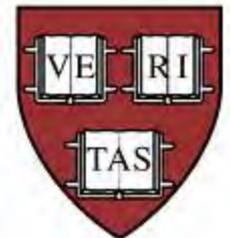
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# Pulling Levers Prevention Strategies

- **Pioneered in Boston to reduce gang violence in the mid 1990s**
- **Serious violent crime problems can be characterized as...**
  - Concentrated among a small number of highly active criminal offenders who are very well known to the criminal justice system
  - Involving victims and offenders are often caught up in ongoing cycles of retaliatory violence among *street gangs* and other criminally-active groups
  - E.g. Boston – 1% of city youth involved in gangs that generate 50% of total homicide
- **Pulling levers strategies seek to address violent crime dynamics by changing decision-making processes of these individuals.**
  - Deterrence principles
  - Moral suasion
  - Facilitating desirable behavior

# Key Elements of the Approach

- Selection of particular problem, e.g. gang violence, street drug dealing
- Problem analysis research
- Working group comprised of law enforcement, social service, and community-based agencies (“network of capacity”)
- Customize enforcement strategy to context, groups, and individuals (“only as hard as it needs to be”)
- Strategic provision of social services and opportunities
- Communicating directly and repeatedly to offenders that they will get special attention (“call-ins,” street discussions, etc.)
- Premium placed on *legitimacy* of approach
  - Fairness (warning, opportunity and social service provision)
  - Community involvement (transparency)
  - Not gang elimination strategy, not a “deal”

# Evaluation Evidence

- **Boston's Operation Ceasefire**
  - U.S. Department of Justice sponsored quasi – experimental design comparing Boston to other large U.S. and New England cities
  - 63% reduction in youth homicide and larger reductions in other indicators of serious youth violence (Braga et al., 2001, *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*; Piehl et al., 2003, *Review of Economics and Statistics*).
  - Reviews generally support evidence of significant reduction in violence, but some question over effect size
- **Replications with Quasi-Experimental Research Designs**
  - Chicago (Papachristos, Meares, & Fagan, 2007, *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies*)
  - Indianapolis (McGarrell et al., 2006, *Justice Quarterly*)
  - East Los Angeles (Tita et al., 2003, Rand Corporation)
  - Stockton, California (Braga, 2008, *Journal of Criminal Justice*)
  - Lowell, Massachusetts (Braga et al., 2008, *Justice Quarterly*)
- **Descriptive Studies Showing Some Evidence of Preventive Benefits**
  - Minneapolis, Minnesota
  - High Point, North Carolina
  - Cincinnati, Ohio