

THE DRUMBEAT OF MEMPHIS: REDUCING YOUTH HANDGUN VIOLENCE ONE CHILD, ONE
GUN, AND ONE COMMUNITY AT A TIME

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The drumbeat of Memphis, Memphis Mayor A. C. Wharton has called it. The drumbeat of gunshots that don't get reported because people in the community have grown accustomed hearing them. Gunshots have become *normal*. News stories covering Memphis' fluctuating homicide rates barely raise an eyebrow in Memphis these days, they're so common. But one new and rising statistic in Memphis has gained everyone's attention – youth homicide and handgun violence. Since youth violence and homicide began to rise in the early 1990s, Memphis has been struggling to implement initiatives to reduce this statistic. These initiatives have had trouble gaining momentum because of a lack of funding or sustained results. The failures have fostered distrust and apathy between the key players in these initiatives --- the community, city justice officials, and law enforcement. Communication broke down between these three spheres and not surprisingly, youth violence continued to rise. Memphis continues to create programs designed to rebuild the broken relationships, but the community, city officials, and law enforcement must elevate communication and make it a number one priority if a decrease in youth handgun violence rates are to be sustained.

It's no secret Memphis' violent crime rate brought the city national fame. (Harkins 1991). For multiple years in the 1920s and 1930s, the headlines dubbed Memphis "Murder Capital" of the world, with the city seeing an astounding rate of 148 homicides in 1933 alone (Memphis Again Holds Title As Murder Capital 1933). This rate plummeted in the 1940s and 1950s, temporarily clearing Memphis of its title. By 1960, Memphis was the safest major city in the South (Harkins 1991). But this relief would not last. Homicide statistics began to creep back up in the late 1960s and skyrocketed in the 1970s. Since

then, violent crime has hit record highs year after year, allowing Memphis regain its previous violent claim to fame. But it's not the general violent crime rate that's lately gaining the attention of residents. It is the decline in age of both the perpetrators and victims involved in these acts that has shocked the Memphis community. "Families ponder losses as violent deaths mount among Memphis youth" (Kelley 1993) and "Guns reign over the kids of the 'hood" (Chisum, Conley and Johnson 1993) have become Memphis' new alarming headlines. While the crime rate in Memphis has actually been declining since 2006, youth violence has been on the rise since the early 1990s. The drumbeat is still present, but the drummers are now younger than ever.

In the past, Memphis has deemed much of its crime unpreventable. In the 20s and 30s, most of the murders were attributed to the large black population and the drifters that often made their way through the city (Harkins 1991). The blame shifted in the 1970s to the unpredictability of the murders. "Police Say Little Can Be Done to Prevent Murder" read a 1977 *Commercial Appeal* article. This article went on to interview a dejected Captain Tommy Smith, commander of Memphis' homicide squad, who claimed that "[homicide] is the only crime you cannot stop by preventative policing" (Steverson 1977). Today, the attitude towards preventing violent crime has changed drastically. The wave of homicides in the early 1990s brought with it a new understanding of violence and violent behavior. Instead of an unpreventable and tragic fact of life, scholars began comparing the prevalence of violence in communities to the epidemic of any other disease. In 1989, The Center for Disease Control labeled homicide as "a public health problem" and should be diagnosed and treated similarly to "heart disease or cancer – as a sometime preventable malady that hits some age groups and races harder than others" (Burch 1989).

The problem of youth violence in Memphis has long been identified and the statistics show that it is concentrated in a specific group and in certain communities (Fox and Swatt 2008). In 2009, more than 54% of those arrested for committing violent crime were 24 years old or younger. Some offenders were as young as nine years old (McKenzie 2013). The real question is how does Memphis change this and reduce youth handgun violence. Many other cities like Memphis, including Boston, Cincinnati, Los Angeles, Baltimore, and Chicago have asked the same question in regard to this issue. All five cities have created models to combat this problem in their inner-city neighborhoods. And now it is Memphis' turn to be consistent in its efforts to reduce youth gun violence. Beginning in September 2011, Memphis received a \$4.8 million dollar grant from the Bloomberg Philanthropies to create innovative ideas in order to move the city forward in increasing economic vitality and reducing youth handgun violence. With this grant, Mayor A. C. Wharton has created the Innovation Delivery Team that will be in charge of working towards these goals in a three-year period. In the last year and a half, the team has produced Memphis Gun Down, a five-prong system that hopes to reduce youth gun violence by 20% in two target neighborhoods, Frayser and South Memphis, and 10% citywide. This system was created using strategies that have seen results in Boston, Cincinnati, Los Angeles, Baltimore, and Chicago, and methods and programs that are uniquely tailored to Memphis.

At the core of Innovation Delivery Team's strategy is the Public Health Model. This model focuses on treating violence as a disease. This approach uses the same four procedural steps that treating any other infection would require. The first step is to define the problem by understanding the "who," "what," "when," "where." and "how" of the

disease, while the second step is to identify the risk and protective factors that are associated with it. A risk factor is a characteristic that increases the likelihood of a person becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence, and a protective factor is one that would decrease this likelihood (The Public Health Approach to Violence Prevention 2008). Memphis has been focused on identifying these first two steps since 1989. It is the job of the Innovation Delivery Team with the creation of Memphis Gun Down to concentrate on the third step: develop and test prevention strategies. The programs and methods created by Memphis Gun Down are on a trial and error basis. They will narrow their focus on primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention to stop violence at multiple angles.

Primary prevention is a strategy to avoid the development of a disease. This strategy will target young children not yet exposed to violence. Secondary prevention is a step up and involves strategies to diagnose and treat the disease in early stages. To do this, Memphis Gun Down will provide intervention workers and programs to intervene in the lives of youth that are in the early stages of acting violently. The final mode of treatment is tertiary prevention. This strategy treats the existing disease in those where it is serious and chronic. These individuals will be quarantined and extracted from the community to prevent further contamination (Innovation Delivery Team, Braggs 2013). The team is testing what will work and what will not work in the treatment of Memphis' particular "strain" of the disease. To do this, the Team will evaluate the statistical data that will be gathered over these three years, but they will also need to listen to the voice of the community and gauge what residents feel is making an impact. Memphis Gun Down will be kept in place after the Innovation Delivery Team has it fully operational in the three-year period. "Part of the strategy is just to show that these techniques are working. And then

how do we begin to grow these techniques and take them into other parts of the city” (Innovation Delivery Team, Lord 2013). The goal is to discover enough strategies that show results so that Memphis can enter the fourth and final step of the Public Health Model: assure widespread adoption (The Public Health Approach to Violence Prevention 2008).

But many residents in these communities are still not willing to trust Memphis Gun Down. While Memphians have grown accustomed to violent crime rate, they have also seen many programs and initiatives to reduce it come and go during the past twenty years. Residents have seen failure and a loss of funding multiple times, creating a climate of justified skepticism and resistance to the actions and implementations of the Innovation Delivery Team. The team has acknowledged the distrust from the community, stating they do not believe there is a “silver bullet” that can fix the problem (Innovation Delivery Team, McGowen 2013). But the trust of the community has yet to be won over.

Because the Innovation Delivery Team will not release its results until October 2014, I am not attempting to label Memphis Gun Down a success or a failure. My research is geared towards exploring the voices of the Innovation Delivery Team and other city justice officials, law enforcement, and the community in a way that will allow the further improvement of Memphis Gun Down’ methods and programs. The relationship between these groups is broken, and has been broken for a long time. For a system that intends to improve the community’s ability to function properly and see results, this relationship needs to be rebuilt. Doug McGowen, director of the Innovation Delivery Team, admits that Memphis Gun Down is about 80% right (2013). The remaining 20% will be the adaptation of this system to the unique characteristics of Memphis and for Memphian’s to take these programs and make them their own. In my research, I have evaluated this 80% by looking

into the relationship each program creates or rebuilds between city justice officials, law enforcement, and the community. My results are not based on statistical data, but rather on the voices in Memphis that tell their story of this city's effort to reduce youth handgun violence.

Primary Prevention

For any disease, once diagnosed, it is imperative to design strategies to prevent those not yet infected from contracting it. Now that violence has been diagnosed as a disease in Memphis, the primary preventative strategies to help youth avoid developing the disease must be created. Our society, today, has many ways of primary preventative measures to ensure the safety of those exposed to a disease. Like a vaccine, the Innovation Delivery team is creating youth outreach opportunities to prevent those not yet involved in a violent lifestyle from resorting to guns to solve conflicts. The primary prevention side of Memphis Gun Down is to educate children in non-violent forms of conflict resolution and mentor them in other areas of their life so they will not enter a violent lifestyle.

Though the population of actual violent perpetrators is small, the influence they have on the community is much larger. These children and youth at risk of traveling down a violent path are much more likely to do so in an atmosphere of guns, gangs, and fear. This collective fear that inhabits so many of the Memphis communities pushes children towards this lifestyle. "People live in fear. There is a lot of anger and apathy in Memphis, and I feel that is by design", Dorothy Cox, manager of the Rhodes Hollywood Springdale Partnership office in the Hollywood community, explains (2013). Memphis is a divided city, Dorothy Cox argues, which translates into many divided communities. When children,

or any other member of the community, feel their life is in danger, the complex of self-preservation takes over. This often leads to actions that reciprocate the violence that prevented them from feeling safe in the first place. This perpetuates the cycle of violence that exists in many of Memphis' communities. A sense of security is no longer exists in the lives of these children explains Joe Hunter, founder and program director of GANG Inc. "How you going to go through your day, and have a great day as a kid, and you're concerned about getting shot?" (2013). To reestablish this sense of security, the safety of the community first needs to be reestablished.

The primary prevention aspect of the Innovation Delivery Team's Public Health Framework, created from the Public Health model approach, works to reestablish this sense of security by intervening into the lives of children at a young age. One way the Innovation Delivery Team is doing this is by partnering with the Memphis Police Department to help develop its new Community Outreach Policing (COP) initiative. COP is a program developed to rebuild the relationship between the community and the Memphis Police Department. This program focuses on a community oriented policing style that operates on a "very close neighborhood approach" (Innovation Delivery Team, Lord 2013). Since the recent installation of the Co-Acts, smaller police agencies that are designed to serve one particular neighborhood, there have been moves to restructure the way the Memphis Police Department reaches out to the community. The sixteen Co-Acts units, short for "community action," have not been as successful as had been originally intended. Memphis Police Director Toney Armstrong explained in a news report that "some precinct commanders saw the need for them, the good that it could do and really stressed it and pushed it, while we had others that didn't have that focus." Because he strongly believes in

community policing, Armstrong was very displeased at the failure of these units (Holiday 2011). But now his focus is on moving forward with C.O.P. This program will restructure the focus of community policing in Memphis and increase efforts to rebuild the relationship between the community and the Memphis Police Department (Community Programs 2011).

The purpose of COP, on the primary prevention front is to develop positive alternatives and solutions to improve the quality of life for all citizens in Memphis (Suppression 2013). COP works by creating relationships with the families in the community and building a safer environment through trust and connections. Most importantly, this initiative is intended to give the younger children in the community that are not involved in gang activity, but are proximally at risk to be in gangs the future, police officers that are also their role models and mentors. “The gangs offer more things to do and something to belong to, so we are trying to do that very same thing, but we are trying to do it in a positive light”, Lt. Tyrone Currie of the Memphis Police Department explains (2013). He describes COP as a way to counter the gang lifestyle and offer alternatives to those children that are proximally at risk for one day joining a gang.

When in action, COP hosts community functions that bring residents and law enforcement officials together in a fun and relaxed atmosphere. The Memphis Police Department wants to show residents that its officers are people just like any other members of the community. The intention is to dispel this inherent fear of police that has been toxic for the city of Memphis. And on top of that, educate the children in attendance that the gang lifestyle will only get you to one of two places: jail or death. And often get you there quickly (Currie 2013). The Memphis Police Department is looking at COP as an

educational tool. It offers these kids a way out that might have not previously been there for them.

COP has been receiving good feedback from both the community and its collaboration with the Innovation Delivery Team, but more is wanted and needed. The community's relationship with law enforcement has been broken for quite some time now explains Bart Garey, president of Hollywood Furniture and Hardware Company, a family owned business that has been in the Hollywood neighborhood since 1924. He remembers back in the 1960s when the law enforcement in his neighborhood was centered on community policing. "It's kind of the old Mayberry concept. Everybody knew who Andy and Barney were. There was a lot of trust. And even though [returning to this style of policing] may not be possible in reality, I think it would be better than it is" (2013). Many advocate for this return because there is no longer faith in law enforcement to make the communities safer. "People in some neighborhoods in this city feel like they are being occupied, not protected," said Brad Watkins, organizing director of the Mid-South Peace and Justice Center (Waters 2013). But it is crime is the real problem, he argues. And making officers appear more relatable and available is a step in the right direction.

To answer the community's request for more, Innovation Delivery is trying to also provide this through youth opportunities. This is another primary prevention tool being used to intervene in the lives of younger children proximally at risk for violent behavior or entering a violent lifestyle. These programs include mentoring opportunities under the Mayor's Mentoring Initiative, a program started by the Memphis Gun Down, The Grizzlies Foundation, and the Shelby County District Attorney General's office, literacy skills training, and connecting youth with summer employment, skills development, and athletic

programs. Memphis Gun Down has also partnered with Parks and Neighborhoods, Ballet Memphis, Assisi Foundation, and communities centers in Frayser and South Memphis to provide free dance classes to youth (Accomplishments 2013). These opportunities place emphasis on building the educational and technical skills of the youth in these communities (Youth Opportunities 2013). Along with these available programs, Memphis Gun Down has also created Summer Night Lights and Midnight Basketball to provide activities to the youth in the community during the hours of the week most associated with violent crime. Summer Night Lights is part of the Memphis Gun Down Safe Summer in which families are invited to the Ed Rice Community Center in Frayser for family-centered recreational, educational, and artistic activities. Summer Night Lights will be every Friday night of the summer from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. starting July 12th and ending August 2nd. The swimming pool will be open, movies will be shown, games and sports are available, and food will be served, all free of charge and open to all ages (Memphis Gun Down Initiative Hosts "Summer Night Lights" at Ed Rice Community Center 2013).

Summer Night Lights is intended to get kids off the streets on Friday nights, a time when violent crime peaks. "You're hanging out in the park. You're having a good time. That's what you're doing", explains Doug McGowen. "And there were a heck of a lot of young gang members that were there... The community needs to see that these are people. They need to see that the police are people. They need to see that this park is a place where you can come and have a good time" (2013). This event was taken from a part of Los Angeles' gun violence reduction model, Gang Reduction and Youth Development. Los Angeles' program includes thirty-two parks and runs from 7 pm to midnight, Wednesdays through Saturdays from the first week in July to the first week in September (Dunworth, et

al. 2010). This event was created due to the gang activity in the parks at night that prevented people from entering the park safely. It has also become a war zone for some gangs and many shootings occur in these parks at night. Summer Night Lights' goal is to take back the parks and change this.

But Memphis is different. Unlike Los Angeles, Memphis does not have the same type of problems with its parks to the degree that Los Angeles does. Joe Hunter views this as problematic. "[Los Angeles] was a place that needed [Summer Night Lights]. Why? Because at 8 o'clock at night, [they] do have a full park. If we had that, then this might work. But to create it when there's nothing normally going on there" is not something that Memphis needs. Instead, he views Summer Night Lights as creating a remedy to a problem that was never there (2013). It also creates new problems that were not there originally. Hunter is concerned for the kids walking to and from the park at night to participate in the event. "We have kids that were at home, out of harms way. We open the center at night and told them 'come on the street'. They've got to get to the center, and they've got to go home. On a normal day if the center wasn't open, they would've been home." This creates an unnecessary danger for the kids on the streets, he argues, and the unnecessary use of police resources in the park to police an area that Summer Night Lights has created (2013).

While Summer Night Lights saw improvements in gun violence reduction in Los Angeles, the community has concerns that something copied and pasted from another city will not see the same types of improvements here in Memphis. This pushes the Innovation Delivery Team to create more programs tailored specifically to Memphis. But to do this requires time. The Summer Night Lights in Los Angeles was started in eight parks in 2008, but has now grown to thirty-two participating parks. The Innovation Delivery Team

recognizes that Summer Night Lights in Memphis this year is just the beginning. If it goes well this summer, it will be expanded. If not, the team will move on and try something new (Innovation Delivery Team, McGowen 2013).

Midnight Basketball was also not a Memphis original. The New Orleans gun violence model, SOS NOLA: Saving Our Sons, a public engagement campaign, was launched by Mayor Landrieu in September 2011. It calls on the entire community to proactively invest in the lives of young men to prevent lifestyles of violence. SOS NOLA partnered with the New Orleans Hornets to launch the NOLA FOR LIFE Midnight Basketball League in 2012 (City of New Orleans Homicide Reduction Initiatives Status Report 2011). On June 1st, 2013, the fourth season of New Orleans's Midnight Basketball kicked off. The past three seasons have seen over 3,000 participants and it's continuing to grow (City of New Orleans 2013). Like the New Orleans Hornets, the Memphis Grizzlies are partnering with Memphis Gun Down to create Midnight Basketball. This tournament's objective is to give males between the ages of sixteen and twenty an activity to participate in on Saturday nights, a time when violent crime peaks during the week (Midnight Basketball 2013). Whether or not Midnight Basketball will stick in Memphis, only time will tell. New Orleans has developed and molded its Midnight Basketball to fit the city by having a specific enrichment theme each season. It will take time for Memphis to tailor its league to the specific needs of the city, but it will also take a conscious effort to ensure success.

In another effort to mold programs specifically to Memphis' needs, Memphis Gun Down has set up community meetings and youth roundtables. The groups discuss what is behind youth handgun violence and instating the appropriate programs to reduce it. The community meetings are attended by leaders in the target communities, but are open to the

public. These meetings will discuss programs already in operation and the introduction of new programs or events to the communities through the Innovation Delivery Team. The youth roundtables are similar to the community meetings, but involve more discussion of the problems that directly affect them. These are directed at getting the youth to voice their specific concerns and hopefully to start “changing the conversation” in the communities (Innovation Delivery Team, McGowen 2013). This, along with the community meetings, will start to increase communication in these areas, and Memphis as a whole. “I believe that communication is the best policy for anything, for any organization. Lack of communication is the worst”, states Bart Garey, community resident. “If you get down to it, realistically, [what Memphis needs] is more communication between the political side, law enforcement, business owners, and the community” (2013). Most Memphians share these feelings, and often it’s a breakdown in communication that feeds the distrust of law enforcement, city government, and programs like Memphis Gun Down. The Innovation Delivery Team recognizes this issue and is working to solve this problem. But the breakdown of communication is a deep and fundamental issue in Memphis, so it will take time and more participants to solve this problem. But the recognition of this issue and the efforts to do something about it are steps in the right direction.

Another mode of communication that the Innovation Delivery Team has tried to utilize is social media. In the summer of 2012, before Memphis Gun Down was officially implemented, the team created the Mayor’s Summer Challenge. This was a call-to-action for the youth of the city to take an online pledge to “Keep Cool This Summer”. The signer pledged to several commitments: I will not carry a gun; I will not use a gun to settle an argument; I will try to keep my friends from carrying and using guns; and together we will

stop gun violence this summer (Mayor's Innovation Delivery Team 2012). Along with this online pledge, a Facebook group and a twitter account were also created to mobilize the youth and encourage them to get involved in the new effort to reduce youth handgun violence. This social media campaign focused on stopping the youth that are susceptible to violence before they pick up a gun. Unfortunately, this did not generate the community movement that the Innovation Delivery Team was originally planned (Innovation Delivery Team, McGowen 2013). The problem proved to be more deeply rooted in the fear the residents feel in the community. A pledge was not enough to remove this fear. The Innovation Delivery Team recognized this and continued to innovate, creating Memphis Gun Down in 2013 after the Mayor's Summer Challenge did not show the desired results. To better address the fear in the communities, primary prevention has created ways for the youth to get involved in safe and productive opportunities to stay away from the violence. It will take time for the primary prevention aspect of Memphis Gun Down to see results. A step has been made in the right direction. But the next step will be to better mold these programs to Memphis and identify ways to reduce youth handgun violence specifically in each community.

Secondary Prevention

Secondary Prevention is a step beyond the primary preventative method used by the Innovation Delivery Team. While primary prevention creates strategies to avoid development of the disease, secondary prevention employs strategies to diagnose and treat the disease in its early stages. This includes youth involved in the early stages of a violent lifestyle, gang activity, and those demonstrating signs of academic difficulty in middle

school (Innovation Delivery Team, Braggs 2013). The services target youth that are at high-risk of being victims or offenders of violent crimes, rather than just proximally at risk. The programs that target these youth have to be more attentive and specialized to make a difference in their lives. The Innovation Delivery Team acknowledges this and has created initiatives and programs specific for youth in the early stages of violent behavior, targeting the streets, the schools, and the hospital.

To help the youth in these early stages, they must first be identified. To do this, the Innovation Delivery Team has created the 901 BLOC Squad, which stands for Better Lives, Opportunities, and Communities. The 901 BLOC Squad is a community mobilization and outreach team charged with combating violence through outreach and service connection (Intervention 2013). This group consists of five intervention workers, all former gang members, that each has a specific job when going into the community to reduce violence. Delvin Lane, the Community Violence Prevention Supervisor, is the leader of this five-man group. "Our goal is to get the kids to want to bring unity to the community and make them understand that they are the solution they are searching for," he expressed on the outset of the group's work in 2012 (Jones 2012). The group also consists of two Violence Intervention Specialists, Trevon Tony and Lonnie Gauldin, and two Street Outreach Workers, Andrew Collins and Link Fisher (Jones 2012). The mission of this group is to mediate conflicts when violence is about to erupt or already has erupted. "It's like mediating something on a school yard", explains Doug McGowen (2013). This group is trying to target the youth in the community that might not be able to take advantage of the primary preventative programs and events, or are already mildly involved in a violent lifestyle and won't take advantage of them.

This is why the secondary prevention strategy focuses more on individual interaction. The youth already diagnosed with this disease will need personal treatment to get out of these violent situations. The five intervention workers have been trained to identify the youth that need treatment and intervene in situations to provide it. What has been discovered, not only in Memphis, is that the violence can be attributed to a very small portion of the youth population in these communities. This fact has been compared to the 80/20 rule: 80% of the problem is caused by only 20% of the population. Roughly, about 80% of the youth violence in these communities is caused by only 20% of the youth. According to George Lord, Performance Management Lead for the Innovation Delivery Team, it is probably less than 20% in Memphis (2013). And this 20% is frequently connected to gang activity. Some statistics have claimed that only 17% of the violent crime in Memphis is gang related. But what this statistic is really saying is that 17% of the violent crime is gang *motivated*, explains the team. This means that this 17% represents the violent crime that is strictly being committed on behalf of the gang because the perpetrator is in a gang. But well over 50% of the violent crime is gang *affiliated*, meaning that either the victim or the perpetrator is in a gang. "Almost all of this crime that we're seeing is based on interpersonal conflict of some variety or another. But the gang affiliation reduces your threshold by which you're going to act violently. It's almost an excuse" (Innovation Delivery Team, McGowen 2013).

The 901 BLOC Squad uses these statistics and is able to target many gang members in Frayser and South Memphis. All being former gang members, they are able to relate to these youth on a level that most others trying to reduce the violence would not be able to. But this group has had to adapt to the uniqueness of the gangs in this city. According the

2011 Census Bureau's American Community Survey, the metropolitan area of Memphis has the highest poverty rate among the 51 U.S. metro areas with populations of 1 million or greater (Charlier 2011). Because Memphis is such a poor city, much of the gang activity is economically driven. This drives the motives and actions of gang members, and much of the violence. Unlike Los Angeles, the Innovation Delivery Team explained, Memphis does not have much "gang versus gang" violence. Many of the gangs actually work together to get money, but it is the interpersonal "beefs" that set off the violent behavior. This must be identified when trying to intervene in the conflicts (2013).

Another unique characteristic of Memphis gangs is their disorganization. Because Memphis has a very high mobility rate, the gang population is very dispersed within the city. One example of this is the dispersion of gang members through section 8 vouchers and Hope IV. These allowed low-income families to move into new housing after being removed from their previous public housing locations. Many of these residents relocated to Foote Homes, a public housing unit that now has representatives from every gang in Memphis, according to Doug McGowen. This dispersion of gangs has also led to many spin-off and hybrid gangs in the city. This disorganization and chaos of gang activity allows for little discipline within the gangs in Memphis (Innovation Delivery Team, McGowen 2013). The 901 BLOC squad understands this characteristic and is trying to angle its approach accordingly.

But not everything has gone as smoothly as had been hoped. On January 8th, 2013, a 17 year-old male was shot in the neck while attending an anti-violence meeting hosted by the 901 BLOC squad. The teen made a full recovery, but the message was still loud and clear. The 901 BLOC Squad claims the shooting was an accident from a stray bullet and not

gang related. But Joe Hunter of GANG Inc. believes otherwise. He recognizes the good intentions of the 5 interventionist, “but intentions don’t stop bullets” he told news reporters in an interview after the shooting (Chen 2013). Hunter questions whether the team is well equipped enough to be doing this type of work. . “[The Innovation Delivery Team] hasn’t brought in the right people and timing. I do this year round, but they come up with all-of-the-sudden stuff.” And this “all-of-the-sudden stuff” is what can get you into trouble, he explains. “There’s a guy dead right now that tried to do what I’m doing, in Memphis. They killed him. This is real. This ain’t no joke. This ain’t no damn commercial. This is real, just like these bullets are real [pointing to scars on his arm]. This is real” (Hunter 2013).

Joe Hunter has been a part of GANG Inc. for 13 years, an outreach ministry that seeks to assist youth in their academics and spiritual growth and allow them to become productive citizens in the community (G.A.N.G., Inc. Home n.d.). But he goes above and beyond his youth mentoring program. Like some of the 901 BLOC Squad members, Hunter is also a former gang member. He has seen the inside workings of a violent lifestyle and understands many problems gang members in Memphis deal with. Since moving to Memphis, he has created relationships with the youth in the neighborhood, many involved in gangs and gang violence. “Kids want to see you care rather than you telling them you care”, something that he believes the 901 BLOC Squad needs to do a better job of (2013). And Joe Hunter is not the only one in the community to voice a concern about the strategies of the intervention workers. After the January shooting outside the 901 BLOC Squad’s anti-violence meeting, an article was released from the Local Memphis news titled “Frayser Community Losing Hope in Stopping Gun Violence”. This article interviewed young

residents from the community that say they are not seeing progress from the 901 BLOC Squad and doubt that the violent perpetrators in the community will change without a stronger police presence (Lambert 2013).

But Delvin Lane would argue that there, in fact, has been progress. He claims that in the areas the 901 BLOC Squad has targeted since October, they've seen a 30 to 40 percent reduction in gun crimes (Hall 2013). He is hoping these numbers will convince the city that the strategies are working and allow the squad to grow. "We are not superheroes. We can't stop everything," Lane explains, and says that more intervention workers are needed to make a greater impact in the city (Hall 2013). Los Angeles has over 240 intervention workers, while Memphis only has five. But the team is getting traction says Doug McGowen. "It's a start. If it's successful and we get the data back, then we can tell the story" (2013). Memphis Gun Down is not promising a quick fix to any of this. Time and the right approach are needed for these workers to build the type of relationships with the youth that are necessary to stop youth violence. But the motivations of the Innovation Delivery Team and its interventionist must also be pure to see success, argue both Joe Hunter and Dorothy Cox. Many community residents believe that the Innovation Delivery Team and any other individuals that are working to stop gun violence don't have a real investment in the community. They see these people as just employees of the city, a city that has abandoned them in the past, that are only here to make money off of their community's situation. And while the Innovation Delivery Team would argue strongly against this, they recognize that only results and consistency will prove their sincerity.

Another tactic in secondary prevention is intervention in the schools. GRASSY, Gang Reduction Assistance for Saving Society's Youth, is an existing program in four of the

Memphis City Schools that the Innovation Delivery Team is hoping to expand upon.

Memphis Gun Down's objective is to increase the capacity of GRASSY by hiring additional school outreach workers (Intervention 2013). Though the Innovation Delivery Team did not create this program, they are hoping to expand on the already existing program. The goal is to increase the results that have already been seen. They have started this process by allocating \$50,000 to provide work experience opportunities for GRASSY students this summer (Accomplishments 2013). During the school year, GRASSY is a ten-week, 120-hour after-school program that gives youth something to belong to and be a part of. "These kids were identified as having been involved with gang activity or some sort of criminal activity in the past, and this is a way to curb that" explains Ronald Pope, Memphis City School direction of gang prevention (Whitten 2012). GRASSY provides these at-risk students a way to get away from the negative impact of violent behavior.

To help these youth move away from a violent lifestyle, GRASSY provides them each with academic assistance, job training, and counseling services. It helps youth that might not necessarily be interested in college a set of skills that can assist them in finding a job in a skilled trade. The spring semester was GRASSY's pilot year at Trezevant High School and attracted twenty-five students on its outset. But retention rate was a problem. Only five students graduated the program. Anthony Hicks, the special project coordinator for GRASSY, recognizes that tweaks are necessary to get this retention rate to go up (Whitten 2012). The Innovation Delivery Team is using the expansion of GRASSY to understand the needs of the youth in this program and address their risk factors. And after addressing individuals' specific needs and problems, GRASSY will connect them to the tools necessary to achieve their goals (Innovation Delivery Team, McGowen 2013).

But the Innovation Delivery Team has acknowledged that it is impossible to reach every young person in the community before they are involved in a shooting. This is why they have also introduced the hospital intervention piece to the secondary prevention strategy, a program that got positive feedback in Baltimore. The hospital-based violence intervention program, introduced in May of 2013 at the Regional Medical Center, will provide an intervention liaison that will talk to both the gun shot victim and their family and friends at the hospital. This strategy has been compared to the same treatment needed for someone who has suffered a heart attack. If strides can be made to get the patient to change his or her lifestyle, then the likelihood of the trauma reoccurring is greatly decreased (McCowen 2013).

Some Memphians have voiced concerns that this program is a waste of money, but it could actually save the MED thousands of dollars if the number of uninsured gunshot victims is reduced. George Lord points out that it costs \$75,000 to the taxpayer for every uninsured gunshot victim that enters the MED. If the program works, the return on investment would be huge (Innovation Delivery Team, Lord 2013). And the hospital intervention team not only tries to prevent the gun shot victims from returning to a violent lifestyle, but it also talks with the friends and family of the victim to prevent a retaliatory shooting on the victim's behalf. Retaliation is a big problem in Memphis, especially within the gang culture. If a retaliatory shooting can be prevented, this will also provide a return in the investment for the hospital-based program.

Police are also focusing on retaliation. Memphis Gun Down is using the data collected by the Retaliatory Violence Insight Project, an insight-based initiative created by George Mason University through a grant from the Department of Justice and Bureau of

Justice Assistance, to train police (Suppression 2013). In November 2012, Memphis Gun Down partnered with the Urban Peace Academy to complete a community assessment of violence in Memphis. Based on this research, police, street outreach workers, and violence intervention specialists will be trained to better predict and prevent retaliatory violence (Accomplishments 2013). This will be accomplished by opening an avenue for understanding retaliatory crime as conflict through the Comprehensive Violence Reduction Strategy Framework (RVIP 2010). This trains officers, outreach workers, and interventionist to extract the information necessary from those involved in a shooting to catch the shooter and help thwart plans to retaliate. The Retaliatory Violence Insight Project has not received much feedback in Memphis yet, but time will tell if police officers find it useful. All the secondary prevention programs, initiatives, and strategies will take time to show results. This is due to the nature of the problem they are addressing. Trying to prevent individuals that have been identified to have already participated in violent crime is difficult coming from any angle. The Innovation Delivery Team believes it has the tools and resources to make an impact in this area, but like primary prevention, the secondary prevention strategies also need to be tailored to the unique characteristics and individuals in Memphis to move forward.

Tertiary Prevention

The final prevention strategy, tertiary prevention, is focused on the few individuals that are serious and chronic offenders of violent crime (Innovation Delivery Team, Braggs 2013). This includes those individuals that are repeatedly involved in violence, gang activity, or gun crime. Unlike primary and secondary prevention, tertiary prevention does

not focus on deterrence through positive reinforcement. Tertiary prevention is focused on extracting these individuals from the community to prevent further contamination. To do this, the Innovation Delivery Team has been focused on creating and implementing strategies to crack down on certain areas where crime aggregates, referred to as “hot spots”. They are also setting up data-driven programs and advocating for legislation that will keep chronic offenders in jail and off the streets for longer periods of time. The tertiary prevention aspect of Memphis Gun Down will require a strong collaboration with the Memphis Police Department and other government offices, including the Shelby County Sherriff’s Office, the Shelby County District Attorney General’s Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives.

Since 2005, the Memphis Police Department has been using data-driven processes to increase the effectiveness of their police work. This started with the implementation of Blue CRUSH, a collaboration between the University of Memphis and the Memphis Police Department on data-driven street operation. This program analyzes the characteristics of crimes, including the type of crime, the day of the week the crime was committed, the time of day the crime was committed, and the location of the crime. This data is then used to target “hot spots” with police resources using new and innovative strategies driven by accountability and responsibility. Since law enforcement has been intensified in these “hot spots”, the over all crime-rate and violent crime rate has seen an aggregate decrease according to the data recorded by Blue CRUSH (Blue C.R.U.S.H. 2011). But Memphis is still having a hard time combatting youth gun-related crime. “We want to emphasize that our city has done a very good job of reducing crime through law enforcement over the last five

or six years”, explains Doug McGowen, “but one thing that [Memphis] struggles with is gun violence, so that’s why [the Innovation Delivery Team] is taking a new look at it” (2013).

One additional program the Innovation Delivery Team has brought to the Memphis Police Department is Gunstat, a prosecution model taken from Philadelphia to put laser focus on the most violent-offenders in small target areas. Once identified, police keep a close eye on these individuals and stop them for even the most minor offense, such as spitting on the sidewalk, so they can pat them down. After they have been arrested, officials seek a higher bail or no bail at all based on the offender’s record. “Before, you would get arrested, get out on bail, go to trial and get probation. So there was really, in many cases, no period of incarceration as a result of carrying a gun illegally,” said Bryan Lentz, who heads the collaborative Gun Violence Task Force for the D.A.’s office and the Attorney General’s Office in Philadelphia (Philadelphia Gunstat: It’s Like GPS for Repeat Firearm Offenders 2012). The Innovation Delivery Team visited Philadelphia in December of 2012, and is now in the early stages of getting Gunstat started up in Memphis. Once integrated into Memphis Gun Down and the Memphis Police Department’s network of programs, Gunstat will focus on the people that are most likely to shoot. “Who are the most likely offenders, and how do you try to make sure that they’re off the streets as easily and quickly as possible?” (Innovation Delivery Team, Lord 2013). Gunstat will give a solution to this particular issue and help get repeat offenders out of the community.

To carry out Gunstat in Memphis, the Innovation Delivery Team will make monthly meetings between the Sheriff, District Attorney, Police Department, Probation and Parole offices, federal prosecutor, and all the other criminal justice actors start to happen (Innovation Delivery Team, Lord 2013). These meetings will serve to get everyone on the

same page and working towards the same goals: increasing the bonds and sentencing to get repeat offenders off the street. But could this be counter-productive? Philadelphia has already seen results, with a 29% drop in violent gun crimes in 2012 alone in the targeted area. This can't be argued with. But Memphis also struggles with a deep distrust in law enforcement. Many community members already feel targeted by the police for racial and economic reasons. Whether this is true or not, it doesn't make the feeling any less real. Any police program that is using its resources to watch an individual more closely is going to be responded with distrust, fear, and anger by some. Memphis already has a tremendous problem with the trust the community is able to put in law enforcement. Whether Gunstat will increase this distrust is unsure, but it is something to take notice of. Gunstat has shown results in other cities and there is probable cause to believe that it will show positive results in Memphis, but are these results fanning the flame to another problem?

Another concern with increased bonds and policing is the use of prison space. While locking up repeat offenders is a logical solution to Memphis' violent crime, the ability to do so should also be evaluated with Gunstat. "It's great to enhance penalties, but you have to have the facilities to keep them once you convict them. Otherwise, what you do, is you let older prisoners out to let the new prisoners have their room", explains Clyde Keenan, twenty-six year veteran and former Head of Homicide for the Memphis Police Department. He equated 201 Poplar, the Memphis prison, with a revolving door. "The more you lock up and the more you convict, the more we've got to let go because we don't have so many beds" (2013). While Gunstat has potential to be something very effective in Memphis, it could also cause more problems than it solves. It has the research and logic backing it, but

whether it will mold to fit the issues Memphis faces with its distrust and its lack of prison space, only time and trial and error will tell.

But, as previously demonstrated, Memphis Gun Down is not a one-note strategy. Gunstat is a new program to Memphis that the Innovation Delivery Team is in the process of introducing, but they are also resurrecting old programs that have seen results in the past. One of these programs is Safeways, a data-driven strategy to curb violent crime in apartment complexes and adjacent areas (Suppression 2013). It was launched in 2007 and saw as much as a 40% reduction in some apartment complexes (Innovation Delivery Team, Lord 2013). But Safeways lost its funding and the crime crept back up. Memphis Gun Down is starting Safeways Phase 2, using the same data-driven strategies that saw results years ago. “Apartment complexes become clusters where there’s a lot of crime. But Safeways is a way that you can start getting at that crime by changing the behavior norms in that apartment complex and making it more of a community” says Doug McGowen (2013). The second phase of Safeways will also target violent crime “hot spots” associated with certain apartment complexes and bring law enforcement, community leaders, and apartment management together to reduce crime in these areas. To do this, a three-year donation totaling \$450,000 from the Plough Foundation and a \$150,000 dollars from Memphis Gun Down as seed funding will put the program back in place (Harris 2013).

Safeways currently has fourteen properties certified and running according to the Safeway apartment complex guidelines (Safeways Communities 2013). These guidelines are built around a zero-tolerance attitude toward troublemakers in apartment complexes (Suppression 2013). In every Safeways apartment complex, there is a strict No Trespassing law enforced. Safeways Phase 2 also uses Crime Prevention Through Environmental

Design to deter crime (Innovation Delivery Team, McGowen 2013). This is a multi-disciplinary approach to deter criminal behavior through changing the atmosphere and the behavioral norms in an area. Safeways has shown results in the past. It is also a program that serves the needs of community residents by specifically targeting the clusters in crime Memphis experiences in its apartment complexes. But as Safeways proved in the past, if the funding and work needed to be done to keep this program going goes away, the violent crime will return. It highlights Memphis's need for consistency, something that many community residents are skeptical they will see.

Tertiary Prevention not only focuses on individuals and crime "hot spots". It also targets group violent crime. This translates into suppression of gang activity. To address this issue, Memphis Gun Down is helping the Memphis Police Department in their recent launch of the Multi-Agency Gang Unit. This team of law enforcement agencies specifically targets gangs and gang members with the mission of eradicating gang activity (Suppression 2013). Like Gunstat targets repeat offenders, this is a team that's objective is to more harshly prosecute those affiliated with gangs. Memphis Police Department will do this by partnering with the Shelby County Sherriff's Office, the Shelby County District Attorney General's Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives to more thoroughly investigate gang crimes and federally prosecute the most violent gang members and leaders. It will also urge residents to report gang activity to local law enforcement (Suppression 2013). This will help mobilize the community to have zero-tolerance for violent gang crime. Tennessee is also making its penalties harsher for gang-related crimes. On June 26, 2013, Governor Bill Haslam signed a Gang-Enhanced Sentencing Bill that rewrote the definition of "criminal gang offense" from

a vague and broad definition to a specific list of offenses that will make it easier for prosecutors to seek a greater sentence (Haslam Signs Gang-Enhanced Sentencing Bill in Memphis 2013). But Doug McGowen acknowledges that it is not illegal to be in a gang, contrary to many people's perception (2013). The crack down on gang members might experience some of the same problems that could result from Gunstat, but it also has the logic and potential to eradicate so much of the violent crime in these communities.

Another part of the tertiary prevention strategy of Memphis Gun Down is advocating for legislation like Tennessee's newly updated gang law. The Innovation Delivery Team hopes to use Memphis Gun Down to transform policies, practices, and systems through organizational change and development. But it stresses that they only hope to do this on a local level. The team knows that they could debate the gun laws and policies of Tennessee for the three years of the grant, but this would get them nowhere. The team is sticking to the effect they can have on Memphis locally, at both a community level and a local policy level. But going too far up the chain is not what they're here for (Innovation Delivery Team 2013). Another aspect of tertiary prevention that the team has elected not to tackle is the reentry of criminals from the prison system back into society. They have considered looking at a juvenile reentry program and have also helped the Tennessee Department of Children Services coordinate wrap around services for young men at Wilder Youth Detention Center as they prepare to return to the Memphis Community, but they're focus remains less on reentry and more on those not yet incarcerated. (Accomplishments 2013). Memphis Gun Down is focused on helping the individuals in the community and removing the small percentage that they can't help through programing or intervention and getting those individuals out of the community.

Removing these individuals through the tertiary prevention strategy allows Memphis Gun Down to be better able do its work with those that are not yet chronic offenders. Tertiary prevention also shows results quicker than primary and secondary prevention, but just like these two, consistency and Memphis tailored approaches must be used to see any lasting success.

Moving Forward

Youth violence is real. Kids killing kids in Memphis, Tennessee, is real. Now it's time to get real about ending it. For many years, the community has tried to solve this problem on its own. And for many years, city initiatives and government programs have tried to use their resources to swoop in and fix the problem overnight. Law enforcement has jumped from strategy to strategy to improve its effectiveness, and money has come and gone for plans to "fix" Memphis. "Crime has been going up and down almost like a rollercoaster. And we've been constantly trying to find innovative ways and strategies to reduce crime" explains Lt. Currie (2013). What is missing from Memphis is communication. The resentment the community feels for city government and law enforcement prevents communication. The dejection law enforcement feels towards the community's crime and the lack of aid from the city prevents communication. And the frustration city justice officials feel toward the high crime rate and the research-based strategies that fail or lose funding also prevent communication.

Memphis is a city where a vital social contract is broken. Thomas Hobbes, a seventeenth-century philosopher, is famous for his early and elaborate development of social contract theory (Plato.stanford.edu 2002). Hobbes first argues that the state of

human nature is motivated by self-interest (lep.utm.edu 2004). His theory of Psychological Egoism claims that human motivation is deeply dependent on egocentricity (lep.utm.edu 2011). In Memphis, Psychological Egoism exists in every sphere involved in youth violence. The community's resentment towards the city's government causes many to believe that community residents are the only people motivated enough to help their youth. Residents question the motivations of the Innovation Delivery Team and other city officials because they do not believe they are invested in helping the community. "How invested am I in you if I know you are my next meal ticket?" Dorothy Cox questions. She, like many other community residents, believes that the Innovation Delivery Team "is just going by what they have read in a book," and not using the community to mold their approach to Memphis (2013).

Law enforcement is also frustrated with city government because they have not been given the funding and resources that are needed to deal with Memphis' high crime rate. In April 2013, multiple billboards were placed around the city by the Memphis Police Association that read "Danger: enter at your own risk, this city does not support public safety." Though not all officers felt the billboards were the appropriate way to handle the situation, the message from the police department to the city is still clear (Waters 2013). The Memphis Police Department's officers know youth crime in Memphis very well and see things that need to be done to lower it. This causes many officers in the department to feel like they are alone in trying to lower youth violence.

But like the community and Memphis Police Department, city justice officials are just as frustrated with the crime rate as law enforcement and the communities. "It is very difficult to try to fix an entire city at one time" explains Doug McGowen (2013). The team is

putting forth the resources it has to help law enforcement and communities. But just like law enforcement and the community, the team has experience that causes members to believe they know best in their methods. Each sphere believes that they hold the key to reducing youth handgun violence, but it is this belief that destroys this key entirely. The key to reducing youth handgun violence in Memphis is communication. While communication has played a big role in the creation of Memphis Gun Down, it still has not been emphasized enough to treat a major underlying problem of violence in Memphis. Many of Memphis Gun Down programs have been taken from what has worked in other cities to reduce youth violence. But Memphis is not Boston or Chicago. Memphis is not Los Angeles or Baltimore. Memphis shares a problem with these cities, but it has unique characteristics that have caused and now perpetuate youth violence. Memphis struggles with communication, and until a system is created where communication is at its center and programs stem out of it, it will be very difficult to be consistent and create sustainable results.

While Thomas Hobbes would argue that this lack of communication is, in part, a result of the innate self-interest of human nature, he also argues that humans are reasonable. They have in them the rational capacity to pursue their desires as efficiently and maximally as possible. And because of this, humans have the ability to create a social contract to work together toward a common goal. A social contract allows for humans to give up certain rights to work together to pursue peace (Iep.utm.edu 2004). In order for Memphis to pursue peace, the social contract between city government officials, law enforcement, and the community must be rebuilt around communication. And for Memphis Gun Down to reduce youth handgun violence, communication must become the

center through which it works. “We are all one, having different experiences. But we judge each other based on the experiences we are having, so we don’t ever come together” (Cox 2013). To effectively reduce youth handgun violence, Memphis will have to come together and stay together. It is imperative for Memphis to realize that communication is the tool to rebuild Memphis, one child, one gun, and one community at a time.

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