

# Improving Civil Gang Injunctions

## How Implementation Can Affect Gang Dynamics, Crime, and Violence

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Civil gang injunctions (CGIs) are an increasingly popular street gang control technique. Although admired by criminal justice officials, we know relatively little about how differing implementation approaches might affect their efficacy. In this study, we interviewed youth in contrasting neighborhoods—some under a CGI and others not—to observe the ways gang injunctions may strengthen or weaken the gang as a group. We conclude that improved knowledge of social psychological processes will help policy makers more effectively craft gang injunctions to achieve sustained neighborhood change.

Street gangs play a major role in the socialization of youth, the social and organizational context of neighborhoods, and the level of crime and fear of crime in many communities. In 2008, close to 774,000 gang members belonging to 27,900 gangs were reported

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across the United States.<sup>1</sup> Howell, Egley, Tita, and Griffiths (2011) reported that gang activity has remained concentrated and prevalent and that “gang violence rates have continued at exceptional levels over the past decade *despite* the remarkable overall crime drop” (p. 13). Gang youth account for most serious and violent crimes committed by adolescents. Their peak level of offending occurs when they are active gang members, with less criminal involvement before joining and after (Krohn and Thornberry, 2008; Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith, and Tobin, 2003). Certainly, interventions are needed to weaken the hold gangs have on our youth.

Various suppression and intervention approaches have been attempted (see Klein, 1995a; Klein and Maxson, 2006; Wong, Gravel, Bouchard, Morselli, and Descormiers, 2011, for reviews). In 1992, an anti-loitering law, similar to a CGI, was enacted in Chicago but was found unconstitutional (Strosnider, 2002). In contrast, the CGI approach was upheld by the California Supreme Court in 1997. Over the last decade, many jurisdictions in California and other regions of the United States have implemented CGIs (Maxson, Hennigan, and Sloane, 2003). However, community critics and criminal justice professionals have expressed concerns about whether its benefits can be sustained, especially given the relatively high cost (Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury, 2004) and the potential negative unintended consequences for gang-affiliated and nongang youth (Crawford, 2009; Herd, 1998). A recent Orange County court decision reinforced these concerns when it limited ways youth can be included in a CGI (Irving, 2011), suggesting that improving CGI implementation is an important public policy objective.

### **Responding to Gang Crime with Civil Gang Injunctions**

Law enforcement has estimated that Los Angeles County is home to between 1,000 and 1,300 gangs with more than 95,000 members (Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury, 2004). Currently, 44 CGIs are active in Los Angeles involving 72 gangs.<sup>2</sup> CGIs target territorial gangs, not gangs primarily organized around drug sales or nonterritorial gangs centered on shared common beliefs, such as skinheads (see Klein and Maxson, 2006, for a discussion of gang types). Although territorial gangs may also participate in drug sales, collection of “taxes,” or other illegal “businesses,” the identity of common street gangs is tied to their spatial location, and CGIs are designed to take advantage of this attribute. City and county prosecutors develop a CGI in collaboration with local police departments by gathering evidence that members of a street gang present a public nuisance. (See Genelin, 1998; Maxson et al., 2003; Shiner, 2009, for details of the process.)

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1. Information is based on the 2008 National Youth Gang Center's yearly survey of law enforcement jurisdictions ([ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/229249.pdf](http://ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/229249.pdf)). Additional findings from these surveys can be accessed at [nationalgangcenter.gov](http://nationalgangcenter.gov).

2. Data data compiled in July 2011 are obtained from [atty.lacity.org/our\\_office/criminaldivision/ganginjunctions/index.htm](http://atty.lacity.org/our_office/criminaldivision/ganginjunctions/index.htm).

The Los Angeles City Attorney's office injunction strategy is focused on the abatement of nuisances caused by gang members in specific neighborhoods. Their 2009 report explains the theory behind gang injunctions in this way (Los Angeles City Attorney's Office, 2009: 1, emphasis in the original):

Gang injunctions are a product of a simple but previously overlooked idea: that a gang can be sued in civil court just like any other entity. The power of gang injunctions is that these civil lawsuits can result in court orders which prohibit members of the gang from engaging in activities that have been shown to contribute to the harm gangs cause, such as associating with other gang members in public, trespassing on private property, and marking their territory with graffiti. These injunctions are somewhat unique in that they are one of the few preventative law tools available to law enforcement. The activities of the members of a gang can be restricted in an effort to *prevent* them from engaging in criminal activities.

In practice, this approach involves the police and attorneys in the process of arresting and prosecuting individuals identified as gang members for disobeying any of the clauses included in the injunction within a defined "safety zone." Law enforcement identifies the gang and specific gang members, the boundaries of a geographic "safety zone," and a list of specific behaviors to be prohibited in the zone. Banned behaviors vary from illegal activities such as trespassing, vandalism, and drug selling to otherwise legal activities like wearing gang colors and carrying cans of spray paint. Nighttime curfews are often imposed. Legal critics have argued against many components but especially the most commonly applied sanction—the prohibition against any two named gang members associating with one another publicly in the safety zone called the "no association" clause (see Crawford, 2009; Stewart, 1998; Walston, 1999).

Implementation of each CGI element can differ. One injunction might target an entire gang and another might identify presumed hardcore insiders within the gang. One might proscribe a large safety zone, whereas another might sharply define the safety zone. Police units might or might not aggressively enforce the various banned behaviors (T. Austin, personal communication, September 3, 2010). Finally, allied social service activities, enhanced criminal justice actions, and other ancillary programs might accompany some, but not all, CGIs. The result is that implementation variations may play a large role in the overall success of the intervention.

Community and legal critics have argued that the CGIs create hardships, establish overly broad discretion in bringing youth under the order, expand enforcement beyond active gang members, and contain no or very limited provisions for removing oneself from the injunction when leaving gang life (see Crawford, 2009). In 2011, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Orange County successfully sued the County District Attorney for at first agreeing to remove 60 supposed gang members from a CGI, and then after the

permanent injunction was approved adding some of them back administratively without them appearing in court (Irving, 2011). The City Attorney's office in Los Angeles recently created procedures to implement exit provisions for injunctions filed in the last 2 years and is looking for other ways to address these concerns (Austin, 2010). In practice, however, apparently very few individuals have successfully removed themselves from a CGI.

### **Mixed Results Suggest Promise, But How and Why?**

Although law enforcement officials believe that CGIs are an effective gang intervention tool, previous studies of the impact of gang injunctions suggest a more guarded conclusion (ACLU, 1997; Grogger, 2002; Goulka et al., 2009; Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury, 2004; Maxson and Allen, 1997; Maxson, Hennigan, and Sloane, 2005). The ACLU (1997) conducted one of the first statistical analyses of a gang injunction. They interpreted their comparison of crime indicators in and around a gang injunction in Los Angeles as showing an increase in violent crime in the injunction safety zone over the first year of the injunction.

However, Grogger (2002), whose study is the strongest methodologically and in terms of a broad representation of multiple injunctions, concluded that serious violent crime decreased during the year after the injunctions by 5% to 10% and found no evidence that injunctions displaced crime to adjoining areas, a finding with which the Los Angeles County Grand Jury study concurred (Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury, 2004). Conversely, Goulka et al. (2009) found no evidence of a reduction in the level of overall "crime calls" for all nontraffic offenses in an Orange County California CGI. They found an increase in the single category of violent crimes in the injunction safety zone relative to a matched control area. However, their findings were ambiguous. The authors concluded that "These effects may reflect changes in the willingness to report crime to the police, which make it difficult to quantify actual changes in criminal behavior due to the injunction" (Goulka et al., 2009: xii).

Instead of evaluating changing crime statistics, Maxson, Hennigan, Sloane, and Kolnick (2004; Maxson et al., 2005) compared the responses of neighborhood residents before and after a San Bernardino, California injunction was implemented. Six months after implementation, residents in the primary injunction area reported more frequent police patrols, fewer gang members hanging around, as well as less gang intimidation, fear of gang members, and fear of crime in general than residents living in a matched comparison area less than a mile north. The persistence of these community perceptions over an extended period of time is an open question.

Overall, these mixed findings suggest that gang injunctions may be modestly effective in reducing crime and fear 6 months or a year after, but not uniformly so. The studies suggest variations in the impact of injunctions. Identification of variables that can help us understand and predict such variations would be a step forward. And we have virtually no information on how or why an injunction may influence gang members' behaviors in ways that can increase or decrease crime and victimization.

## **Influence on the Behavior of Gang Members**

Given the varying conditions and results, how could implementation factors influence positive or negative changes among gang-involved youth in the affected areas? We pose three questions to explore the ways a CGI may influence gang involved youth.

First, do gang members perceive that CGIs increase the likelihood that they will be caught and punished because of a higher level of surveillance, stiffer sanctions, and other activities that result in arrest and prosecution? These considerations reflect a rational choice model of criminal behavior where specific and perceptual deterrence are thought to be important inhibitors of criminal actions (Zimring and Hawkins, 1972). Both the experience of being caught and arrested for a crime as well as an increase in one's perceptions of the likelihood of getting caught and punished are expected to reduce the probability of committing delinquent and criminal acts in the future.

Studies have confirmed youth also weigh other considerations as they contemplate criminal actions. Paternoster (1989) proposed that affective ties, moral beliefs, opportunities for delinquency, and informal sanctions (peer and parental) are also weighed along with perceived deterrence in one's calculation of whether to commit a crime. Several studies have found empirical support for this expanded model but mostly among low-risk individuals (see Pratt, Cullen, Blevins, Daigle, and Madensen, 2006, for a meta-analytic review).

Research findings have not always supported deterrence effects at the high-risk end of the continuum (see Foglia, 1997), whereas very few studies have examined the role of deterrence factors with gang-involved youth. Watkins, Huebner, and Decker (2008) suggested the decision to carry and fire a gun was associated with perceived risk of arrest for young adults but was rarely mentioned as an important factor by gang-involved youth. Similarly, Maxson, Matsuda, and Hennigan (2011) found only weak evidence for deterrence effects among gang-involved youth. Recently, Loughran, Piquero, Fagan, and Mulvey (2012) suggested that shifts in the calculus of factors that are weighed by high-risk youth are consistent with less avoidance of crime, and they found some evidence to support their view. This perspective and other perspectives on deterrence center on a rational process of weighing costs and benefits (including personal and social concerns) from an *individual point of view*.

Stafford and Warr (1993) discussed alternative ways that social influences may affect involvement in crime including normative pressures to violate the law. These authors considered that delinquency may be a group phenomenon or a collective experience, and that the "presence of companions during delinquent episodes may produce a heightened sense of anonymity" (p. 132). Hennigan and Spanovic (2012) elaborated on the sense of anonymity that may accompany behavior in the context of groups, especially street gangs. A common theme in gang research is a focus on group rather than on individual behavior, not in terms of acting in concert, but in terms of the motivation to act in accordance with group norms rather than with one's own self-interest. Grogger (2005) also observed that deterrence seems an unlikely explanation for reductions in crime after CGIs.

Nonetheless, gang injunctions are designed to increase arrests and the threat of arrest for gang members in the defined safety zones with the goal of deterring gang criminal activities. Gang injunctions have been associated with a higher visibility of law enforcement and with increased surveillance of the targeted gang (Maxson et al., 2005). Injunction orders often include provisions that make it easier for officers to arrest gang members (e.g., stipulations that make it possible to arrest youth in the presence of, rather than in possession of, guns or drug paraphernalia and simply for associating with another gang member in public). The expected impact of gang injunctions is, in part, based on the belief that the increased risk of arrest will act as a deterrent for gang-involved youth. Perceptions of the likelihood of getting caught and punished are expected to be higher for gang members in areas with a gang injunction, and this perception of higher risk could reduce levels of criminal offending.

The second question is whether gang injunctions reduce gang cohesion by disrupting opportunities to gather together openly in the safety zone (through the no association and curfew clauses). Researchers have found that gang cohesion is strongly correlated with members' involvement in violent activities and that disrupting cohesion could reduce crime. Klein and Crawford (1967) observed that internal sources of cohesion such as common goals, role differentiation, membership mobility, and affective bonds have "far less impact among gangs than among most groups" (p. 65). Consequently, Klein (1971; Klein and Crawford, 1967) avoided using measures of cohesion based on affective bonds or perceived similarity in favor of measures based on the frequency that gang members get together with each other. These researchers and others (e.g., Decker, 1996; Short and Strodtbeck, 1965) found that gang cohesion is generally weaker than cohesion in other social groups.

Gang injunctions explicitly prohibit gang members from associating in public within the safety zone, which could reduce levels of gang cohesion directly. Studies have confirmed that lower gang cohesion is associated with less criminal activity and higher cohesion with more (Decker, 1996; Jansyn, 1966; Klein and Crawford, 1967; Klein and Maxson, 2006; Short and Strodtbeck, 1965). If a CGI disrupts and weakens gang cohesion, then this change bodes well for the impact of gang injunctions.

However, we argue that the way a gang injunction is implemented could affect whether it will reduce gang cohesion. As gang researchers have observed, street gangs thrive on intergroup conflict *as a principal source of group cohesion* (Decker, 1996; Decker and Van Winkle, 1996; Klein and Crawford, 1967; Short and Strodtbeck, 1965). In the face of perceived conflict, gang members stick together and react as a group. Depending on how it is implemented, a CGI could just as easily increase rather than decrease gang cohesion by inadvertently triggering reactions at the group level that stimulate a sense of intergroup rivalry (i.e., cops vs. the gang). A strong potential exists for provoking an "us versus them" mentality—which has been shown to be a strong accelerant for gang violence (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996; Klein, 1995b).

Third, do gang injunctions weaken or strengthen an individual's identification with the gang? If injunctions reduce the strength of individuals' identification with their gang, then

fewer youth will advance from fringe to core membership, more youth will pull back from core involvement to fringe, fewer youth will join, and more will leave the targeted gang. Just how strongly a youth identifies with a street gang has an impact on how much he participates in the behaviors that are normative for the gang (see Hennigan and Spanovic, 2012; Tajfel, 1978; Vigil, 1988). Ample evidence shows that a primary norm of traditional American street gangs is participation in antisocial, illegal, and often violent activities (Decker, 1996; Decker and Van Winkle, 1996; Esbensen, Winfree, He, and Taylor, 2001; Fleisher, 1998; Hill, Howell, Hawkins, and Battin-Pearson, 1999; Klein and Maxson, 2006; Thornberry et al., 2003). Gang membership is relatively unstable, evidenced by the finding from the “causes and correlates” longitudinal studies that most youth who join a street gang leave the gang within a year or two. These studies have also documented a rise and fall in delinquent and criminal activities associated with joining and leaving a street gang (see Esbensen and Huizinga, 1993; Esbensen, Huizinga, and Weiher, 1993; Gatti, Tremblay, Vitaro, and McDuff, 2005; Gordon, Lahey, Kawai, Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber, and Farrington, 2004; Klein and Crawford, 1967; Krohn and Thornberry, 2008; Thornberry et al., 2003). This cycle is one demonstration of the importance of social identity. As Vigil (2002) observed, a transition from self-esteem to “group esteem” maintains the focus on the collective identity needed to get the “work” of the gang done—and that “work” is slanted toward violent and criminal activities (Melde and Esbensen, 2012).

The possibility that a gang injunction could “backfire” is related to basic group dynamics explained by social identity and self-categorization theories (see Brewer, 1991; Hogg, 1992, 2001; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1979, 1986; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, and Wetherell, 1987). Social psychologists have documented that the stronger a person identifies with a group, the stronger his or her adherence is to the group’s norms. Strong group identification leads an individual to think and act as an interchangeable member of that group, a process called *depersonalization*. A weaker identification allows more reflection on individual concerns, a process called *individuation*. Thus, is a gang injunction implemented in ways that increase individuation (by focusing on an individual’s personal options for change) or in ways that increase depersonalization (by focusing on the gang as a group)? One approach could lead to weakening group normative behavior (through a focus on self), whereas another approach could strengthen antisocial group normative behavior (see Hennigan and Spanovic, 2012).

Consider the message conveyed to gang members by the notice they receive when an injunction has been filed in court against their gang. In one scenario, the message conveyed is that “your” gang is under increased scrutiny (“all of us” police are against “all of you” gang members), under new rules that make it easier for police to arrest gang members with no defined end and no way to remove yourself from the injunction order (“all of you” gang members are in this together for the long term). This message could strengthen gang social identity and bring gang members closer together (see Caldwell, 2010), invoking a group response from *depersonalized* gang members focused on the “work” of the gang. Injunctions

and enforcement that apply heightened strengthened sanctions to all members of the gang now and into the future may result in short-term success but in long-term failure because the members' identification with the gang is fueled rather than defused.

Alternatively, consider a scenario where an injunction explicitly singles out the most active gang members by name, combined with realistic ways for an individual to desist from gang activities (via access to gang-focused services) and remove himself from the injunction order. An injunction approach that seeks to *individuate* gang members and invoke individual responses may over time weaken the group gang identity. Whereas the impact of this contrast may be exaggerated, social identity theory suggests that the way a gang injunction is framed and implemented can have important implications for its success or failure.

We hypothesize that differences in strength of identification with the gang will mediate the impact an injunction has on criminal activities and ultimately on levels of gang membership. Implementation that focuses on the gang as a group strengthens gang identification and group-level responses that override individual concerns, and promotes depersonalization and motivation to continue participation in criminal and violent ways. Conversely, injunctions that are paired with realistic diversion opportunities that direct youth to services and concentrate on progress toward developing individual assets, such as education, employment, counseling, removal of tattoos, and so on, have a better chance of weakening the hold that a street gang has on neighborhood youth (through individuation).

## Methods

To identify the study areas, we interviewed police managers in the central administration, deputy city attorneys, and local police officers with gang expertise to understand how various administrative divisions implement and administer gang injunctions. We also participated in ride-alongs with officers to hone in on microneighborhoods in these divisions. We learned about the types of social services available in different neighborhoods. These rides also helped us understand the specific geographic terrains and locations of gang cliques.

The region of Los Angeles we studied is a highly urbanized, older section situated northeast and east of downtown Los Angeles. The region is a traditional industrial area east of the Los Angeles River with a long-standing Latino population. Long ignored by politicians, the area has suffered from large infrastructure projects, especially the construction of four freeways. However, the destruction of homes, the obstructions caused by the freeways, and the failure of policy makers to revitalize the area economically seems to have only strengthened the area's identity. Street gangs have been a part of these communities as far back as the 1940s.

This research was conducted in four locations called south 1, south 2, north, and control. The community characteristics, demographics, and other factors of the four areas were similar. A new CGI was implemented in each area (except the control) approximately 6 months prior to the beginning of data collection, a process that spanned 17 months. Two injunctions, south 1 and south 2, were implemented within the same police division,



TABLE 1

Characteristics of Gang Injunction Safety Zones and Study Areas<sup>a</sup>

Safety Zones			South	North	Control	City of Los
	South 1	South 2	(Average)			Angeles
Area Characteristics						
Date injunction granted	Oct. 2006	Jan. 2007	Oct. to Jan. 2007	Feb. 2007	None	(na)
Size (sq. mi.)	1.71	2.10	1.91	4.64		498.29
Population	18,757	36,601	27,679	64,899		3,694,820
Households (HH)	5,459	9,189	7,324	23,763		1,275,412
Study Areas						
Area Characteristics						
Size (sq. mi.)	0.26	0.55	0.41	0.50	0.45	498.29
Population	6,186	11,057	8,622	11,568	12,730	3,694,820
Households	2,861	2,678	2,770	4,629	3,150	1,275,412
Percentage males age 15–21 in total population <sup>b</sup>	5.8%	5.9%	5.9%	3.8%	5.9%	5.1%
Concentrated Disadvantage Indicators <sup>c</sup>						
Percentage HH receiving welfare	15%	14%	14%	13%	17%	7%
Percentage HH below poverty level	32%	26%	29%	23%	38%	19%
Percentage population unemployed	5.8%	6.2%	6%	5.8%	6.4%	5.6%
Percentage female-headed households	16%	15%	16%	17%	17%	10%
Percentage population Latino <sup>d</sup>	68%	97%	82%	82%	93%	47%
Percentage population younger than age 18	33%	34%	34%	34%	35%	27%

Notes. HH = household; na = not applicable; sq. mi. = square miles.

<sup>a</sup>Census block group data, 2000.

<sup>b</sup>Youth interviewed for this study were 14–21 years of age. Census population data do not break out age 14 separately from younger children.

<sup>c</sup>Data obtained from Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls (1997) and Sampson, Sharkey, and Raudenbush (2008).

<sup>d</sup>We have substituted “percentage Latino” for Sampson’s “percentage African American” because of the minority population demographic differences between Los Angeles and Chicago.

whereas the third, north, was located in a separate division. The two divisions handled implementation differently, with the ones in the south favoring individuation, with incentives focusing on personal development and easy access to social services. Implementation in the north focused primarily on suppression of gang crime through arrests leading to incarceration.

As Table 1 shows, the CGIs differ substantially by the size of safety zone, which affects how many households are included. Small microneighborhoods were defined within each CGI safety zone so that we could concentrate our interviewers and achieve a high response rate in the target areas. The microzones focused on areas where troublesome gang cliques were located.

The control study area is not under a CGI, so it does not have a safety zone (although it was mentioned as a possible future target). In an attempt to mirror the approach used in the other study areas, we chose to focus on microneighborhoods within the control area where local gang cliques were active.

## Research Design

A community-based sample of males, skewed toward youth that spend time out on the streets, was systematically recruited for interviews. Care was taken to frame similar samples and balance interviewers' time across the areas to attain a comparative sample of youth encountered via door-to-door solicitation and approaching youth on the street. Interviewers were blind to the study hypotheses.

The research design incorporated two levels of control. The first one compared responses from youth in areas with an active gang injunction to youth living in similar areas without one. Second, responses from youth interviewed in each area that were not involved in a gang were used to control for area-specific influences originating from each neighborhood's unique characteristics and history. This research approach was designed to increase the statistical power for the hypotheses tested by comparing across areas while controlling for extraneous area influences.

### *Respondent Recruitment*

Field researchers visited every household in the microneighborhoods, speaking with the residents or leaving a flyer, recording households where males between the ages of 14 and 21 years lived and screening interested youth on the study eligibility criteria. Field researchers also engaged youth walking or hanging out in the neighborhood who seemed to be in the appropriate age range. At first, interviewers met considerable resistance; over time, neighborhood residents reacted more positively as they better understood the interviewers' purpose. The intent was to oversample street-oriented youth in the study areas.

A brief screening questionnaire was administered to determine whether the youth met the eligibility criteria, including male, 14–21 years old, living or hanging out in the study area regularly for 2 years or more, and indicating some awareness of a gang or other social group in his area. Interviews were conducted only after informed consent was administered according to Institutional Review Board guidelines to eligible youth and to the parent of any youth younger than 18 years of age. Respondents were paid \$20 for the interview. Although the median interview time was 80 minutes, they varied in length from 50 to 140 minutes. Efforts to complete the interviews continued daily over two 5-month periods during the spring and summers of 2007 and 2008. A total of 6 male and 14 female interviewers, of whom 16 were Latino, were employed over these two summers. Seventeen interviewers grew up or currently lived or worked in similar areas. No significant main effects or interactions were associated with interviewer ethnicity or gender on the levels of criminal or violent behavior self-reported by the respondents.

### *Description of the Sample*

Interviewers screened 673 youth, 15% ( $n = 101$ ) of whom were not eligible for the study because they did not meet the eligibility requirements. An additional 4.3% ( $n = 29$  cases) were not assigned to an interviewer because they were screened too late in the process. A total

of 543 cases were assigned to interviewers. Interviewers completed 416 (77%) interviews. Among the cases not completed, 91 (16.8%) were refusals; 9 cases (1.7%) were dropped because only one interview per household was allowed; 5 cases (0.9%) were incomplete because the youth left the area; 2 cases (0.4%) were incomplete because they required languages we did not have the resources to provide; 9 cases (1.7%) were found ineligible after being assigned to an interviewer because of misrepresentation of age or residence; and 11 cases (2.0%) were dropped because of issues that arose during the interview including inadequate comprehension, uncooperative behavior during the interview, or risky or unusual circumstances. By study area, 77% of the cases were completed in south, 73% in north, and 79% in control. These completion rates do not vary across the study conditions ( $X^2 = 1.54$ , degrees of freedom [ $df$ ] = 2,  $n = 543$ ,  $p = .462$ ).

### *Gang Involvement*

Given its importance, we used two methods to identify gang affiliation. First, each respondent was asked to name the groups they had some involvement with, such as competitive teams, organized clubs, street gangs, tagger and skater groups, party posses, and crews. Respondents could use a generic label for their group such as my “homies” or “friends” so long as the interviewer understood the kind of group. If they mentioned multiple groups of the same type, then the interviewer asked the respondent to choose the one that was “most important to you and to who you are.”

Respondents next answered a series of questions about each group. They indicated their level of involvement by placing themselves on a target scale adapted from Esbensen’s work (see Esbensen and Osgood, 1999; Esbensen et al., 2001). For this study the rings of the target were labeled a leader, very active, active, rarely active, in the group but no longer active, or out of the group. Youth who indicated any level of involvement in a street gang on this measure were coded as gang involved.

Second, we included a series of questions developed by the Eurogang Network that measures gang involvement indirectly, through group attributes (see Eurogang Manual, pp. 19–20 at [umsl.edu/~ccj/eurogang/EurogangManual.pdf](http://umsl.edu/~ccj/eurogang/EurogangManual.pdf); also see Decker and Weerman, 2005; Esbensen et al., 2001; Klein and Maxson, 2006: 3–4; Matsuda, Esbensen, and Carson, 2012). Our self-report method and the Eurogang Network definition were not in agreement for 105 of the 416 cases (25%). An interviewer and a study administrator reviewed the inconsistent cases to determine gang involvement. The independent reviewers agreed on their determination of gang status for 86% of these cases and disagreed on 14% (15 cases). The disagreements were resolved through discussion. The number of cases so examined did not vary by study condition ( $X^2 = 2.392$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $n = 416$ ,  $p = .302$ ).

In all, 112 respondents were coded as gang-involved youth and 304 respondents were classified as nongang. The nongang category included street-oriented groups, such as a variety of crews and posses, as well as informal groups of friends. The percentage of youth

involved in a street gang did not vary by study area ( $X^2 = 0.326$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $n = 416$ ,  $p = .850$ ). Overall, 27% of the sample indicated some recent association with a gang and 73% were associated with other kinds of peer groups.

### *Demographics, Custody, and Local Violence by Area*

The average age of the respondents was 17.3 years, 97% were Latino, and 87% were born in the United States as shown in Table 2. No area differences were found on any indicators except that more gang-involved youth in the control area had witnessed violence in their neighborhood than gang-involved youth in the injunction areas ( $X^2 = 5.590$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .018$ ). One possible interpretation of this difference is that youth in areas with gang injunctions were less likely to witness overt public violence because of the injunctions' no association clauses, which may have reduced the violence or moved it to less public contexts. As expected, the gang-involved respondents in each area indicated higher levels on each indicator than the nongang respondents (all  $X^2$  analyses showed differences beyond  $p = .020$ ); gang-involved youth were at least five times more likely to have spent a night in custody than nongang respondents, were almost universally involved in violent crime (92%), and had frequently been a victim of violence in their neighborhood (84%).

### *Differences in Level of Service Use*

Prior to the interviews, researchers developed a list of services near each study area for "help finding employment, job training, education, health issues, or personal issues" especially those that were gang friendly or included outreach to gang-involved youth as part of their mission.<sup>3</sup> The areas had different levels of service available, and law enforcement agencies did not incorporate services equally in their CGI implementation. Awareness of services was nearly unanimous among respondents. In the south, only 4% of the gang-involved youth and 7% of the nongang youth were unaware of at least one local service program. In the north and the control areas, no gang-involved youth were unaware, and only 3% to 4% of the nongang youth were unaware.

Use of services by gang-involved youth did vary across study areas. The percentage of youth interviewed who indicated using a service on at least one occasion was higher among the gang-involved than among the nongang youth in both the south and control areas. In the south, 70% of gang-involved and 47% of nongang youth reported using a service

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3. A research assistant began this process by visiting a known program in each area. Providers there were asked about inclusion of gang-involved youth and which other services in the area were available to these youth. The process snowballed to other programs. Also, blanks were provided at the end of each area list for youth to write in any service programs they were aware of that were missing. Sixteen youth (6 from the south, 4 from the north, and 6 from the control) listed additional services that were vocational, educational, or recreational. As a reliability check, some service programs that did not exist in the study areas were included in the list. In only five instances (1%), a youth stated he had used one of these services, suggesting that the responses were fairly reliable.

T A B L E 2

Demographic Characteristics of the Youth Interviewed

	South Area Injunctions			North Area Injunctions			Control Area			Gang vs. Nongang	Area Difference
	Mean Nongang n = 128	Mean Gang n = 46		Mean Nongang n = 68	Mean Gang n = 28		Mean Nongang n = 108	Mean Gang n = 38			
Age	17.01	18.02	Mean	17.10	17.11		17.51	17.40	ns	ns	
Hispanic ethnicity	% yes 98.0%	100.0%	% yes	94.0%	93.0%		96.0%	100.0%	ns	ns	
Born in United States	% yes 85.0%	78.0%	% yes	88.2%	92.9%		90.7%	89.7%	ns	ns	
Ever in custody overnight	% yes 4.0%	35.0%	% yes	7.0%	43.0%		9.0%	45.0%	$\chi^2$ comparing gang to nongang within area range from 30.34 to 17.16, $p < .001$	ns	
Ever commit a violent crime	% yes 61.0%	91.0%	% yes	59.0%	93.0%		56.0%	92.0%	$\chi^2$ comparing gang to nongang within area range from 15.84 to 10.69, $p < .001$	ns	
Ever a victim of violence	% yes 62.0%	83.0%	% yes	50.0%	89.0%		59.0%	84.0%	$\chi^2$ comparing gang to nongang within area range from 12.92 to 6.27, $p = .016$	ns	
Ever witness local violence	% yes 69.0%	80.0%	% yes	66.0%	71.0%		67.0%	95.0%	Differs only in control, $\chi^2 = 11.504$ , $df = 1$ , $p = .001$	$\chi^2 = 6.80$ , $df = 2$ , $p = .033$	

( $X^2 = 6.990$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .008$ ). Similarly, in the control area, 79% of gang-involved and 56% of nongang youth reported using a service ( $X^2 = 6.040$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .014$ ). Only in the north did gang and nongang respondents show no difference in the use of services (54% of the gang-involved and 50% of the nongang respondents).

We are aware of two possible reasons for this difference in accessing services. First, we selected the south and control locations as study areas in part because of their close proximity to highly respected gang-focused services. In contrast, the service opportunities in the north were less gang focused. Second, based on our conversations with local police and city attorney contacts, the areas including the south and control were part of a criminal justice program that actively encouraged youth arrested for gang-related issues to seek services.

### *Deterrence Measures*

Youth were asked how many times would “the police find out and you would get in trouble” if they committed various crimes on ten different occasions in their neighborhood. Youth were asked about shoplifting, driving while drunk or high, tagging or writing graffiti, stealing a car, breaking into a building to steal something, trespassing on private property, hitting someone in a fight, seriously beating someone up, intimidating or challenging someone that might tell authorities about something illegal that you or a friend did, and selling drugs in your neighborhood. Whereas the level of expected consequences varied by crime, youth who estimated a higher likelihood on one type of crime tended to do the same for other crimes (Pearson  $r$ 's were all statistically significant ranging from 0.22 to 0.60). As a result, we formed a general scale of expected consequences across the 11 crimes ( $\alpha = 0.86$ ) and for a subset of three violent activities ( $\alpha = 0.72$ ).

### *Measures of Cohesion and Street Cohesion*

Following the lead of past gang researchers (Klein, 1971; Klein and Crawford, 1967), cohesion was worded as follows: “In some groups, the members meet or get together frequently, but in other groups, the members rarely meet or get together at all. Recently, how often do you meet or get together with members of your group?”<sup>4</sup> To measure street cohesion, respondents were asked: “When you are with members of <group> how often are you outside on the streets, in malls, in parks or in cars?” We are reminded by Decker, Bynum, and Weisel (1998) that “meeting” can imply something more organized than many gangs have. We attempted to dilute this impression by including the clarification “get together.”

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4. See Hennigan and Spanovic (2012) for a discussion of various conceptual definitions of cohesion that capture a person's relationship to his group in terms of agency (being together or acting together as a group) or essence (being similar in terms of looks or actions or racial-, ethnic-, or gender-related categories). Street gang cohesion has been primarily conceptualized in terms of agency rather than of essence, based in part on Malcolm Klein's early work (with Crawford) in 1967 and in 1971.

*Measures of Strength of Social Identity*

Four items from the “identity” subscale of the collective self-esteem scale developed by Luhtanen and Crocker (1992; see also Leach et al., 2008) were adapted for use in this population. The items included were as follows: Overall (group) has very little to do with how I feel about myself; (group) is an important reflection of who I am; (group) is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am; and in general, belonging to (group) is an important part of my self-image. These four items were highly correlated ( $\alpha = 0.79$ ) and were combined to form a scale.<sup>5</sup>

*Measures of Criminal and Violent Activities*

Each respondent’s involvement in criminal activities and violence over the prior 6 months were measured with the frequently used self-report protocol originally developed for the National Youth Study (Huizinga and Elliott, 1986) and subsequently revised and used in the causes and correlates studies (see Esbensen and Huizinga, 1993; Lahey, Gordan, Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber, and Farrington, 1999; Loeber and Farrington, 1998; Thornberry et al., 2003). Here, the level of involvement in criminal activities was defined using the same list of activities, with a few exceptions, employed by Thornberry et al. (2003, see Appendix A of that book). Our index of 31 items includes two rather than four items for theft; sexual assault and prostitution were omitted; and questions about tagging, intimidation, and extortion were added. The subset of six violent activities was the same except that sexual assault was omitted and witness intimidation was added. When scored, two variety indexes were created: An index of criminal activities counted how many of the listed activities the youth admitted doing over the prior 6 months, and a violence index was created by counting how many violent activities the youth admitted doing over the prior 6 months. See Thornberry and Krohn (2000) and Sweeten (2012) for discussions of the validity of this measurement approach. The overall median variety score among the nongang respondents was 4.1 for general delinquency and 0.9 for violent delinquency. The medians for gang-involved respondents was more than double, 9.3 for general delinquency and 1.9 for violent. The scores were logged to improve the distribution of these variables in analyses, but the unlogged scores are given in Table 4 below.

*Self-Report Measures and Defensive Responding*

Many researchers in this area have agreed that self-reports are a valid and useful method of assessing criminal activities (Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis, 1981; Huizinga and Elliott, 1986; Sweeten, 2012; Thornberry and Krohn, 2000) so long as potential sources of bias are unrelated to the study conditions. We examined possible differential bias in self-reporting that might confound our determination of gang status and other measures by including a

5. Early on, the interviewers noticed difficulties with the reversed items. They were instructed to be sure that the respondents noticed and understood the directional variations.

short version of the Marlowe–Crowne scale (Strahan and Gerbasi, 1972) that is designed to reveal defensiveness or a tendency to bias responses toward a favorable self–presentation—sometimes known as the “lie scale.”<sup>6</sup> We found no evidence that gang members were less forthcoming than nongang respondents ( $F = 1.424$ ,  $df = 1,410$ ,  $p = .233$ ), no evidence of differences across the study areas ( $F = 0.328$ ,  $df = 2,410$ ,  $p = .720$ ), and no interaction between gang membership and neighborhood condition ( $F = 1.126$ ,  $df = 2,410$ ,  $p = .325$ ) that could confound the results.

We found that defensiveness as measured by the Marlowe–Crowne scale is significantly correlated with age ( $r = 0.125$ ,  $p = .011$ ; older respondents showed more defensiveness than younger ones) and with criminal behavior ( $r = -0.247$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and violence ( $r = -0.221$ ,  $p < .001$ ), suggesting respondents with higher levels of defensiveness reported lower levels of involvement in criminal activities. In their thorough review of the validity of measures of criminal behavior, Thornberry and Krohn (2000) did find some evidence of “either concealing or forgetting past criminal behavior” that resulted in underreporting. However, they concluded that for analytical purposes, the self-report method is acceptably “accurate and valid” (p. 58) so long as the bias is not differential across comparisons. Similarly, Webb, Katz, and Decker (2006) found a modest decrement in the self-reports but no differential validity for gang versus nongang respondents on self-reported drug use. We reach the same conclusion because we find evidence suggesting some youth underreported criminal activities, but no evidence that this happened more frequently among gang than nongang youth or more frequently in one study area than another.

### *Incidents of Violent Gang Crime Reported to Law Enforcement*

Gang crime incident data recorded by law enforcement are coded as gang related based on information gathered at the scene from victims, witnesses, evidence, or other intelligence garnered about each incident. Violent gang crime reported to the police is an alternative way to examine how levels of gang-related violent activity differed in the study areas before and after the gang injunctions studied.

The city of Los Angeles maintains a detailed geocoded database of gang crime data. We obtained crime incident data over a 5-year period beginning 2 years prior to the injunctions through 2 years after implementation. The injunctions studied were ordered during October 2006 (south 1), January 2007 (south 2), and February 2007 (north). The reference year is defined as October 2006 to September 2007. Two prior years were defined: prior 2

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6. Questions about gang membership are potentially reactive. Relative to alternatives such as asking an observer (parent, teacher, or police), past research has suggested that asking youth directly (in a confidential setting) is the better way of determining gang membership (Craig, Vitaro, Gagnon, and Tremblay, 2002; Curry, 2000). Although clearly not 100% accurate, simple straightforward questions asked of youth in the context of a properly grounded interview have been shown to be a valid and reliable approach to measure gang involvement (Esbensen and Winfree, 1998: 515; Thornberry et al., 2003: 189).



(October 2004 to September 2005) and prior 1 (October 2005 to September 2006), and 2 subsequent years were defined: after 1 (October 2007 to September 2008) and after 2 (October 2008 to September 2009).

### *Analysis Plan*

We conducted the analyses in three stages. First, we established the relationship between the proposed mediating variables (including two deterrence measures, two cohesion measures, and one social identity measure) and criminal and violent behavior among the nongang and gang youth interviewed (collapsed across areas). Based on past research, we expected the influence of mediating variables to differ between the gang and nongang respondents. In particular, we expected that deterrence would be more important for the nongang respondents and that group cohesion and social identity would be more important among the gang-involved respondents for mediating crime and violence. To test this expectation, we ran two multigroup structural equation analyses, one restricting the parameters to be the same for gang and nongang and the other allowing the parameters to vary. We used the goodness-of-fit criteria recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999).<sup>7</sup> Given that all data were collected as one panel, the overall causal order (between the set of mediating variables and crime) implied in the models is based solely on our theoretical framework.

The second stage used analyses of variance (ANOVAs) to test for area differences among gang members (in south, north, and control) on the proposed mediators and outcomes using nongang respondents to control for extraneous area influences. Interactions across areas were predicted. Proposed mediators that show a significant interaction were tested further with a set of orthogonal planned comparisons to determine (a) whether respondents in the two areas under a gang injunction (south and north) differ from those in the control area (i.e., that CGIs in both areas affect changes that support lower crime and violence relative to the control area), (b) whether the differing injunction approaches were associated with lower crime in the south and higher crime in the north, and (c) specifically whether the implementation approach taken in the south was associated with lower crime than in the control area. Differences in self-reported criminal and violent behavior across study areas are examined and interpreted in the context of the proposed mediating variables.

Finally, incidents of violent gang crime reported to the police in the safety zones of the gang injunctions studied in the north and south were compared with the citywide trends over 2 years before and 2 years after the reference year (during which the injunctions were obtained and implemented). Violent gang crime was defined as homicide, aggravated assault, robbery, and rape coded by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) as gang involved. To allow simple visual comparisons between the trends over the 2 years prior and

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7. A chi-square value that is nonsignificant, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) < .08, and confirmatory fit index (CFI > .95) represents good fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

**T A B L E 3 a**

**A Bivariate Correlations in the Nongang Sample**

		Correlations <sup>a,b</sup>						
		Violence		Street	Social	Criminal		
		Deterrence	Deterrence	Cohesion	Cohesion	Identity	Activities	Violence
Deterrence	Pearson correlation	1	.845**	.036	-.052	.049	-.317**	-.186**
	Significance (two-tailed)		.000	.533	.370	.393	.000	.001
Violent deterrence	Pearson correlation	.845**	1	.022	-.052	.016	-.310**	-.195**
	Significance (two-tailed)	.000		.703	.369	.787	.000	.001
Cohesion	Pearson correlation	.036	.022	1	.481**	.155**	-.060	.033
	Significance (two-tailed)	.533	.703		.000	.007	.301	.572
Street cohesion	Pearson correlation	-.052	-.052	.481**	1	.268**	.116**	.100
	Significance (two-tailed)	.370	.369	.000		.000	.042	.082
Social identity	Pearson correlation	.049	.016	.155**	.268**	1	-.043	-.052
	Significance (two-tailed)	.393	.787	.007	.000		.452	.365
Criminal activities	Pearson correlation	-.317**	-.310**	-.060	.116*	-.043	1	.643**
	Significance (two-tailed)	.000	.000	.301	.042	.452		.000
Violence	Pearson correlation	-.186**	-.195**	.033	.100	-.052	.643**	1
	Significance (two-tailed)	.001	.001	.572	.082	.365	.000	

<sup>a</sup>Listwise *N* = 304.

<sup>b</sup>Gang = 1, nongang = 0.

\**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01 (two-tailed).

the 2 years after, we calculated the percent of incidents each year prior to and after the reference year.

**Results**

*Proposed Mediation of Crime and Violence*

The correlations among the proposed mediating variables and criminal and violent activities for the gang and nongang respondents are given in Tables 3a and 3b.

*Criminal activity.* Separate structural equation models (SEMs) were constructed to test the predicted relationships simultaneously among the three proposed mediators and criminal or violent behavior within each group of respondents. The first analysis tested a multigroup (gang vs. nongang) model that assumes that the parameters relating the predictor and outcome variables are the same for the gang and nongang respondents. This restricted model was not a good fit to the data ( $X^2 = 19.520, df = 9, p = .021$ ), suggesting that the parameters do differ. The second multigroup model tested allowed the parameters estimating the influences that deterrence, cohesion, and social identity have on crime among gang and nongang respondents to vary. The unrestricted model was a good fit ( $X^2 = 2.098, df = 2, p = .350, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0.011$ ), confirming the hypothesis that these variables differ in their relationship to crime among gang and nongang respondents.

TABLE 3b

## B Bivariate Correlations in the Gang Sample

		Correlations <sup>a,b</sup>						
		Violence		Street	Social	Criminal		
		Deterrence	Deterrence	Cohesion	Cohesion	Identity	Activities	Violence
Deterrence	Pearson correlation	1	.811**	-.150	-.285**	-.208*	-.236*	-.179
	Significance (two-tailed)		.000	.114	.002	.028	.012	.060
Violent deterrence	Pearson correlation	.811**	1	-.058	-.193*	-.159	-.341**	-.209*
	Significance (two-tailed)	.000		.544	.042	.093	.000	.027
Cohesion	Pearson correlation	-.150	-.058	1	.695**	.490**	.217*	.224*
	Significance (two-tailed)	.114	.544		.000	.000	.022	.018
Street cohesion	Pearson correlation	-.285**	.193*	.695**	1	.525**	.315**	.259**
	Significance (two-tailed)	.002	.042	.000		.000	.001	.006
Social identity	Pearson correlation	-.208*	-.159	.490**	.525**	1	.323**	.490**
	Significance (two-tailed)	.028	.093	.000	.000		.001	.000
Criminal activities	Pearson correlation	-.236*	.341**	.217*	.315**	.323**	1	.706**
	Significance (two-tailed)	.012	.000	.022	.001	.001		.000
Violence	Pearson correlation	-.179	.209*	.224*	.259**	.490**	.706**	1
	Significance (two-tailed)	.060	.027	.018	.006	.000	.000	

<sup>a</sup>Listwise  $N = 112$ .

<sup>b</sup>Gang<sup>c</sup>ny = 1.00 nongang.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$  (two-tailed).

The model estimated for gang is given in Figure 1a, and the model estimated for nongang is in Figure 1b.<sup>8</sup> Among the gang-involved respondents, only strength of social identity was significantly associated with crime (0.213,  $p < .050$ ). Follow-up tests showed that the relationship between cohesion and criminal behavior (0.052,  $p = .033$ ) and between street cohesion and criminal behavior (0.076,  $p = .025$ ) was mediated by social identity.<sup>9</sup> Among the nongang respondents, deterrence (-0.301,  $p < .001$ ) was significantly related to crime and social identity was not. The nongang respondents included youth involved in a variety of groups including nongang crews and other conventional friendship groups. Perhaps for this reason the two types of cohesion had differing relationships with crime such that street cohesion (time together on the street) was positively related (0.179,  $p < .010$ ), whereas general cohesion (time together anywhere) was negatively related to crime (-0.125,  $p < .050$ ).

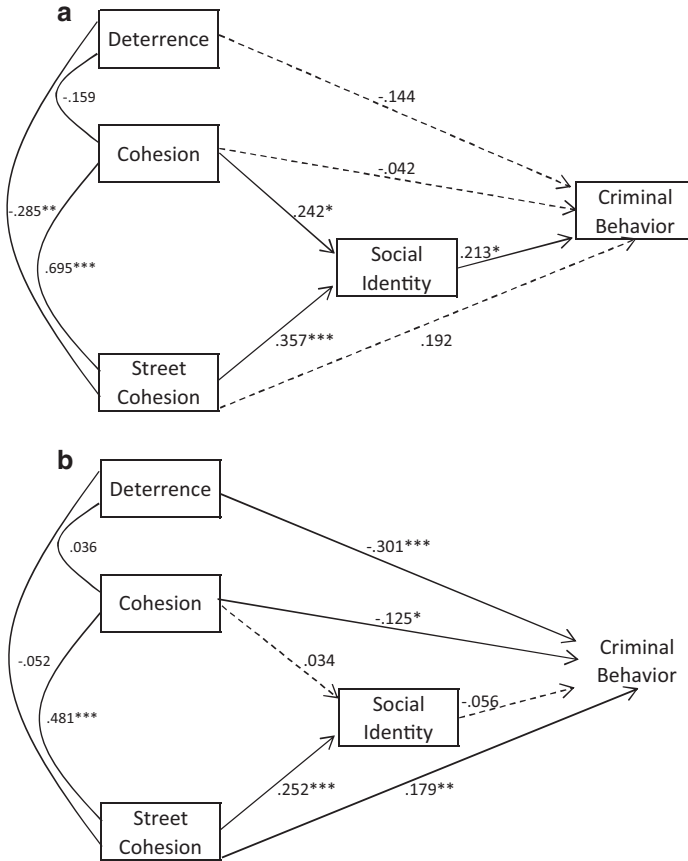
**Violence.** Similar but stronger results were observed for violent activities. The model estimated for gang is given in Figure 2a, and the model estimated for nongang is in Figure 2b.

8. All parameters shown are standardized.

9. The SPSS macro (SPSS Corporation, Chicago, IL) by Preacher and Hayes (2004) is used to assess the extent to which strength of social identity mediates a relationship between cohesion and criminal and violent activities or vice versa in the gang models.

FIGURE 1

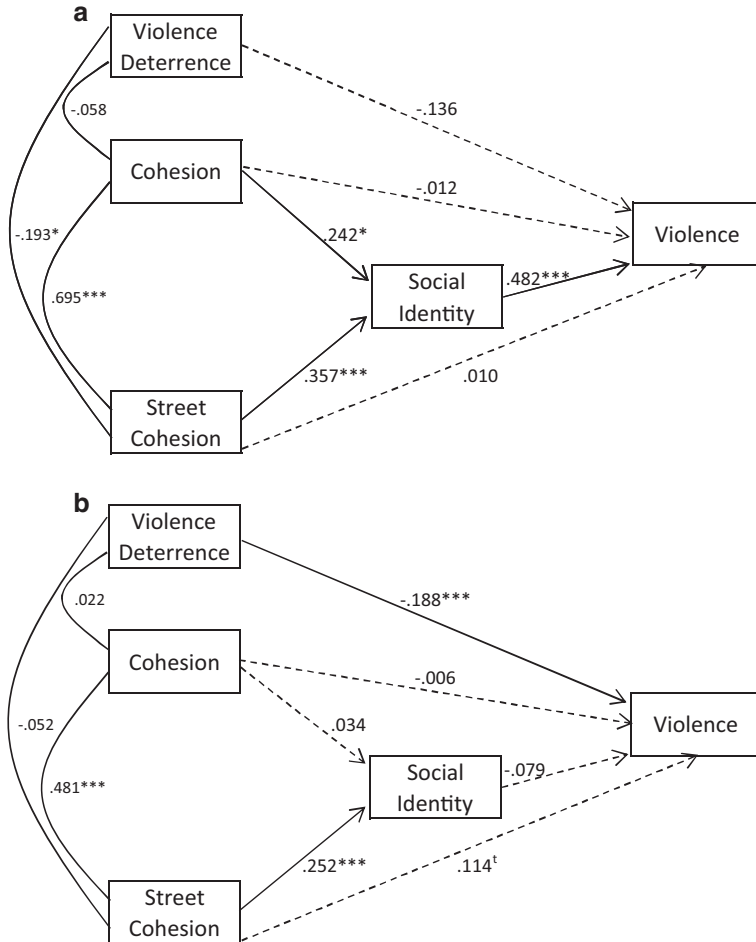
a. Explanation of Gang Criminal Activities. b. Explanation of Nongang Criminal Behavior



The first multigroup analysis found that the restricted model was not a good fit ( $X^2 = 31.250, df = 9, p < .001$ ), whereas the unrestricted model was a good fit ( $X^2 = 1.248, df = 2, p = .535, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0.000$ ). The findings confirm that the proposed mediators are differentially related to violence among the gang and nongang respondents. For gang respondents, social identity was strongly related to involvement in violent activities ( $0.482, p < .001$ ) with no evidence that the perceived likelihood of getting caught and punished for violent activities served as a deterrent ( $-0.136, ns$ ). A test of mediation effects confirmed that social identity mediated the relationship between cohesion ( $0.116, p = .021$ ) and street cohesion ( $0.172, p < .001$ ) with violent activities. For nongang respondents, only

**FIGURE 2**

**a. Explanation of Gang Violent Activities. b. Explanation of Nongang Violent Activities**



deterrence (the perceived likelihood of getting caught and punished) was significantly related to violent activities ( $-0.188, p < .001$ ).

Strength of group identification was related to crime only among the gang-involved youth where criminal activities are normative for group members. The modeling results thus support the contention that criminal and violent activities among gang-involved youth are strongly related to cohesion (general and street specific), mediated by strength of identification. These findings do not support the supposition that deterrence-related

beliefs (as measured in this study) are associated with less involvement in criminal or violent activities among gang-involved youth. Practically speaking, then, a gang injunction's impact on gang identification and cohesion seems to be of greater importance in terms of its potential for reducing criminal activities than a gang injunction's impact on beliefs about the likelihood of getting caught and punished—deterrence. Next, we tested more specific hypotheses across the study areas using planned comparisons.

### *Differences Across Study Conditions*

**Deterrence hypothesis.** Gang-involved youth reported lower estimates of the likelihood of being caught and punished for criminal activities in general and for violent activities in particular than nongang youth. The main effect for gang status on each deterrence variable was significant ( $F = 41.070$ ,  $df = 1,410$ ,  $p = .001$  and  $F = 26.550$ ,  $df = 1,410$ ,  $p = .001$ , respectively; see Table 4) with no interactions across the study areas. We found no evidence that gang-involved youth interviewed in the CGI study areas had higher expectations of being caught and punished for criminal or violent activities than gang-involved youth in the control area with no gang injunction.

**Cohesion hypothesis.** Gang respondents reported lower levels of cohesion, both in a street context ( $F = 18.820$ ,  $df = 1,410$ ,  $p = .001$ ) and in general ( $F = 30.060$ ,  $df = 1,410$ ,  $p = .001$ ), than the nongang respondents. This observation is qualified by a significant area by gang status interaction ( $F = 4.700$ ,  $df = 2,410$ ,  $p = .010$ ) for street cohesion, but not for group cohesion in general. The difference between gang and nongang street cohesion was notably larger in the CGI areas where the gang-involved youth reported less street time together than their counterparts in the control area. The planned comparisons confirmed that street cohesion among gang-involved youth in both CGI areas was lower than the level found in the control area ( $t = 2.50$ ,  $df = 112$ ,  $p = .014$ ) with no significant differences between the north and south injunction areas on street cohesion.

The results for general cohesion were quite different. No area differences were observed on general cohesion. Although gang-involved youth in the CGI areas got together less frequently in public settings than their counterparts in the control area, presumably in response to the no association prohibition in the injunction orders, there was no evidence that the gang-involved youth in the injunction areas got together less frequently *overall* than the gang-involved youth in the control area.

**Social identity hypothesis.** In the structural equation modeling discussed earlier, strength of identification with one's group was shown to be a strong correlate of criminal and violent activities for gang-involved youth. We found a main effect for gang versus nongang status on strength of identification ( $F = 63.160$ ,  $df = 1,410$ ,  $p = .001$ ), but more importantly, the magnitude of these differences varied across the study areas ( $F = 3.090$ ,  $df = 2,410$ ,  $p = .046$ ). Planned comparisons of the means show that gang identification was marginally ( $t = 1.82$ ,  $df = 109$ ,  $p = .072$ ) weaker in the south than in the north and clearly weaker in the south ( $t = 2.00$ ,  $df = 96$ ,  $p = .049$ ) than in the control area. This finding is consistent

T A B L E 4

**Means and Standard Error for Proposed Mediating Variables by Area and Gang Involvement with Results of Statistical Tests<sup>a</sup>**

	South Area			North Area			Control Area			Gang Status by Area Interaction	Planned Comparisons <sup>b</sup>		
	Mean	Nongang <i>n</i> = 128	Gang <i>n</i> = 46	Mean	Nongang <i>n</i> = 68	Gang <i>n</i> = 28	Mean	Nongang <i>n</i> = 108	Gang <i>n</i> = 38		CGI vs. Control	South vs. North	South vs. Control
Deterrence	Mean	4.50	3.08	4.78	3.24	4.40	2.58	$F(1,410) = 41.07, p = .001$	$F(1,410) = 0.26, p = .768$	ns	ns	ns	
	SE	0.21	0.30	0.28	0.35	0.22	0.26						
Deterrence (violence)	Mean	4.27	2.96	4.84	3.32	4.21	2.30	$F(1,410) = 26.55, p = .001$	$F(1,410) = 0.38, p = .682$	ns	ns	ns	
	SE	0.26	0.40	0.33	0.44	0.27	0.31						
Group cohesion: street	Mean	4.67	3.43	4.79	3.89	4.44	4.36	$F(1,410) = 18.82, p = .001$	$F(2,410) = 4.70, p = .010$	$t = 2.50, df = 112, p = .014$	ns	$t = 2.56, df = 114, p = .012$	
	SE	0.12	0.30	0.15	0.32	0.13	0.29						
Group cohesion: general	Mean	5.02	3.63	5.07	4.50	4.85	4.11	$F(1,410) = 30.06, p = .001$	$F(2,410) = 2.46, p = .089$	ns	ns	ns	
	SE	0.10	0.29	0.15	0.31	0.13	0.30						
Identification with group	Mean	4.24	2.72	4.24	3.30	4.10	3.30	$F(1,410) = 63.16, p = .001$	$F(2,410) = 3.09, p = .046$	ns	$t = 1.82, df = 109, p = .072$	$t = 2.00, df = 96, p = .049$	
	SE	0.10	0.18	0.13	0.21	0.11	0.27						
Criminal activities <sup>c</sup>	Mean	1.47	2.09	1.26	2.26	1.38	2.25	$F(1,410) = 114.38, p = .001$	$F(2,410) = 2.15, p = .118$	ns	$t = 2.16, df = 143, p = .032$	ns	
	SE	0.07	0.11	0.08	0.08	0.07	0.08						
Violent activities <sup>a</sup>	Mean	0.47	0.82	0.34	1.03	0.37	0.91	$F(1,410) = 84.66, p = .001$	$F(2,410) = 3.06, p = .048$	ns	$t = 2.33, df = 104, p = .022$	ns	
	SE	0.04	0.09	0.05	0.09	0.04	0.10						

Note: SE = standard error.

<sup>a</sup>A total of 11 missing values was filled with the mean within area by gang status for deterrence (*n* = 1), violent deterrence (*n* = 2), meeting in a street context (*n* = 6), and meeting with group (*n* = 2). Imputing means to fill these scores did not change the results of the analyses.

<sup>b</sup>The planned *t* tests were adjusted for unequal variances when a Levine test of the homogeneity of the variances indicated the need.

with the hypothesis that a CGI implementation approach that focuses (to a greater extent) on individuals may weaken social identity. These results suggest that the CGI implementation approach in the south (where both getting together on the street and gang identification were weaker than in the control) has a better chance of reducing crime and violence than in the north.

*Involvement in criminal and violent activities.* Each respondent was asked about his personal involvement in criminal and violent activities over the 6 months prior to the interview. As expected, gang-involved youth reported much higher involvement in criminal activities ( $F = 114.380$ ,  $df = 1,410$ ,  $p = .001$ ) and in violent activities ( $F = 84.660$ ,  $df = 1,410$ ,  $p = .001$ ) than nongang youth. Further, the area by gang status interaction was significant for violent activities ( $F = 3.060$ ,  $df = 2,410$ ,  $p = .048$ ). The planned comparisons did not show that violence was lower in the two CGI areas relative to the control area. Rather, the comparisons found that criminal ( $t = 2.16$ ,  $df = 143$ ,  $p = .032$ ) and violent activities ( $t = 2.33$ ,  $df = 104$ ,  $p = .022$ ) were lower among gang involved youth in the south CGI area than in the north CGI area.<sup>10</sup>

*Trends in incidents of violent gang crime reported to law enforcement.* Law enforcement gang crime incident data provided an additional check on gang crime in the north and south injunction areas before and after the injunctions were obtained. In Figure 3, we have plotted the levels of violent gang crime in the north and south injunction areas 2 years prior to and 2 years after the reference year. The citywide figures are included for comparison.

The trends suggest that violent gang crime trended down in both the north and the south during the year the injunctions were first implemented (the reference year) despite slightly higher violent gang crime citywide. Over the next 2 years, however, the trends diverge. Violent gang crime trended up in the north and down in the south. These trends are generally consistent with the findings reported earlier: (a) The structural modeling analyses linked strength of gang social identity to crime and violence; and (b) the planned comparisons confirmed that gang identification in the south was weaker than in the control area, but not in the north. Additional self-reported gang-related criminal and violent activities were lower in the south than in the north over the interview period 6 to 17 months after the injunctions were first implemented. The observation that violent gang crime trended up in the north but not in the south is consistent with the interview findings.

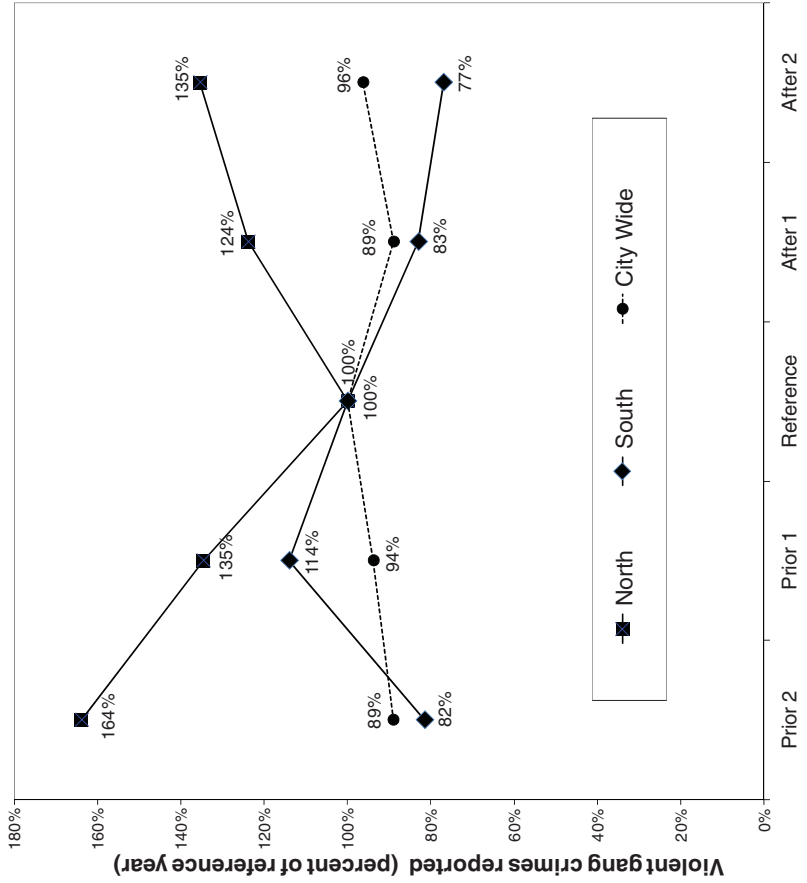
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10. We checked to determine whether this comparison was affected by the inclusion of youth arrested and held in controlled settings during the 6-month self-report period. The same analyses were repeated dropping nine respondents (two from the north, three from the south, and four from the control), who were in prison, jail, juvenile hall, or probation camp for more than a third of the self-report period. The results reported earlier were replicated. The gang status by area interactions was statistically significant for both criminal ( $F = 3.150$ ,  $df = 2,401$ ,  $p = .044$ ) and violent activities ( $F = 3.630$ ,  $df = 2,401$ ,  $p = .028$ ). The planned comparisons confirmed lower levels of criminal ( $t = 2.73$ ,  $df = 152$ ,  $p = .007$ ) and violent activities ( $t = 2.51$ ,  $df = 401$ ,  $p = .012$ ) among gang respondents in the south than in the north, and they show marginally significant indications of lower levels of criminal ( $t = 1.94$ ,  $df = 157$ ,  $p = .054$ ) and violent activities ( $t = 1.91$ ,  $df = 401$ ,  $p = .056$ ) in the south relative to the control area.



FIGURE 3

**Level of Violent Gang Crimes Reported to LAPD in the Study Zones Expressed as the Percentage of the Reference Year (Oct. 2006 through Sept. 2007)**



*Note.* All CGIs studied were obtained, and implementation began in the reference year.

## Discussion and Conclusions

This study used social-psychological and criminological theory to extend our understanding of the range of effects that gang injunctions may have on gang-involved youth and to develop clues as to the processes behind them so that CGIs may be planned and implemented more effectively. Our comparison areas varied by the size of the safety zone and by the inclusion (in the south and the control) of other initiatives designed to leverage the “stick” of possible consequences of an arrest with the “carrot” of easily accessible gang-focused services to help youth move away from gang involvement. In short, the south CGI focused on individual change (at least this focus was a higher priority than elsewhere). In contrast, the north area CGI was broad and focused primarily on gang suppression.

Whereas past research on the effectiveness of CGIs has primarily studied criminal behavior, a chief concern here is the potential *mediators* of criminal activities that may be influenced by the way gang injunctions are implemented. In the structural equation models developed, the strength of gang social identity was related to criminal and violent activities and mediated the relationship between gang cohesion and these activities. The strength of gang identification was weaker in the south injunction areas than in the control. Comparisons confirmed that self-reported crime and violent activities among the gang-involved respondents were lower in the south than in the north. Corresponding to these findings, plots of the incidents of violent gang crime reported to the police after the injunctions were implemented suggested that violence rose in the north and decreased in the south relative to the citywide average over the 2 years after the injunctions were implemented. In short, we found no support for the deterrence hypothesis. The findings suggest that disrupting gang cohesion by limiting street time alone does not seem to be an effective approach. We found some support for the social identity hypothesis, suggesting that injunction approaches that include steps to dilute the focus on the gang as a group in favor of individual concerns may decrease gang crime.

Taken together, these findings support the contention that gang injunction implementation can have an impact on the strength of identification with the gang, which in turn mediates crime and violence. This finding is consistent with social-psychological theories that explain how behaviors that are normative within a group (as criminal activities are for street gang members) are influenced more by the strength of one’s identification with the group than by one’s own unique individual concerns or proclivities. (See Hennigan and Spanovic, 2012, for an expanded discussion of this point.)

Deterrence may have little impact in contexts where the calculus of risks is weighed from a group perspective rather than from an individual perspective and the norms of the group call for violence. Where gang members are involved, we argue that a rational choice perspective may be trumped by group level concerns, especially among those where gang social identity is relatively strong. The finding that personal estimates of the likelihood of getting caught and punished for criminal behavior were significantly associated with

criminal activities primarily among the nongang youth is consistent with prior research that questioned the efficacy of deterrence when targeting high-crime populations such as street gangs (see Loughran et al., 2012; Maxson et al., 2011; Watkins et al., 2008). Stafford and Warr (1993) speculated that when delinquency is understood as a group phenomenon, a heightened sense of anonymity may encourage rather than discourage crime. Social identity theorists elaborate on the sense of anonymity that increases behavior consistent with the norms of a group with which a person is strongly identified (Hennigan and Spanovic, 2012; Postmes and Spears, 1998). One way to mute the identity dynamics of gang involvement is to concentrate a youth's attention on *individual* concerns rather than on the goals of the group.

Although the evidence here is correlational, the findings are consistent with the notion that the threat of arrest and punishment has less impact on youth involved in a gang than on other youth in the same neighborhoods. Instead, it is the unintended impact a CGI may have on gang cohesion, and especially gang identification, that likely is more important than an individual's own concern for getting arrested and incarcerated. CGI implementation approaches that focus on the gang as a group may strengthen the salience of the gang and members' allegiance to the gang, which is counterproductive to the goal of reducing violence. Gang injunctions implemented as part of a wider effort to reduce the influence gangs have on members and potential members may provide leverage toward personal development (pressure access to education, employment, and counseling for positive personal growth) that can strengthen individuals and weaken the influence of the gang in the long run. Ignoring these dynamics may perpetuate a cycle of suppressing gang violence in the short run while leaving intact or strengthening gang cohesion and identity in the long run. This line of thinking suggests that gang cohesion and gang identification are aspects that should be considered when interventions such as a gang injunction are undertaken.

Growing insights into the processes of gang disengagement (see Pyrooz and Decker, 2011; Pyrooz, Decker, and Webb, 2010; Pyrooz, Sweeten, and Piquero, 2012) have important implications for our understanding of the long-term effects of CGIs and other policies that focus on the gang (as a group) rather than on individuals. If a gang injunction is focused primarily on suppression, then this study suggests the result may be a strengthening of overall gang identification and cohesion. The implication of strengthening these ties or "embeddedness" in the gang is likely to increase and prolong gang involvement. Alternatively, if a gang injunction is focused primarily on individuals, using arrests as leverage to move individuals toward services, education, employment, or other legal paths towards self-sufficiency, then the result may be a gradual weakening of gang ties. There is much yet to be learned about the process of gang disengagement. Contrary to popular beliefs, research suggests that gang desistance is frequent, ongoing, and gradual, and that the length of gang involvement is sensitive to gang embeddedness factors such as the two included in this study: gang cohesion and identification with the gang (Pyrooz et al., 2012).

The results reported in this study are limited as they are tied to the specific circumstances in the areas studied and are correlational in nature. Studies undertaken with different research designs and in different areas that test the principles proposed in this study are needed to determine how well these findings generalize to other places and circumstances. We hope that this work will stimulate further exploration in other contexts and with varying implementation aspects including a coupling with comprehensive approaches that are growing in importance.

### **Public Policy Implications**

Youth street gangs remain a serious public policy challenge. As the evidence from Los Angeles County suggests, gang members continue to commit serious crimes, including homicides, at rates that threaten public safety in many neighborhoods. Reducing the impact of youth street gangs has been a difficult challenge for policy makers and criminal justice professionals. Efforts to craft law-enforcement-centered gang interventions that successfully reduce gang activities have enjoyed only modest success to date.

The implications of this study coincide with a growing consensus that comprehensive (multidimensional) gang programs are both needed and difficult to achieve. One big obstacle to successful implementation of comprehensive approaches is summed up by this quote from Decker and Curry (2002: 201): “[O]ur review found that responses generally failed to include one (or more) essential ingredients for the successful response to gangs. In most cases a social service response did not have a suppression or law enforcement component. In other cases a suppression-only intervention was mounted.” In terms of gang injunctions, most are implemented by law enforcement with a focus on gang control (i.e., suppression only). Katz and Webb (2006) examined gang units in four large cities and found that despite a mandate to take a community policing approach, the operations of these units concentrated on suppression and were generally shrouded in secrecy. This study suggests that gang injunctions with a suppression-only focus may not be as effective in the long run and may even backfire by inadvertently strengthening gang social identity that sustains gang crime.

Comprehensive approaches incorporate efforts at many levels, including efforts centered on individual change as well as efforts to interrupt gang-on-gang (group level) violence using resources from multiple sources working together (law enforcement, gang intervention workers, service providers, and others) to broker individual relationships and build trust and cooperation in lieu of cycles of retaliation and violence (see, for example, the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2010: OJJDP Comprehensive Model; Cespedes and Herz, 2012: Los Angeles Gang Reduction and Youth Development Comprehensive Model). Our findings suggest that gang injunctions coupled with accessible steps toward individual change might be a useful component of a comprehensive approach if it requires collaboration at many levels rather than suppression alone.

Although CGIs are an increasingly popular approach, previous scholarly studies have found mixed results. In this study, we took a novel approach to understand more clearly ways implementation procedures may affect the success of gang injunctions. This study suggests that criminal justice policy makers should carefully consider CGI implementation procedures that emphasize an orientation toward intervention goals rather than exclusively suppression goals in the training of officers and attorneys tasked with enforcing the CGI; the necessity of a strong working relationship with service providers that can provide gang intervention services for enjoined youth who seek assistance; and reasonable and transparent methods for removing oneself from the CGI once an individual has taken steps to desist from participation in criminal gang activities.

Perhaps most importantly, our findings strongly suggest CGIs should target individuals rather than the gang as a group. By focusing on individuals, we believe the policy would better ensure that gang members respond by defending themselves rather than their group, perhaps increasing the odds of taking steps to move away from gangbanging. Unlike the recent trend in which local law enforcement seeks an injunction against a gang identifying large numbers of gang members as a way to target the gang inclusively, the results of this study suggest that members should be held individually responsible for the problems they cause and be given incentives to find a solution to their predicament. Using a CGI to leverage steps toward personal development (access to education, employment, and counseling for positive personal growth) may strengthen the individual and weaken the gang as a group.

A large safety zone may preclude a clear focus on individuals and may reinforce the “us versus them” attitude, inadvertently strengthening gang cohesion and social identity, potentially defeating the purpose of the CGI. The results here suggest that smaller safety zones constructed around well-developed street information about the activities of the gang will allow police officials to target individuals in the gang and will press them to move away from gang life. Furthermore, the availability of gang-focused services may facilitate a positive impact on the long-term success of the CGI there. Although we did not explicitly test knowledge of the existing procedures for removing oneself from the CGI, our interviews with criminal justice professionals and widespread media stories suggest that improving knowledge of such procedures, and providing clear evidence of the successful use of such procedures, may have a positive impact on the community’s acceptance of CGIs.

Finally, we do not know how well the findings here can be generalized to other neighborhoods, city and social service contexts, law enforcement contexts, or other gang contexts. What we do know is that the success of gang injunctions (both anecdotally and as documented) has varied widely. Our purpose is to begin to identify factors that can facilitate lasting change in communities suffering from high rates of violence and struggling with the hold that street gangs have over their youth. We hope that this study will encourage creative and perhaps collaborative efforts to explore the dynamics of gang injunctions in search of principles that can guide implementation approaches that look beyond the impact of suppression efforts alone.

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