Collaborative Approaches to Reducing Gun and Gang Violence

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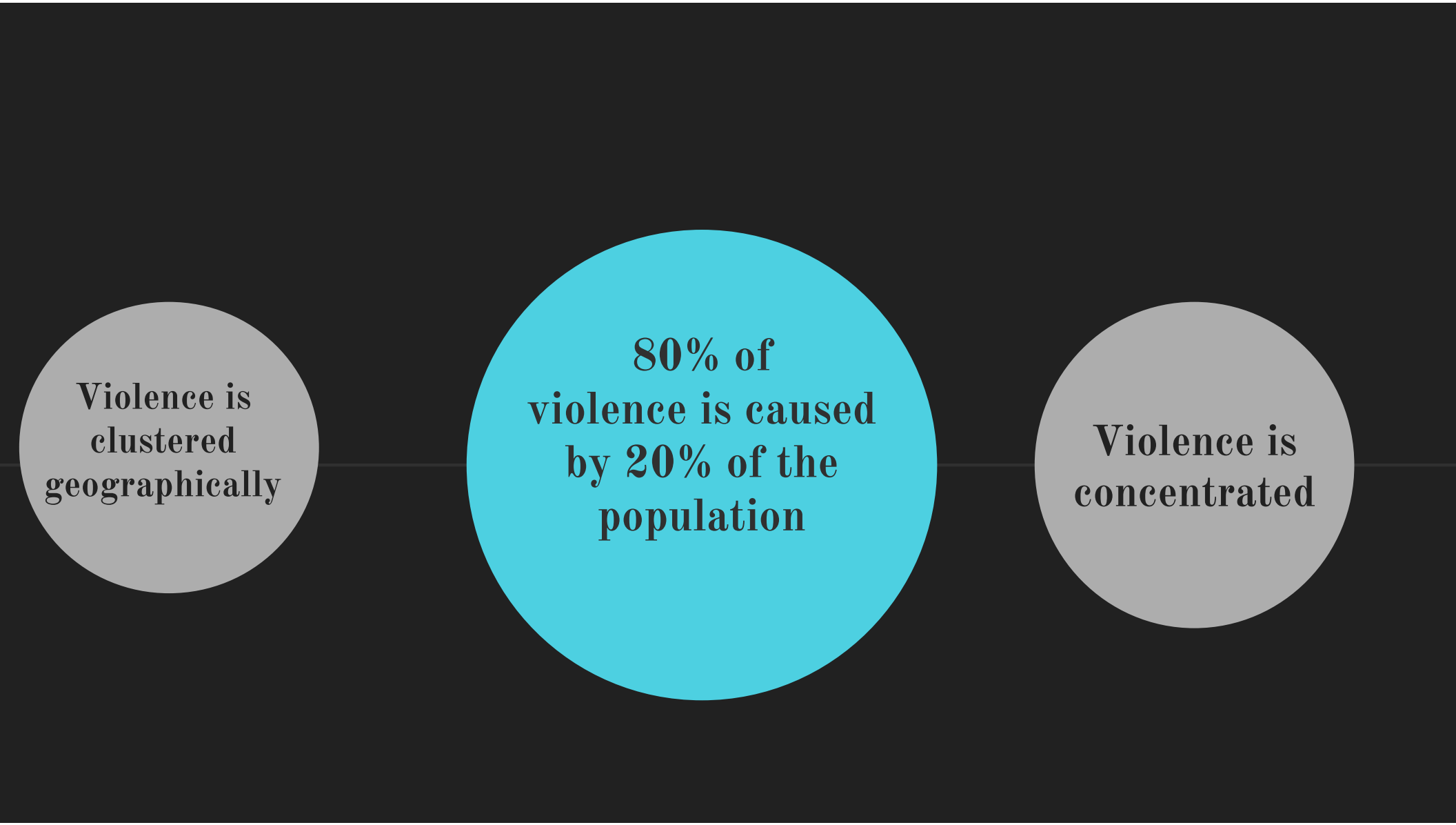
Our journey

THE [] HUB

2020/2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
COVID-19 Response - Rest and Hygiene Center Rebranded as The HUB Service expansion based on needs assessment from our guests	Homeless programming continues	Program development for program working with those at the center of violence	Case Management program continues for those at the center of violence	24hr wrap around support for those at the center of violence/case management continues

Violence

What do we know about it?


Violence is clustered geographically
80% of violence is caused by 20% of the population
Violence is concentrated

More specifically, what do we know about **gun** violence?

Behavioural Economics

- Gun violence is mostly a crime of passion, not a crime for profit
- Gun violence is human behaviour - stemming from what all of us face daily: conflict
- Most shootings start with words
- Drivers are not all about morality or poverty alone

(Ludwig,2025)

Mental bandwidth depletion

Conflict

Economic disadvantage

Gun violence = guns + violence

System 1 Cognition

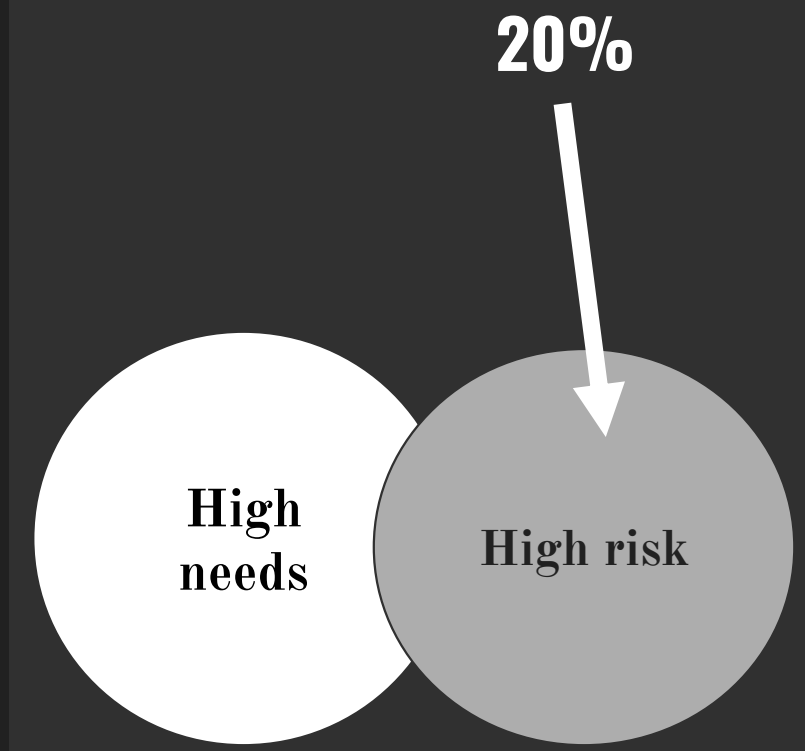
Social disadvantage - FORGIVING VS UNFORGIVING PLACES

(Ludwig,2025)

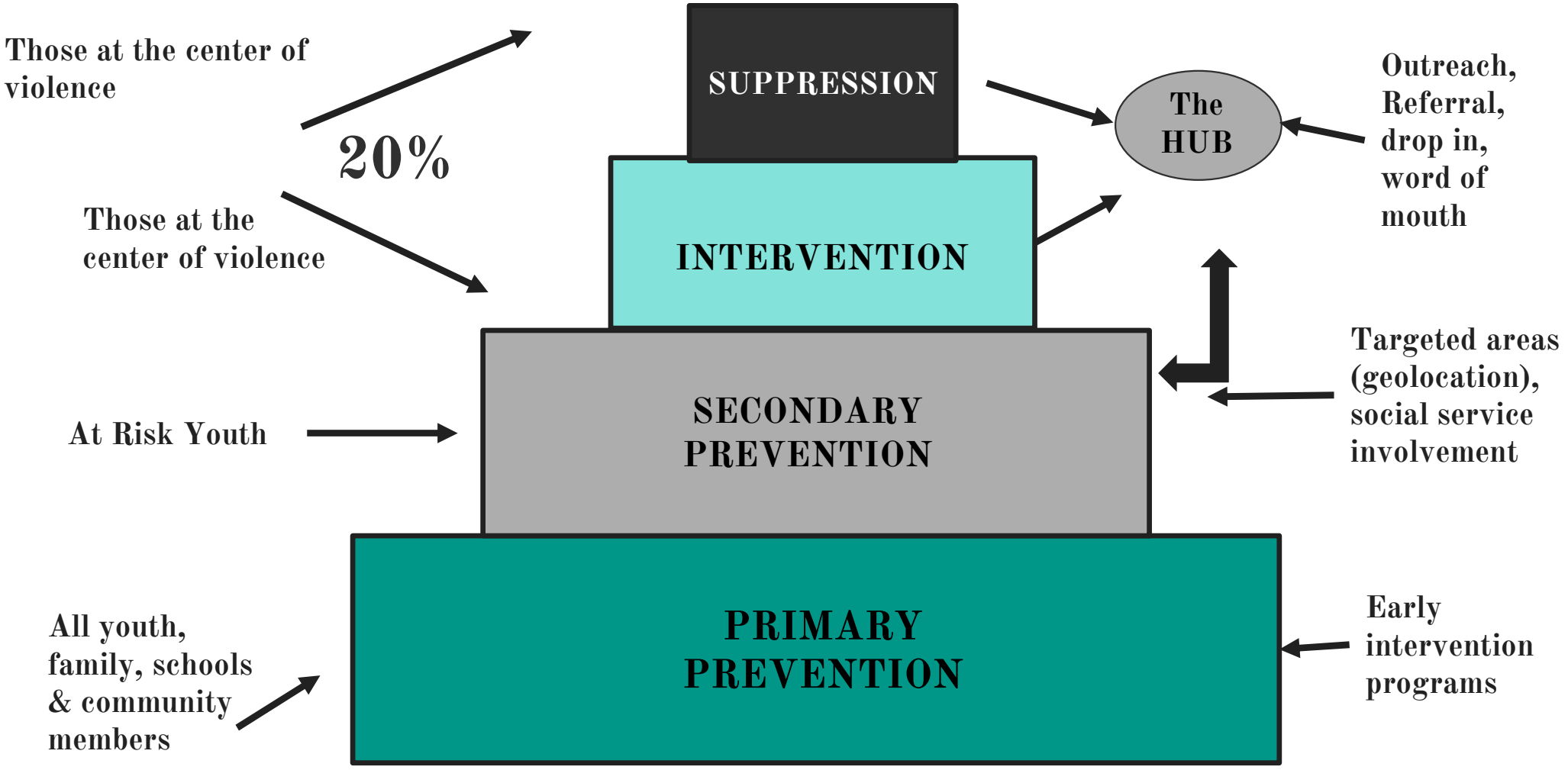
Not all gun violence is gang related

1. **Gang related gun violence**
- Crimes of profit - 20%
- Crimes of passion - 80%
1. **Ideology driven violence - ex) extremism and violent ideology**
2. **Domestic gun violence**
3. **Suicide by gun**

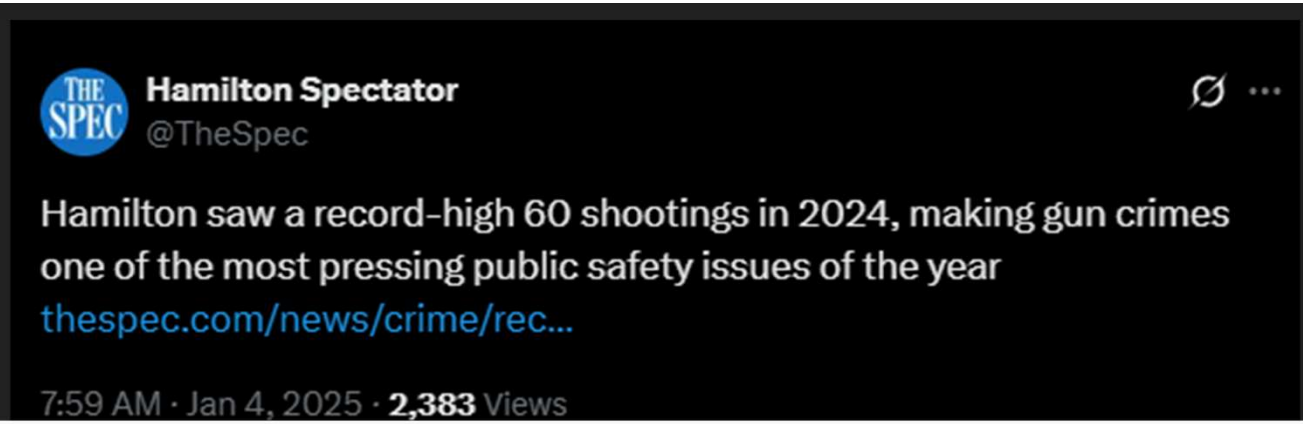
Who we work with



Who do we support?



Why this demographic?



Hamilton, 03 June 2024

Police Release Images and Video of Friday's Daytime Shooting

Hamilton, Ontario, 03 May 2025

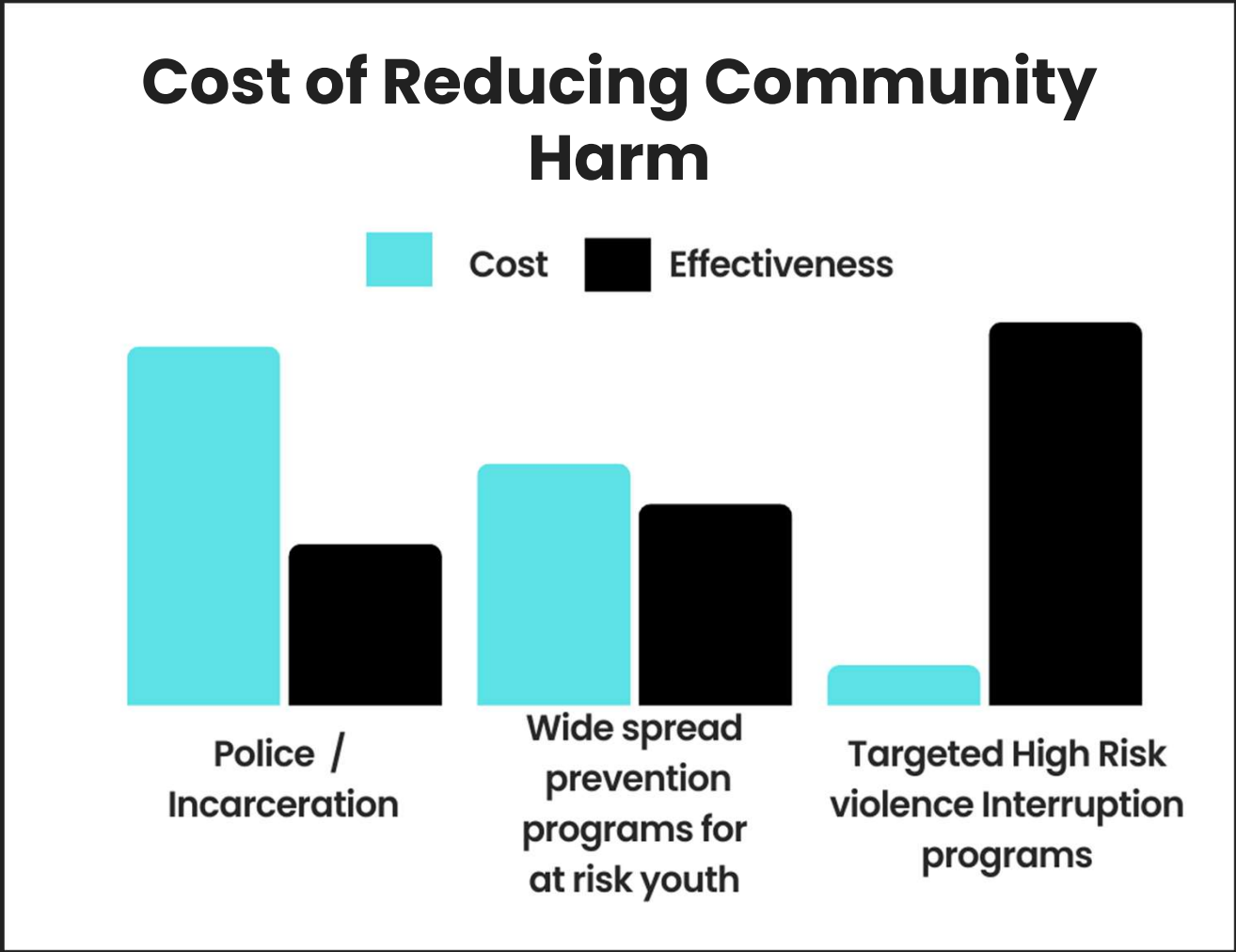
Hamilton Police Investigate Shooting in Downtown

On Saturday May 3rd, 2025 shortly after 2:00 a.m., Hamilton Police responded to an occurrence of shots being fired in the area of Inchbury Street and Tecumseh Street in the City of Hamilton.

Officers immediately secured the area and searched for anyone involved; however, no victims or suspects were located.

Why this demographic?

Tough on crime is tough on our wallets!



(Abt, 2018)

Violence is costly

Costs can be over $ 3.1 billion for firearm related crime in Canada (Stats Canada, 2024)

- Medical costs
- Enforcement initiatives
- Neighborhood fear mongering
- Victim Services

How do we work with those at the center of GUN AND GANG violence?

Using a

Public Health Approach implemented through a

Community Violence Intervention Model and

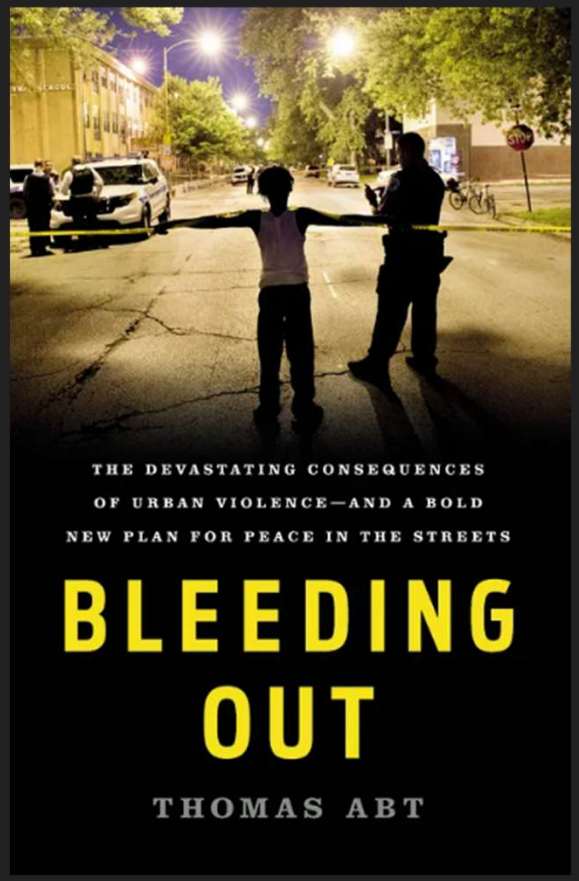
Social Network Analysis

The Public Health Model operates off 3 core components:

Focus

Balance

Fairness



(Abt, 2018)

Community Violence Intervention Model

1. Risk Assessment
2. Credible Messengers
3. Place based outreach
4. Data and network analysis

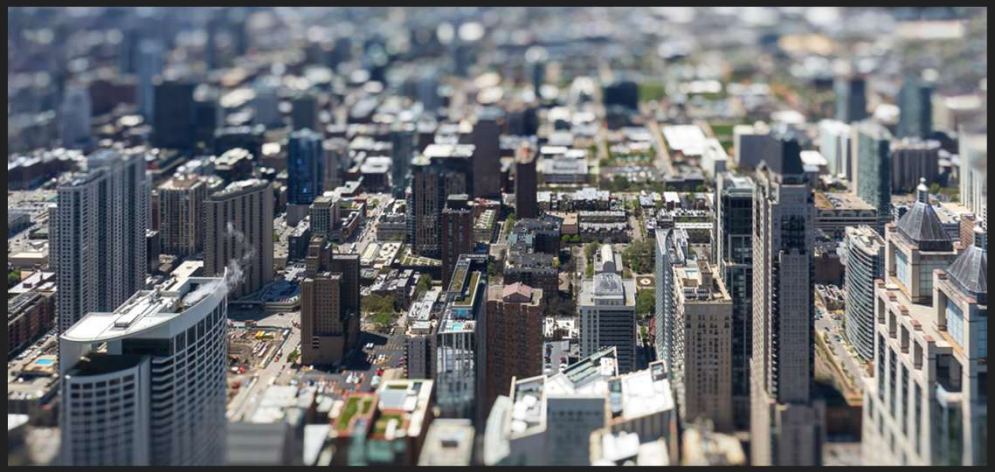
Risk Assessment

	Emergence of Violence	Elaboration of Threat	Escalating Behaviours	Empowering Thoughts
Decompensating (action)	Execution of violence: pending or imminent	Obtaining the means to execute violence	Planning execution of violence	Unusual / concerning interest in violence (possibly influenced by group)
Deteriorating (action)	Threat of violence that is either vague and or non lethal	Expression of vague plan to execute non lethal violence	Vague planning of non lethal violence	Increase in vague intrusive thoughts about non lethal violence
Distressed (thoughts)	Expression of desire to create ultimatums / consequences regarding grievances	Increased expression of experiences of injustice	increase in defiance and agitation	Increase in thoughts about resolving injustice with violence
Developing (thoughts)	Defiance of other beliefs that don't align with the group narrative	Increase in consumption of violent rhetoric	Knowledge gathering about violence generally	Narrowing of circle of influence to only include the group narrative

What is a credible messenger?

An individual in community with high social capital, holds weight within street networks.

Place based outreach

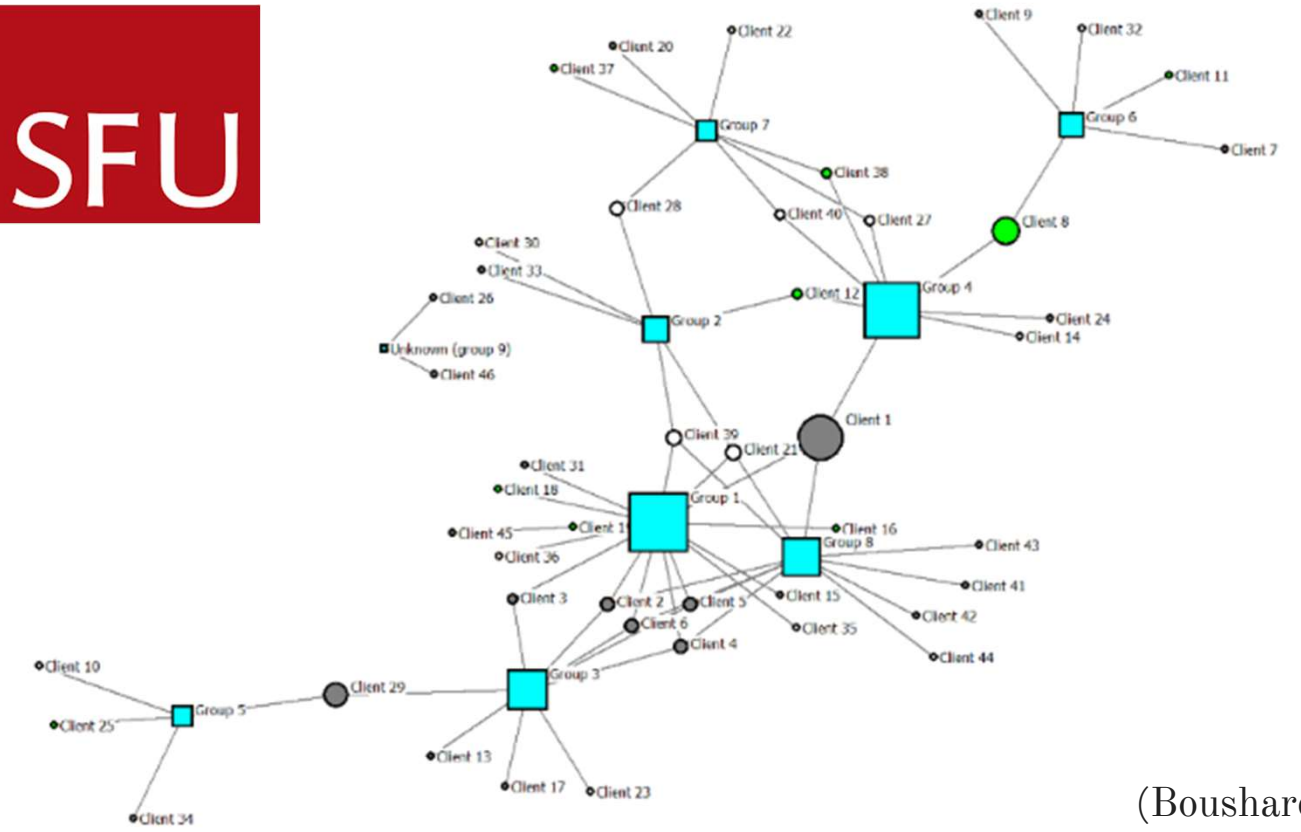


(Ludwig, 2025/Abt, 2023)

Social Network Analysis

Social network analysis is tool used to identify how violent behaviour, aggressive norms and risks of conflict spreading through interpersonal connections within a community

Social Network Analysis: Full Network by betweenness and centrality



(Boushard, 2025)

Knowing all this, practically what does this mean?

Our Program Goals

Risk reduction

Healthy asset building

Reduce cycles of incarceration

Detect and Interrupt cycles of violence

Change community norms through credible messengers

Working at both the individual and group level

- Focus on those of highest risk - **20%**
- Meeting them where they are at
- Knowing the current pulse of gang politics and street conflicts
- Knowing the person behind their street identity
- Working towards both **group and individual behaviour change**
- **CREDIBLE MESSENGERS**

How do we know we are working with this 20%?

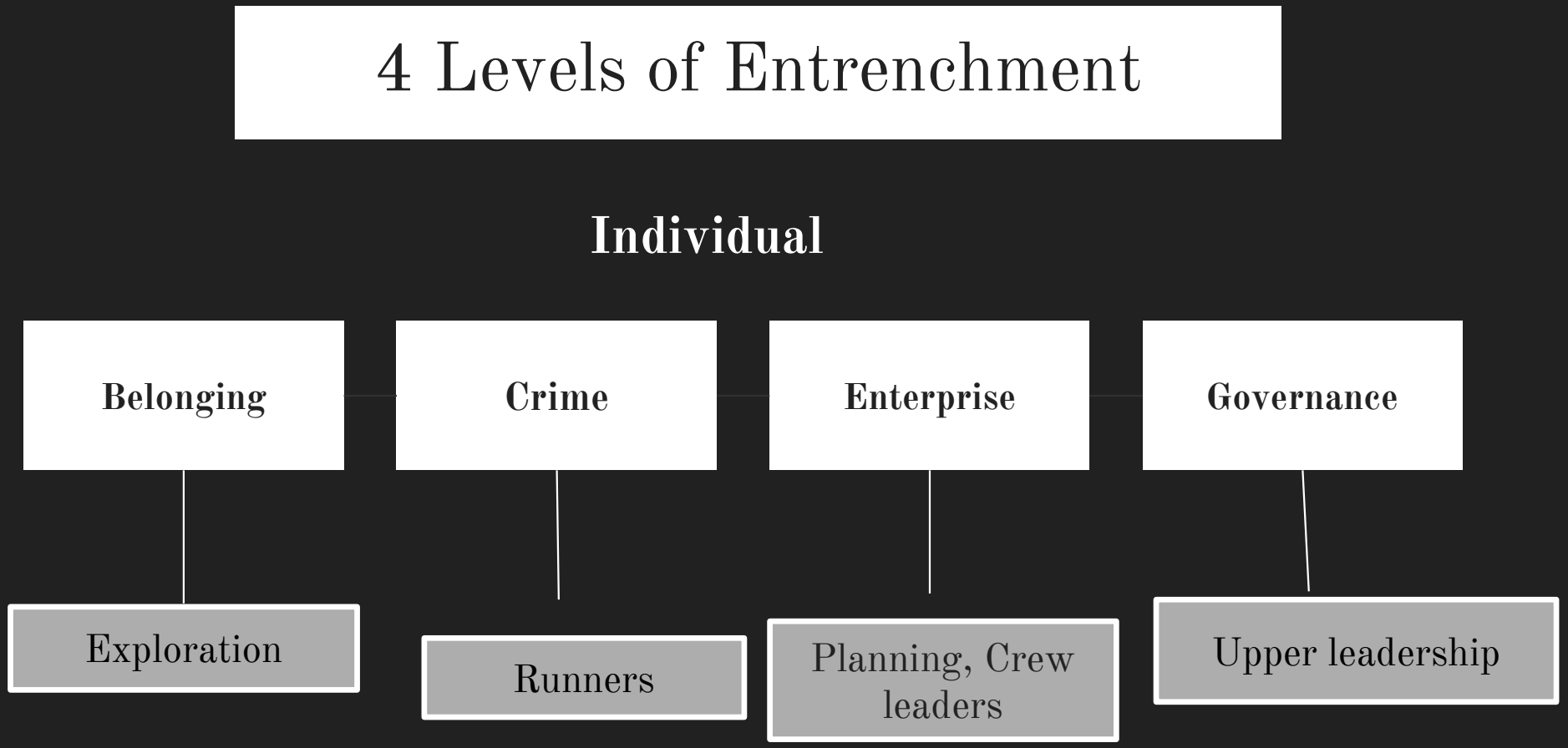
Individual Assessment

1. 4 levels of entrenchment
2. 4 reasons to carry

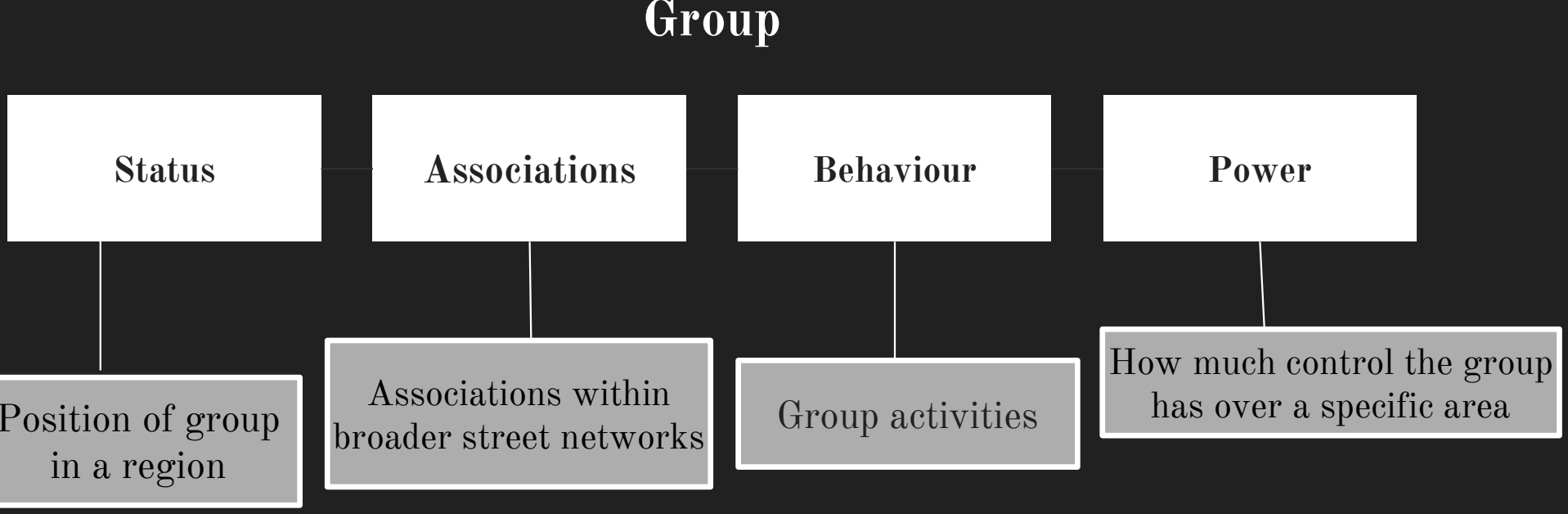
Group Assessment

1. 4 levels of embeddedness

4 Levels of Entrenchment

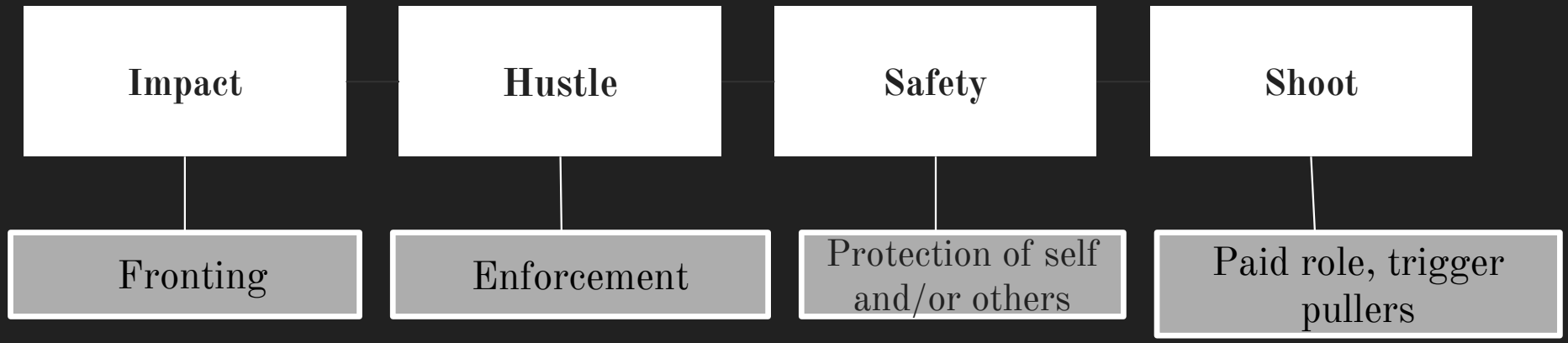


4 Levels of Embeddedness



4 Reasons to Carry

Individual



Center for Justice Innovation, 2023)

How can we tell the model is making a difference?

Individual Assessment

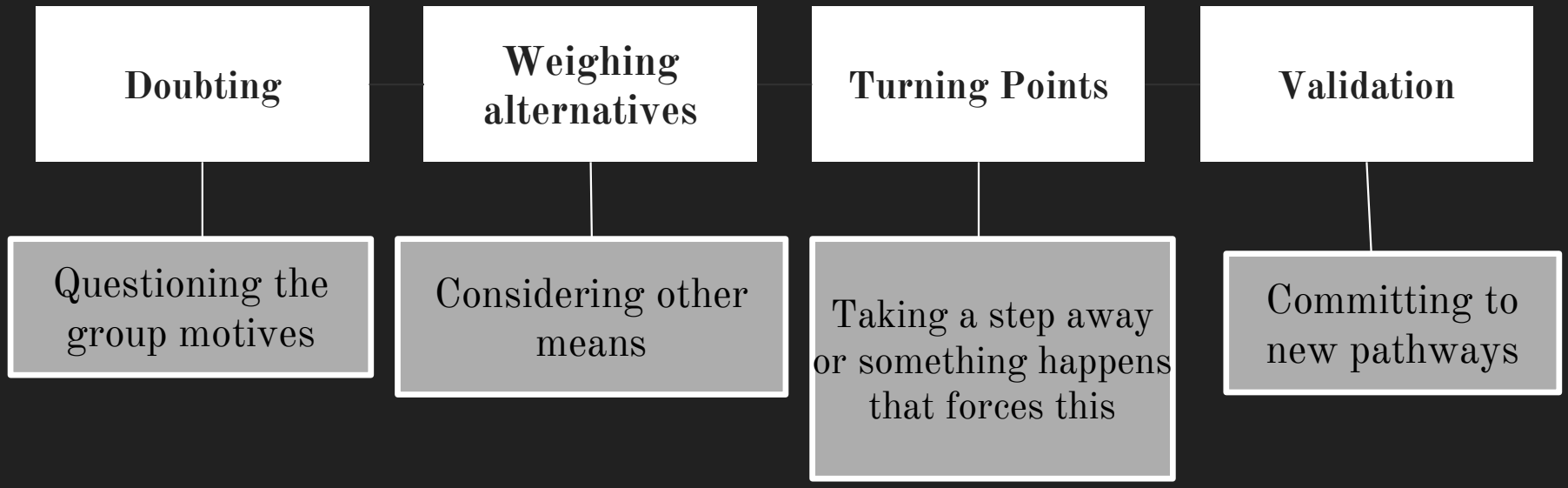
1. 4 Levels of Distance

Group Assessment

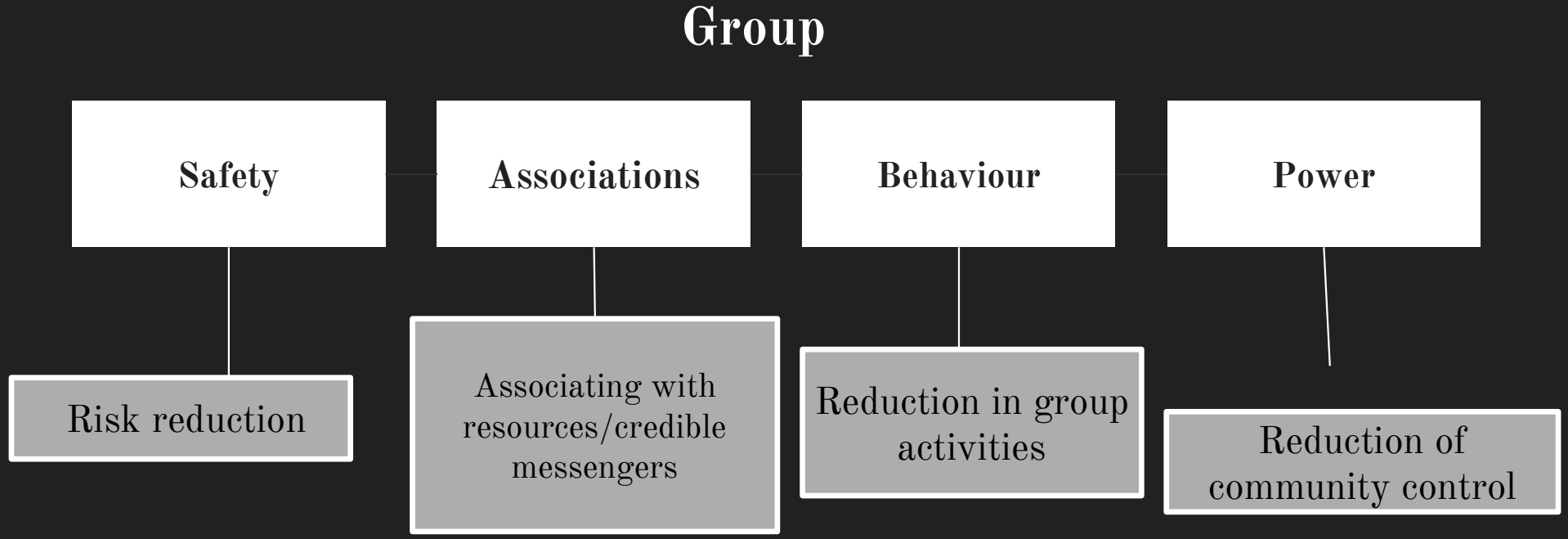
1. 4 Levels of Disembedding

4 Levels of Distance

Individual



4 Levels of Disembedding



Best Practices: A Trauma Informed Approach

- Safety
- Transparency
- Peer support and mutual self help
- Leveling of power differences
- Empowerment, voice , choice
- Cultural, historical and gender responsiveness

Focusing on these individuals as people leads us to....

The truth about those at the center of violence

Mentors

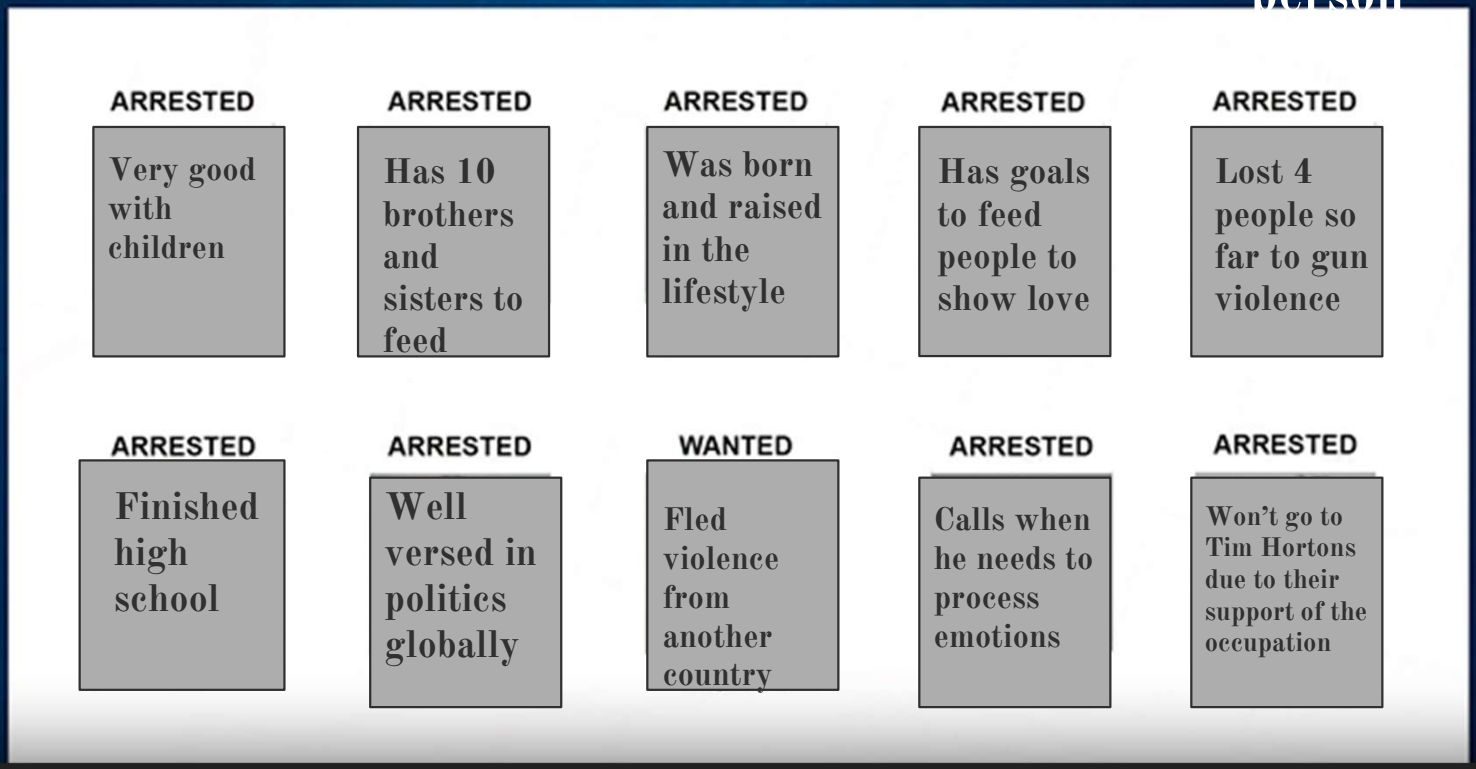
High motivation

Situations and context matter more than the person

Convicted in loyalty and trust

Social scientists

Emotional regulation has been impaired due to societal ideas about manhood



Empaths

Leaders

Gentle

Therapeutic Opportunities

System 1 Cognition:
automatic responses

System 2 Cognition:
deliberate and slow, cost-benefit calculations

(Ludwig, 2024)

Therapeutic Opportunities - In crisis

System 1 Cognition

Appealing to self interest

Negotiation and mediation (Violence Interruption)

(Ludwig, 2024)

Therapeutic Opportunities: Strengthening System 2

Floating (Rapport Building)

Active Listening

Trust building

Snorkeling (Coping Skills)

CBI - Cognitive Behavioural Interventions

DBT - Dialectical Behavioural Therapy

Scuba Diving (Trauma Work)

ACT - Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

Narrative Therapy

Data Collection & Evaluation

What we track

- Location
- Every interaction - texts, calls, facetimes, outreach, meetings at our office space
- Number of crisis, violence interruptions
- Evidence based tools used to interrupt violence
- Time of interaction
- Reasons for interaction - emotional check ins, court support, violence interruption, hospital support ect.
- Behaviour change
- Group Dynamics (Predictor of Violence)

2023/ 2024...

1773 Text messages

1513 Phone calls

31 Violence interruptions

786 Outreach engagements

So far in 2025...

Over **1500** interactions with those at the center of violence

20 violence interruptions

Over 650 Outreach touch points across the region

Academic and other system players we work with and have learned from along the way ....

- Simon Fraser University
- McMaster University
- Walk With Me Impact San Diego
- Violence Reduction Centre - University of Maryland
- Crime and Justice Policy Lab - University of Pennsylvania

Violence Intervention Tracking

We track...

- How many groups involved?
- How many individuals involved
- Location of violent incident
- How were we notified of the violence?
- What type of conflict?
- Did violence occur after the intervention (72 hours after)
- Insights from online/social media conflicts

Hamilton, 28 August 2025

Hamilton Police Charge 21-Year-Old in Gibson Avenue Shooting

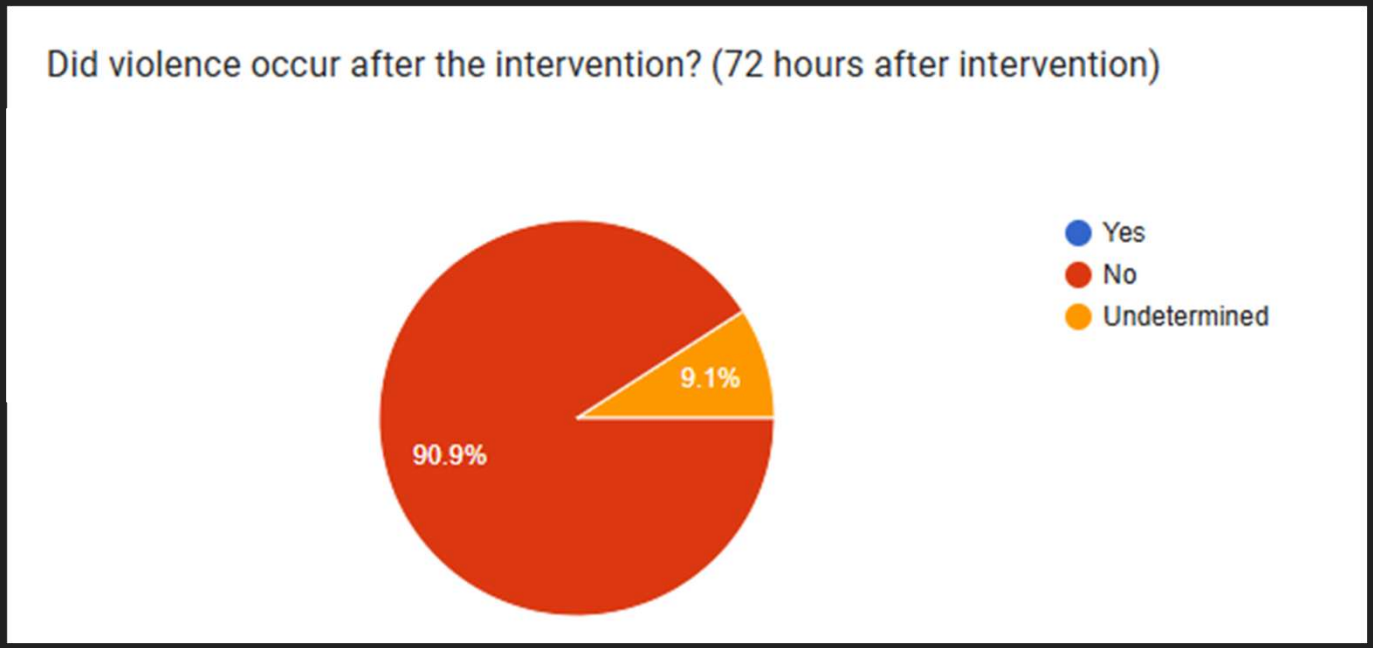
Hamilton Police Service have arrested an individual believed to be responsible for the shooting that occurred on Gibson Avenue at King Street East on August 3, 2025.

The shooting did not result in any injuries, and investigators have not yet identified the intended victim. Police are urging the victim to come forward and speak with investigators.

The investigation was conducted by the Shooting Response Team. On August 26, 2025, detectives arrested Marques Griffiths, a 21-year-old male from Hamilton, and charged him with the following offences:

1. Discharge Firearm with Intent
2. Knowledge of Unauthorized Possession of a Firearm
3. Possession of a Prohibited Loaded Firearm
4. Reckless Discharge of a Firearm
5. Fail to Comply with Probation Order x 2
6. Possession of a Firearm, contrary to Court Order
7. Fail to Comply with Release Order x 2

Results take time, but we reach goals



Results take time, but we reach goals....

And the positive change becomes contagious.

Additional examples of positive work that comes CVI Models

- Voluntary surrenders
- Negotiation with those at the center of violence to choose non violent responses to conflict
- In the moment interventions
- Ceasefire agreements
- Peers interrupting cycles of violence amongst their peers

Group Dynamics: How we interrupt cycles of gang violence

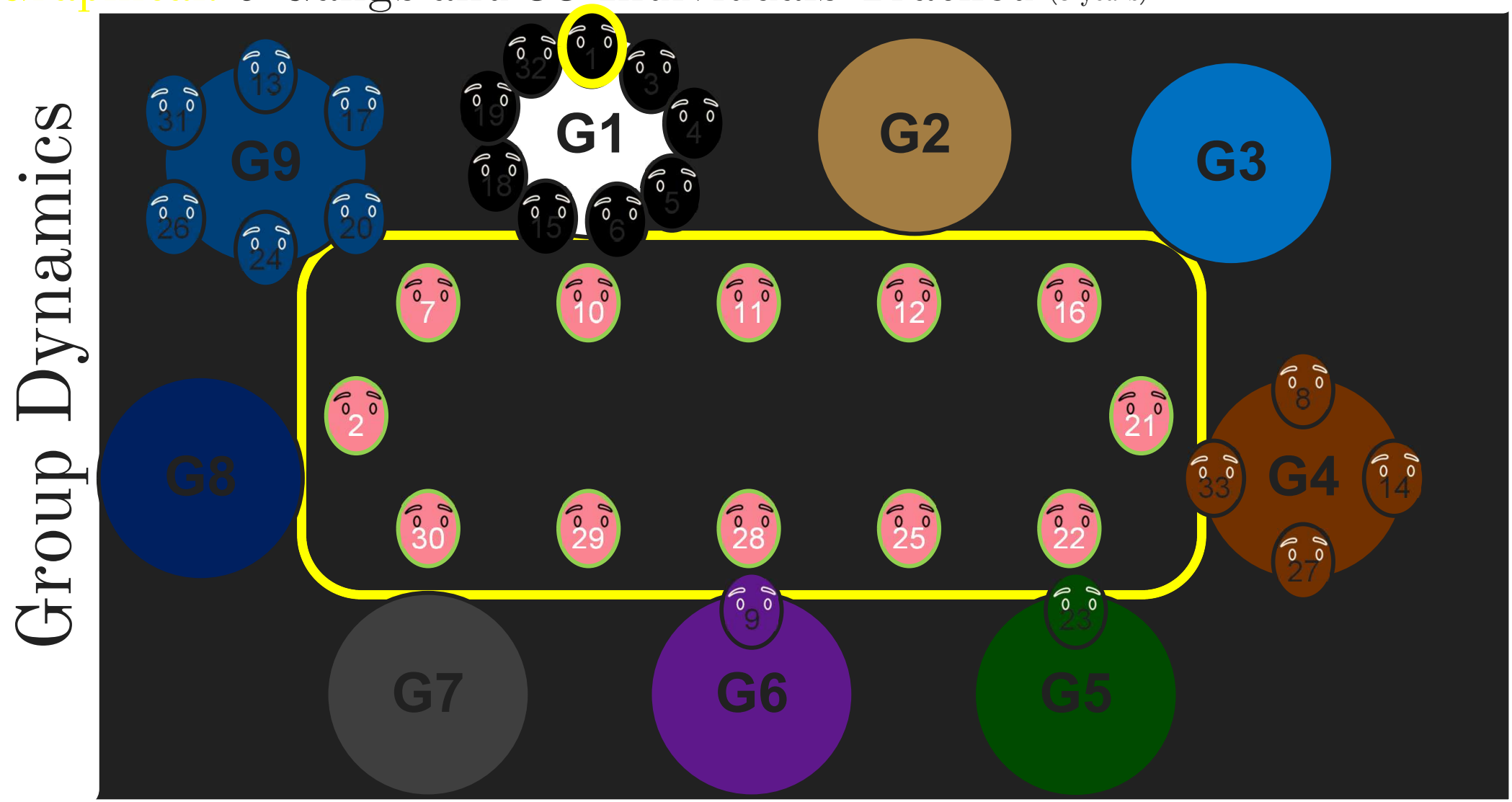
Raw Data: 9 Gangs and 33 Individuals Tracked (3 years)

Group Dynamics

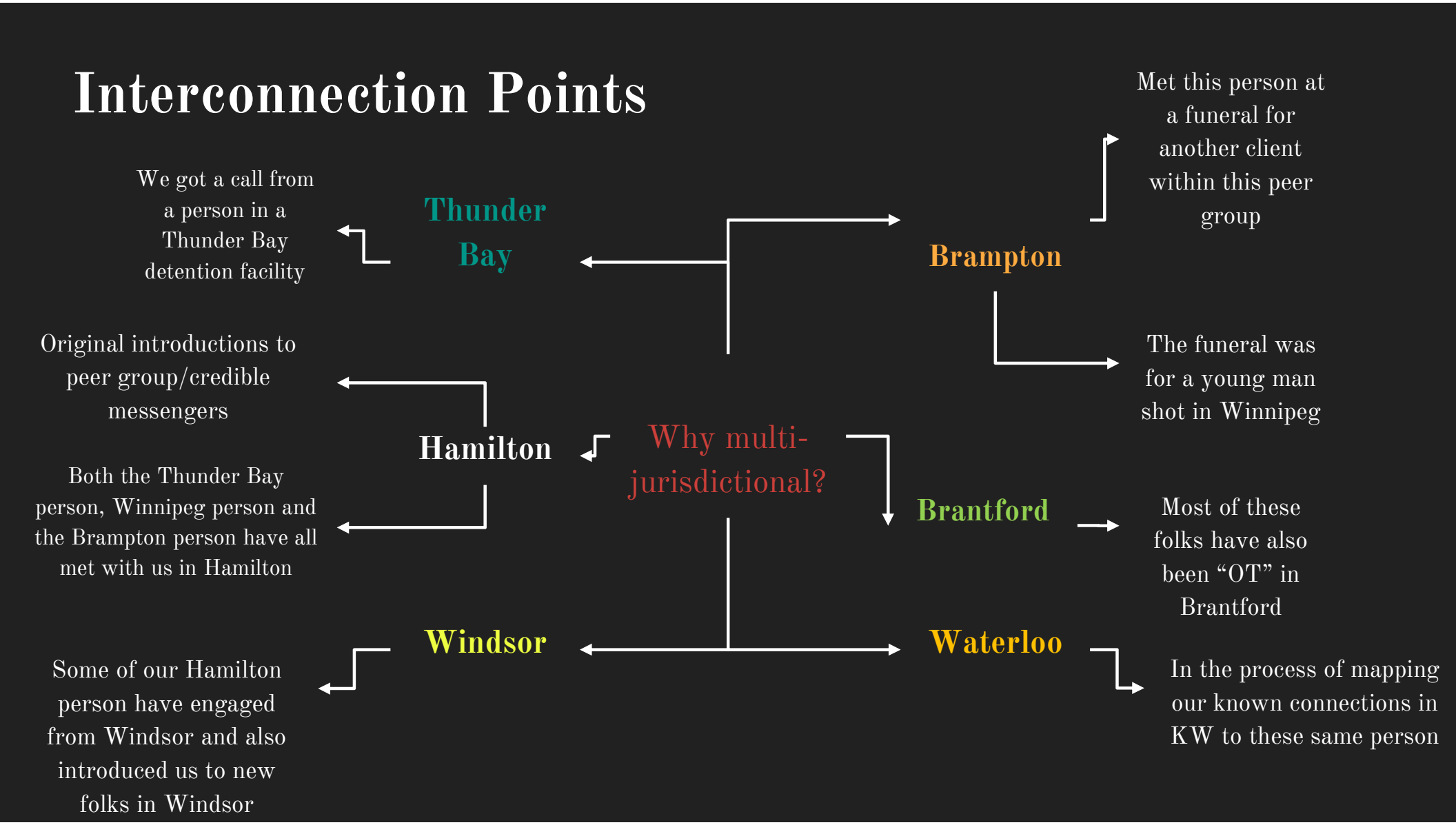
Client Number	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7	Group 8	Group 9
Client 1	M	R	R	N	A	V	UK	A	UK
Client 2	V	R	R	A	UK	UK	UK	A	UK
Client 3	M	R	R	A	A	V	UK	UK	UK
Client 4	M	R	R	N	A	V	UK	A	UK
Client 5	M	R	R	N	UK	UK	UK	A	UK
Client 6	M	R	R	UK	UK	UK	UK	A	UK
Client 7	A	R	R	V	R	A	N	UK	V
Client 8	A	N	R	M	R	A	A	UK	UK
Client 9	A	N	N	A	R	M	UK	UK	UK
Client 10	R	A	A	R	A	R	UK	UK	UK
Client 11	N	N	A	N	R	A	UK	UK	UK
Client 12	V	V	A	V	N	V	UK	UK	UK
Client 13	N	N	N	N	A	N	N	UK	M (USA)
Client 14	A	R	R	M	R	N	N	UK	UK
Client 15	M	R	R	N	A	V	UK	UK	UK
Client 16	A	R	R	R	A	R	UK	UK	UK
Client 17	A	N	R	N	A	N	UK	UK	UK (USA)
Client 18	M	R	R	N	A	V	UK	A	UK
Client 19	M	R	R	N	A	V	UK	UK	UK
Client 20	R	R	R	N	UK	UK	UK	UK	M
Client 21	A	A	N	N	N	N	UK	A	UK
Client 22	R	R	R	N	UK	UK	UK	UK	UK
Client 23	R	N	N	N	M	R	UK	UK	UK
Client 24	UK	UK	UK	UK	UK	UK	UK	UK	M
Client 25	UK	UK	UK	UK	UK	UK	UK	UK	UK
Client 26	A	R	R	R	N	N	UK	UK	KEV - M
Client 27	R	R	R	M	UK	UK	N	UK	UK
Client 28	R	N	N	N	A	N	A	UK	UK
Client 29	N	A	A	N	UK	N	A	UK	UK
Client 30	A	R	N	A	R	A	UK	UK	UK
Client 31	V	V	R	N	UK	UK	UK	UK	M
Client 32	M	R	R	UK	UK	UK	UK	A	UK
Client 33	UK	N	N	M	UK	UK	UK	UK	UK

M - MEMBER
R - RIVLARY
N - NEUTRAL
A - ALLIANCE
V - VOLATILE
UK - UNKNOWN

Graphical: 9 Gangs and 33 Individuals Tracked (3 years)



Interconnection Points



Norm changes and stickers

In Summary...

- Gun and gang violence reduction is achieved best with a Public Health approach which is called a Community Violence Intervention Model
- Knowing who the leader of a group is matters to make both group and individual behaviour change
- Relationships matter - relentless engagement, trust and love are at the core
- Built off programs in the US/UK
- The WHY behind a violent act matters when choosing an intervention tool

THE [] HUB

Thank you!

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