



# The effects of gang truces

Edward R. Maguire, Ph.D.  
American University

March 29, 2013



Example 1

**LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA**



# 1993 Study by Ordog, et al.

Analysis of the number of GSW victims at an LA hospital before and after the 1992 riot.

Conclusion: “Since the riot, the gang truce between the ‘Bloods’ and the ‘Crips’ has resulted in a significant decrease in the number of GSW victims seen at a level I trauma center in Los Angeles” (p. 779).



# 1995 Study by Ordog, et al.

Follow-up study finds that the effects of the truce lasted only 3 months, after which the number of GSW victims increased beyond what it was before the truce.

Conclusion: The subsequent increase in GSW victims “negated any positive effect of the gang truce” (p. 417).



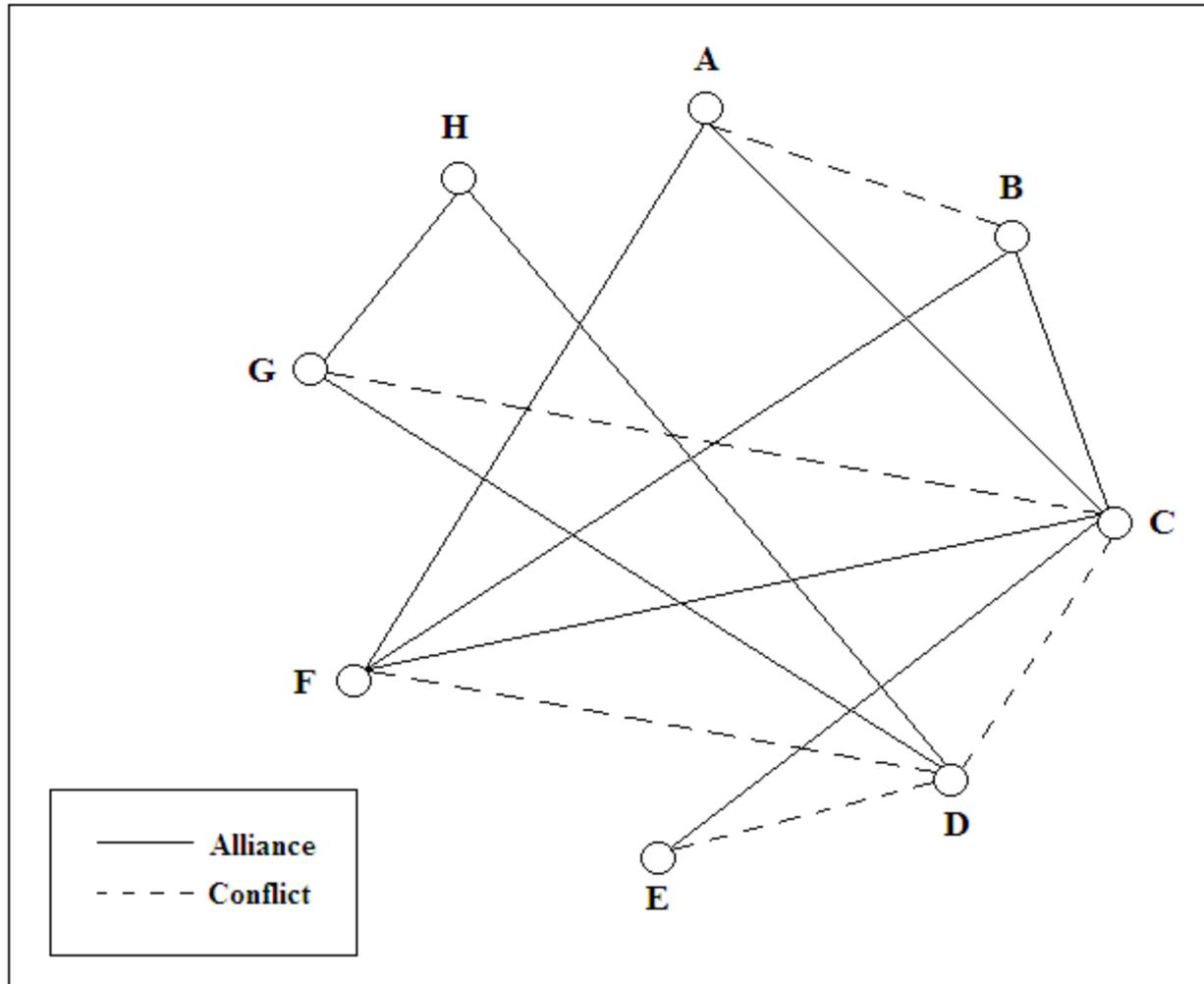


Example 2

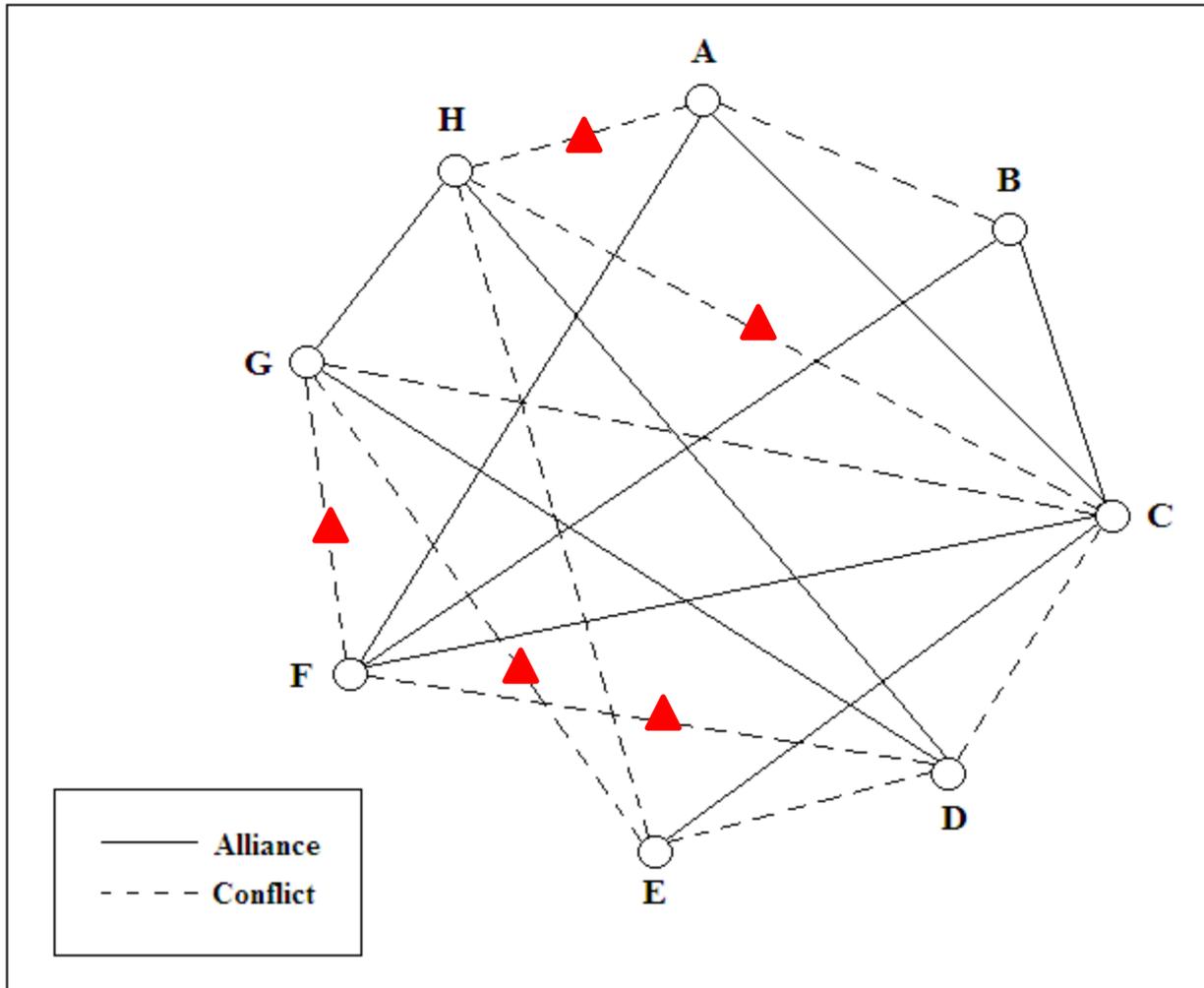
**MORVANT, TRINIDAD**



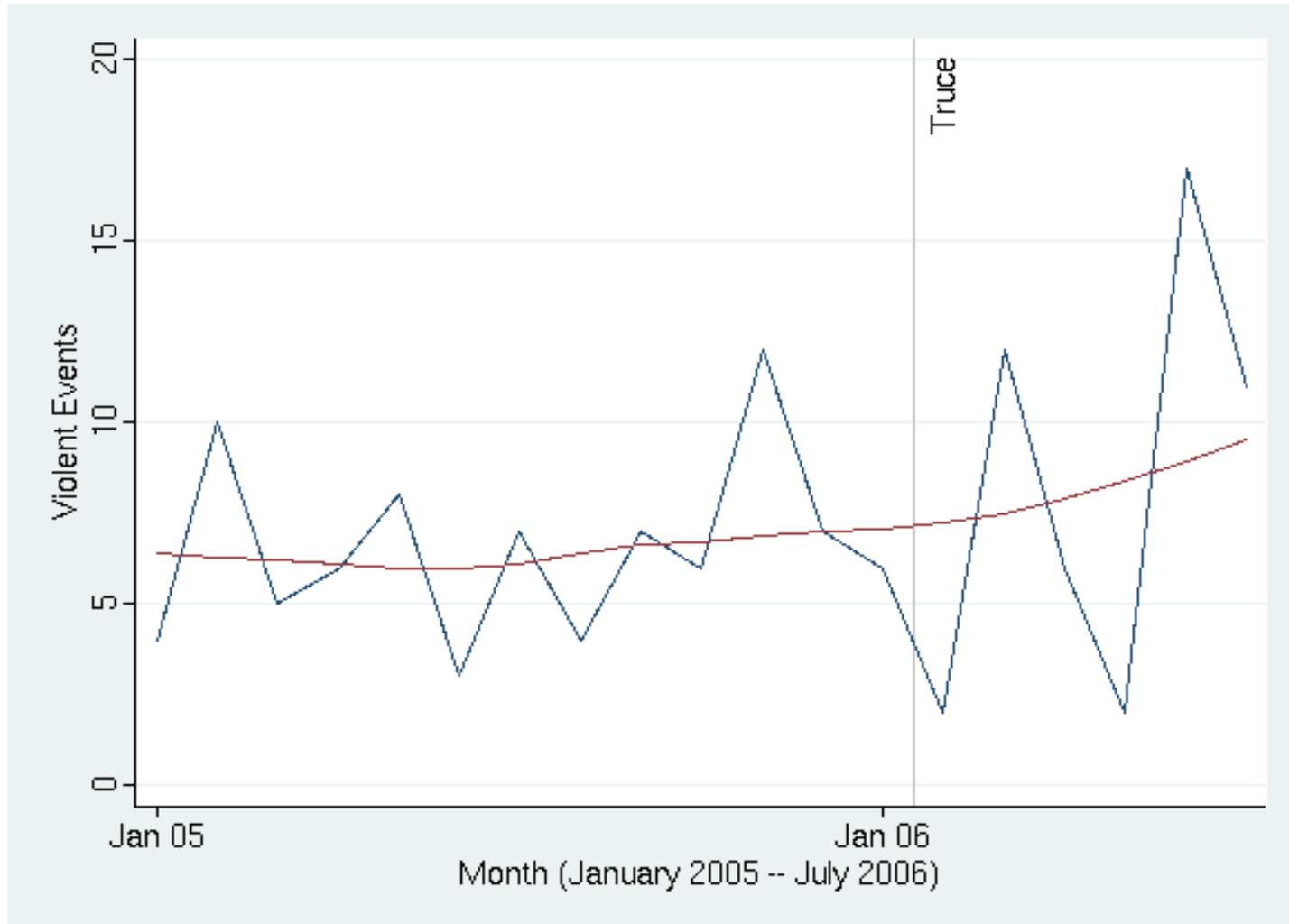
# Gang network (before truce)



# Gang network (after truce)



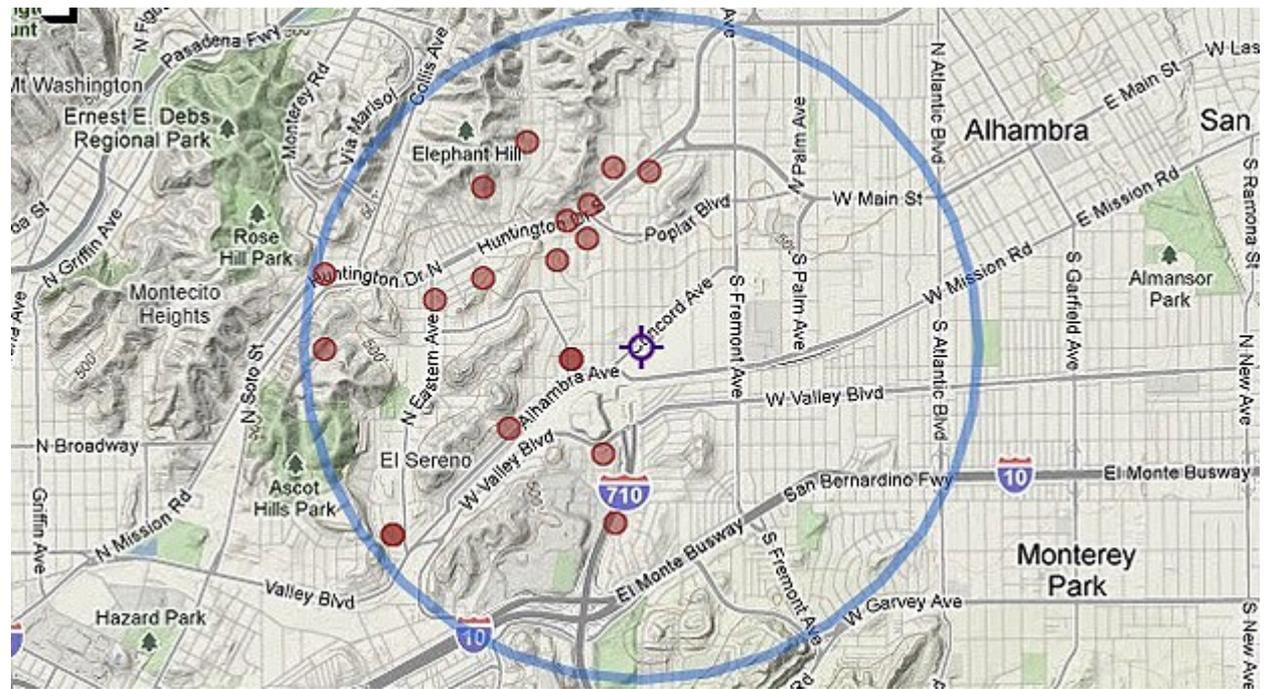
# The effect of the truce on violent crime



# Why did the truce fail?

1. Some gangs did not participate in the truce.
2. Deflecting police away from the participating gangs led police to focus on other gangs.
3. When some gangs laid down their arms, others viewed them as weak and vulnerable.
4. An ongoing tendency to kill “peacemakers.”





# SOME OBSERVATIONS FROM THE RESEARCH LITERATURE



# Malcolm Klein (1995)

- Views truces as unlikely to work because they legitimate the existence of the gang, reinforce the authority of the gang's leader, and promote increased gang cohesion.
- Concludes that “over many years, truces arranged by outsiders have generally been ineffective (or have even backfired)” (p. 232-233).



# National Gang Crime Research Center (1995)

- Concludes that gang truces are “rarely successful and are indeed risky.”
- “We have found no such lasting truce between gangs anywhere. What we have found are ways for gangs to gain additional power, prestige, and recognition in the process of conning otherwise responsible adults into believing that criminal organizations can rehabilitate themselves.”



# Kodluboy & Evenrud (1993)

- Conclude that although mediation between gangs may “sometimes be necessary to forestall immediate violence or prevent loss of life... such mediation increases the risk of validating the gang as a legitimate social entity, thus buying short-term peace at the price of long-term persistence of the gang” (p. 285).



# Conclusion

(1) Some research suggests that gang truces may increase violence.



# Conclusion

- (1) Some research suggests that gang truces may increase violence.
- (2) The typical pattern is a short-term decrease in violence followed by a long-term increase, but the evidence base is sparse.



# Conclusion

(3) Most gang scholars agree that gang members use truces to manipulate the government, businesses, the media, and the public.



# Conclusion

- (3) Most gang scholars agree that gang members use truces to manipulate the government, businesses, the media, and the public.
- (4) Most gang scholars worry about the unintended consequences of truces, particularly their effects on the cohesion and legitimacy of gangs.**



# Conclusion

(5) The truce in El Salvador is worthy of high-quality evaluation research by scholars with access to the necessary medical and police data as well as the gang leaders and other key participants.

This research should be sensitive to the emergence of unintended consequences.



# Photo Credits



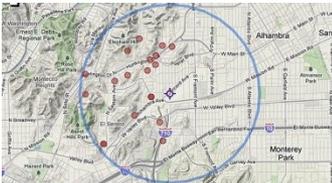
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/54703139@N06/5063930486/in/pool-1544021@N23>



[http://www.flickr.com/photos/me\\_studio/4537995863](http://www.flickr.com/photos/me_studio/4537995863)



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/bbcworldservice/8012927982/in/photostream>



<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/.a/6a00d8341c630a53ef0162fc00f605970d-640wi>



## References

- Klein, Malcolm. 1995. Street Gang Cycles. Pp. 217-236 in *Crime*, eds. James Q. Wilson and Joan Petersilia, Oakland, CA: ICS Press.
- Kodluboy, Donald W., and Loren A. Evenrud. 1993. School-Based Interventions: Best Practice and Critical Issues. In *The Gang Intervention Handbook*, eds. Arnold P. Goldstein and C. Ronald Huff, Champaign, IL: Research Press.
- National Gang Crime Research Center. 1995. *Gang Prevention and Gang Intervention: Preliminary Results from the 1995 Project GANGPINT*. National Needs Assessment Gang Research Task Force.
- Ordog, Gary J., William Shoemaker, Jonathan Wasserberger, and Michael Bishop. 1995. Gunshot Wounds Seen at a County Hospital before and after a Riot and Gang Truce: Part Two. *Journal of Trauma-Injury Infection and Critical Care* 38:417-9.
- Ordog, Gary J., Jonathan Wasserberger, Julius Ibanez, Michael Bishop, Eduardo Velayos, Subramaniam Balasubramaniam, and William Shoemaker. 1993. Incidence of Gunshot Wounds at a County Hospital following the Los Angeles Riot and a Gang Truce. *Journal of Trauma* 34:779-82.

