

# Policing of gangs in rural and urban areas criminology essay



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Gang related crimes and activities are being exported to rural communities and gangs are migrating to more rural areas. Social reasons and drug trafficking are the primary reasons for the spread of drug use and why gangs are developing in rural areas. When concerning the exporting or spreading of urban crimes to rural areas, the migration of gangs and their criminal activities plays a large role. Police strategies make it hard for gangs to stay inside of the metropolitan areas, so gangs are moving their operations to places less known to the police. Gang members find a base for their operations and seek out troubled or lost youth to join their gang. When concerning the methods of policing, policing strategies, and crime, there is a big difference between rural environments and urban environments.

## **Gang Identification**

There are significant indications which identify gang members in a particular group or gang. These indications are specific tattoos, graffiti tags, gang colors, and self identification by youths (Weisheit & Wells, 2001). Law

enforcement officials rely on visual impressions when determining whether or not a youth, or any individual is in a gang. When gang members try to keep a low profile, this can make it especially hard for law enforcement to identify them individually or as a group. Gang members keep low profiles by not getting tattoos that signify their gang, by not wearing any specific color in their dress, and by withholding the use of gang signs.

Many suburban and rural communities are experiencing rises in gang related crimes and violence. However, the impact of gangs is worse the more densely populated areas, especially areas with populations of 50, 000 people or more (Howell, 2006). However, gangs are attracted to rural communities because this way they can grow their drug distribution areas, they can hide from or escape from police, and recruit new members into their gangs.

## **Relocation of Gangs**

Gangs use tools to recruit new gang members and one of these tools is the Internet. The Internet makes communication between them and other gang members in other parts of the country or even in other foreign countries possible. These gangs commit about 80% of the crime in many communities (National Gang Intelligence Center, 2009). Reports of gang related homicides are mainly concentrated in the largest cities in the United States, because gangs are more persistent in these large cities. Youth gangs are also responsible for a disproportionate number of homicides (Howell, 2006). Some of the more common kinds of gang related crimes are smuggling aliens, armed robbery, assault, auto theft, trafficking drugs, fraud, identity theft, home invasions, and murder (National Gang Intelligence Center, 2009).

Gangs deal with the trafficking of illicit drugs such as marijuana and cocaine in most suburban communities.

The impact of gang migration on local gangs is not as large as once thought, but it is still an issue. According to a 2004 National Gang Youth Survey study, which involved information they received from law enforcement of gang member migration, the results showed that a small number of agencies had reported that more than half of the documented gang members had migrated from other areas (Howell, 2006). Of the agencies that experience a larger percentage of gang migration, 45% reported the reason behind the migration was due to social reasons, such as family. They also reported that 23% was due to the drug market, 21% was due to evading law enforcement, and 18% was because of other illegal ventures (Howell, 2006). Social reasons or issues are the driving force behind gang migration.

Gangs spread out into smaller regions or towns because the access to transportation is easy to obtain. The easy access to transportation makes it easier to traffic drugs. Gangs are attracted to trafficking drugs out from small rural areas because of the large profits they can make off of drugs in smaller towns. The street value of drugs in smaller towns is two to three times higher than the value in metropolitan areas (Donnermeyer, 1995). These gang members establish or set up drug dealing businesses or franchises in these rural communities because they can move drugs more securely and safely and because the latest and most popular drugs are available more speedily (Donnermeyer, 2005). Even though there is a focus on urban street gangs in rural areas, biker gangs have a history of criminal activity in rural settings

(Muhammad, 2002). It is also easier in rural areas for gang members to get the local drug dealer(s) to cooperate with them in drug transactions.

Gangs not only migrate from urban settings or regions to rural areas, they also migrate from rural regions to urban areas. These types of gangs are generally known as hate groups. These hate groups include white supremacist groups. There are many members of these white supremacist groups such as Members of the Aryan Nation and Skinheads that are born and raised in rural areas (Donnermeyer, 2005). Since these white supremacist gang members are born and raised in rural areas, they are more likely to first establish gang operations in these rural areas. Once they have their drug franchises established in rural areas, they then reach out and get connected with gang members in the larger cities and then are able to move and set up their operations in the larger metropolitan areas (Donnermeyer, 2005). Once they are settled into the urban area, they have easier access to and can target minority groups.

## **Urban Gangs and Rural Gangs**

There are many similarities between metropolitan and rural gangs.

Metropolitan and rural gangs both are strongly connected with social stability and they both are molded by characteristics of the population (Weisheit & Wells, 2001). According to a study or survey based on police reports on gangs between the years of 1996 and 1998, among the agencies in nonmetropolitan areas; 22.6 percent reported persistent gang problems, 57 percent reported a persistent absence of gangs, and 20.4 percent reported transitory gang problems (Weisheit & Wells, 2001). The biggest difference in urban and rural gangs is the role economic issues have on these groups.

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Economic factors are more important to gangs in urban areas than gangs in rural areas. Gang activity in metropolitan areas has a different relationship to poverty as compared to gang activity in rural areas (Weisheit & Wells, 2001). Gangs are more likely to be reported in nonmetropolitan areas that are growing economically.

## **Police Response to Gangs**

The practices of policing are different from one jurisdiction to another and being able to gain information on the different styles of police behavior can bring about a detailed look into the role of the police in urban and rural communities. There are various types of policing styles when it comes to different rural regions. These differences change from region to region and from one jurisdiction to the next. In one region police may be more involved dealing with illegal immigration and in another region police may be more involved with drug trafficking and/or illegal crops. There are specific issues that influence law enforcement operations in rural communities. These aspects are the informal social control among individuals in the rural community, rural citizens not trusting the government, and keeping their inside problems to themselves (Falcone, Weisheit, & Wells, 1994). Citizens in rural communities are less likely to report crimes and because of this, there is less information gathered on the precise number of crimes that happen in these rural communities.

One way police deal with or respond to gangs in their jurisdiction is through gang training. Police have training on technical assistance that's needed when dealing with gangs and when concerning forming task forces. The most frequent response to gang activity is suppression through strict enforcement, <https://assignbuster.com/policing-of-gangs-in-rural-and-urban-areas-criminology-essay/>

such as the zero tolerance policy, which is more associated with urban police (Weisheit & Wells, 2001). It has been suggested that zero tolerance strategies are easier to implement in smaller communities where gang members were easier to identify. Police use the community and stress the importance of prevention when it comes to gangs and gang activity (Weisheit & Wells, 2001). When it concerns youth in gangs and that have stronger bonds with the community, police tend to focus more on family pressure than on prevention.

## **Conclusion**

There are differences in crimes and policing concerning gangs in rural regions and gangs in urban regions. It seems that the differences of gang related crimes and policing efforts in various jurisdictions and regions may be decreasing but the spread of gang related crimes is finding its way into rural regions. There needs to be more research on rural gangs so rural law enforcement can better understand, be better trained, and be better equipped to deal with these gang members and to be able to prevent and reduce gang related activities. Even though law enforcement agencies in rural areas may be lacking when it comes to tools and resources, rural police agencies seem to be more efficient and more respected by the public.

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