

# Research paper on drugs and gangs

[Law](#), [Criminal Justice](#)



## **Abstract**

This paper explores the history of gangs and their relationship with drugs in the United States. The existing literature shows that gangs have been around since 18th century, they have evolved over the time to carry out different atrocities in the cities. Research has shown that violence is a way of life for the gang members because it is their main system of justice. The paper also identifies the measures that state agencies should use to curb the illicit trade and save the society from the terror that is associated with this trade. The research has shown that the drug trade is also facilitated by other gangs along the supply chain, and they are not necessarily on the street. This paper also evaluates the significance of the street gangs in the supply chain of hard drugs and the establishment of their networks. The conclusions indicate that the gang affiliation is an intentional association with drug connections that include sales and usage. Gangs complex associations with command structures and strict rules of membership.

## **Introduction**

The first active gang in western civilization was reported in 1873 by Pike, a chronicler of the British crime. He documented the existence of highway robber gangs in England in the 17th century, and he speculated that similar gangs might have existed in the United States much earlier, maybe as early as 14th century. Although there were gangs then, they might not have had features of the modern day street gangs. Structured gangs did not appear until 16th century, when Londoner were terrorized by organized gangs that were calling themselves Hectors, Dead Boys, Bugles, Mims and others who

found amusement breaking windows and demolishing taverns, and they use to fight among themselves. The account of street rings in the America started with the emergence of the east coast in 1783 towards the end of American Revolution, but there is significant justification in questioning the seriousness of those early gangs (Williams, 2013, p. 174). The best available evidence suggests that the serious street gangs emerged in the early part of the 19th century.

The rise of gang activities started in four regions of the United States: Midwest, Northwest, west and South regions. There evidence that the gangs that emerged in each of those regions influenced characteristics and the growth of gangs in their respective regions. The gang emergence in Midwest and Northeast was fueled by immigration and poverty, first by the waves of underprivileged, mostly the whites from Europe. As the early immigrants settled in urban areas and formed communities to help each another in the economic struggle, they did not have marketable skill and it was tough for them to secure jobs. The Native Americans discriminated against those immigrants. There was conflicts among between the native and immigrant communities and gangs grew in such environments.

In the western region, gangs grew out of the preexisting Mexican culture which was fueled by subsequent Mexican migrations. Los Angeles, Albuquerque and El Paso were initially populated by migrant groups beside the route from Mexico to California. The continuing arrival of Mexicans further fueled gang growth.

The Midwest, northeast and western states would soon be overwhelmed with another wave of migrants, Africa-American populations that migrated

westward and northward from the south. Other gang mixtures including Latinos, Dominicans, Samoans, Thais, Koreans and others would later populate the gang landscape. The Native American would emerge later. The internal migration of the blacks fueled the growth of extra wave of gang activities. The effect was a predominantly Mexican black and white gangs with varying degree of influence.

Another mix of immigrant would arrive after the mid-1960s. Through the Immigration and Nationality act of 1965, the United States government ended the quotas on foreigners in the United States. That law led to a shift in immigration to the United States, from European origin to central, Asian and South Americans. The new groups consisted mainly of Latin Americans, Asians and others, by 1980s, the children of many American-born parents had reached adolescent age or they were young adult and the youth formed gangs in the classic immigrant gang tradition. The urban centers where these gang members that belong to the second generation settled experienced juvenile delinquency in recent past. Gang related crimes like abuse and distribution of drugs in many cities began accelerating in the 1970s and growing gradually through 1990s.

Conventionally, gangs use to operate in larger urban areas that were experiencing rapid population change. In those transitional communities, diverse racial and ethnic grouping find themselves in habitual competition with one another. The homicide rates and inter gang conflict over the territorial ownership for mainly drug distribution are common. Areas that house the financially lower urban class eventually evolve to permanently disorganized neighborhoods where the social controls and structures

mechanisms have broken down. The group shifts slows down in those areas allowing the pattern of felonious behavior and tradition to develop over the years.

Although people think that gangs are solely an urban phenomenon, an estimated fifteen thousand gangs with three hundred members each survive in peripheral counties, small cities and rural areas. The emergence of gangs in the residential counties and suburban areas has been attributed to a reformation of the populace. There have been enormous movements of societies from the central urban to distant communities and outskirts causing an upsurge in the number of the gang's effect. Gang communications involve their sense of the area that they control. Most of the gang members live close to each other, and their feelings of belonging spreads only to a small region of the metropolis. A gang may be formed by members of ethnic minority of self-preservation. As the group as a group gain domination over a territory, it may view the area as its own turf which need to be defended from the outsider who might be seeking to capture their markets for drugs.

Once the gang is established, it expands as the youth who admire the senior members are accepted as they seek to join the group. At times when they are accepted they are given special identity that reflects their status. To assume leadership roles, members earn their status by hitting the targets of illicit drug sales, surviving jail terms, athletic distinction, and verbal quickness or fighting skills. Most gangs have a clear chain of command and leaders who are in control manage the member errant behavior (Stoli, Dukes, & Smith, 2013, p. 84). That plays the stability role for the new

entrants of the gang members as they learn the drill. Regardless of the nature of their members criminal acts, the members always supports the actions of their associates.

Research indicates that the gang violence is impulsive and involves defense of the gang and their member's reputations. Violence is a core factor in gang's formation and its existence (Harding, 2014, p. 369). Member marks and protects their territory at all cost. Once a member is initiated to the gang, they consider the gang as their family, and they protect and cover each other as a group from the law enforcers or from rival gang members. Majority of gangs put their members through hazing process to make sure they can withstand the cruel torture from the law enforcers if they are caught and not divulge the secrets of the gang. As it happens with rites of passage in the tribal societies, the initiation in the gang membership is regarded as the death of childhood for the youth. Boys in lower class urban area strife to join the gangs and start life. Their membership in a gang means they gives up their childish way of life and assume the new responsibilities that come with gang membership. Individuals join gangs during periods of economic and social turmoil. Mass exodus or rapid increase in population can create fragmented societies and gangs may be established in such settings. Gangs that deals with drugs has an appeal to adolescents that are alienated from their families or their communities. Consequently children that have suffered juvenile justice are more likely to join a gang compared to the other children, however; there are many factors that can lead to gang involvement.

The subject of lack can sometimes compel individuals to join gangs. Despite

the economic odds that face the current generation, people continue to desire prestige, life comforts, material possessions, classy gadgets and lots of monies. Citizens of the lower class who cannot afford their wishes through the conventional means and some of them seek illegal means as their alternatives to achieve their dreams. Some end up joining gangs in order to get into the lucrative drug business.

Some youth may make a rational choice of joining gang. In some cases, joining gangs that deal with drugs is an employment decision to earn their living. Some studies that has been done suggest that some individuals choose to join gangs after they assess the legitimate chances of making money.

Adolescents who are new to certain communities may choose to join gangs for safety purposes. In some communities, the youth who are not affiliated to the local gangs are prone to attacks and gets harassed. Youth who live in neighborhoods that are proliferated with gangs and drugs is likely to be persuaded to join gangs. The motivation of joining gangs may have its roots in inter-ethnic or inter-race rivalry. Depending on the exposure, some people join gangs to in order to have fun. They enjoy hanging out with other and getting involved in some exciting experiences like taking drugs. Studies have shown that youths are introduced into drugs by their peers who may have an affiliation to a gang, the idea of having a gang member as a friend directs one to join a gang. Some gang members have limited contact with their parents, and many of them are unemployed and have drug abuse problems. The United States correctional institution are also breeding grounds for gangs. With many gang members serving jail terms at all times, the gangs

have extended their command to the prisons, and the non-member is sometimes forced to join the gangs while in prison in order to enjoy the protection that comes with being a member. After their reentry to the society majority of the new members from the prisons joins the outside members of the gang and continue with the trade. The illegal trade of hard drug thrives well in gang setting due to their extensive network and the lure of the money to fund their other illegal activities.

The selling of illegal drugs in the U. S. is one of the most lucrative and the most violent business in the world today. The street corner drug sales are the fiscal backbone to the majority of the gangs on the international and national level. Gang members are the critical to the overall supply chain of the drugs for both the international and the national level. Drugs from the international trafficking cartels reach the end user through the street gangs. The gang member's makeup the bulk of the street level sales of drugs in the populated centers across the country.

The international drug cartels need the street gangs for them to get the drugs to the end user on the street, just as the gang members relies on the traffickers in getting their supplies flowing. The law enforcement on the gang members is very critical in fighting the drug menace because it affects the supply chain all the way up.

The U. S. government have a responsibility to protect its citizens from the various threats that are caused by the thriving illegal business of hard drugs as they get into the community (Phillips, 2012, p. 5). Over the years, traffickers have established smuggling routes that have strong family and ethnic ties. The fact that Mexico has no chemical control legislation and also



lacks effective export laws makes the fight of drugs difficult. The profits made from drugs are staggering compared to what they pay their law enforcement agencies as salaries, and this makes the bribery of their officers a common occurrence.

According to the department of justice, United States has a coastline of 88663 miles and more than 7, 500 miles of border with Canada and Mexico including more than 300 ports of entry. The Mexico/U. S border is over 2000 miles long and with so many individuals and transferences and inadequate resources that smuggling is rampant.

The violent crimes in American societies are mainly due to the illegal drugs. Violence occurs in connection with gangs and drugs as the addict struggle to fund their addiction by getting money via illegal means (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, Goldweber, Johnson, 2013, p. 225). The uses of some of those drugs leads to impaired cognitive function and often commits violent crimes while under the drug influence. Violence also may happen as the traffickers and dealers force their way to the new territories that belong to rival gangs. The street gangs also commits violent crimes as they use force to make their customers pay or protect their territory from other gangs using force.

As the legitimate transaction and organizations pursue justice through the established laws and established justice systems, the gangs and drug cartels rely on themselves to settle scores by use of violence. Violence is their effective way to force their way into new territories, curb unfair trade practices, and discipline their errant members of the gang (Volkman, Fraga, Brodine, Iñiguez-Stevens, Cepeda, Elder, 2013, p. 67). The gang members usually results to violence at the slightest provocation in the course of

transacting business.

Gangs are present at all levels of the drugs process including the cultivators, manufacturers, smugglers, distributors, dealers, traffickers, body packers and importers. The cultivators are those who do the farming, they plant, nurture and harvest the raw drug plants. The manufacturer gangs convert the raw materials into finished products.

Importer gangs devise ways to transport the drug into the different destinations. Smugglers help the importer gangs to arrange the passage routes, run the ships, aircrafts or other automobiles for transport purposes. Enforcer gangs protect the shipment and the storage from informants or from being stolen. Dealer gangs rule the street as they are the ones who deliver the products to the consumer.

There are different levels of gang activities; the street gang level is the most essential to get the intelligence on the patterns of systemic violence and on what gang controls in terms of territories. Violence is the main tool that is used to expand the gang territory or for protecting the current turf.

Vehemence is either used to terrorize competitors or to respond against the rivalry in an effort to drive the rival gangs out of business.

Understanding how violence is used by the drug peddlers' at the street level is a crucial role of gang delinquency analysis (Nadelmann, 2014, p. 783).

Being able to approximate fairly expectable responses can help in sweeps, raids and other operations in a productive and timely manner.

At the middle level gang, the dealer is mainly a poly drug distributor, they have access to just about any drug and in different quantities. Often, the middle gang members cross the gang ranks and face the individuals who

may be a competitor on the street. They have got consistent and steady supply of drugs. They own properties; they get skilled lawyers in the case of arrests, and they rely on the dealers to sustain and grow their business. They operate within an exclusive area, and they use counter surveillance techniques to secure their territory.

The middle level dealers usually have connections to major narcotic networks, and they often communicate with traffickers from other countries or the smugglers in the port cities, in the United States (Maxwell, 2011, p. 267). The middle level intelligence analysis includes the phone call records, association, financial analysis and event flow analysis.

At the major level, the gang operates within a well mapped out territories, internationally or nationally where exclusive networks exists for the smuggling, manufacture and distribution of large quantities of narcotics. Major level is syndicate that can be a ring, a posse or a cartel (Gonzales, Mooney, Rawson, 2010, p. 267). The undercover operations at this level are hazardous, and the members do not deal with strangers. In most cases, they have connections that might need bilateral cooperation's with the law agencies of other countries.

Major dealers often use legitimate businesses as outlets to sell their merchandises, at a different location away from the illegal substance to conceal their annals, and as a way to clean the loot of their drug dealings (Gaines, Kremling, 2013, p. 4). A big chunk of their cash is channeled into legitimate buys, and some are hidden within legitimate bank accounts and later used for legitimate business investments.

Law enforcement should target the gang assets and money as well as the

companies that launder their illegal gains. Strict legislation can be used to reduce the profitability of drug dealings for the street gangs and make it hard for them to launder money by use of enforcement. The state enforcement might require a multidisciplinary approach that would include cooperation between related institutions and law enforcement with strict laundering laws and regulations. Gang members do not report their illegal loot to the IRS; some buy legitimate companies to make the illegal monies to appear legitimate so that they can spend it at will.

Major gangs always maintains soft copy records of the various electronic gadgets. Some maintain books, lists, notation, ledgers and memoranda's that assist them to manage their illegal enterprises. They frequently keep the records of past transactions, inventories, income, expenses and status of their accounts. These materials are created in the same manner and for the same motives as individuals involved in genuine business retain similar materials. Consequently the status of inventories, expenses, income and the like are all relevant evidence which tend to identify those that engage in illegal trafficking of the illicit substances. It is clear that drugs and gangs are major threats to the safety of society; they destroy families, individuals and the entire communities. They also act as a facilitator for the various violent crimes that are committed. The United States government should seek and use alternative ways to minimize the existence of these gangs. A blow to street gangs is a blow to the illicit drugs trade. Surveillance mechanisms should be put in place by the government to prevent proliferation of gangs influence to the state agencies. Studies have shown that, for the trade of drugs to be successful, state officers are part of the people who get

compromised to sympathize with traffickers for kickbacks. To alleviate gangs the government should also deal with unemployment and standard of living. It should also reform the correctional facilities to efficiently prepare the prisoners for their reentry after they finish serving their sentence. The state should also fund programs that would constructively harness the energy of the youth for objective gains to prevent them from getting lured to the illegal trades.

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