

What Is The Nexus Between Organized Crime and Gangs?

by

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Abstract

Among the major threats to homeland security and law enforcement are the phenomena's of gangs and organized crime. The concepts of these entities are complex and often are difficult to distinguish and define. Many gangs function in similar fashion as organized or transnational crime groups. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the "nexus" of gangs to organized crime. The results of the research reveal that many gangs can be considered as organized entities because they maintain a hierarchical organization structure, a division of labor, maintain international operations and operate in more than one criminal activity. Moreover, the research has shown that gangs and organized crime commit overlapping crimes such as drug and human trafficking and murder. There is a trend of gangs evolving into organized transnational organized crime,

Introduction

Among the major threats to homeland security and law enforcement are the phenomena's of gangs and organized crime. The concepts of these entities are complex and often are difficult to distinguish and define. Many gangs function in similar fashion as the organized or transnational crime groups that have evolved throughout the world. This paper will analyze the nexus of gangs to organized crime. There really is no one single Mafia. Italian organized crime is represented by the Sicilian Mafia, La Cosa Nostra, Camorra, 'Ndrangheta (Calabrian Mafia), and the Sacra Corona Unita (United Sacred Crown). The FBI estimates that all of the different variations of Italian Organized Crime have about 25,000 members that are supported by 250,000 affiliates worldwide. All of these factions have some representation in the United States. However in the United States, La Cosa Nostra is by far the largest and is what most Americans traditionally view as being the American Mafia. (FBI, 2014a) For purposes of comparison, this paper will look at traditional American organized crime as represented by the La Cosa Nostra (LCN), outlaw motorcycle gangs, and American street gangs such as Chicago based street gangs (Folk and People) and. Los Angeles based street gangs (Crips and Bloods).

Characteristics That Define Organized Crime

Organized crime has been described as both a loose knit and highly structured organization. In any case, the difficulty of prosecution increases as a group becomes organized and structured where rules and discipline are employed. Organized crime is a business that provides illegal services and goods as the public demands. Without public demand, these organizations would not be in existence. Still another aspect of organized crime is corruption. Historically, corruption has been only applied mostly to law enforcement. Corruption also includes the business community (i.e. banks and financial institutions in particular), and any government official or politician, and members of a community. Mallory (2012) observed that most organized criminal groups have common observable characteristics. While each individual group may not practice each and every one, the majority of these characteristics will be found in the group. The characteristics that Mallory observed include:

1. Employs rules and discipline with codes of secrecy.
2. Perpetual existence.
3. Invest in legal enterprises and use these as fronts for illegal operations.
4. Operates in more than one state and most often internationally
5. Operates in more than one criminal activity.
6. Has hierarchical organization structure.
7. Applies violence and intimidation.
8. Applies long-term or strategic planning.
9. Employs monopoly of goods and services.
10. Has restricted membership and rituals for initiation into the organization.
11. Supplies goods and services demanded by the public.
12. Produces significant income.
13. Engages in money laundering.
14. Gains control of legitimate business by investing in illegal profits.
15. Has a division of labor.
16. Has international operations.
17. Remains dynamic displaying the ability to adapt to public demand, law enforcement, and rivalry from other criminal organizations.

Organization and History

As with organized crime, gangs may be defined by the numbers and activities of a group. The term organization is most often the characteristic that separates this type of criminal activity from individual criminal activity. The term describes a group of individuals who cooperate to accomplish the goals of the group such as power and wealth. Among the advantages of organization are:

Gang constitutions/ rules that offer efficiency and effectiveness

- Leadership/ structure that guides and offers a vision/ goals
- Defines authority and responsibility
- Offers a purpose for the group and why they exist
- Specialization of functions for individuals or units
- Rules for becoming a member
- Offers insulation of leadership such as cells that operate without knowledge of members or cells.

As viewed from the above list, organized gangs or organized crime operate in a similar manner as corporations or businesses and bureaucracies as described by Max Weber (1947) with a hierarchy of authority, a division of labor, and specialization training or mentoring to improve the function of the bureaucracy. The added advantage of extreme profits, ruthless leadership/ authority, and extreme penalties for disloyalty or failure make these criminal organizations a formidable adversary for governments and law enforcement.

La Cosa Nostra (LCN)

The roots of LCN begin in New Orleans in 1869 when Italian immigrants who had been involved with the Sicilian Mafia in the old country began to ply their trade along the waterfronts and back alleys of the city. (Asbury, 2003) The FBI (2014a) observed that: “Giuseppe Esposito was the first known Sicilian Mafia member to emigrate to the U.S. He and six other Sicilians fled to New York after murdering the chancellor and a vice chancellor of a Sicilian province and 11 wealthy landowners. He was arrested in New Orleans in 1881 and extradited to Italy. New Orleans was also the site of the first major Mafia incident in this country. On October 15, 1890, New Orleans Police Superintendent David Hennessey was murdered execution-style. Hundreds of Sicilians were arrested, and 19 were eventually indicted for the murder. An acquittal generated rumors of widespread bribery and intimidated witnesses. Outraged citizens of New Orleans organized a lynch mob and killed 11 of the 19 defendants. Two were hanged, nine were shot, and the remaining eight escaped.”

Asbury (2003) noted that Hennessey had been corrupted by the Mafia and chose the wrong side in a conflict that had developed involving a local Don named Charles Matranga. Matranga was indicted, but the charges were dismissed by a local judge. According to Petacco (1974) by 1898, NYPD detective LT Joe Petrosino had begun to make the connection between Italian immigrant criminal groups that were terrorizing the local Italian immigrant population and the Sicilian Mafia from whence they had come. Petrosino was murdered by the Mafia while investigating them during a visit to Sicily in 1909. (Raab, 2006; Zion, 1994; Petacco, 1974) The American version of the Sicilian Mafia began to evolve into a uniquely American enterprise. This was accelerated by the arrival of Prohibition in 1919 with the Volstead Act.

In the 1920's and 1930's LCN began to evolve from small local enterprises into larger more cohesive criminal entities that fought vicious gang wars over turf and the control of the booze trade. Prohibition of alcohol and later drugs were the impetuses for the expansion of organized crime in the United States. Out of this era came the 5 LCN families of New York, the Outfit in Chicago, and bosses such as Carlos Marcello of New Orleans,

which was a major part of LCN. (Raab, 2006; Zion, 1994)

Ousely (2011) observed that: “Cosa Nostra came to be as the result of a bloody struggle between Italian-Sicilian crime societies in New York City in 1931. With the cessation of hostilities, the groups consolidated and united similar crime groups in some 26 U.S. cities. These structured, disciplined ‘families,’ restricted to men of Italian descent, insinuated themselves into the political, economic and social fabric of their cities, They were dedicated to an everlasting lifespan and preserved intact through good times and bad, with succession to leadership as certain as that of the throne of Great Britain.”

LCN is a hierarchical criminal organization and has a fixed medieval para-military leadership structure organized into various families. (Calder & Lynch, 2008; Balsamo, 2006) In this organizational structure the “royalty” is represented by the Boss or Don (Capo Crimine or Capofamiglia), the Underboss (Capo Bastone or Soto Capo), and the Consigliere or counselor. The Capo (Captain, Caporegime, or Capodecina) commands a group of Soldiers or “Made Men” (Sgarrista or Soldato). The Soldiers are also sometimes called Uomini D’onore or “Men of Honor”. Some families have low ranking members known as Picciotto or “little man” who serve as enforcers. All LCN families have Associates (Giovane D’Onore) who while not “Made Men” work for the family in one criminal capacity or another. (FBI, 2014b)

LCN families have operated in or currently operate in: Buffalo, New York (Magaddino crime family); Chicago, Illinois (The Outfit); Cleveland, Ohio (Licavoli crime family); Dallas, Texas (Dallas crime family); Denver, Colorado (Smaldone crime family); Detroit, Michigan (Detroit Partnership sometimes called the Zerilli crime family); Kansas City, Missouri (Kansas City crime family sometimes known as the Civella crime family); Los Angeles, California (Los Angeles crime family); Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Milwaukee crime family sometimes called the Balistrieri crime family); Providence, Rhode Island and Boston Massachusetts (New England crime family sometimes known as the Patriarca crime family); Elizabeth, New Jersey (DeCavalcante crime family); New Orleans, Louisiana (New Orleans crime family formerly called the Matranga family or the Dixie Mafia); New York, New York (home of the Five Families: Bonanno crime family, Colombo crime family, Gambino crime family, Genovese crime family, and Lucchese crime family); Northeast Pennsylvania (Bufalino crime family); Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Philadelphia crime family sometimes called Bruno crime family or the Scarfo crime family); Pittsburg, Pennsylvania (Pittsburg crime family sometimes know as the LaRocca crime family); Rochester, New York (Rochester crime family); San Francisco, California (San Francisco crime family sometimes known as the Lanza crime family); San Jose, California (San Jose crime family sometimes known as the Cerrito Crime Family); St. Louis, Missouri (St. Louis crime family sometimes known as the Giordano crime family); and Tampa, Florida (Tampa Mafia sometimes known as the Trafficante crime family). Due to vigorous prosecutions over the last 50 years by the FBI, some of these LCN families are decimated or even defunct. The FBI (2014a) estimates that there are approximately 3,000 active members of LCN in the United States. Many of the LCN families use associates to insulate their members from

prosecution and as force multipliers to add to their numbers to conduct criminal operations. Lindberg, Petrenko, Gladden and Johnson (1997) in a study for the Chicago Crime Commission found that there were about 70 “made men” in the Chicago Outfit. However they noted that these 75 “made men” of the Chicago Outfit were supported by an estimated 700 to 1,200 associates in their criminal activities.

Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMG)

Beginning in 1935 with the Outlaws MC, Outlaw motorcycle gangs begin to form and expand rapidly after the “Hollister Incident” in 1947. (Hayes & Quattlebaum, 2009) The International Outlaw Motorcycle Gang Investigator’s Association (IOMGIA, 2014) estimated that there are 375 Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs in the United States. Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs can range from <25 members with single chapters to Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs with several thousands of members and hundreds of chapters worldwide. Many of the smaller Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs are allied with larger Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs for protection or drug distribution. These smaller Outlaw Motorcycle clubs are often known as support club, duck clubs or bunny clubs. (Barker, 2007) The National Gang Intelligence Center estimated that in 2011 there were approximately 44,000 members of outlaw motorcycle gangs in the United States. (NGIC, 2013) The IOMGIA also estimates that there are over 100 Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs in Canada, Asia, Africa, and Europe. Most outlaw motorcycle gangs outside the United States have ties to U.S. counterparts with the same name.

Almost all outlaw motorcycle gangs exhibit a hierarchal gang structure and have a business structure. The individual motorcycle clubs are divided into individual chapters. (Flaco & Droben, 2013; Barker, 2007) Most chapters have an elected president, vice president, treasurer, sergeant at arms and enforcers. Many OMG’s have national officers. Some have regional officers. (RCMP, 2007) The exception is the Pagans MC which has a ruling council. Although they flaunt their club’s colors, the outlaw biker lives under a strict set of club rules. Most clubs have a written constitution and rule breakers are punished severely.

Chicago Based Street Gangs: Folk and People

Gangs are nothing new in Chicago. Asbury observed that by 1857 there already existed large groups of armed criminal thugs who had formed into gangs for the purpose of continuing their criminal enterprises. (Asbury, 1986) The gangs engaged in murders, robberies, burglaries, thefts, prostitution, and illegal liquor sales on Sunday. Like their brethren in the Five Points District in New York, the Gangs of Chicago quickly became involved in local politics. However, they largely stayed a local affair and stuck to their own territories. (Asbury, 1989) By 1927 the street gang problem in Chicago had grown exponentially with the population of the city. A 1927 study by Dr. Frederic M. Thrasher found that there were 1,313 youth gangs in Chicago and that did not even count the more traditional adult gangs like Al Capone’s gang and other mobsters who were in the middle of a bloody gang war at the time. (Thrasher, 2000) While the adult gangs were involved

in local politics, all of the Chicago's gangs were still a largely local operation staying within their well defined territories. To stray outside of those territories meant war with the next gang over and their allies. (Howell and Moore, 2010)

However, in the late 1950's and early 1960's Chicago street gangs began to evolve. Beginning in the jails and juvenile correctional facilities of Cook County, new players began to form gangs. These gangs were strictly local affairs at first and did not have very many members, the drug trade in the 1960's and 1970's changed all of that. Chicago based street gangs became very organized with visible leadership structures. The gangs divided into two basic groups the Folk and the People and began to grow. The Folk and the People gradually evolved into 28 distinct gangs in each alliance. The Chicago based street gangs developed a hierarchical leadership structure often on a business or paramilitary model. The gangs usually have written constitutions and a strict set of rules for their members. Some gangs even gave their members business cards that listed the members of their particular set. Some of the original gangs wore "War Sweaters" that looked like a high school letterman's sweater with gang insignia or patches to identify gang membership. They also began to use two and sometimes three colors to identify their gang. Because more than one gang might use the same colors, the way that the colors were arranged indicated which gang was being represented. The Folk would generally wear their clothing to the right and the People would generally wear their clothing to the left.

As the Chicago based street gangs expanded their memberships, they also began to expand their areas of operations into the surrounding cities and even into surrounding states following the drug markets and the movements of their members. Some gang expansion was based on drug supply, some on the movements of gang members into other areas. Laskey (1996) observed that well meaning family members who tried to remove their children (who were gang members) from the gang environment by relocating them to another city or state did not end the child's gang membership. The gang member simply started a new branch of their gang in the new area. Laskey call this "The Familial Gang Transplant Phenomenon". In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Hagedorn (1998) observed that in the 1980's many local Milwaukee gangs began to identify with Chicago based street gangs either because of contact with Chicago gang members or to protect themselves from other local gang rivals. The result of this gang expansion and the competition for turf area in the drug trade was a series of street gang wars that dramatically increased the levels of violent crime in Chicago. (Block and Block, 1993)

The gangs of Chicago have continued to evolve. They still basically fall into either the Folk or People Nations. However as time has passed some individual gangs in each alliance have disbanded either through death, imprisonment or disinterest. Some have even switched sides from Folk to People or People to Folk. New neighborhood gangs have stepped up to take their place in the alliances. Although the Chicago based street gangs did not spread as fast or as far as their Los Angeles based counterparts, they did expand and are continuing to do so. Some of the gangs in both the Folk and the People now have expanded over several states to be nationwide. Some of the gangs in the Folk and the People are still only operating in the neighborhood that they started in or nearby areas. However,

these neighborhood gangs have been in continuous operation for over 50 years. Chicago Based Street Gangs like the Folk and People Nations are hierarchical criminal organizations and have a para-military structure in their nations. (Buccellato, 2013)

Los Angeles Based Street Gangs: Crips and Bloods

During the late 1970's and early 1980's two groups of largely African-American street gangs began to evolve very rapidly due largely to changes in the cocaine drug market and the newly available product of rock or crack cocaine. (NDIC, 1998) Two groups developed separately in different cities and in different areas of the country, but came to dominate the drug market and often absorbed local gangs or forced them out through hostile takeovers. The two groups were the Los Angeles based street gangs (Crips & Bloods) and the Chicago based street gangs (Folk & People). The structures of the two groups were very different. Buccellato (2013) observed that the Chicago based street gang were based on a hierarchical structure, while, Los Angeles based street gangs were describe as being institutionalized and had a much looser structure. The expansion of Chicago based street gangs and Los Angeles based street gangs from their home cities changed the face of gang crime in the United States. Local law enforcement, being unfamiliar with these new groups had to face some very new challenges and make changes in their own operations to meet this new criminal threat. The gang problem went from being a largely local issue to becoming a nationwide law enforcement problem.

Prior to 1968, street gangs in the Los Angeles area were largely a local affair. Each ethnic group had their own gangs and turf area . Although African-American street gangs had existed in the Los Angeles area since the 1920's, after 1969 two particular groups: the Crips and the Bloods began to dominate the Los Angeles Gang scene (Clemons, Rossi, & Van De Kamp, 1990). Quicker and Batani-Khalfani observed that in the early 1970's groups identifying themselves as Crips and Bloods began to appear all over South Los Angeles "like wildflowers after a spring rain storm". These gangs began to supplant or replace local street gangs in the area. (Quicker & Batanti-Khalfani, 1998) Although even with their expansion, the Crips and Bloods still remained a very local affair in the Los Angeles area until early 1980's.

In the 1980's the fast growing trade in "rock cocaine" or crack fueled a rapid expansion of both the Crips and the Bloods from their local Los Angeles roots. The Crips and Bloods expanded their drug selling operations to the Mississippi river in the 1980's. By the early 1990's the Crips and Bloods had expanded their gang franchise nationwide with an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 gang members.(Clemons, Rossi, & Van De Kamp, 1990, p.1) These new gangs often operated like hamburger restaurant franchises selling their product under the national brand name, but with a local flair to meet local conditions. In order to conduct their criminal operations, the Crips and Bloods operate in small groups. Individual groups of Crips and Bloods are known sets. The sets often take geographical locators as a part of their set name, such as 22nd street. Often these geographical locators do not refer to the actual area that the set operates in, but rather a street or location in the Los Angeles area. Typically sets run from around 10-40 members each.

While the Crips have expanded from a neighborhood based local gang in the Los Angeles area to a nationwide drug selling operation they have no central organization. They are a series of independent operations sometimes cooperating with each other, other times not. Walker (2014) observed that “The Crips is a loose association of some 200 gangs, many of which are at war with one another, and none of whom recognizes or exerts any kind of authority. Individual groups are equally marginal in their organization. Most are loosely knit coalitions of small, autonomous cliques.” Because of their loose organizational structure combined with their long history, Buccellato (2013) described the Crips as an institutionalized gang.

While the Crip sets do not recognize any central leader they do recognize a type of seniority within the set. A gang member who was there when the set was founded is known as an “O.G.” or Original Gangster. The Crips prefer a leaderless type of organization rationalizing that if they elect or appoint a leader, when that leader is killed or captured it will adversely affect the operations of the set. The Crips have a saying as to their organizational structure and plans, “We don’t die, we just multiply!” In keeping with their loose structure, the Crips and Bloods have rules that are passed down by oral history. However, the rules are just as vigorously enforced as in the other groups.

Knox (1997) found that the structure of the Crips assisted in their rapid expansion throughout the United States saying: “Because Crips have an imitative informal structure, it is a gang that is easily ‘transplanted’ . Using the ‘familial gang transplant phenomenon’ as an explanation, a mother might upon discovering her son was a ‘Crip’ decide to ‘move’ to a new geographical area, thinking this move would remove her son from the evil clutches of gang influence, only to find that in the new location her son starts up a new chapter of the same gang! A Crip gang is easily “imitated” as well and can therefore begin within in any new geographical area simply by means of ‘emulation’ . There are few rules, few ‘prayers’ , no lengthy written constitution to remember. Unlike Gangster Disciples, there are no detailed typed ‘memos’ from the top leader that are regularly distributed to the ‘troops’ on the front line. The dress colors, the demeanor, the hand signs, the music forms, the cultural argot and linguistic expressions, the ‘values’ --- these are all spread through the mass media, and are therefore readily available to the ‘wannabe’ gang member.”

The National Gang Intelligence Center’s 2011 Gang National Gang Threat Assessment reported that Crips were found in the following states: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Washington. (NGIC, 2013, p.49-79) Other sources report the presence of Crips in Belize and Canada.

In 1969 a rival gang called the Bloods also formed in Los Angeles. Clemons, Rossi and Van De Kamp found that “The Bloods originally developed to protect themselves from the Crips gang members. The Bloods gangs originated in the Compton area in Southern California. The first Bloods gang was a group of youths from Piru Street in Compton who named themselves the Compton Pirus. They adopted the color red because most members

attended or lived near Centennial High School in Compton where red is a school color.” (Clemons, Rossi, & Van De Kamp, 1990) Valdez observed that two of the original Bloods members were Sylvester Scott and Benson Owens who were both students at Centennial High School in Compton and lived on Piru Street. (Valdez, 2001) Other groups in the neighborhoods began calling themselves Brims. It is these two groups that combined to become the Bloods. The Bloods began as a local affair and conducted their criminal activities locally. With the advent of crack cocaine and the expanding opportunities that drug presented, the Bloods (like their Crip opponents) began to rapidly expand. At first, the Blood expanded throughout California and latter Eastward across the United States.

Prior to 1993, the Bloods sets had a similar organizational structure to their rivals the Crips. That is to say there was no central organized leadership and O.G.’s or Original Gangster held sway within individual sets. The Bloods never had as many sets as the Crips but they did not usually fight among themselves. Because of their loose organizational structure combined with their long history, Buccellato (2013) described the Bloods as an institutionalized gang. Beginning in 1993, Bloods incarcerated at Riker’s Island in the New York City’s jail system began to organize among themselves to form a prison gang. The result was the United Blood Nation. The UBN is a hierarchical gang with a much more formal leadership structure than the traditional Bloods sets. The UBN spread from the jails to the streets and westward back toward California. Some Bloods sets have embraced the new structure of the UBN and others have chosen to remain with the looser traditional Blood’s gang structure. The mixture has not seemed to cause inter-set fighting among the Bloods. The Bloods maintain a very loose alliance with the Chicago based People Nation, but will fight sets from that group if interests in drug trade or turf occur.

The National Gang Intelligence Center’s 2011 Gang National Gang Threat Assessment reported that Bloods were found in the following states: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming. (NGIC, 2013) Other sources report the presence of Bloods in Belize and Canada.

Organized Crime and Gangs Practice Selective Membership

Street gangs, outlaw motorcycle gangs, and organized crime have a need to keep the nature of their business from the prying eyes of the local authorities and also from rival criminal organizations. Prospective members are often screened by race, sex, ethnic background, religion and language. They have to be vouched for by a current member. (Etter, 1998) Individual membership practices vary somewhat. Initiation rites usually involve rituals, are a lifelong commitment by the prospective member, and often involve either violence or the commission of a crime.

The LCN or the American Mafia practices selective membership. (Balsamo, 2006) The History Channel (2014) noted that: “Becoming an official member of a Mafia family traditionally involved an initiation ceremony in which a person performed such rituals as pricking his finger to draw blood and holding a burning picture of a patron saint while taking an oath of loyalty. Italian heritage was a prerequisite for every inductee (although some crime families required such lineage only from the father’s side) and men often, though not always, had to commit a murder before they could be made. Becoming a member of the Mafia was meant to be a lifetime commitment and each Mafiosi swore to obey omerta, the all-important code of loyalty and silence. Mafiosi were also expected to follow other rules, including never assaulting one another and never cheating with another member’s girlfriend or wife.”

Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs practice selective membership. (Flaco & Droben, 2013; Barker, 2007) In order to protect themselves from infiltration by the police, outlaw motorcycle gangs, (like many other gangs) practice selective membership. All new members must be vouched for by an existing member. Race is often a discriminator. Outlaw motorcycle gang members are generally White. However the Mongols and the Vagos have always admitted Hispanics. The Wheels of Soul started as an African-American group but is now multi-racial. Another game changer is the expansion to countries overseas. This has relaxed the race requirement in some areas out of necessity. The requirement that the prospective member must be male and over 18 years of age seems to be universal. Originally most clubs had a requirement that prospective or active members must own an American made motorcycle. However, the Pagans initially began by riding Triumphs. The Wheels of Soul simply requires the motorcycle to be larger than 750 cc. engine size.

All outlaw motorcycle gangs practice an extensive screening of new members. Some clubs require a written application and polygraph test. Others even employ background investigators. ATF Agent William Queen (2005) infiltrated the Mogols and stated: “Before you can become a full patch, they make copies of your picture and distribute it to every other charter in the club; every patch studies your face closely and considers whether they have a problem with you or may have known you at some point. Every patch stares hard at you and weighs the possibility that you might be a cop trying to infiltrate the club.”

Modeling themselves after the LCN and outlaw motorcycle gangs, Chicago Based Street Gangs like the Folk and People Nation practice selective membership. (Etter, 1998) Los Angeles Based Street Gangs like the Crips and Bloods practice selective membership. (Etter, 1998) However, racial or ethnic components of membership have somewhat relaxed in some areas due to expansion. Although most individual sets are basically racially or ethnically cohesive. For example, while you would probably never find a non-Hispanic white Crip in Los Angeles they are present in Little Rock and other areas.

Just as they have rituals to enter the criminal group, organized crime, outlaw motorcycle gangs and street gangs have rituals to leave when you die. LCN created that tradition of a large showy funeral for their fallen leaders in the 1920’s. Outlaw motorcycle gangs have continued this tradition as have street gangs. All have gang related funerary rituals.

Organized Crime and Gang Commit Crimes to Make Money

The Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 states that “organized crime is the unlawful activities of the members of a highly organized, disciplined association engaged in the supply of illegal goods and services including but not limited to, gambling, prostitution, loan-sharking, narcotics, labor racketeering and other activities of member and other criminal activities.” In short organized crime and gangs provide illegal goods and services to make money. Their crimes are economically motivated. The primary crimes are drug trafficking, human trafficking/prostitution, gambling, theft/fencing, extortion/loan-sharking, and arson. Secondary crimes such as political corruption or violence support the primary crimes. However, not every criminal group participates in every type of crime. While drug trafficking seems universal, others like gambling are not.

The primary crimes of outlaw motorcycle gangs are crimes are economically motivated. Crimes such as: drug trafficking, motorcycle theft, prostitution and other illegal enterprises provide funds for the club and individual members. Secondary crimes such as murder, assault, rape, kidnapping or arson often either support the primary crimes or the biker culture. However, unlike members of other types of gangs, outlaw motorcycle gang members seldom use illicit income as their sole means of support. Most outlaw motorcycle gang members have “day” jobs as well.

Drug Trafficking

The sale of illegal drugs is a primary source of income for organized crime, outlaw motorcycle gangs, Chicago based street gangs and L.A. based street gangs. The question becomes scale and the product involved. LCN has become a strictly wholesale drug trafficking operation and has abandoned retail operations all together in this area. LCN is one of the primary importers of heroin in the United States. (Giancana, 2007; Sterling, 1990; Blumenthal, 1988) LCN might finance the manufacture of drugs through its associates, but generally is an importer and wholesaler. LCN is allied with Mexican drug cartels, Chinese Triads, the Yakuza, and Columbian Cartels to facilitate their drug operations. (Stewart, 2012)

Outlaw motorcycle gangs engage in manufacture, importation, transportation, wholesale and retail sales of drugs. Outlaw motorcycle gangs have been known to grow marijuana and manufacture methamphetamine. (Etter and Garrett, 2010) OMG’s have alliances with Mexican drug cartels and LCN. In addition to wholesale and retail sale of drugs, OMG’s often act as transporters of illegal drugs for third parties. (NGIC, 2014)

Chicago based street gangs and L.A. based street gangs engage in drug trafficking at both the wholesale and retail levels. They specialize in cocaine and crack, but sell other drugs as available. They sometimes act as transporters of drugs as well. Both Chicago and L.A. based street gangs maintain alliances with Mexican drug cartels. (NGIC, 2014) L.A. based street gangs have on occasion, maintained direct contacts with Columbian Cartels.

Human Trafficking/Prostitution

LCN is heavily involved in the human trafficking business. Prostitution is a primary

source of income for many gangs. LCN now only participates in prostitution on a wholesale level through third party associates. This is in spite of the conviction of LCN leader Salvadore “Lucky” Luciano in 1936 in New York for 62 counts of compulsory prostitution (pimping) which earned him a 30-50 year term in prison and caused his deportation in 1946. (Gage, 1971)

Outlaw motorcycle gangs are often engaged in promoting prostitution at the retail level and occasionally at the wholesale level by providing women to serve as “nude dancers” at gentleman’s clubs. Chicago based and L.A. based street gangs often engage in prostitution and pay the prostitutes in drugs.

Weapons Trafficking

By the very nature of the business that they engage in members of LCN, outlaw motorcycle gangs, Chicago based street gangs and L.A. based street gangs are involved in the weapons trafficking trade. They all possess weapons for protection, intimidation or status in the pseudo-warrior culture that they operate in. The acquisition of and sale of illegal weapons is a primary crime in this group. The LCN’s extensive use of fully automatic weapons during the gang wars of the 1920’s was one of the primary reasons that the federal government passed the National Firearm’s Act of 1934.

Gambling

Gambling has long been a staple of LCN operations. The legalization of many forms of gambling has cut deeply into LCN profits in this area. LCN has attempted, sometimes successfully, to infiltrate legalized gambling casinos. LCN is also attempting to become more involved in internet gambling enterprises. (Lindberg, Petrenko, Gladden and Johnson, 1997) Outlaw motorcycle gangs usually are not involved in gambling, although they do like to have their motorcycle runs there which has resulted in violence on occasion. As a general rule Chicago based street gangs and Los Angeles based street gangs are not involved in gambling as a criminal enterprise.

Theft/Fencing

Theft is a given among criminals. However the question the question is scale. For instance, in the crime of cargo theft, a member of a street gang might steal something from a pallet on a cargo dock as a part of a gang initiation. A member of an outlaw motorcycle gang might be employed driving the truck that delivered to the dock and somehow “lost” a single pallet of merchandise that they swear was not on the manifest. The LCN member steals the entire truck. For example, in 1967 future LCN Don, John Gotti was arrested for hijacking a truck carrying cigarettes worth \$500,000 on the New Jersey Turnpike. (Cimino, 2014) Outlaw motorcycle gangs will steal motorcycles. The OMG’s will transport them across state lines and sell them or take them to chop shops for sale as parts. (Queen, 2005) Some street gangs steal cars and sell them to other gangs in exchange for drugs or weapons. The stolen autos often wind up in Mexico, Central America, or South America.

However, when you have dope, you have junkies! Why take the risk of stealing something when you can get the junkies to do it in exchange for their daily fix? The LCN or gang member then acts as the fence or receiver of stolen goods. The stolen property is then resold by the fence. (Etter, 1998)

Extortion/Loansharking

One of the most traditional ways for organized crime or gangs to exercise control over a region is to collect tribute from the residents or business men in the neighborhood. This is called the protection racket and is one of the oldest scams still operational. Business men are approached by gang members who wish to help them to keep their businesses “safe” in this high crime area. If the business pays it comes under the protection of the mob or gang that controls that turf. Any other criminal who attacks that business or patrons of that business has to answer to the mob or gang. If the business owners refuse, the mob or gang members break windows, knees, etc. until the business owners relent. (Etter, 1998) LCN has moved beyond breaking windows and might threaten a corporation with delayed deliveries of goods or union problems if the tribute is not paid.

Another way for the LCN or the gangs to make money is to determine who has a secret (embezzlement, adultery, pedophilia, etc.) and use that knowledge to blackmail the victim into payment or cooperation. The judge with the “nose candy” problem, the politician who has affairs, the high school principal who likes prostitutes all are potential targets. LCN often uses this knowledge to foster corruption in public officials. Outlaw motorcycle gangs and street gangs often use this type of leverage also but on a more local level.

One way that organized crime and gangs acquire things, cars, and businesses is through the practice of loan sharking. Desperate and poor people have little access to the formal banking system. Money is loaned to them at outrageous interest rates that sometimes are compounded hourly. Failure to pay can be fatal. LCN often sub-contracts with outlaw motorcycle gangs or street gangs to collect the debt. Organized crime or gangs often acquire an interest in a legitimate business in this fashion.

Arson

Arson of buildings to collect the insurance is a time honored way to make money for organized crime and gangs. One problem for the struggling businessmen who use this service is that sometimes the arsonists don't stay bought (See Extortion). (Etter, 1998) LCN and outlaw motorcycle gangs often commit arson as a part of insurance fraud. (Pileggi, 1987)

LCN, outlaw motorcycle gangs, Chicago based street gangs and L.A. based street gangs will all use arson of vehicles or buildings to intimidate individuals. The destroyed property might belong to a business man who refused to pay protection, a wayward gang member who needed to be reminded of his place in life or to intimidate a potential witness. (Etter, 1998)

Corruption

A cash business like organized crime or a gang is an invitation to corruption. LCN has become a master of political corruption and infiltration of labor unions. This provides political protection, bid rigging and other economic opportunities for LCN. (Lindberg, Petrenko, Gladden and Johnson, 1997) Chicago based street gangs like the Folk and People operate political arms in Cook County, Illinois and have openly campaigned for various political candidates. Their social work organizations have defrauded the government and this has resulted in convictions of some gang leaders. (Knox, 2009; Neely, 1997) Outlaw motorcycle gangs and L.A. based street gangs might corrupt an individual district attorney or police officer but are mostly apolitical.

In their definitions of organized crime, academic authors include the employment of corruption, use of violence and intimidation, an extended planned criminal activity, and conspiracies formed upon social or ethnic relationships (Albanese, Das, and Verma, 2003). Donald Cressey (1969) and the 1967 and 1984 president's Commission Task Force on Organized Crime noted the positions of corruptor, corrupted and enforcer was present in organized crime groups. It should be noted that organized hierarchy that directed the group was part of the Kefauver Committee's explanation of organized crime. Not every organized crime group exhibits all of these characteristics, but may employ many of the above listed characteristics.

Organized Crime and Gang Will Use Violence to Achieve Their Goals

Organized crime and gangs will use violence to achieve their ends. These objectives may include warnings, intimidation, control of turf, control of trade, control of personnel, revenge, etc.. This has been true of the LCN since its incorporation on American shores, beginning with violence on the docks of New Orleans in 1869. (Asbury, 2003) The drive-by shooting was invented by LCN in the 1920's for these purposes and has been adapted to modern usage by the current crop of outlaw motorcycle gangs and urban street gangs. (Etter, 1998)

It was a struggle for leadership and control of turf that led to the bloody Castellammarese War in 1930-31 between rival LCN families in New York. The forces of Salvatore Maranzano and Giuseppe "Joe" Masseria (aka "Joe the Boss") battled after Joe the Boss demanded \$10,000 in tribute from Maranzano for the privilege of doing business there. The two LCN families began killing each other with abandon. The "war" finally ended when Charles "Lucky" Luciano invited his boss, Masseria to lunch. While Luciano excused himself to go to the bathroom, the assassins that he had hired came in and killed Masseria. It was the end of the "Mustache Petes" and the beginning of the Five Families ruled by the Commission. (Cimino, 2014; Raab, 2006; Blumenthal, 1998)

There have been other gang wars as the LCN expanded into Las Vegas as the Chicago and New York families battled for control of legal gambling beginning in 1946. (Lacy, 1991; Roemer, 1990) In 1953, the LCN (Luciano and Meyer Lansky) were asked by Cuban President Fulgencio Bastista to take over the drug, gambling and prostitution

operations of Cuban casinos until the revolution in 1959 ended the agreement. There have been many other Mafia wars over power, turf, and succession.

Sometimes the violence is gang against rival gang for turf reasons. On April 27, 2002, 42 Hells Angel members stormed into the Harrah's Casino in Laughlin, Nevada where the Mongols were staying during the Laughlin River Run. They began shooting their rival bikers. In the ensuing fight, 3 bikers (2 Hells Angels and 1 Mongol) were killed and 10 more injured. Forty-two Hells Angels were indicted, 6 bikers plea bargained, the rest of the charges against the Hells Angels members were dismissed. (Snedeker, 2002)

Because of turf disputes and conflicts of interests in the drug trade, the Crips and Bloods are usually in a state of continuous street warfare. This leads from showing disrespect of other gang's graffiti to violent reactions when members of the two groups find themselves in the same space. The Chicago based Folk and People Nations fight each other's sets in a similar fashion.

Organized Crime and Gangs Claim Territory

In order to better conduct their crimes and operations, LCN, outlaw motorcycle gangs, Chicago based street gangs and L.A. based street gangs claim territory as being exclusively theirs for the purposes of the club's operations. The outlaw motorcycle gangs have developed what is called the 100 miles rule. Basically the 100 mile rule says that when an outlaw motorcycle gang claims a territory as theirs, no other outlaw motorcycle gang may sell drugs, recruit or conduct other business within 100 miles of the OMG that is claiming the turf. This is to prevent biker wars. Outlaw Motorcycle Gang's that want to/or need to conduct business within another club's turf ask permission and sometimes pay a street tax. A street tax is a form of tribute paid by the OMG that wants to do business in the other OMG's claimed turf. It may take the form of money, drugs, weapons or other services provided to the host club. LCN, Los Angeles based street gangs, and Chicago based street gangs all operate in a similar fashion. Violence or even gang wars begin over turf battles. LCN and street gangs operate in a somewhat similar fashion.

Conclusion

Some writers state that the first American organized crime group was the pirates who established corrupt partnerships with Governors and city leaders (Kenny and Finkenauer, 1995). Abadinsky (2003) and Albanese (1996) claim that the gangs of major cities such as New York, Chicago and New Orleans were the beginning of modern organized crime in America. Whatever the beginnings of organized crime in the United States might be, the criminality of gangs and organized crime has evolved. The LCN, outlaw motorcycle gangs, Chicago based street gangs and Los Angeles based street gangs have evolved into a more complex type of organized crime.

The idea of gangs is not a recent phenomenon; they have existed throughout history, most often formed along racial or ethnic lines such as Irish, Jews, Hispanic, and Italians. Others have been formed in response to threats from existing gangs; for an example, Bloods was a response to the Crips. Power, pride, wealth, reputation, the ability to retaliate, and respect are among the common goals of gang members and gangs. Other motives include perceived inequities of society, social or economic structure of over-populated poverty

stricken areas, and the absence of belonging or family of perspective members. Violence, defending territory, and criminal activity are major elements of defining gangs or gang members along with the ability to battle rival gangs (Grennan, Rush, and Barker, 2000).

With that stated, the differences between organized crime and gangs are more pronounced with lower level gangs. The authors strongly believe that the trend of national gangs and higher-level gangs is to become more organized and transnational, diverse in their criminal activity, use corruption as a means to protect their operations and avoid arrest and prosecution, and employ technology in their operations. To that end, national gangs and transnational criminal entities have shown a desire to become more like their organized crime counterparts.

The definitions and classification of groups as organized crime varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, country to country, and even from state to state within the United States. It is clear that these groups do not exist without corruption, public demand, are very dynamic, and are involved in conspiracies, money laundering, active in multi-jurisdictions, and form alliances among criminal organizations to remain in business and continue to evolve and exist.

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