The Gang and Terror Extremism Overlap

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The recent terrorist attacks in Paris have brought into sharper focus the rise of a new breed of jihadists, one that blurs the line between organized crime and Islamist extremism, using skills honed in lawbreaking in the service of violent radicalism. The Islamic State is constructing an army of loyalists from Europe that includes an increasing number of street toughs and ex-cons as the nature of radicalization evolves in the era of its self-proclaimed caliphate. Rather than leave behind lives of crime, some adherents are using their illicit talents to finance recruiting rings and travel costs for foreign fighters even as their backgrounds give them potentially easier access to cash and weapons, posing a new kind of challenge to European authorities.
As we well know, ISIS is recruiting angry young men as far afield as Minneapolis and London. The allure is much like the allure of a street gang -- in part, because ISIS looks an awful lot like a street gang.

Gangs have long been understood as a collective response or "solution" to the strains encountered by their respective members. For some youth, ISIS has become the "solution." They are searching for the same protection and respect that pull people into gangs. The difference is they are pushed by feelings of marginalization, victimization, and vulnerability that stem from the state's purported failure to protect Muslim interests.
You know things in Chicago are bad when 70 murders in the first quarter can be seen as a good thing. But context is everything: Last year at this time there had been more than 120 murders, so I guess we should thank God for small favors.

It seems inconceivable that the city President Barack Obama calls home is also the city where his family may be least safe. Just this Monday a 15-year-old boy was found shot dead in a backyard only four blocks from the president's house. What's responsible for the bloodshed? Gang violence, as usual. Police estimate that of the 532 murders in 2012 -- nearly 1.5 a day -- about 80 percent were gang related. And yet, despite that rather staggering statistic, the national outcry is muted at best -- nothing, to say the least, like the kind we saw last week in Boston. What is it about the word "gang" that brings out the apathy in us? Would we view Chicago differently if we called the perpetrators something else?

But how do we explain our habit of greeting terrorists with 24-hour news coverage and relentless wrath while overlooking the gangs that terrorize our streets daily -- as if terrorism were only an enemy state and not a concept.
Numerous Groups and Media have endorsed the view that gangs overlap with terrorist groups and gang members are engaged in terrorism.
The Eurogang Definition
(an anchor)

“A street gang (or troublesome youth group corresponding to a street gang elsewhere), is any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity”.

This definition certainly is flexible enough to include extremists, radicalized individuals and members of terrorist groups.
Evolution of Gangs in America

1890’s Immigration, Concentrated Poverty, Marginalized Ethnic Groups, Urbanization, Industrialization. European Immigration.

1920’s Immigration, Concentrated Poverty, Marginalized Ethnic Groups, Urbanization, Industrialization.

1960’s Rapid Urban Change (Suburbanization), Population Composition Change.

1980’s and beyond Concentration of Poverty, New Immigrant Groups.
Characteristics of Gang Definitions

Group characteristics.

Symbols of membership.

Persistence of membership.

Self-identification.

Criminal involvement.
Recognizing Gangs

The way we “recognize” gangs will determine how we respond to them.

Are gang members:  Troubled Individuals?  Young Criminals? Or the products of disrupted or ineffective social systems?

The Social Process of Responding to Gangs

Denial → Identification → Over-identification

Sources of Gang Knowledge about Gangs
Task Force and the Media.  Sole sources (federal law enforcement)

Cultural Transmission  Exportation to Europe, Suburbs, and Mainstream Culture
What do we need to know to create successful gang Prevention, Intervention, Suppression and Re-entry strategies?

**Community** characteristics, assets, and deficits.

Individual **gang member** characteristics – race/ethnicity, age, gender, siblings, family structure, neighborhood, education.

**Gang** Characteristics – turf, age of the gang, initiation rites, exit rites, link to prison gangs, hanging out.

**Gang Organizational** Characteristics – rules, roles, leaders, meetings, handling of money.

**Gang Activities** – crime and non-crime.

**Gang Crime** – involvement in gang versus non-gang crime, drugs, guns, violent crime, property crime, rivalries.
Organizational Structures of Gangs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corporate</th>
<th>Cells</th>
<th>Episodic Groups</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Super Gangs</td>
<td>Purposive</td>
<td>Local Gangs</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Presence</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Cafeteria offending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Members</td>
<td>Focused</td>
<td>Younger members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long life of the Gang</td>
<td>Specialists</td>
<td>Non purposive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prison involvement</td>
<td>Isolated</td>
<td>Hanging out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profit motives dominate</td>
<td>Criminal events</td>
<td>“Occasional Crime”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proscribed Belief Systems</td>
<td>Code of the Group</td>
<td>Code of the Street</td>
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What are the implications for understanding gangs? Human Smuggling? Terrorism? Drug Smuggling?

What are the implications for responding to these groups?
Six Risk Factors for Gang Membership

1. Poor parental supervision
2. Early childhood aggression
3. Delinquent belief systems
4. Significant negative life events
5. Peers that are delinquent
6. Commitment to street oriented peers

Number, Intensity, Duration, Early onset
Characteristics of Gang Members

1,000,000 gang members in the US
Gang homicide rate 100/100,000, US rate 4/100,000
Gender of U.S. Gang Members

Law Enforcement Data
- Male: 90%
- Female: 10%

Survey Data
- Male: 62%
- Female: 38%
Age of U.S. Gang Members

Law Enforcement Data
- 85%
- 15%

Survey Data
- 77%
- 23%

Legend:
- Gray: Under 15
- Light Gray: 15 & Over
Characteristics of Gang Behavior
A MODEL OF GANG MEMBERSHIP

Pyrooz and Decker (2011)
BUT where is the data?
A Glimpse at Four Projects that measure the intersection between gang membership and extremism

1. PIRUS/NLSY97 Comparison
2. Somali Refugees/Emigres in five Cities
3. LoneStar Re-Entry Interviews
4. Gang Members, Prison and Extremism (GPE Sample)
PIRUS/NLSY97 Comparison

National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97)
  N=705 gang members
Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS)
  N=1,473 domestic extremists

Comparisons across several domains, including group membership, demographics, family, religion, and socioeconomic status

12.6% members of the PIRUS sample have gang ties

Major difference between samples is AGE, which affects life course measures
Conceptual Models

Convergence/Divergence

- Individual
- Group
- Macro

Interchangeability model

Fundamental cause model

Independence model
Somali Refugees/Emigrees in Five Cities

Boston, Lewiston (ME), Minneapolis, Portland (ME) Toronto

Surveys with 399 Somali Youth 18 to 31 and 40 in-depth qualitative interviews

Somalis are Muslim, Immigrants/Emigres, African and many are gang members. This represents triple marginalization.

Most are second generation US residents.

Males and highly marginalized individuals report the most negative police interactions. Members of these groups report (qualitatively) being identified more often as gang and terrorist group members.

“Overall, our findings suggest that within this particular group of Somali immigrants, there is more difference than similarity in terms of factors that are associated with gang involvement versus openness to political violence. Indeed, the only two factors that were significantly associated with both outcomes were being younger and being male.”

H. Ellis Principal Investigator, Boston Children’s Hospital, Harvard Medical School.
## Predictors of VE Only, Violence for a Political Cause, and Gang Involvement Only (Somali sample)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant predictors of high support for Violent Extremism only</th>
<th>Support the use of violence for a political cause</th>
<th>Significant predictors of self-reported gang involvement only</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher social media use</td>
<td>Younger</td>
<td>Lifetime discrimination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor attachment to US/Canada</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Daily discrimination</td>
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<td>Higher civic engagement</td>
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<td>Delinquent Behavior</td>
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<td>Higher importance of tribe</td>
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<td>Higher levels of lifetime trauma exposure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Higher importance of online community</td>
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<td>Higher levels of recent trauma</td>
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LoneStar Re-Entry Interviews

800 interviews at Huntsville (TX) pre-release/max security facilities
400 gang and 400 non-gang members, all males
Community follow up interviews at one month, six months and twelve months

Data collection launched at the end of April 2016

Demographic questions, including life course measures, gang membership, masculinities, theory, victimization, re-entry, procedural justice, legitimacy and legal cynicism, collective efficacy, code of the street, inmate code, religious fundamentalism ARIS (activism, radicalization, intensions, scale), SR offending.

320 completed baseline interviews
50 completed follow up interviews
Gang Members, Prison and Extremism (GPE Sample)

Qualitative Life Histories: Denver, Los Angeles, Phoenix 50+, All are Current or Former Gang members, Served Prison Time

life course, gang membership, ARIS, radicalization, extremism, code of the street, gang membership, desistance, victimization, self-reported offending, procedural justice, legitimacy and legal cynicism.

One member of the sample acknowledges radicalization whilst in prison.
Are Gang members like Extremists?

• Are there differences between extremists (violent, non-violent, different ideological milieus) and gang members?
  – Individual and demographic
  – Social, economic, and political
  – Community-level
  – Extremist beliefs

• How do the pathways to extremist violence compare to the pathways to gangs?

• Do any theories of extremism predict gang participation? Do any theories of gang participation predict extremism?

• Are there identifiable sub-groups (i.e., ISIS, right wing, left wing, violent, nonviolent) for which some theories of criminal behavior work best?

• What responses to gangs might be most promising in attempting to respond to extremists?
Similar but not the Same

- Radicalized beliefs are problematic when they result in action.
- There are not good assessment tools to identify the stages of radicalization.
- We lack definitional clarity about the differences between radicalization, extremism and terrorism.
- “Lone Wolfs” rarely exist among gang members
Summit Against Violent Extremism (SAVE) Google & Council on Foreign Relations

http://www.cfr.org/projects/world/summit-against-violent-extremism-save/pr1557

- Islamic Terror Groups
- Religious Extremism
- Gangs
- Right Wing Hate Groups
- Political Extremists
What Can Gang Research Tell Us about Terrorist groups?

• Level of Explanation Matters (individual, group, macro)
• Organizational Structure, Cohesion and Group Process are important
• Technology is important to Group Processes such as joining, escalation of violence and dis-engagement
• Gangs do not fully map onto terrorist groups
Borum on Radicalization

• Radicalization is “the process of developing extremist ideologies and beliefs”
• This is a values based definition.
• It does not integrate action into the definition.
• Radicalization processes are multilayered.
• In understanding radicalization it is important to examine “actions scripts” and “action pathways”
Lessons from studying gang members that apply to the study of terror groups

• Don’t depend on media or popular stereotypes.

• Organizational structure matters. Groups do not have to be radicalized to be dangerous.

• Pay careful attention to the role of social media in recruitment and mobilization.

• Radicalization is a fluid state.

• Time in radical groups is typically short.
Key Points of Comparison between Gangs and Radicalized Groups

• 1. It is important to triangulate across methods, data, theory and policy.

• 2. Pay attention to Symmetric and Asymmetric process across selection into groups, engagement and disengagement.

• 3. Pay attention to the collective, the clique, the cell.

• 4. Definitions matter. Distinguish between extremism, radicalization and terrorism.
5. Women matter.

6. Interventions need evaluation.

7. Instrumental activities are different from symbolic activities and must be understood as such.

8. Type I and Type II errors both matter. Identifying and validating risk factors should be a key goal for research on radicalization.

9. Understanding the oppositional nature of group formation and values (codes) is important.
10. Theory has an important role to play in understanding and building the knowledge base of information about radicalization. Building on theories of collective behavior, marginalization, trauma, recruitment and disengagement is important.

11. Prisons may be important sites for radicalization, enhancing group ties and increasing involvement in and commitment to crime.

12. Comparative research methods are important to understanding groups involved in crime.
Belief Systems in Crime Groups Matter

• Code of the Street – Street Offenders
• Gang Codes and Respect – Gangs
• The Inmate Code – Belief systems among prisoners
• Extremist Beliefs – Religious, Political
• Radicalization – Action Oriented
Understanding the Role of Trauma

- Child Soldiers.
- Exposure to Violence.
- PTSD and future involvement in violence.
- Witnessing violence (Gangs, Terror Groups, Domestic Violence).
- Role of witnessing childhood trauma on future victimization and offending.
A Framework for Desistance from Group Deviance

- Use a life-course perspective that examines onset, persistence, and desistence
- Exiting the gang or extremist group...
  - Sudden vs. gradual departures
  - Pushes and pulls
- Implications for leaving the group
  - Offending and victimization
  - Pro social relationships and activities (employment)
  - Collateral Consequences (neighborhood, family)
"By all accounts, these guys grew up in bad neighborhoods. They got into the military and overcame their situations. They were successful, yet they maintained their ties and gang activity." - SCOT THOMASON, U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives

Troops do double duty in gangs

One soldier allegedly helped buy and sell drugs, shipped guns

BY FRANK MAIN
Chicago Defender

Army soldiers who belong to the Gangster Disciples have robbed people to raise money for the gang, orchestrated drug and gun deals, and even killed two people after gang members were kicked out of a bar.

About a dozen soldiers at bases in Texas and Colorado have been sentenced to prison over the last decade as a result of federal investigations into criminal activity they carried out for the Chicago-based gang.

They highlight the danger of soldiers maintaining gang affiliations.

"It is a continuing problem here. It’s ongoing," said Scot Thomason, a supervisor with the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives who investigated dope dealing and gun trafficking involving Fort Carson, Colo., soldiers.

Earlier this month, a Wisconsin National Guard sergeant serving in Iraq provided the Chicago Sun-Times with photos he recently took of gang graffiti on military equipment and buildings throughout Iraq.

Assault rifles seized

Other civilian and military investigations warned that gang membership in the Army appears to be rising as more recruiters ignore applicants' criminal backgrounds and

Army Sgt. Jeffrey Stolason took these photos of gang graffiti on U.S. equipment in Iraq.


Porter maintained his gang contacts in the Chicago area and his ties to noncommissioned officers at Fort Carson, near Colorado Springs.

In 1998, the feds targeted a gun and-drug operation involving Porter and 26 other Gangster Disciples, including Geraldo Ivey — an active-duty sergeant at Fort Carson — as well as other soldiers and civilians, officials said.

Ivey was a native who served in Operation Desert Storm, and said they’d purchase marijuana for about $300 a pound in Texas and sell it for $1,300 a pound in Gary, Ind., which was Ivey’s hometown.

Ivey also shipped guns back to Gary. He acted as an illegal "store purchases," using his military ID to buy weapons at a Colorado gun store called Dragon Arms, prosecutors said.

ATF agents seized five shaved-off shotguns, three assault rifles and other guns from the gang. Ivey bought other guns that were later used in crimes in Chicago and Gary and were found in crack house searches.

40-member faction of the Gangster Disciples — many of whom were soldiers — was convicted of battery.

Sentenced to prison for stealing weapons, they are among a row of gang members sentenced to prison in recent years.

Chicago Police Lt. Robert Stauch was invited to Fort Hood to testify as an expert witness at the trial against the gang leader. He was sentenced to 27 years of confinement.

Hired through his private consulting firm, Law Enforcement Training Consultants, Stauch identified Billings' tattoos of a pitchfork and a six-pointed star as GD symbols. He led Army investigators to GD graffiti in a culvert near the entrance to the base. And he explained gang literature found in Billings' home.

"He claimed it was like a social club, like the Elks or Moose Lodge, and she called it "Growth & Development,"" Stauch said. "I told them they were Gangster Disciples."

Convicted of battery

In July 1997, Billings was convicted of a charge that he committed battery against the victim. But Billings claimed he simply ordered the victim to touch him. He was acquitted of murder but found guilty of battery.

Army to relocate members of the 4th Infantry Division from Fort Carson, Colo., to locations in Texas.
Gang Interventions and Terror Groups

• Public Health Approach (Cure Violence)
• Strategic
• Coordinated
• Targeted
• Assess then Intervene
• Evaluation is imperative (Don’t repeat the gang mistakes)
Five Strategies for Responding to Gangs

The Comprehensive Strategy or Spergel Model

1. Suppression
2. Community Organization
3. Organizational Change/Development
4. Opportunity Provision
5. Social Intervention
Who is “involved”?

1. Serious & Chronic Offenders
   Gang Leaders

2. Other Active Gang Members
   and Associates

3. Children and Adolescents at
   High Risk for Gang Involvement

4. General Population of Youth and Families
   Living in High Risk Areas

Share of Illegal Activity vs. Relative Share of Population
Changing Course

http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/preventgangmembership/

Strategies to Address Gang Crime: A Guidebook for Local Law Enforcement

Archbishop
Rigali

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OF SAINT LOUIS

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in the St. Louis Archdiocese.