

## **Crime Increase in Jackson Heights**

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Jackson Heights is a neighborhood located in Queens, New York; mostly known as Little Colombia due to the fact the first group of immigrants moving into the city were Colombian, who started immigrating in the 1970s. Jackson Heights is known for its variety of restaurants, nightclubs, and numerous amount of cultures that mix making it a very diverse neighborhood. Like any other neighborhood in New York, gangs have started to emerge causing problems with violence which increases crimes to gain control of a territory which also includes people from other countries coming to the city and end up joining the gang. Technology has also contributed to the increase in gang activities because gang members usually communicate through social media but it also leaves them vulnerable due to the fact police can track them down due to the posts they make and conversations they have.

Gangs have always controlled neighborhoods throughout history and used crime as a method to get the necessities that they want to feel empowered. Although it is clear that many people think of gangs as being disorganized due to there being many people in the gang who want to achieve things their own way and due to the illegal resources. Studies have shown that gangs are the exact opposite of disorganized because the gangs need to maintain a structure that is controlled by people who are older which can keep order and a firm hand to make the rules known.

“This chapter argued that gangs exhibit a degree of organizational rationality, whereby gang members develop systems for issuing orders and rules that govern member interaction in order to maintain their social and economic infrastructure. Gangs are not groups of persons that form randomly for the immediate commission of a single offense. They require organizing to maximize

efficiency in the provision of illegal goods and services... Evolved gangs have strong identities and highly competitive, hierarchical structures that provide some level of exclusivity. Much of the activity within gangs is age-graded” (James A, 2013, P. 97).

James is trying to communicate to us that gangs that are typically run by the oldest gangsters have a system where they apply rules and standards to maintain the value of their gang socially and economically so it could keep running and maintain a certain level of control over every action being made. Usually, when things are run efficiently and organized, incomes come in and in this case, gangs would gain a good amount of money, power, and control over territories.

In Jackson Heights, most of the experiences that I lived were seeing boys and girls joining gangs at a young age and engaging in delinquent activities. Genders in gangs usually play a big role but they do have differences in why they join gangs.

“1) conflicting sets of moral values, (2) adult role models whose material success derived from participation in criminal activities, and (3) a social tradition of delinquency that was a hallmark of the life of the local community. Boys constantly surrounded by this social milieu were thus routinely exposed to delinquent lifestyles... Boys from low-income families thus calculated that the best way to achieve success lay in acts of delinquency and crime. Juvenile delinquency is, therefore, rational activity, and delinquent boys are by no means necessarily disorganized, maladjusted, or antisocial. As Shaw and McKay explained” (Beirne, 2015, P. 110-111).

This quote demonstrates that boys usually try joining gangs at an early age because they either can be living in conditions where they are exposed to this type of lifestyle or they create an ambition for success and they try to get it by any means necessary. On the other hand, females have different motives for joining gangs because they seek security from past trauma that they experienced and seek the protection of people that they believe they will feel secure around.

“75 percent of the girls (as opposed to 55 percent of the boys) reported being victims of parental physical and/or sexual abuse. Thus, although the gang provides a surrogate family role to most youth who join, this is especially so for girls who *have* been victimized by a family member... Girls are *more* likely to be runaways from physical and sexual victimization at home who eventually approach a gang for solace as an alternative family”(Beirne, 2015, P. 192).

The author is trying to state that females who usually join gangs have the motive to find somewhere where they will feel safe due to the abuses that they experienced before from someone close to them. Young females are most likely seen as an easy target for abusers to take advantage of so that's why females will join a gang where there will most likely be people with a common situation and who are willing to watch their back.

People in Latino countries sometimes live a lifestyle that is hard to maintain due to the violence, lack of money, and opportunities so that's why New York is known to be the capital of the world because many people immigrate from other countries to come here for better opportunities. Gangs in Latino countries are no better than gangs in the USA but they are rougher due to the environment they're located in and the lack of

support from the government. “Many of these returning migrants and deportees were members of Latino gangs return with “the education they received on the mean streets of Los Angeles”. Salvadoran maras have adopted violent behavioral patterns typical of U.S. youth gangs, including drive-by shootings, high-casualty gang warfare, and daylight-armed assaults” (Rodgers, 1999, P. 9). When people immigrated from El Salvador to the United States due to the civil war that was happening, many of those immigrants started forming gangs as a form of protection from all the harassment they received from locals. Once the gangs started getting out of hand, the government started deporting illegal immigrants back to their country which flooded El Salvador's streets with gang members and caused the country to be manipulated by these organizations. Although many of the illegal gang members from El Salvador were deported, the gang members who were legal in the country stayed making a presence, making the gangs of MS-13 and MS-18 St to even spread to Jackson Heights.

Since we live in a modern world and many of the gang members are young people, they know how to use modern technology to their advantage to plan out a way to cause damage to a rival gang or a way to sell the drugs provided by the gang to make a profit. Although, selling drugs on social media is known to be taken place, what really calls people's attention is how gang members make posts to insult a rival and make a back-and-forth argument with the person until they take physical actions.

“Barnes changed her Twitter handle to @TyquanAssassin in memory of her friend Tyquan Tyler, who was killed in 2012. She subsequently swore to avenge Tyler's death and became a known gang leader with 9 killings to her name before she was in turn shot and killed at age 17. We focus on Gakirah because she was

highly active on Twitter, posting over 27,000 tweets from December 2011 until her death on April 11, 2014. Her typical content ranged from discussing friends and intimate relationships to threats and taunts towards rival gangs and grieving the loss of friends killed due to gang or police violence” (Blevins, 2016, P. 2198).

Gang members usually make publications on social media talking about the crimes that they've committed like murder and also the taunting of rivals that can cause tensions to rise. They do all that without taking into consideration that they can get caught by law authorities because they published something illegal in a space where anyone can see it.

The presence of social media has been growing everywhere, even if it is to publish things about illegal activities like crimes that have been committed which most of the time the person making the post is incriminating themselves or others who are close to them. That is why law enforcement now checks social media and pays close attention to who is making posts that are related to crimes that have caused harm, which later on leads to the responsible person being tracked down so justice can be made. Moreover, with law enforcement getting in-depth with the social media movement in gang culture, they can get an idea of who belongs to what gang and what type of activities they are engaging in so there could be a record for future scenarios.

“Network analysis examines the social media profiles of at-risk users, determining the likelihood of the person becoming involved in gang activity. Officers also create fake social media accounts to get better access to gang members... The police use social media to both to find evidence of past and ongoing gang crime, as well as to develop an understanding of gang networks. Through the use of social media

monitoring, police officers can determine who is connected to which gang, as well as get a sense of the relationships between different gangs and different gang members” (Hua, 2015, P. 1).

With the local law enforcement getting an idea of who’s in a gang and is posting on social media, they can launch an investigation to know who is related to that person, what crimes has the person been involved in, what is the gang usually involved in and their relation with other gangs in the area. With all of this information being known by the police, they can keep the neighborhood safer because they can take precautions before certain situations happen due to the fact that they already know how the movement is.

Although neighborhoods like Jackson Heights have local gangs and people who chose a risky lifestyle, a change can start being implemented so future generations can find themselves in a better place. Programs can be an option for change we can start putting our younger generations into these programs so they can learn about gang violence and the prevention of joining these types of organizations for comfort.

“When prevention programs succeed, the high costs of supplemental police officers in gang task forces, medical bills of victims, legal proceedings, court backlogs, and incarceration of offenders can be avoided. Plus, the social benefit to a community that does not live in fear of crime is substantial. Prevention program participants, taxpayers, the government, and potential crime victims are direct beneficiaries of a wide range of economic benefits, including improved health, increased educational achievement, higher earnings, and lower taxes”

When programs are made for people to realize the bad effects of gangs and people actually take into consideration all the advice provided, everything can be benefited from a change because there will be more safety, productivity, and awareness of everything bad so good actions could be taken. Gang prevention programs should be a required topic for kids because it can start teaching them about what is right and what is wrong and also be provided precise steps on how to avoid gang recruitment.

To conclude, Jackson Heights might be a good neighborhood to live in due to the commodity that everything is close by like restaurants, transportation, and a familiar environment for people who come from elsewhere. But it would definitely be a better neighborhood if local gangs were tracked down so people can feel safe without any type of crime or anything that can put their lives at risk. Gang members could be provided with programs that can help them realize that there is much more than just being in a gang and that society would accept them for who they are even if they've made bad choices in the past. This also shows that gangs are much more than just a simple organization because there are rules and priorities, and people feel safe when they surround themselves with others that have similar stories to them.



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