

Natalija Lukić<sup>1</sup>

University of Belgrade, Law Faculty, Serbia

Frank van Gemert, Dana Peterson, Inger-Lise Lien (Ed.)

**Street Gangs, Migration and Ethnicity**

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Migration and ethnicity are in many ways related to crime. Apart from the influence of migration and ethnicity on offending and victimization, there is a reverse relation as well (for example political crimes in the country of migrants origin that foster migration) or smuggling of migrants into developed countries. Furthermore, issues of migration and ethnicity in respect to crime open questions of informal and formal social reactions toward migrants and members of ethnic minorities as well as of the perception of these people toward the new state. Marginalisation, the lack of trust in the police, poverty, cultural conflicts are some of the factors that could explain crime of migrants and ethnic minorities. Special attention in criminological literature is devoted to relation of migrations/ethnicity and gangs formation. We are witnesses of many crimes committed by members of these groups in European countries. Violent crimes, destruction of public and private property, riots in capitals suburbs always get media covers and in many cases lead to scapegoating of the whole communities. Therefore, it is very important to research these issues and give the objective explanations that would be useful for policy makers. The book „Street Gangs, Migration and Ethnicity“ edited by Frank van Gemert, Dana Peterson and Inger-Lise Lien is valuable scientific source for understanding these phenomena. The book is divided into four parts: introduction, migration and street gangs, ethnicity and street gangs and issues and challenges of migration and ethnicity in dealing with street gangs. The articles within the book open many important questions, give results of numerous conducted researches and of special importance is the comparative character of the book considering that it includes contributions from 11 countries.

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1 PhD, Assistant Professor in the Department of Criminal Law, Law Faculty, University of Belgrade, Serbia. ORCID: 0000-0001-5761-2444. E-mail: natalija.lukic@ius.bg.ac.rs.

In the introduction Frank van Gemert, Inger-Lise Lien and Dana Peterson give explanations of key terms that are subject of the book. First and foremost, the authors point to crucial characteristics of a gang considering that this term is not uniquely understood and the literature relates it to various kinds of groups including cliques of corner boys, transnational organisations, urban tribes, or even formal youth associations. However, the term gang in this book is understood strictly to include any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of their group identity. Furthermore, authors explain that migration and gang formation are related and especially this is true for the second-generation immigrants whose crime involvement is higher in comparison to the first and third generation. Migration is a crucial factor in most of the articles in this book. The central question is, in what ways does migration contribute to gang formation? However, this does not mean that the only focus is on the people in the move but also on the “migration” of gang symbols. The ethnicity is another issue related to gangs and many authors acknowledge that the ethnicity plays important role in a gang identity. The questions that this book tries to answer are *how does ethnicity relate to gang characteristics and gang behaviour?* and *is ethnicity relevant for understanding gangs?* Finally, authors emphasize that gangs and their activities that are street-oriented and thus visible, draw attention of the public and the police which may lead gang members becoming scapegoats. Throughout the chapter the authors make valuable comparisons between European countries and the USA.

In the chapter entitled “Migrant groups and gang activity: a contrast between Europe and the USA” authors Frank van Gemert and Scott Decker analyse characteristics of European gangs starting from an American point of view. After pointing to migration patterns in Europe, the authors use different theoretical approaches to explain this phenomenon. They emphasize that is necessary to meld cultural transmission theory and neighbourhood marginalisation theory. Authors also examine relationship between gangs and ethnicity and assert that there is a diversity of ways in which ethnicity correlates with gang formation. It is worth noting that gang members usually face two types of constraints and problems. On the one hand, newcomers find it hard to connect to their new cultural context and on the other hand they can also be alienated from their own ethnic roots. This is especially true for the second generation of immigrants whose parents were raised in their soil lands according to norms and values different to the European countries whereas their children have to adapt to both cultures. Finally, the authors examine the role of marginalization and neighbourhoods in the studies of gangs.

Judith Aldridge, Juanjo Medina and Robert Ralphs in their article emphasize the dangers of conducting gang research due to the possibility of stereotyping communities, ethnic groups and young people generally which could lead to unintended punitive policy outcomes. Due to these reasons there is an apparent reluctance in British academic discourse to use the label “gang”. However, authors

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notice that in some cities in the UK several groups refer to themselves as “gangs” as do police and other community members and the term has existed in those cities for at least 25 years. Although the mentioned concerns have to be kept in mind, the researchers are of opinion that the gang research should be carried out and conclusions made on empirical base. First of all, authors notice that in their research they tried not to follow the standard view according to which gangs are dominated by ethnic minority youth. On the contrary, results of the conducted representative survey in England and Wales have shown that only a tiny minority of youth gangs in England and Wales were exclusively from ethnic minority groups. Secondly, the article presents in details obstacles encountered in communication with residents in two cities where the research was conducted. Finally, the authors describe the strategy they adopted in order to reduce possible stigmatization of ethnic minorities and their communities.

The second part of the book deals with the theme of migration and street gangs. The first article within this group is written by James Diego Vigil about Mexican migrants in gangs. The author’s focus is on the predominant involvement of the second generation of migrants in crime and reasons for this situation. On the example of Mexican-American gangs in Los Angeles the author points to three crucial elements in understanding the phenomenon: time, place and people. “Time” refers to the chronological developments in the social and economic conditions that are shaped by political forces and historical events. The author very nicely explains that the poverty, racism as well as the cultural conflicts contribute to the emergence of gangs. The most affected is the second generation. The existence of separate schools for Anglo-Americans and Mexicans seriously undermined the educational and social mobility aspirations of the newcomers. Simultaneously, the first generation struggled to make ends meet and in the situation of poor living and working conditions it was this generation that lost their control over children. “Place” denotes the regional variation in behaviour and material circumstances, as well as how those factors differ in urban, suburban, and rural locales. Finally, “people” refers to class, cultural, and racial differences.

The next article is dedicated to Latin American youth in Spain, especially in Barcelona. Carles Feixa, Noemi Canelles, Laura Porzio, Carolina Recio and Luca Giliberti present the first results of the research on this topic. It included interviews with Latin American youth, with adults, focus groups, observation and media analysis. The authors argue that different groups exist in Spain and point to classification of four types: North American tradition, which includes the experience of the street organisations and whose origin can be found in the gang model; Latin American tradition, represented by the model of the *pandillas* (Spanish word for gang;) transnational tradition represented by subcultural youth styles, known as urban tribes in Spain; virtual tradition represented by youth identity models circulating on the Internet. Authors also pay attention to media construction of Latin

gangs and they criticize the way these youth are presented in Spain. Finally, authors conclude that there are different modalities in the gang involvement (starting from the expression of identity through the group; being a member or being involved in criminal activities). Therefore, for most of the youth groups of migrant origin it could be asserted that they are only gangs-in-process.

Frank van Gemert and Jantien Stuifbergen in the article *Gangs, migration and conflict: Trasher's theme in the Netherlands* point to importance of conflict in understanding of gangs and their integration. Conflicts make gangs stronger, more active and shape group identity. Authors define three groups according to type of conflict. The first includes conflicts with newcomers and the aim of the already established group is to maintain dominance. The second type refers to conflicts between equals. Finally, gangs can be in conflicts within the neighbourhood. This classification doesn't cover the whole spectrum of gangs in conflict and thus authors mention "speciality gangs" and "cultural rebels". These gangs have a conflict with a society. Finally, authors present two gangs in the Netherlands (Moroccan gangs and Lonsdale groups), types of their conflicts with examples and the relation between them. The first gang is mostly comprised of Moroccan youth in larger cities whereas the second is widespread in the rural areas in the country. Explanation of these conflicts can't be understood without taking into consideration historical and political context.

In the final article in this part of the book Alexander Shashkin presents results of the ethnographic study conducted in Moscow on skinhead groups. The study is based on 20 interviews with experts and practitioners. The author regards skinhead groups as a violent youth subculture but at the same time author acknowledges that it is difficult to separate these groups in real life, as various right-wing parties and movements are constantly trying to work with skinheads, organise them, and foster their political involvement. Skinhead culture appeared in Russia at the beginning of 1990s and according to the author "youth racist choice" is more associated with political, social, and economic transformations, than with working-class struggle or social pressures on an economically deprived population. The research has shown that there are six factors associated with racist or Nazi skinhead culture in Moscow: economic crisis of the early 1990s; the collapse of the Soviet state system of education; fosterage and out-of-school education; the ideological shift from total domination of communist ideas to condemnation of Soviet totalitarianism; state violence (in particular, the storming of the Russian Parliament in 1993, the war in Chechnya, and the 'xenophobic campaigns' in Moscow); everyday racism and negative attitudes to the economic domination of migrants; the surge of migration.

The third part of the book is dedicated to relation between ethnicity and street gangs. In the first article Finn-Aage Esbensen, Bradley T. Brick, Chris Melde, Karin Tusinski and Terrance J. Taylor discuss the role of ethnicity and race in gang membership. Based on the Eurogang definition of gang, the authors

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research following questions: (1) the distribution of gang membership – prevalence and demographic characteristics – in an American school-based sample; (2) the epidemiology of individual offending by gang membership and race/ethnicity; and (3) descriptions of gang characteristics by race/ethnicity of gang members. Data in this study were obtained in 15 schools in nine cities in four states of the USA. Results allowed several conclusions to be made: 1) Gang membership is less common, relatively speaking, among single-parent black and multiracial households than among two-parent families; 2) White youth have significantly lower rates of self-reported involvement in serious violent offending while black gang youth report the highest level of drug selling and weapon carrying; 3) Black gangs tend to be larger than other racial/ethnic groups and, regardless of race/ethnicity, gangs tend to be comprised of both boys and girls; 4) Gangs appear to engage in a variety of offences, although white gang youths report less variety in their gang's offending than do the other gang members.

Rob White analyses gangs in Australia with special focus on Sydney. His observations are based on the qualitative research consisted of interviews and observation. The author examines relations of gang members with others i.e. friends and enemies. Membership depends on ethnicity, language and culture. Results of 50 conducted interviews show that each group has its enemies and potential allies. Further, gang membership does not exclude friendships with other and with people from other ethnic background. The author also pays attention to the issue of gangs and street fighting. It is concluded that fighting represents something enjoyable and natural. These young men do not think twice about resolving an argument with fists or weapons. Importance of this observation is that it implies that the gang could be merely the mechanism through which violence could be best expressed.

Coralie Fiori-Khayat explores the gang problem in Paris. The article presents results of the field research that was chosen considering that the creation of files based on origin, skin colour, religion, community or other ethnic factor is forbidden and the use of these information is only allowed in police investigation. Studied teenage groups were from several suburbs of Paris. The author concludes that the ethnicity plays the same role for both non-deviant juvenile peer groups and deviant ones (including gangs). Young people gather because of the same educational frames, same food habits, same relations toward the country they live in etc. Ethnicity becomes important if it is perceived as a basis for discrimination. In relation to that, the author also makes a parallel between crimes for which juvenile gang members use ethnicity as a justification (mainly destruction of political and social symbols) and crimes of non-political nature (mostly appropriation offences). Attention is also paid to the issues of relations with other gang members and other gangs as well as the attitude of gang members toward the state.

Hans-Jürgen Kerner, Kerstin Reich, Marc Coester, Elmar G.M. Weitekamp analyse the results of study conducted in Stuttgart, Germany. The research is based

on questionnaires filled in by 200 youths out of which 157 were completely and correctly completed. The authors made a classification of all respondents into three groups: 1) youths without any direct migration background; 2) youths with partially direct migration background; 3) youths with full migration background. The aim of the statistical analysis was to try to answer on the following questions: 1) are young persons with a full migration background more prone to engage in deviant and delinquent behaviour than are other two groups; 2) would such a distinction also be found with regard to joining troublesome youth groups; 3) is there a distinction between basically non delinquent youth groups, occasionally delinquent groups concentrating so far on 'typical youth offences', and 'truly delinquent' groups engaging in a whole variety of minor and major offences as punishable by the penal law, including serious crimes?

Scot Wortley and Julian Tanner conducted a research in Toronto, Canada that was based on qualitative interviews with a large sample (125) of gang members from a variety of neighbourhoods and backgrounds. Beside gang characteristics that these authors emphasize, it is worth mentioning their classification of reasons for gang membership. These include: 1) neighbourhood, peer, and family influences; 2) protection; 3) support and companionship; 4) status and respect; 5) money; and 6) racial injustice. The authors conclude that all gang members, from all racial backgrounds, mention first five reasons for gang membership, but only respondents from minority groups assert that their involvement in gangs can be directly linked to their perception of racial injustice and social exclusion.

Eric Debarbieux and Catherine Blaya research the role of schools in segregation in France. This analysis combines quantitative methods with qualitative approaches including ethnography and interviews in secondary schools located in deprived neighbourhoods in France. Authors conclude that although the percentage of gangs in all analyzed schools is in line with percentages in other researches, there is a great diversity. In order to see whether this uneven distribution of gangs is related to school context, authors have conducted a case study in one of the schools marked as a "high school risk". Face-to-face interviews, focus groups and observation led to a conclusion that difficulties in this school are not entirely the result of neighbourhood influences. The contribution gives also the way of class organization. Namely, the division between high-achieving and low-achieving classes is the only way for school to retain children from better-off backgrounds. On the other hand, this process of differentiation naturalizes sociological characteristics into ethnic ones.

Inger Lise-Lien researches Pakistani gangs in Oslo, Norway. The focus is on two gangs and each of them has more than 50 members. They can be described as organized criminal groups as well as street gangs. The author describes the action of the police in which fathers, mothers and wives of gang members were arrested because of receiving proceeds of crimes. For gang members it was unbearable to know that especially their mothers were arrested. The author analyzes in depth the

way morality and values are structured in ethnic communities and sheds lights on differences between gangs and other members of Pakistani community. “What distinguishes the honour of the Pakistani community and the hyperhonour of the gang, then, are rule-breaking activities together with the willingness to apply brutal violence in order to obtain power.” Furthermore, authors also emphasizes that under certain conditions it is possible that the honour code causes externalisation of the secular law and secular institutions.

Micael Björk in his article pays attention to gang-police interaction in Gothenburg, Sweden. The author made field research that included 400 hours of ride-along conversations with police driving reconnaissance cars, taking individuals into custody, or investigating crimes. Fieldwork also included patrolling with police officers on foot in ‘hot-spot areas.’ The lack of cooperation between Muslim immigrants and the police author relates to several reasons: subcultural explanations, experiences of racism and ineffective policing, but also to collective histories and the lack of trust in the state. “Distrust of the police shows that it is impossible for law enforcement agencies to work alone in the field of ‘policing and protecting trust’, without help from other municipal authorities and, most importantly, local community organisations.”

The editors of the book in concluding remarks point to key issues and dilemmas discussed in all articles. Firstly, they notice the existing differences between gangs in the book that in some cases represent gangs in process whereas in other they have the elements of organized criminal groups. This is important because it shows possible transformations. Secondly, although among researchers exists reluctance in respect to the use of term “gang” and this is especially true for European countries, it is important to research these phenomena and name them properly. This does not mean the creation of prejudices. On the contrary, many authors point to the existence of white gangs as well. Although articles offer many conclusions, there are still questions that need to be answered. For example, if marginalisation contributes to gang formation how is it possible that only small percentage of immigrants or members of minority groups join gangs? It would be necessary to research differences within these groups. This is of special importance considering the uneven distribution of crime involvement among ethnic minority groups and immigrants from different countries. Further, although authors do not assert that immigrants or ethnic minority members are more prone to commit crimes than natives, it would be useful to do comparison across groups. Finally, the editors give valuable recommendations for policy makers.