The Entrepreneurial Experiences of a Jamaican Posse in the South Bronx

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Introduction

Some members of the politically affiliated criminal gangs in Jamaica emigrated to the United States and elsewhere after fighting political wars in the electoral interest of the Peoples National Party (PNP) and the Jamaica Labor Party (JLP) (Headley 1996; Wilson 1980). One such group that left Jamaica for the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s to achieve the American Dream emanated from Central Kingston. This group of males socialized on a corner in the Bronx that we call Peyton Place. Not all of the Posse members had a criminal past in Jamaica. According to Akers and Sellers (2009), strain theory argues that people experience strain when they experience societal obstacles to their legitimate attempts at capital accumulation and some people reduce this strain by committing crimes. The members of the Peyton Place Posse entered the illegal marijuana and crack-cocaine market in the United States as underground entrepreneurs to reduce economic strain. The Posse members experienced varied outcomes in their operation as entrepreneurs in the illegal narcotics trade.

There is very little research on how the members of the Jamaican Posses fared as entrepreneurs in the illicit drug market in the United States. This chapter extends prior research on gang members as entrepreneurs and seeks to understand the members of the Peyton Place Posse as entrepreneurs in the illegal narcotic market in the United States in their quest to achieve the America Dream. Specifically, the chapter addresses the motivation of the Posse members for entering the market, and the successes and failures of the Posse members in their quest for capital accumulation. The chapter commences with an illustrative rather than an exhaustive review of the gang literature. Next, is a brief discussion of the characteristics of Bronx, New York. This discourse is followed by a synopsis of the Peyton Place Posse. Finally, strain theory
is used to explain the entrepreneurial experiences of the Peyton Place Posse in the illegal narcotics market in the gang members’ quest for wealth accumulation.

**Gangs**

The decision youths make to become gang members is related to the level of social disorganization in their community (Daniel and Adams 2010) and the lack of personal validation by their families (Gibbs 2000). These young people have few positive role models and they experience intense material deprivation (Daniel and Adams 2010). Gangs provide incentives to youths such as an income, security, recreation, identity, social solidarity and respect (Gibbs 2000). However, critical incidents during adulthood may force some gang members to reevaluate their childhood decision to join a gang (Daniels and Adams 2010).

The Diamond gang was comprised of second generation Puerto Ricans in the United States who had dropped out of conventional society and found solace and ethnic identity in belonging to the gang. Members of the gang felt neglected and rejected by the larger society and were able to generate an income by the gang’s involvement in the drug trade on the streets. The United States is not creating the opportunities to provide adolescents and young minority adults with wholesome choices. However, some gang members became disillusioned with the Diamonds and returned to the conventional world (Padilla 1996).

There is the danger that the values and culture of adolescent street gangs that rob and intimidate people will spread as the members of the gang approach adulthood (Gavniliuk 2011). Policing and crime control in relation to gangs have been politicized since September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States and the development of moral panic. This politicization and
moral panic threatens civil liberties of urban youth within the context of the rule of law (Morgan, Dagistanli and Martin 2010).

The sale of illegal drugs and the involvement in violence have become the hallmark of contemporary urban gangs. The level of general delinquency is higher in a structured gang of youths compared to a group of delinquent youths (Bouchard and Spindler 2010). Non-gang members compared to gang members are significantly less likely to be perpetrators and victims of personal and property crimes (Fox, Lane and Akers 2010). There is a prevalence of gang members in prisons and they are becoming more sophisticated and disruptive. Several intervention strategies are used to control these gangs but the absence of rehabilitation programs is undermining the intervention strategies (Winterdyk and Ruddell 2010). There is also the possibility of gang members, at the behest of the gang leader, to change their modus operandi as a criminal organization and morph into a social movement (Brotherton and Barrios 2004).

Urban gangs have undergone transformation from a pre-occupation with neighborhood turf to a fixation with capital accumulation through involvement in the profit making business of drug distribution (Coughlin and Venkatesh 2003). Howell and Decker (1999) identify the connection linking gangs, guns and violence. These youth gangs not only had a penchant for guns and violence, they were also involved in drug trafficking.

Some gangs organized themselves as profit making entities through the sale of illegal drugs. However there is no difference in the amount of drug sales by gang members and non-gang members (Duran 2010). There are organized drug gangs where there is a chain of command and there are clearly defined roles and functions that the different members are assigned. These gangs control and protect their housing projects or drug turfs from rival gangs. Residents doing
business in the gang-controlled projects have to pay “taxes” to the gang leaders (Venkatesh 2009). There is usually a spike in homicides in some cities when the police dismantle the dominant gang in the housing projects because the rival gangs start to fight each other over the drug turf that was controlled by the dismantled gang (Hagerdorn and Rauch 2007).

The spatial contestation of gangs in the drug market drives the gun-related homicide rate among urban youth (Cohen, Cork, Engberg and Tita 1998). These homicides occur in the geographical space where gang members conduct business. There is usually a higher crime rate on street corners, open air drug markets and cut-throat economic competition. Invariably there is a higher crime rate where illegal drugs are distributed and where multiple gangs operate (Taniguchi, Ratcliffe and Taylor 2011). Sometimes the drug market in the gang set space is controlled by adult gang members in prison. This control of the drug market from prisons transforms the youth gangs operating in the gang set space to become extensions of the incarcerated adult gang members. The prison gangs are able to protect property rights, enforce the sale of illegal drugs and adjudicate disputes in the drug markets. This control by the prison gangs increases the rate of incarceration and recidivism among urban youth who face declining economic opportunities (Skarbek 2011; Valdez 2005).

The illegal drug market is a turbulent environment where vertically organized and inflexible gangs are likely to fail. Drug sales more often than not are loosely organized neighborhood based operations that vary based on the stability of the drug mark and how lucrative these markets are. There is an inverse relationship between the complexity of the gang’s drug operation and the degree to which drug sales were centered in the neighborhood market. The level of gang operations also varied based on the ethnicity of the gang members (Hagerdorn 1994a).
The labor market has shifted from unskilled and semi-skilled blue collar jobs to jobs that require college education. The de-industrialization of the inner city and lack of stable employment have pushed many unskilled youth into the drug market economy. The drug culture emerged and the communities became marginalized (Fagan 1996). Adult gang members are not necessarily committed to long term participation in the drug economy. Many of these gang members become intermittently involved in illegal drug sales because of the spasmodic contraction of the formal labor market. Many gang members would accept fulltime formal jobs with parsimonious wages despite the relatively more lucrative illegal drug market (Hagedorn 1994b).

The proliferation of gangs worldwide and the global culture of gangsterism are a result of the glaring inequality extant in First World and Third World countries. The favelas in Brazil, the barrios in Mexico, the townships in South Africa, the shanty towns in Jamaica create the material conditions for the raison d’etre for gangs. This marginalization of a certain segment of the populace triggers a culture of resistance (Hagedorn 2008).

Youth street gangs sometimes become transnational organized criminal organizations because of regular flow of emigrants to the United States (Cruz 2010). However, the social organization of some local gangs prevents them from developing transnational ties with other criminal organizations. Sometimes the intra-gang structure and inter-gang relations reveal a contractor arrangement driven by weak market-like ties and criminal social capital (Pih, Hirose and Mao 2010). The gang literature does not take into account the Jamaican Posses and their entry into the illegal drug market. However, the Jamaican Posses in the United States are exemplars of street gangs with transnational linkages and criminal social capital (Gibson and Wilson 2003; Joseph 1999).
Jamaican Posses

After the violent General Elections of 1967, 1972, 1976, and 1980 some members of criminal gangs in Jamaica who fought political wars on behalf of the PNP or the JLP were assisted by their political benefactors to travel overseas (Headley 1996; Lacey 1977; Wilson 1980). The JLP and PNP political benefactors removed their gunmen from Jamaica because they were political and legal liabilities after the General Elections. This pipeline of criminals from Jamaica to the United States is still active (Headley 1996). The foregoing gang members who immigrated to the United States maintained ties to their local gangs, communities and political parties in Jamaica (Gunst 2003; Joseph 1999). These gang members entered the marijuana and crack-cocaine trade in the inner cities of the United States beginning in the late 1960s by leveraging their organizational and ruthless paramilitary skills honed from political wars in Jamaica (Lacey 1977; Wilson 1980).

By the 1980s there were 40 Jamaican Gangs/Posses in the United States. These posses that took their names from their politically affiliated communities in Jamaica were reportedly responsible for some 4,000 homicides in the United States. These murders occurred from inter-gang rivalries over control of the drug market, robbery by rival gangs, petty feuds and the settling of old political scores that had their genesis in Jamaica (Gibson and Wilson 2003; Joseph 1999). The posses supported their local communities with some of the profits from the illegal drug trade and shipped guns for inter-community and intra-community wars (Gunst 2003; Gibson and Wilson 2003). Many of these violent and amoral drug Posses were dismantled by a joint federal and state task force in the 1980s. These posses have resurfaced but operate clandestinely because they do not want to attract the attention of law enforcement agencies in the

The South Bronx

The Bronx is the poorest of the five boroughs that comprise New York City. The per capita income (PCI) for the Bronx between 2006 and 2010 was US$ 17,575 while the PCI for New York was US$30,948. Some 28.4% of the people in the Bronx fall below the poverty line between 2006 and 2010 in contrast to New York where only 14.2% of the population was below the poverty line. The rate of home ownership in the Bronx between 2006 and 2010 was 20.7% compared to 55.2% for New York. During the same period the housing units in multi-unit structures for the Bronx was 89.1% compared to 50.6% for New York (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). The figures above are worse in the South Bronx and has been like this for decades. Poverty and the immiseration of the marginalized precipitated the vast destruction of housing stock in the South Bronx from the 1970s to the mid1980s (Glazer 1987). Despite the poverty and run down communities, there are informal networks of social control that residents of the South Bronx use in their day to day interactions with each other (Rengifo 2008).

There is health disparity between Whites in New York City and African Americans and Latinos in the South Bronx. This problem is made worse by the deep distrust the residents of the South Bronx have for the health system, the perceived disrespect received at the hands of health care staff and the communication difficulties between patients and health care staff (Kaplan, Calman, Neil, Golub, Maxine, Davis and Ruddock 2006). The high rate of teenage pregnancies in the South Bronx requires parenting and education programs to curb the problem. These programs will not be adequate unless they take into account the disorganized families, the high
rates of substance abuse, poverty and poor education among residents (Davis, Fink, Yesupria, Rajegowda and Lala 1986).

Despite their involvement in criminal activities, users of illegal drugs in the Bronx provide some form of sustenance for each other. The widespread use of drugs in the Bronx reinforces negative behavior. The harsh environment and the differences in the quality of the drugs available cause users to share needles that place them at risk for HIV infection (Grund, Stern, Kaplan, Adriaans and Drucker 1992).

The number of persons 25 years and older in the Bronx that were high school graduates between 2006 and 2010 were 68.8% of the county’s population compared to 84.4% for New York (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). There is a positive correlation between association with deviant peers and deviant behavior in the South Bronx (Pabon, Rodriguez and Gurin 1992). Moral panic is embedded in the community narratives about the lower Bronx fueled by media reports of blighted communities. Community residents argued that their communities were viewed by outsiders as socially disintegrated, poor and violent (Diaz 2010). Minority males within this narrative are considered dangerous people. These males suffer from ecological contamination because they are deemed criminals because they live in crime ridden communities. The killing of Amadou Diallo is a case in point because the unarmed African immigrant was shot 41 times by police officers. The officers thought Diallo had a gun when he reached for his wallet (Grant 2003).

The characteristics of the communities in the South Bronx in terms of poor housing, homicides and other crimes, the moral panic, failing schools, high rates of poverty and unemployment, very low wages, substance abuse, high rates of teen pregnancies and the resultant
ecological contamination in socially disorganized communities provides the context in which to understand the strain that influenced the members of the Peyton Place Posse to gravitate to the illegal drug market. These problems have existed in the Bronx for decades. This study seeks to answer the question, how successful were the Peyton Place Posse members as entrepreneurs in the drug market based on the strain they were experiencing.

**Method**

**Sample and Procedure**

A purposive sample of eight members of the Peyton Place Posse was chosen for the study because these members could give an in-depth understanding of the gang. Specifically, they could tell us about themselves and the other gang members in the illegal drug market and how they were affected by the market. These members were also selected because they are acquaintances of the second author and they could easily be found in New York and were willing to tell their story because they trusted the second author. The second author made contact with some members of the group and asked if they were interested in participating in a study about the Posse. These members circulated the request for participation to the other Posse members. The participants who were interested in being a part of the study made contact with the second author. The study was explained to the participants and they were informed of their rights and all consented to participating in the study. Interview notes were taken because the interviews were not tape recorded at the request of the participants.

Eight retrospective in-depth interviews were conducted with members of the Peyton Place Posse between 2010 and 2012. Demographic questions were asked. Questions were also asked that tracked their involvement in the illegal drug markets over time. The interviews
explored the outcomes of what happened to the members such as competition with other groups, incarceration or avoiding incarceration, deportation, members being killed, becoming crack addicts and which members invested the money gained from the sale of illegal narcotics. The members were also asked about the origins of the Posse, the pre-drug market relationships and how the group organized and structured itself once it entered the drug market. All identifiers relating to the participants in the notes made during the interviews were removed to guarantee the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. The interview notes were read several times to identify the relevant themes and issues holistically by focusing on important events, the decisions and behaviors of gang members in their organization, community and the illegal drug market.

Findings and Discussion

Most members of the Peyton Place Posse immigrated to the South Bronx, United States between 1968 and 1973 from various sections of Central Kingston, Jamaica. Most of the Posse members were childhood friends in Jamaica. Some members of the Posse attended St. Mathews School on Victoria Avenue in Central Kingston. There were approximately 20 core members of the Posse and about 10 peripheral members who were a part of the group but did not become directly involved in the selling of illegal drugs. There were members of the group who would indulge in the smoking of marijuana but never engaged in the selling of marijuana or cocaine. They kept their jobs. One steadily employed peripheral member of the Posse was for many years strung out on crack until he kicked the habit in the early 1990s.

The Jamaican members of this all-male gang came from the communities of Tel Aviv, Southside, Rae Town and Browns Town in Central Kingston. These are low income
communities suffering from intense material deprivation where capital accumulation and upward mobility for the poor were limited. The situation of poverty in which the Posse members grew up pushed them out of Jamaica into the United States. Arriving in the United States, they were determined to change their circumstances. As one of the Posse members indicated-

When I first came to this country, I first worked as a welder at the World Trade Center but I find the money small and it wasn’t anything like what I could make on the streets

(Interview conducted January 16, 2011)

This quest for a better life in America makes strain theory an appropriate analytical framework for understanding the activities of the Posse members in the United States. The ethos of the American Dream transcends class. The average citizen/resident believes that appropriating the achievement orientation and working hard in competition with others will lead to financial success. Capital accumulation is the index of social worth, integrity and societal success (Akers and Sellers 2009; Messner and Rosenfeld 2006). This pervasive ethos ignores the fact that many people experience poverty, inequality and a lack of opportunities that restricts socio-economic mobility mediated by the social structure such as race, social class and gender. Blacks, members of the working class and women are more likely to experience strain than members of the white upper and middle classes (Akers and Sellers 2009; Messner and Rosenfeld 2006).

Many members of the poor working class, particularly the youth, driven by the achievement orientation experience frustration and anger because they cannot achieve material wellbeing despite their hard work. These people do not have the means to achieve their goals
because they are uneducated, unskilled or semi-skilled. They feel that they face insurmountable obstacles to the realization of their dreams in the society because of the poverty they encounter and their struggle to survive economically (Akers and Sellers 2009; Messner and Rosenfeld 2006). Repeated frustration and anger create a strain because of a disjuncture between ends and means. This dialectic causes some members of the working class poor to change their belief that conventional hard work brings financial rewards. These people commit crimes to reduce the strain they experience because of the rupture between their desired ends and the available means. Many young people reduce the strain they experience by joining criminal gangs (Akers and Seller 2009; Messner and Rosenfeld 2006).

Poverty was the push factor which influenced the Peyton Place Posse members to leave Jamaica where the chances of economic success were limited for the United States where achieving economic success was more likely. Jamaica received political independence from England in 1962 and poverty increased in the first decade of independence much to the chagrin of the Jamaican masses that had high expectations of a better life under the new dispensation (Lacey 1977).

Some of the gang members had families residing in the United States who filed resident alien petitions on their behalf. These family members articulated a narrative of the American Dream to their relatives in Jamaica that “it was easier to make it in America” than Jamaica. The articulated narrative matched the reality of these young males who were in marginal jobs or unemployed. Other members of the gang also saw migration as a way to reduce the strain they were experiencing in Jamaica. The perception that these gang members had, that “life was too hard” in Jamaica influenced them to enter the United States illegally via private boats through the Bahamas. The average age of the members of the Posse in 1973 was 25.
The Motivational Context

The Posse members on arrival in the United States faced several obstacles to their dream of “making it.” The Posse members were immigrants without college education that made them unprepared for decent paying jobs in the competitive labor market. Moreover, they were Black males who were stigmatized as dangerous and lazy. Many members of the gang became frustrated because they applied for jobs in the labor market but were unsuccessful.

Despite the achievements of the Civil Rights Movement, the immigrants with a low level of education, and their racial status made it difficult for these young men’s quest to achieve the American Dream. The frustrated young men decided to opt for the opportunity of the promise of wealth accumulation in the underground economy. They entered the illegal drug market to reduce the strain created by the obstacles that thwarted upward mobility in the United States.

Nonetheless, the dangerous nature of drug markets produces its own variant of strain because the Posse had to stay one step ahead of law enforcement and was hyper-vigilant in protecting themselves from rival gangs in the illegal narcotics market. Within a few months operating in lucrative markets, the Posse members acquired capital accumulation from the illegal drug trade that the average Jamaican immigrant in the working class would take years to acquire. The drug entrepreneurs with their new found wealth started to live lavishly and acquired consumer goods that set them apart from the average working class immigrants from the Caribbean. The fast money from the illegal narcotics market was used by the Posse members not just to reduce strain they were experiencing as new immigrants but to publicly show others that they were financially successful. This entailed driving expensive cars, purchasing exquisite clothing and partying with a bevy of pretty women. One member of the Posse boasted:
When you check it out everyone on the corner was
deeded out with fine clothing, expensive jewelry and
late-model motorcars. When we visited clubs, we drank
the most expensive champagne (Interview of November 5, 2010).

Transnational Linkages

Some of the Peyton Place Posse members in the midst of open drug markets in the 1970s
and 1980s maintained ties with the communities in which they were bred. The Posse members
sent money home to relatives and friends. One deceased member during lucrative times
purchased a fishing boat for colleagues hustling on the seas in Central Kingston. That Posse
member was also instrumental in resurfacing a soccer field in Brown’s Town, Central Kingston.
One Posse member bought a house for his mother in the middle class community of Havendale
and another bought a house for his mother in the working class community of Rockfort. These
and other homes similarly acquired have served as a place of refuge for those who have been
forced to return to Jamaica. This commitment to helping family members and communities in
Jamaica was quite typical of Jamaican Posses operating in New York City. The remittances sent
by the Posse members that assisted relatives and friends was a small fraction of their wealth so
the remittances did not contribute to the entrepreneurial failure of the majority of the gang
members. The remittances reduced the economic strain of family members and friends in
Jamaica who were unemployed or in low paying jobs.
Organizational structure

The Posse’s corner or turf was based on 168 Street and 169 Street between Fulton Avenue and Third Avenue in the South Bronx, New York. The Posse was called the Peyton Place Posse because the members conducted their illegal drug operations near a social club called Peyton Place. The illegal drugs were sold in gates and on the streets corners during the 1970s and the 1980s. The Posse operated from the late 1960s to the late 1980s when local and federal law enforcement agencies started cracking down on drug markets because of the crack epidemic, which consequently thwarted the illegal entrepreneurs’ pathways to continued capital accumulation. Selling illegal drugs with impunity and the prevalence of open markets came to a screeching halt by the end of the 1980s.

The majority of these new immigrants from Jamaica came together as a group because they had close ties of friendship in Jamaica and were now living in proximity to each other in the South Bronx. Most of the gang members had the worldview of the Caribbean immigrant population of “making it in America” and acquiring some real estate. The purchase of a house and the ability to pay the mortgage was an index of success, a goal that was difficult to achieve in Jamaica for the average working class immigrant.

In the embryonic stages of the marijuana business in the 1970s, the formally employed members of the Posse supplied the startup capital. As business became more expansive, having access to suppliers became more critical. A particular member of the Posse had a supply connection to a Cuban source and shared his proceeds with other members. In actuality, business was very Darwinian. The gang members scrambled to make money in the open and competitive drug market. It was a case of every man for himself. The gang members quickly internalized the
individuality of the achievement orientation of the American dream. The gang members
competed with each other in terms of wealth accumulation. The demand for illegal drug was so
great that there was the feeling that the more sellers, the more buyers. The chaotic and dangerous
nature of the business meant that guns were always necessary to defend the Posse against
competing drug gangs who were like preying vultures. The lucrative business attracted rival
gangs who preyed on those who were successful in the illicit market place.

The relationship between the core Posse members and those on the periphery is quite
fascinating. The friendships persisted but they occupied different worlds. Members of the
periphery worked in the legitimate economy as bus drivers, electricians or cab drivers. They
ventured to the haunts to participate in the rituals of marijuana smoking, the sharing of crack and
attending dances. Some members on the periphery succumbed to crack addiction but they
managed to keep their distance and refrained from getting involved in the tempting world of
illegal drug dealing. The presence of the peripheral members provided crucial and critical social
support and encouragement for the hardcore members that chose a life of crime to accumulate
wealth.

The Crack-Cocaine Addiction

By the 1980s, marijuana was no longer the drug of choice. Cocaine and crack were in
greater demand on the streets of New York and street sales sky-rocketed. The majority of the
Peyton Place Posse members became crack addicts. The culture of crack encouraged extreme
highs, bountiful sex and cut-throat control of the crazed market. Despite the massive capital
accumulation of many members of the Posse, crack addiction contributed to their entrepreneurial
failure. The addicted Posse members did not make long term investments with the capital they
made in the illegal narcotics trade. The criminal entrepreneurs were hooked on crack rather than on capital investments. Crack addiction derailed the American Dream of the Peyton Place Posse. The capital accumulation was essentially squandered.

Only a few of the Posse members were able to successfully amass wealth. These Posse members tended to be college educated or possessed incredible street savvy. The informal job market was more financially lucrative than the formal job market that invariably would pay minimum wages. The educated Posse members saw the financial success of their non-college educated colleagues and decided to use their college education in the service of the illegal narcotics trade to outperform their lesser-educated colleagues and achieve their economic goals. They operated more on the wholesale level and avoided the greater danger of the retail market. These entrepreneurs found ways to launder money and invested in stocks, real estate and other lucrative investment instruments. The few successful entrepreneurs of the Posse were not hardcore street people like the rest of the gang members and often made their exodus from the underground economy and functioned as legitimate businessmen. The few members of the Posse who accumulated wealth for a return to normal life were unlike the majority of the members who were career criminals. The non-career criminals in the Posse were the ones who successfully reduced the strain by leaving the posse, investing the wealth, improving their standard of living thereby achieving upward social mobility.

**Violence in the Illegal Drug Market**

There was ongoing violent confrontation with the African-American and rival Jamaican gangs who challenged the Peyton Place Posse for turf. In their quest to reduce their economic strain in the United States through crime, the Posse members experienced greater strain because
of the daily threat of death in the illegal drug market. One of the African-American members of the Peyton Place Posse was killed by rival gang members during inter-gang warfare. Another member was killed in 1975 by a member of a rival gang when he walked in on the robbery of another member of the Peyton Place Posse. He ran when he saw what was happening but was pursued and shot to death. One peripheral member of the Posse stated insightfully:

Once the gun was introduced, it changed everything.
those who possessed “weed gates” were constantly
fearful of robbers who preyed on them. One killing
led to another (Interview conducted August 10, 2012)

The threat of robberies by rival gangs led to a breakdown of trust and ongoing tension among the gangs. Three members of the Peyton Place Posse were indicted and convicted for murder. They were each given 25 years to life but served 22 years in state prisons. These three Posse members were deported to Jamaica. Two other known enforcers of the Posse were also deported to Jamaica.

The violence which also created strain not only resulted from drug market squabbles but also from age-old disputes and reprisal killings. Shortly after one member of the Posse migrated to the United States, his brother invited him to a dance held in Brooklyn that attracted other members of the Peyton Place Posse and other gangs from Brooklyn. The new immigrant was dancing with his brother's girlfriend when a member of a rival gang punched him in his face. A fight ensued and shots were fired during the melee. The Peyton Place Posse left Brooklyn in a hurry. Drug markets are by nature exceedingly violent. The Peyton Place Posse was comprised of members who had embraced a sub-culture of violence to support their pursuit of capital
accumulation. The Posse members felt that they had to succeed in the illegal drug market by any means necessary, in particular the use of lethal violence. But their demise was in large part due to crack addiction. The resort to crack made drug markets even more violent.

Specifically in New York City the crackdown on the illegal drug market was triggered by the killing of a police officer in Jamaica, Queens by a drug king pin in February, 1988. The administration of Mayor Ed Koch was forced to crack down on open drug markets in Harlem, the South Bronx and elsewhere. There was the feeling that things were rapidly deteriorating and some drastic law enforcement measures had to be taken to restore some semblance of order in the city.

The core members of the Posse with few exceptions were “devoured” by the criminal lifestyle. Some met an early death. At least five spent a huge portion of their lives wasted behind bars in state prisons. Much of the wealth accumulated was squandered. For some the prison sentence saved them from the likely death due to crack addiction. For much of their adulthood, they chose a life of criminality and in the sunset of their lives, regretted chasing the American Dream through the illicit drug markets.

This chapter has contributed to the gang literature through an analysis of the strain and entrepreneurial experience of a Jamaican Posse chasing the American dream and the role of crack addiction among other factors in the demise of the gang. However, there are limitations to the study. Only a minority of the gang members were interviewed so we do not know if their views are representative of the views of the gang as a whole. Moreover, the interviews with the participants were done more than two decades after the demise of the gang. Post-event
information, recall and discussion of the events over the years might have modified the original reconstructed memory of the events.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly the crack era of 1985 to 1989 led to the ruin of the Peyton Place Posse. The Posse moved from the selling of marijuana in the 1970s to selling crack in the 1980s as the demand for crack and cocaine increased in the inner cities. Many of the Posse members were awash with the fast money generated by the crack epidemic. This period coincided with an exponential increase in homicides in New York City that resulted in an NYPD crackdown on open drug markets. The demise of the Peyton Place Posse resulted from the arrest of three key members of the gang by NYPD for murder. The devastating impact of the crack addiction and subsequent financial ruin of a large number of the Posse members led to a derailment of beating the system.

The Peyton Place Posse as a group failed as entrepreneurs in the illegal drug market in the United States between the early 1970s and the late 1980s. Only one or two Posse members were able to make successful long term investments from the capital accumulated. The Posse members successfully defended their drug turf and market from rival gangs. Huge capital accumulation was squandered. The stress of the drug trade, the subsequent addiction of members of the gang to crack, the death of some members of the posse because of inter-gang violence and the incarceration of key members of the gang for murder led to the demise of the Peyton Place Posse by the late 1980s. The majority of Posse members failed through illegal means to reduce the economic strain they were experiencing in the United States as new immigrants that sought the America Dream. It is ironic that where the Peyton Place Posse once practiced its lucrative
drug trading, those two housing projects in the South Bronx have been reduced to rubble.
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