Analysis Of A Gang Essay, Research Paper

Gangs are a violent reality that people have to deal with in today’s

cities. What has made these groups come about? Why do kids feel

that being in a gang is both an acceptable and prestigious way to

live? The long-range answer to these questions can only be

speculated upon, but in the short term the answers are much easier

to find. On the surface, gangs are a direct result of human beings’

personal wants and peer pressure. To determine how to effectively

end gang violence we must find the way that these morals are given

to the individual. Unfortunately, these can only be hypothesized.

However, by looking at the way humans are influenced in society, I

believe there is good evidence to point the blame at several

institutions. These include the forces of the media, theater, drugs, the

government, and our economic system.

By looking at the forces of the media, theater, drugs, and the

capitalist economic system we can apply Akers? social learning

theory and the Marxist theory as the cause of Gangs. Akers? social

learning theory addresses the forces of the media, theater, and drugs.

Akers? social learning theory states that criminal and delinquent

behavior are acquired, repeated, and changed by the same process

as conforming behavior. It also addresses four major concepts of

differential association, definitions, differential reinforcement, and

imitation. It goes on to say that this process will more likely produce

behavior that violates social and legal norms than conforming

behavior when persons differentially associate with those who

expose them to deviant patterns, when the deviant pattern is

differently reinforced over conforming models. Marxist?s theory has

capitalism the as the cause of crime. Marxist theory states that

ownership of the means of production by the capitalist ruling class

produces a society that is inherently criminogenic. The theory

believes that the crimes committed are either, ?crimes of

accommodation or crimes of resistance to the capitalist system.

On the surface, peer pressure and greed cause gangs. Many teens in

gangs will pressure peers into becoming part of a gang by making it

all sound glamorous. Money is also a crucial factor. A kid (a 6-10

year old, who is not yet a member) is shown that s/he could make

$200 to $400 for small part time gang jobs. Although these are

important factors they are not strong enough to make kids do things

that are strongly

against their morals.

One of the ways that kids morals are bent so that gang violence

becomes more acceptable is the influence of television and movies.

This is an example of the social learning theory. The average child

spends more time at a TV than she/he spends in a classroom. Since

nobody can completely turn off their minds, kids must be learning

something while watching the TV. Very few hours of television

watched by children are educational, so other ideas are being

absorbed during this period of time. Many shows on television today

are extremely violent and are often shown this from a gang’s

perspective. A normal adult can see that this is showing how foully

that gangs are living. However, to a child this portrays a violent gang

existence as acceptable. ‘The Ends Justifies the Means’ mentality is

also taught through many shows where the “goody guy” captures the

“bad guy” through violence and is then being commended. A young

child sees this a perfectly acceptable because he knows that the “bad

guy” was wrong but has no idea of what acceptable apprehension

techniques are.

Gore in television also takes a big part in influencing young minds.

Children see gory scenes and are fascinated by these things that they

have not seen before. Older viewers see gore and are not concerned

with the blood but rather with the pain the victim must feel. A

younger mind doesn’t make this connection. Thus a gore fascination

is formed, and has been seen in several of my peers. Unfortunately

kids raised with this sort of television end up growing up with a

stronger propensity to becoming a violent gang member or

‘violent-acceptant’ person.

“Gangs bring the delinquent norms of society into intimate contact

with the individual.”1, (Marshall B Clinard, 1963). So, as you can

see if TV leads a child to believe that violence is the norm this will

manifest itself in the actions of the child quite, often in a gang

situation. This is especially the case when parents don’t spend a lot of

time with their kids at the TV explaining what is right and what is

wrong. Quite often newer books and some types of music will

enforce this type of thought and ideas.

Once this mentality is installed in youngsters they become

increasingly prone to being easily pushed into a gang situation by any

problem at home or elsewhere. For instance, in poor families with

many children or upper-middle class families where parents are

always working, the children will often feel deprived of love. Parents

can often feel that putting food on the table is enough love. Children

of these families may often go to the gang firstly out of boredom and

to belong somewhere. As time goes on, a form of love or kinship

develops between the gang members and the child. It is then that the

bond between the kid and the gang is completed because the gang

has effectively taken the place of the family.

The new anti social structure of cities also effects the ease in which a

boy/girl can join a gang. ” The formation of gangs in cities, and most

recently in suburbs, is facilitated by the same lack of community

among parents. The parents do not know what their children are

doing for two reasons: First, much of the parents’ lives are outside

the local community, while the children’s lives are lived almost totally

within it. Second, in a fully developed community, the network of

relations gives every parent, in a sense, a community of sentries who

can keep him informed of his child’s activities. In modern

living-places (city or suburban), where such a network is attenuated,

he no longer has such sentries.”2, (Merton Nisbet, 1971).

In male gangs problems occur as each of the members tries to be the

manliest. This often leads to all members participating in

“one-up-manship”. Quite often this will then lead to each member

trying to commit a bigger and more violent crime or simply more

crimes than the others will. With all members participating in this sort

of activity it makes for a never-ending unorganized violence spree (A

sort of Clockwork Orange mentality). In gangs with more intelligent

members these feelings end up making each member want to be the

star when the groups commit a crime. This makes the gang much

more organized and improves the morale of members which in turn

makes them more dangerous and very hard for the police to deal

with and catch (There is nothing harder to find and deal with than

organized teens that are dedicated to the group). This sort of gang is

usually common of middle or upper class people although it can

happen in gangs in the projects and other low rent districts too.

This “one-up-manship” is often the reason between rival gangs

fighting. All gangs feel powerful and they want to be feared. To do

this they try to establish themselves as the only gang in a certain

neighborhood. After a few gang fights hatred forms and gang

murders and drive-bye?s begin to take place. When two gangs are at

war it makes life very dangerous for citizens in the area. Less that

40% of drive-bye?s kill their intended victim yet over 60% do kill

someone. This gang application is one of the many reasons that

sexual stereotypes and pressure to conform to the same must be

stopped.

Lastly one of the great factors in joining a gang is for protection.

Although from an objective point of view, we can see joining a gang

brings more danger than it saves you from, this is not always the way

it is seen by kids. In slums such as the Bronx or the very worst case,

Compton, children will no doubt be beaten and robbed if they do not

join a gang. Of course they can probably get the same treatment

from rivals when in a gang. The gang also provides some money for

these children who quite often need to feed their families. The reason

kids think that the gang will keep them safe is from propaganda from

the gangs. Gang members will say that no one will get hurt and make

a public show of revenge if a member is hurt or killed.

People in low rent areas are most often being repressed due to

poverty and most importantly, race. This often results in an attitude

that motivates the person to base his/her life on doing what the

system that oppresses them doesn’t want. Although this

accomplishes little it is a big factor in gang enrollment. They then

commit crimes of resistance, which displays the Marxist theory of

crime.

So, as you have seen gangs are a product of the environment we

have created for ourselves. Some of these factors include

oppression, the media, greed, violence and other gangs. There seems

to be no way to end the problem of gangs without totally

restructuring the modern economy and value system. Since the

chance of this happening is minimal, we must learn to cope with

gangs and try to keep their following to a minimum. Unfortunately

there is no real organized force to help fight gangs. Of course the

police are supposed to do this but this situation quite often deals with

racial issues also and the police forces regularly display their

increasing inability to deal fairly with these issues. What we need are

more people to form organizations like the “Guardian Angels” a

gang-like group that makes life very tough for street gangs that are

breaking laws.