Gangs Essay, Research Paper

The Original law of the Illinois juvenile court defined a delinquent as: a child under the age of sixteen years who has violated any laws of the state, or any city or village ordinance. Under the common law, children between the ages of 7 and 16 years of could be dealt with as delinquent. Today in 37 states and in the District of Columbia, juvenile courts are initially responsible for all violations committed by youth under the age of 18. In ten states the age limit is 17 and in three states the jurisdictional age is 16, which means that anyone at these ages or above will face criminal prosecution. Dependency, neglect, and violation of educational laws have been included in most jurisdictions of the juvenile courts. Juvenile delinquency from a legal state combines the characteristics of social protection and restriction.

Juvenile delinquency may be a reflection of ethical defects in the families pattern of living. The parent themselves may be contributing to the delinquency of their offsprings by the example of their own social misconduct. The broken home defined as one in which one or both parents are absent because of death, desertion, separation, divorce, or a commitment to an institution, have contributed to juvenile delinquency. Other factors that may contribute to the high rate of juvenile delinquency is excessive poverty, dependency, overcrowding and other poor home conditions, and the lack of parental control or attention.

Why do youths join gangs? This Question has many answers, and it all depends upon many factors that are Affecting the youth?s life. For some youths there isn?t a choice, they are born into the activities of gangs because of their parents. Others that don?t have a choice are the ones who are forced in or recruited very strongly. Younger kids about the age of 10 or 11 are chased down by older, bigger and tougher gang members and beat up. They are made to keep a watch out for the police at a particular time and place, or hold the drugs or the drug money during a transaction. Those who join voluntarily may be joining for the social relationships and a sense of identity. Others join for a sense of community, protection from other gangs and an overall sense of well being.

It is believed that youth gangs may have first appeared in Europe or Mexico. No one is sure when or why gangs emerged in the Untied States. The earliest record of their appearance in the United States may have been as early as 1783 as the American Revolution ended. They may have emerged from adolescent playgroups or as a collective response to urban conditions in this country. Gangs began to spread across the United States in the early 1800?s, as the industrial revolution was having an impact on larger cities. In Chicago and other larger cities gangs began to flourishes during the industrial era, when immigration and population shifts reached peak levels. It is during these rapid population shifts that gangs seemed more visible and violent. It is believed that the original gangs were formed by young man rebelling against their low social status. These gangs came from overcrowded, substandard housing, poor or nonexistent health care facilities, and few if any economic opportunities. The intent behind these groups may have been simple camaraderie born of shared frustration at perceived social and economic injustices. The United States has seen four distinct periods of gang growth and peak activity: the late 1800?s, the 1920?s, the 1960?s, and the 1990?s (Curry and Decker, 1990).

In the early part of the 19th-century, youth gangs in the United States were primarily Irish, Jewish, and Italian (Haskins 1974; Sante 1991). According to resent national law enforcement survey, the ethnicity of gang members is 48 percent African American, 43 percent Hispanic, 4 percent white, and 4 percent Asian (Curry, 1996). A survey among students in the eight grade at 11 different sites showed these percentages were different. 31 percent of the students who said that their were gang members were African American, 25 percent were Hispanic, 25 percent were white, 5 percent were Asian, and 15 percent were others (Esbensenand and Osgood). Youth gangs are widespread in cities that have a history of gang problems like Chicago and Los Angeles. It has been said that Chicago has about 132 gangs with an estimated membership of 30,000 to 50,000 hardcore members. Chicago?s four largest and most criminally active gangs, the Black Gangster Disciples Nation, the Latin Disciples, the Latin Kings, and the Vice-Lords account for about two-thirds of all gang motivated crimes.

Youth gangs vary by size and by types. Territorial gangs? average around 180 members; Specialty gangs average around 25 members. In cities where gangs have been in existence for a long period of time, the typical age of the gang member is 12 to 24. The average age of the youth gang member is 17 to 18. African American gangs in large cities generally tend be involve in entrepreneurial activities more than any other ethnic/racial gangs. These gangs are said to be more involved in drug offenses. Hispanic gangs are more involved in turf?related violence; Asians and white Gangs offenses deal mostly with property.

Membership in a youth gang involves many dangerous actives the, initiation to join is an example of the danger involved. Daniel Monti the author and researcher of the book Wannabes Gangs in Suburbs and School interview 400 young men and women many of them gang members, to get a clearer understanding about history and human nature. In the Book Wannabes several of the youths describes their initiation and going through the wannabe process before they were approached to become a member of a particular gang. There are many different types of initiations, one is being beat up by the members of the gang that you are joining. Another type of initiation is to shot someone, that person doesn?t necessary have to die but the act of shooting that individual has be done in order to join. Youth gang members commit a disproportionate share of offenses including nonviolent ones. Gang violence differs from one city to another, one community to another and from one gang to another. In the book Wannabe the most mentioned type of violence was that of physically fighting members of other gangs. The female role in gangs is not that much different then that of the males, they are initiated similarly as the males. Most female gang members do not commit the hardcore violent act, their popularity is generally high due to their sexual activity. Violence inside the gang such as initiation serves to intensity the bonds. Most gangs are governed by rules that support using violence to settle disputes and to achieve group goals, turf protection and expansion, and in defense of the gang?s order. Fighting is also a way of demonstrating toughness and establishing status in the gang.

How does a youth get out of a gang? One young man says that you lose yourself. This young man was with a gang called the Disciples, his gang did a lot of drug trafficking and he made a sufficient amount of money and was ready to get out of the gang. He had prepared a letter to his parents telling them of his involvement, that he had left them some money in the bank, and that this was the only way for him to get out. It is said that once you are in the gang that there is no way out. Some of the other youths interview by Monti express that wanted out also, one says that ?you can back out but you can?t get out.? Another tells of the procedure for getting out ? you if to kill somebody in your family or get beat up by a whole bunch of them?.

Gangs that have good ties to other local groups and to adults in their area behave in a more restrained way. They do not tear up their own neighborhoods and do not intimidate those that live there their community. It is believed that gangs like this type of relationship with their community because they need a safe haven. The community also provide the gang with information, and the gang need a psychological tie to the community because the social adhesive is harder to brake. Gangs that have poor ties to area groups are more likely to destroy property and to harass their neighbors.

Gangs are beginning to show up in communities where they have not been seen before. Gangs are not going away, it is believed that a national crime syndicate built by the larger African American and Latino Gangs was established in Kansas City on April 1993. It is believed that this syndicate will divide the country up into drug territories while still allowing the small gangs to continue to fight amongst themselves.

Bibliography

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