Gangs

The emergence of contemporary urban youth cultures provides a sense of identity and belonging to many of its members. Critically evaluate this statement in relation to the emergence of gang cultures and communities. How should the British education system respond to these rapid societal changes? In the past 10 years the British education system has began to suffer under the reign of ever growing ' gang culture' (CITE). The streets of the UK have been subjected to increased gun culture, knife crimes and gang related violence. We have also seen the age of gang ' members' lowering and the impact it has on our schools increasing, with teachers being subjected to violence and non-members loosing out on valued teaching hours due to extra attention being required to tackle these problems (WGSS, 1996). However, to begin to address the issues of gangs we must first look at the members themselves and how they interact with our community and why. In the essay I plan to look in to some of the reasons why so many youths feel they can identify with this lifestyle and the effect this has on our Education system. To finish conclude I will then suggest possible ways in which our education system could adapt in order to handle this growing and often threatening culture and compare this to some successful international schemes we have witnessed in the past (Kennedy, Braga & Piechl, 2001). To begin with, I think it is imperative to outline the reasons as to why so many young Britons seek the sense of belonging they achieve once initiated into a gang. With Sir Ian Blair stating " We need to find out what makes people feel safer in a gang then out of one", it is no secret that these members actively seek out places in the community where they feel they can identify with their peers while gaining respect (CITE). One reason behind this longing to belong

may be put down to child neglect; although a child may be seen to be attending school, have well-fitting, clean clothes and appears hygienic and healthy this does not mean he or she are receiving proper love, encouragement and support at home. Learning theorist such as (??) BETTLEHEIM. WINNICOTT ?? TALK TO ME NOT SURE. Suggest that without fulfilling all the emotional needs of a being a person is unable to progress and thus lacks in cognitive development causing them to have minimal social and academic intelligence (CITE). This may offer explanations into why so many young gang affiliated teens do poorly at school and why it is they seek out friendships otherwise shunned by their schooling institution (CTE). In other words, it may be time to redefine neglect in the UK (Tang, 2008). This emotional deprivation may take the form of a struggling one-parent home, a lack of understanding of British culture from elders, lack of interest in to a Childs education and so on. With these said children lacking in social development due to little attention at home it is no surprise that so many succumb when approached by older, authorities gang members who may be offering a ' family-like' environment providing things such as security, protection and in some strange forms — love. This is reflected in a study of 641 abused and neglected children carried out by the Journal of Health and Social Behavior, whom interviewed the participants 20 years after the investigations in to their well-being had been closed. The study showed, that out of the 641, a significant amount (especially males) had gone on to present signs of learning difficulties and anti social personality disorder later on in life, providing explanations in to why we are seeing such erratic behavior from teen-boys emerged in gang culture as a result of child neglect

(Horwitz, Spatz, McLaughlin & White, 2001). GOOD In addition, my reading suggests to me that the majority of these children/gang members are not just being neglected at home but are in fact being ignored by the government and policy makers with youth centres and after school activities being taken away with every budget cut (YJB, 2007). The lack of facilities and extra curricular activities being available at an affordable price has the direct offset of seeing more teens in the street giving ample opportunity for cliques of young males to establish relationships that are perceived as gang-like to the outside world (CITE). This deprivation of youth activities in our society in this day and age also has the direct implication that so many more teens are spending their time socializing on the Internet; many have even been raised by their computers and this in now an accepted social norm. This access to an online network is providing the perfect platform for youths to connect with, create and promote gangs (CITE). This therefore, presents a problem of lack of interaction with both parents and the community and provides further explanation as to why our teens are seeking entertainment and friendships in ' un-savory' places. Furthermore, another possible reason behind the increasing number of active gang members is the globalization and mainstream success of black expressive culture. During the last decade we have witnessed hip-hop music and the affiliated products move from the ' niche' market to the mainstream with rappers becoming household names across the country (Gidley, 2007). Hip-hop has been suggested to encourage and glorify gang culture with many music videos showing young men waving around weapons, wearing bullet proof vests and lyrics often boast about revenge killings, drug deals and protecting the honor of your ' gang' (Cite).

With the target audience for this type of music being adolescent males who are at their most impressionable it is understandable that many turn to this argument as an explanation as to why so many of Britain's youths feel comfortable imitating this lifestyle. Hiphop is able to play on the notions that so many teens are insecure, and yet demand respect; they are so quick to take on foreign images as their persona and yet preech about being ' real' and so forth. However, the above issues are not isolated to street crime and are having a huge impact on Education in this country. With the gradual introduction of weapons, EXPLAIN SOME FIGURES ? our education system is dealing with issues it seems unequipped to handle. One ongoing effect gang culture is having on our schools is the limitations it is placing on to teachers with many teachers feeling threatened and are unable to meet learning objectives with constant violent disruptions: " Gangs and gang activity are often linked to increased levels of school violence" (Thomphins, 2000). The fatal stabbing of London Head teacher, Phillip Lawrence, in 1995 has required groups such as The Working Group of School Security to be put in place (WGSS, 1996) along with the increase of the use of CCTV and metal detectors in Secondary Schools (Lloyd & Ching, 2003). This clearly suggests that, currently, British schools are not only unable to deal with the ever-growing gang community but also that it is costing the Education System vast amounts of money. However, this has lead me to consider that the possibility that there could be more money in the cure than the prevention as my research suggests to me that there have been successful ways to tackle gang crime before it reaches schools, I will discuss this later in my essay. In addition, the British Education System is moving further away from

solving gang related issues with the vision that Education is crucial for ones future become a laughing matter amongst gang members (Chaskin, 2010). As these adolescents have identified themselves as ' gangsters' and feel more comfortable within this sub-culture than they do in a classroom, it is fair to make the assumption that the majority are involved in organized crime. In Alexander, C ' s(WHO?!) research she states, " The FBI, for example, has redefined the ' gang', focusing exclusively to ' violent street gangs/drug enterprise'", and notes " From the FBI's perspective a gang is a group of individuals involved in continuing criminal activity. " (Decker, 2007 — Cited in Alexander, 2008). This holds the implication that gang life is not only providing British teens with a sense of belonging but with financial stability too and thus is undermining the need for education as these teens are already supporting themselves (and often their siblings and parents) through crime so therefore see no benefit in pro-longed reward that comes along with the GCSE system and alike. For example, a boy of 15 years old is able to earn up to and beyond one thousand pounds a month selling crack cocaine in contrast to the 6 hours a day ' wasted' at school earning nothing at all (CITE). To continue, now I want to focus on the ways in which the British education system may respond to cope with this change in youth culture. One direction our system could take is the implementation of schemes and projects directly targeted towards gang culture its related issues. An example of this is the launch of the Boston Gun Project of 1996 in America. This project introduced heavy and clear communications between law enforcement agencies and gang members relaying the message that any violent act would be heavily punishable by law. This scheme also introduced

Boston Community Centers Street Workers Programme which provided facilities throughout the community (including in schools themselves) consisting of volunteers aged 22 — 55 working closely with known gang affiliates offering them and their families access to the social services in hopes of eliminating cases of neglect (mentioned above). In addition the Boston Gun Project also provided the Youth Services Provider Network, Alternatives to Incarceration and The Summer of Opportunities (1996 — 1997), these services offered help to teen runaways and substance abusers alongside dropout prevention, mentoring, job training, internships, legal advice and community service as a condition of gang related sentences (exclusive to Alternatives to Incarceration), (Kennedy, Braga & Piechl, 2001). This program was deemed a success with the number of young offenders charged with firearm offenses dropping from 152 to 23 in the first 8 months of practice (Kennedy, Braga & Piechl, 2001). Another way in which British schooling could adapt to these gang related circumstances is to introduce intervention in to early years education. My research suggests that by providing young children with a safe and comfortable environment (perhaps via specially trained anti-gang campaigners) children are more likely to step forward and discuss if they have been approached by gang members and thus accepting advice in to how to avoid this situation and the negative effects it may have on ones life (Chaskin, 2010). Furthermore, the education system and government in the UK could prevent the increase of gang culture by providing better role models and a stake in their community. During the last decade educators and policy makers have cried out for role models for pupils (especially males) and community involvement, however these

optimistic ideas have not been met by systematic practice leaving students feeling abandoned and causing them to seek guidance else where (Nettles, 1991). As a multicultural society, those born and raised in England are often noted to report no sense of culture and/or belonging, therefore by introducing a dialogue between the older generations and current pupils we may be able to reinstall a sense of pride in ones community; By offering oral histories we can teach young Britons why it is that they are expected to respect their country and the systems and institutions put in place by our governments (Villarel, 2000). And my final suggestion in to the ways in which our education system may adapt to equipped equip young gang members with a better education would be by approaching the labeling of young teens very carefully. Although, as this essay states, gang culture is an ever-growing problem, I think it fair to say that many young males associated with gang culture would never actually refer to them and their friends as a ' gang' (Alexander, 2008). Many simply view their experiences as social and innocent and by labeling these young students we may be criminalizing those who have simply sought out a place of belonging. By adding a label to a young boy who plays out in the street, just as his father did comfortably 20 years ago, we are implying that they are untrustworthy and not worth the time and money the education system entitles them to (CITE SELF PROFICING). PROPHICYING? Many studies have proved this to be damaging and could be setting our teens up for failure before they have even embarked on their academic career (CITE). GOOD GO FOR THIS POINT To conclude, by looking at my reading, I can see that gang culture is not the result of one community failing but the amalgamation of many reasons

which result in many pupils who do not feel cared for in today's society. And without a doubt, offers an identity to young members of society otherwise forgotten about. I feel this is also reflected in the smaller numbers of female gang members as they have multiple identities to associate themselves with such as ?. Although the British government has addressed gang culture and the crimes that come with it year after year it seems as if our system continues to fail young males with false promises of improved facilities and customized education. With the rise of child poverty, we see the rise of gang crime and this correlation must be addressed in order to move forward. In terms of our education system I feel it necessary to point out that although many failings and flaws have been mentioned in this essay I do not perceive these as individual institutions failing but the abandonment of proper social care provided in schools by the government and policy makers. To improve this we must begin to listen to the needs of young pupils, address emotional neglect much more seriously and with proper resources and intervene in to the social activities of children at a much younger age. AGREE HAVE YOU READ THE WORK OF CAMILLA BATTENGLEIH OF KIDS COMPANY WHO ARGUES THAT THESE KID CHAOTITC LIFESTYLES MEANS NEURALPATHWAYS ARE NOT FORMED PROPERLY. THEY LIVE IN CONSTANT STATE OF ANXIEXTY AND LACK EMPATHY. ALSO MAYBE ADDRESS ISSUE OF TERRITORY . ARE POSTCODE GANGS REAL OR DOES THE MEDIA MAKE EXAGGERTE AND MAKE IT WORSE? WHY DO WE NOT CARE WHEN BLACK KIDS ARE KILLED . MAYBE MENTION STEPSHN LARWENCE ?? RACE. BI GGANG PROBELM FOR INSTANC IN SCOTLAND BUT ALL WHITE. IN LONDON NEARLY ALWAYS ASSOCIATED WITH RACE? SO HOW MUCH IS CLASS A FACTOR? BIG I WOULD SAY? ALSO A

SENTENCE OT TWO MAYBE ABOUT HOW GIRLS PARTICIPATE IN GANGS SO ITS NOT JUST A PROBLEM AROUND BOYS? ALSO IN CONCLUSION GO BACK TO QUESTION AND SAY SOMETHING ABOUT IDENTITY. HOW INTERVERNTION MAKES OTHER MORE POSTIVE IDENTIES PART OF THE LANDSCAPE??

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