

Analysis of a gang



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

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 processes 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 theory has capitalism as the cause of crime.

Marxist theory states that ownership of the means of production by the capitalist ruling class reduces 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 ave 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 anifest 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 lways 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 ecently 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 ore 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-by s begin to take place. When two gangs are at war it makes life very dangerous for citizens in the area. Less than 40% of drive-by 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 overtly 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.