FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA UNIVERZITY PALACKÉHO
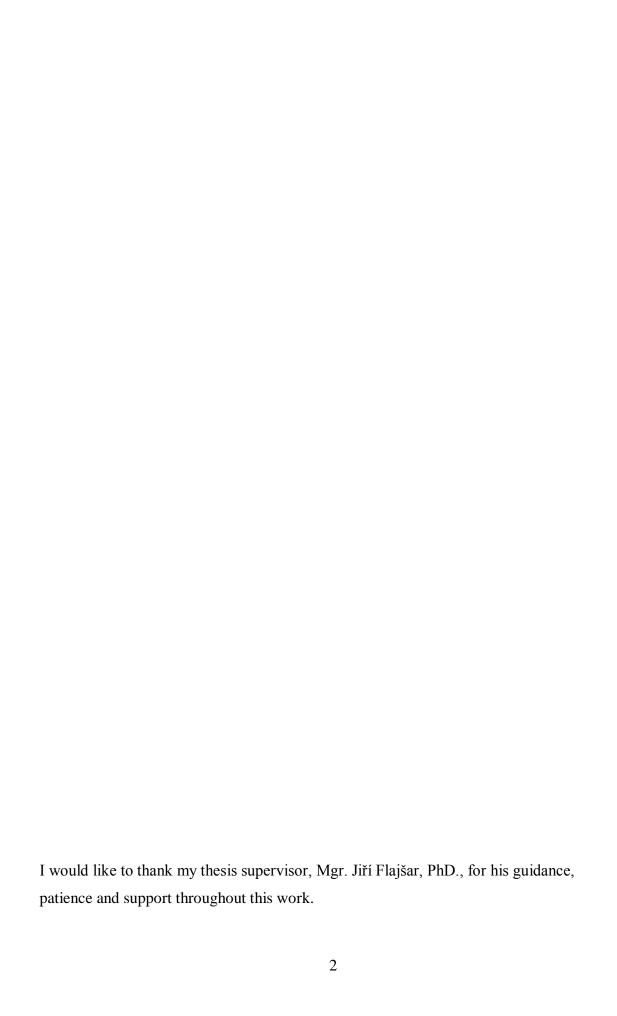
KATEDRA ANGLISTIKY A AMERIKANISTIKY

The Los Angeles Street Gangs

Youth delinquency and anti-gang programs

(bakalářská práce)

Autor: Jakub Šorm, Anglická filologie

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Jiří Flajšar, PhD.

OLOMOUC 2013

I declare that I worked on this bachelor thesis independently and that I included the complete list of used and cited literature.

In Olomouc _____   Signature _____

CONTENTS

1   INTRODUCTION

The second half of the 19th century saw an influx of immigrants from Europe which was joining the American society.[1] Some of these immigrants included people from various backgrounds such as the Germans, Italians, Irish and the Polish. These people gathered in streets within their neighborhoods in order to address and confront their new challenges. This was a form of new found unity which was aimed at ensuring that these people are able to tackle new found challenges. These challenges were associated with the new patterns of life within industrialized cities which were located in the eastern part of the United States of America. The nature of these unions brought to the fore various names which described each society. For example there was an early Irish group which had the name Plug Uglies.

These groups would join together and face issues such as poverty and living in squalid conditions. They also developed strategies which enabled them face challenges of life such as prejudice. In most cases, the members of these groups were older than the members of the youth gangs of today.

Gang cultures pose a persistent problem in major cities across the globe. Essentially, gangs have become one of the major challenges in the security of the society. One of the main factors which are making these gangs to grow is the fact that gang membership is growing by leaps and bounds. The gang cultures which have been taking place in these cities have not been restricted to the males only. In as much as the gang culture is growing, it is the responsibility of the society to understand the driving force behind the gangs. This will enable the society to identify the challenges which face the youths and how to deal with them.

In essence, street gangs pose a serious crime problem of the society. Some of the common forms of crimes which are hitting the society are perpetrated by the gangs. For instance, the rise of street assaults, homicides and robbery with violence has been enhanced

---

[1] Kären M. Hess and Robert W. Drowns, *Juvenile Justice*, (California: Cengage Learning, 2009), 12-15.

by the number of gangs within the society. In order to understand the way or manner in which gangs operate, the policy formulators should be in a position of understanding causes of the gangs. Essentially, there are many factors which lead to gang involvement. Seeking to understand the nature of these factors plays a major role in understanding and resolving.

2   ORIGIN OF GANGS

Where do gangs come from? Essentially, gangs were not invented by the American society. It is also important to note that the African Americans and the Latino youths did not originate these delinquent behaviors in the United States. Youth gangs have been persistent and prevalent in virtually all youth populations across the globe.[2] These gangs are populations of people who have been forced to delinquent behaviors courtesy of the background which they have found themselves. Societies and background which have been associated with poverty, segregation and minority groupings have been at the core of developing gangs.[3]

Gangs have not just been defined from the youthful state rather some of them have been sustained by adult behaviors which have served to accomplish certain goals in their lives.[4] Gangs have been associated with adult behavior and criminal problems within the society. They have also been used in the past to develop and generate political movements which have become revolutionary movements.

The recent decade has been a decade which has been marked by a dramatic increase of gangs. A variety of these gangs have also emerged in developing nations across the globe. Due to technological advancements, these gangs have developed into massive institutions which have been better organized and specialized.[5] This has made these institutions to be associated with serious criminal activities in order to raise income to fund their various activities. Most of the activities which have been associated with the youth gangs are violence and drug dealing activities.[6] Some of the activities which they have also been associated with have been age related criminal and juvenile activities. It is not always

---

[2] Irwing A. Spergel, *Reducing Youth Gang Violence: The Little Village Gang Project in Chicago*, (Illinois: Rowman Altamira, 2007), 43.

[3] James C. Howell, *Juvenile justice and youth violence*, (New York: Sage Publications, 1997), 64.

[4] Sudhir Venkatesh, *Gang Leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist Takes to the Streets*, (New York: Penguin Group US, 2008), 186.

[5] Thomas W. Ward, *Gangsters Without Borders: An Ethnography of a Salvadoran Street Gang*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 58.

[6] Larry J. Siegel, *Criminology*, (California: Cengage Learning, 2008), 33-35.

the case that the members of these gangs have any criminal records. This implies that there are people who have been sustained by their clean records and have managed to remain unnoticed by the legal forces.

It is worth noting that members within youth gangs seem to grow out of these gangs with age. What most of these youths were involved in when they were in their teens is not what they focus on when they mature into their late twenties heading to early thirties.[7] It has been noted that the youth gang problem within this nation has been associated with young adult problems. The problems faced by these members of the gangs emanate from a variety of social challenges. These challenges are consequences of an accumulation and the interaction of failures associated with institutions such as the family, pressures within and without the society, lack of proper guidance and poor policies within the government circles. In addition, issues such as inadequate job opportunities render these young minds to be vulnerable to social challenges that force them to join and form gangs.

In addition, youth gangs do not just exist for the sake of it. These organizations have been established with the aim of achieving a certain goal within the society. In essence, youth gangs are subcultures which exist with the intention of creating avenues for their means within the society. It is quite unfortunate that most of the means which are created by these groups are associated with criminal activities.[8] The youth gangs provide the members with personal identity and enable them to acquire a certain status within the society. In addition, various issues are also addressed within these groupings. Since these organizations are established from poor backgrounds, one of their main objectives is to create structures which will enable them to gather resources. Though some of the members of these societies are able to generate income, the gang culture does not create them to become meaningful members of these societies. Most of the members end up leading unproductive lives within the society.

---

[7] Spergel, *Reducing Youth Gang Violence*, 57.
[8] Howell, *Juvenile justice and youth violence*, 117.

3   GANG OUTREACH PROGRAMS

These are approaches which have been established within the society to enable the gang members to reach out and make meaningful choices in their lives. Gang outreach programs are set up in slums where most of gang members exist. The efforts which have been established by these programs have sought to work hand in hand with measures that have been developed in the past. The outreach programs exist within various organizations in American systems. In essence, the roots of contemporary outreach efforts have been developed by charitable and religious organizations which are established in the slum settings. The organizations have developed approaches which have been able to identify vulnerable youth and provide alternative approaches towards life.

Mission workers who developed associations within the society hoped that they would be able to persuade these young minds to change their ways. The goal was to establish activities and patterns of living which would resonate with the needs within the society. Efforts by these missionaries did not take place within any institutionalized agency. This is because these approaches took place outside physical structures of any agency. Since moral persuasion and change in lifestyle was one of the goals of these programs, the missionaries worked within the slums among these youths. Some of the missionary and religious organizations which worked round the clock to offer direction and guidance among these youths included Boys Club and workers in the YMCA. These organizations which worked in Chicago recruited the young members and gave them opportunities to take part in activities that would reduce criminal activities associated with gang violence.

3.1 Chicago Area Project

This is a project which was established in 1930s that was geared towards offering protection and guidance to the young people.[9] This approach introduced the concept of counseling in order to enlighten the members within these societies about the ills associated with gang violence amongst the youth. The objective of this program was to target youth groups which had tendencies of gang delinquency. The project located regions within Chicago which were characterized by low income and high rates of poverty.[10] This project stressed on creating a form of autonomy among the residents when it came to planning and operating programs which targeted the youths. This enabled the society to generate workable programs of dealing issues associated with delinquency and enhanced control among youth socialization processes. The stakeholders of this project were able to articulate issues which were affecting the youth and generate solutions which were able to create a sense of commitment among the youths.

The major strength of this approach was based on the fact that its techniques were social in nature. This was based on the premise that if people were able to understand the benefits associated with this program, then they would develop strategies which would uphold societal goal of security. Some of the strategies which the project developed and laid emphasis on were outreach and involvement of indigenous communities in decision making.

The local adults were able to move within the streets and address the youth regarding their destructive behaviors. In addition, the team was able to bring on board ex-convicts who were able to advice the youth based on their previous gang involvement and how it led them to where they were in life.[11] The ex-convicts were known as "curbstone counselors" and their main responsibility was to engage the youth gangs in a manner that the members would identify their risky lifestyle patterns.

---

[9] Spergel, *Reducing Youth Gang Violence*, 241.
[10] Spergel, *Reducing Youth Gang Violence*, 242.
[11] Rolf Loeber and David P. Farrington, *Serious and Violent Juvenile Offenders: Risk Factors and Successful Interventions*, (New York: SAGE, 1998), 250-253.

These ex-convicts were instrumental in advocating for sober thinking among the youth. In essence, these teams were able to mediate on issues such as truancy among youths and adolescents within learning institutions. They also worked with the police force in providing solutions or avenues of resolving challenges that were facing under age offenders.[12] To a large extent, this project was effective because it addressed the challenge of gang violence by creating a societal awareness campaign which was collective in nature. In some areas, gradual improvement started to take shape and noticeable changes were observed. Due to the effects of the project, agencies started to mount pressure on the government to establish clear structures which created opportunities for developing the rehabilitation programs.

The Boston Gun Project is a project which has been developed to work towards eradicating high levels of gang violence.[13] This project was established by an association of various professionals who included researchers, communal leaders, criminal agents and the clergy. This team developed the Boston Gun Project with the intention of reducing youth violence within the Boston region. The main strategy was to reduce violence by ensuring that the gang activities within this region were limited. Due to the approach used, the impact of this program was immediately noted in 1996. Cases of youth violence dropped drastically within Boston city.

The Boston strategy worked through developing tailor-made solutions facing specific blocks within the Boston area. Specifically, the defining charter of this program required people who were faced by problems to identify a region and the challenges associated with the location. Using expertise from the team, they would generate or develop strategies which would address the specific problem in this region.[14] Just like the Chicago area project, this approach worked with community leaders in the process of creating intervention measures.

---

[12] Howell, *Juvenile justice and youth violence*, 165.
[13] Spergel, *Reducing Youth Gang Violence*, 258.
[14] Robert J. Spitzer, *The politics of gun control*, (New Jersey: CQ Press, 2008), 135.

4 GANG VIOLENCE AND CRIMES

Violent crime is one of the major forms of crimes which affect many people living in certain regions of the United States. Gun homicide is one of the leading forms of violent crimes in these regions.[15] Gang violence is one of the most challenging aspects in the current society. Essentially, this crime is mostly concentrated in major cities of the United States and the key perpetrators are the young males.[16]

Research has established that violent crime which involves gun violence has a high concentration in neighborhoods which have high levels of poverty which is accompanied by poverty and drug abuse.[17] Despite the fact that there have community based approaches aimed at curbing gang violence communal complexes have not been all that effective in providing solutions. Due to this, the society has opted to respond to this menace by developing various approaches matching the need.[18]

4.1 Illegal activities of the youth gangs

One of the primary distinguishing factors of youth gangs from lawful groups is the illegal activities that the youth gangs perpetuate.[19] The youth gangs are notorious for committing an array of crimes which range from petty crimes to violent gang activities such as drug abuse. The most common form of gang offense which the youth are involved in is gang fighting. This form of gang offense takes place the moment two or more gangs engage in violent combats. When this combats are taking place, these youths often injure or

---

[15] Margaret Haerens, *Gun Violence*, (California: Greenhaven Press, 2006), 38.

[16] Laura K. Egendorf, *How can gun violence be reduced?*, (London: Greenhaven Press, 2002), 53.

[17] Erika Gebo and Brenda J. Bond, *Looking Beyond Suppression: Community Strategies to Reduce Gang Violence*, (California: Lexington Books, 2012), 42.

[18] George Tita et al., *Reducing Gun Violence: Results from an Intervention in East Los Angeles*, (New York: Rand Corporation, 2011), 47.

[19] Hess and Drowns, *Juvenile Justice*, 202.

hurt other people along the road. For example, there have been cases whereby children or passer-by are hit by stray bullets in the streets. However, in as much as this is the case, majority of the victims who are affected by this form of crimes are the youth themselves.

4.2   Youth gang violence and drugs

Youth gang activity when approached from a juvenile perspective is a study which is focused at understanding violent crime. The perpetual cycle which is created by gangs can be dated back to many years ago. In essence, most of these gang members may not have concrete reasons explaining why they get involved in gang fights. To most of the members, gang life is a lifestyle which they have embraced as a way of life. For example when gang members within the same group tend to disagree what happens is that they tend to respond in violent acts. This has been attributed to the fact that most of the members of the gangs are young people who find pleasure in fighting and violence. The level of technological advancements have attributed to high rates of gang fights among these members. For instance, the availability of automated weapons has a major impact on the nature of violence which takes place among these gangs.

One of the main dangers which are associated with these gangs is the fact that violence which is perpetrated by one member of the gang normally cycles back to that person. In essence, the originator of the violence starts a loop of violence from the victim going back to the originator. This is what attributes to cycles which are associated with gang violence. Youth gangs are also involved in drugs in order to meet their financial demands and obligations. The nature of drug involvement takes place from two fronts. That is, the youth gangs either use these drugs are they are involved in peddling and distributing them. The most common drugs which are found among these youths include alcohol, cocaine, phencyclidine and marijuana.

Studies have revealed that it was not until the early 1990s when crack cocaine hit the market, most of these youths were involved in robbery, car theft and extortion. Though this was taking place, the level at which it was taking place was considerably higher than it

is the case in this generation. Drugs have higher economic returns compared to other forms of activities. These perceived benefits among the youths have led to an increase in drug involvement. These fast economic gains contribute to higher enrollment rates of the youths in gangs.

Despite the fact that most of the gang members being involved in drug sale and distribution, it has been argued that most of the people who abuse these drugs are not necessarily the gang members. Studies have indicated conflicting findings regarding the usage and distribution of the drugs. This has been orchestrated by the nature of leadership structure which exists in the youth gangs. Essentially, youth gangs lack the leadership and structure to sustain this business for long. Drug gangs are institutions which are purely involved in the criminal activity of selling and producing drugs. These gangs are very organized and have a clear structure of leadership. This is contrary to street gangs which have amorphous leadership structures which contribute to lack of adequate capacity to deal with the drug menace.

4.3 Reasons which lead youths to join gangs

There are very many reasons which lead people to join youth gangs in this generation.[20] Youths join these gangs for a variety of reasons some of which include similar reasons that lead people to join movements such as the scouting movement or other forms of sororities in learning institutions and societies. Leading reasons which make people want to join youth gangs include the need or desire to hang out with people who are of similar interests and desires. Secondly, people join youth gangs with the intention of looking for ways to distinguish themselves from their parents. Thirdly, people join youth gangs with the intention of developing their own identities. Economic reasons have also been at the fore of spurring people to join youth gangs. For instance, if gangs are in the business of distributing drugs and stolen goods most youngsters from difficult backgrounds

---

[20] Karen L. Kinnear, *Gangs: A Reference Handbook*, (California: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 9-10.

find themselves attracted to such lifestyles. This is because such organizations are seen as an easy means of making quick and extra cash.

Most people in the society have held the believe that young people join gangs and then get into trouble as they strive to stick to the gang's dictates. Gang cultures have conditions that sustain and promote life of violence among the gang members. Some of the attributes which are associated with these cultures include violent and sociopathic behaviors. These behaviors are generated the moment that these gangs show their members how to gain or obtain wealth which may be difficult to be obtained in their environment. This drives the demand for joining and identifying themselves with these gangs especially for youths who are from difficult backgrounds or inner cities. There are people who hold the idea that people who join these gangs are ready trouble shooters who are looking for avenues to unleash their criminal tendencies.

Studies have revealed that gangs harbor members who have little respect for other people's opinions.[21] Therefore it is most likely that people who join these gangs are youths who have juvenile tendencies and they know what is expected from them. These youths do not or did not need any encouragement from others when they were making a decision on whether they should join the gangs. Current studies have revealed that some youths join gangs so that they can be part of a group and meet their basic desires and demands.[22] Other youths who join these gangs already have delinquent criminal records before they join these groups. In this case, these groups provide them with opportunities to showcase or exercise their delinquent behavior tendencies.

---

[21] Kinnear, *Gangs*, 4.
[22] Kinnear, *Gangs*, 6.

5   THEORIES OF GANG FORMATION

There are many theories which explain or give reasons why youths join these gangs. Some of these theories present sociological tendencies whereby they focus on social structure and variables. These variables define the role or purpose of gang formation from various backgrounds. Studies have revealed that some of the variables which are associated with these behaviors include social environment, availability of economic opportunities, family and prevailing economic conditions. Majority of these theories fall into six major categories that include bonding and control theory, opportunity and strain theory, labeling theory, sub-cultural or conflict theory, social disorganization theory, and radical or sociopolitical theory.

5.1   Bonding and control theory

The primary and basic institutions which are identified within the American social aspects include institutions such as the school, workplace and the church. These are institutions which play a crucial role in teaching children moral and socially acceptable behaviors. One of the main roles of these institutions is to offer rewards for those people or individuals who adhere to societal rules and regulations. This implies that people or societies which do not adhere to social rules or norms are also punished by the same institutions.

Families are instrumental in instilling values and social norms in people. They develop social bonds which prevent them from committing delinquent acts. Studies have revealed that families which have delinquent children or offspring have little time together.[23]

---

[23] Kinnear, *Gangs*, 6.

This means that such families provide very little support and affection for their offspring. As compared to families of children of well-behaved parents, these parents from delinquent families do not have time to engage in discussing or noting important values of life. Most of these parents are normally unemployed with little or unsteady sources of income. Some of these parents who have drug and substance abuse related problems fail to provide any supervision to their children. It has been noted that such parents do not pay attention to what is happening in the lives of these children. Furthermore, they do not appreciate or recognize the role of social institutions such as the school or church. These children often miss out on opportunities which are created by the social institutions. Thus, leading the youths to engage in unsocial behaviors and end up joining criminal gangs.

5.2   Opportunity and strain theory

The society has been led to believe that achieving the American dream entails generating wealth, attaining a specific social position and achieving certain personal goals. These are ideals which have been defined by the society as meaningful. This has led many people to develop similar attributes and thoughts regarding the nature of their lifestyles. In most cases, the young people in families try or attempt to make it in life better than their parents and achieve greater roles in their lives.

However, in as much as there are these dreams and aspirations among the young people. Very few of them live to achieve or realize them. This develops heightens the level of frustration and creates a hopeless attitude towards life. This is because the young people develop the belief that they will not develop or receive their aspirations in life as other people. Due to these frustrations, most of these young people rely on delinquent behaviors in order to address these frustrations.

Studies conducted by several sociology scholars have led to the conclusion that such social strain provides the underlying explanation of juvenile and gang delinquency. These studies have led to the conclusion that there exists a relationship between social strain and gang culture. Essentially, young people or the youths who believe that they will

be able to get a share of what the society provides or offers are the ones who are likely going to join scouts and other meaningful social fraternities. On the other hand, young people who do not hold similar views and beliefs, that is, the society will provide for them do not join these gangs.

It has been argued that people and especially young people join youth gangs when they have the notion that the society will not provide for them what they aspire to acquire as their share. This is because gangs offer them an opportunity to dream again on how they will actualize their dreams. In as much as the strain theory is utilized when seeking to understand why people join gangs, there are scholars who hold a contrary opinion. These scholars hold the view that the strain theory does not adequately handle the issues associated with joining of gangs. For example, it has been noted that the theory does not offer adequate reasons which explain why youths from the middle or working class join the gangs. From the analysis which has been carried out it has been discovered that it is only certain or a number of youths from these cities who opt to join these gangs.

This theory offers paths and leads which might be explored further in order to understand factors which are associated with gang culture. However, it is important to appreciate the fact that this theory offers an explanation of how the youths deal with the strain of having high hopes about their future. In addition, this gives them an opportunity to evaluate the probability of how these high hopes can be dealt with within the realities of a society. Essentially, these young people can be led to conform to their goals and patterns of life by ensuring that they conform to a given set of principles that guarantee life. Furthermore, this understanding can act as a motivation which can be used to enhance their abilities to seek certain standards of living which are in line with achieving their goals.

When the youths focus on the means of achieving these successes, they easily become absorbed into small details of their processes. Some of them retreat from their society seeking other means to achieve their goals. This is what eventually leads these youths to rebel from their society and goals leading to joining gangs.

5.3   Labeling theory

This is a theory which was developed by George Herbert Mead (1934). This theory is based on the concept that people tend to behave the way they are labeled by the society. That is, an individual's self – concept is derived from the processes of labeling which take place within a society. This approach is what forms the grounds for self – fulfilling prophecies. There are theories which have been inclined on this perspective. This means that theorists have developed explanations of why youths join gangs that are aligned to concepts of labeling.

In essence, initial acts of delinquency are not what attribute to labeling in the society. The initial act which is usually known as the primary deviance does not have a major impact when it comes to labeling theory. The subsequent acts of delinquency are the ones which are used to explain this action. This is because these subsequent acts which are committed in response to how the society reacts that are relevant in this theory. These secondary acts are commonly known as the secondary acts of deviance which are the acts that are important when analyzing this theory.

According to this theory, people's good behaviors may not be reinforced if the society views their behaviors as deviant. For example when a society views a person's behaviors as deviant, then they are likely going to engage in acts that serve to sustain these deviant behaviors. A person is led to the conclusion that if many people feel that he is bad, then one might as well remain to be bad within the society. These actions which are a consequence of the societal reinforcements serve to make the members of these groups stick to participating in deviant behaviors.

5.4   Sub-cultural or cultural conflict theory

This theory explains why youths join gangs based on where they are brought up. The argument which is presented by this theory is based on the premise that people or youths tend to conform to prevailing norms within their society. Essentially, when these

norms vary from those of the wider society, then these young people identify with norms which exist within their subcultures.

Studies have revealed that males who have friends that have delinquent tendencies tend to also take part in some delinquent activities. In addition, youths who have grown up in societies which have high rates of delinquency also report a high rate of committing delinquent crimes. This is occasioned by the fact that these youths who grow up in societies that have high rates of criminal activities accept crime to be the order of the day. This implies that to them crime is an ordinary act which is committed on a daily basis. They do not have any negative perception regarding crime rates within the society. This is what justifies why they engage in various crimes.

5.5   Social disorganization theory

This is a theory which seeks to explain the reasons why youths find gangs to be so compelling to join. Essentially, youth opt to join gangs when they feel that the social institutions which are in existence do not offer what they expect. This often leads to a sense of disconnect that leads them to find other avenues which identify with who they are. These youths find it easy to drop out of school in order to take part in gang life which is in line with what they wish to accomplish.

These youths feel that gangs provide opportunities for them to feel accepted and received. These gangs are a form of brotherhood which offers solace and needs which suit their various expectations. This theory posits that gang formation is not an abnormality rather it is a normal response which is in line with societal situations which may be termed as abnormal.

Several scholars further argue that one of the primary indicators of disorganization within the society is the way the communities supervise teenage groups and especially the gangs involved. Communities or societies which have high rates of gang culture are societies which have many social problems. Some of these problems include lack of employment, disjointed families and drug abuse.

5.6   Radical or sociopolitical theory

This is a sociopolitical perspective which was developed in 1970s by social scientists. This theory seeks to give a perspective that is used on crime and delinquent behaviors which take place in the society. The tenets which support this theory hold the opinion that prevailing American laws are instrumental in holding down the poor people within the society. That is they serve to disfavor the poor and minority groups within the society. The radical theory is founded on several premises, for instance, the American life culture is structured around what scholar's term as advanced capitalist societies. Secondly, the government is structured in a way which responds to the needs of the minority within the society. The ruling classes in this case are taken care of by this theory. Thirdly, the laws which are enacted by the government serve to protect the interests of the ruling class within the society. Fourthly, the American society's structure is created with the intention of oppressing people who belong to lower classes through various or several means. Lastly, societies which are based on socialism approaches are best placed to deal with problems associated with gangs and crime.

5.7   Combined theories

Scholars and researchers have found it necessary to combine various theories in an attempt to address the problem of delinquent behaviors. For instance, Albert Bandura's social learning theory is instrumental when it comes to addressing social and cognitive factors that are involved in influencing behavior. Theories on social development place significant value of variables such as available parenting and family opportunities and their impact on child behavior. Essentially, familial background which offer protection and safety to a child contribute towards ensuring that children grow up with sound values which reduce chances of joining youth gangs. On the other hand, families which do not have such values create societies which do not have values thus encouraging children to develop into youths who would join violent gangs.

6   GANG CULTURE IN LOS ANGELES

Youth gangs within the territory of the United States have been associated with poverty and economic deprivation. As noted earlier, most of the gangs within Los Angeles started to emerge as early as the 1930s. They started as small boy gangs which were located in the East Los Angeles and later developed into massive and deep rooted gang cultures which have threatened the stability of the citizens in Los Angeles. These gangs developed into subcultures that were identified as a collection of individuals who formed unions on the basis of common goals and defined within ethnic communities.

6.1   Forms of gang operation in Los Angeles

There are two major lines of operations which exist among the youth gangs. These lines are informed by the nature of operations that these gangs are involved in during various instances. The common types or forms of gang operation include the violence oriented gangs which are known as expressive gangs. These gangs exist for the main purpose of fighting or causing mayhem in various locations in major towns and inner cities. The second form of operation is the gangs which exist with an entrepreneurial perspective. These gangs are known as instrumental gangs which are structured to generate money for the organization. Some of the activities that these gangs engage in include drug trafficking and car theft and carjacking. These gangs are also associated with violence since most of their entrepreneurial activities are aligned to criminal activities.

The law has played a major role in how these gangs operate. For example, gangs which are involved in drug peddling have adopted approaches which ensure that they are not hurt by the law. In most cases, these gangs employ the services of minors when it comes to drug related crimes. The gangs have opted to exploit differences which are within

the juvenile and adult laws respectively. This has made them to prefer using younger adults to avoid sanctions which are associated with older adults.[24]

6.2   Youth Gangs and Crime

Youth gangs are groupings which have been breeding in most American cities. These gangs have been described as breeding grounds for youth who engage in crime. Most of the crimes have been committed by people who have been in the crime ring as juvenescent. This implies that youth gangs provide breeding grounds for the gangs which have been disturbing urbanites. Youths who join gangs at tender ages grow up to become masterminds of organized crime. Youth gangs which took part in petty crimes have evolved to become complex and notorious gangs in the society. These are gangs which are involved in serious crimes which include burglaries, drugs and other forms of crimes which are carried out by hardened criminals.

There are various youth gangs which developed into notorious gangs which led to massive attacks. These gangs include the infamous African American *Bloods* and *Crips* which originated in Los Angeles. These are gangs which evolved into massive systems of governance. Due to massive growth, these gangs have grown into other cities which have led to an increase in cases of violence.

6.3   The Crips

This is a gang which was formed in 1969 by a 15 year old high student by the name of Raymond Washington. Washington developed this organization because he was not able to participate in most of the movements which were taking place such as the Blank Panther. As a teenager, Washington was influenced by leaders of the Black Panther movement's

---

[24] Hess and Drowns, *Juvenile Justice*, 227.

militant style of operation. Due to this influence, he named his team the Baby Avenues which was supposed to represent the new breed of people who were reigning during this time.

The name Crip was a short form of the word cripple because one of Raymond's associated walked with a slight gait that seemed crippled. This explained why a cane was a common sign which was used by members of this team. Members associated with this team walked with an exaggerated limp as a sign of allegiance to the team. This gang became popular among juvenile offenders who started organizing themselves into groups seeking to be associated with the Crip image. Most of these juvenile offenders seeking association with the group came into contact with this image in detention.

Washington combined with other young members of the society who resided near the 78th street. This street was the location where Washington's home was located. The main objective of this gang was to purvey the revolutionary ideologies which had been established during the sixties. In addition, he wanted to create a gang which would act as community leader that would offer protection to the neighborhood.

The revolutionary ideas which were espoused by Washington did not materialize due to immaturity and lack of leadership within the organization. The members of these groups were at loggerheads with members of their neighborhoods which led to massive conflicts among the group members. This conflict hindered performance and the identity of Crips as the group sought to maintain its identity.

After a turbulent time, the group emerged and grew with revitalized vehemence. Jimel Barnes opted to join this group alongside others who felt that the group showed immense promise and action associated with the progressivistic ideologies. The Crips started to grow in terms of populations and this led to massive and tough sanctions against them. More violent activities started to take place when non – crips members were engaged in street fights associated with this group. In 1972, eight Crip neighborhoods grew into about 45 in six years.

In the current society, Crips is not one gang which is operating in the society. Rather it is an identity which is being used by many gangs to purvey their activities in

many locations within Los Angeles. The Crips is a gang which has over 30,000 members divided into 800 sets, where more than 13,000 are in Los Angeles. Most of these gang members exercise a form of autonomy since the leadership structure is loosely developed.

6.4 Similarities among violent gangs

These gangs were formed with the objective to outdo each other within the Los Angeles block. These gangs have what can be termed as loosely developed structures. They thrive within specified regions of the Los Angeles. This implies that each gang has a region which they brand as their territory. When a gang member conflicts with either group a violent conflict ensues. These gangs have specific color codes which serve to provide identity for their location. Each one of them has a distinctive fashion where the members who identify with it are supposed to put on. These gangs have a specific communication code which they use when they are conveying their messages. In most instances, they communicate through the use of graffiti. However, this is not always the case in the event that they reveal themselves with drug trafficking.

During the early eighties, these gangs emerged in Los Angeles and California with the intention of selling cocaine. Reports which were developed by 1991 indicated that Crips and Bloods were gangs which have grown and developed into 32 states across the United States. Movements which led to the growth of these gangs were occasioned by criminal acts that their leaders. In essence, in the process of fleeing, the leaders managed to form other gangs in various locations within United States.

6.5 Transformation of the gangs within Los Angeles

This century has seen a thorough transformation of these gangs. First and foremost these gangs have changed their names. Most of these gangs have gone ahead and chosen names for their groups contrary to what they had before. Some of the common gangs in this generation include Crips, Maravilla and the Businessmen. Compared to the earlier gangs, the modern gangs are also made up of young immigrants who have come to America to seek better approaches to living. The methods and approaches which have been used by these gangs have changed considerably leading to the use of deadlier weapons. In essence, the culture and nature of operations which have been associated with these gangs have been attributed to the acculturation process in these urban cities. Most of these youths who have come to the United States from other nations have been forced to develop scoping strategies which have been developed by the groups which are already in existence.

Los Angeles is a perfect example of a city which bears people from various cultures. This is a city which has witnessed an influx of people from various societies across the globe. These people have to struggle and find their way in a society which is undergoing social transformation and change. Los Angeles is an urban city which has been modeled by great diversity. This is a city which is ever growing due to the growth that it taking place from all its sides. There are very many different languages which reside there. This implies that Los Angeles is made up of people with various traditions. Essentially, the nature of conflict which arises in this city is based on differences that exist among people who occupy it.

Los Angeles experienced a massive increase in growth which took place within the first half of the twentieth century. This led to massive expansions which took place in the suburban areas. Due to massive competition of available resources, civil unrest took place. This unrest threatened the working class and middle class in the early 1960s forcing most of them to settle in suburbs. It was during this time that the city was undergoing rapid expansions and major demographic shifts. The economic structure within this city was also undergoing transformations. Essentially, various forms of migration were taking place. For example internal and large scale migration was happening simultaneously. Internal

migration was taking place by the movement of people from towns which were rated or regarded to be small. While large scale migration was taking place by people who were moving in from other foreign countries across the world. This meant that the state of this city was bound to change. This city was no longer reserved for the white working and middle class, but it now belonged to a global metropolis.

These rapid social changes had a major impact on the city which led to a strain on the infrastructure and support system. Issues such as housing became a major problem for many people who were living in this city. Neighborhoods like the Pico – Union has major housing problems. In essence, this was a region where the Central Americans had made their home. People crammed into free spaces within apartments. During this time you could find as many as 100 people residing within a four storey building. Schools which were built for a smaller population had to expand and accommodate more students. One more challenge that this society was facing entailed the issue of foreign languages. The schools were underfunded due to high demand and low supply in terms of infrastructure and personnel.

The inflow and increase in population within the Los Angeles led to worsened conditions which aggravated living conditions. This presented a city which is prototype with regard to social and infrastructural problems. The social challenges which were associated with this city led to the development of social ills which led to development of various challenges. These problems degenerated to produce city gangs which operate in poverty ridden locations in Los Angeles.

Gangs have degenerated into a major security and youth issue in urban cities within the United States. Recent estimates have placed the overall number of gangs which operate throughout the United States of America to be above thirty thousand. In addition, the number of gang members has grown to over eight hundred thousand. Los Angeles is an urban city which has been tipped to top the number of the gangs operating within the United States of America. It is important to take note of the fact that the numbers of gangs which are described in this case are male members. In as much as this is the case, the number of female arrests which have been taking place in Los Angeles has also been on the increase.

One of the major attributes which have made these gangs to be a major issue within the United States is the rate of crimes which they have been involved in. Drug trafficking and violence among other criminal activities have been on the increase in regions which have been predisposed to gang related cases. During the period which ranges from 1982 to 1991, the number of homicides which were associated with gang violence multiplied. This was associated by rapid growth in crime rates that were caused by high levels of insecurity. In essence, the rates of gang crimes within these cities have also been aggravated by massive differences in terms of resources. These gang members who are often from poor backgrounds feel that they do not have what it takes to make ends to meet. This has led to an escalation of their wayward ways that contribute to the gang culture.

7 CHARACTERISTICS OF GANGS IN LOS ANGELES

A literal definition of youth gangs was carried out among the youths by scholars to police officers, social workers and juvenile offenders. The most common definition which was generated described a youth gang on various fronts. Some of the common traits which were observed included organization, purpose, turf, leadership and cohesiveness among these gangs. The question which lingers is, whether these traits occur simultaneously among these youth gangs.

7.1 Organization

The organizations of gangs have gone through rapid changes with time. This has been occasioned by societal changes which have been taking place from time to time. Other changes have been attributed to differences among city conditions and norms defining cultural orientations of certain locations. It has been discovered that most gangs fall between what can be termed as crowds and mobs. Upon analysis of one of the gangs, *The Losers,* scholars discovered that the leadership structure of this gang had approximately 10 to 12 members. These members formed the central control unit of this gang. In other instances, there are gangs which become so large that they naturally subdivide themselves into groups known as "cliques".

The cliques which are formed in these gangs are primarily based on various ages of the gang members. However, there are cases whereby this is never the case. Some of these cliques are formed based on specialties of the members. For example, there are gang members who are referred to as shooters. This is a clique of members who are primarily capable of handling a gun and engaging in gun related crimes with ease.

There are gangs which are formed on the basis of reasons that define joining of these groups. For example, youths who joined gangs for social reasons are highly likely going to form friendship cliques. On the other hand members who join these gangs based

on their desire for money and wealth are highly likely going to form cliques which have the same goals.

7.2   Leadership

Like most organizations, most of the gangs which operate in urban centers have got a form of leadership.[25] However, the type and approaches which are used or embraced in leadership vary from one location to another. There are various types of leadership styles which the gangs embrace within the Los Angeles. These styles include the militaristic style, and the mafia style of leadership. In these styles of leadership, there are the top most people who hold the highest rank. This person controls activities and operations which are under the gangs. It is important to note at this point that youths who join these gangs are assigned a form of rank or level. The rank position improves or grows with time. One of the major goals of people or youths who join such gangs is to improve in their organizational ranks. This implies that the members within these gangs obey a certain chain of command which stipulates what ought to be done and what cannot be done.

There are types of leadership styles which are espoused by these gangs;one of these styles is the charismatic leadership style. This style ensures that a leader rules by use a force of personalities. These types of leaders have been termed to be strong and enduring leaders who are able to make use of available resources to achieve their goals. These leaders often manipulate members to subjection through the use of fear and emotion.

---

[25] Robert Regoli, John Hewitt and Matt DeLisi, *Delinquency in Society*, (New York: Jones & Bartlett Learning, 2009), 492.

7.3   Turf

These gangs have a form of turf which they use to achieve their goals. The turf is a territory which they use to advance their goals. Most of the gangs in Los Angeles are able to identify with particular zones and regions within this city. These territories are marked and manned by gang members. Violence ensues when individuals from other gangs cross these regions.

In essence, one of the traits associated with these regions are the marks that are used to demarcate the stated regions. Gangs use graffiti to zone off specific regions of operations. These zones are manned by gang members who swear their allegiance to these gangs. This means that any economic activity whether legal or illegal which is conducted within these areas is usually controlled by them. However, in as much as this is the case, high rates of relocation associated with these gangs have destabilized the zones.

7.4   Cohesiveness

Gangs in Los Angeles have been described as cohesive and tightly knit outfits. This enhanced by high degrees of allegiance and loyalty which is ascribed to these gangs by the members. Thrasher, a scholar and researcher notes that most of the youths who join gangs do so with the intention of making friends and providing protection to their colleagues.

7.5   Purpose

Gangs are formed with a certain objective and purpose in mind. Though this is an issue which has been studied by scholars, the challenge which remains is how to estimate the level of purpose among these gangs. In as much as this is the case, it has been discovered that various gangs which are operating within Los Angeles have specific and various roles and purposes. For instance, the Crips is a gang which is primarily involved in

violent crimes within Los Angeles. The Freeze Crew on the other hand is a gang which is associated with property crimes.[26]

---

[26] Regoli, Hewitt and DeLisi, *Delinquency*, 494-499.

8 FACTORS THAT PROMOTED DEVELOPMENT OF THE GANG CULTURE IN LOS ANGELES

Some of the issues which have contributed to the development of these gangs include social neglect which has been attributed to weakened family structures. People from various societies have been banished based on their ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Young people who were exiled from the larger social fabric felt the need to develop a team or group of people who would offer or even provide support when it comes to issues affecting the society. Economic marginalization is another factor which attributed to development and growth of these gangs. Essentially, one of the reasons why youths joined gangs was due to limited economic opportunities for most youths who came from poor or deprived economic backgrounds. Cultural repression is another factor which contributed to development of gangs within the United States. Youths who were from suppressed cultures had to find means and avenues of surviving in the society.

This implies that suppression gave or created grounds for the youths to marshal efforts with the aim of growing subcultures that would create a meaningful society. In as much as this is the case, no ethnic group has or was immune from the gang culture. This is because gangs operated based on various needs and societal attributes. In this paper we are going to look at the following factors in detail and analyze how they have contributed in the development and growth of the gang culture.

8.1 Family life

A family forms the most basic unit of the social fabric. In essence, families are central units which influence thinking patterns of individuals within any society. This implies that families are critical when it comes to understanding the driving forces which influence a person's capacity to think. Families form or create the basic foundation which

informs and guides a person. This is because they play a major role when it comes to forming critical social relations which are instrumental in the process of socialization.

Family relationships guide a person and direct them into conventional paths of life. This means that people who are in a position of defining what they ought to be normally aided by values and attributes that they gained from the family. Parents in these institutions play the important role of providing and sheltering family members. This is because they ensure that a child is introduced to the world and trained to accept and live in this world.

Disruptions within families exert pressure on the processes of parenting. This hinders parents from focusing on their obligations of ensuring that children are properly socialized into the society. Consequently, children grow up without values associated with leading a significant and meaningful life. Poverty ridden societies are most vulnerable when it comes to producing children who are not adequately socialized. This is due to the fact that societies do not have time to invest in meaningful family relationships.

Female gang members are the ones who are mostly affected when it comes to these relationships. This is because most of them become single parents who have the responsibility of taking care of their children. However, in spite of these, studies have revealed that most of these women grow out of these gangs to become strong and committed members of the society taking care of their children.

8.2 Schools

Academic institutions have a crucial role to play when it comes to instilling worthwhile social values. This is because schools and learning institutions train young people to make meaningful life choices which lead a person to leading a productive life. In the United States, schools are second in importance when it comes to instilling worthwhile social values to children. This is because schools provide a social platform which addresses social issues which may not be properly articulated within the family set up. In addition,

schools and learning institutions give children and students an opportunity to interrogate various or pertinent issues within a social framework.

As children grow up the school takes up the role of transforming the children into productive members of the society. Essentially, children from all backgrounds who are within the United States are entitled to attend school which includes children from immigrant families and communities. However, one of the challenges which immigrant children face is that or formal education. When immigrants moved to Los Angeles they found an education system which was founded on principles of formal education. Some of these immigrants were not used to this system which led them to get involved in activities which were not in line with the learning institution.

Despite the fact that education is a major concern in the lives of children within the United States, low income and children who come from ethnic minorities at times experience negative effects. Some of the educational approaches which have been used by the schools to monitor progress have worked negatively in the case of these groups. For example, policies such as tracking and monitoring the progress of the learners have been detrimental on the academic performance of the children. This has been occasioned by the feelings of segregation which are generated from these academic systems.

In addition, children who attend these learning institutions have often felt unattended and segregated. High levels of de-motivation which are generated from these learning institutions have contributed to lack of development associated with visionary goals and social ideals. Instead of creating an atmosphere associated with development of social goals, some of the learners within these institutions have ended up despising the very institutions due to lack of the drive to take part. These factors influence the children to make decisions which are aligned to joining youth gangs.

8.3   Law enforcement

Social order is a consequence of the internalization of values aligned to the society. A person who has an internalized quality that defines a quality society is able to make

decisions and choices that server any links to violence or criminal behavior. The process of inculcating these principles is defined or enshrined along the schools and reinforced by the family plus religious organizations within a society.

Youths who have not had an opportunity to participate in school are vulnerable to join or be associated with such organizations. This is largely because they lack the innate structures which inform the nature of choices which are making in life. The legal arms serve to instill social values among individuals who are not well placed in the society. This is largely contributed by failure to conform to a given set or academic patterns which are associated with life. Weak legal systems provide an environment which sustains criminal behavior among various towns. In addition, societies which do not support the activities of the legal institutions are also prone to facing social challenges. This explains why there are various regions where cases of youth and gang violence have been on the increase as compared to other locations.

8.4   Street socialization

Youths and individuals who spend most of their time in the streets are socialized into individuals who have traits sustained by the street culture. In certain ethnic communities located in Los Angeles, most of the gangs are formed in the streets. This is because they spend most of their time in streets participating in activities which are not productive in nature. Streets provide a haven for the male and female youths to hang out and share their personal experiences in the course of life. This is one of the most challenging tasks which face a person growing up in a society that embraces the street culture. Street socialization is an avenue which is used by the youth to fill voids which are left by inadequate parenting and schooling. This is mostly the case in situations where youths come from families which have little or no supervision at all.

The cultures which are developed in the streets make the youths to conform to certain behaviors which are promoted by the gang culture. This is because youths who find

themselves on the street are often subjected to a new set of subcultures which create a new set of values which are mostly contrary to the values esteemed by the wider society.

Los Angeles has witnessed massive drop out cases of Latinos and African American youths from schools. These youths end up in streets having limited academic experiences and knowledge. Due to this, they have found themselves actively taking part in gangs in order to fill the voids that the society has developed.

Most of the marginalized children are the ones who find themselves on the streets. These children are alienated from school life through the street life culture. This alienation contributes to the disregard of educational values from student's lifestyles. Schools in South Central Los Angeles have experienced high rates of drop outs. The moment these students are out of school they join gangs and commit themselves to gang cultures which are defined by street values and norms. It has been noted that youths and teenagers who come from these backgrounds are mostly involved in delinquent cases in learning institutions.

8.5   A complete Understanding of Gangs

Even though factors such as the family, school and law enforcement as earlier observed contribute to sustenance of the gang culture, the urban society is largely responsible for growth of this subcultures. This is because the public society has opened up avenues which make it difficult to intervene or stop vices that are associated with the gang culture.

In the recent past, the society has tried to introduce measures which are aimed at improving living conditions among these urban centers. For instance the government has attempted to introduce measures which have been aimed at assisting families which have been struggling. In addition, the government has also stepping in and introduced other learning approaches which have been intended to enhance learning among students of different natures. These are academic approaches which are innovative and motivating

enough to ensure that children and adolescents remain at school. Law enforcement strategies have also been improved with the intention of ensuring that they enhance conformity to legal requirements.

The local leaders have been on the forefront initializing policies and regulations aimed at stamping out this vice in the society. Though this has been taking place, there are concerns that the approaches which they have been embracing have been out of sync with the actual problem. The political leaders have not been in a position of actualizing the nature of the real problem which has been affecting the urban populations. One of the sure ways of addressing this menace has been creating formulas which address the underlying problems which are associated with the low income earners. In essence, this is a major issue because when the subject of poverty and lack of economic opportunities is not adequately addressed, then the risk is that vulnerable populations will continue facing gang related issues.

Addressing these challenges entails starting at the bottom them moving up the ladder of the issues affecting these societies. The structure of the society should be analyzed and understood in order to enable policy formulators to see and understand major issues which are affecting that particular society. This is because structural issues will lead a society to be in a position of confronting problems that are facing the society.[27]

---

[27] Diego Vigil, *A Rainbow of Gangs: Street Cultures in the Mega-City*, (Texas: University of Texas Press, 2002), 154-155.

9 PROGRAMS FOR CONTROLLING GANG

Gang violence is an escalating phenomenon which requires collective efforts in order to mitigate its effects.[28] The rise in cases of gang violence has forced the society to develop a variety of processes aimed at reducing gang violence. This is an approach which can be used to address gang related programs. This approach is based on the fact that youth gang problem is not only defined by delinquent or criminal behaviors among the young people.[29] But it is a consequence of what goes within the society.

9.1 Anti-gang initiatives

These are initiatives which were developed in 2009. The initiatives were developed by the Office of Justice Programs with the aim of merging previous approaches in dealing with the gang menace. This was a comprehensive plan whose objective was to create a form of a gang control nerve center to deal with gang crime. The National gang Center reported that by 2010 a total of 29,400 gang groups had been developed.[30] These groupings were the major cause homicides in leading urban centers across the United States. Majority of homicide and cases in states such as Chicago were associated with gang violence. This implies that activities among various populations which instigated gangs were a major cause of gang activity leading to crime.

9.2 Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) Program

This is a program which was initiated and managed by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. This approach is based on evidence base techniques

---

[28] Haerens, *Gun Violence*, 46.
[29] Hess and Drowns, *Juvenile Justice*, 225.
[30] Howell, *Juvenile justice and youth violence*, 40.

within learning institutions.[31] In essence, this program is built around classroom curricula which is school based. A law enforcement officer plays a crucial role when it comes to implementing the program within learning settings. The main objective of this program is to enhance awareness while developing attitudinal and behavioral changes among the youth. Eventually, youths who go through this program are supposed to be immunized from delinquency in later years. Since immunization is one of its core objectives, the GREAT program introduces issues associated with gangs to children at an early age.

The success of this program has been informed by the partnerships which have been aligned to or with organizations such as Boys and Girls Clubs, the Families and Schools Together and the National Association of Police Athletic Activities Leagues. These programs and partnerships have created a front which has been effective in promoting positive change within the society based on progressive and informed relations.

This program offers an approach which is slightly different from the community based programs since it enables parents and teachers to develop life skills. These skills have been instrumental in offering coping techniques for the learners within learning institutions. A report from this study illustrated that learners who were involved in these programs emerged with positive social attributes. These attributes included positive attitude towards the police, information about gangs and their effects in the society, they exhibited a variety of skills for refusing to be involved in gangs, they had a higher rate of efficacy, and their rates of gang involvement was low. The report further reiterated the need to carryout collective efforts in its implementation. As a preventive measure, this program would complement effectively with other communal anti-gang programs.

---

[31] Loeber and Farrington, *Juvenile Offenders*, 249.

10 CONCLUSION

The current society is very dynamic and versatile. This implies that there are rapid changes taking place within gang operations. Technology has also increased the rate in which these organizations operate. Due to these and other factors, the society has witnessed a steady challenge associated with gang violence.[32] It is with this in mind that the government needs to step up measures which counter the negative effects associated with the gang culture. Despite the fact that some measures have worked in the past, it is the responsibility of the entire society to show collective effort in curbing this menace.

Identifying strategy areas is a major step which can empower the society to put in place pragmatic approaches in dealing with gang violence.[33] Some of these strategies as discussed in this paper should include suppression strategies. Suppression strategies basically involve exertion of law enforcement measures intended to control gangs. Social intervention is a strategy which puts into consideration societal perspectives in dealing with gang violence. It is a preventive measure which has been effective within the society. These programs include school based techniques which are made up of community based organizations plus government initiated projects.

The society still faces the problem of eliminating and or controlling gangs. Some of these problems include strategies on how to eliminate cases of violence which are associated with the gang culture. This begins with how to accurately define what a gang is and how to establish frameworks of dealing with these gangs. Stereotypes and prejudices held by the society influence measures which will be used in addressing gang problems. The media's perception of youth gangs influences people's definition of gangs and the role they play within a society.

It is worth noting that gangs cannot just be whisked away as an American problem. This is because these are organizations which affect the entire world. This is because the

---

[32] Spitzer, *Gun control*, 68-69.

[33] Larry J. Siegel and Brandon C. Welsh, *Juvenile Delinquency: The Core*, (California: Cengage Learning, 2011), 220-221.

gangs have developed into internal forces within nations that threaten security and stability. This is a challenge that has forced law enforcement agencies to deal with the problems associated with the gang culture and how they limit or hinder societal progress.[34]

Lastly, none of these programs can be used individually and report successful achievement of their objectives. These approaches demand stakeholders to be proactive in developing collective strategies when dealing with youth gangs across the United States and the world at large. Societies which are able to put all these factors into consideration will offer adequate choices for the youth in difficult background who are involved in gang violence.

---

[34] Kinnear, *Gangs*, 49-50.

RESUME

Předmětem této bakalářské práce je poukázat především na problematiku týkající se vývoje, struktury a účelu vzniku pouličních gangů ve Spojených státech amerických, a to především v kalifornské metropoli Los Angeles. Následným cílem je prostřednictvím ukázkových příkladů navrhnuto, jak se s těmito problémy potýkat.

Gangy, jako je známe dnes, je pro podstatu pochopení nutno rozlišovat podle zaměření jejich činnosti, důvodu vzniku a případného začlenění do takové skupiny. Některé gangy vznikají přímo za účelem kriminální a protizákonné aktivity. Mezi nejčastější důvody vzniku těchto skupin patří vydělávání peněz z prodeje drog, krádeží či ozbrojených loupeží. Kvůli jednoduché dostupnosti zbraní se stávají tyto nelegální aktivity více nebezpečnými a představují obrovské ohrožení bezpečí společnosti. Je proto nezbytné, aby si lidé, a především příslušné autority uvědomili důvody, které stojí v pozadí činů těchto mladistvých.

Jako první pouliční gangy bychom mohli označit skupinky přistěhovalců z Evropy, kteří se shlukovali v ulicích měst na východním pobřeží, aby diskutovali o svých nově vzniklých problémech a snažili se vypořádat se s pro ně novými výzvami, jako například chudoba nebo předsudky.

Pokud porovnáme smysl a důvod vzniku prvního afro amerického gangu v Los Angeles se současnými mladistvými delikventy provozujícími kriminální činnosti, tak najdeme jen málo společných rysů, které si novodobé gangy zachovaly. Hlavním motivem vzniku afro amerických skupin ve 40. letech byla jejich segregace, utlačování a násilí ze strany bělochů jak ve školách, tak ve společnosti. Utvoření těchto gangů sloužilo především pro ochranu a boj proti tomuto zacházení bělochů. Odmítnutí mladistvých tmavé pleti do spolku jako jsou například „Boy Scouts of America" byla poslední kapkou pro mnohé z nich. Další přistěhovalci vstupovali do těchto gangů s vidinou rychlejší integrace do nové společnosti a za účelem získání určité identity. Na začátku 70. let vznikly dva nejznámější pouliční gangy na světě, „Crips" a „Bloods", jejichž rivalita spočívá ve

velikosti ať už v počtu členů nebo obsazeného území. Ne nadarmo má první jmenovaný gang heslo „Crips don´t die they multiply".

Kvůli urychlenému rozvoji společnosti a především dynamice vývoje na poli technologie a zvýšeného nároku na styl života se stávají gangy více nebezpečnými a nezvladatelnými pro společnost i kriminálníky samotné. Tudíž je samozřejmé, že pro spoustu lidí je takový život nepřípustný a je třeba s tím zákonitě něco dělat. Obyvatelé těchto městských částí, kde se gangy vyskytují a kde provozují své nelegální činnosti, žijí ve strachu a utlačení.

V minulosti byly určité zákroky proti gangům částečně úspěšné. Například město Los Angeles a komunitní programy slíbily několik pracovních příležitostí a zlepšení životních podmínek v postižených oblastech. Na okamžik se i notoricky známí „Crips" a „Bloods" spojili v jeden celek a vymizela nevraživost, ale sliby nebyly naplněny a southcentral Los Angeles se proměnilo zpět v bitevní pole. Je důležité, aby celá společnost včetně členů samotných, dokázala projevit úsilí v postupném eliminování těchto společensky nepřípustných kriminálních skupin. Jeden ze způsobů boje proti rozšiřování gangů je prevence. Mezi nejúčinnější metody se řadí komunitní či vládní programy operující ve školství a organizacích pro mladistvé. Součástí těchto programů jsou shromáždění, kde významní bývalí členové gangů hovoří o životě v něm a odstrašují na základě vlastních zkušeností mladistvé od chyb, které sami udělali. Tyto programy jsou především zaměřeny na případy násilí a brutality, které jsou nejčastěji spojovány s kulturou gangu.

Pro mladistvé delikventy je obrovsky důležitý pohled a názor, jakým je vidí dospělí a zbytek společnosti. Tato prvoplánově negativně zaujatá stanoviska občanů, a to především kvůli lživým či zavádějícím informacím médií, formují tyto nezletilé jedince velice negativním způsobem. Nemají poté moc na výběr, pokud se narodí už do tak definovaného světa. Spolu s faktorem místa narození, neúplnosti rodiny a špatného zázemí je těžké vymanit se z tohoto života. Důležitou roli ve výchově hrají instituce, které mají určitý vliv na děti a mají zároveň moc je nasměrovat tím správným směrem. Jde především o školu a kostel, kde je možné ovlivnit budoucnost mladistvých například odměnami za dodržování regulí a naopak trestem za společensky neakceptovatelné chování. Největší

dopad má bez diskuse rodina a domov, kde žijí. Ve většině případů je otec rodiny mrtev nebo ve vězení a matka závislá na drogách či pracuje ve dvou zaměstnáních, aby rodinu uživila. Nezbývá čas věnovat se dětem, což má za následek slabé rodinné pouto, díky čemuž mladistvým chybí svědomí, respekt a pevná ruka.

ANNOTATION

The aim of this bachelor thesis is the issue and structure of youth street gangs mainly in the area of Los Angeles. The paper is divided into eight chapters. In the opening two chapters is the clarification of the origination and objectives of gangs, followed by an example of a helpful outreach program. The third one is concerned about illegal activities and criminal acts of various gang members. The fourth chapter analyses theories and causes of why do people join gangs. The fifth one explores the similarities among different violent gangs of Los Angeles from the structural point of view and takes a closer look at the notorious Crips. The sixth chapter defines the concept of youth street gang and then describes and questions the necessity of each part of that definition. The seventh chapter is concerned about the factors that help the gang culture in Los Angeles to grow. The last chapter presents programs for controlling gangs and about getting awareness of the menace to the youth. The purpose of this bachelor thesis is the notification of the threat which youth street gangs represent for the society and for themselves. The attempt to define the

theories why do gangs emerge and following suggestions how to deal with them in the form of gang controlling programs seems to be the best way for understanding this problematic issues.

ANOTACE

Autor:	Jakub Šorm
Název katedry a fakulty:	Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky Filozofická fakulta
Název práce:	Pouliční gangy v Los Angeles – mladiství zločinci a programy proti gangům
Vedoucí práce:	Mgr. Flajšar Jiří, PhD.
Počet stran:	47
Počet znaků:	70 081
Počet příloh:	0
Počet titulů použité literatury:	17
Klíčová slova:	gangová kultura, mladiství zločinci, proti-gangové programy, formování gangu

Předmětem této bakalářské práce je problematika a struktura mladistvých pouličních gangů, především v Los Angeles. Práce je rozdělena do osmi kapitol. V úvodních dvou kapitolách se objasňuje počátek, účel gangů a projekt pomáhající problémovým mladistvým. Následně třetí kapitola se věnuje protizákonným aktivitám a kriminálním činnostem členů různých gangů. V navazující čtvrté kapitole jsou zkoumány teorie a příčiny, z jakých důvodů a za jakými účely se lidé stávají členy gangů. Pátá kapitola již analyzuje zejména gangy Los Angeles z pohledu struktury a podobnosti mezi jednotlivými kriminálními skupinami a zaměřuje se na nechvalně známý Crips gang. Šestá kapitola definuje pouliční gang mladistvých a následně popisuje a zkoumá jednotlivé části této definice. Sedmá kapitola se zaobírá faktory, které napomáhají k rozvoji gangů nejen na území Los Angeles. Poslední osmá kapitola se věnuje programům bojujícím proti vytváření nových gangů a pro eliminaci těch současných. Účelem této závěrečné práce je upozornění na hrozbu, kterou mladistvé pouliční gangy představují pro okolí i je samotné. Snaha

definovat teorie proč gangy vznikají a následné návrhy nejúčinnějších prostředků ve formě programů pro boj s gangy se mi jeví jako nejvhodnější způsob pro pochopení této problematiky.

Bibliography

1. Egendorf, Laura K. *How can gun violence be reduced?* London: Greenhaven Press, 2002.

2. Gebo, Erika, and Brenda J. Bond. *Looking Beyond Suppression:Community Strategies to Reduce Gang Violence.* California: Lexington Books, 2012.

3. George Tita, K. Jack Riley, Greg Ridgeway, Clifford A. Grammich, and Allan Abrahamse. *Reducing Gun Violence:Results from an Intervention in East Los Angeles.* New York: Rand Corporation, 2011.

4. Haerens, Margaret. *Gun Violence.* California: Greenhaven Press, 2006.

5. Hess, Kären M., and Robert W. Drowns. *Juvenile Justice.* California: Cengage Learning, 2009.

6. Howell, James C. *Juvenile justice and youth violence.* New York: Sage Publications, 1997.

7. Howell, James C. *Preventing and Reducing Juvenile Delinquency:A Comprehensive Framework.* London: SAGE, 2003.

8. Karen L. Kinnear, *Gangs: A Reference Handbook*, (California: ABC-CLIO, 2009)

9. Loeber, Rolf, and David P. Farrington. *Serious and Violent Juvenile Offenders:Risk Factors and Successful Interventions.* New York: SAGE, 1998.

10. Regoli, Robert, John Hewitt, and Matt DeLisi. *Delinquency in Society.* New York: Jones & Bartlett Learning, 2009.

11. Siegel, Larry J. *Criminology.* California: Cengage Learning, 2008.

12. Siegel, Larry J., and Brandon C. Welsh. *Juvenile Delinquency:The Core.* California: Cengage Learning, 2011.

13. Spergel, Irving A. *Reducing Youth Gang Violence:The Little Village Gang Project in Chicago.* Illinois: Rowman Altamira, 2007.

14. Spitzer, Robert J. *The politics of gun control.* New Jersey: CQ Press, 2008.

15. Venkatesh, Sudhir. *Gang Leader for a Day:A Rogue Sociologist Takes to the Streets.* New York: Penguin Group US, 2008.

16. Vigil, Diego. *A Rainbow of Gangs: Street Cultures in the Mega-City*. Texas: University of Texas Press, 2002.

17. Ward, Thomas W. *Gangsters Without Borders:An Ethnography of a Salvadoran Street Gang.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.