

Gangs as Cults

On the History channel there is a new series called "Gangland" which covers the history and practices of various gangs The Arian Brotherhood, La Eme, The Hells Angels and The Mongol Nation to name a few. Many of these gangs are "blood in, blood out", meaning one must commit violence to join and must be killed to leave.

After watching a few episodes it became clear what no one else is seeing from these gangs is that they constitute a form of cult. What is unique about this form of cult is their overt willingness to do violence and engage in illegal activity.

What these gangs/cults provide to it's members highlight what a good functional cult should provide:

- * A sense of family
- * A feeling of uniqueness
- * A feeling of superiority
- * It gives its members a special place to feel at home within the cult
- * Huge amounts of reward in the form of money, drugs, sex and freedom as well as an outlet for them to practice whatever talent they have.
- * if the leader gets removed the cult/gang can keep going, and possibly no one feels vulnerable or unworthy just because they are at the bottom of the pyramid within the group.

The main thing that makes these gang/cults different from a religious cult is that the focus is not on God or the Leader but on the gang itself. This creates a powerful sense of brotherly love and comradeship.

The leaders themselves differ from most cult leaders in that their priority of values is not to God, the cause, or spreading the word or even their own ego gratification. Instead they value the protection and comradeship the family gives them. That said they get their personal needs well met.

An act of violence or criminal act does two things to the mind of the member who commits them:

- 1) It creates a concrete sense of commitment. This is an act that demands absolute commitment which extends itself to group. Afterwards they are well rewarded for "taking care of business" in a celebration of their success. Cult experts call this love bombing.
- 2) An act of violence also forces them to make a commitment to NOT be part of the rest of society. They are now committing to alienate themselves by their affiliations (the gang) and their actions.

As a side note, It is claimed that there is a "sealing ceremony" within some cults in which a young child is force to witness a murder (which, unbeknown to them, is actually staged) then told they will be killed if they leave the group and that they are accomplices to this murder.

A simple rule within all these gang/cults is "we protect our own". Each member knows that anyone else in the gang will "take a bullet" for him and he will do the same for them.

In order to further bond these people to the group and alienate them from the rest of society they often sport tattoos and wardrobe that proclaim their gang affiliation. This is somewhat reminiscent of how the Mormon "cult" isolated themselves from the rest of society by 1) practicing polygamy and 2) moving from New York to the isolated regions of Utah.

A gang is not something easily joined, one has to be 'Initiated' into the gang, be it elaborate ritual, or simply having the gang members beat the crap out of you for 13 seconds (Why 13 seconds, the timing varies amongst some groups, but one theory is that its for the letter "M" which is the 13th letter of the alphabet, standing for Mexico, something for Latin based gang members). When a person is initiated, they learn the special hand signals and lingo only the gang knows, and in part its identification and helps bring together members into the world of the gang as family and the rest as outsiders. Its an interesting idea to link them to a cult grouping, not many have ventured in that direction intellectually.

About the Author

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