

The Influence of Gang Culture and Violence Through Music

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Music plays a large roll in most of our lives. Everyone has their favorite kind of music and artists to listen to. Gang members are no different and much of the music they choose to listen to supports the “Gangsta” lifestyle and mentality. One trend that appears to be getting more and more popular is the desire young kids have to become rap artists. They watch their idols perform in music videos and on stage and they want the lifestyle that is portrayed by these musicians. In most of these video’s the performers have girls, expensive cars, money, jewelry etc. This is very attractive to kids especially those who don’t have these things in their lives. The music that appears to be the most popular with gang members is Rap. There are several Rap artists who have past and present gang involvement; there are many resources on the internet you can research to find out who is considered a “Gangster Rapper”. When it comes to music, Rap appears to be a common denominator with gang members. Corporate America is also cashing in on the phenomenon, Rap artists are endorsing everything from clothing to cars and many have starred in Hollywood movies, TV shows and reality shows.



Rather than just pick on a specific genre of music I think it is important to look closely at the artists because there is a dark side to the music our kids are listening to. There are many artists writing songs promoting gang involvement, drug distribution, retaliation, exploitation of females and in some cases, killing cops. Even though the song might have a great beat, what is the real message the artist is trying to get out? Whether or not these artists are documented as gang members somewhere really doesn’t matter, what matters is what our kids perceive them to be. The old saying, “if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and talks like a duck, then it’s probably a duck” is true.



There are groups of individuals in the community that would not exist if it were not for music, one group in particular is the group known as “Juggalo’s”. The term Juggalo was thought up by the hardcore hip hop duo known as I.C.P (Insane Clown Posse) and members of their fan base often refer to themselves as Juggalo’s (male) and Juggalettes (female). The music of I.C.P is very violent and has a wicked clown, dark carnival theme. I.C.P has a record label called Psychopathic Records and there are many artists attached to this label. They all have a similar theme and a common denominator in all their music which is violence. Even though here in Utah we don’t consider all Juggalo’s gang members it is still important to note that the music is extremely violent and as these groups continue to grow so do the problems.

Other groups in society that are influenced by the music they listen to are extremist groups like Skin Heads and many others in the White Power movement. Their music is also very violent and promotes their beliefs. Locally we have Straight Edge and much of the activity Straight Edge members are involved in revolves around the music they listen to. Most of the Straight Edge kids in the community are good kids who just like the style of music they listen to. Kids who consider themselves as “hardcore” usually are the ones who cause the problems.



There have been many arguments over the years about music and the effect it may or may not have on the individual listener. One thing is for sure no matter what side of the argument you are on, music has become more violent and extreme. The music influence is everywhere and keeps getting bigger and bigger. The bottom line is pay attention to what your kids are listening to, find the lyrics online and read them. Research the artist and make sure the music your kids are listening to isn't having a negative effect. Below is a list of web sites to assist with researching artists and songs.

www.youtube.com www.knowgangs.com
www.wikipedia.org www.myspace.com
www.lyrics.com

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