

Gun Violence

Michael S. Kimmel's exploration entitled "I am not insane, I am angry. Adolescent Masculinity, Homophobia and Violence", provides an analysis of the increasing amount of gun violence in U.S schools. "Young people open fire apparently randomly, killing or wounding other students and their teachers" (Sadowski 99). Gun violence is increasing. I was interested in this article because of the reactions I felt when I heard about the Connecticut shootings on December 14th 2012. As I watched the news reports and saw the innocent victims, all kinds of questions raced through my mind. Why? Who would do this?

The writer states that white boys are bullied because they are perceived to be homosexual and therefore "gay-baited" by their peers. These boys respond to this by using weapons that are symbolic to proving their manhood. It is suggested that the white boys are "acting out". During our class discussion we discussed why these boys needed to use guns to prove that they are male: a gun is a phallic symbol, boys will use this to show their power and control.

We queried if these boys were of a different ethnicity how would the boys be viewed differently. When African – American boys "act-out" it is easier for the media to lead to conclusions of: poverty, education, socio-economic-class, but when middle class white boys "act-out", there is confusion and cover up, and it is only when patterns emerge the issue is taken more seriously. I thought about the points made in the class very much and wanted to further understand why these boys would resort to the drastic action of murder

to fill their voids. I thought about the isolation they felt. These boys could have been helped. The murders could have been prevented.

As a class we discussed the teachers role when the student has psychological or pathological illness. Some of the class members believed that there was no responsibility on the shoulder of the teacher. I had to disagree with this point because I believe that when an individual becomes a teacher he/she has to accept an amount of social responsibility towards the students. This responsibility is dictated by the, teacher-student relationship. A mental illness can be over-looked but effective teacher training programs can help teacher's identify the students who are anxious, depressed or isolated. Teachers play a vital role in a student's development. If teachers develop close relationships with their students the more chances for open discussions exist. These discussions are crucial to the teachers understanding of his/her students.

When the professor asked the class if there should be gun clubs in schools, I observed the many hands that were raised by fellow students. The conversation became very thought provoking as there were varied opinions. Could a gun club be a solution? Should boys be allowed to play with guns in a safe environment with other boys? It is certain that the boys will feel less isolated, but will this lead to a decrease in gun violence? I thought about this but I felt that it is simply not a solution to give, "the boys the toys". Further analysis with regards to the implications of developing such clubs has to be considered. Parents want to know that their children are safe when they come to school, and it is this safety that is demanding serious policy discussions.

This discussion experience was interesting because as a class we unsettled an issue that has been covered up. We were able to provide opinions that we did not necessarily agree upon but understood that the killers needed to be helped. The idea of gun clubs is very controversial. It is more necessary to remove the stigma that surrounds mental illness, so that these boys will open –up and talk about their feelings. Once the psychological factors are known, influential adults can help these boys in an environment that is safe in the form of youth clubs. This reading shows that the discussion of gun violence is open. Researchers are searching for answers. Gun violence is increasing.

Notes: Please note that this is a reading response paper, it has been modified for the purposes of the Cyber Security. Any use of material must be cited appropriately.

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