

# Gangs vs cults



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Gangs and Cults Gangs and cults at first glance may seem very different, and in some ways they are, but when you look closer their cultures are very similar. Cults promote a particular belief system, recruiting members by tricking them or influencing them to believe what they are teaching or telling them. Gangs pretty much do the same thing. They create glorified myths about the gang that appeal to young recruits, and far too often these myths become the foundation for young aspirations.

Gangs differ from cults by promising things like money, sex, power, and materialistic things to their members. In the following essay I will show how the two groups have similar and different cultures when it comes to the use of symbols, behaviors, and language. Symbols are a very important part of the gang culture. Signs and symbols are used to identify a certain gang or to intimidate and disrespect rival gangs. There are times when they are used to identify a group of gangs, referred to as a “nation”.

Gang members use tattoos, graffiti, and a particular color of clothing to show who they are affiliated with. Cults use symbols to identify different religious beliefs. Some examples of these signs or symbols are as follows; the inverted pentagram is used in witchcraft and occult rituals to conjure up evil spirits, the hexagram is one of the most potent symbols used in the working of the powers of darkness, and the upside down cross symbolizes mockery and rejection of Christ.

Symbols are used in very different ways in the two cultures. Gangs represent their set very proudly and openly displaying who they are affiliated with, while cults mostly display their symbols through jewelry. Slang is the unique language used by the street gangs and prison gangs in America. Gangs have

created a language of their own. Some of the words and symbols have a universal use and meaning, while others have an ethnic, cultural, or regional meaning.

A few terms used by gangs are; a buster-a fake or imitation, ace kool-best friend or backup, bangin-gang fighting or violence, baby gangster-very young (7-12 years) who are used to act as lookouts, hold drugs, and guns. Cults use hypnotic language patterns and metaphors, either consciously or unconsciously. Every religion or cult has its own language. Most cults will speak their native language to one another in private, or during ceremonies. It is usually considered rude to not speak common when there are people from another cult present.

Cults tend to completely withdraw from normal regular society, into a communal isolated lifestyle. That lifestyle can be a relative one, where people withdraw locally within their regular communities, or, actually withdraw as a group into a distant or remote area with others who follow their beliefs. The polygamists of southern Utah, who live in Colorado City, are an example of this behaviour. Gangs on the other hand are completely different when it comes to behaviour. They are typically referred to as a group of people who engage in criminal activity.

Gangs exist in urban and even in rural areas as well. There are well over a quarter million youths throughout the country who are involved in gang activity (Curry et al. 1992). In Los Angeles County their violent acts claim an average of one life a day (1989 McBride & Jackson). In the past three-and-a-half years, more than 23, 000 people have been killed along the U. S. border in connection with gang violence. “ 21 dead in Mexicangang gun battle near

U. S. border,” The Associated Press, July 2, 2010. These two groups are similar in the way they form their groups, and recruit members.

Yet they are very different in their actions. In spite of external pressures on gangs and cults to conform to conventional social norms, they choose to follow an alternative lifestyle and adopt untraditional values. While some members of the general public tolerate their existence, others express covert or even hostility towards them through threats or physical crimes.

References Bissel, B. (n. d. ). Signs and symbols. Retrieved from <http://www.exposingsatanism.org/signs2.htm> Walker, R. (2010, November 09). Gangs or us. Retrieved from <http://www.gangorus.com/index.html>