

# A study on gang violence sociology essay



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This paper is going to briefly delve into the meaning of gang violence and its implication. The word gang can be described as a group of people within an organization and share a common identity, it must be noted that the meaning of this word has undergone change and has increasingly been associated with criminal activity or has basically been branded as a criminal organization.

### **Thesis statement**

In the recent past, the name gang has become synonymous with violence. This is indeed a sudden change of events; this is because more and more youths are getting closely affiliated to these gangs. The truth is that gang violence actually a social problem in many aspects which simply means that the society is increasingly coming under the potential threat of violence that is perpetrated by these gangs. The gangs are increasing in numbers because most of the youths who feel that they have been rejected by the society find a false sense of belonging within these gangs. A sociological study and survey that was conducted by a sociologist from the University of Massachusetts (Andrew v. papachristos) revealed that the younger members join the gangs for the purpose of being recognized and achieving a certain class status, protection is another reason for membership. The threat of the gang violence cannot be ignored since it is slowly tearing families apart either directly or indirectly through deaths, incarceration of some of the gang members, rape, murder et cetera. Andrew pointed at the fact that gang violence is indeed a social problem and not a police issue that must be addressed from a larger context.

**Gang violence**

It must be remembered that most of the gang violence are majorly driven by the gang codes, which drives or pushes the members not to appear weak any time they are wronged i. e. they must appear turf and therefore tend to retaliate any time another gang violates or trespasses on their gang territorial borders (American journal of sociology July issue). Gang violence has opened a new chapter in criminal activities and is proving to be a complex and challenging vice for the police to deal with simply because it cannot just be eliminated or be made to disappear. Gang violence has a root cause within the society and must therefore be critically examined in order to understand what sustains these gangs if a solution is to be found.

The common approach of incarceration of the violent gang members seems to be failing and simply escalating the problem e. g. the gang members after incarceration consider them selves fully initiated and are only much more violent and dangerous that indicating that the ' Lock them up' approach only seems to be failing and pushing the violence levels up. Once the fact that gang violence is part of bigger social problems is adequately understood then there will be some progress made towards finding a solution to this problem.

A nation wide survey conducted in the year 1995 by the National Youth Gang Center under the directive of the U. S department of justice, office of juvenile justice and delinquency prevention, revealed the following trends; the existing communities within the 50 states did report that there were about 652, 000 gang members who were affiliated to the 25, 000 gangs within the Nation. These numbers are very startling. There is evidence that there is an

increased gang and gang related problems of 48% in the communities, this is an indication that the gang problems are only worsening with little improvement of about 10% witnessed in some states. The number of sheriff and police agencies that reported the gang related activity stood at 1, 974 out of the 34, 447. Gang membership usually fulfills a number of factors namely; the search for love, a feeling of belonging or commitment, a degree of recognition, the feeling of power and authority, and finally an environment of acceptance for the gang members. Based on sociological research findings the following are some of the risk factors that are associated with joining gangs that are majorly involved with violent and illegal activities; drug addiction, possibility of death as a result of illegal arms dealing and usage. The factors that drive these youths to join these gangs include racism, poverty, influence from the media and lack of support network (Source, research, 1994, 2)The evidence from the state of Los Angeles has revealed that more than 10, 000 African American and Latino young men have been killed as a result of gang warfare (source, vigil, 2002).

### **Conclusion**

Many researchers have shown that many youths join the gangs at an early age of between 9-11 years old (Knox, 2002). The studies also revealed the need for these youths to feel some kind of belonging, this would help them avoid getting involved with these gangs. The gang members were mostly from families that had subjected them to abuse, neglect or had simply ignored them. There was evidence that there was reduced possibility for youths from stable and loving families to be members of gangs for example those youths from a two parent family and were actively involved in

community activities were less likely to join these gangs. Gang violence is an issue of national concern that has negatively impacted on the society; it has led to the rapid degeneration of social values and erosion of the traditional cultures. This problem must be addressed and this can only be done through an extensive and intensive preventive measures.

## **REFERENCE**

American journal of sociology (July issue)

National Youth Gang centre (National survey 1995)