

An assessment of the gothic subculture sociology essay



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Little research has been performed on the subculture of Gothics and with further researching online I am hoping to learn more about one of the most misunderstood subcultures that has seen an increasing amount of member's throughout the world. The results, opinions and statements are discussed throughout this paper.

The subculture that I choose to write my Final Term Paper on is the Gothic Subculture which is one of the most popular subcultures but on the same hand is one of the ones we don't know much about. Different cities tend to have their own slight differences when it comes to Goth fashions. Goth individuals tend to wear anything that has the color black and are well known for dyeing their hair the same color. The most common Goth look for a male is a fishnet shirt and vinyl or leather pants with some sort of boots and other various accessories. Some guys tend to wear makeup, skirts, corsets or heels and to them it isn't considered cross-dressing because they are not actually trying to look like women. Straight males like to look or dress feminine either to challenge social barriers or to show that they have an open mind.

When looking at females they are known for wearing a cleavage-enhancing corset top with a long flowing or tutu-like skirt. Also a fishnet shirt with a black bra underneath, a bondage belt and either a short vinyl skirt or a long velvet skirt with tight leggings or stirrup pants. When it comes to things that are associated with things that Goths like they are but not limited to art " that portrays music, painting, writing and drawing", clove cigarettes, cats, candles, fairies, coffee, spider webs, skulls, graveyards, coffins and Egyptian symbols. The Gothic Subculture dates back to 1979 when Bauhaus releases <https://assignbuster.com/an-assessment-of-the-gothic-subculture-sociology-essay/>

the song "Bela Lugosi's Dead". The band originally intended the song to be tongue-in-cheek; however many young fans latched onto this mysterious eerie sound as inspirations for the beginning gothic subculture.

The first generation of the gothic movement emerged mostly in the UK in the late seventies and early eighties as a splinter from the punk movement. In the early 1980's the Gothic movement thrived with bands like Sisters of Mercy, the movement started to dwindle in the late eighties. The second generation of gothic bands emerged and distinguish themselves by being the first to regularly call themselves Gothic. As the second generation now ages into their mid to late 20's they usually become less interested in participating in the gothic social scene. In the late 90's a third generation emerged and begun to shape the future progression of the gothic movement. The third generation represents an explosion in the number of people referring to themselves as gothic. Many of them have learned about gothic culture because of the present widespread commercial availability exposing the trends.

When the people that were a part of the second generation of Goths that emerged in the late 1990's are asked about the new generation of Goths they doubt their authenticity and dislike the exposure they give to the subculture and would prefer to remain underground. Over the past 20 years the subculture has grown, mutated and adapted making it one of the longest surviving youth subcultures in existence. When analyzing the Gothic topic to the three sociological perspectives the first I would like to talk about is the symbolic Interactionism Perspective which directs sociologists to consider the symbols and details of everyday life, what they mean and how people

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interact with each other. This perspective was introduced to American sociology in the 1920's. Gothic individuals tend to like anything that is considered "Dark" or possibly even evil to the average person. They use Egyptian Symbols that was stated earlier in this paper to represent everlasting life.

Typically Goths don't associate with anyone outside their group and how they dress and act makes it very easy to distinguish themselves from anyone else. When looking at the Functionalist perspective which is also called functionalism each aspect of society is interdependent and contributes to society's functioning as a whole. Functionalists believe the society is held together by social consensus or cohesion in which members of society agree upon and work together to achieve what is best for the society as a whole. Gothic members don't relate very much to this perspective but have a lot of the same beliefs as a group not so much as a society. What I mean by that is for the members of their group they believe that they help stabilize their group from the outside in but nothing they do helps society as a whole. Functionalism does not encourage people to take an active role in changing their social environment even when such change may benefit them. Instead functionalism sees active social change as undesirable because the various parts of society will compensate naturally for any problems that may arise.

The third and final perspective is the Conflict Perspective which originated primarily out of Karl Marx's writings on class struggles. It presents societies in a different light than do the functionalist and the symbolic interactionist perspectives. While these other perspectives focus on the positive aspects of society that contribute to its stability, the conflict perspective focuses on the

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negative, conflicted and ever-changing nature of society. The conflict theorists challenge the status quo; encourage social change “ even when this means social revolution”. They believe in rich and powerful people force social order on the poor and the weak. When we look at the Gothic subculture in comparison to this perspective it does have some similarities in the fact that a lot of members of the gothic group typically are associated with being poor and misunderstood.

I feel that the founder that would be most interested in this subculture would be American philosopher George H. Mead who was born in 1863 and died in 1931. George introduced the symbolic interactionist perspective and I feel that out of the three this is the one that fits the best. I feel that George’s perspective fits the best because it incorporates symbols and their meanings and face to face interactions. When we look at the Gothic subculture from the outside there is a lot that we don’t know and won’t know because we aren’t part of their group. Why do they wear all black, why do they talk the way they do and furthermore why do they choose to be a part of this culture anyways? I feel that if George was given the opportunity to analyze this particular subculture we would have a better understanding for how things work and it would answer a lot of our why questions.

Individuals that are a part of the Gothic subculture are socialized very negatively in today’s society. A questionnaire was given to 20 people on a college campus and it asked very simple questions in regards to the Gothic subculture. A few of the questions were as follows “ What does “ Gothic” mean to you”, “ What attracts you to this social group? And “ Describe an instance where you were harassed or prejudged because of your

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appearance". When the questionnaires were returned the most overwhelming thing the scientist found was people had a very wide range of opinions for what gothic means. As was noted earlier in this paper the term gothic can mean many different things depending on where you live and the type of environment you are around.

When looking at a variable such as age and how it affects my topic its simple the Gothic subculture is the most popular youth subculture we have seen in society today. Typically when the members get into their 20's they tend to pull themselves out of the picture. They tend to change their looks, how they act and some even completely never acknowledge they ever were a part of this group. Age is a very interesting variable when we look at anything in life we all go through a growing process that incorporated at least a few things that we aren't proud of later on in life. An example for me would be getting a bowl-cut which when I was younger seemed like the coolest thing to do and I thought it made me look very attractive. And now when I see those photos I can't believe my mother didn't tell me no and that I looked like an idiot. Regardless how big or small the regret is its life we all grow up and our interests change and that is how age affects my subculture.

When looking at class and how it affects my subculture I feel that is another easy one typically we see the poorer class tend to join groups such as being gothic. Popular kids who have a lot of friends don't feel the need to make drastic changes to get attention such as these other individuals. When I was going through high school I know we had a few classmates that everyone considered to be Goth and we put them all in the same category as "Lame".

We felt that they did these things to get attention and for nothing more. A <https://assignbuster.com/an-assessment-of-the-gothic-subculture-sociology-essay/>

few statistics that I found interesting was a group of Gothic individuals were given a questionnaire with the promise of secrecy and were asked to give honest answers in regards to drug use. A few of the results were as follows 15/20 admitted to using alcohol which is 75%, 12/20 admitted to using Tobacco which is 60%, 13/20 admitted to using LSD which is 65% and finally 9/20 admitted to using Marijuana which is 45%. These numbers shocked me because what's considered as being a gateway drug such as Marijuana and Tobacco were used less frequently than the harder drugs such as LSD.

When I attended school I never once was offered a drug at any point which some people find to be very interesting. As was stated earlier depending on where you're located and the scene you're around day in and day out really can affect how you live your life and what social class you decide to join.

When looking at the groups and networks that are associated with my subculture there are a lot. From what I can locate the number one network is VampireFreaks.com which is a website that basically individuals can log onto and join and communicate with one another as well as post thoughts and beliefs on things such as vampires.

Another network that is associated with my subculture is Goth. Net which is a forum website that is used for all sorts of things for members of these groups. The last post I see on this website actually references my above network and the individual states that it is like MySpace for Goths. These members talk back and forth with each other over various topics such as other sites they are involved with like Facebook and twitter. Every topic we research will have social networks that members are a part of to keep in

touch with one another and to talk to people with the same interests without
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the worry of being judged like they would with face to face interactions with people in their community.

When looking at groups that Goths are associated with again there are a lot a few that I would like to mention in my paper are Gothic Rock groups and Gothic Meet up groups. The meet up group that I am going to incorporate into my paper is located in UK which is very relevant considering that is where this subculture originated. This group has a website as well which was created in October of 2002 and has over 5000 members has a lot for these individuals to do. On their website it has a section that is labeled " What are we" and it says as follows " We are a friendly and welcoming bunch of people with the primary aim to help Goths meet and socialize with Goths in the London area". It goes on and stats that they often go to gigs and clubs and run a range of different events such as walks and picnics and RPG night. What I found interesting on this website it also has a section labeled " What are we not" and it says as follows " If you are expecting misery, moping, self-pity and think the world is against you personally this is not the group for you. We are not better than you, but we're not a self-help group either".

What I find very interesting about this is that they obviously believe that a lot of people are fakers and they don't agree with everything that other people that associate themselves as Goths do on a day to day basis. The most common stereotype that surrounds Goth is the fixation on death. Members say that they are an exaggeration of the darker side of the human psyche and that they represent outwardly the thoughts that linger in the back of everyone's mind. Another thing that is tied directly to beliefs about Goths is that they are all depressed which the websites touched a little bit on in the <https://assignbuster.com/an-assessment-of-the-gothic-subculture-sociology-essay/>

we are not a self-help group. When we look at all the other subcultures such as punks they represent rebellion, Industrial represents anger and Goths represent sadness.

Scientists believe that many people feel alienated from each other and that they will break off into small groups and latch onto a specific belief or idea and form a culture surrounding it. People belong to cultures such as these in order to feel as if they own something and are a part of something. Another very important topic that surrounds my subculture is Self-cutting and the most typical reason behind this is to get attention. These youths will make shallow cuts in obvious or semi-obvious areas such as the inner arm usually with a razor blade. Typically it is in an area that can be hidden by clothing from parents or teacher if they are around. However they will want friends or others to be observant enough to notice and care. These types of individuals are not suicidal they just want someone to notice.

In regards to the social structure status which is the honor or prestige attached to ones position in society. And may also refer to a rank or position that one holds in a group, social status can either be earned by their individual achievements which are known as achieved statuses or one can be placed in the stratification system by their inherited position which is called ascribed statuses. When looking a gothics as a whole they don't get very much honor or praise from anyone in society if anything they are considered an outcast probably because they are not part of the norm. And when society doesn't understand a group and there ways they typically become outsiders and are looked down upon. When looking at ascribed

positions from what I could tell they don't have any type of ranking system that one could be born into or earned so to speak.

One thing that could be considered in the respect that the ones around you in the group with give you if they liked you which would be something that would be earned such as the social status explains. When looking at roles every group has what is considered to be roles from things like recruiting all the way to what individual drives the group around. There aren't any honorary roles that I could find to be associated with my subculture. Overall I feel that this final term paper has opened my eyes to the ways of life of this subculture and has changed a few of my opinions. I am happy with the decision I made when selecting the culture I did what made me select it was I tried to pick the one that I knew the least about so at the end of this course I would have a better understanding for the types of things they do all the way to things such as why they wear the clothing and pick the colors they do. I still agree with the statement that this is still one of the most misunderstood cultures that are active today. Hopefully as time goes on and we see the fourth generation come along we will have a better outlook on these individuals in the society as well as except them more.

On the websites that I gathered information from I choose to read down through a few pages of posts and from what I could gather these members feel that need to know for sure they are talking to people with the same interests and that they won't be judged. And that they know that other members have issues that they need to check at the door before coming in not everyone that calls themselves a Goth wants to hear about your

problems or talk about how you feel the world is out to get you. What I find <https://assignbuster.com/an-assessment-of-the-gothic-subculture-sociology-essay/>

interesting about that statement made by the website is that they do separate themselves from other so called Goths just by the actions they choose to take.

Society as a whole can be harsh on any culture that isn't considered part of the norm not just gothic groups. We all need to realize that just because someone doesn't believe in the same things we do or they choose to dress differently or talk differently doesn't make them a bad person. I feel that it will be a long time before we stop doing things like this to one another and it needs to start now. People shouldn't have to feel the need to separate themselves from one another to get attention and also we all need to realize that no one is better than anyone else no matter what you think or have been told. I hope that one day everyone can stand together without having to worry about what someone thinks about them it doesn't matter rich or poor or black or white we all need to group together to make society a better place to live in and an inviting one at that which the Functionalist Perspective goes into detail on.