

Gang leader for a day essay sample

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This book is about a Sociologist named Sudhir Venkatesh who is a graduate student at the University of Chicago and was interested in the poor black neighborhoods that surrounded the university and he wanted to study them. He wanted to explore how the black folks lived in the projects, he wanted to know how life was like the challenges it took for those folks to live in there. The sacrifices it takes to move forward and how poverty affects the way of living. But he did not know what was going to happen ahead of him. He did not know that he would become the best friend of the gang leader of the Black Kings J. T. I read this book because I wanted to see how this text ties to what I have learned in my sociology class and from what I have read in my sociology book, and to be honest I am surprised that there is a lot of similarities found in this book. Some of the theories I learned are presented in this book in examples of Sudhir's experiences in his journey with J. T. and within the black neighborhoods. For example at the beginning Sudhir took on professor William Julius Wilson's project to find out what the difference was between growing up in a neighborhood that was surrounded by other poor areas and growing up poor .

In the sociology book it says that the best way to collect and gather data during research is to form a questioner filled with questions that are relevant to the research that is being conducted. So he went and constructed a questioner by forming new questions and incorporating questions from previous questioners conducted in past research projects and formulated his survey based on that. So Sudhir took his questioner to the streets of Chicago. He went to some abandoned building in one of Chicago's notorious housing projects to see if people were willing to take his survey. As soon as he

walked in people immediately knew he was not from around here so a couple of Black Kings took him because he looked like a Mexican guy to their boss who was J. T. After that J. T. walked in and saw his guy with Sudhir he said to keep him for a night and let him go.

The next day Sudhir came back again and talked to J. T. and told him what he was doing. J. T. later told him that people would never answer those dumb questions instead he told Sudhir that he should hang out with him and spend time with these people and by interacting with them he would get the answers he was looking for. Secondly In the sociology books the Davis-Moore thesis states an explanation of social stratification, based on the idea of functional necessity. Davis and Moore argue that the most difficult jobs in any society are the most necessary and require the highest rewards and compensation because it is a lot harder to replace people holding these kind of jobs as for someone washing cars or answering the telephone they are a lot easy to replace. Therefore Davis and Moore explain that the greater importance of the job the greater rewards come with.

This promotes productivity and efficiency because rewarding important work with income, prestige, power this encourages people to do these things and to work better, longer and harder. In “Gang Leader for a Day” we J. T. who told Sudhir he had a college education but due to the situation that J. T. is black society didn't not rewarded him with a good paying job for his hard work making him turn back into crime. Also J. T. mentioned that within the gang there is a hierarchy standing of superiors broken down into rankings in which J. T. belonged to. J. T. said that the higher responsibility jobs you

worked one you had a pretty good chance on moving up in the ranking of the Black Kings encouraging a lot of the members to take high responsibility tasks to become better and better the organization it's self. The higher ranking or job you had the higher your income.

For example setting turf disputes among other rival gangs, collecting taxes from people with small businesses and collecting drug money. This would increase the respect you have among your crew and the organization in other words your prestige and power increases therefore making it your reward for your hard work for the gang. Third which I think is huge in the book and in "Gang Leader for a Day" is Deviance which is a violation to cultural norms, a category of deviance is Crime which is a violation of a society's formally enacted criminal law. Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin said that crime results not simply from limited legitimate opportunity (legal) but also from readily accessible illegitimate opportunity (illegal). Deviance or conformity depends on the relative opportunity structure that frames people's life. J. T. explained to Sudhir that a lot of the folks who lived in Robert Taylor didn't even have proper schooling a lot of the children's parents didn't know how to read and weren't given a good education to reach some sort of legal opportunity to better their lives.

Instead they turned to illegal opportunity for example selling drugs because they weren't comfortable with themselves. In other words when people are unable to find any opportunity legal or illegal, deviance may take one of two forms one of them is Conflict Subcultures like armed street gangs that engage in violence that is fed with frustration and a desire for respect.

Second there are retreatist subcultures, in which deviants drop out and abuse alcohol or other drugs. This reflects on what happens inside J. T's building he has his foot soldiers who are frustrated people that involve on criminal activity or violence to gain respect within the Black Kings and for them. Also the squatters which are the people who are homeless that stay in the buildings stairs and are consistent drug abusers. Also the book argues that the most deviant behavior happens regularly to minorities for example African-Americans, Hispanics, and Asians.

J. T. mentioned that most of the teenagers engage in in gang activity not because they don't want to but because they have no choice there is nothing out there for them because they are a minority or simply " Black". Finally I really like the the Book " Gang Leader for a Day" because it shows a different perspective on how people live in the poor neighborhoods. Not just because the Black Kings control Robert Taylor that doesn't mean that everyone who lives there is affiliated with gang activity. On the contrary people like Ms. Bailey, Ms. Mae who take care of people with in the building who are in need of a temporary home or just something to eat. They also organize events so that the whole community can gather together and form a family within the Robert Taylor buildings. Most of the book shows examples to theories in the Sociology book and it ties it back together in a form of anecdotes of Sudhir's experiences in the streets of Chicago. This book is just to interesting.