

Gangs from different sociological perspectives and theories



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

\n[[toc title="Table of Contents"](#)]\n

\n \t

1. [Conflict Theorist Perspective](#) \n \t
2. [Functionalist Perspective](#) \n \t
3. [Feminist Perspective](#) \n \t
4. [Symbolic-Interactionists Perspective](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), today's gangs are best characterized by their diversity in geographical location, organization, and their involvement in criminal or delinquent activities. In today's society, people are more aware of gangs forming all around the world. From little children to adults, gangs appeal to all types of people. Many different ethnic and socioeconomic groups make up gangs, but gangs are mostly made up of young children. The reason why many children join gangs is that they do not receive much attention from their family members, thus they turn to gangs as a means to get the attention they were being denied. The reason why adults join gangs is to gain power, money, or even safety. To those people, a gang provides identity, status, and love, among other things, in turn they develop loyalty to the gang they join.

Conflict Theorist Perspective

Regarding gangs, a conflict theorist would see this social issue as a pattern of domination, submission, and struggle between people of high and low standing (Brym and Lie 10). In the view of Karl Marx, all stratified societies

<https://assignbuster.com/gangs-from-different-sociological-perspectives-and-theories/>

consist of two social groups: ruling class and social class. The ruling class being made up of people with high standing and social power and would use their power to exploit those of the social class (the powerless and low standing class).

Marx would explain the gang issue as an ownership of property. Gangs are groups of people joined together by shared interest or situation; they are social class people of low standing. They want power that they believe can only come from selling and distributing drugs to get the power they crave. This would result in class struggle from the gangs with lower class, and other people with higher class; defeating the suggestion that “ Lessening privilege will lower the level of conflict and increase total human welfare” (Brym and Lie 10). Instead of lessening and lowering conflict, more is created by gang violence. Marx would label gangs in the subordinate group, trying to obtain the position and power to be in the dominate group. Gangs are part of working class for someone of the dominate group, contributing to the wealth of Capitalists.

Max Weber would see gangs as one of the many social classes/status groups out there (unlike Marx, who believed there were only two kinds of groups: the working and capitalist groups). Weber believed that not only does power play a role in society; it also played an important part in religion, politics, ethnicity, and gender. Weber would probably think of gangs and break them down into smaller groups, groups based on their religion, gender, etc.... He'd think of these smaller groups as major players in society, because he believed they all possessed different degrees of social power. In those groups there would be people of higher power (like gang lords), and in the <https://assignbuster.com/gangs-from-different-sociological-perspectives-and-theories/>

groups of gang lords there would be the more feared gang lords as the ones highest in power and social status.

Functionalist Perspective

Functionalist view society as a social system of interconnected parts, and they examine society through a functional framework which stresses that everything in society serves a purpose (Bohm, R. M. 2001). It doesn't matter how wrong, right, strange, good, bad, or even violent something is – functionalist would see that “ something” as serving a purpose. They believe that technology advances and population growth leads to social change.

As for gangs, functionalists would likely see them as helpful citizens in society, because they serve a purpose. The easy entry into the gangs decreases the amount of poverty in society (no matter how small). The growth rate of poor people slowly increases each year, and with gangs taking being a money making business; the poor has somewhere to go (and make money at the same time).

Functionalists will also point out that gangs are there for the purpose to provide jobs to people like: lawyers, police officers, criminal investigators, and so on. If there weren't any gangs then most police officers wouldn't have employment in their chosen fields. The reason lies in the fact that gangs are a huge part of crime. If there weren't any gangs causing havoc, the crime rate would drop because gangs cause a good percent of violence. If the crime rate drop, the employment for lawmakers would definitely decrease.

Émile Durkheim would explain that gangs and deviance is normal, and they are found in all societies. He would see gangs as a part of society that <https://assignbuster.com/gangs-from-different-sociological-perspectives-and-theories/>

promotes social unity, rethink societal norms, and challenges the way things are now. In other words, gangs force society to rethink their previous norms (social solidarity) and come up with newer ones.

Robert Merton, on the other hand, preferred the middle range theory rather than the grand theory. Merton would probably emphasize the fact that gangs function with manifest and latent functions. The manifest function of how gangs (the actors) sell drugs to make a living shows a sign that the actors are conscious of their intentions. The latent function of selling drug to make money (the action) may not fully explain the action continues to be performed. The actors might not be consciously aware of the hidden reasons that they perform said actions.

Feminist Perspective

Feminists believe that society is based on disagreement between the sexes (females and males). They believe that men have more power in society and that women only have the little power (if any), because they are at a disadvantage. Feminists use both micro and macro scales of analysis. Their main focus is on patriarchy, which is their belief that society is wholly male dominated. They also want to find equality in both sexes in social, political, and economic means.

Feminists will most likely critique gangs as a male dominated organization and will let their opinions known and try to change it. They will probably observe and question to themselves, “ Why are there more men than women in gangs?” Their first plan of action would be to show and explain how important women are in society. Secondly, they would make an example of

how women have always been subordinate to the men dominance in society for years. From there they will continue on their quest to bring about equality in gangs. I don't think it would matter if gangs are criminals to society, feminists would just look at the fact that the women are scarce and almost nonexistent.

In their opinions, women have just as much as a right to join any organization they want, if a man is doing the same. It wouldn't matter to them if a female joined or not, they just want the option open for women as well.

Some feminist theories were in agreement with one another, but of course there were small differences in belief. For instance, liberal feminism believed that the problem to inequality between men and women was caused by sexist. Liberals believed that the law was sexist and the way females and males socialized with each other. They thought that the only way to make females equal to man, was to banish all sexist law and the socialization between men and women should change. If we socialized differently, the outcome of the socialization would bring greater good. Liberals would agree to let women join a gang to communicate and with one another in close settings.

Radical feminist believed that women were exploited by patriarchal society and men. It was known that some radical feminists thought the best solution to stop the inequality, was to separate both sexes so that they would live apart. They saw separation as the key to avoid the situation as best as they

could. Radicals would think that women would do right to not join gangs, for the sole reason of separating themselves from men.

Marxist Feminist believed that women were there only to benefit capitalism by being housewives. They, of course, wanted to get rid of capitalism and substitute it with communism; therefore men and women would be equal. If gangs followed the rules of communism, there would be more women to rival men (if they wanted to be a criminal, that is).

Marianne Weber (Max Weber's wife), was a well known feminist. She believed that women should be treated equally in all institutions (mostly the institution of marriage). This could be said for gangs as well, the institution of gangs should treat women equally.

Symbolic-Interactionists Perspective

Symbolic interactionism is how groups and individuals interact with each other. It focuses on the personal identity of a person creates when interacting with others individuals or groups (mostly involving group pressures and an individual's actions). People create symbolic structures that make life what it is through interacting. It is defined that the structures that symbolic interactionism is made of, allows the actors (the individuals and groups) to understand and experience things in similar ways. Interacting like this is how society is made.

People are born in a society with symbolic structures, and it is a process that we can see actually taking place, right before our very eyes. If a person isn't interacting with face-to-face interaction, then interactionist ignores anything outside the interaction realm.

<https://assignbuster.com/gangs-from-different-sociological-perspectives-and-theories/>

Symbolic interactionist would explain that gangs are good subjects for interacting. They would see gangs as a structured community group of individuals that interact in all the time. A good example would be when they make their drug deals. In order to complete that task, they must interact in a way to get the most out of their sale. If they want to keep the customer (or other actor) coming back for more business, then they will interact in a way that is different from their normal way.

Herbert Blumer, student of George Herbert Mead, was given credit for the word "symbolic interactionism". Meaning, language, and thought were the three core principles that he believed made up symbolic interactionism. Meaning gave life to the way people interacted with one another. It gave meaning to the way people saw things in life around us. Language is the voice of reasoning and understanding another's interpretation of symbols. Thought is when a person's thought process comes to different interpretation for a similar symbol. If you combine the three core principles, a form of communication is then created.

Herbert Blumer would believe that gangs meet the three core principles that are contributed to symbolic interactionism. They use meaning every time they try to find way to communicate with other gang members or outsiders. If meaning isn't shown, things can and will go wrong in certain types of situations. Language is the most important core principle use. They use it to give voice to their interpretations and relay them to their listener. Language is used daily by gangster; they use it the most when giving orders or making deals. Thought could cause major problems for most gang members. If they get the wrong interpretation of something that was meant to be important, <https://assignbuster.com/gangs-from-different-sociological-perspectives-and-theories/>

they would be in big trouble. For example, if a gang boss told one of his underlings “ today is payday”, the underling would probably get a wrong interpretation of what he meant.

The gang boss could mean that it was payday for him and only him. The underlings could have thought that statement meant that he and the other workers would finally get their paycheck for their hard work. That’s a good example of how the gang boss and underling arrive to the thoughts and language. Usually all three core principles are used in every day communicating in society.

A variant of symbolic interactionism that became popular recently is social constructionism. Social constructionists argue that when people interact, they typically assume things are naturally or innately what they seem to be (14). People in today’s society look at gangs and assume they are criminals who should be locked away. But aren’t they people too? Some gang members have no other option but to join a gang. There are many personal reasons that could be fault to why a person joins a gang. Social constructionists are well known to analyze these types of problems and solve them.

I read an article today on Yahoo! titled Dozens charged with the largest Medicare scam ever. The article talked about Armenian Gangsters and how they, and their associates, used health care clinics to fraud Medicare out of \$163 million. It is noted that this fraud is thought of as the largest fraud by one enterprise. The Federal Prosecutors charged and arrested some of the 73 people in a couple different states that were involved in the scam.

This article is proof that gangs are still out there in plain sight. Gang activity has gradually increased in the 20th century. Gangs sell drugs; buy drugs, kill, etc... It all depends on the situation they are found in.

As I've stated before, people just can't understand why a person would want to join a gang and become a criminal. There are many reasons like poverty, peer pressure, boredom, and despair. I've explained that people join gangs to make money if they are in desperate need of it. Peer pressure is another reason why people join gangs. Young children and teens are usually the ones that fall under peer pressure. They are the most susceptible groups of people that always want to follow the crowd and fit in with the "cooler" kids.

Boredom is another reason. Boredom can lead a person to do almost anything in order to cure said boredom. Lastly, despair is connected to poverty. Those who are in poverty find themselves despairing on how they are going to get money where could they get the money.

Regular people who aren't sociological theorists will come up with their own perspectives of gangs, and they are free to speak their opinions. It doesn't matter if you are a theorist or not, gangs are seen and analyzed by everyday people.