

Gang crime essay

Business



Abstract Gang crime is a problem which has wrecked havoc in all the facets of life and has raised a lot of tension among the citizens. Its increasing trend is a wake up call for more comprehensive strategies and policies so that cohesive living in the society can be propagated. The government's response is critical but has to address the root causes by giving more financial and operational capacity to locally based organizations which are able to include the people in the grassroots as they endeavor to alleviate the problem. The media portrayal of youths in a negative dimension is one source of social exclusion which most youths are struggling to overcome and hence ought to change. Academic criminology has not shed enough light on gang crime issue which has left many not adequately informed.

Introduction The definition of a gang crime by the law enforcement officials takes two dimensions but they employ one of the definitions in order to measure and tackle this problem in the society. The first definition considers gang-related all crimes committed by individuals who belong to a particular gang without regard to the circumstances surrounding such crimes or the nature of the offense. This therefore is a member-based definition of gang crime.

Another but more restrictive definition is that a gang crime is committed if and when such occurs as part of the function of a gang or for the benefit of the gang and therefore is strictly gang-motivated. Based on the evidence that gang-motivated crimes constitute more than half of gang homicides for instance in South Central Los Angeles, the law enforcement officials have based most of their operations in addressing this problem on the motive-based definition of gang crime (justicepolicyorg, n. d). Gang-motivated

crimes are then classified under two groups. There are those crimes which are committed by small groups or individuals within the gang and these are called self-directed crimes. The other classification is the gang-directed crimes in which the gang leaders or the entire gang is involved in commissioning of crimes.

There are different motives under which gang-related crimes are orchestrated by the perpetrators and this forms the basis for understanding these crimes. One of the motives is rooted on the expressive actions demonstrated by a group to depict its fearless nature and also to expose its pride by for instance avenging past sins done by a rival gang. Another motive is based on instrumental actions whose main objective is to ensure that the material requirements of the gang leaders or those of its members are catered for (justicepolicy.

org, n. d). Gangs exhibit a particular hierarchy and can be categorized into three groups based on their composition and motives of operation. Peer groups are unorganized and small groups of individuals who have a common background and share the same space. Their involvement in crime is not at any significant level and therefore its influence on the identity of the group is not important. Peer groups are the lowest level of gangs. The intermediate level is comprised of more organized groups of young people in the streets whose motive of participating in criminal activities is strongly attached to the identity of the group so that the groups assign themselves names. This level therefore is made up of gangs.

Finally, there are the organized criminal groups whose motive of committing crimes is for personal gains and this may likely be their main occupation. These organized criminal groups base their operations in the illegal market place (le. ac. uk, n. d). Gang crime is an issue of concern which touches many aspects of a society. Not only is it a social problem but also a political as well as an economically related issue. The most affected are the young people who have increasingly joined gangs due to many factors personal, familial or social.

This case study will discuss this topic in relation to the different findings on the trends, causes and the responses to alleviate gang crime. Findings Trends in gang crime The problem of gang crime has seen an increasing trend in the United Kingdom but the extent of use of firearms has been lesser compared to other countries such as the U. S where it is on the rise. The proliferation of firearms is however a major concern for the Home Office in the UK. This is because guns have been used by organized gangs in the streets to commit crimes such as bank robberies and to intimidate people. In addition UK has experienced an increasing illegal drug trade which has also been facilitated by using guns by various organized gangs who operate in the illegal market. The Home Office in the UK however points out that there has been overall low levels in crimes committed using guns in which only 0. 5% of the total crimes recorded by the police involved the use of firearms (Gibson, 2007).

The provisional figures in March 2005 showed that the use of handguns declined by 16% and injuries resulting from firearms offenses went down by 6%. In addition, robbery cases committed using guns reduced by 9%

(Gibson, 2007). In spite of these figures on the trend of gang crime and firearm use, there are several current facts on gang crimes.

The first fact is that about 170 street gangs are operating in Strathclyde and London today. Secondly, the likelihood of committing a crime by a gang member is two and a half times more than that of a non-member. Another fact is that of all the shootings in Manchester and Merseyside, about 60% of them are attributed to gang activities (centreforsocialjustice.org.uk, 2010). In the United States, the rise in crime has been largely associated with the increase in the number of violent criminal gangs. Though gang activity is not a new problem in the US, the escalating cases of crimes and the prevalence of gangs is a major cause for alarm.

A survey conducted in 2004 by the National Youth Gang Survey revealed a shocking 760, 000 members who were active in 24, 000 gangs. In addition, of all the homicides reported in cities with 100, 000 or more in 2004, 25% of them were suspected to be gang-related according to police departments (Muhlhausen & Little, 2007). Risk factors associated with gang crime There are many risk factors which predispose many youths to joining gang groups. Many researchers have investigated the origin of the problem by talking with members of different gangs and also by observing their lives. From their reports, the two major factors which attract young people to join gangs are fun and action.

Many of these kids reason that their siblings and friends are in the gang and therefore is the place to be. Protection offered by the gangs to the kids as they go to and come from school is another factor. This is because most

gangs are rivals and in constant conflicts which expose young people to danger if they do not belong to a particular gang and happen to be caught in the middle of such conflicts in the streets. Other risk factors include destabilized family relationships, poor grades and poor attachment to school, living in neighborhoods with gangs and involving themselves in violence and drug use at an early age. Overall analysis of these factors shows that gradual accumulation of deficits of several social values influences many young people more to join gangs than individual factors (ed.

gov, 2009). How the media has portrayed gang crime
The media coverage on issues of gang crime in the UK has been rather generalized and mostly associated with young people and this has elicited negative influence on the youths. Findings of a research done by Young NCB members indicate that the way the media portrays young people as being associated with gangs, crimes, and violence has a great effect on how they feel about themselves.

The negative reporting of media on youth issues also impacts on how the authorities handle and treat them for instance how the police harass young people even without having committed any offences. On the other hand the journalists were of the opinion that negative acts such as those of gang crimes ought not to be blamed generally on youths since not all youths participate in such crimes. Such a negative coverage only makes them feel alienated in the society which triggers anger inside them. From the research, the journalists also confirmed that they usually face a lot of pressure when covering negative stories which depict the young generation as a bad one (participationworks. org. uk, n. d). Another survey by the British Youth

Council shows similar opinions about how the media has portrayed gang crime, knife and gun crime, and youths.

About 67.5% of the youths interviewed were of the thought that coverage of these issues by the media had negative effects. On one hand, the media is fond of exaggerating the extent of such crimes thereby raising too much tension in the society and 22.5% of the 67.5% who talked of negative effects argued from this perspective. On the other hand, the media also in many occasions portray these social evils as being propagated by the “young people” which is a generalization. This as 45% of the interviewees explained is quite unfair since not every youth is involved and through this generalization, many innocent youths have found themselves in trouble of harassment and accusations for instance by police. However, through media coverage, politicians can be prompted to take the necessary action to curb gang crime as believed by 15% of the young people interviewed (ncvys.

org. uk, n. d). How the Government is prioritizing gang crime issue Despite the intensive focus on gang crime in England, government reports seem to be contradicting what the media is bringing into picture. This is because the figures by the Home Office show a falling trend in violent crime as opposed to reports from other sources which show a rise. Gang crime issue is however on top of the community safety agenda and the government has initiated several programs to tackle it. For instance in 2004, the government launched the Tackling Violent Crime Program (TVCP) which is jointly run by the Violent Crime Unit and the Partnership Development Unit.

The government has also been addressing the problem through the Tackling Gangs Action Program which was a project running for six months and ended in 2008. This project aimed at reducing cases of youth-related violence and in particular those in gangs who use firearms to commit the offenses (idea. gov. uk, 2010).

The government has been seen to prioritize the issue of gang crime by and large via coming up with more effective and all inclusive measures. For instance in 2008, an action plan was launched which included several intervention methods. These included expansion of youth services, training which covered job-related skills, capacity building for community-based organizations and family support programs (idea. gov. uk, Guns and gangs: tackling violent youth crime , 2008).

Majority of the measures have been implemented and are operational. This is why current organizational intervention has mostly relied on local community structures following government's adherence to advices warning it not to overrely on tougher enforcement approaches. Such examples has portrayed the efforts being made by the government in prioritizing gang crime and violent crime in general. Academic criminology on gang crime Recently, indications by government reports and national newspapers depict a rising number of gangs and gang members in the UK in addition to the reports of street gangs carrying guns and committing many serious crimes. Such reports have made many people believe that the situation in UK is becoming like that of the US where massive gang crimes are evident. In spite of these depictions, there still remains inadequate criminological

research on this issue of national concern in UK which can give more insight about it.

There is however current criminological researches done such as the one generated from New English and Welsh Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring program. The focus of this program is on the connection that exists between gang membership, crime and the abuse of drugs. According to this research, similarities exist between its findings and the situation in the US in relation to certain aspects of gang crime such as the behavioral problems and social traits of gang members.

The conclusion of this research recommends a thorough monitoring strategy into the current developments in this problem (Bennett & Holloway, 2004).
Organizational Response Most of the responses to the problem of gang crime in the UK had previously been by the central government which has largely focused on the area in which it has the greatest influence that is law enforcement and administration of justice. This top down “ crack-down” approach however has not been very effective in addition to it facing a lot of criticism as it has ignored the potential of local organizational interventions in facing the problem of gang crime. Therefore, the current response has been dominated by local organizations which have been devoted in addressing the root causes of the issue by rallying the community to work together in an organized way. These local organizations operate on the understanding that the vicious cycle of gang crimes can be effectively broken by enhancing a bottom up approach and local authorities have been actively involved together with their partners in ensuring the success of these local plans (Brand & Ollerearnshaw, 2008).

<https://assignbuster.com/gang-crime-essay/>

Policy InterventionsThe types of interventions used to tackle gang crime in the UK have changed over time from being solely central government-driven to include those involving community based organizations at the grassroots. This has been greatly influenced by reports warning the government to embrace such approaches by coming up with policies aimed at their capacity building. Such report in 2008 pointed to the fact that the use of tough enforcement measures in many occasions fail to account for the diverse nature of gangs and also the local factors which drive the formation of gangs. The report therefore recommended the establishment of locally based community programs (Brand, Gangs at the Grassroots: Community solutions to street violence, 2008). Community based programs

Rainier Communities that Care (RCTC)This program makes use of a public health approach in the prevention of youth crime.

It was introduced by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in the year 1997 and has involved about 400, 000 youths in more than 30 communities in the UK (Committee). Its objective is preventing crime through identifying, then measuring and finally doing a thorough analysis of the risk factors that predispose the youths to joining gangs or involving in violence. The RCTC then forwards its recommendations to the commissioners in the assessed localities to suppress the risk factors and put in place the identified protective factors. Gathering of information is done from estate to estate and from neighborhood to neighborhood after which the groups of streets or estates that are in dire need of resources are adequately assisted. Positive outcomes have been registered in terms of both the decline in the risk factors and the involvement of youths in gang activities. The greatest

improvement was registered in the areas where the program has operated the longest such as Swansea and this is an indication of its efficacy. The program has showed that effective distribution of resources is vital in alleviating most of the risk factors.

In comparison with the US where the program originated, similar levels of efficacy have been confirmed from several independent studies. This has prompted its adoption by a federal agency which is championing for its use as a preventive approach to gang crime in all the states (Committee). Rainer Youth Inclusion Program (YIP). The operations of this program are concentrated in the London Borough of Lambeth which is among the most affected boroughs in London by the rising gang crime. Two senior and two junior programs in addition to a mentoring service constitute the whole program.

Its aims are to raise awareness of the risk factors and their consequences by challenging the mode of thinking in youths. It accomplishes this by providing a way out of social exclusion affecting the young people through actively involving them in constructive community-based endeavors. A reduction level of up to 70% in youth involvement in gang crimes and other offences is a positive outcome. Many young people traditionally perceived to be difficult have been assimilated into the program since it allows them to have a hand in determining the program's content (Committee). The Manchester Multi-Agency Gang Strategy (MMAGS) It was initiated in 2002 with the aim of reducing gang and gang-related crimes in Manchester. To achieve this, it employed both preventative and enforcement based approaches. These

included a conducive environment for business activities, supporting vulnerable youths, diverting youths away from the culture of gangs.

Its anticipated benefits were drawn from the Boston-Gun Project in the US (Bullock & Tilley, 2008). MMAGS team has also worked to establish mentorship programs which work with 18 inner-city primary schools to create a good and sustainable link between families and schools. The project also enhances team work, community awareness and an element of citizenship by promoting issue-based work. The aims of the project include dispelling myths about gangs and gang culture and discouraging youths from joining gangs. It also assists families who are vulnerable by guiding their children in making positive choices and also helping them understand how their actions impact the society. The evaluation is based on observing and documenting changes, interviews, evaluation by parents via feedback forms and schools' evaluation by feedback forms (teachernet.

gov. uk, n. d).

Positive changes have been documented in terms of decline in the number of youths joining gangs and also in terms of youth awareness of the effects of their actions in the community. Summary of Policy Evaluation The evaluation of these policies is based on the degree to which they have accomplished the objectives of their establishment. Community based programs have showed more positive results than those of tougher law enforcement by the government. This is because they are more inclusive and address the root causes of gang crime. Positive results have been an increase in youth awareness of harms posed by gang crime, reduced cases of gang-related

arrests and more youth engagement in economic activities. Conclusion The problem of gang crime can be adequately addressed by using more of locally organized and community based projects.

The financing of these programs by the government and other organizations is critical to ensure that they remain operational to bring the much needed change in terms of alleviating the problem of gang

crime. References Bennett, T., & Holloway, K. (2004). Gang Membership, Drugs and Crime in the UK1. Retrieved July 18, 2010, from [http://bjc.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/short/44/3/305? rss= 1&source= mfcBrand](http://bjc.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/short/44/3/305?rss=1&source=mfcBrand),

A.

(2008). Gangs at the Grassroots: Community solutions to street violence.

Retrieved July 18, 2010, from <http://www.nlgn.org.uk/public/2008/gangs-at-the-grassroots-community-solutions-to-street-violence/>Brand, A., &

Ollerearnshaw, R. (2008).

Gangs at the Grassroots. Retrieved July 18, 2010, from <http://www.nlgn.org.uk/public/wp-content/uploads/gangs-at-the-grassroots.pdf>

Bullock, K., &

Tilley, N. (2008). Understanding and Tackling Gang Violence.

Retrieved July 18, 2010, from <http://www.palgrave-journals.com/cpcs/journal/v10/n1/full/8150057a.html>

centreforsocialjustice.org.uk. (2010). Gangs.

Retrieved July 18, 2010, from [http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/default.asp? pageRef= 314](http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/default.asp?pageRef=314)

Committee, H. o.

<https://assignbuster.com/gang-crime-essay/>

-J. House of Commons – Justice Committee: HC 94-II Cutting Crime: The Case for Justice Reinvestment – Volume 2. Salt Lake City: The Stationery Office.

ed. gov. (2009).

Youth Gangs: Going Beyond the Myths to Address a Critical Problem.

Retrieved July 17, 2010, from http://www.dopnmodel.info/wiki/index.php?title=Gang_ViolenceGibson, B.

(2007). The new Home Office: an introduction. Winchester: Waterside Press.

idea. gov. uk. (2008). Guns and gangs: tackling violent youth crime .

Retrieved July 18, 2010, from <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageld=7989494>idea. gov. uk. (2010).

Tackling violent crime. Retrieved July 18, 2010, from <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageld=8789659>

justicepolicy. org. (n. d). Public Enemy #1? Gang Crime Myths and Realities.

Retrieved July 17, 2010, from http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/07-07_Ch6_GangWars_GC-PS-AC-JJ.pdfle. ac. uk.

org/images/upload/07-07_Ch6_GangWars_GC-PS-AC-JJ. pdfle. ac. uk.

(n. d). Gang Culture. Retrieved July 17, 2010, from <http://www2.le.ac.uk/ebulletin/features/2000-2009/2006/08/nparticle.2006-08-03>.

2020148239Muhlhausen, D., & Little, E. (2007). Gang Crime: Effective and Constitutional Policies to Stop Violent Gangs.

Retrieved July 17, 2010, from [http://www. heritage.](http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2007/06/Gang-Crime-Effective-and-Constitutional-Policies-to-Stop-Violent-Gangsncvys.org)

[org/Research/Reports/2007/06/Gang-Crime-Effective-and-Constitutional-Policies-to-Stop-Violent-Gangsncvys.](http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2007/06/Gang-Crime-Effective-and-Constitutional-Policies-to-Stop-Violent-Gangsncvys.org)

org. uk. (n. d). Speaking out on gun, knife and gang crime The survey results.

Retrieved July 18, 2010, from [http://www.](http://www.ncvys.org.uk/UserFiles/Speaking%20Out/Small%20Grants%20Case%20Studies%2008/British%20Youth%20Council%20Survey%20on%20gun,%20knife%20and%20gang%20crime.pdf)

[ncvys. org. uk/UserFiles/Speaking%20Out/Small%20Grants%20Case%20Studies%2008/British%20Youth%20Council%20Survey%20on%20gun,%20knife%20and%20gang%20crime.](http://www.ncvys.org.uk/UserFiles/Speaking%20Out/Small%20Grants%20Case%20Studies%2008/British%20Youth%20Council%20Survey%20on%20gun,%20knife%20and%20gang%20crime.pdf)

pdfparticipationworks. org. uk. (n. d). Young people publish research on how negative media portrayal affects their lives.

Retrieved July 18, 2010, from [http://www. participationworks. org.](http://www.participationworks.org.uk/news/young-people-publish-research-how-negative-media-portrayal-affects-their-livesteachernet)

[uk/news/young-people-publish-research-how-negative-media-portrayal-affects-their-livesteachernet.](http://www.participationworks.org.uk/news/young-people-publish-research-how-negative-media-portrayal-affects-their-livesteachernet)

gov. uk. (n. d). Accelerated extended schools – Manchester Prevention and early intervention: mentoring and family support.

Retrieved July 19, 2010, from [http://www. teachernet. gov.](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/13186/Manchester-prevention_and_intervention%28mentoring%29.pdf)

[uk/_doc/13186/Manchester-prevention_and_intervention%28mentoring%29.pdf](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/13186/Manchester-prevention_and_intervention%28mentoring%29.pdf)