Youth Gangs in American Society: Summaries and Highlights

Chapter 1: Introduction to the subject matter and are of study. What is a gang? What are some of the main features of gangs? Prevalence of gangs in the US.; images and stereotypes about gangs in the US.

Chapter 2: Pay close attention to the types of gangs; the classification of gang memberships, the features of the super-gangs; and the brief discussions given about black, Asian, and white gangs. This chapter also highlights the fact that gang members and their victims share the same social space; that is, they are victims and victimizers.

Chapter 3: Is there a gang subculture? What are the features of this subculture? How do gangs recruit? What are some of the values and beliefs held by gang members? How important are these belief systems? Do these belief systems differ from that of conventional society? What do we know about gang members and their respective families? How do gangs control their members? What are the consequences of not conforming to the gang’s expectations?

Chapter 4: What types of criminal activities do gangs engage in and why? To what extent is gang behavior a form of business? Gangs and the drug culture: is there a relationship?

Chapter 5: Why do females join or form gangs? What theories can we use to explain why they join in the first place? Are there social, cultural, economic, and psychological reasons to explain why females join a gang? Are the reasons for joining the same as that of their male counterparts? What do we know about female gang crimes? What do we know about female gangs and drugs?

Chapter 6: This chapter will introduce you to the causes of gangs. Note the diverse theories that are represented. Note also the multidisciplinary aspects of these theories and the wide range that they cover. Knox also talks about some of these theories. I have also given you a summary of the gist of most of these theories.

Chapter 7: Is there a relationship between the system of social stratification, inequality, the underclass, and gang formation in America? This issue is very critical because most sociologists believe that a common reason for
joining gangs is the lack of access to economic and social opportunities in America. In this regard, gang behavior is explained as a function of the inability of the economic system to provide people with legitimate opportunity. Gang formation is therefore an institutional failure, the inability of society to cater to the needs of people. This may include housing inequality, educational inequality, lack of employment opportunities, failure of the educational systems, disintegration of families, and so on. Overall, the argument is made that often times, changes in the economy in the form of the deindustrialization of America has had a deleterious impact on inner city and rural America. Jobs keep leaving the country. The middle class feels squeezed; urban youth unemployment is chronic. The question then is: to what extent do these problems motivate people to join or form gangs?

Chapter 8: Here, the focus is going to be on community prevention of gangs. Knox also talks about this. Pay attention to some of the programs various communities have designed to prevent and control gang activities. More importantly, as you read this section, familiarize yourselves with programs that have been found to be effective in eradicating gang crimes. Reflect on what you will do also to eradicate or reduce gang crime in your community. Ask yourselves this question: should we take a law enforcement or criminal justice approach to solve the gang problem?

Possible Essay Questions from Youth Gangs in American Society

1. What the main forms or types of gangs? What are supergangs?
   Describe briefly each of the supergangs.
2. Is there a distinct gang subculture? Why or why not?
3. What are the specific forms of criminal activities engaged in by gangs?
4. Write an essay on each of the following theories bring out how each theory will explain the existence of gangs in society: labeling, social learning, social control, strain theory; cultural deviance theories, differential association theory, and Marxist theory.
5. What are the forms of community gang prevention and intervention techniques and how effective are some of these techniques in stamping out gang activities?