



Encyclopedia of Gangs

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Encyclopedia of Gangs From Greenwood

In light of Los Angeles' gang state of emergency, ethnic and minority gangs are arguably more high profile now than at any other time in our history. News media typically focus on the crime and violence associated with gangs, but not much else. This encyclopedia seeks to illuminate the world of gangs, including gang formations, routine gang activities, aberrations and current developments. One hundred essay entries related to gangs in the United States and worldwide provide a diffuse overview of the gang phenomenon. Each entry defines and explains the term, provides an historical overview, and explains its significance today. As the following entries demonstrate, gangs are part of the fabric of American society. They are not only in our communities but also our schools and other social institutions. Understanding the world of gangs is therefore needed to understand American society.

Entries include: Bikers, Bloods, Cholas, Crips, gang mythology, gang warfare, graffiti, Hell's Angels, Hong Kong Triads, Latin Kings, law enforcement, occultic gangs, mafia, media, prison gangs, rites, Skinheads, Streetgang Terrorism Omnibus Prevention Act, tattoos, trafficking, Wanna-bes, *West Side Story*, Witness Protection programs, and youth gangs.

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Editorial Review

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In 1927 the first book on gang life, Frederic Thrasher's *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago*, was published. Only in the last 20 years, as gangs have spread from the inner cities to the suburbs and beyond, has the study of gangs become more than just a specialization in sociology and criminology. For this new encyclopedia, two editors and approximately 60 other contributors have written 82 signed entries exploring gangs and public policies and programs designed to deal in a positive manner with the problem of gangs. The alphabetical entries range from one-half page (Non-racist skinheads) to 12 pages (Mexican gangs). Words in bold type indicate a separate entry in the encyclopedia. A list of references and suggested readings at the end of each entry leads the reader to more in-depth works. The preface and introduction set the stage for the detailed overview of gangs that follows. An index completes the volume. The introduction highlights four areas that are covered in the encyclopedia: gang theory, gang practices, gang types, and gang expansion. Examples of entries on gang theory are Differential association theory and Subcultural theories of gangs. Gang practices include such topics as Gang clothing, Gang graffiti, and Gang symbols. Gang types include Gangs in U.S. schools and Gangs in prisons; ethnic gangs (e.g., The Black Hand and Jewish gangs and gangsters); and gender gangs (e.g., The Latin Queens). Gang expansion is covered in such entries as Australian youth gangs and Transnational gangs. A list of entries and a guide to related topics precede the alphabetical entries. This first encyclopedia on the subject of gangs definitely delivers what the editors intended: an orientation to the subject, a stimulation of curiosity, and guidance for further investigation of the subject by the reader. Recommended for academic and large public libraries. --Kaye Talley

Review

"Billed as the first encyclopedia of gangs in the United States, this volume provides an extensive over view of the great variety of gangs in American society and selected other countries (e.g., Australia, Brazil, France, Germany, Russia, South Africa, and Spain), and the various public programs and policies that have been developed to ameliorate their negative impacts. . . . This encyclopedia will be useful for college and university libraries, or other settings where readers desire further understanding of this complex topic. Recommended. Lower-level undergraduates through professionals/practitioners." - **Choice**

"The first encyclopedia on the subject of gangs definitely delivers what the editors intended: an orientation to the subject, a stimulation of curiosity, and guidance for further investigation of the subject by the reader. Recommended for academic and large public libraries." - **Booklist**

"*The Encyclopedia of Gangs* provides timely and compelling information on a topic that has gained a great deal of attention both in institutions of higher education and mainstream media outlets...recommended for novice researchers...*The Encyclopedia of Gangs* offers a nice starting point for the study of a wide range of gang topics and would make a fine addition to most library collections." - **ARBA**

"The Greenwood press Encyclopedia of Gangs is highly recommended. The authors have provided excellent context and academic background for what is becoming an increasingly multifaceted and prevalent subject matter. . . . This book will find a strong audience in sociology, cultural, justice, civil liberty and criminology fields. It is particularly readable and offers a nice balance between depth of subject matter and 'continued investigation'. Public, special and academic libraries should give strong consideration to this item, particularly as there is a dearth of resources in the subject area." - **Reference Reviews**

About the Author

Louis Kontos is Associate Professor of Sociology at Long Island University and is the co-editor of *Gangs*

and Society: Alternative Perspectives (2003).

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