

Social problems and issues
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Session three: Youth gangs

Reflect upon the video and the interview and write what you think about the following. There are no minimum words.

Are youth gangs really a social problem? Or is it a moral panic?

- Students ought to be able to state that the youth gang member interviewed was sceptical about the construction of youth gangs by the media and public debate.
 - Students ought to be able to exhibit some awareness that there is no single definition of a youth gang, and that individuals who might be associated with a youth gang might be more or less strong in their allegiance to it.
 - Furthermore students might express a view that whilst individuals might self-identify with a youth gang if they commit a crime this does not necessarily make it a 'gang crime'.
 - Students who are extending themselves might express some reasons why there is a moral panic about youth gangs, even if the social research points to a very unclear picture. This might be because the police need recourses, or government an easy policy area to target which will gain public approval.
 - Any reflective work on why young people are often labelled or categorised in this way would be a very good thoughtful piece of work.
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Further reading

Chapter 9, 'Social Problems in the UK: An Introduction' by Stuart Isaacs, David Blundell, Anne Foley, Norman Ginsburg, Brian McDonough, Dan Silverstone, Tara Young
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ISBN 9780415719995