Preface

THE GLOBALIZED GANG

Gangs are no longer solely associated with run-down inner-city American cities but are now effectively a worldwide phenomenon with activities stretching from street corner drug deals to regional, or even countrywide, violence which can threaten the existence and survival of the political state. As renowned gang scholar John Hagedorn (2008) has so clearly set out, gangs find their genesis in poverty, immigration, urbanisation and weakened states. Whilst globalisation itself does not cause gangs, it reproduces the conditions which allow gangs to generate and then thrive. These global conditions of structural unemployment, dis-investment, socio-political marginalisation, find their expression in a concentration of disadvantage and high-crime neighbourhoods (Pitts, 2008). Familiar to us as projects, estates, banlieus, slums, favelas, ghettos, barrios, townships, shantytowns these communities then find themselves further excluded and ultimately discredited and abandoned by the State. The discredited populations become stigmatised (Baum, 1996) and subject to racism and ethnic oppression which exacerbates and inflames marginalization and hopelessness (van Gemert, Peterson, & Lien, 2008; Vigil, 2002).

Diego Vigil says that the youth of such communities know that they live in neighborhoods which are ‘physically inferior’ and needy and this generates a sense of being social outcasts, ‘a psychological state of bitterness and resentment often becomes another burden’ (Hazan & Rogers, 2014, p. 54).

This, in conjunction with the neo-liberal restructuring of world economies, generates the conditions which present a bleak outlook: a Planet of Slums (Davis, 2006) increasingly populated by urban outcasts (Wacquant, 2008) which in turn generates a World of Gangs (Hagedorn, 2008). Such phenomena are increasingly reported and recognised all over the world. These features of globalization and convergent evolution were recognized as two of several factors helping to generate gangs in the recent edited collection, Global Gangs by Hazan and Rogers (2014). In his chapter on the migratory origins of Chicano gangs in Los Angeles, Diego Vigil (2002, p. 49) identifies a further critical factor in the development of gangs - the continuous migration and ‘adaptation and adjustment to urban society’, which is passed down as ‘inter-generational marginalisation’. For Vigil, this issue, best expressed as ‘multiple marginality’ (Vigil, 2007) underlies the creation of street gangs, especially when co-joined with high impact issues which are socio-economic, social-cultural, psychological, and ecological. As he points out, at the very least, multiple marginality reduces the effectiveness of family, school and law enforcement for young people. As such the mechanisms of social control are eroded, diluted or even absent, it seems inevitable that many young people join the ‘pool of availability’ which then leads many to affiliate to urban street gangs.
Within these discredited communities there inevitably is a lessening of social control and increasingly 'law enforcement disconnects from low-income communities’ (Vigil in Hazan & Rogers, 2014, p. 50). In such ways street socialization becomes the central focus and orientation of youth offering both the answers and outcomes they seek. This is best witnessed through the global appeal and expansion of Hip Hop as a shared global culture, which itself has become an immersive cultural experience for many street oriented young people. For some it has moved beyond a poetic cultural reflection of lived experience and instead becomes a credo or template for how to experience life.

John Hagedorn argues that within these forms of social exclusion it becomes a goal to create ‘identities to protect their personality and community’ (Hagedorn, 2008, p. 60). In this way Hip Hop both articulates this world and provides a counterbalance to what is otherwise a world of ultra-violence, misogyny and nihilism, which has a global appeal to the youth caught up in this expanding net. It offers a cultural response which articulates stories of survival offering life lessons to those who recognise themselves and their predicament.

A further issue of globalized expansion of street gangs, and one which might be a cause for serious concern, is the geographical spread of gangs through transplantation, which has given rise to the ‘transnational gang’. This form of gang has largely evolved from migratory movements of people from Central America to the USA and then notably through the subsequent attempts to reverse this via an extensive programme of deportations. Consequently, gang and prison hierarchies established, formalised and codified in the mega-penitentiaries of the USA, were frequently replicated and then transplanted back to Central American states. This has resulted in increased gang activity and violence in the original domestic communities. These transplanted gangs were then well placed to link up with the emergent narco-gangs and cartels from Mexico and Columbia. Such issues now present a considerable and growing threat to the political stability of several Latin American states. The question for all of us is how are such issues now to be addressed?

The key challenge for the future is to address the depth of alienation of some marginalised communities and the consequent potential for gangs to institutionalise. Considering this phenomena, Hagedorn warns of ‘institutionalised gangs and other armed young men [that] have become permanent fixtures in many ghettos, barrios and favelas across the globe are an ever present option for marginalized youth. Gangs are unmistakeable signs that all is not well and that millions of people are being left out of the marvels of a globalised economy’ (Hagedorn, 2008, p. xxiv).

If true, then gangs can be viewed as simply logical conclusions to the need to survive and adapt to these changing social and global conditions. Where conditions of marginalisation, poverty and deprivation persist, urban street gangs will thrive whether it be in local housing neighborhoods, prison, secondary schools, in India, Kenya, France, Ukraine, New Zealand, Mexico or the USA. Here neglected populations will find both protection and opportunity for social and economic advancement in these alternative social institutions. Increasingly this search for protection and social advancement is inter-generational with the struggle and also the various adopted techniques for survival handed down from one generation to the next. Gangs are now increasingly embedded in these communities and their predicament is often made worse by grinding poverty and racism. As Klein (1971) and Vigil (1998) note, Mexican gangs have operated in Los Angeles since the 1940s and there local youths have to engage with what are now both 2nd and 3rd generation gangs. For this reason, Hagedorn describes gangs as institutionalised ‘living organisms’. I would argue they are also adaptive, evolving and regenerative. The result of which means - gangs are here to stay!
A NEW RESEARCH AGENDA?

The concept of urban street gangs as a logical adaptation to local, and global, conditions is not universally acknowledged, but does seem to be gathering ground.

Sudhir Venkatesh also suggests that, ‘gangs are a logical and inevitable expression of local social structure’ (Hazan & Rogers, 2008, p. 281) and more recently has posed an interesting question which jumps to the heart of a new approach in gang scholarship - why shouldn’t gangs exist? (Hazan & Rogers, 2014).

This query echoes recent developments in gang scholarship in the UK (Pitts, 2008; Densley, 2013; Deuchar, 2009; Harding, 2014) which similarly argue that gangs are a logical development of the local expression of social-structural inequities (though each with a different cultural flavour and situational context). These arguments are advanced through new research which advocates analysis of the social field, (Bourdieu, 1985). Thus future research should perhaps consider how the localised gang context is first generated and then how this social field interacts with the structural factors which bring them about through poverty. This analytical form might then allow for issues of local, or regional, variation and diversity to be explored in greater depth.

The majority of gang studies, whether in the US, Europe or beyond, often remains a highly fragmented and disparate discipline. In places it is overly positivist in its approach. Almost certainly it fails to effectively engage with other disciplines which impact upon it including macro issues such as geography, economics, transport, migration patterns, or more localised issues such as child safeguarding, child sexual exploitation, missing children, etc. On a brighter note, prison studies and mental health issues have more recently begun to intrude into these debates generating fresh perspectives, though they too often remain thematically silo’d.

The advent and impact of social media has similarly generated fresh developments, both within gang life, and within gang studies in the form of social network analysis. It is likely that such new analytical developments will prove influential and insightful. Other new developments in gang research are now considering aspects of gang embeddedness and depth of engagement in gangs and importantly how this relates to policy development for models of desistance. These newly emerging issues are awaited with keen interest and they may permit gang studies to move in new directions; whilst perhaps side-stepping some of the more intransigent and thorny issues, yet to be fully resolved.

Gang studies have, in places, been somewhat hindered by definitional challenges and at times this has dogged the development of international perspectives on street gangs across the globe. For some, the term gang should only ever appear as ‘gang’. The term often then evokes colourful imagery, covering an all too expansive spectrum ranging from local schoolyard groups to street corner youths, via neighbourhood street gangs, to organized crime syndicates and narco–cartels. Despite globalisation and the global proliferation of such groups, a shared global typology and definition remains elusive.

Whilst the study of youth delinquency in the United Kingdom has a rich sociological background of inquiry, studies into urban street gangs are on the whole, much more recent. Here definitional concerns have undoubtedly hindered scholarly inquiry, as has a reluctance, if not an outright denial by some academics, to believe that street based youth groups, or ‘gangs’, even exist. This has created, in some localities, an impediment to local recognition, research and policy development.

I would argue that part of this problem relates to people’s point of entry into the gangs debate and its discussions. This then serves to influence their subsequent perspective.
Many people only experience or learn about gangs via negative and alarmist media – or through global gang imagery via manipulated portrayals of street gangs in Hollywood movies. Such cultural or mediated imagery portray strong cultural representations of their subject such as the Bloods and Crips or the Maras and pandillas. These accounts are highly context specific but nevertheless, often widely reported. There can be few scholars or communities who remain unfamiliar with the advance of narco-cartels or the deadly impact of street gangs in Chicago – a city now pejoratively renamed Chi-Raq by filmmaker Spike Lee. This endonym can be heard by some Chicago residents who see a resemblance in high local death rates and endemic violence which for many equates to other recent war zones.

This constructed symbolism becomes highly recognizable and symbolic of gang life. As a result of this it is usually the Bloods or Crips, or the violent drug gangs of Rio’s favelas, which are immediately conjured up by the public whenever the topic of ‘gangs’ is raised. The strong symbolism of gang colours, masking, gang signs, tattoos and prison segregation creates an instant default image of the ‘gang’ and the ‘gangster’ in the public mind. It becomes easy to situate this culturally and thus deny their existence in your own locality if your own local gangs are clearly nothing like them.

This imagined reality then provides ample opportunity for those unfamiliar with gangs to simply overlook the home-grown street gangs on their doorstep. Emerging from local neighborhood concentrations of poverty and deprivation these localised street gangs may be less colourful, less obvious or less violent than the Hollywood portrayals of the Gangs of Compton, but they may nonetheless be destructive, controlling and dangerous. In this way localised home-grown gangs can be dismissed as not the real thing.

Thus when people in England are asked do gangs exist in the UK many refer to these globally mediated cultural representations by default and then claim such issues do not exist in the UK. Domestic representations of local street gangs can be more difficult to recognise, identify or even, in the case local politicians, to accept. It requires undertaking localised research, keeping your nose to the ground and working with local practitioners and authorities to determine if gangs are in fact emerging locally; to identify how they may present; to understand how they are organised or to determine which criminal activates they might be actively involved in.

Whilst this contention was prevalent, even predominant for the first few years of the century in the UK, recent empirical work by Pitts (2008), Deuchar (2009), and Firmen (2010), and ethnographic work by Densley (2013) and Harding (2014) have successfully laid such divisive views to rest by clarifying and evidencing the increasingly violent behavioural world of urban street gang-affiliated youth in the UK. Similar debates are underway across Europe, notably in France, but also in Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

If this book teaches us anything, it is that gangs come in many shapes and sizes with many different forms of behaviour, expression and violence and we should, both as academics and the public, be accepting of this diversity. Perhaps to overcome this we need effective and accurate localised descriptions of street-oriented gangs rather than continue to search for a globally accepted definition.

THE BOOK

The original intention of the book was to consider youth gang behaviour in relation to weapons and the psychological functions served by these weapons and indeed the initial call for contributions reflected this objective. This call however only generated a limited number of responses and thus a slightly wider brief was determined for the publication. This is suggestive of two factors: firstly, the chapters on gang
weaponisation came only from the Americas, indicative perhaps of the centrality of firearms in the USA, but also that gang scholarship there is sufficiently advanced that scholars are able to isolate and focus on this detailed topic.

Secondly the chapters from other global regions were broader and more generalised in their approach to gangs or the topic aired, focusing more perhaps on neighbourhood context, communities and issues of cultural change, immigration and different forms of violence within their localised contexts. This reflects the likelihood that gang scholarship outside north America is still developing with the arguments articulated being broader and not yet focussed on specific details such as weaponisation. It was felt therefore that it is important to give room to these different broader perspectives and to only consider the issues of weapons as part of a broader grouping of chapters. This decision proved a useful way forward in terms of grouping the book as it generated some new thinking as well as new chapters. Reading across the submitted works, clearly some chapters provided detailed specifics on violence and behavioural dynamics of street gangs. Others, by contrast, articulated these broader themes of immigration, incarceration, poverty, ethnicity and social deprivation as the dominant discursive agenda for that region.

Interestingly this permits the confluence of two different types of chapter in the book: those geared towards weapon use within an established gang context, and those articulating emerging trends or changing gang dynamics. This confluence in turn highlights both the similarities and differences of urban street gangs in different socio-economic and socio-cultural contexts across the globe.

In this way then this book generates a particular perspective and provides a platform for the reader to consider, through detailed discussion and presentation, both the localised and globalised nature of gangs and how they present in various world regions. Setting the chapters side by side in a global context best illustrates the commonalities of experience of gang-affiliated youth as well as the challenges faced in addressing this complex issue.

In reading the book as a whole it is compelling how similar conditions of poverty, racial inequality, marginalisation and immigration co-exist in neighbourhoods throughout the developed and the developing world. That regardless of the continent, these conditions find expression in localised neighbourhood contexts which are remarkably similar in that they become the well-spring of emergent local street gangs. The type of gang, how it presents and its relation to the community or to the local policing authorities might differ significantly; however, the core issues remain the same.

Often it is how these globalised experiences of the urbanised poor find their expression in localised community contexts which are the most enlightening. Examination of this process can lead scholars to consider the cultural diversification of gangs and the unique, and shared, forms of cultural and violent expression. Whilst this appreciation of globalised influences marks a relatively new perspective on gang scholarship, the focus on the local is a long-standing aspect of gang studies, i.e. the work of the Chicago School of Sociology rightly identified community and neighbourhood context as critical in developing an understanding of delinquency and social control.

As gang studies increasingly becomes an international discipline, these localised neighbourhood contexts can sometimes be overlooked in pursuit of broader globalised themes. It is therefore an aim of this book that both global and localised themes are juxtaposed. In this context, the term Global references not only the proliferation and geo-spread of street gangs around the globe, but the global nature of poverty, deprivation and marginalisation as a prolific element of our urbanised environments.

The essays collated in the book also demonstrate that gangs present in many different forms. Gang research can often focus on single issues, or upon single groups situated within their own regional context. Thus comparative analysis in gang studies is often very difficult. For example, researchers comparing US
and UK gangs often claim that domestic or situated features dilute the applicability of any comparisons. Whilst key issues might be context specific, there may nonetheless be commonalities worth exploring. In a similar way the global practices of the urban street are not fully explored. Hazan and Rogers suggest a failure to undertake such comparative analysis is a failing, or at least a limitation, in our understandings of gangs. However, comparative analysis quickly stumbles at the door of definitional problems. Hazan and Rogers (2014) argue caution is required with any international comparisons, noting that ‘variability is one of the major challenges to developing shared definitions’ (p. 5). It is important therefore to avoid making assumptions.

Furthermore, it is important that any comparative analysis seeks to identify differences not only in context but in presentation of gangs and group offending. This is important to help us develop more nuanced understandings of how gangs present, form, dissolve or transmogrify. Only then can we begin to map, chart, and explain aspects of commonalities, globalisation and the shared practice.

In consideration of these points we follow work by eminent scholars in this field. Decker and Pyrooz (2010) previously examined the prevalence of gangs internationally and found them located in many urbanised centres of population across the globe. Levels of violence varied however depending upon access to and use of, firearms.

Such findings have been supported by international comparative work including that of Gatti et al. (2005, 2011). The conclusions of a proliferation of urban street gangs across the globe is more specifically supported and revealed in an increasing number of country or region specific studies which offer insight in localised and neighbourhood contexts. For example, the work of Thale and Falkenburger (2006), Juttersonke, Muggah, and Rogers (2009), and Papachristos (2005, 2009) considering gangs in Latin America; the work of Jose Cruz (2007, 2010) and the central American maras; the work of Rob White in considering youth gangs in Australia (2013); the emergence of gang studies from Russia in the work of Salagaev et al. (2005); and a developing picture of gangs in China (Zhang et al., 1997, 2008; Pyrooz & Decker, 2012; Broadhurst & Wa, 2009). Whilst gang scholarship in Africa and India is still in its infancy (with the exception of the growing body of work in the Republic of South Africa by Don Pinnock), indications are that this issue is increasingly of public concern and academic focus. Gangs in the European context are similarly the focus of increased research by international scholars such as Decker and Weerman (2005), Decker et al. (2009), Gatti et al. (2005), and through the work of the Eurogang Network (Esbensen & Maxson, 2012).

Our present collaborative work was conceived by Marek Palasinski and Simon Harding who sought to contribute to these debates in gang studies by grouping together a range of essays from established or emerging gang scholars across the world. The approach offered to authors was as broad as could be. No definitional criteria on gangs were set, thus allowing contextualisation and differing definitions to be offered or challenged. As such the contributions offered here range across a broad spectrum from the challenges of schools in addressing gang behaviour on their premises, to prison gangs, and street children. It considers group offending and violence by youth groups that may, or may not, always be included in the gang definition, to those who clearly fit the concept of urban street gangs.

Despite what appears as a disparate collection of essays, common trends quickly become identifiable. The essays illuminate commonalities and differences, global and local phenomena; contextual similarities and how the behavioural dynamics of gangs are shaped by global or local contexts.

This book therefore offers a global gallery of street gangs as they present and operate in multiple different ways across the globe.
ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The book is organized into 16 chapters which in turn are grouped into global continental regions, notably; North America, Latin America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Pacifica.

The first section presents a group of essays which considers gangs in North America. The first chapter by Laura Hansen and Melissa Freitag, “Come on Now, I Want to See Blood! : Choreographed Violence in Gang Initiation Rites,” considers the often violent initiation rites directed at new members or potential members of an organization noting this is not a recent phenomenon nor is it exclusive to joining street gangs or crews. This chapter explores the origins of violent initiation through history and how contemporary rites are used to “welcome” new members in youth gangs mirror other entries into exclusively male enclaves. These rituals include controlled, choreographed patterns of violent behaviour, including participants vs. voyeurs and number of blows directed at the initiate before the rite is considered to be completed. In addition to taking a historical perspective, recognized predictive risk factors for gang recruitment are listed, including those identified by Hill et al. (1999) in their Seattle study of juvenile delinquency and how it leads down the slippery slope to gang affiliation.

Chapter 2, “Baby Steps: Urban Violence, Gangs, and School Safety,” takes a different perspective on gang initiation, focusing this time on the primary school grades. It considers the challenges experienced by educators and administrators in identifying and suppressing gang activities within schools. Author Laura Hansen highlights the impotence of school systems in controlling the neighbourhood and family environments whilst striving to keep students engaged. Taking an applied approach, this chapter identifies what educators, administrators, and staff can do to identify behaviour which on the surface might simply be imitation of gang membership (e.g. throwing gang signs), but could be symptomatic of closer contact or possibly exposure to gang violence. She argues that the more school personnel can be cognizant of behaviour indicative of exposure to gangs, curriculum planning and after school programs can be effectively designed to counter delinquent influences within the community, beyond “just say no” strategies.

Chapter 3, “Gang Violence in Schools: Safety Measures and Their Effectiveness,” is also located within the school environment. Here author Sarah Daly reports on how gang-related violence in schools can have numerous negative effects on the school environment, student achievement, and perceptions of fear. Schools reporting a gang presence often report higher rates of victimization on school property. In response, many schools have focused on both physical and procedural safety measures to enhance security and prevent violence. However, attempts at maintaining order and ensuring safety often fall short in preventing violence and may actually enhance feelings of fear at schools. This presents schools with a difficult task of addressing violence with effective safety measures while also minimizing and balancing the prison-like feeling that is often the end result. This chapter aims to describe the effects of violence in schools and examine a variety of safety measures in terms of cost, effect on perceptions of fear, and effectiveness.

Chapter 4 by Tim Lauger looks at the “Reality and Myth of Weapons and Violence in Gang Life.” This chapter examines the division between myth and reality in gang life. Here the author addresses the image of the violent gang and the perception of gang members prepared to use ultra-violence. Lauger notes that the image of violent gang members is usefully embraced and used by youth on the streets to navigate their social world. He argues that in peer on peer groups, gang members often create personal and group-based myths by exaggerating their willingness and ability to use weapons and violence. This chapter offers an exploration of the boundaries between reality and fantasy or mythic representations of gang violence. Whilst weaponised violence is a reality amongst global gangs, myths about gang violence
can emerge among gang members who have ample motivation for fictionalizing both violence and the use of weapons. To better understand the development of myths, this chapter also briefly reviews the social psychological ideas of social constructionism, interpretive socialization, and identity.

The focus of Chapter 5 switches to different types of weapons potentially used by gang. Here Ronn Johnson considers “Forensic Perspectives on Youth Gang Involvement in Juvenile Fire Setting and Bomb Making Weapons (JFSB).” Taking a Forensic psychological perspective, Ronn Johnson, explores issues related to gang-affiliated youth’s use of JFSB behaviour as a weapon. This essay argues that too often, the critical analysis of JFSB is circumscribed to the act with little or no consideration of a clinical forensic weapons use motivation. In this case, successful efforts to identify and isolate the origins of such events are more contingent upon a deeper understanding of the subtle processes that explain this particular kind of weapons use by juvenile gang members.

The following chapter considers a different form of gang – that of the hate group where the weapon of choice used is frequently that of words. Chapter 6 takes a social psychological approach to understanding hate groups and how hate groups use hate as a promotional tool and as an implement of aggression. In “Sticks and Stones: When the Words of Hatred Become Weapons,” Robin Valeri and Kevin Borgeson detail how hate groups use hate speech to attract new members to their organizations and to promote their beliefs to the mainstream public. Here hate also serves as an incendiary, to fuel member’s emotions and incite them to action against their targets. This chapter offers a rich interpretative background of theories as to why and why certain groups or gangs act as hate groups and how they justify their resulting actions through a number of social psychological theories including realistic group conflict, relative deprivation, social identity theory and terror management.

Chapter 7 sees us move north to consider “Youth Gang Exit from a Canadian Perspective.” Laura Dunbar contends that the issue of desistance has received little research attention and seeks to address this gap with an overview of desistance and how it is measured. Having set out the desistance landscape she then reviews some prominent criminological perspectives to demonstrate that leaving the gang is a complex process involving the interaction of multiple factors. Several approaches to desistance are developed with different types of intervention, including some Canadian examples, discussed. Laura concludes by arguing for the development of a comprehensive strategy for youth gang exit.

The next section takes us to Latin America. In Chapter 8, Nowony, Zhao, Kaplan, Cepeda, and Valdez, examine the “Gender Dynamics of Violent Acts among Gang Affiliated Young Adult Mexican American Men.” Using the concept of hegemonic masculinity to examine the various ways that gender is performed in acts of violence they consider how tendencies for aggression and violence are central to masculine identity. Among this sub-population of street-oriented disadvantaged former gang members, there are limited options to express their masculinity. As a result engaging in personal violence becomes a means to gain social status and respect within the context of racial segregation and community disadvantage. Whilst this essay resonates across all the chapters, it enhances our understanding of the way that cultural constructions of gender influence violent acts. This in turn is important for constructing interventions for violence.

Chapter 9, “In Hand, Out of Hand: Weapons and Violence Culture in Large Latino Gangs,” interrogates the nature and function of weapons in Latino gang culture. Author, Ami Carpenter has divided the chapter into three parts. It begins by defining Latino gangs in the Americas, and classifying them into Mexican-American gangs, Mexican gangs, and Central American gangs. Despite differences in region, economic situation, generations and cultural characteristics, Carpenter draws broad similarities by focusing specifically on large, organized gangs within each of the three classifications. She then moves on to
interrogate the logics and motivations driving gangs’ use of weapons, along with the psychological and instrumental functions of weapons use for Latino gangs. The chapter’s third section is a substantial conclusion which argues for approaches to gang-violence which derive from the field of peace and conflict studies, including short-term approaches to violence reduction (gang ceasefires and truces) and longer term, ecological approaches based on the theoretical framework of community resilience.

The subsequent section moves the gang’s debate to Europe. In Chapter 10, “‘It’s a Vicious Game’: Youth Gangs, Street Violence, and Organised Crime in Modern Britain,” Dev Maitra, explores the activities and characteristics of street gangs and organised crime groups in contemporary British society. Maitra acknowledges there is scant research which specifically investigates contemporary British criminal gangs before offering findings from his qualitative research at an adult men’s prison in England. The chapter attempts to articulate the experiences of prisoners and street-offenders and illustrates the entrenched role street gangs and organised crime groups hold in certain areas of England. Here gangs are often considered viable alternatives to gainful employment and their activities are often sanctioned by their host communities. Subsequently, Maitra reports that a high level of violence is normalised within such communities, including heightened levels of weapon usage by gang members, both within and outside prison.

In a second chapter by Maitra, Chapter 11, the focus now shifts to the composition of UK prison gangs, their effects on the prison environment, and their relationships with street gangs. Titled “An Exploratory Study of Prison Gangs in Contemporary British Society,” the author conducts an ethnographic study of an adult men’s prison in England. The chapter attempts to articulate the experiences of prison gang members, as well as prisoners exposed to high levels of gang activity. The results illustrate the established role gangs play within English prisons, but also the relevance of other groups, collectives and “sets” within the penal environment. Through analysing the gathered data Maitra shows the important - but not defining - role gangs play within an English prison. Interestingly he concludes that when compared to the American prison system, gangs are far less entrenched in English prisons; this can partly be attributed to the deeper historical roots of American prison gangs, as well as their highly racialized dimensions.

The final chapter on Europe draws upon some unique research from the Ukraine. In Chapter 12, “Surviving the Streets of Makeevka: A Study of Subculture of Street Children in Ukraine,” Andrej Naterer, explores the subculture of street children in Makeevka, Ukraine. Drawing upon qualitative and quantitative data gathered during longitudinal anthropological field research he articulates their survival strategies whilst commenting upon the social structures, economic activities and substance abuse which are prevalent. Naterer also analyses the extra-, intra- and inter-group violence with an emphasis on the child’s situational interpretation and adoption of the code of the street through subsequent code/identity switching and subcultural reactions.

The next section focusses on Africa with a chapter by Don Pinnock investigating the underlying causes of gang formation in Cape Town. Chapter 13, “Cape Town Gangs: The Other Side of Paradise,” begins by setting the unique context and historical underpinnings in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. Pinnock then explores various aspects of violent gang life on the city including firearms, marginalized masculinity, the impact of toxic stress and substance abuse on prenatal development. Finally he concludes with an examination of drug usage (and the impact on epigenetic damage), and poverty on the increasingly violent youth culture in the city’s low-income, high-risk areas.

In the section on Asia, Simon Harding considers youth offending and youth justice in contemporary China which has witnessed considerable changes over the past two decades. In Chapter 14, “From ‘Little Flowers of the Motherland’ into ‘Carnivorous Plants’: The Changing Face of Youth Gang Crime in Con-
temporary China,” he considers how youth offending is broadly similar to that in the West. However, he argues recent rapid economic transformation has initiated rapid changes in the nature and presentation of youth offending. Once famous for its low rates of crime and juvenile delinquency, the apparent rapid rise in Chinese juvenile delinquency has left the media ‘wondering what transformed these little “flowers of the motherland” into “carnivorous plants”’. He charts changes from 1983 to the contemporary and highly publicised anti-crime crackdowns in Chongqing. Despite challenges of obtaining Chinese data, a picture is now emerging of changing influence of triads and altering relationships between organised crime and street gangs. The chapter offers a typology of Asian gangs before considering how street gangs appear to be on the rise in China as a result of large scale immigration from rural China to the rapidly urbanised mega cities.

The final section of the book is Pacifica. Here two chapters focus on group offending in both Australia and New Zealand. In Chapter 15, “Youth Gangs and Youth Violence in Australia,” Rob White provides an overview of issues pertaining to youth gangs and youth violence in Australia. The first part features the voices of young people from around Australia describing their experiences of youth gang violence. The second part of the chapter provides a broad overview of biological, psychological and social factors that together shape the propensities for young people, and young men in particular, to join gangs and to engage in youth violence. The final part of the chapter provides more detailed exposition of two gang members, ‘Mohammad’ and ‘Tan’, and the everyday complexities of their lives. The chapter concludes by noting that the gang does not have to be seen as an overwhelming influence in the lives of young people, and that their activities and behaviours are more diverse, and include positive elements, than generally given credit in mainstream youth gangs research and analysis.

The last essay presented in Chapter 16 by Dr. Jarrod Gilbert, is titled “The Reorganisation of Gangs in New Zealand.” This chapter considers the significant changes among the gangs of New Zealand since the turn of the century. Facing a changing cultural climate in which rebellious young people see membership in traditional ‘patch’-wearing gangs as less desirable, New Zealand’s established gangs have become starved for recruits. Rather than precipitating a straightforward decline in the country’s gang scene, however, Gilbert argues that we are seeing a reorganisation of the gangs. This chapter examines the problems facing the outlaw motorcycle clubs and the ‘patched’ street gangs, and the numerous and complex nature of the issues facing these groups. It also explores the rise of LA-style street gangs, the influence of drug misuse and the similarities and difference that exist between them and New Zealand’s traditional gangs.

REFERENCES


Preface


