

# GANGS

**Dr. Mark James**

**M.A.James@kent.ac.uk**

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University of  
**Kent**

Centre of Research  
and Education in  
Forensic Psychology  
(CORE-FP)

# THE EUROGANG DEFINITION

A street gang (or troublesome youth group corresponding to a street gang elsewhere) is any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity.



# GANG RESEARCH AT KENT



**Dr Jane Wood:**

- Prison gang activity;
- Street gang formation & activity;
- Mental health & membership.



**Dr Eduardo Vasquez:**

- Inter-gang relations & violence;
- Alcohol & inter-group anxiety;
- Displaced aggression.



**Dr Emma Alleyne:**

- Socio-cognitive processing in gang members;
- Girl gang members;
- Sexual exploitation in gangs.



**Dr Mark James:**

- Core vs. fringe membership;
- Intervention programmes & their effectiveness;
- Public perception of gangs.

# Gang Involvement: Social and Environmental Factors

Emma Alleyne<sup>1</sup> and Jane L. Wood<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

This study examines some of the factors that differentiate gang-involved youth (general youth) and nongang youth. Gang-involved youth were more likely to have individual delinquency and non-compliance. Using structural equation modeling, the article found that parental involvement and commitment to school had indirect effects on findings are discussed as they relate to which protective and risk factors

## Keywords

## Denying humanness to victims: How gang members justify violent behavior

Emma Alleyne,<sup>1</sup> Isabel Fernandes,<sup>1</sup> and Eli

## Abstract

The high prevalence of violent offending amongst gang members is well documented in the literature. Yet the underlying psychological mechanisms of violence remain unclear. One hundred eighty-nine young men in London, UK, known for their gang activity. We found that these young men, described the groups they belong to as having initiation rituals, and special clothing. Gang members use language to engage in violent behavior and endorse moral disengagement (e.g., euphemistic language, advantageous comparison, displacement, and dehumanization). Finally, we found that dehumanization mediated the relationship between gang membership and violent behavior. These findings have implications for identifying psychological mechanisms of violence.

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Psychology, Crime & Law, December 2006; 12(6): 605-617

## Gang activity in English prisons: The prisoners' perspective

JANE WOOD

Department of Psychology, Keynes College, University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent, United Kingdom

Aggression and Violent Behavior 15 (2010) 100-111



## Aggression and Violent Behavior

## Street gang theory and research: Where are we now and where are we going?

Jane Wood\*, Emma Alleyne  
University of Kent, United Kingdom

### ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

### ABSTRACT

Recent years have seen an increase of attention paid to street gangs. This article reviews the effects of gang membership on fundamental issues of criminology. Theoretical frameworks on gangs is still limited. A disciplinary approach to gangs is an important body of work. The article discusses the understanding of gangs and their

## Group Processes & Intergroup Relations

Group Processes & Intergroup Relations  
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## Rumination and the Displacement of Aggression in United Kingdom Gang-Affiliated Youth

Eduardo A. Vasquez\*, Sarah Osman, and Jane L. Wood

School of Psychology, Keynes College, University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent, United Kingdom

The concept of gang aggression oftentimes elicits images of brutality. It can have various motivations and causal factors, and it can be examined in terms of the relationship among gang affiliation, ruminative thought, and displaced aggression. Our analyses found a three-way interaction between ruminative thought and affiliation. Those who were high in affiliation and rumination had the greatest tendency to engage in displaced aggression. Furthermore, regression analyses showed that even after controlling for ruminative thought, affiliation remained a significant predictor of displaced aggression. The implications for conducting future research in this area were discussed. Aggr. Behav.

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## Prisoners' gang-related activity: the importance of bullying and moral disengagement

Jane Wood\*, Alice Moir and

Department of Psychology, Keynes College, University of Kent, Canterbury CT2 7NI

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Gang-related activity can have a significant impact on prisoners in the UK, yet little is known about the factors that influence this activity. In this study, 141 adult male prisoners' gang membership was examined in relation to their bullying behaviour and use of moral disengagement. Findings showed that prisoners most involved in gang-related activity spent a longer total time in the prison system, had higher levels of moral disengagement. Findings also showed that moral disengagement partially mediates the relationship between bullying and gang membership. Implications for treatment programmes and the importance of addressing moral disengagement are discussed.

Keywords: moral disengagement; prison gangs; bullying

## Gang Involvement: Psychological and Behavioral Characteristics of Gang Members, Peripheral Youth and Nongang Youth

Emma Alleyne\* and Jane L. Wood

## Understanding gang membership: The significance of group processes

Psychology, Crime & Law  
Vol. 15, No. 6, July 2009, 569-581

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Keywords: rumination; displaced aggression; gang affiliation

## Any of Them Will Do: In-Group Identification, Out-Group Entitativity, and Gang Membership as Predictors of Group-Based Retribution

Eduardo A. Vasquez\*, Lisa Wenborne, Madeline Peers, Emma Alleyne, and Kirsty Ellis

School of Psychology, University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent, United Kingdom

## Group Processes & Intergroup Relations

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the degree of identification with an in-group and perceptions of out-group entitativity, the perception of group-based retribution, and the perception of group-based retribution. The link between group-based retribution and group-based retribution.

Psychology, Crime & Law, 2013  
Vol. 19, No. 7, 611-627, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2012.658050>

## Gang-related crime: the social, psychological and behavioral correlates

Emma Alleyne\* and Jane L. Wood

School of Psychology, Keynes College, University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent, UK

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and psychological factors associated with gang-related crime. This study examined the social, psychological, and behavioral correlates of gang-related crime. Data were collected via individual interviews with 188 young offenders held in a Young Offenders Institution in the United Kingdom. Results showed that psychological factors such as the value of social status, a social dominance orientation, and anti-authority attitudes were important in predicting young offenders' involvement in prison gang activity. Further important predictors included preimprisonment events such as levels of threat, levels of individual delinquency, and levels of involvement in group crime. Longer current sentences also predicted involvement in prison gang activity. However, street gang membership was not an important predictor of involvement in prison gang activity. These findings have implications for identifying prisoners involved in prison gang activity and for considering the role of psychological factors and group processes in gang research.

Keywords: predicting prison gangs, street gangs, psychology

Law and Human Behavior  
2014, Vol. 38, No. 3, 203-211

## Predicting Involvement in Prison Gang Activity: Street Gang Membership, Social and Psychological Factors

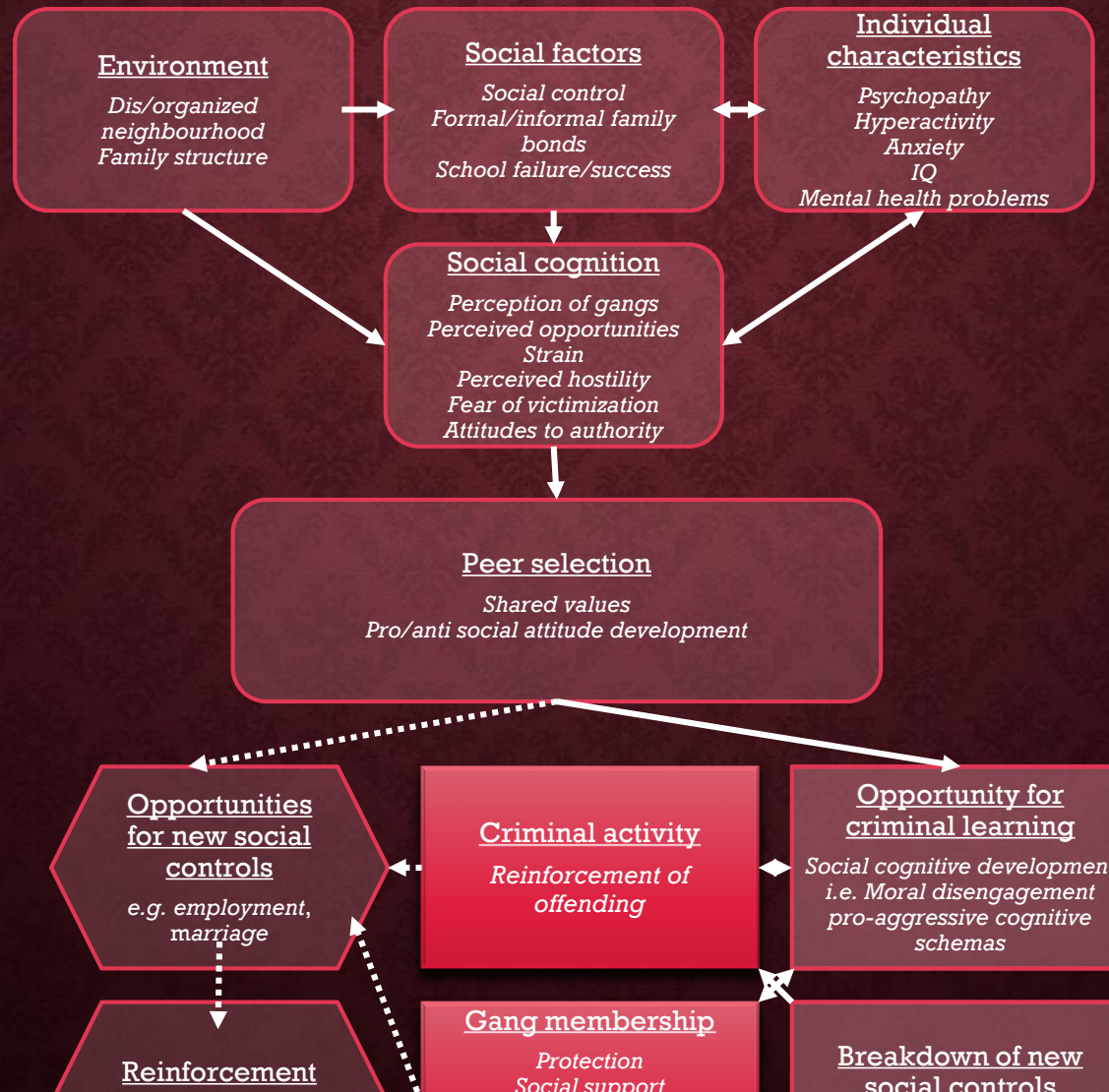
Jane L. Wood, Emma Alleyne, Katarina Mozova, and Mark James

University of Kent

The aim of this study was to examine whether street gang membership, psychological factors, and social factors such as preprison experiences could predict young offenders' involvement in prison gang activity. Data were collected via individual interviews with 188 young offenders held in a Young Offenders Institution in the United Kingdom. Results showed that psychological factors such as the value of social status, a social dominance orientation, and anti-authority attitudes were important in predicting young offenders' involvement in prison gang activity. Further important predictors included preimprisonment events such as levels of threat, levels of individual delinquency, and levels of involvement in group crime. Longer current sentences also predicted involvement in prison gang activity. However, street gang membership was not an important predictor of involvement in prison gang activity. These findings have implications for identifying prisoners involved in prison gang activity and for considering the role of psychological factors and group processes in gang research.

Keywords: predicting prison gangs, street gangs, psychology

# EXPLAINING THE GANG – UNIFIED THEORY



(adapted from Wood & Alleyne, 2010)

# EXPLAINING THE CORE-FRINGE DISTINCTION

## Principle factor – Variable Commitment:

- Cores reject pro-social peers and commit to anti-social peers;
- Fringes maintain fluid associations between pro- and anti-social peers.

## Important underlying factors – Fringes...

- ... describe relatively more unstable backgrounds;
  - ... show relatively deeper emotional sensitivity and expression;
  - ... possess relatively stronger commitment to traditional values, goals, and social controls;
  - ... externalise control and react more negatively to disappointment;
  - ... display different motivations for forming social bonds;
- ... than do Cores.



# IN THE REAL WORLD...

## Mental Health issues among gang members:

- Antecedent or consequence of membership?
- Working with clinical psychologists to improve support and rehabilitation for former members.

## Margate Task Force:

- Working with Kent Police to understand recent, local trends in gang activity.

## Gang risk assessment (2017):

- Are anti-gang programmes effective?
- Working with YOIs, YOTs, and gang charities to assess, streamline, and boost support provision.

