GANG MEMBERSHIP: BEHAVIOURAL, SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL

CHARACTERISTICS

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By

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Noreen and Gerald, without whom this never would have been possible. Thank you for your love and support, and thank you for always believing in me.

Love always,

Em

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It goes without saying that my family and friends have been indelible crutches throughout my life, and especially during the course of this PhD. The amount of love and support I receive astonishes me every day and has inspired me to keep striving towards my goals. Thank you!

Lastly, it is impossible to list everyone who has helped me along the way, so I offer my regards and blessings to all of those who supported me in any respect during the completion of this thesis.

ABSTRACT

The existence of gangs can no longer be regarded as an urban myth in Europe (Klein, Kerner, Maxson, & Weitekamp, 2001). There is a growth in literature on the presence of gangs in metropolitan areas across the UK (e.g. Bradshaw, 2005; Everard, 2006; Shropshire & McFarquhar, 2002). To date, gang research has been primarily criminological and sociological in nature (Bennett & Holloway, 2004; Wood & Alleyne, 2010), and since criminological theories pay scant attention to the social psychological processes involved in joining a gang (Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith, & Tobin, 2003) there is a real need to understand more about the *psychology* of gang involvement (Wood & Alleyne, 2010). To that end, this thesis sheds light on the psychological processes that underpin gang membership and gang-related crime. While the purpose of this thesis, is not to test theory, Thornberry and colleagues' (2003) Interactional Theory was used to improve understanding and make educated inferences about the relationships between gang involvement and its correlates. Four studies were conducted concurrently. The first study laid the foundation by illustrating the social context in which gangs manifest and sustain themselves. Study two showed how attitudes, perceptions, and cognitions interact with varying levels of gang involvement providing insight into the development of gang members. Study three demonstrated how psychological processes work hand-in-hand with social factors to reinforce the gang culture. Finally, study four addressed the behavioural outcome of gang involvement, gang-related crime, by examining its predictors and correlates. These four studies are discussed in the context of theory development, and prevention/intervention programmes and policy. In summary, the findings of this thesis expand on the current literature by uniquely

examining the role of psychological processes that elaborate on why young people become involved in gangs. These findings also highlight areas for future research.

CHAPTER ONE

Gangs: A review of literature

The body of literature focused on gangs is limited and that which exists is primarily criminological and sociological in discipline (Bennett & Holloway, 2004; Wood & Alleyne, 2010). What we do know is that the prevalence of gang involvement in the US is approximately 5% (Klein & Maxson, 2006), and in the UK, 6-8% (Bradshaw, 2005; Esbensen & Weerman, 2005). Considering the lethal outcomes stemming from gang activity (Klein & Maxson, 2006), this warrants further research attention. The main aim of this thesis is to explore the areas in which psychology can broaden our understanding of the gang phenomenon. The purpose of this chapter is to review the current literature by highlighting the main scope of gang research. Even though the majority of the literature is based on gangs in the US, there are some important implications that can be generalised and/or transferred to the UK context. Therefore, this chapter can be broken down into the following themes: definitional issues, risk factors, and gang characteristics. It is expected that these areas of literature can inform the social psychologist's approach to studying gang involvement.

1.1 What is a gang?

The definition of a gang has been the subject of much debate and discussion in academia (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993; see Spergel, 1995, ch. 2, for review; Esbensen, Winfree, He, & Taylor, 2001). Researchers have struggled to come up with a consensus in order to operationalise the term. This has made comparative and meta-analytic work extremely challenging with the varying definitions encountered in the present literature, only allowing descriptive reviews possible (Klein, 2006, see for discussion). One of the main problems is that there are several types of

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delinquent/criminal groups that young people may join. For example, Hallsworth and Young (2004) described the following types: (1) peer groups – small, sporadic and street-oriented groupings, however, illegal activity is not necessary nor integral to the group's identity; (2) street gangs – durable and street-oriented groups where illegal activity is a fundamental characteristic of the group; (3) organised crime groups – highly structured criminal organisations where criminal activity is part and parcel of a business venture. The 'street gang' characterisation reflects the groups of interest in this thesis, however, in order to encompass varying labels (e.g. street gang, youth gang, delinquent gang, etc.), the term 'gang' will be used.

Another definitional issue is that the process of defining a gang is a subjective one. For instance, the definition changes depending on who is using it, i.e., academics, policy makers, media, politicians, etc. (Spergel, 1995; Esbensen et al., 2001; Esbensen & Weerman, 2005). From an academic perspective, a clear definition is necessary because researchers currently struggle with designing an appropriate method to accurately measure one's level of gang involvement (Esbensen et al., 2001). There is what could be described as a balancing act with regard to constructing a definition that is not too broad and not too narrow in order to avoid over- and under-estimating the number of gang members in a sample (Esbensen et al., 2001; Sullivan, 2006).

Various researchers have made attempts at constructing a universal definition. The ever-evolving definition began over 80 years ago with Thrasher (1927):

"The gang is an interstitial group originally formed spontaneously, and then integrated through conflict. It is characterised by the following types of behaviour: meeting face-to-face, milling, movement through space as a unit,

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conflict, and planning. The result of this collective behaviour is the development of tradition, unreflective internal structure, esprit de corps, solidarity, morale, group awareness, and attachment to a local territory" (p. 46).

More recently, Sharp and colleagues (2004) defined gangs in their study (conducted in the UK) as: "a group of three or more that spends a lot of time in public spaces, has existed for a minimum of three months, has engaged in delinquent activities in the past 12 months, and has at least one structural feature, i.e., a name, leader, or code/rules" (p. 2). However, specifying a minimum number of members could be problematic in that it could prevent researchers from learning about the formation of gangs. That is, two young persons that are very good friends, could commit various delinquent acts around their neighbourhood and call themselves by a name. Could this lead to further members joining leading to the formation of a gang? Thrasher (1927) described a phenomenon called 'two- and three-boy relationships': "it is relations of this sort, existing before the gang develops, that serve as primary structures when the group is first formed and that shape the growth of its future organisation" (p. 224). A researcher may run the risk of under-estimating gang membership by setting such specific parameters. Also, engaging in delinquent activities could result from provocation. It might be helpful to make this distinction.

Bennett and Holloway (2004) conducted a study in England and Wales, and their approach to asking this question began with a preamble specifically defining gang membership as follows: "In some areas, there are local gangs that sometimes have names or other means of identification and cover a particular geographic area or territory" (p. 310). There would be a subsequent question asking whether the

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participant has ever been a member of such groups. However well prescribed this method may be, this study highlights two interesting areas to discuss.

First, part of the debate has focused on the criminality and delinquency of a gang. Is the definition of a gang too broad if it does not include criminality as a necessary component, or vice versa? Again, the answer to this question is dependent on who is asking. Everard (2006) reported on groups of teenagers labelled 'gangs' seen around Glasgow. However, when interviewed, the primary reason young people gave for getting together was to stay out of trouble. In some cases, young people group together simply with the reasoning: 'safety in numbers' (Yablonsky, 1959). They do not proactively engage in criminal/delinquent activities, but if provoked, they could respond in such a way as a group. For the purpose of this thesis, a component such as criminal behaviour is fundamental, as it is this group behaviour that is deemed socially unacceptable (Conklin, 1975). Also, some researchers support the premise that criminality should be considered as an essential part of gang behaviour (Howell, 1998; Klein & Maxson, 1989; 2006). However, caution must be expressed in order to avoid the criminal aspect from being over-exaggerated. Criminality is of particular interest in this thesis because this is the behaviour that has the potential for traumatic and lethal outcomes.

Second, Bennett and Holloway (2004) claimed that their definition mirrored the definition established by members of the Eurogang Network. The Eurogang Network is a group of researchers from across Europe and America which has the goal of providing a forum for gang researchers to communicate their ideas (Weerman et al., 2009). As a result of much debate and discussion, the network devised a definition to be used which operationalises the term and allows for comparisons to be made internationally. The definition is as follows: "a gang, or troublesome youth

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group, is any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of their group identity" (Klein, 2004; Esbensen & Weerman, 2005; Weerman et al., 2009). It should be noted, in the Eurogang Network's definition there is an explicit criminal element key to the group's identity, which is missing from Bennett and Holloway's (2004) definition. Unfortunately, this misrepresentation takes away from the purpose of establishing a definition with regard to the Eurogang Network's overall goal of providing universal consistency.

From a methodological perspective, the definitional debate includes determining the most accurate method to measure gang membership (Ball & Curry, 1995, for review). The most reliable yet least comparable method is self-nomination. A Canadian longitudinal study of boys aged 14, 15, and 16 years old, asked, "During the past 12 months, were you part of a group or gang that did reprehensible acts?" (Gatti, Tremblay, Vitaro, & McDuff, 2005, p. 1180). This question is a form of the self-nomination method with the defining principle of performing 'reprehensible acts'. However, in this particular instance, the word 'reprehensible' is not age-sensitive and could have led to confusion and misinterpretations.

In the US, Esbensen and colleagues (2001) conducted a study which aimed to determine the legitimacy of the self-nomination method. They simply asked their participants if they were members of a gang with the rationale of 'if it walks like a duck, talks like a duck, it is a duck'. They also asked questions regarding the participants' gang-like behaviours, and they found that self-reported gang members were more likely to show higher levels of overall delinquency and antisocial behaviours and attitudes. This does seem to be the most reliable method (Klemp-North, 2007), however, there could be some key cultural differences if tried in Europe especially regarding the distorted perceptions of the American gang (i.e. the

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stereotypical American gang). For example, a group of young people who engage in gang-like behaviour might not admit to being a gang because of the negative stigma attached to the 'American gang' and a possible mistrust of how this information might be used by researchers. Also, the simple matter of language variations for the word 'gang' could generate different interpretations (Esbensen & Weerman, 2005).

In a broader sense, there are researchers who have come up with the most basic and necessary criteria that every gang should adhere to. Hakkert and colleagues (2001) suggest that a group of young people can be labelled a delinquent group (such as a gang) if: the members themselves identify the group as a separate collective; other people identify the members as belonging to a group; and it is part of the group's acceptable behaviour to engage in anti-social or criminal endeavours. Alternatively, the Eurogang Network discusses four components that define a gang: durability, street orientation, youthfulness, and identity via illegal activity (Klein, 2006; Klein & Maxson, 2006; Weerman et al., 2009). In both cases there is a common theme with respect to the group's identity and the criminality embedded within it.

Also, the criteria above only sum up to the minimum requirements, thus, gangs have many other identifiable characteristics. However, Klein and Maxson (2006) make a valuable argument that researchers should stick to the criteria above that define the gang and refrain from using demographic characteristics or 'descriptors', e.g., ethnicity, age, gender, special clothing and argot, location, group names, crime patterns, and so on. Although a group name can contribute to a group's identity, there are cases where the groups themselves did not create the names. The police and public can create names for troublesome groups simply to identify and differentiate their group and behaviour. However, this could result in an over-

exaggeration and stigmatisation of the group problem and could result in the anti-social behaviour being reinforced (Hakkert, van Wijk, Ferweda, & Eijken, 2001).

It seems that the evolution of the gang definition has been a process of broadening the approach. As mentioned previously, Thrasher's (1927) definition included multiple criteria. Since then, the gang definition has shied away from using 'descriptors', while focusing more on 'definers'. Even a prominent researcher such as Malcolm Klein has broadened his scope, slightly. In 1971, Klein defined a gang as "any denotable adolescent group of youngsters who (a) are generally perceived as a distinct aggregation by others in their neighbourhood, (b) recognise themselves as a denotable group (almost invariably with a group name) and (c) have been involved in a sufficient number of delinquent incidents to call forth a consistent negative response from neighbourhood residents and/or enforcement agencies" (p. 13). However, more recently, along with his Eurogang colleagues, he has written that "a street gang is any durable, street-oriented youth group whose own identity includes involvement in illegal activity" (Klein, 2006, p. 129). In the latter definition, he is less concerned about the public's perception of gangs and more concerned about the durability of the gang.

Overall, there is an obvious persistence to establish a universal definition. However, Sullivan (2006) presents a compelling argument from the other side of the coin. Gang involvement, gang membership and gang activity are all attractive, media savvy topics. This attention has generated an asymmetry in the news outlets (Spergel, 1995; Sullivan, 2006) which has led to media images that glamourise gang members (Przemieniecki, 2005). Hence it is not surprising that young people look up to gang members, mimic them, and aspire to gang membership (Hughes & Short, 2005), thus creating a self-perpetuating cycle of gang membership. While the focus is on

defining the 'gang' phenomenon, Sullivan (2006) argues that researchers are distracted from the bigger, broader problem, i.e. youth violence and that they should focus on tackling youth delinquency overall and not gang crime specifically. Instead of interpreting Sullivan's (2006) inference as antithetic, this argument could provide further support for the need to include youth criminality and delinquency in the gang definition because generally, the gangs of interest to researchers and practitioners engage in those types of behaviours.

In light of all these definitional issues, one of the consequences of such discrepancies is trying to determine whether or not gangs exist in parts of the world other than America and if so, do they mirror the same characteristics? There is a tendency throughout Europe to claim that the 'American gang problem' is non-existent and instead of confronting the issue, it is ignored (Klein, 1997). This phenomenon has been labelled the 'Eurogang paradox', where authorities in European countries use the stereotype of American gangs to inform their definition of what a gang is (Klein, Kerner, Maxson, & Weitekamp, 2001). This stereotype includes a constant series of serious and often fatal criminal activities such as black-on-black crime, drive-by shootings, turf wars, and gun crime (Bennett & Holloway, 2004), a sort of 'blood in, blood out' ideology. The irony is that this phenomenon, termed the 'violent gang', is a rarity in modern day America (Klein et al., 2001), hence, a paradox. However, Hagedorn (2001) argues that American gangs to some extent do follow the stereotype and the difference between the US and Europe more or less lies on a gradient of social disorganisation. That is, the US is at a more advanced stage of social deterioration due to a higher level of poverty and unemployment, and considering the increase in globalisation, Europe will follow suit.

In addition to the 'Eurogang paradox', there seems to be a 'reality gap' between what researchers discover and what the general public knows (Takata & Zevitz, 1990). The American stereotype not only informs the police authorities' but also the general public's definition of what a gang is. This is interesting because America also has a long-standing and comprehensive background in research devoted to gang activity mirrored by no other country (Esbensen & Weerman, 2005). Therefore, this highlights an additional need to be clear about what a gang is.

In summary: "Even when older definitions have proved acceptable, new definitions often become necessary, either because of changes in the phenomenon itself or changes in the purposes for which definition is required" (Ball & Curry, 1995, p. 16). The definition of a gang is a dynamic phenomenon that has both academic and practical implications that need to be addressed but not necessarily defined. For the purpose of this thesis, the academic and methodological issues are of particular interest. From the research examined, there is support for the use of the self-nomination method with additional questions to identify the level of gang involvement when conducting a study. This allows for an analysis to be made regarding the varying perceptions of what a gang is. However, using the term 'gang' in this way may result in cross-cultural biases and misinterpretations. To conclude this matter, when designing future studies, one must weigh whether the benefit of comparative research is worth the potential cost of excluding gangs that do not fit the socially constructed definition. Researchers must always remember that "no two gangs are just alike" (Thrasher, 1927, p. 36). However, due to its growing support in the literature, the definition that will be used throughout this thesis will be: "a gang, or troublesome youth group, is any durable, street-oriented youth group whose

involvement in illegal activity is part of their group identity" (Klein, 2004; Esbensen & Weerman, 2005; Weerman et al., 2009).

1.2 Risk factors

As mentioned previously, much of what we know about gangs comes from criminological and sociological backgrounds. The findings can be categorised into five domains: the community/neighbourhood, family, school, peer influences, and individual attributes (Rizzo, 2003). This literature provides us with a better understanding of the social and environmental factors that put young people at risk of joining a gang. Klein and Maxson (2006) defined a risk factor as "any characteristic that predicts, or is associated with, gang affiliation" (p. 139). They argued that young people can be placed on a continuum where the opposing poles are risk and protection (i.e. protective factors that reduce the risk of young people joining gangs). As a result, Klein and Maxson (2006) argued that the presence or absence of factors determines risk or protection, as opposed to a different set of factors for risk and protection independent of each other. These factors are summarised below.

1.2.1 Neighbourhood characteristics

Gangs tend to thrive in socially and economically disadvantaged communities (Spergel, 1995; Rizzo, 2003; Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith, & Tobin, 2003; Hall, Thornberry, & Lizotte, 2006; Klein & Maxson, 2006). Also, gang members have been found to come from neighbourhoods with already existing gangs (Spergel, 1995; Thornberry et al., 2003; Hall et al., 2006) and high in juvenile delinquency (Hall et al., 2006), thus putting young people who reside in these 'gang neighbourhoods' at an increased risk of gang joining (Thornberry et al., 2003). Arguably, this could be the result of a lack of protective factors in disadvantaged communities (Hall et al., 2006). However, researchers have also found that

neighbourhood characteristics do not fully (and in some instances quite marginally) explain gang membership above and beyond individual, family, and peer influences (Thornberry et al., 2003).

1.2.2 Family factors

It can be said that poor community organisation weakens prosocial family influences, thus resulting in the youth's attraction to gangs and delinquency (Spergel, 1995). A lack of parental discipline (Thornberry et al., 2003) and parental supervision/monitoring (Lahey, Gordon, Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber, & Farrington, 1999; Thornberry et al., 2003; Klein & Maxson, 2006) have both been found to put young people at risk of joining a gang. Further factors such as family income (Spergel, 1995; Lahey et al., 1999; Rizzo, 2003; Chettleburgh, 2007), familial criminality (Eitle, Gunkel, & Van Gundy, 2004; Klein & Maxson, 2006) and gang-involved family members (Spergel, 1995; Klein & Maxson, 2006) provide young people with a home environment that reinforces gang-related and delinquent behaviour (Thornberry et al., 2003).

1.2.3 School factors

Little research examines the gang phenomenon within the school context however an abundance of gang research is conducted within a school setting (Lahey et al., 1999; Thornberry et al., 2003). Poor performance and low commitment in school has been linked with gang membership (Thornberry et al., 2003) and it could be argued that gang-related crime is a response to school failure and frustration (Thornberry et al., 2003). Since gangs offer youth opportunities for prestige, status, and material possession more quickly than conventional means (Knox, 1994; Hallsworth & Young, 2004) gang members see little value in what public education

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has to offer since they are already failing or being failed by the school system (Spergel, 1995; Howell & Egley, 2005).

1.2.4 Peer influences

The delinquency literature strongly supports that delinquent peers are strong predictors of delinquent behaviour (e.g. Dishion, Patterson, & Griesler, 1994). Furthermore, we know that delinquent behaviour is typically a group phenomenon (Goldstein, 2002), therefore it is not surprising that delinquent peers and pressure from these peers increase the likelihood of antisocial behaviour (e.g. the Confluence Model – Dishion et al., 1994; Monahan, Steinberg, & Cauffman, 2009) and gang membership (Lahey et al., 1999; Craig, Vitaro, Gagnon, & Tremblay, 2002; Thornberry et al., 2003; Klein & Maxson, 2006).

1.2.5 Individual factors

In the US, the average age reported of gang members is between approximately 17 and 20 years of age (Rizzo, 2003; Kakar, 2005). There appears to be a common misrepresentation that a gang consists of an overwhelmingly higher proportion of younger gang members than their older counterparts, however, even though researchers have acknowledged an increase in younger members being recruited, they also suggested that the older age group (i.e., older than 20) is growing at a significantly higher rate (Rizzo, 2003; Klein & Maxson, 1989; 2006). This implies that members who are recruited at a young age may mature within the structure of a gang and continue their involvement well into their adulthood (Spergel, 1995; Klein & Maxson, 1989; 2006). Spergel (1995) presents an interesting discussion about how the gang problem has transitioned from a youth/juvenile phenomenon to a young adult phenomenon, i.e., the youth gang has matured into an adult gang.

In the UK, Shropshire and McFarquhar (2002) claimed that the average age of gang members is falling due to the recruitment of young people as young as 9 and 10 years old. However, Stelfox (1998) reported on a large gang with an age range of 25-29 years of age and Bullock and Tilley (2002) reported that over half of all members consisted of 21-24 year olds. Overall, the research contends that the age trend in the UK does resemble the US trend, i.e. the recruitment age is overwhelmingly young but members are maturing and continuing their involvement. Also, it can be argued that the misrepresentation of the younger gang members could be attributed to the social shock attached to young people committing gang crimes. Young people who engage in gang violence imply underlying failings in the community, which speaks volumes, with the result that the public, in turn, attribute such crime to personal inadequacies (Conklin, 1975).

Traditionally, gangs were thought to have been organised for the purpose of coping with racial discrimination (Yablonsky, 1959). As a result, in the US, gangs tend to be ethnically homogenous and represent the minority population of its community (Thrasher, 1927; Klein, 1971; Klein & Maxson, 1989; Spergel, 1995). However, interestingly enough, gang conflict and/or violence occur only among groups with similar ethnic backgrounds (Klein, 1971; Spergel, 1995).

Contrary to the American stereotype, close to a third of gangs in the UK are ethnically mixed and those that are homogenous are predominantly white (Stelfox, 1998; Shropshire & McFarquhar, 2002; Bennett & Holloway, 2004; Sharp et al., 2006). Similar findings have also been found in Canada (Gatti et al., 2005) and Australia (White, 2006). However, one study in the Netherlands (Esbensen & Weerman, 2005) and another in the UK (Bullock & Tilley, 2002) contradict these findings. These studies found that gangs were more likely to be ethnically

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homogenous, comprised of ethnic minorities, and reflected the ethnic make-up of the neighbourhoods they represented. This inconsistency in the literature supports the notion that gangs are more likely to form along regional lines rather than ethnic divisions (Bullock & Tilley, 2002).

Consistently throughout the literature it has been reported that males constitute the majority of gang members (Rizzo, 2003). Thrasher (1927) attributed the low number of female gang members to two factors: the traditional role of females in society, i.e., characterised as nurturing femininity; and, as a result of this preconceived role, girls are naturally protected and closely supervised, allowing little opportunity for girls to engage in gang activities. However, the proportion of females has varied considerably, partly because there is difficulty understanding the relationship between gang membership and their actual participation in gang activity (Spergel, 1995). This presents the issue regarding the female's role within the gang especially since Bennett and Holloway (2004) suggested that the variance can be attributed to the source of the data. For example, police reports suggest females typically do not commit gang crimes (Spergel, 1995), therefore, studies based on police surveys may be biased towards those who only commit 'gang crimes'. Self-reports, on the other hand, produce a higher prevalence amongst females (Bennett & Holloway, 2004). Researchers have discussed the female role as subservient and their recruitment is partly (if not wholly) for their income potential as sex workers (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001; Chettleburgh, 2007). This supports why police data may include a smaller representation of females as their crimes, i.e., prostitution, may not be categorised as gang-related. However, recent findings show that female gang members are more violent than female and male non-gang members (Haymoz & Gatti, 2010), therefore, they warrant attention.

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In the UK, gang members are predominantly male (Stelfox, 1998; Bullock &
Tilley, 2002; Bennett & Holloway, 2004), in some cases researchers reported
proportions as high as 94-96% (Bullock & Tilley, 2002; Bennett & Holloway, 2004).
However, Sharp and colleagues (2006) reported that 10% of their 'delinquent youth
group' members claimed that their group was 'all or mostly' female and 42%
claimed that they were approximately half male, half female. There has been no
research to date known to the current author that has explored the role and duties of
the female gang member in the UK, a gap in the literature that needs to be addressed.

1.2.6 Psychological factors

Little is known about the psychological characteristics of gang members. The
little that we do know is that there is a significant relationship between low self-
esteem and delinquency, antisocial behaviour, and aggression, elements
characteristic of gang membership (Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt, &
Caspi, 2005). Some research supports the premise that youth with less confidence
and self-esteem, and weak bonds with a prosocial environment and social network
(i.e., schools and family) are more likely to look towards gangs than youth who are
more confident (Dukes, Martinez, & Stein, 1997). Furthermore, self-esteem has a
dynamic relationship with gang membership. It plays a central role in whether a
young person joins a gang, participates as a member, and decides to leave the gang
(Dukes et al., 1997). To illustrate, a young person with low self-esteem could look
towards a gang for support and consequently as the group esteem goes up (due to
success in delinquent and antisocial activities), that individual's esteem parallels.
However, if ever a gang member wants to leave the gang, it would require a high
self-esteem in order to resist the pressure from the gang.

Additional psychological constructs that have been linked with gang membership and its related criminal behaviour include: impulsivity, risk-seeking, and peer pressure (Esbensen et al., 2001; Esbensen & Weerman, 2005). Also, gang members cope with their behaviour by neutralizing the negative consequences of their actions (Esbensen & Weerman, 2005; Esbensen, Peterson, Taylor, & Freng, 2009), and, most disturbingly, they are guilt-free of their criminal behaviour (Esbensen et al., 2001; Esbensen et al., 2009).

Some researchers have examined the psychological characteristics of gang members by, for example, looking at the interaction effects of neighbourhood and personality traits of gang members. Youth who live in disorganised neighbourhoods (i.e., with a high turnover of residents) and who have psychopathic tendencies (i.e. higher levels of hyperactivity and lower levels of anxiety and prosocial tendencies) are five times more likely to become gang members than youth without this configuration of traits (Dupéré, Lacourse, Willms, Vitaro & Tremblay, 2006). Such youth are also less sensitive to parental attempts at supervision (Dupéré et. al, 2006). Gang membership is even more likely if these youth live in an adverse family environment (Lacourse, Nagin, Vitaro, Côté, Arseneault & Tremblay, 2006). Research has also found that gang members hold more negative attitudes toward authority (Kakar, 2005) such as the police (Lurigio, Flexon & Greenleaf, 2008). Additional risk factors for gang membership can also include individual differences such as lower IQ levels (Spergel, 1995), learning difficulties and mental health problems (Hill, Howell, Hawkins, & Battin-Pearson, 1999).

In summary, "it is important to understand that the street gang culture is something young people have created themselves for themselves" (Shropshire & McFarquhar, 2002, p. 3). Researchers have discussed joining a gang as feeding an

emotional need that young people have for personal development and it can be argued that the risk factors discussed all contribute to motivating young people to look to each other for support (Yablonsky, 1959; Spegel, 1995; Klein & Maxson, 2006).

1.3 Gang characteristics

1.3.1 Structure and gang typologies

The literature on gang structure has generally struggled with where to place gangs along the gradient between loosely knit and well organised. Spergel (1995) contends that gangs can amount to both:

> "It is likely that the loosely knit characterisation refers to the gang member's diffuse and seemingly erratic pattern of interaction with other gang members, while the well-organised characterisation refers to the large membership size of certain gangs, their location in different streets or sections of the neighbourhood or city, their supposed hierarchical organisation, or simply gang longevity. The notion of well-organised gang may also refer to the more business-oriented, usually drug-dealing, clique or gang" (p. 74).

Researchers originally grouped gangs into two typologies: spontaneous gangs – they consist of no more than 30 members, have a 2-3 year age range, and last no longer than a year or two (Klein, 1971); and traditional gangs – they tend to have a specific territory and name, they consist of age-graded subgroups with a stronger, durable gang identity (Klein, 1971; Spergel, 1995; Rizzo, 2003). However, these typologies have evolved into five distinct groups: (1) the traditional gang – large membership, wide age range, long duration, hierarchical, territorial, and criminally versatile; (2) the neotraditional gang – mid-large membership, differential age range, short duration, hierarchical, territorial, and criminally versatile; (3) the compressed gang –

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small membership, narrow age range, short duration, not hierarchical, not necessarily territorial, and criminally versatile; (4) the collective gang – mid-large membership, medium-wide age range, moderately durable, not hierarchical, not necessarily territorial, and criminally versatile; (5) the specialty gang – small membership, narrow age range, short duration, not hierarchical, territorial, and criminally specific (Klein & Maxson, 2006; Weerman et al., 2009).

There have been specific hierarchical levels identified within gangs. Yablonsky (1959) suggested that gangs are commonly labelled either a group or a mob, but instead they should be considered as a 'near-group', characterised as having minimal, diffuse role definition, limited cohesion, transient and temporary, shifting membership and disturbed leadership. The structure of the 'near-group' consisted of three types of members: leaders – young people responsible for gang cohesion and organising gang activities; temporal members – identifying themselves as members, however, characterised by their inconsistent participation in accordance with their emotional needs; and peripheral members – different from temporal members in that they tend not to identify themselves as members of a gang but may participate in gang activity on occasion. Other researchers have contended that there are two levels, suggesting that the leaders are a part of a core group of members and the rest consist of peripheral members (Patrick, 1973; Klein, 1971; Klein & Maxson, 1989). However, an overall consensus has been that a gang's leadership is more likely to be conducted by a group rather than a single person.

Spergel (1995) broke down the gang's hierarchy even further. In addition to the above-mentioned core and peripheral members, there are: floaters – they are characterised by their access to special resources and/or services and they exist in and across gangs; wannabes – as the name suggests, they are young aspiring

members; and veterans – they are comprised of older members who have outgrown the gang's typical street conflict activities and are more involved in organised white-collar crime.

However organised and structured a gang may be, it has been found that gangs show little group cohesion (Yablonsky, 1959; Patrick, 1973; Klein & Maxson, 1989). The quality of the relationships among the members is shallow and superficial, especially among peripheral members (Patrick, 1973). However, what is most important is that it is not necessary to be a full gang member in order to experience the effects of gang membership (Curry, Decker, & Egley, Jr., 2002), therefore, research should include findings on youth who are not gang involved, those who are not, as yet, fully committed to gang membership, and those who are fully fledged members in order to gain a full picture of the gang phenomenon.

Gangs in the UK do seem to follow some form of structure and organisation. In Manchester, gangs have been found to have names and represent a specific territory (Mares, 2001; Bullock & Tilley, 2002). Stelfox (1998) reported that over half of the gangs profiled in his study (nation-wide) were led by either "a family group or a core group of individuals who were not related through family" (p. 399). Research into criminal youth groups have found that leadership within gangs can also be quite informal. In some cases it has been found that groups who are responsible for more serious offences are led by what are called 'instigators' (Hakkert et al., 2001). In addition, a significant proportion of gangs in the UK have been recorded to have a name, leader, and rules/codes of behaviour (33%, 38%, and 15%, respectively) (Sharp et al., 2006).

1.3.2 Criminality

A major problem with the current understanding of gang criminality is that it has been over-exaggerated. "The media and law enforcement have incorrectly claimed or implied a general and close connection between gangs, drug trafficking and gang violence" (Spergel, 1995, p. 54). However, such a misrepresentation could be attributed to the criminological findings that gang members are, in fact, more likely to commit a crime than nongang members and even nongang delinquents (Tita & Ridgeway, 2007). In the US, the crimes committed are typically minor criminal activities, predominantly property crimes (Klein & Maxson, 1989; Tita & Ridgeway, 2007) and drug distribution (Tita & Ridgeway, 2007). The crimes committed against persons tend to be targeted and relatively organised, i.e., the victims usually belong to rival gangs (Klein & Maxson, 1989; 2006).

In the UK, Bennett and Holloway (2004) found that the crimes in which gangs tend to be active include robbery, drug supply, and weapons possession. The most serious of concerns regarding the gang culture, is the unfortunate use of guns to commit robberies or even settle minor disputes (Bullock & Tilley, 2002; Shropshire & McFarquhar, 2002; Bennett & Holloway, 2004). This emerging problem has not yet reached the heights achieved in American statistics. For example, in 2002, the firearms rate in England and Wales was 0.09 per 100,000 people in the population. This can be compared to the American rate of 5.4 per 100,000 people (Shropshire & McFarquhar, 2002). However, it was also noted that these rates fluctuate according to the type of area in which one resides. For example, areas known for their gang activity produce rates as high as 10 per 100,000 people in the UK (Shropshire & McFarquhar, 2002). This only reinforces the need for more research on gang activity across the whole of the United Kingdom.

There has been an extensive amount of research in the US on the behavioural effects gang membership have on youth. It can be argued that the gang, in some cases, can provide young people with a social buffer where they are free to act out hostility and aggression in order to nourish their emotional needs (Yablonsky, 1959). Overall, gang membership is responsible for an increase in individual delinquency (Esbensen, Huizinga, & Weiher, 1993; Battin, Hill, Abbott, Catalano, & Hawkins, 1998; Curry, 2000; Hill, Lui, & Hawkins, 2001; Amato & Cornell, 2003; Gatti et al., 2005); an increase in substance use (Spergel, 1995; Battin et al., 1998; Gordon, Lahey, Kawai, Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber, & Farrington, 2004; Gatti et al., 2005); and, gang membership escalates general criminal behaviour to violence (Battin et al., 1998). In fact, it is proposed that gang membership takes a facilitative role with regard to criminal behaviour and violence (Thornberry, 1998; Thornberry et al., 2003; Tita & Ridgeway, 2007), this will be discussed further in chapter two. Although Thornberry and colleagues (2003) were able to find support for an increase in a variety of delinquent behaviours, they were unable to find a significant increase in drug use in their youth sample. An interpretation of this result could be that although gang members may sell drugs and perform other forms of criminal activities, what needs to be considered is who purchases the drugs from them (Tita & Ridgeway, 2007). Their customers could most likely be their nongang counterparts with similar interests in drug use. Bennett and Holloway's (2004) results also support these behavioural effects in England and Wales.

1.4 Chapter summary

Headlines such as, "Man hospitalised by street gang", "Man hurt in street gang robbery", "Youth hurt in street gang attack", "Man injured in street gang attack", and "'Gang revenge' behind shootings" are assumed to be the typical stories

posted on American news, also regarded as the American phenomenon. However, all of these headlines are taken straight off the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) News and reported to occur in various regions of the UK (BBC News, 2004; BBC News, 2006). Shropshire and McFarquhar (2002) reported especially that Manchester, London, and Birmingham are regarded as the most affected by gang-related behaviours. They also commented on a growing gang culture in cities such as Liverpool, Leeds, Bradford, Preston, Bolton, and Bristol, although quite primitive in development.

The gang problem in America is very prevalent and is a serious concern with respect to its immense toll on human life. Unfortunately this reality is emerging in Europe as well. The Eurogang paradox is slowly and surely being realised and more researchers are beginning to investigate the extent of the gang problem in the UK (Stelfox, 1998; Mares, 2001; Bullock & Tilley, 2002; Shropshire & McFarquhar, 2002; Bennett & Holloway, 2004; Sharp et al., 2006; Ralphs, Medina, & Aldridge, 2009).

In the past 25 years, street gangs have been on the rise exponentially in the US (Howell, 1998). These gangs have served as an alternative outlet for modern youth searching for companionship and support (Spergel, 1995; Maxson, Whitlock, & Klein, 1998; Eitle et al., 2004). Historically, gangs in the US arose from immigrant families who struggled under the strain of unemployment (Spergel, 1995) and racial discrimination (Yablonsky, 1959). Hagedorn (2005) also argues that present-day gang membership is a form of communication. It is suggested that the message is one of marginalisation and resistance. In support of this notion gang membership has been previously associated with the urban, lower class communities (Klein, 1971).

This association will be discussed in the next chapter under social disorganisation theory.

Gangs both in America and in Europe do not seem to follow the 'American stereotype' wholly, but most importantly show similarities in risk factors, age, gender composition, criminality and organisation across both continents (Klein, Weerman, & Thornberry, 2006). It is difficult to pinpoint the exact factors that put young people at risk of joining a gang. However, the most important concept to resonate from this discussion should be the additive nature of the factors (Howell & Egley, 2005). Also, the gang-like behaviours and structures are dynamic adding to researchers' difficulty in assigning a universal definition.

There are still many questions regarding the definitional issues regarding gang membership, but some important advances have been made. Firstly, for independent studies, the use of self-nomination in order to best identify gang members seems to acquire the most successful identification rates (Esbensen et al., 2001). However, there are cultural differences in the interpretation of the word *gang*. This prevents researchers from conducting much needed systematic reviews and meta-analyses. For example, behavioural characteristics of gangs in the UK and the US could vary due to fundamental differences in the laws that affect gang-related crime. In particular, the varying laws regarding firearms possession and sales probably influence the difference in gun crimes (Shropshire & McFarquhar, 2002).

With respect to what researchers have learned about the characteristics of street gangs, the UK (Shropshire & McFarquhar, 2002; Bennett & Holloway, 2004; Sharp et al., 2006), Canada (Gatti et al., 2005), and even America (Esbensen & Weerman, 2005) do not appear to strictly mirror the American stereotype of ethnic divisions. On examining the literature regarding risk factors encouraging young

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people to join gangs there appears to be one distinguishable feature. It can be argued that a young person's level of risk increases with the addition of each factor into his or her life (Hill et al., 2001; Sharp et al., 2006). Amongst all the risk factors discussed, self-esteem had the most interesting relationship with gang membership and deserves more in-depth study. Although there is overwhelming concern for the recruitment into gangs of (in some cases) children, there is a misrepresentation of the age proportions. The gang phenomenon is not associated with any particular ethnicity. However, the composition of the gang is primarily young males. Considering the reported existence of the gang phenomenon in the UK, there is still very little research to examine, and consequently, a serious gap in the literature. Overall, this chapter reviewed the literature with respect to the definitional issues regarding gangs and the characteristics of a gang member. The next chapter will examine the key theoretical approaches that researchers have used to explain why young people join and/or form gangs.

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical approaches

The previous chapter introduced the gang culture primarily from a descriptive and sociological perspective. While we need a clear and comprehensive definition that clarifies what a gang is we also need a comprehensive theory to guide empirical work and provide synthesis in explaining why people become members of a gang. This introduces the content of the current chapter. A substantial amount of gang research uses theory to explain the causal factors of gang involvement and gang-like behaviour. This gang research is grounded in predominantly sociological and criminological theory. However, there is a growing literature in psychology offering explanations regarding gang membership. It is not, however, the intention of this chapter to cover all of the theoretical approaches applicable to gangs. The following theories were appropriately identified for their empirical support of and value to a social psychological perspective.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the criminality of gangs is generally what draws researchers' attention. Therefore, the theoretical approaches presented in this chapter discuss explanatory/causal factors related to delinquency and criminal behaviour in gangs. The literature examines these variables by superimposing theoretical frameworks on what is known about gang membership in order to provide insight into what is not known about gang membership. The purpose of this chapter is to present and evaluate the theoretical approaches in order to consider issues and questions related to the psychological study of street gangs.

2.1 Social disorganisation theory

According to social disorganisation theory, a society is considered organised when there is consensus amongst the residents on societal norms and values, and thus

a system in place to regulate and enforce or reinforce those rules (Akers, 1973). Social disorganisation comes from "the inability of local communities to realise the common values of their residents or solve commonly experienced problems" (Bursik, 1988, p. 521). These 'problems' have been found to consist of an increase in crime and delinquency rates (Bursik, 1988; Sampson & Groves, 1989; Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003; Jacob, 2006). Furthermore, since delinquency is predominantly a group phenomenon (Emler & Reicher, 1995; Goldstein, 2002), this supports the argument that delinquency is a risk factor for gang membership (Thrasher, 1927; Lahey et al., 1999; Craig et al., 2002). Therefore, to be specific, this theory posits that gangs develop in communities where residents resist addressing issues as a collective and as a result lose social stability (Yablonsky, 1959; Spergel, 1995; Hill et al., 1999; Lane & Meeker, 2004; Papachristos & Kirk, 2006). This discussion begins with the structural factors that contribute to the cultivation of such disorganisation.

Shaw and McKay (1969) described three factors to which social disorganisation could be attributed: low socio-economic status, ethnic heterogeneity, and residential mobility. First, low socio-economic status, i.e., poverty and unemployment have been widely studied as key indicators of social disorganisation and delinquency (Thrasher, 1927; Cohen, 1955; Klein, 1971; Akers, 1973; Sampson & Groves, 1989; Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003; Jacob, 2006). Cohen (1955) suggested that the working-class lacked the following values commonly instilled in middle-class children that typically work to circumvent the attraction of delinquency: (1) ambition; (2) an ethic of individual responsibility; (3) an education; (4) 'worldly asceticism' – the motivation to pursue long-term goals at the expense of short-term indulgences; (5) rational thinking; (6) appropriate etiquette; (7) self-control of physical aggression and violence; (8) free time filled with a variety of 'wholesome'

activities; and, (9) respect for one's property. Historically, this theory was developed when the manufacturing and industrial work force (a gateway for social mobility and advancement) was destroyed. Therefore, theoretically, gangs provided a social support system in socially disorganised communities (Spergel, 1995; Papachristos & Kirk, 2006). In the US, Lane and Meeker (2004) discussed how such economic inequality results in racial and ethnic divisions leading into the stereotyped ethnically homogenous gangs. In the UK (as discussed in the previous chapter), economic inequality does not necessarily instigate ethnic divisions between gangs (Bullock & Tilley, 2002), however, the general premise may still apply.

Secondly, the ethnic composition of a community has also been found to be a contributing factor to social disorganisation. It has been argued that ethnic heterogeneity can behave as an obstacle for residents within the community to communicate concerns and discuss solutions with one another (Shaw & McKay, 1969; Sampson & Groves, 1989). This can be attributed to language barriers and/or varying cultural misunderstandings. However, this does not necessarily include varying opinions of social goals for the community (Sampson & Groves, 1989). Disorganisation can be merely caused by miscommunications and/or misinterpretations.

The last of Shaw and McKay's (1969) factors, residential mobility, refers to the constant movement of residents in and out of a community resulting in the inability to develop an extensive network of friendships, thus a lack of trust and support amongst neighbours (Sampson & Groves, 1989; Jacob, 2006). Therefore, in summary, a community that lacks resources, an ability to communicate appropriately, and is constantly changing will have difficulty in establishing a prosocial and constructive environment, especially for young people. Sampson and

Groves (1989) suggested that the deteriorating effect that the above-mentioned factors have on social organisation contributes, in part, to the inability of a community to monitor and/or control street-oriented peer groups, e.g. gangs.

In recent literature, researchers have expanded on Shaw and McKay's (1969) theory by investigating whether specific neighbourhood processes could mediate the relationship between social disorganisation and delinquency (Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003; Papachristos & Kirk, 2006). Kubrin and Weitzer (2003) argued that there needed to be a factor that would account for the resident's willingness to contribute to the overall 'common good' of the community. This factor would be termed, "collective efficacy", which refers to "the process of activating or converting social ties to achieve any number of collective goals, such as public order or the control of crime" (Papachristos & Kirk, 2006, p. 67). The research supports that collective efficacy is correlated with a decrease in general crime (Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003; Papachristos & Kirk, 2006). However, although Papachristos and Kirk's (2006) study found support for collective efficacy's effect on general violence, they did not find a significant relationship between collective efficacy and gang violence in particular. This result (or lack of result) could be attributed to the researchers' inability to sufficiently isolate the gang violence from the overall violence.

Every theory has its criticisms and social disorganisation theory is no exception. First, in Shaw and McKay's (1969) original theory, ethnic heterogeneity was considered a significant predictor of social disorganisation, however, Jacob (2006) conducted a study on male and female offending in Canada and found that ethnic heterogeneity, in fact, had a slightly opposite effect on youth crime. That is, ethnic heterogeneity may result in a slight decrease in youth crime, but this result was not significant. A possible explanation could be that ethnic heterogeneity was a

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relevant factor approximately 40 years ago, but considering the increase of globalisation and immigration, it has become a norm, and perhaps considered more conventional.

This theory also does account for a wide variety of factors that are significant contributors to gang activity within a community, however, it does not take into consideration individual differences (Bursik, 1988). "Different individuals do deal differently with the same or similar problems and these differences must like-wise be accounted for" (Cohen, 1955, p. 55). It can be argued that social disorganisation theory sees people as motivationally empty, without choice, and as mere vessels to be filled with society's impositions (Emler & Reicher, 1995). Spergel (1995) discusses the phenomenon whereby children raised in the same household can be 'variably prone' to gang involvement and labels it personal disorganisation theory, a by-product of social disorganisation theory. He discusses research looking at potential differences in intellectual development, personality development, and various socialisation factors between gang and nongang youth. However, his examination consistently came to the conclusion that individual predispositions such as intelligence and learning cannot fully account for involvement in gangs. Yet research findings have shown that gang members' ability to choose has been evidenced by how they drift in and out of legitimate work over time (Hagedorn & Macon, 1998). This is the result of the lucrative illegal drug labour market, despite its seriousness, competing with the low wages, and adverse working conditions of the legitimate labour market (Bourgois, 1995).

Lastly, there is evidence suggesting no link between low socio-economic status and gang membership (Eitle et al., 2004). Even though gang members, as discussed previously, tend to come from low-income families and communities,

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there is a small exception where some gang members come from a more resourceful background (Spergel, 1995). It could be argued that an abundance of resources would be attractive to gangs looking to recruit because it provides stability and mobility, thus, reinforcing the gang culture's stereotype of money, cars, and sex. However, more importantly, the gang lifestyle can be economically taxing, e.g., lawyers' fees due to an increased risk of arrests (Spergel, 1995). Therefore, the more financially resourceful a gang member is, the more likely that person is able to maintain membership.

Overall, social disorganisation theory supports Hagedorn's (2005) notion that gangs are in themselves a message of social disadvantage and marginalisation. However, there are more factors involved in gang formation than social and economic constraints.

2.2 Theory of differential association and social learning theory

Traditionally, the theory of differential association was developed to recognise criminal behaviour across all classes contrary to social disorganisation theory. This theory argues that young people develop the attitudes and skills necessary to become delinquent by associating with individuals who are "carriers" of criminal norms (Sutherland, 1937). The essence of differential association is that criminal behaviour is learned and the principal part of learning comes from within important personal groups (Sutherland & Cressey, 1960). Exposure to the attitudes of members of personal groups that either favour or reject legal codes influences the attitudes of the individual. Therefore, people will go on to commit crimes if they are exposed to: attitudes that favour law violation more than attitudes that favour abiding by the law; law-violation attitudes early in life; law-violation attitudes over a prolonged period of time; and law-violation attitudes from people they like and

respect. Once the appropriate attitudes have developed, young people learn the skills of criminality in much the same way as they would learn any skills; by example and tutelage. Sutherland argued that a principal part of this criminal learning process is derived from small social groups such as gangs.

The appeal of *differential association* is that it not only looks to the environment for explanations of criminal behaviour to explain differences in populations that other researchers such as Shaw and McKay (1931, 1942) ignored. Sutherland also considered the transmission and development of psychological constructs such as attitudes and beliefs about crime.

Stemming from differential association, Bandura (1977) also placed more emphasis on individuality with respect to both personal and environmental determinants, and less emphasis on preconceived social definitions. He argued that although behaviour is learned from external sources, the selection of that behaviour may be innately influenced. For example, "aversive treatment produces a general state of emotional arousal that can facilitate a variety of behaviours, depending on the types of responses the person has learned for coping with stress and their relative effectiveness" (Bandura, 1973, p. 53). This learning paradigm is predominantly attributed to the responses received from one's environment. Consequently, *social learning theory* posits that crime is learned through: the development of beliefs that crime is acceptable in some situations; the positive reinforcement of criminal involvement (e.g. approval of friends, financial gains); and the imitation of the criminal behaviour of others – especially if they are people the individual values (Akers, 1997).

Young people learn 'acceptable' behaviour (as determined by the most influential persons in their lives) by receiving the appropriate reward and/or

punishment. For example, parental discipline tends to play a proportionately large role in moulding a child's behaviour (West & Farrington, 1973). If delinquent behaviour is not suitably punished, a child could assume that the behaviour is, in fact, acceptable (West & Farrington, 1973; Chung & Steinberg, 2006). "For most delinquents delinquency would not be available as a response were it not socially legitimised and given a kind of respectability, albeit by a restricted community of fellow-adventurers" (Cohen, 1955, p. 135). Social learning theory has also been used to explain the process by which youth may choose to leave a gang, an area not adequately addressed. It can be argued that if a young person can realise and recognise the long-term negative consequences (i.e., reduced life-span, imprisonment, etc.), the person would be more inclined to engage in an alternative lifestyle (Spergel, 1995). It should also be mentioned that parents are not the only influential people in a child's life, other adults such as teachers or religious leaders, also peers of a similar age group play a significant role (Bandura, 1977; Dishion et al., 1994; Monahan et al., 2009).

This theory is transferrable to gang-related behaviours. The literature shows that factors associated with social learning theory, such as peer criminality and delinquency (Winfree, Backstrom, & Mays, 1994; Lahey et al., 1999; Esbensen et al., 2001; Craig et al., 2002; Thornberry et al., 2003; Klein & Maxson, 2006), parental criminality (Winfree et al., 1994; Eitle et al., 2004; Klein & Maxson, 2006), peer attitudes, peer pressure and the individual's negative moral attitudes (Winfree et al., 1994; Esbensen et al., 2001; Sharp et al., 2006), were more capable of distinguishing gang members from nongang youth than personal-biographical characteristics (i.e., gender, ethnicity, place of residence, etc.). This theory has much support from the research community because it embraces a plethora of variables that

are associated with gang involvement. However, social learning theory and differential association both fail to specify how much individuals need to favour crime before they become influential in a pro-criminal sense since generally people hold beliefs that justify crime only in certain situations (Agnew, 1995; Akers, 1997).

Lastly, as previously mentioned, young people look for reinforcement and validation of their behaviour in order to establish what is acceptable. Other than parents and peers there is another source of influence that is only recently receiving attention, the media. Przemieniecki (2005) proposed a model of three theories in order to explain the possible relationship between Hollywood gang films and gang crime. These theories included: social learning theory which, as defined above, can result in imitation of certain behaviours; differential association theory (also defined above), whereby the learned behaviour can be attributed to one's association with close relations, such as peers and family; and instigation theory, whereby the criminal behaviour occurs in response to an emotional reaction to messages received from various stimuli. Przemieniecki (2005) found that gang films that depict characters who are rewarded for committing gang-like behaviours are, in fact, a blueprint for young aspiring gang members. These youth imitate the behaviours because on-screen they are viewed as acceptable and are associated with characters that can be seen as role models, and the films (especially the most dramatic) instil an emotional reaction in their audience. Therefore, this type of research adds to the debate on censorship and the effects of media has on young people.

In summary, differential association and social learning theory emphasise the effect delinquent peers has on whether a young person joins a gang. They also consider the influence of attitudes and beliefs, an area most sociologists and criminologists overlook. Yet, there still remains a lack of empirical research

regarding the characteristics of young people prior to engaging with delinquent peers and whether this unidirectional perspective fully explains the process of joining a gang.

<u>2.3 Strain theory</u>

The central concept of *strain theory* is that society sets universal goals for its populace and then offers the ability to achieve them to a limited number of people. The resultant inequality of opportunity causes a strain on cultural goals. This, Merton (1938) proposes, leads to anomie (Durkheim, 1893): a breakdown in the cultural structure due to an acute division between prescribed cultural norms and the ability of members to act in line with them (Merton, 1938). The consequence of anomie is that people adapt to their circumstances by adopting a specific form of behaviour (Merton, 1938). Cohen (1955) depicts gang members as working class youth who experience strain resulting in status frustration. Status frustration may be resolved by the youth associating with similar others in order to "strike out" against middle class ideals and standards. In turn, this leads to the formation of a delinquent subculture where instant gratification, fighting, and destructive behaviour become the new values. It is a rebellion that is considered to be right precisely because it is wrong in the norms of the larger culture. Cohen (1955) argued that a child experiences frustration and tension due to the unequal opportunities offered in a meritocratic society that claims to operate on egalitarian principles of equal opportunity. Strain results when individuals are inadequately socialised to accept the legitimate means available to them. Inadequate socialisation includes: unstructured leisure time, a failure in the educational system to provide sufficient resources, and the child's misunderstanding of what school requires of him or her. Further examples of inadequate socialisation include meager community resources and educational toys

and facilities in the home. The child experiencing these social deprivations gradually sinks to the bottom of the educational hierarchy and experiences feelings of status frustration involving self-hatred, guilt, loss of self-esteem, self-recrimination, and anxiety. The child blames him/herself for the failure and copes with it by seeking alternative avenues for status achievement such as street gang membership (Cohen, 1955).

Agnew (1992) expanded on strain theory by arguing that young people engage in delinquency as a result of the 'presence' of negative relationships provoking negative affective states, such as anger. However, unlike previous versions of the theory, Agnew (1992) revised it so that there are three types of strain (irrespective of a particular class): "(1) the actual or anticipated failure to achieve positively valued goals, (2) the actual or anticipated removal of positively valued stimuli, (3) the actual or anticipated presentation of negative stimuli" (p. 74). This broadening of the theory considers both individual and community factors (Agnew, 1992; Klemp-North, 2007), and has been empirically supported as contributing to gang membership specifically.

For example, the first type of strain can occur when a person is unable to achieve his/her dream. Young people may experience strain as a result of shortcomings experienced in employment, education, or any other aspirations and endeavours. This helps to explain why young people turn to gangs as a way to achieve their goals illegitimately (Klemp-North, 2007). The second type of strain can occur when a young person loses contact with positive role models. Gang members are more likely to come from disorganised families and may lose contact with a parent because of death, separation or divorce (Klemp-North, 2007). The last type of

strain can occur when negative influences are introduced into a young person's life, for example, drugs and delinquent peers (Klemp-North, 2007).

Research has shown that preteen stress exposure is a risk factor for gang membership and gang-like behaviours, therefore, deviance can act as a coping mechanism for unattainable goals (Eitle et al., 2004). The results did not fully support the causal relationship between stress/strain and gang membership but they did support an increased involvement in gang activities. Therefore, Agnew's General Strain Theory explains gang membership as the following process: young people who are unable to counteract any or all of the three types of strain with the appropriate coping mechanisms will feel pressured into gang membership by negative emotions such as anger, frustration, and anxiety (Eitle et al., 2004; Klemp-North, 2007).

This research is novel in its attempt to isolate variable causes of strain as a necessary precondition to gang membership. Furthermore, Agnew (1992) concludes that strain is likely to have a 'cumulative effect on delinquency', therefore, it could explain why individuals cope with strain differently, a difference in threshold perhaps. Yet, similar to the previous theories, strain theory does not explain the individual differences of at-risk youth (Bursik, 1988), that is, it does not explain why young people from the same circumstances, experiencing the same or similar *strains*, still have different outcomes, with some people becoming gang members and some not. Also, with its inconsistent ability to fully support a causal relationship it further gives strength to the notion that trying to identify definite risk factors for gang membership will always be quite difficult, and instead more attention needs to be paid to the additive and reciprocal nature of different factors that resonate across all gang members.

2.4 Control theory

Hirschi (1969) developed control theory (also known as social bond theory) in an effort to explain an individual's proclivity to general delinquency. This theory posits that people engage in deviant behaviour when their bond to society weakens or is broken. This approach is fundamentally different from strain theory in that it focuses on the absence of key prosocial relationships as a predictor of delinquency, while strain theory's central premise is the presence of negative/antisocial relationships in the development of delinquency (Agnew, 1992; Klemp-North, 2007). However, control theory, strain theory and social disorganisation theory agree that communities with a deteriorating social structure are a breeding ground for delinquency. In control theory, this deterioration inhibits people from being able to establish bonds with others (Klemp-North, 2007). Although Hirschi's (1969) theory was initially meant to explain delinquency generally, researchers have been able to use the social control theory to explain juvenile delinquency and gang membership specifically. For example, research has found that if children/youth are unable to integrate into societal institutions they are more likely to become delinquent and join deviant peer groups as a result (Dukes et al., 1997; Hill et al., 1999).

Initially, control theory emphasised the reducing effect social control, i.e., the restraining power of the justice system, had on delinquency (Hirschi, 1969; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). This social control is transmitted via the social bond between society and the individual. Hirschi (1969) described this bond to comprise of four main elements. First, "the essence of internalisation of norms, conscience, or super-ego thus lies in the attachment of the individual to others" (Hirschi, 1969, p. 18). A young person who is emotionally connected to individuals with a particular responsibility (i.e., parents, teachers, etc.) is more likely to appreciate and learn the

behaviours and beliefs these individuals try to teach them. Also, disapproval of the young person's behaviour would be acknowledged as punishment, thus, reducing the likelihood of delinquency (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

Typically the bond between a parent and child is usually considered a primary relationship with respect to attachment due to the immediate and constant opportunity for interaction (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). As discussed in the previous chapter, the risk factors (regarding the parental role) for juvenile delinquency are familial criminality and poor parenting (Chung & Steinberg, 2006). The risk factors for gang membership include lack of parental role models, family disorganisation (Klemp-North, 2007), and poor parental management skills (Hill et al., 1999; Thornberry et al., 2003; Eitle et al., 2004; Sharp et al., 2006). Although the relationship between parent and child plays a key role, gang members were also less likely to be attached to school (Hill et al., 1999; Thornberry et al., 2003). Overall, attachment is based on a fundamental element of social learning theory, reward and punishment. If a young person becomes emotionally attached to a care-giver (or another individual of similar influence), the care-giver's response (i.e., punishment) to deviant behaviour will reduce the likelihood of further delinquency and gang involvement.

The second element of Hirschi's (1969) control theory is commitment. "The concept of commitment assumes that the organisation of society is such that the interests of most persons would be endangered if they were to engage in criminal acts" (Hirschi, 1969, p. 21). That is, young people who are committed to an education, the prospect of employment and the welfare of their community as a whole will less likely become delinquent and join a gang. Therefore, according to social control theory, the lack of such commitments leads to a propensity for

criminality, thus, jeopardising any future aspirations (Akers, 1973). Cohen (1966) paralleled this concept with social disorganisation theory by suggesting that an individual's conformity to society is partly, if not wholly, due to the commitments (i.e., resources and/or investments) they make to the community, and social disorganisation is dependent on the trust stemming from such commitments. Commitment to a positive future also includes abstaining from immediate gratification of desires in order to achieve long-term goals. A criminal disposition consists of satisfying those desires in the quickest and simplest way possible (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Researchers found that little or no commitment within a school setting was a risk factor for gang membership (Hill et al., 1999; Brownfield, 2003; Thornberry et al., 2003). Also, researchers have established a link between commitment to delinquent peers and gang membership (Esbensen et al., 1993; Thornberry et al., 2003; Klein & Maxson, 2006). Therefore, commitment plays multiple roles in predicting gang membership.

The third element, involvement, can be interpreted as: 'idle hands are the devil's workshop'. Young people must be involved in conventional activities or else they will have free time to engage in deviant behaviour (Hirschi, 1969). Hirschi (1969) argued that this line of reasoning places a burden of responsibility on schools and recreational programmes to deter delinquency. Brownfield (2003) found that lack of educational involvement was correlated with gang membership and Thrasher (1927) suggested that a lack of 'organised and supervised activities' leaves young people in need of something to fill their spare time, and the gang supplements that need. However, unlike the other bond elements, the literature does not fully support the deterrent effect involvement has on young people. Hill and colleagues (1999) were unable to empirically support the lack of religious involvement as a predictor of

gang membership. In addition, Esbensen, Huizinga, and Weiher (1993) reported that elements of Hirschi's theory should not be considered as finite predictors. More specifically, in their study, involvement in extracurricular activities did not distinguish gang members from non-gang members. One possible interpretation could be that environments for extracurricular activities could provide a forum both for recruitment into gangs and resistance to gangs. However, similar to self-esteem, extracurricular and conventional activities may have a dynamic and unique relationship with gang membership.

The last element, belief, encompasses the main logic of social control theory. In order for the community to promote obedience and conformity, the members within such community must share similar attitudes and beliefs. Therefore, in order for the above three elements to be effective, a person must believe in the moral validity of society's rules (Hirschi, 1969). Akers (1973) describes this process as socialisation, "the process whereby a person takes as his own the ideas of right and wrong shared by others" (p. 6). It is not a matter of why young people engage in delinquent or gang-related activities, but rather why young people do not engage in such activities. Control theory suggests that those who do share these common beliefs are less likely to violate them (Klemp-North, 2007). The literature supports the connection between non-conformist attitudes and gang membership (Esbensen et al., 1993; Hill et al., 1999).

These four social elements all work together with the purpose of deterring delinquent activity. In summary, control theory emphasises the deterrence of delinquent behaviour through learned inhibitions (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). This is based on the premise that young people left on their own, in an unsocialised state,

will become deviant. The fictional novel *Lord of the Flies* provides a theatrical, yet appropriate, illustration.

Although social control theory has contributed greatly to the understanding of deviant behaviour, its emphasis on the role of society's rules, and the individual's belief in those rules is limiting. "What classical theory lacks is an explicit idea of self-control, the idea that people also differ in the extent to which they are vulnerable to the temptations of the moment. Combining the two ideas thus merely recognises the simultaneous existence of social and individual restraints on behaviour" (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, p. 87-88). Hirschi, who devised the classical control theory, has recognised the significance of individuality and along with Gottfredson developed an alternative, yet complementary theory, self-control theory (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) suggested that human behaviour is naturally motivated by a tendency to enhance one's own pleasure. They described the benefits of engaging in criminal activity as: immediate gratification of desires, easy or simple gratification of desires, excitement and risk, few long-term benefits resulting from few long-term goals, little skill and planning involved, and pain or discomfort for a victim or multiple victims. Therefore, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) introduced self-control as a mechanism responsible for subduing such motivations, parallel to the afore-mentioned element of commitment.

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) continued to attribute, partly, if not wholly, the development of self-control to parental monitoring and management. It is from this perspective that the theory outlines a significant relationship between an adolescent's delinquent and criminal behaviour with the person's level of self-control (Gibbs, Giever, & Martin, 1998; Lattimore, Tittle, & Grasmick, 2006). The key

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elements of parental management deemed necessary for a positive development of self-control are: keeping track of the child's behaviour and activities, quickly identifying when the child is involved in deviant activities, and applying the appropriate punishment (Gibbs et al., 1998).

In their definition of self-control theory Esbensen and colleagues (2001) adapted the theory by testing not only parental management, but also impulsivity and risk-seeking. Their study provided empirical support for all three of the variables. Furthermore, poor parental management has been found to, in fact, predict impulsivity and risk-seeking (Gibbs et al., 1998; Lattimore et al., 2006).

Overall, control theory proposes that informal social control breaks down and offending results, however, the theory fails to adequately explain how informal social controls might be re-established. For instance, some social control theorists argue that a propensity for criminal involvement is stable throughout life and desistance from crime only occurs when there is a change in opportunity for crime (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). However, evidence shows that it is the effect of social controls that urges people to stop offending. For instance, gang members leave the gang in favour of fatherhood (Moloney, Mackenzie, Hunt & Joe-Laidler, 2009); and employment, military service and marriage all contribute to a cessation of offending (Sampson & Laub, 2001). It therefore seems that social controls may be more flexible than control theory suggests and that even if informal social controls *break down* to the extent that youth become involved in delinquency, they *maintain* influence during the period of delinquency and can be *re-established* sufficiently to facilitate desistance. This supports the argument that conventional theories fail to incorporate a social contextual dimension to the study of gangs (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993; Spergel, 1995; Jankowski, 1991).

In summary, 'where there are rules, there is deviance' (Cohen, 1966, p. 1). Control theory (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Hirschi, 1969) neatly diverts the attention of research away from why offenders offend, to why conformists do not offend? Both social control and self-control combined contribute to the gang literature by highlighting rules and norms as an avenue towards conformity. They also describe both contextual and individual circumstances that have the potential to result in gang-related activity. However, rules and norms lack the flexibility necessary to account for the variability of individual (and in some cases societal) needs. That is, the needs of the community may change over time, therefore, the definition of deviant behaviour must accommodate.

2.5 Interactional theory

Interactional theory (Thornberry, 1987; Thornberry & Krohn, 2001; Thornberry et al., 2003) has elaborated earlier criminological theories by proposing that gang membership results from a reciprocal relationship between the individual and: peer groups, social structures (i.e. poor neighbourhood, school and family environments), weakened social bonds, and a learning environment that fosters and reinforces delinquency. This theory can be considered a marriage between two theories. As discussed previously, *control theory* argues that people who engage in deviant behaviour do so when their bond to society weakens (Hirschi, 1969). However, control theory does not acknowledge the effects of antisocial influences, e.g. delinquent peers, on gang membership (e.g. Esbensen & Weerman, 2005). On the other hand, *social learning theory* argues that crime is learned through: the development of beliefs that crime is acceptable in some situations; the positive reinforcement of criminal involvement (e.g. approval of friends, financial gains); and the imitation of the criminal behaviour of others—especially if they are people the

individual values (Akers, 1997). A drawback, for example, is that social learning theory fails to specify how much individuals need to favour crime prior to engaging with like-minded delinquent peers (e.g. gang members) (Akers, 1997). Unlike control theory, social learning theory, and others, which take a unidirectional perspective of delinquency involving specific risk factors that *cause* a youth to become delinquent, interactional theory provides a more subtle *developmental* explanation of delinquency where societal, learning and delinquency factors all interact and mutually influence one another across an individual's lifespan (Thornberry et al., 2003).

Thornberry and colleagues (2003) also argued that whether a young person joined a gang was a consequence of one of three models. That is, gang membership may result from *selection* where gangs select and recruit members who are already delinquent (Lahey et al., 1999; Craig et al., 2002); from *facilitation* where gangs provide opportunities for delinquency to youth who were not delinquent beforehand (Gatti et al., 2005; Gordon et al., 2004; Thornberry et al., 1993), and *enhancement* where gang members are recruited from a population of high-risk youth who, as gang members, become more delinquent (Gatti et al., 2005; Thornberry et al., 1993). Furthermore, these models go one step further by introducing two different types of gang members, transient and stable. Gatti et al. (2005) found that youth who were delinquent prior to joining a gang were more likely to remain in the gang long term (i.e. stable members). On the other hand, youth who were not delinquent before joining a gang were more-or-less temporary members (i.e. transient members). This implies that delinquency before gang membership is positively correlated with the length of membership.

Past research has found that the likelihood of joining a gang increases when young people experience risk factors from all social and environmental domains, i.e. the individual, family, school, peer, and neighbourhood factors discussed in the previous chapter (Howell & Egley, 2005). Also, these risk factors have a cumulative effect, that is, the more risk factors a young person has or experiences in life, the more likely the person is to join a gang (Hill et al., 2001; Howell & Egley, 2005). Thus, Howell and Egley (2005) proposed an extension of interactional theory that includes a younger cohort of youth and the associated risk factors. Since most gang research is conducted with adolescent samples, Howell and Egley (2005) argued that the developmental trajectory towards gang membership would have already begun and that we are missing key factors that precede the risk factors known.

Interactional theory looks at gang membership from a unique perspective. It takes into account that not all gang members were delinquent prior to joining. Also, an individual's offending history notwithstanding, such models help to explain how such a person may become even more delinquent after joining. Research supports this inevitable escalation in delinquency (Tita & Ridgeway, 2007). However, this theory also has its limitations. It does not provide insight into the process of leaving a gang, however, it leaves room for speculation and further theorising. Lastly, although its focus on delinquency and criminality can be limiting, as discussed in the previous chapter, criminality is the characteristic that draws attention to gangs.

2.6 Chapter Summary

A great deal of research is based on a foundation of theory and gang research is no exception. This chapter discussed if and how gang membership can be explained by theories such as: social disorganisation theory, strain theory, control theory, social learning theory, and interactional theory. Each theory makes its own

unique (but incomplete) contribution to explaining gang membership. For example, Brownfield and colleagues (1999) found support for different aspects of strain theory, social learning theory, and social control theory. Therefore, although some theories might receive more empirical support than others, each is unable to capture the entire scope of the problem. Another example, self-control theory makes an empirically supported argument regarding the relationship between poor parental management and the development of poor self-control leading to gang membership. However, Turner, Piquero, and Pratt (2005) argued that parental management is not the only variable predicting the development of self-control, in fact, school socialisation also played a significant role. These subtle differences speak volumes when efforts are made to come up with gang prevention and intervention strategies.

The theories examined here do contribute, in part, to the overall understanding of why young people engage in gang-like behaviours or at worst, become gang members. As presented above, the common theme in the literature focuses on the effects the environment has on the individual and the research unanimously concludes that the causal factor for gang involvement is not just one variable. There is a need for more research on theories of individual predispositions to joining a gang. Consequently, individual differences seem to be gaining conceptual importance in the development of gang theory and as such there is a role for psychology to add to this theoretical development.

The purpose of this thesis is to add to the current, however limited, literature on the psychological characteristics of gang membership, therefore, this chapter provided a platform to develop the theoretical framework in support of this goal. The next chapter will examine the literature on some of the key socio-cognitive processes proposed to provide some insight into the gang phenomenon.

CHAPTER THREE

A socio-cognitive perspective of gang membership

To date, gang membership has been studied predominantly from a sociological and criminological perspective (Bennett & Holloway, 2004), therefore, examining this problem from a psychological perspective will shed further light on the gang phenomenon since its approach remains fairly novel. The previous chapter presented theoretical approaches that explain the current literature and best inform future social psychological research. One of the main conclusions discussed was the current literature's shortcomings when explaining the individual differences that predispose some youth to gang involvement and others toward an alternative life course regardless of their similar social and environmental circumstances. Perhaps psychology can provide some insight.

Ultimately, why do gangs form? They probably form to fulfill the needs that any adolescents have: peer friendship, pride, identity development, enhancement of self-esteem, excitement, the acquisition of resources, and goals that may not, due to low-income environments, be available through legitimate means (Goldstein, 2002). They may offer a strong psychological sense of community, a physical and psychological neighbourhood, a social network, and social support (Goldstein, 1991). In short, gangs form for the same reasons that any other group forms (Goldstein, 2002). Past theoretical approaches have acknowledged that psychological constructs such as attitudes and beliefs bind young people together, i.e. 'birds of a feather flock together'. For example, social learning theory argues that young people learn these antisocial attitudes and the associated behaviours from their peers (Sutherland, 1937; Akers, 1997). Similarly, control theory argues that young people who exhibit law-

violating beliefs and attitudes are more likely to become gang members (Esbensen et al., 1993; Hill et al., 1999).

Thornberry and colleagues (2003) describe these psychological processes as facilitators of gang membership within the framework of their interactional theory. In their research they discuss delinquent beliefs (defined as the belief that it is acceptable to be delinquent) as causes, correlates, and consequences of delinquent behaviour and gang membership. These beliefs, similar to self-esteem, play a dynamic role developmentally. They have been found to interact reciprocally with associations with delinquent peers and delinquent behaviour (Thornberry, Lizotte, Krohn, Farnworth, & Jang, 1994). However, there continues to be a lack of clarity about the types of psychological processes inherent in gangs. Therefore, it can be argued that these beliefs need further examination as they are more resistant to intervention (Hollin, Browne, & Palmer, 2002).

This thesis adopts the framework of interactional theory in order to examine the reciprocity of relationships between influential factors during the life course (Hall et al., 2006). Although the purpose of this thesis is not to test theory, interactional theory provides a constructive framework for exploring these individual, social, and psychological factors and how they relate to gang membership. Interactional theory also provides an avenue for theory development, by way of elaborating on what is known about these 'delinquent beliefs'. As such, this socio-cognitive approach to gang membership considers both internal and external types of influences by incorporating 'perceived' external variables rather than 'actual' social conditions because "people react to their perception of social problems rather than to the problems themselves" (Conklin, 1975, p. 17). Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to examine the current literature on various psychological processes with regard to

young people and gang culture and the potential interactions between them. It is impossible, within the scope of this thesis, to evaluate all processes relevant to gang involvement (there are just too many), therefore, the following constructs were identified based on their current support from the literature regarding gangs and/or delinquent behaviour: moral disengagement, social status, hostile attribution biases, perceived outgroup threat, and attitudes toward authority, crime, and gang culture.

3.1 Moral disengagement

As discussed in the first chapter, gang youth are more likely to commit a crime than even non-gang delinquents (Tita & Ridgeway, 2007) and gang membership escalates general criminal behaviour to violence (Battin et al., 1998). Although, it can be argued that gang youth who commit these criminal activities would still be aware of the legal boundaries they are crossing and yet there exists socio-cognitive processes allowing them to abandon their socialised moral standards. So, traditionally, Sykes and Matza (1957) argued that any dissonance resulting from feelings of guilt and shame following involvement in harmful behaviour (e.g. gang crime) can be *neutralised* by employing cognitive techniques (i.e. denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of the victim, condemnation of the condemners, and appeal to higher loyalties). There is evidence that gang members do, in fact, use neutralisation techniques (Esbensen & Weerman, 2005), however, it is unclear which specific strategies they employ.

Bandura (2002) elaborated Sykes and Matza's concepts and suggested that everyone develops a moral self and as part of that self there is a dyadic moral agency: inhibitive form – the ability to refrain from behaving inhumanely; and proactive form – the ability to behave humanely. However, people experience moral conflicts when they come across valuable benefits requiring immoral behaviour

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(Bandura, 1990). As a result, people enable what Bandura (2002) described as moral disengagement strategies, "cognitive restructuring of inhumane conduct into benign or worthy behaviour" (p. 101). These moral disengagement strategies consist of four mechanisms: reconstruing detrimental conduct, obscuring causal agency, disregarding or misrepresenting injurious consequences, and blaming and devaluating the victims (Bandura, 1990; Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli, 1996; Bandura, 2002).

There are three processes for reconstruing conduct. People generally do not commit reprehensible acts unless they are convinced it is for an almighty moral imperative. So, they reconstrue the conduct by a process of 'moral justification' (Bandura, 1990; 2002). This process involves emphasising the morality and benefits of the end result in order to justify the immoral means. For example, young people may justify committing illegal and/or violent acts if it means the end result consists of monetary reimbursement, protection, etc. It has also been supported that manipulating the language attributed to immoral behaviour, a process of 'euphemistic labelling', can reduce a person's moral anxiety (Bandura, 1990; 2002). Acts of violence could be referred to as 'self-defence' or 'retaliation' in order to morally justify such behaviours. Lastly, reconstruing one's conduct could consist of 'exploiting the contrast principle', i.e., comparing one's 'marginally' immoral conduct (e.g., robbing a house) with heinous atrocities (e.g., violent massacres) (Bandura, 1990; 2002).

In order to commit crime, people can also restructure associations to responsibility. Bandura (1990; 2002) labelled this 'obscuring causal agency' and described two processes responsible for this cognitive restructuring. People are willing to engage in detrimental conduct if an authoritative figure is willing to accept

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responsibility. This process, 'displacement of responsibility', was demonstrated in the classic Milgram study where participants inflicted harmful stimuli on others especially when the 'experimenter' claimed full responsibility (Milgram, 1974). The second process, 'diffusion of responsibility', is quite appropriate to the current research. Young people feel less responsible for immoral behaviour if they are a part of a group who decided upon it collectively. "Where everyone is responsible, no one is really responsible" (Bandura, 1990, p. 36-37).

Another mechanism for minimising internal conflicts surrounding immoral behaviour is to disregard or distort the harmful consequences of said actions (Bandura, 1990; 2002). Essentially, a person has not caused harm if there is no victim to make the claim. Bandura (1990) described examples of hierarchies where the person making the commands are remote from the suffering caused, thus, reducing responsibility. Also, if the harm caused is made evident, people attempt to either minimise or discredit the evidence (Bandura, 1990; 2002). Therefore, young people might be willing to engage in harmful behaviours if the harmful consequences are not apparent to them. An appropriate example might be drive-by shootings.

The three above-mentioned mechanisms are all manipulations of self-perceptions, however, the last mechanism to be discussed consists of two processes resulting in the manipulation or distortion of the recipient of the injurious conduct. In general, it is considered inhumane to hurt or mistreat other people. Bandura (1990; 2002) discussed a process where the actors of harmful behaviour de-personalise or 'dehumanise' their victims in order to not empathise with them. Thus, they are considered subhuman. Essentially, once individuals can relate to their victims they experience distress and the suffering is much more salient, however, by a process of dehumanisation, their victims would not only lack feelings, but also suffering

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(Bandura, 1990; 2002). Secondly, people are able to morally disengage if they consider their actions as a retaliation to a previous act committed by their victims (Bandura, 1990; 2002). Therefore, they are manipulating their 'attributions of blame' in order to render themselves faultless and their victims as the provocateurs.

Research has shown that young people who morally disengage become angry easily and engage in more harmful behaviours (Bandura et al., 1996). Moral disengagement has also been linked to bullying behaviours. Secondary school students (Wood, Grundy, Shearer, & James, 2008) and prison inmates (South & Wood, 2006) who engage in bullying are also likely to abandon their moral standards, and it was found that group bullies, in the school context, were more likely to morally disengage than lone bullies (Wood et al., 2008). This implies that moral disengagement has an integral role in group processes. Since youth crime is typically conducted in groups, it can be argued that group members encourage each other to morally disengage (Hakkert et al., 2001), perhaps in the form of shared attitudes and beliefs (Akers, 1997). Consequently, it has been found that gangs, through a process of facilitation, provide an environment that fosters delinquency and violence (Hall et al., 2006), therefore, it can be argued that moral disengagement plays an integral role in gang behaviour.

Researchers have criticised the role of moral disengagement in groups by arguing that people are more likely to set aside moral standards amongst strangers rather than friends, referring to crowd psychology (Emler & Reicher, 1995). However, it has been found that young people will set aside their moral standards if by doing so they will be accepted by a chosen group (Emler & Reicher, 1995). Such acceptance can be interpreted as a rung in the ladder of social status. In the bullying literature, to achieve social status adolescents morally disengage and this enables

them to engage in bullying behaviour (Wood et al., 2008). Therefore, there is an interesting relationship between moral disengagement and social status that needs to be explored in gangs.

3.2 Social status

Goldstein (2002) describes street gangs "as a social (or, better, anti-social) phenomenon" (p. 77), and as such, research has examined, for example, the role socio-economic status plays in young people's proclivity to gang membership (see previous chapter for an overview). However, "people react to their perception of social problems rather than to the problems themselves" (Conklin, 1975, p. 17), and there presents a gap in the literature. The gang literature has not considered sufficiently what effect perceived importance of social status (i.e., how important social status is to an individual) has on influencing young people to join gangs. This area of research could shed light on this issue considering that gangs have been found to offer young people the opportunity for prestige, status, and material possessions more quickly than conventional means (Knox, 1994; Bourgois, 1995). Knox (1994) described gangs as exerting two types of social power that attract youth: coercive power – the threat or actual use of force and violence; and the power to pay, buy, or impress, also to delegate status and rank to its members. Therefore it seems likely that adolescents who see social status among peer groups as important will hold pro-gang attitudes and may become involved in gangs because they feel a need to achieve social status and/or material possessions.

Perceived social status has been found to affect both psychological and physiological functioning (Adler, Epel, Castellazzo, & Ickovics, 2000; Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003). The findings show that perceptions of a high social status are linked with positive psychological factors responsible for healthier

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lifestyles. On the other hand, perceptions of a low social status are linked with negative psychological factors resulting in poorer health trajectories (Adler et al., 2000). Several of the negative outcomes include an increase in stress or, at least, an increase in vulnerability to the effects of stress, pessimism, low self-control, and an overall negative affect (Adler et al., 2000). However, it is important to note the inability to identify a causal direction, that is, the perception of a low social standing could be responsible for the poor outcomes, or, the negative physical and mental states could be responsible for a perceived lower social standing, or a reciprocal relationship (Adler et al., 2000), all of which exemplify the bidirectional perspective of interactional theory.

A link between perceived social status and psychological functioning has also been found in the bullying literature. Researchers found that victims of bullying were more likely than their classmates to perceive a low personal social status (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1996) and an increase in psychological distress, while bullies exhibited the opposite conditions (Juvonen et al., 2003). Salmivalli and colleagues (1996) argued that the relationship between perceived personal social status and bullying resembled one of a self-fulfilling prophecy. That is, once a victim has acquired such a stigma, the perceptions of the victim and their peers gradually change in accordance (e.g., perceiving the victim as unpopular, worthless, deviant, etc.) (Salmivalli et al., 1996). Therefore, perceived social status in young people plays a fundamental part in determining their behaviours.

Wood and colleagues (2008) elaborated on the relationship between the perceptions of social status and bullying behaviour by also examining the relationship between *perceived importance of social status* and bullying. They found

that young people involved in bullying (bullies and victims) placed a greater emphasis on the importance of social status than their counterparts (Wood et al., 2008). In addition, they found that young people who bullied in groups considered social status as more important than lone bullies (Wood et al., 2008). This finding would explain why young people might be motivated to engage in bullying behaviour and provides a link between social status and group bullying behaviour.

Salmivalli and colleagues (1996) discuss the dynamic relationship between bullies and the social status attributed to them. Peer reports have shown that bullies are not necessarily ranked as high on the social status ladder, and there are various explanations for such findings (Salmivalli et al., 1996), however, regardless of where young people rank bullies, victims, or other participants, social status is still of great importance.

There is a breadth of literature that has found that perceptions of social status have socio-cognitive consequences. In particular, perceived social status has been linked with various attribution biases. Sherif, White, and Harvey (1955) reported that young people, who perceive members of their group as high in status, also tend to appraise their performance as better than actuality, and vice versa. Similarly, social status also plays a role in self-serving attribution biases (Salmivalli et al., 1996; Lee & Tiedens, 2001). Research has found that young people tend to rationalise, justify, and/or minimise their aggressive behaviour and emphasise their prosocial behaviour in order to fulfill their personal perceptions of the criteria of high social standing (Salmivalli et al., 1996). This explains why gangs are attractive to young people, and why gang leaders are not only believed to be such 'good' leaders, but are also seen as a mechanism for maintaining group cohesion. "As part of a pervasive need to maintain positive self-regard, people want to view the groups to which they belong in

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a positive light" (Messick & Mackie, 1989, p. 59), therefore, committing the attributional errors Messick and Mackie (1989) describe as intergroup biases. Thus, in light of this thesis, these attribution errors can involve biases when attributing blame or hostile intent, for example.

3.3 Perception of outgroup threat

An expansion of attribution theory's relationship with gang membership should consider how these bias errors result in group solidarity and cohesion. Tajfel and Turner (1979) argued that intergroup competitive and discriminatory behaviour could be provoked by the mere awareness of the presence of an outgroup (see also Turner, 1982). This is supported by Sherif and colleagues' (1961) 'Robbers Cave experiment' when two groups of boys, who had never met each other, displayed both ingroup favouritism and outgroup discrimination as a result of such 'mere awareness.' Sherif suggested that a perceived threat to goal attainment provokes group solidarity during intergroup competition (Dion, 1979). However, this can only be observed once a collective identity has been formed, and then a perceived threat against that group identity can result in the group defending its reputation (Emler & Reicher, 1995). Therefore, it can be hypothesised, that a gang's level of cohesion and discriminatory behaviour could be dependent on its perception of outgroup threat (Turner, 1982).

It is proposed that the perception of outgroup threat can be attributed to the 'schema-based distrust hypothesis', "a schema consisting of learned beliefs that intergroup relations are competitive, unfriendly, deceitful, and aggressive, which dictates distrust of outgroups" (Wildschut, Insko, & Pinter, 2004, p. 340). This hypothesis has been empirically supported from the following six perspectives: (1) participants are more likely to distrust groups than individuals; (2) participants are

more likely to perceive intergroup interactions as more negative than interindividual interactions; (3) participants are more likely to expect more competitive behaviour from groups than individuals; (4) participants are more likely to express distrust in written and oral form for groups than individuals; (5) participants are more likely to recall groups as behaving more competitively than individuals; and (6) the discrepancy in recall is not necessarily a consequence of previous experience (for review, see Wildschut et al., 2004). However, in order for this outgroup schema to be activated, as shown in Sherif's (1961) study, Wildschut and colleagues (2004) discussed procedural interdependence as an antecedent. Procedural interdependence refers to the process in which the behaviours of group members are motivated by the overall group's goals (Wildschut et al., 2004). Sherif and colleagues (1961) accomplished this in their studies by encouraging teamwork via various group tasks before the groups engaged in intergroup competitions. Therefore, this suggests a potential reciprocal relationship. That is, once a group identity and goals are established, outgroup distrust and fear develops resulting in intergroup hostility, thus, reinforcing the negative outgroup schema.

Lastly, perceptions of outgroup threat may be able to explain why young people join or form gangs in the first place. Research supports that an individual's response to a group threat is to form a group response (Abelson, Dasgupta, Park, & Banaji, 1998). Previous literature has identified some gang members as 'reluctant gangsters' where neighbourhoods peppered with gangs and crime make youth fearful of victimisation and lead to perceptions that their world is a dangerous place (Pitts, 2007). Such threat can play multiple roles within and between gangs. Threat from neighbourhood gangs can push a group of young people towards developing into a gang, it can also reinforce the collective identity and group cohesion, and lastly, it

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can be responsible for an increase in further gang violence (Decker, 1996; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). Therefore, it might also be expected that gang members experience *threat* from other groups of young people, and thus see gang membership as offering them protection. As Klein, (1995) observes: "......in the gang there is protection from attack ...... It provides what he has not obtained from his family, in school, or elsewhere in his community" (p.78). As such youth who become involved in gangs may be those who experience most threat from others.

3.4 Attitudes

An attitude is "a subjective experience involving an evaluation of something or somebody" (Eiser, 1986, p. 13), and typically, once expressed, others should be able to interpret the focus of the attitude (Eiser, 1986). There is a plethora of literature examining the relationship between attitudes and behaviour, and the causal direction still remains a mystery (Kelman, 1974; Eiser, 1986; Terry, Hogg, & Duck, 1999). However, there is consensus that the attitude-behaviour relationship is not only complex but also at the mercy of a variety of other attitudinal inputs (Kelman, 1974) and social norms and expectations (Terry et al., 1999). Researchers have argued that the relationship is facilitated by the norms and salience of the ingroup (Turner, 1982; Hogg, 1998; Terry et al., 1999). That is, "whether people engage in attitudinally consistent behaviour depends, in part, on whether there is ingroup normative support for their attitude" (Terry et al., p. 308). It can be argued that attitudes could play a similar role as moral disengagement because young people will also morally disengage in order to be accepted by a chosen group (Emler & Reicher, 1995).

Kelman (1974) suggested that researchers would be able to improve their ability to predict relevant behaviours if they assessed a wide spectrum of possible

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attitudes. Specifically, it was argued that there were three types of attitudes that should always be considered: (1) attitudes toward a specific object with which the person is interacting; (2) attitudes toward the action itself; (3) attitudes toward the situation (Kelman, 1974). This provides that framework in which the current research will examine the attitude-behaviour relationship among gang youth. That is, the following will be examined: attitudes toward authority and attitudes toward the gang culture.

3.4.1 Attitudes toward authority

Control theory lends support to this notion of attitudinally motivated behaviour (Cohen, 1966; Hirschi, 1969). That is, according to control theory's fourth element, young people must believe in the 'law of the land' in order to conform to it. "Every rule, then, creates a potentiality for deviance" (Cohen, 1966, p. 4). This framed Emler and Reicher's (1995) proposal of three hypotheses on the relationship between attitudes toward authority [authority, also known as 'institutional authority', is comprised of parents, teachers, police and the law (Emler & Reicher, 1995; Levy, 2001)] and delinquency. First, young people's compliance with social order is dependent on their orientation to authority. Secondly, an understanding of and conformity to social order is developed within an educational context (further defining teachers as a perceived authority figure). Lastly, young people communicate their willingness to conform by either engaging in or abstaining from delinquent activities (Emler & Reicher, 1995). Therefore, group members with negative attitudes toward authority generate an 'us' versus 'them' schema resulting in authority being perceived as an outgroup (Emler & Reicher, 1995; Tarry & Emler, 2007) along with the various attributional errors in accompaniment as discussed previously in this chapter.

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Similar to moral disengagement, it could be argued that in order to engage in gang-related delinquency, a young person would not only have to set aside his/her moral standards, but also hold negative attitudes towards authority. In fact, Tarry and Emler (2007) suggested that anti-authority attitudes could either mediate or moderate the causal relationship between moral reasoning and delinquency. However, their study did not support these hypotheses. In spite of these specific findings, there still remains a relationship between attitudes towards authority and delinquency (both general and gang-related) worth exploring.

The literature supports that delinquent youth are likely to share anti-authority attitudes (Reicher & Emler, 1985; Tarry & Emler, 2007). Also, as mentioned previously, delinquent behaviour and group memberships endure a reciprocal relationship (Khoo & Oakes, 2000; Hakkert et al., 2001; Thornberry et al., 2003). Therefore, it can be argued that negative attitudes toward authority, correlate with delinquency, and also play a role in gang culture. Research findings have shown that gang members hold more *negative attitudes to authority* (Kakar, 2005) such as the police (Lurigio et al., 2008) and if youth are primed in their gang identities, their anti-authority attitudes increase (Khoo & Oakes, 2000). In addition, persistent contact with authority may, in fact, reinforce gang identities (McAra & McVie, 2005; Ralphs et al., 2009) exemplifying the reciprocity interactional theory denotes. So, we might expect youth involved in gangs, either as gang members or peripheral youth, to hold more negative attitudes to authority than non-gang youth.

In summary, due to the stereotypical rebellious nature of adolescence, it was assumed that young people generally held negative attitudes toward authority, however, the opposite is empirically supported within the general youth population (Murray & Thompson, 1985). Therefore, this suggests that delinquency (especially

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group delinquency) can account for any variance in measures of attitudes toward authority, thus reinforcing a relationship between the two. Lastly, a caveat worth mentioning is that researchers have found difficulty in substantiating a causal direction in the relationship between attitudes toward authority and delinquency (Reicher & Emler, 1985). It has been argued that the negative relationship (i.e., between anti-authority attitudes and delinquency) could be a result of a previously positive relationship (i.e., between pro-authority attitudes and nondelinquency) deteriorating, as suggested by strain theory (Reicher & Emler, 1985). On the other hand, it has also been argued that the negative relationship could be a result of the positive relationship never initially forming, as suggested by control theory (Reicher & Emler, 1985). This further substantiates the need for a bidirectional approach to studying gangs.

3.4.2 Attitudes toward gang culture

Unfortunately, to date, gang researchers have yet to examine the prevalence and influence of attitudes toward gang culture generally and specifically in young people. This is disappointing considering the extent to which such information could help to understand young people's behavioural choices. That is, according to Kelman (1974), another piece of the attitude-behaviour puzzle is to examine one's attitudes toward the given situation and as such, the studies reported in this thesis looked at young people's attitudes towards the existing gang culture within their communities. Therefore, since this is quite a novel approach, this section reviews the little that is known about what young people think about gangs.

It has been found that young people were more likely than adults to perceive the existence of gangs, possibly as a result of their first-hand exposure to gang members, while adults' perceptions were reported to be shaped almost entirely by the

media (Takata & Zevitz, 1990). Consequently, adults were more likely than young people to perceive gangs as a problem. A possible interpretation could be that young people may engage with gang members in a more non-criminal capacity while adults only learn about gangs from media reports on their criminal activities (Swetnam & Pope, 2001). There is some empirical value to these findings, however, the term gang was not explicitly defined in their study, therefore, each respondent could have had differing ideas on what constitutes a gang.

Pryor and McGarrell (1993) took Takata and Zevitz' research one step further by exploring other factors that could distort perceptions of gangs. Similar to the previous findings, they found that age did play a part in perception. However, they concluded that young people would have a more assured perception of the seriousness of gangs because of their contact with gang members. They also found that respondents were more likely to view youth gang crime as a nonlocal problem, with the exception of those who reported personal experiences of youth gang crime and/or if the media identified the particular area as a high-risk location. They did conclude that this result does not clearly distinguish whether the locality or media specifically influenced the respondents' perceptions.

In summary, these findings support that young people are more attuned to gang activity within their neighbourhoods. They also support the importance of evaluating their attitudes towards gang culture in addition to crime and authority because gangs offer more than an opportunity to commit crimes and oppose authority, they also provide support from a non-criminal capacity.

To conclude, "attitude is not an index of action, but a determinant, component, and consequent of it…Attitude and action are linked in a continuing reciprocal process, each generating the other in an endless chain" (Kelman, 1974, p.

316). The relationship between attitudes and gang membership is clearly of significance because beliefs and attitudes are responsible for the maintenance and reinforcement of delinquent behaviour, perhaps in the form of gang crime (Hollin et al., 2002).

3.5 Additional psychological processes

3.5.1 Hostile attribution bias

In the first chapter, one of the gang characteristics discussed was criminality. Researchers found that gang members are more likely to commit a crime than even nongang delinquents (Tita & Ridgeway, 2007). Within such criminality, gang membership has been attributed to the escalation of general criminal behaviour to more aggressive, violent criminal acts (Battin et al., 1998). For example, in the UK, it has been found that gang members are more likely than nongang members to use guns to commit robberies or even settle minor disputes (Bullock & Tilley, 2002; Shropshire & McFarquhar, 2002; Bennett & Holloway, 2004). Therefore, it can be argued that gang membership may have a strong relationship with aggression, thus, precursors to and/or correlates of increased aggression should be examined in gang research. Research supports that attributions of hostile intent are positively associated with increased aggression (Nasby, Hayden, & DePaulo, 1979; VanOostrum & Horvath, 1997). Simourd and Mamuza (2000) found that expressed anger or hostility was dependent on situational allowances and reinforcement as a result of reduced self-control, and perceived provocation. In this section, aspects of such provocation will be discussed in the context of hostile attribution bias.

Hostile attribution bias can be defined as attributing hostile or malevolent intent to a benign stimulus or context (Dodge, 1980; Nasby et al., 1980; VanOostrum & Horvath, 1997; Simourd & Mamuza, 2000). This is based on the premise that

individuals interpret a social situation through the lens of 'biologically limited capabilities' and past experiences (Crick & Dodge, 1994). Researchers have furthermore expanded on this social cognitive process by developing the Social Information-Processing (SIP) model (Crick & Dodge, 1994). Crick and Dodge (1994) suggested that a child's behavioural response is a function of processing both internal and external cues, and as a result, there are six steps to this process: encoding of cues, interpretation of cues, clarification or selection of a goal, response access or construction, response decision, and behavioural enactment.

In the reformulated SIP model, Crick and Dodge (1994) argued that each step is in constant 'communication' with an internal database of the above-mentioned 'biologically limited capabilities' and past experiences (consisting of acquired rules, social schemas, and knowledge organised in a long-term memory store). Therefore, based on this database, young people first actively (consciously and unconsciously) select which cues to attend to, followed by encoding (step 1) and interpreting the cues (step 2). The interpretation of cues can be considered the most complex step in this model. When interpreting the cues, children access a variety of cognitive processes such as: causal and intent attributions, and evaluations of goal attainment, past performance, prior and present exchanges with others, and current situational circumstances. This step is highly dependent on what is stored in the database (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

Once the interpretation of the situation is complete, Crick and Dodge (1994) proposed that children identify or construct a desired outcome based on the situational cues and the database (step 3). This provides the basis for response selection (step 4). For every goal there is a set of compatible responses, either stored or newly constructed. Children would then evaluate how successful each response

would be to the desired outcome and, thus, choose the most positively rated response (step 5). The decision of a response is based on the evaluation of three main criteria: (1) outcome expectations – what are the outcomes expected from each potential response; (2) self-efficacy – how capable is the individual to perform each response; and (3) response evaluation – how appropriate is each response. Once a decision is made, the behavioural response is enacted (step 6) (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

It was also proposed that the SIP model has a cyclical orientation and is actively reassessing the situational cues as they respond to the responses enacted by the actor. In fact, Crick and Dodge (1994) suggested that the model could be more of a 'self-perpetuating spiral' of increased hostile attributions and aggressive behaviour or social withdrawal similar to the self-fulfilling prophecy and self-serving attribution biases discussed in the previous section. Therefore, it is argued that hostile attribution biases occur when social cues are perceived and interpreted incorrectly due to an over-reliance on the internal database resulting in the individual developing current attributions on past experiences (Crick & Dodge, 1994). Sutton, Smith, and Swettenham (1999) proposed a slightly different interpretation for these biases. They suggested that young people interpret social cues accurately, however, the discrepancy lies in their response selection. According to their argument, bullies balance the cost-benefit ratio of aggressive behaviour differently, i.e., their value system is at fault (Sutton et al., 1999). However, regardless of which interpretation best explains hostile attribution biases, the conclusion remains the same: attribution biases are common between groups (Cooper & Fazio, 1979), therefore, attributions of hostile intent could explain why gangs behave aggressively towards other gangs.

In summary, once a person has identified with a particular group, in-group and out-group bias develops regardless of group similarity or an opportunity for

cooperative interaction (Brewer, 1979). Cooper and Fazio (1979) suggest that a symptom of such memberships is vicarious personalism – "the perception by members of one group that another group's actions are aimed at and intended for them" (p. 151). Gangs have been found capable of facilitating group cohesion by emphasising socio-cognitive processes for both in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination (Goldstein, 2002). Therefore, considering the link between hostile attribution biases and aggression (Nasby et al., 1979; VanOostrum & Horvath, 1997), it can be argued that gang members would make more hostile attributions than would non-gang members.

3.5.2 Criminal thinking

As previously mentioned, Kelman (1974) argued the importance of examining one's attitudes to the action in question. It has been established that gang members are more likely to engage in delinquent, law-breaking behaviours than non-gang youth (Tita & Ridgeway, 2007), therefore, it is appropriate to examine their attitude to crime itself. For the sake of nomenclature, Walters (2003; 2006; 2007) operationalised the term 'criminal thinking' and defined it as "thought content and process conducive to the initiation and maintenance of habitual law-breaking behaviour" (Walters, 2006, p. 88). This term is congruent with the current topic, attitudes to crime, and will be used from here on.

Criminal thinking has been found to have both a predictive and reciprocal relationship with delinquent behaviour (Zhang, Loeber, & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1997; Engels, Luijpers, Landsheer, & Meeus, 2004; Walters, 2006). In addition, it can be argued that the relationship between criminal thinking and behaviour complies with the enhancement model discussed in the second chapter. That is, the relationship varies as a function of prior delinquent involvement (Engels et al., 2004).

Furthermore, criminal thinking may lead to criminal cognitive distortions (Egan, McMurran, Richardson, & Blair, 2000). Egan and colleagues (2000) suggested that the reciprocity between criminal thinking and behaviour can be fuelled by cognitive distortions introduced by either criminal thinking or behaviour initially. Examples of these cognitive distortions include: internalising delinquent values and forming self-serving ideations (Egan et al., 2000); distorted 'outcome expectancies' – defined as anticipated sequelae to participation in criminal behaviours (Walters, 2003; 2007); and hostile attribution biases (Walters, 2007). Overall, it is evident that criminal thinking is correlated with delinquency, therefore, it is quite suitable to hypothesise an existing relationship between criminal thinking and gang membership.

Walters (2002) developed a tool to measure levels of various criminal thinking styles entitled 'Psychology Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles' (PICTS). It was argued that there were three factors that explain one's criminal behaviour: condition – the internal and external factors that predispose people to commit crime; constraints – conditions that limit people with respect to their behavioural and lifestyle choices; cognitions – thought processes that initiate, support and maintain behavioural choices (Palmer & Hollin, 2004). From these three factors, Walters identified four behavioural styles characteristic of offenders: interpersonal intrusiveness, lack of responsibility, self-indulgence, and social rule breaking (Palmer & Hollin, 2004). However, in order to assess one's attitude to crime considering its influence on behaviour, Walters (2003) focused on people's cognitions and devised the following eight criminal thinking styles: (1) mollification – attributing blame for one's criminal actions onto someone or something outside oneself; (2) cut-off – the cognitive dismissal of opposing factors to crime; (3) entitlement – rationalising criminal behaviour by highlighting past injustices or

current conditions; (4) power orientation – a predisposition to take control over one's environment; (5) sentimentality – one's good deeds overshadows one's criminal actions; (6) super-optimism – the belief that one's criminal career will not catch up with oneself; (7) cognitive indolence – impulsivity, impatience, and investment in short-term goals rather than long-term commitments; (8) discontinuity – a general lack of consistency in one's thoughts, plans, and actions. There is empirical support for the relationship between these criminal thinking styles and criminal behaviour (Palmer & Hollin, 2004; McCoy, Fremouw, Tyner, Clegg, & Johansson-Love, 2006).

Lastly, the purpose of examining such cognitive processes is to inform intervention programmes since the idea is to reduce criminal behaviour. Walters (2003) found that psycho-educational programmes focused on these criminal thinking styles were able to reduce these cognitions and subsequent behaviours. Therefore, further adding support to the relationship between criminal thinking styles and behaviour. However, unlike the previous attitudes, this section is simply a discussion of the various criminal thinking styles and not a preface for the methodological design of the current research study. Considering the theoretical and empirical relationship between anti-authority attitudes, pro-gang attitudes and delinquency, it can only be assumed that a gang member would hold pro-crime attitudes.

3.6 Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to review the background literature on various psychological processes that could shed light on the gang phenomenon. Essentially, what is known about the psychology of gangs is quite scarce, hence the examination of literature from areas of bullying and general youth delinquency. This chapter looked at various motivators for young people to join gangs such as the

perceived importance of social status, perceptions of outgroup threat, and arguably attitudes toward authority, crime, and gangs. In addition, this chapter looked at the cognitive mechanisms that young people rely on in order to commit the illegal and violent gang-related crimes and those are moral disengagement and hostile attribution biases.

3.7 Overview of the thesis

The overall purpose of this thesis is to shed light on the individual differences that predispose some youth to gang involvement and others toward an alternative life course regardless of their similar social and environmental circumstances. The findings of the literature reviewed in chapters one, two, and three can be consolidated into four research questions: **(1)** do gangs in the UK experience the same or similar social and environmental factors as gangs in the US?; **(2)** what are the psychological characteristics that differentiate gang from non-gang youth?; **(3)** how do these psychological characteristics/processes interact with social factors in gang members?; **(4)** how do social, behavioural, and psychological factors relate to gang-related crime specifically? All of these questions can be examined within the framework of interactional theory because it is expected that no one directional pathway will appropriately explain why young people join gangs. This thesis examines these questions via the findings of four studies conducted concurrently.

Study one. This study examined some of the individual, social, and environmental factors that differentiate gang-involved youth (both gang members and peripheral youth) and non-gang youth in a British setting. Curry and colleagues (2002) have found that it is not necessary to be a full gang member in order to experience the effects of gangs. So, by comparing non-gang youth with youth who are peripherally and fully involved in gangs, this study provided an opportunity to identify some of

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the individual, social, and environmental factors that differentiate gang-involved and non-gang youth. Therefore, it was hypothesised that based on the previous literature gang-involved youth would be older and predominantly male. It was also hypothesised that the presence of neighbourhood gangs, low levels of parental management and commitment to school, and high levels of deviant peer pressure and individual delinquency would all predict gang involvement. However, it was not expected that there would be differences in ethnic backgrounds because the literature supports that the ethnic composition of gangs is representative of the communities in which they reside (Bullock & Tilley, 2002).

Study two. This study examined gang members, peripheral youth, and non-gang youth across measures of criminal activity, the perceived importance of social status, their levels of moral disengagement, their perceptions of out-group threat, and their attitudes toward authority. The examination of different levels of gang involvement allowed for a greater understanding of the differences between youth who are not gang involved, those who are not, as yet, fully committed to gang membership, and those who are fully fledged members. It was expected that gang members and peripheral youth would commit more overall delinquency, and specifically minor offences, property offences, and crimes that harm people, than non-gang youth. It was also expected that gang members and peripheral youth, when compared to non-gang youth, would see status as more important, perceive more threat from others, have higher levels of moral disengagement, and possess higher levels of anti-authority attitudes.

Study three. This study proposed a socio-cognitive approach to gang membership that considers both internal and external types of influences and the processes by which these variables interact. This study aimed to address two questions: do gang

members blame figures of authority for their own behaviour? And do they learn these anti-authority attitudes from their delinquent peers? This approach examined the relationships between social and psychological characteristics with consideration of Thornberry and colleagues' (2003) three models of gang membership. It was hypothesised that: gang members would hold more anti-authority attitudes than non-gang youth and that they would blame others for their behaviour more than non-gang youth. It was also anticipated that gang members would experience more deviant peer pressure than non-gang youth. Finally, it was expected that anti-authority attitudes would be pivotal in terms of attribution of blame and the influence of peer pressure. Specifically it was argued that anti-authority attitudes would mediate the relationship between attribution of blame and gang membership and mediate the relationship between deviant peer pressure and gang membership.

Study four. This study examined the behavioural, social and psychological factors associated with gang-related crime. So, for this study group crime committed by non-gang youth was compared with crime committed by gang members to: **(1)** identify the types of criminal activity gang members engage in, and **(2)** identify some of the specific social, psychological and behavioural characteristics that differentiate gang members' criminal activity from non-gang group crimes. Based on previous findings, it was expected that gang members would commit more group crimes than would non-gang youth. It was also hypothesised that gang crime would be predicted by the existence of neighbourhood gangs, poor parental management, high levels of individual delinquency, deviant peer pressure, anti-authority attitudes, perceived importance of social status, and moral disengagement strategies.

In summary, the purpose of the studies reported in this thesis is to highlight some of the individual differences that distinguish gang from non-gang youth. The

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main premise is that psychology can provide valuable insight into the gang phenomenon and make significant contributions to the prevention and intervention strategies currently in effect. Psychology can also contribute to the development and/or evolution of gang theory. The next chapter presents the results of the pilot study, to be followed by four empirical chapters each outlining the findings of a specific study.

CHAPTER FOUR

<u>Methodology</u>

The previous chapter examined the literature on various psychological processes (i.e. moral disengagement, the perceived importance of social status, perception of outgroup threat, attitudes toward authority and gangs) involved in motivating young people to join gangs. As a result, four studies were devised. However, prior to the main data collection, a pilot study was conducted to ensure that the measures used were suitable for the intended participants. The current chapter presents the findings of the pilot study.

<u>4.1 The pilot study</u>

<u>4.1.1 Ethical considerations</u>

The sensitive nature of this research and the population of interest (young people aged 12-18), posed difficulties for the process of collecting the data. The schools who agreed to grant access to their students were only willing to allow single entry, that is, one questionnaire to be administered. Therefore, the measures for all four studies had to be consolidated into one questionnaire. The inclusion criterion was that participants were aged between 12 and 18 years as this age group had been identified as most at risk for gang membership (Spergel, 1995; Rizzo, 2003). For participants who were 12-16 years old, consent was provided 'in loco parentis' by their teacher. The school viewed parental consent as unnecessary as long as all ethical stipulations were observed, (i.e., voluntary participation, withdrawal opportunities, and research information provided upon request). This method allowed for the inclusion of a more representative sample in light of the existing biases (e.g. students who were ill, tardy, or truant) associated with sampling in schools (see

Esbensen, Melde, Taylor, & Peterson, 2008, for review). The older participants (17-18 years old) provided their own consent.

4.1.2 Participants

The pilot sample was recruited from one of the five schools used in the main study. This sample was simply chosen because of availability, as opposed to any risk characteristics (e.g. high risk area, school classification, etc.). Thirty-six participants took part in the pilot study. Of the pilot sample, 20 (56%) were male, 16 (44%) were female, and their ages ranged from 12-18, the mean age was 14.8 ($SD = 1.80$).

4.1.3 Procedure

First, this study was approved by the University of Kent's School of Psychology Ethics Committee. Questionnaires were administered in a classroom following a full verbal briefing regarding the purpose of the research. However, to avoid response bias, participants were not told that the research was evaluating gang membership. Instead, they were told that the questionnaire was evaluating the nature of their friendship groups. All participants were told that their responses were confidential and would remain anonymous and that their responses would have a code which would be given to them on their debrief sheet so that if they chose to withdraw, their data could be identified and destroyed. They were also told that their participation was voluntary, which meant they could leave the study at any time without penalty. Following this briefing, participants were given the opportunity to leave the study if they wished to do so. Questionnaires took approximately 60 minutes to complete after which participants were debriefed verbally and provided with a debriefing sheet which reiterated the purpose of the study, provided information on how to withdraw their data if they chose to do so and offered the

researchers' (i.e. the author and supervisor) contact details should they have further questions.

4.1.4 Changes to the questionnaire

After reviewing the pilot data, two adjustments were made to the questionnaires. Item 68 consisted of two parts: (1) "Does your group defend this area or place against other groups?" and (2) "If yes, how do they do that?" (listed as items 68 and 68a respectively, see Appendix D). Three participants responded "yes" to item 68 (a 2-point Likert-type scale, "no" or "yes"), however, did not provide an answer for item 68a (a 3-point Likert-type scale, "fight", "intimidate or threaten others", or "other (specify)"). It could be argued that the responses available were too restrictive, or that the participants did not feel comfortable selecting one of the responses. Either way, item 68a was adjusted so that the participants could provide an open-ended, rather than scale, response (see Appendix E).

Item 69 asked the participant "How long has this group existed?", followed by space for an open-ended response (see Appendix D). In some cases, the responses were difficult to enumerate or measure, for example, "since year 11" or "since we were in primary school". As a result, the item was changed so that respondents were given units of measurement to guide their answers, i.e., "How long has this group existed? (in months and/or years)" (see Appendix E).

Overall, the questionnaire required minimal adjustment and was received positively by the pilot sample. Although an overwhelming amount did comment on the length of the questionnaire, the majority ($n = 25$, 70%) of the sample did not encounter difficulty completing the questionnaire. The main reason the remainder of the participants encountered difficulty finishing the questionnaire within the time given was that they had arrived late to the session.

4.2 The main study

4.2.1 Participants

Every secondary school in the 32 London Boroughs was approached for participants (approximately 300 schools). As a result, participants were recruited from five London schools. The mean age of the sample was 14.3 years ($SD = 1.74$, range = 12-18) with 566 boys (71%) and 231 girls (29%). A large proportion of the sample reported that both parents were born in the UK (50%), 14% reported that one parent was UK-born and the other was not, and 36% reported that both parents were immigrants to the UK (see table 4.1). A total of 1041 questionnaires were returned of which 798 (77%) were used for analyses. The remainder were discarded because of lack of, or incorrect completion of, questionnaire items. Similar to the pilot study, the inclusion criterion was that participants were aged between 12 and 18 years as this age group has been identified as most at risk for gang membership (Spergel, 1995; Rizzo, 2003). For participants who were 12-16 years old, consent was provided 'in loco parentis' by either their teachers, head teachers, or deputy head teachers. The schools viewed parental consent as unnecessary as long as all ethical stipulations were observed, (i.e., voluntary participation, withdrawal opportunities, and research information provided upon request). This not only allowed for our very high participation rate of 77% (Esbensen and colleagues (2008) support a threshold of 70%), but also the inclusion of a more representative sample in light of the existing biases (e.g. students who were ill, tardy, or truant) associated with sampling in schools (see Esbensen et al., 2008, for review). The older participants (17-18 years old) provided their own consent.

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Table 4.1

Demographic characteristics of the total sample

Demographic characteristics	Total
Sample size	798
Mean age (*SD*)	14.30 (1.74)
Sex(%)	
Male	566 (71)
Female	232 (29)
Ethnicity (%)	
UK	395 (50)
Mixed	112 (14)
Other	291 (36)

4.2.2 Measures

The youth survey: Eurogang program of research (Weerman et al., 2009). This is a comprehensive instrument consisting of 89 items including information on demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and ethnic background (coded as 1 = UK, 2 = Mixed, 3 = Other). This instrument is also designed to identify those who do and do not belong to a gang according to the Eurogang definition and is useful in highlighting risk and protective factors for gang membership.

Gang involvement. Group affiliations were first assessed: e.g. "In addition to any such formal groups, some people have a certain group of friends that they spend time with, doing things together or just hanging out. Do you have a group of friends like that?" Participants who responded "yes" were then asked questions assessing gang membership. According to the Eurogang definition's four components the following

were measured: youthfulness – i.e., all members of the group were under the age of 25; durability – the group had been together for more than three months; street-orientation – responding "yes" to the item "Does this group spend a lot of time together in public places like the park, the street, shopping areas, or the neighbourhood?"; group criminality as an integral part of the group identity – responding "yes" to the items "Is doing illegal things accepted by or okay for your group?" and "Do people in your group actually do illegal things together?". As a result, 59 participants were identified as gang members. Peripheral involvement was measured using a two-cluster analysis of the remaining participants' responses to their group's durability, street orientation, and criminal identity. This analysis used a k-means algorithm where each case was assigned to the cluster for which its distance to the cluster mean was smallest (Norusis, 2009). The analysis revealed a similar pattern of responses where the non-gang group ($n = 664$) had low group durability, were not street-oriented, and little to no criminal identity; the peripheral group ($n = 75$) had been together longer, were street-oriented, and were more likely to have a criminal identity (see table 4.2 for the distribution of the participants' responses to the gang criteria questions).

Table 4.2

Distribution of the responses to the gang criteria questions by gang members, peripheral youth, and non-gang youth

Gang criteria	Non-gang	Peripheral	Gang
N (%)	(*N* = 664)	(*N* = 75)	(*N* = 59)
Durability	352 (53)	74 (99)	59 (100)
Street orientation	252 (38)	74 (99)	59 (100)
Illegal activity accepted by group	97 (15)	27 (36)	59 (100)
Illegal activity conducted by group	85 (13)	21 (28)	59 (100)

Parental management. The questionnaire consists of 13 items using a 5-point Likert-type scale (i.e. ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree") assessing the participants' perceptions of their parents. The items cover parenting skills such as supervision/monitoring (e.g. "Your parents know where you are when you are not at home or at school" and "Your parents know who you are with if you are not at home") and support (e.g. "You depend upon your parents for advice and guidance" and "Your parents praise you when you do well"). Also, the items include negative perceptions, e.g. "Your parents don't try to understand your problems" and "Your parents are always picking on you."

School commitment. This variable was measured with seven items (e.g. "Homework is a waste of time" and "Grades are very important to you") using a 5-point Likert-type scale (ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree") with one exception, "If you had to choose between studying to get a good grade on a test or going out with your friends, which would you do?" The participants were given the following

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to select from: "definitely go with friends", "probably go with friends", "uncertain", "probably study", and "definitely study".

Deviant peer pressure. The participants' commitment to deviant peers was measured with three items: "If your group of friends was getting you into trouble [at home], how likely is it that you would still hang out with them?", the same was asked "at school" and "with the police". Responses were provided on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from "not at all likely" to "very likely".

Neighbourhood gangs. Gang members have been found to come from neighbourhoods with already existing gangs (Spergel, 1995; Thornberry et al., 2003; Hall et al., 2006), thus identified as a risk factor. The participants were asked: "Are there any gangs in your neighbourhood or city?" with a response choice of "no" or "yes".

Delinquency. The delinquency measure was divided into three sub-groups in line with Esbensen and Weerman's (2005) previous work. All responses were assessed using a 5-point Likert-type scale: "never", "once or twice", "3-5 times", "6-10 times", and "more than 10 times". *Minor offending* consisted of two items: "During the past 6 months, how often have you avoided paying for something such as movies, bus or underground rides" and "purposely damaged or destroyed property that did not belong to you." *Property offending* consisted of four items: e.g. "stolen or tried to steal something worth less than £50" and "stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle." *Crimes against the person* consisted of three items: e.g. "hit someone with the idea of hurting the person" and "attacked someone with a weapon." *Individual delinquency* consisted of 16 items including all of the above with additional items: e.g. "carried a hidden weapon for protection" and "sold illegal drugs" (see table 6.2 for full list).

Group crime. Fourteen items were used to assess participants' involvement in group crime. Using a 4-point Likert-type scale (i.e. ranging from "never" to "often"), they were asked how often their group committed a range of offences. Examples include: "threaten people", "illegal drug use", "destroy property" and "physical assault".

Perception of out-group threat. The perception of out-group threat was measured by one item that was created by the authors: "How much do you feel threatened by other groups of youth?" Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from "not at all" to "very much".

Social status scale (South & Wood, 2006). South and Wood's (2006) 18-item scale measures perceptions of the importance of having status. Participants responded to a Likert-type scale with five options for each item ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. The items included various scenarios regarding respect, e.g., "At school students respect people who can fight," "At school good looking people are popular," and "At school if people pick on the 'nerds' they get respect from other students" (South & Wood, 2006).

Mechanisms of moral disengagement scale (Bandura et al., 1996). Bandura and colleagues' (1996) scale consists of 32 items assessing agreement or disagreement with statements regarding moral disengagement strategies. Four statements assess each of the eight mechanisms: moral justification, euphemistic language, advantageous comparison, displacement of responsibility, diffusion of responsibility, distorting consequences, attribution of blame, and dehumanization of victims. The value of this scale lies not only in its ability to assess whether people are willing to set aside their moral standards in order to achieve a desired outcome, but also in its ability to identify specific cognitive strategies used to do so. *Attribution of blame* was examined independently in chapter seven. Four statements assessing

participants' use of the strategy *attribution of blame* consisted of: "If kids fight and misbehave in school it is their teacher's fault", "If people are careless where they leave their things it is their own fault if they get stolen", "Kids who get mistreated usually do things that deserve it", and "Children are not at fault for misbehaving if their parents force them too much".

Attitude toward formal authority scale (Reicher & Emler, 1985). Reicher and Emler's (1985) Attitude to Formal Authority Scale assesses youth attitudes towards authority figures such as school officials and the police. The scale consisted of the 17 items discussed in Reicher and Emler's (1985) publication and responses were assessed using a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' on statements regarding attitudes toward various encounters with authority.

4.2.3 Procedure

Since the procedure for the pilot study was very successful, the procedure remained the same for the main data collection.

4.2.4 Reliability analyses

Data were entered into SPSS where analyses were conducted using a $p < 0.05$ level of significance. Reliability analyses were conducted on each scale except for the variables *neighbourhood gangs and perception of outgroup threat* because they only had one item. The analyses confirmed that all scales had low – high internal consistency: parental management, $\alpha = 0.71$; school commitment, $\alpha = 0.75$; deviant peer pressure, $\alpha = 0.84$; minor offending (Esbensen & Weerman, 2005), $\alpha = 0.45$; property offending (Esbensen & Weerman, 2005), $\alpha = 0.61$; crimes against the person (Esbensen & Weerman, 2005), $\alpha = 0.42$; individual delinquency (Esbensen & Weerman, 2005), $\alpha = 0.82$; group crime, $\alpha = 0.89$; the Importance of Social Status Scale (South & Wood, 2006), $\alpha = 0.91$; the Mechanisms for Moral Disengagement

scale (Bandura et al., 1996), $\alpha = 0.91$; attribution of blame (Bandura et al., 1996); and the Attitude toward Formal Authority (Reicher & Emler, 1985), $\alpha = 0.85$.

4.3 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the findings of the pilot study and research methodology for the main data collection. Minimal changes were made to the questionnaire as a result of the pilot study. Once the main data collection was complete, the data were inputted and analysed using SPSS and SAS. The next chapter presents the findings from the first empirical study.

CHAPTER FIVE

Gang involvement: Social and environmental factors

The gang problem in America is a social priority considering its immense toll on human life (Tita & Ridgeway, 2007). Unfortunately this reality is emerging in Europe as well. The Eurogang paradox (where authorities in European countries use the stereotype of American gangs to inform their definition of a gang) is slowly and surely being realised (Klein et al., 2001) and more researchers are beginning to investigate the extent of the gang problem in the UK (Bullock & Tilley, 2002; Shropshire & McFarquhar, 2002; Bennett & Holloway, 2004; Sharp et al., 2006; Ralphs et al., 2009). This delay is unfortunate since research has found overwhelming similarities between European and American gangs (Klein et al., 2006). The purpose of this chapter is to examine what is known about the social and environmental antecedents of gangs and to determine the extent to which they distinguish youth at different levels of involvement in a British context.

5.1 Study one

As discussed in chapter two, interactional theory (Thornberry et al., 2003) posits that gang membership results from a reciprocal relationship between the individual and peer groups, social structures (i.e. poor neighbourhood, school and family environments), weakened social bonds, and a learning environment that fosters and reinforces delinquency (Hall et al., 2006). While the purpose of this chapter, and the forthcoming empirical chapters, is not to test theory, interactional theory has been used to better understand and make educated inferences about the relationships between gang involvement and its associated social/environmental factors.

In addition to Thornberry et al.'s (2003) interactional theory, they also argued that the causal processes associated with gang membership could be mapped out in a model. Neighbourhood, family, school and peer influences all play a role in the cumulative risk of gang involvement. Wood and Alleyne (2010) also acknowledged this in their *unified theory of gang involvement.* Their comprehensive framework provided testable hypotheses that may guide the current and future empirical examinations of why youth may or may not join gangs. As a result, they argued that both psychological and criminological factors contribute to the risk of becoming a gang member, this proposition reflects no other in the current literature (Wood & Alleyne, 2010). Therefore, it was from these theoretical advances that the current empirical chapter was formulated.

Curry and colleagues (2002) have found that it is not necessary to be a full gang member in order to experience the effects of gangs. So, by comparing non-gang youth with youth who are peripherally and fully involved in gangs, this study provides an opportunity to identify some of the individual, social, and environmental factors that differentiate gang-involved and non-gang youth. Therefore, it was hypothesised that (based on the reviewed literature) gang-involved youth would be older, predominantly male, live in neighbourhoods with gangs present, report lower levels of parental management and commitment to school, and higher levels of deviant peer pressure and individual delinquency. However, it was also hypothesised that there would not be any differences in ethnic backgrounds because the literature supports the premise that the ethnic composition of gangs is representative of the communities in which they reside (Bullock & Tilley, 2002).

Please refer to chapter four for the participants, measures, procedure and reliability analyses.

Table 5.1

Demographic characteristics of the total sample, non-gang youth and gang-involved youth

Demographic characteristics	Total	Non-gang	Gang-involved
Sample size (%)	798	664 (83)	134 (17)
Mean age	14.30	14.18	14.84
Sex(%)			
Male	566 (71)	469 (83)	97 (17)
Female	232 (29)	195 (84)	37(16)
Ethnicity (%)			
UK	395 (50)	325 (82)	70 (18)
Mixed	112 (14)	95 (85)	17 (15)
Other	291 (36)	244 (84)	47 (16)

5.3 Results

Gang involvement

Gang involved youth, i.e. gang members and peripheral youth ($n = 134$), were identified based on the analyses outlined in chapter four. All remaining participants ($n = 664$) were labelled as non-gang youth.

Demographic characteristics

Using a oneway ANOVA, it was found that gang-involved youth ($M = 14.84$, $SD = 1.66$) were older than non-gang youth ($M = 14.18$, $SD = 1.74$; $F(1, 796) = 16.22$, $p < 0.001$). There were no gender differences ($F(1, 796) = 0.17$, $p = 0.68$) nor were there differences in ethnic background ($F(1, 796) = 0.33$, $p = 0.57$).

Logistic regression

A logistic regression was conducted to see which social and environmental factors (i.e. parental management, deviant peer pressure, school commitment, individual delinquency, and neighbourhood gangs) predicted gang involvement (gang-involved youth and non-gang youth). The predictor variables were continuous total scores of each scale with the exeption of *neighbourhood gang* which was a dichotomous variable (i.e. 'yes' and 'no' response to 'Are there any gangs in your neighbourhood or city?'). Results showed that the full model significantly predicted gang involvement, omnibus chi-square $= 40.379$, df $= 5$, $p < 0.001$. The model accounted for between 4.9% and 8.3% of the variance in gang involvement. Of the five predictor variables, individual delinquency and neighbourhood gangs were significant predictors. The values of the coefficients revealed that an increase in individual delinquency and neighbourhood gangs was associated with an increase in gang involvement (see table 5.2 for the coefficients, Wald statistic, degrees of freedom, probability values, and p values).

Table 5.2

Logistic regression: Social and environmental factors predicting gang involvement

Variables	B	Wald	df	p	Exp(B)	95% CI for Exp(B)	
						Lower	*Upper*
Parental management	-0.01	0.44	1	0.508	0.99	0.96	1.02
Deviant peer pressure	0.04	1.45	1	0.229	1.04	0.97	1.12
School commitment	0.01	0.04	1	0.838	1.01	0.95	1.06
Individual delinquency	0.04	5.04	1	0.025	1.04	1.01	1.07
Neighbourhood gangs	0.99	21.26	1	0.001	2.68	1.76	4.08

Additional analyses

The non-significant relationships between the variables parental management, deviant peer pressure, and school commitment with the outcome variable, gang involvement, were contrary to the hypotheses. Therefore, it was argued that these variables had indirect relationships with the outcome variable and structural equation modelling was employed to confirm the nature of these indirect relationships. Because of the cross-sectional design of the study, causality can not be tested, however, it was proposed that directional pathways could be measured based on Thornberry and colleagues (2003) model of causal processes associated with gang membership and Wood and Alleyne's (2010) *unified theory of gang involvement*. Means, standard deviations, and correlations among the observed variables are presented in table 5.3. The software used to conduct this analysis was SAS version 9.2.

Based on the variables measured in this study, a theoretical model was formed (see figure 5.1). The standardised coefficient values and fit indices for the theoretical model are presented in figure 5.2. The results showed that the model was not a good fit for the data. As a result, the model was modified with additional pathways supported by past research and theory. It was argued that neighbourhood gangs would have a direct relationship with gang involvement, as seen in the logistic regression and prior research (Hall et al., 2006; Klein & Maxson, 2006); and neighbourhood gangs would also have a direct relationship with individual delinquency (Hall et al., 2006). It was also argued that parental management would have a direct relationship with individual delinquency (Chung & Steinberg, 2006). The standardised coefficient values and fit indices for the modified model are presented in figure 5.3. The results showed that the model was a good fit for the data. Lastly, the delta T test ($\Delta T = 79.74$) was significant at $p < 0.001$ confirming that the modified model was indeed a better fit. Therefore, as previously argued, parental management, school commitment, and deviant peer pressure all have indirect effects on gang involvement.

Table 5.3

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among observed variables (N = 798)

	Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Parental management	44.11	6.88					
2.	Deviant peer pressure	7.15	2.98	-0.29***				
3.	School commitment	23.02	3.89	0.39***	-0.36***			
4.	Individual delinquency	20.58	5.77	-0.38***	0.33***	-0.35***		
5.	Neighbourhood gangs	1.53	0.50	-0.09*	0.11**	-0.07*	0.13***	
6.	Gang involvement	0.17	0.37	-0.09*	0.10**	-0.06	0.14***	0.19***

*$p < 0.05$. **$p < 0.01$. ***$p < 0.001$.
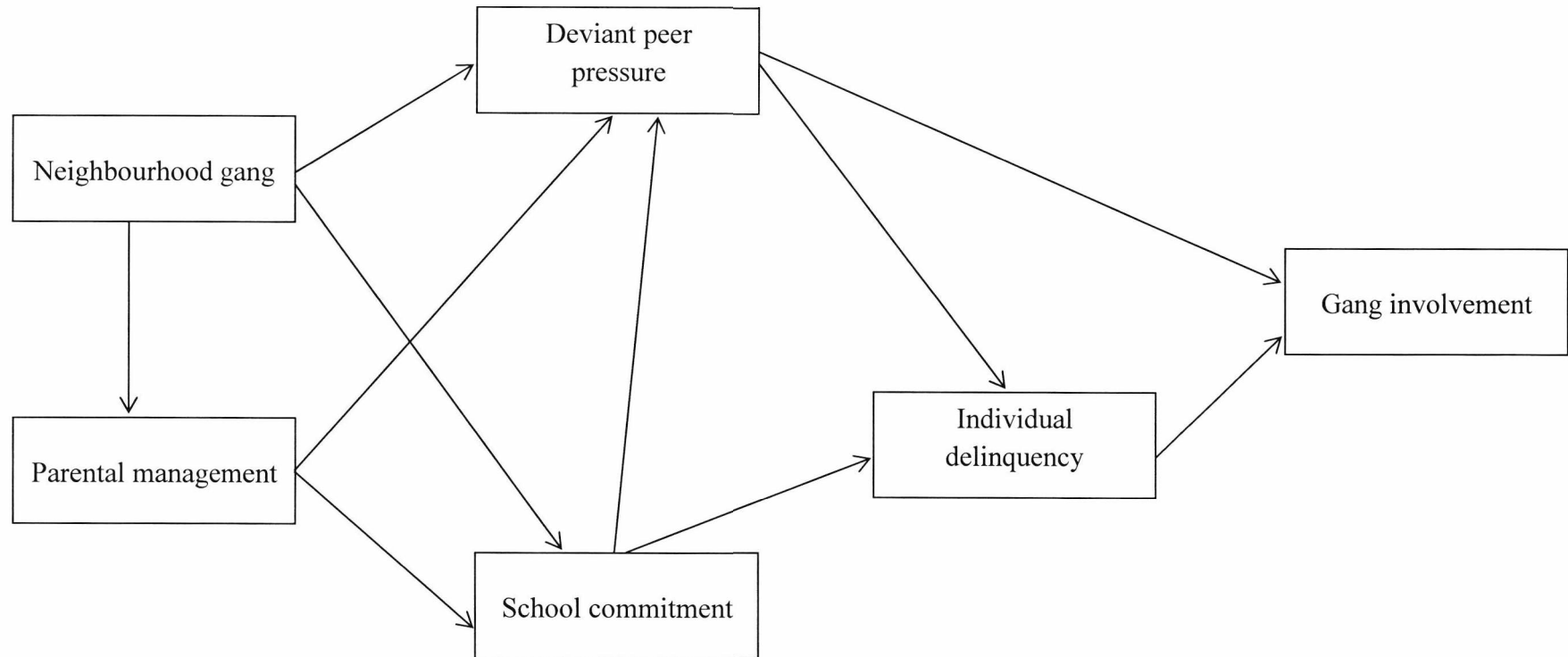
Figure 5.1. Hypothesised model of gang involvement.
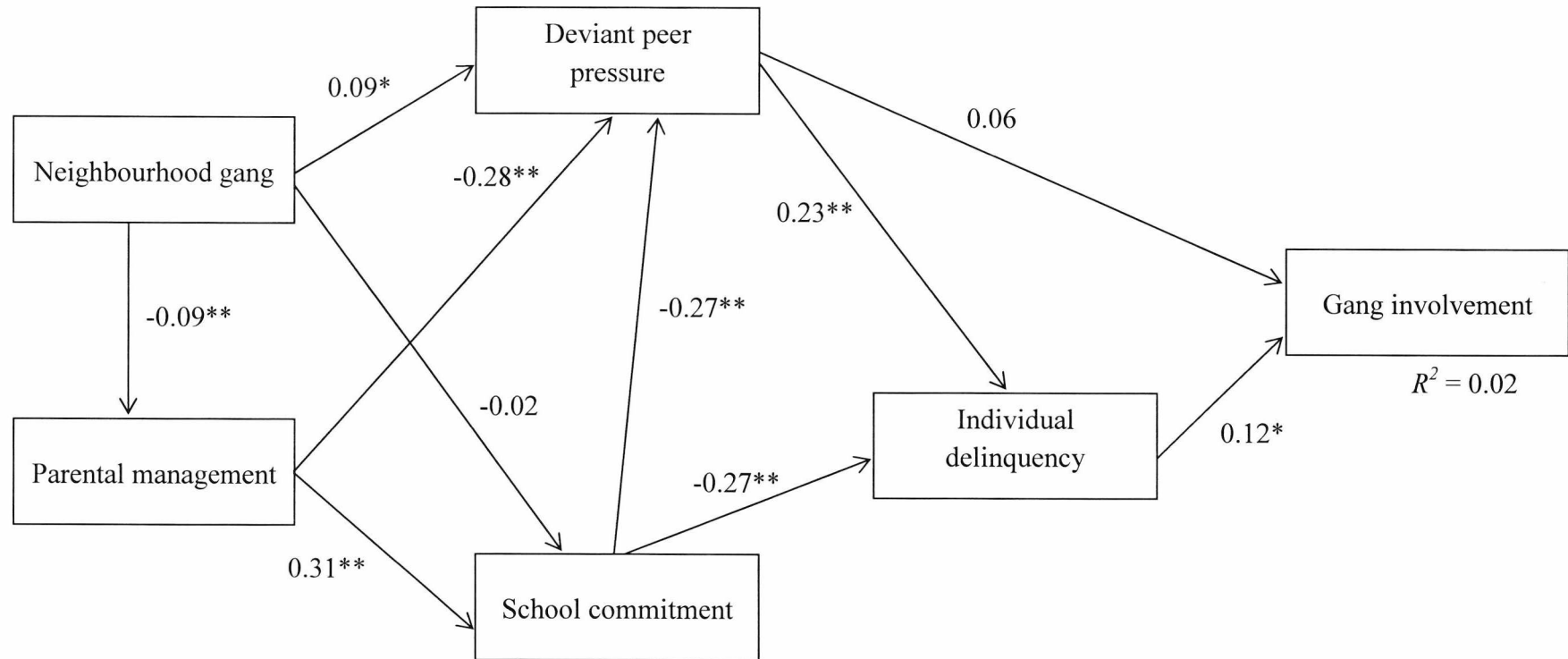
Figure 5.2. Standardized estimates for the theoretical model predicting gang involvement. $N = 798$, chi-square = 80.09.df = 5, $p <$ 0.001, CFI = 0.85, GFI = 0.97, NFI = 0.85, RMSEA = 0.14 (0.11-0.16).

*$p < 0.05$. **$p < 0.01$.
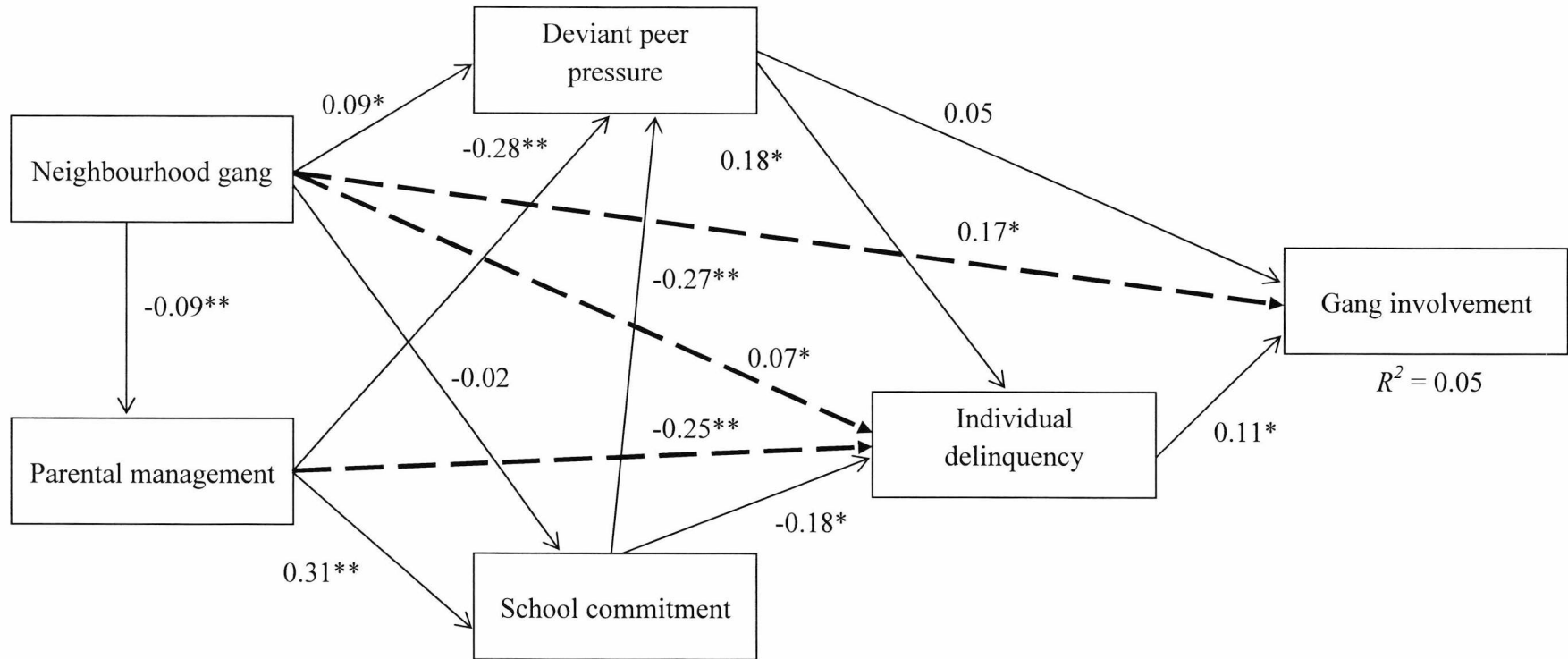
Figure 5.3. Standardized estimates for the modified model predicting gang involvement. $N = 798$, chi-square = 0.35.df = 2, $p = 0.838$, CFI = 1.00, GFI = 1.00, NFI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0 (0-0.04).

*$p < 0.05$. **$p < 0.01$.

5.4 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine some of the individual, social and environmental factors that differentiate gang-involved and non-gang youth in a British setting. The results showed that gang-involved youth were older than non-gang youth, and individual delinquency along with neighbourhood gangs were significant predictors of gang involvement. There were not, however, any differences in gender and ethnicity between gang-involved and non-gang youth suggesting that similar to previous literature, girls are becoming more gang involved (Esbensen, Deschenes, & Winfree, Jr., 1999) and the ethnic composition of a gang is representative of its community (Bullock & Tilley, 2002). Contrary to the hypotheses, parental management, school commitment, and deviant peer pressure were not direct predictors of gang involvement. However, structural equation modelling showed that they had indirect relationships leading to gang involvement. A fuller discussion of these findings is conducted in chapter nine.

This chapter expanded on previous literature by examining both gang members and peripherally involved youth because the effects of gang membership is not only experienced by gang members themselves, but by a broader circle of youth who may or may not become gang members in the future (Curry et al., 2002). The next chapter presents a study examining the socio-cognitive processes that leave youth vulnerable to the consequences of gang membership.

CHAPTER SIX

Gang involvement: Psychological and behavioural characteristics of gang members, peripheral youth and non-gang youth

The existence of gangs can no longer be regarded as an urban myth in the UK (Klein et al., 2001). Metropolitan areas such as Edinburgh (Bradshaw, 2005), Glasgow (Everard, 2006), Manchester (Mares, 2001; Shropshire & McFarquhar, 2002), London, and Birmingham (Shropshire & McFarquhar, 2002) are especially affected by gang-related crime, and several additional cities have reported gang-like activity (Shropshire & McFarquhar, 2002). However, the Eurogang paradox (Klein et al., 2001) has stunted the development of empirical research and as a result, the literature on gangs in Europe, and particularly in the UK, has only recently begun to emerge (Hallsworth & Young, 2004). This is unfortunate since research has found overwhelming similarities between European and American gangs (Klein et al., 2006). As a result, the majority of what is known about gangs comes primarily from research conducted in the US (Klein et al., 2006).

The previous chapter exemplifies the scope of the current gang literature which has been primarily criminological and sociological in nature (Bennett & Holloway, 2004; Wood & Alleyne, 2010), and since criminological theories pay scant attention to the social psychological processes involved in joining a gang (Thornberry et al., 2003) there is a real need to understand more about the *psychology* of gang involvement (Wood & Alleyne, 2010). To that end, the study presented in this chapter compared gang members, peripheral youth and non-gang youth to gain insight into the social-cognitive processes that leave youth vulnerable to the consequences of gang membership. This study has been accepted for

publication (see Alleyne & Wood, in press), and this chapter presents an adapted version of the publication.

6.1 What we do not know about gangs

To date, there is little known about the psychological processes that Thornberry and colleagues (2003) discuss as facilitators of gang membership (see chapter three for full review). In their research they show that delinquent beliefs interact reciprocally with associations with delinquent peers and delinquent behaviour (Thornberry et al., 1994). However, it can be argued that these beliefs need further examination because they include various forms of attitudes, perceptions and cognitions and they are more resistant to intervention (Hollin et al., 2002).

For example, the temptation to join a gang may be prompted by the perception that gangs offer youth the opportunity to gain respect and status (Anderson, 1999; Klein & Maxson, 2006). Knox (1994) described gangs as exerting two types of social power that attract youth: coercive power and the power to reward their members. As such, gangs reflect universal needs of young people for status, identity and companionship (Klein, 1995; Klein & Maxson, 2006). Young boys look up to gang members, mimic them, and aspire to gang membership (Hughes & Short, 2005) and gang films depicting characters rewarded for gang-like behaviours act as a blueprint for young aspiring gang members (Przemieniecki, 2005). So, it is feasible that a young person who sees *status as important* may be tempted into gangs. Therefore, it is also reasonable to expect that gang members will give status more importance than will non-gang youth.

However, youth may experience internal moral conflict when they discover benefits requiring immoral behaviour, since harmful behaviour is likely to conflict with their existing moral standards. Research shows that youth do indeed set aside

their moral standards if by doing so they will be accepted by a chosen group (Emler & Reicher, 1995). Research also shows a relationship between moral disengagers and violent behaviour (Bandura et al., 1996; see chapter three for full review of the moral disengagement literature). As a result, social cognitive processes such as moral disengagement may help explain the process of *how* youth set aside their existing moral standards in favour of the rewards gang membership offers. Also, if there are differences between types of gang members and their use of moral disengagement strategies, there may be evidence of the way in which gang cognitions facilitate joining a gang and engaging in gang-related crime.

The literature supports the premise that gang members hold more *negative attitudes to authority* (Kakar, 2005) as represented by the police (Lurigio et al., 2008) and if youth are primed in their gang identities, their anti-authority attitudes increase (Khoo & Oakes, 2000; see chapter three for full review of attitudes toward authority literature). In addition, persistent contact with authority may, in fact, reinforce gang identities (McAra & McVie, 2005; Ralphs et al., 2009) exemplifying the reciprocity interactional theory denotes. So, it can be hypothesised that youth involved in gangs, either as gang members or peripheral youth, are likely to hold more negative attitudes toward authority than non-gang youth.

Perception of outgroup threat (also see chapter three for review) might explain why young people join gangs (e.g. protection), remain in the gang (e.g. collective identity and group cohesion), and engage in gang violence (Decker, 1996; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). As Klein (1995) observes: ".....in the gang there is protection from attack ...... It provides what he has not obtained from his family, in school, or elsewhere in his community" (p.78). Therefore, youth who become involved in gangs may be those who experience most threat from others.

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<u>6.2 Study two</u>

Comparisons are all too rare in the gang literature (Klein, 2006) and so by comparing gang with non-gang youth this study provides an opportunity to examine some of the psychological processes that differentiate gang members from non-gang youth. In addition, by comparing varying levels of gang involvement progress can be made to pinpoint some of the unique and/or shared psychological characteristics at each level (Decker & Curry, 2000). Since it is not necessary to be a full gang member in order to experience the effects of gang membership (Curry et al., 2002), these comparisons will help to understand more about the differences between youth who are not gang involved, those who are not, as yet, fully committed to gang membership, and those who are fully fledged members. This allows for a greater understanding of the processes involved in the development of gang membership and also highlights ways to circumvent these processes, which is an area lacking in existing research (Klein & Maxson, 2006). Also, if these psychological factors that underlie a tendency to join or form a gang could be identified then at risk youth could be more easily identified. These psychological factors would also add to a more comprehensive theory of gang development (see Wood & Alleyne, 2010). Since the most successful intervention programs targeting delinquency address social, cognitive, and behavioural processes (Hollin et al., 2002), these psychological factors could be used to construct more successful interventions to reduce gang membership.

This approach included an examination of different levels of gang involvement. Researchers acknowledge a loose and fluid hierarchy within and around the gang, consisting of gang members and youth who exist along the gang's periphery (Stelfox, 1998; Esbensen et al., 2001; Curry et al., 2002). For example,

Curry and colleagues (2002) examined the differences in delinquency for young people with no gang involvement, gang involvement but not members, and gang members. They found that the fluid and gradual process of increasing gang involvement had significant effects on delinquency and although they could not speak directly from a developmental perspective, their findings highlight the potential for a developmental trajectory of gang involvement. Previous research has labelled these 'gang-involved non-members' as peripheral, fringe, and/or wannabes (Spergel, 1995). For the purpose of this study, levels of involvement were defined and labelled as follows: gang members – those who fit the aforementioned Eurogang definition; peripheral youth – those who do not identify themselves as gang members but may participate in gang-related crime and activity; and non-gang youth – those who do not identify themselves as gang members and do not engage in any form of gang related crime and activity. An examination of the effects gang membership has on delinquency in conjunction with the extent of involvement with a gang, may highlight the processes that facilitate gang involvement (Thornberry et al., 2003).

The expectations were that gang members and peripheral youth would commit more overall delinquency (specifically minor offences, property offences, and crimes that harm people), than non-gang youth. It was also expected that gang members and peripheral youth, when compared to non-gang youth, would see status as more important, perceive more threat from others, have higher levels of moral disengagement, and possess higher levels of anti-authority attitudes.

6.3 Method

Please refer to chapter four for the participants, measures, procedure and reliability analyses.

Table 6.1

Demographic characteristics of the total sample, non-gang youth, peripheral youth, and gang members

Demographic characteristics	Total	Non-gang	Peripheral	Gang
Sample size (%)	798	664 (83)	75 (9)	59 (7)
Mean age	14.30	14.18	14.43	15.37
Sex(%)				
Male	566 (71)	469 (71)	59 (79)	38 (64)
Female	232 (29)	195 (29)	16 (21)	21 (36)
Ethnicity (%)				
UK	395 (50)	325 (49)	40 (53)	30 (51)
Mixed	112 (14)	95 (14)	5 (7)	12 (20)
Other	291 (36)	244 (37)	30 (40)	17 (29)

6.4 Results

Membership

Of the 798 participants, 59 (7%) were identified as gang members, 75 (9%) were identified as peripheral youth, and 664 (83%) were identified as non-gang youth.

Demographic characteristics

Using a oneway ANOVA, significant age differences were found between groups ($F(2, 795) = 13.22$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.03$). Bonferroni post-hoc analysis revealed that gang members ($M = 15.37$, $SD = 1.50$) were older than peripheral youth ($M = 14.43$, $SD = 1.68$, $p < 0.01$) and non-gang youth ($M = 14.18$, $SD = 1.74$, $p < 0.001$). However, there were no significant differences between peripheral and non-

gang youth ($p = 0.74$). Also, there were no gender ($F(2, 795) = 1.71, p = 0.18$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.004$) or ethnic ($F(2, 795) = 0.31, p = 0.73$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.001$) differences across levels of involvement.

Criminal activity

Table 6.2 shows the prevalence of gang members, peripheral youth, and non-gang youth who reported committing each type of delinquency at least once in the past six months. As discussed previously, individual scores were summed to provide total scores for minor offending (*range* = 2-10), property offending (*range* = 4-20), crimes against the person (*range* = 3-15), and overall delinquency (*range* = 16-80). A MANCOVA was conducted to see whether the different offending measures varied as a function of gang involvement (gang, peripheral, and non-gang) after adjusting for any age, gender, and ethnicity effects. Preliminary analyses confirmed that the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes was not violated. After the adjustments for the covariates, minor offending ($F(2, 792) = 3.18, p < 0.05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.01$), crimes against the person ($F(2, 792) = 3.97, p < 0.05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.01$), and overall delinquency ($F(2, 792) = 6.10, p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.02$) had significant effects on gang involvement; property offending ($F(2, 792) = 1.01, p = 0.36$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.003$) did not have an effect on gang involvement (see table 6.3 for adjusted means). Follow-up tests were conducted to evaluate pairwise differences among the adjusted means for minor offending, crimes against the person, and overall delinquency. The LSD posthoc analysis showed that gang members scored higher on minor offending ($p < 0.05$) and overall delinquency ($p < 0.01$) than non-gang youth. The results also showed that peripheral youth scored significantly higher than non-gang youth on the crimes against the person measure ($p < 0.05$) and overall delinquency ($p < 0.05$).

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Table 6.2

Prevalence of non-gang youth, peripheral youth, and gang members who committed offences at least once in the past six months

Type of delinquency	Non-gang (N = 584)		Peripheral (N = 75)		Gang (N = 59)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Minor offending	342	52	43	57	38	64
Avoid paying for merchandise	263	40	33	44	35	59
Damaged or destroyed property	169	26	27	36	18	31
Property offending	179	27	26	35	24	41
Stolen items worth less than £50	170	26	25	33	22	37
Stolen items worth more than £50	25	4	4	5	4	7
Break and enter to steal	24	4	5	7	4	7
Stolen a motor vehicle	9	1	0	0	1	2
Crimes against person	330	50	46	61	35	59
Hit someone	327	49	46	61	34	58
Attacked with a weapon	32	5	4	5	5	9
Used a weapon to get money	17	3	3	4	2	3
Other						
Truancy	201	30	22	29	28	48
Lie about age	301	45	43	57	41	70
Carry a weapon	32	5	6	8	6	10
Graffiti	37	6	7	9	7	12
Gang fight	62	9	9	12	10	17
Sell drugs	12	2	1	1	0	0
Used drugs	48	7	14	19	10	17

Table 6.3

Adjusted means and standard deviations for minor offending, property offending,

crimes against people, and overall delinquency

Offending type		M	SD
Minor*	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	3.60(a)	0.21
	Peripheral ($N = 75$, 9%)	3.33(ab)	0.18
	Non-gang ($N = 664$, 83%)	3.10(b)	0.06
Property	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	4.71	0.18
	Peripheral ($N = 75$, 9%)	4.69	0.15
	Non-gang ($N = 664$, 83%)	4.52	0.05
Crimes against people*	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	4.18(ab)	0.18
	Peripheral ($N = 75$, 9%)	4.26(a)	0.15
	Non-gang ($N = 664$, 83%)	3.87(b)	0.05
Overall delinquency**	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	22.49(a)	0.75
	Peripheral ($N = 75$, 9%)	21.84(a)	0.65
	Non-gang ($N = 664$, 83%)	20.27(b)	0.22

Note: Means adjusted for age, gender, and ethnicity. Means that do not share
subscripts differ at $p < .05$.

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$

Psychological characteristics

A second MANCOVA was conducted to see whether the psychological measures (attitudes toward authority, perceived importance of social status, perceptions of outgroup threat, and moral disengagement) varied as a function of gang involvement after adjusting for any age, gender, and ethnicity effects. Preliminary analyses confirmed that the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes was not violated. After the adjustments for the covariates, anti-authority attitudes ($F(2, 793) = 3.00$, $p < 0.05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.01$), and perceived importance of social status ($F(2, 793) = 5.26$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.01$) had significant effects on gang involvement; moral disengagement ($F(2, 793) = 2.56$, $p = 0.08$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.01$) and perceptions of outgroup threat ($F(2, 793) = 0.47$, $p = 0.63$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.001$) did not have an effect on gang involvement (see table 6.4 for adjusted means). Follow-up tests were conducted to evaluate pairwise differences among the adjusted means for attitudes toward authority and perceived importance of social status. The LSD posthoc analysis showed that gang youth scored significantly higher on both anti-authority attitudes ($p < 0.05$) and the perceived importance of social status ($p < 0.01$) than non-gang youth. The results also showed that peripheral youth perceived social status as more important than non-gang youth ($p < 0.05$).

Table 6.4

Adjusted means and standard deviations for anti-authority attitudes, perceived

importance of social status, perception of out-group threat, and moral

disengagement

Psychological variable		M	SD
Anti-authority attitudes*	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	39.30$_{(a)}$	1.35
	Peripheral ($N = 75$, 9%)	36.85$_{(ab)}$	1.18
	Non-gang ($N = 664$, 83%)	35.93$_{(b)}$	0.40
Perceived importance of social status**	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	58.93$_{(a)}$	1.74
	Peripheral ($N = 75$, 9%)	57.31$_{(a)}$	1.52
	Non-gang ($N = 664$, 83%)	54.03$_{(b)}$	0.51
Perception of out-group threat	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	2.13	0.14
	Peripheral ($N = 75$, 9%)	1.97	0.12
	Non-gang ($N = 664$, 83%)	2.08	0.04
Moral disengagement	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	77.03	2.47
	Peripheral ($N = 75$, 9%)	75.43	2.17
	Non-gang ($N = 664$, 83%)	72.16	0.73

Note: Means adjusted for age, gender, and ethnicity. Means that do not share subscripts differ at p < .05.

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$

A final MANCOVA was conducted to see whether the moral disengagement strategies (moral justification, euphemistic labelling, advantageous comparison, displacement of responsibility, diffusion of responsibility, distortion of consequences, attribution of blame, and dehumanization) varied as a function of gang involvement after adjusting for any age, gender, and ethnicity effects. Preliminary analyses confirmed that the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes was not violated. After the adjustments for the covariates, euphemistic language ($F(2, 793) = 3.71$, $p < 0.05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.01$), displacement of responsibility ($F(2, 793) = 3.05$, $p < 0.05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.01$), and attribution of blame ($F(2, 793) = 4.28$, $p < 0.05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.01$) had significant effects on gang involvement; moral justification ($F(2, 793) = 2.08$, $p = 0.13$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.01$), advantageous comparison ($F(2, 793) = 0.85$, $p = 0.43$, partial $\eta^2 < 0.01$), diffusion of responsibility ($F(2, 793) = 0.32$, $p = 0.73$, partial $\eta^2 < 0.01$), distortion of consequences ($F(2, 793) = 1.32$, $p = 0.27$, partial $\eta^2 < 0.01$), and dehumanization ($F(2, 793) = 0.97$, $p = 0.38$, partial $\eta^2 < 0.01$) did not have an effect on gang involvement (see table 6.5 for adjusted means). Follow-up tests were conducted to evaluate pairwise differences among the adjusted means for euphemistic labelling, displacement of responsibility, and attribution of blame. The LSD posthoc analysis showed that gang members scored higher on euphemistic labelling ($p < 0.05$) and attributions of blame (blaming the victim) ($p < 0.01$) than non-gang youth. The results also showed that peripheral youth displaced responsibility more than non-gang youth ($p < 0.05$).

Table 6.5

Adjusted means and standard deviations for the eight moral disengagement strategies

Moral disengagement strategy		M	SD
Moral justification	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	12.47	0.48
	Peripheral ($N = 75$, 9%)	12.48	0.42
	Non-gang ($N = 664$, 83%)	11.77	0.14
Euphemistic labelling*	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	9.12(a)	0.39
	Peripheral ($N = 75$, 9%)	8.92(ab)	0.34
	Non-gang ($N = 664$, 83%)	8.24(b)	0.12
Advantageous comparison	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	7.33	0.40
	Peripheral ($N = 75$, 9%)	6.72	0.35
	Non-gang ($N = 664$, 83%)	6.81	0.12
Displacement of responsibility*	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	10.17(ab)	0.46
	Peripheral ($N = 75$, 9%)	10.54(a)	0.41
	Non-gang ($N = 664$, 83%)	9.57(b)	0.14
Diffusion of responsibility	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	9.27	0.48
	Peripheral ($N = 75$, 9%)	9.79	0.42
	Non-gang ($N = 664$, 83%)	9.53	0.14
Distortion of consequences	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	9.04	0.43
	Peripheral ($N = 75$, 9%)	8.25	0.37
	Non-gang ($N = 664$, 83%)	8.33	0.13
Attribution of blame*	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	10.85(a)	0.40
	Peripheral ($N = 75$, 9%)	10.14(ab)	0.35
	Non-gang ($N = 664$, 83%)	9.69(b)	0.12
Dehumanization	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	8.79	0.47
	Peripheral ($N = 75$, 9%)	8.61	0.42
	Non-gang ($N = 664$, 83%)	8.22	0.14

Note: Means adjusted for age, gender, and ethnicity. Means that do not share subscripts differ at p < .05.

* $p < 0.05$.

6.5 Discussion

The aim of this study was to identify some of the psychological factors that underpin gang membership and differentiate between levels of involvement. The results support previous research findings that there is fluidity to young people's involvement in gangs exemplified especially by the nature of peripheral youth's attitudes and behaviours (e.g. Spergel, 1995; Stelfox, 1998). Significant age differences were found between gang members and non-gang youth, i.e. gang members were older than non-gang youth; peripheral youth did not differ from either gang or non-gang youth, which suggests a developmental process involved in gang membership. There were not, however, any differences in gender and ethnicity between the three groups, which suggests that similar to previous literature, girls are becoming more gang involved (e.g. Esbensen et al., 1999) and the ethnic composition of a gang is representative of its community (Bullock & Tilley, 2002).

The expectation that both gang members and peripheral youth would commit more overall crime than non-gang youth was upheld. In addition, it was found that gang members committed more minor offences than non-gang youth, and peripheral youth committed more crimes against people than non-gang youth. Parallel to previous research was the finding that property offending did not differ between all three groups (Battin et al., 1998; Tita & Ridgeway, 2007) adding further support to the facilitation effect gangs have on violent but not property offending. It was also found that gang members were more anti-authority than non-gang youth and that both gang and peripheral youth saw social status as more important than non-gang youth. Although moral disengagement as a whole did not have a significant main effect, when the individual strategies were examined, it was found that gang members used more euphemisms and blamed their victims more than non-gang

youth; whilst peripheral youth displaced the responsibility for their actions more than non-gang youth. A fuller discussion of these findings is conducted in chapter nine.

This chapter demonstrated that the incorporation of the psychological processes that delineate non-gang youth, peripheral youth and gang members expanded previous research and highlighted the importance of examining individual differences in the cognitive processes that relate to gang membership. There is still little understanding about the manner in which these processes interact with each other and with the environment. The next chapter proposes a socio-cognitive approach to gang membership that considers both internal and external types of influences and the processes by which these variables interact.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Gang membership: The mediating effects of anti-authority attitudes

The previous chapter provided some insight into the psychological factors that underpin varying levels of gang involvement. The next step is to better understand the processes by which these factors interact with each other and the environment. To that end, this chapter proposes a socio-cognitive approach to gang membership that considers both internal and external influences and processes in terms of gang membership. This type of research is unique because it incorporates 'perceived' external variables rather than 'actual' social conditions.

7.1 The impact of attitudes

As discussed previously in chapter three, attitudes have a complex relationship with behaviour, and this relationship is at the mercy of a variety of other attitudinal inputs (Kelman, 1974), social norms and expectations (Terry et al., 1999). Researchers have argued that the relationship is *facilitated* by the norms and salience of the ingroup (Turner, 1982; Hogg, 1998; Terry et al., 1999). It can be argued that attitudes could play a similar role within gangs. The results of chapter six showed that gang members held more anti-authority attitudes than their non-gang counterparts. Therefore, the actual and perceived contact between authority and gang members must be examined because these attitudes (either positive or negative) have a significant influence on the quality of subsequent interactions (Rosenbaum, Schuck, Costello, Hawkins, & Ring, 2005; Flexon, Lurigion, & Greenleaf, 2009), e.g. gang-related crime.

Both the direct and indirect/vicarious encounters young people have with authority have an impact on their perceptions of and attitudes toward authority (Rosenbaum et al., 2005; Flexon et al., 2009). Since delinquency is typically a group

phenomenon (Goldstein, 2002; Emler & Reicher, 2005) and groups tend to form along similar attitudes and beliefs (Emler & Reicher, 1995), it is not surprising that young people join gangs because gangs offer young people an identity to which they can relate (Klein, 1995; Klein & Maxson, 2006). As a result, young people look up to gang members, mimic them, and aspire to gang membership (Hughes & Short, 2005), and gang films depicting characters rewarded for gang-like behaviours act as a blueprint for young aspiring gang members (Przemieniecki, 2005). If these factors inspire youth to join a group (e.g. a gang) it is also known that they may well set aside their moral standards in order to be accepted by the chosen group (Emler & Reicher, 1995).

The mechanisms by which youth may disregard their positive moral standards in favour of morals more consistent with gang membership are explained by Bandura's (2002) social-cognitive theory of moral disengagement (see chapter three). The results of chapter six also showed that gang members were more likely than non-gang youth to employ euphemistic labelling and attribution of blame strategies. However, what is not known is to whom gang members attribute blame for their immoral actions. So, it is possible that gang members could be *attributing blame* to the authority figures they perceive as an outgroup. In short, gang members may see their gang-related behaviour as justified because they see themselves acting in opposition to authority figures.

The delinquency literature strongly supports the idea that delinquent peers play a vital role in a youth's delinquent behaviour (Chung & Steinberg, 2009). As mentioned previously, delinquent behaviour is typically a group phenomenon (Goldstein, 2002; Emler & Reicher, 2005), therefore it is not surprising that delinquent peers and pressure from these peers increase the likelihood of antisocial

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behaviour (e.g. Dishion et al., 1994; Monahan et al., 2009) and gang membership (Thornberry et al., 2003; Klein & Maxson, 2006; Sharp et al., 2006). Research supports the adage that 'birds of a feather, flock together' whereby young people tend to associate with like-minded peers (Emler & Reicher, 2005). Therefore, it can be argued that, at least in part, young people learn and reinforce their beliefs and attitudes (e.g. anti-authority attitudes) through their peer associations (e.g. delinquent peers).

7.2 Study three

In summary, research findings have shown that gang members hold more *negative attitudes to authority* than non-gang youth (Kakar, 2005; chapter six). It has been found that gang members, more than non-gang youth, *blame others* for their behaviour (chapter six) and experience *deviant peer pressure* (Esbensen & Weerman, 2005). In this study two questions are addressed. Do gang members blame figures of authority for their behaviour? Do they learn these anti-authority attitudes from their delinquent peers? The current study compared gang members with non-gang youth (peripheral youth and non-gang youth) in order to definitively explore the cognitive pathways complementary to the gang lifestyle as exemplified by the research questions. This approach allows for the exploration of the relationships between social and psychological characteristics with consideration of Thornberry and colleagues' (2003) three models of gang membership. The hypotheses were as follows: gang members would hold more anti-authority attitudes than non-gang youth and that they would blame others for their behaviour more than non-gang youth (as seen in chapter six). It was also anticipated that gang members would experience more deviant peer pressure than non-gang youth. Finally, it was expected that anti-authority attitudes would be pivotal in terms of attribution of blame and the

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influence of peer pressure. Specifically it was hypothesised that anti-authority attitudes would mediate the relationship between attribution of blame and gang membership as well as the relationship between deviant peer pressure and gang membership.

7.3 Method

Please refer to chapter four for the participants, measures, procedure and reliability analyses.

Table 7.1

Demographic characteristics of the total sample, non-gang youth and gang members

Demographic characteristics	Total	Non-gang	Gang
Sample size (%)	798	739 (93)	59 (7)
Mean age	14.30	14.21	15.37
Sex(%)			
Male	566 (71)	528 (71)	38 (64)
Female	232 (29)	211 (29)	21 (36)
Ethnicity (%)			
UK	395 (50)	365 (49)	30 (51)
Mixed	112 (14)	100 (14)	12 (20)
Other	291 (36)	274 (37)	17 (29)

Membership

Gang members ($n = 59$) were identified based on the analyses outlined in chapter four and all remaining participants ($n = 739$) were labelled as non-gang youth. The proportion of gang members in this sample is within range with previous research conducted in the UK (e.g. 6%, Sharp et al., 2006; 4% - current members, 11% - past members, Bennett & Holloway, 2004).

Demographic characteristics

Using a oneway ANOVA, it was found that gang members ($M = 15.37$, $SD = 1.50$) were older than non-gang youth ($M = 14.21$, $SD = 1.73$; $F(1, 796) = 25.09$, $p < 0.001$). There were no gender differences ($F(1, 796) = 1.31$, $p = 0.25$) nor were there differences in ethnic background ($F(1, 796) = 0.61$, $p = 0.43$).

Multivariate analyses

A MANCOVA was conducted to see whether deviant peer pressure, attribution of blame, and anti-authority attitudes varied as a function of gang membership (gang members and non-gang youth) after adjusting for any age, gender, and ethnicity effects. After the adjustments for the covariates, anti-authority attitudes ($F(1, 793) = 5.44$, $p < 0.05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.01$) and attribution of blame ($F(1, 793) = 7.10$, $p < 0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.01$) had significant effects on gang membership; deviant peer pressure ($F(1, 793) = 2.26$, $p = 0.13$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.003$) did not have an effect on gang membership (see table 7.2 for adjusted means). Thus, gang members scored significantly higher on both anti-authority attitudes and attributions of blame than their non-gang counterparts.

Table 7.2

Adjusted means and standard deviations for anti-authority attitudes, attribution of

blame, and deviant peer pressure

Variables		*M*	*SD*
Anti-authority attitudes*	Gang (*N* = 59, 7%)	39.30	1.34
	Non-gang (*N* = 739, 93%)	36.02	0.38
Attribution of blame**	Gang (*N* = 59, 7%)	10.84	0.40
	Non-gang (*N* = 739, 93%)	9.74	0.11
Deviant peer pressure	Gang (*N* = 59, 7%)	7.70	0.38
	Non-gang (*N* = 739, 93%)	7.10	0.11

Note: Means adjusted for age, gender, and ethnicity.

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$

Mediator models

The significant relationship between attribution of blame and gang membership, does not explain whom gang members blame for their offences. Tarry and Emler (2007) argued that anti-authority attitudes could mediate the causal relationship between moral reasoning and delinquency. So, it was expected that anti-authority attitudes would mediate the relationship between attribution of blame and gang membership. The four criteria for full mediation were met (see figure 7.1): (1) attribution of blame had a significant relationship with gang membership; (2) attribution of blame had a significant relationship with anti-authority attitudes; (3) anti-authority attitudes had a significant relationship with gang membership when controlling for attribution of blame; (4) the Sobel *z* test confirmed that when controlling for anti-authority attitudes, a significant change was found in the

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relationship between attribution of blame and gang membership (z = 3.50, p < 0.001). This confirms that anti-authority attitudes significantly account for the relationship between attribution of blame and gang membership.

The non-significant relationship between deviant peer pressure and gang membership, when controlling for age, gender, and ethnicity, was contrary to theory. Since chapter five showed that deviant peer pressure predicted gang involvement indirectly (via individual delinquency), it was argued that perhaps deviant peer pressure predicted gang membership indirectly via anti-authority attitudes, a correlate of delinquency (Tarry & Emler, 2007). Additional analyses were conducted to investigate whether this type of mediation was occurring, arguing that anti-authority attitudes mediated the relationship between deviant peer pressure and gang membership. Again, the four criteria for full mediation were met (see figure 2): (1) deviant peer pressure had a significant relationship with gang membership; (2) deviant peer pressure had a significant relationship with anti-authority attitudes; (3) anti-authority attitudes had a significant relationship with gang membership when controlling for deviant peer pressure; (4) the Sobel z test confirmed that when controlling for anti-authority attitudes, a significant change was found in the relationship between deviant peer pressure and gang membership (z = 3.93, p < 0.001). These findings confirm that anti-authority attitudes significantly account for the relationship between deviant peer pressure and gang membership.
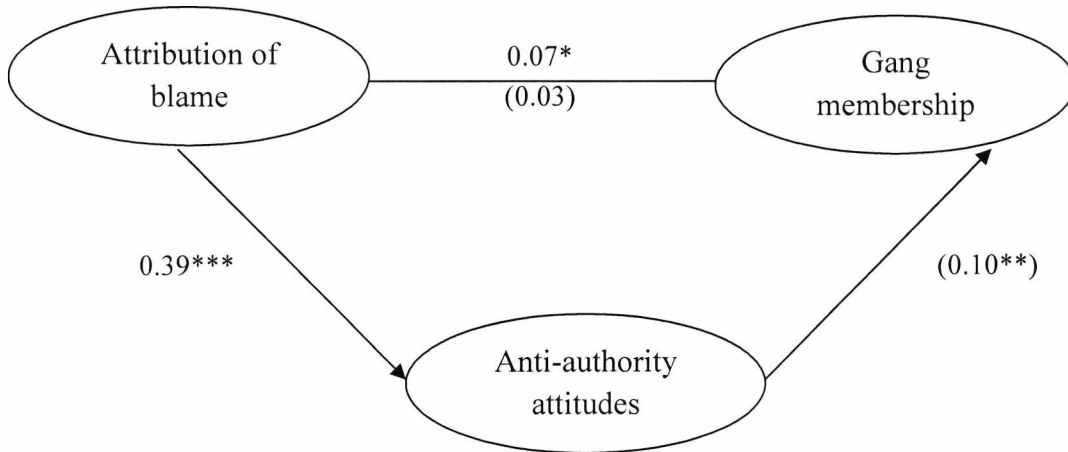
Figure 7.1. Full mediation of the attribution of blame – gang membership

relationship by anti-authority attitudes. Beta weights are shown; betas in parentheses

are controlling for other variable. $z = 3.50$, $p < 0.001$.

$* p < 0.05.$ $** p < 0.01.$ $*** p < 0.001$
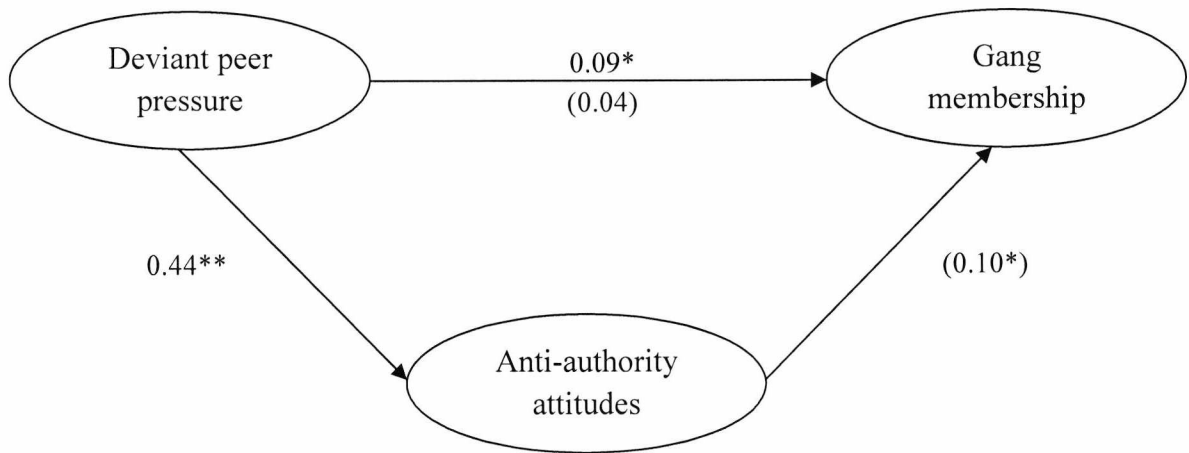
Figure 7.2. Full mediation of the deviant peer pressure – gang membership

relationship by anti-authority attitudes. Beta weights are shown; betas in parentheses

are controlling for other variable. $z = 3.93$, $p < 0.001$.

$* p < 0.05.$ $** p < 0.001$

7.5 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to provide much needed insight into the nature of the relationships between social and psychological factors, and gang membership. The results showed that gang members were older, held more anti-authority attitudes, and blamed others for their behaviour, more so than their non-gang counterparts. It was also found that anti-authority attitudes mediated the relationship between attribution of blame and gang membership. There were not, however, any differences in gender and ethnicity between gang members and non-gang youth suggesting that in line with previous findings, (e.g. Esbensen et al., 1999) girls are becoming more gang involved and the ethnic composition of a gang is representative of its community (Bullock & Tilley, 2002). Contrary to the hypotheses, gang members did not score differently than non-gang youth on deviant peer pressure. However, further analyses showed that high levels of deviant peer pressure predicted gang membership with high levels of anti-authority attitudes as a mediator. A fuller discussion of these findings is conducted in chapter nine.

This chapter presented an explanatory perspective on the processes by which social and psychological factors interact. It was found that anti-authority attitudes played an extensive role as direct correlates with gang membership and as mediators for the indirect relationship of blaming others and delinquent peer pressure with gang membership. However, these findings do not fully explain the contribution of psychological constructs in terms of gang membership. To expand on what was learned, the next chapter examines the direct links between social and psychological variables and gang-related crime since this is of particular concern to the community (Sullivan, 2006).

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CHAPTER EIGHT

Gang-related crime: The social, psychological and behavioural correlates

Gangs have attracted academic interest because there is a 'moral panic' regarding their criminal activity (Klein & Maxson, 2006; Sullivan, 2006). This seems justified since gang members are more criminally inclined than non-gang members or even non-gang delinquents (Tita & Ridgeway, 2007). It is well-documented that gangs, once considered a uniquely 'American' phenomenon, exist in the UK specifically (e.g. Sharp et al., 2006), and in wider Europe (Klein et al., 2001). Gang researchers have found overwhelming similarities between European and American gangs (Klein et al., 2006). For example, like their American counterparts, the criminal activity of gangs in the UK typically consists of robbery, drug trafficking and weapons possession (Bennett & Holloway, 2004). Thus, since the 'moral panic' that surrounds gang activity focuses on crimes committed by gangs (Tita & Ridgeway, 2007), the purpose of this chapter is to examine the social, psychological and behavioural predictors of gang members' criminal activity.

8.1 What is the problem with gangs?

Gang involvement, gang membership and gang activity are all attractive, media savvy topics. This attention has generated an asymmetry in the news outlets (Spergel, 1995; Sullivan, 2006) which has led to media images that glamourise gang members (Przemieniecki, 2005). Hence it is not surprising that young people look up to gang members, mimic them, and aspire to gang membership (Hughes & Short, 2005), thus creating a self-perpetuating cycle of gang membership. While the focus is on defining the 'gang' phenomenon, Sullivan (2006) argued that researchers were distracted from the bigger, broader problem, i.e. youth violence and that they should focus on tackling youth delinquency overall and not gang crime specifically.

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However, research findings show that gang youth commit more crime than non-gang youth and non-gang delinquents (Tita & Ridgeway, 2007) and the characteristics of gang-related crime are fundamentally different from other forms of youth crime (Thornberry et al., 2003). Therefore, given that there seems to be a difference between youth violence per se and gang membership, a better understanding of the nature of gang-related crime, and a research focus on gang crime are justified.

Interactional theory (Thornberry et al., 2003) posits that gang membership results from selection, facilitation, and enhancement processes (see chapter two for full review). This model clearly supports that delinquency is an important factor in gang membership. Delinquency can also explain whether a young person will be a stable or transient member of a gang (Gatti et al., 2005). This suggests that delinquency before gang membership may dictate commitment to the gang. This also implies that *pre-existing* attitudes, beliefs and cognitions that support delinquent behaviour (Hollin et al., 2002) are important in the maintenance of gang membership and its associated criminal activity.

8.2 Study four

Sullivan (2006) presented a compelling argument: the problem with gangs is in their behaviour and so research needs to address the causes, correlates, and consequences of gang-related crime. So, for this study, group crime committed by non-gang youth and crime committed by gang members were compared to identify: (1) the types of criminal activity in which gang members engage, and (2) some of the specific social, psychological and behavioural characteristics that differentiate gang members' criminal activity from non-gang group crimes. Based on previous findings, it was expected that gang members would commit more group crimes than would non-gang youth. It was also expected that gang crime would be predicted by the

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existence of neighbourhood gangs, poor parental management, high levels of individual delinquency, deviant peer pressure, anti-authority attitudes, perceived importance of social status, and moral disengagement strategies.

8.3 Method

Please refer to chapter four for the participants, measures, procedure and reliability analyses.

8.4 Results

Membership

Gang members (7%, $n = 59$) were identified based on the analyses outlined in chapter four and all remaining participants (93%, $n = 739$) were considered to be non-gang youth. The proportion of gang members in this sample is comparable with previous research conducted in the UK (e.g. 6%, Sharp et al., 2006; 4% - current members, 11% - past members, Bennett & Holloway, 2004).

Demographic characteristics

Using a oneway ANOVA, it was found that gang members ($M = 15.37$, $SD = 1.50$) were older than non-gang youth ($M = 14.21$, $SD = 1.73$; $F(1, 796) = 25.09$, $p < 0.001$). There were no gender differences ($F(1, 796) = 1.31$, $p = 0.252$) nor were there differences in ethnic background ($F(1, 796) = 0.61$, $p = 0.434$).

Multivariate analyses

A MANCOVA was conducted to see whether each type of group crime and overall group crime varied as a function of gang membership (gang members and non-gang youth) after adjusting for age, gender, and ethnicity effects. Results showed that gang members were more likely to: be involved in group crime overall ($F(1, 793) = 15.16$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.02$) threaten people ($F(1, 793) = 4.33$, $p = 0.038$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.01$), steal things ($F(1, 793) = 7.02$, $p = 0.008$, partial $\eta^2 = $

0.01), destroy property ($F(1, 793) = 3.95$, $p = 0.047$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.01$), graffiti ($F(1, 793) = 14.80$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.02$), illegal drug use ($F(1, 793) = 11.36$, $p = 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.01$), and illegal alcohol use ($F(1, 793) = 62.49$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.07$).

On the other hand gang members did not differ from non gang members on: fighting ($F(1, 793) = 0.55$, $p = 0.457$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.001$), selling protection ($F(1, 793) = 0.31$, $p = 0.578$, partial $\eta^2 < 0.001$), robbery ($F(1, 793) = 3.27$, $p = 0.071$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.004$), stealing cars ($F(1, 793) = 1.51$, $p = 0.220$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.002$), selling drugs ($F(1, 793) = 1.20$, $p = 0.275$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.002$), carrying weapons ($F(1, 793) = 1.20$, $p = 0.273$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.002$), breaking and entering ($F(1, 793) = 0.23$, $p = 0.634$, partial $\eta^2 < 0.001$), and physical assault ($F(1, 793) = 2.70$, $p = 0.101$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.003$) (see table 8.1 for adjusted means).

Table 8.1

Adjusted means and standard deviations for individual group crimes and overall

group crime

Variables		M	SD
Threaten people*	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	1.38	0.07
	Non-gang ($N = 739$, 93%)	1.22	0.02
Fight	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	1.44	0.09
	Non-gang ($N = 739$, 93%)	1.37	0.03
Theft**	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	1.42	0.08
	Non-gang ($N = 739$, 93%)	1.21	0.02
Sell protection	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	1.12	0.05
	Non-gang ($N = 739$, 93%)	1.09	0.01
Robbery	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	1.16	0.05
	Non-gang ($N = 739$, 93%)	1.07	0.01
Steal cars	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	1.08	0.04
	Non-gang ($N = 739$, 93%)	1.04	0.01
Sell drugs	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	1.15	0.06
	Non-gang ($N = 739$, 93%)	1.09	0.02
Carry weapon	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	1.13	0.05
	Non-gang ($N = 739$, 93%)	1.07	0.01
Destroy property*	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	1.27	0.06
	Non-gang ($N = 739$, 93%)	1.14	0.02
Physical assault	Gang ($N = 59$, 7%)	1.26	0.07
	Non-gang ($N = 739$, 93%)	1.15	0.02

Graffiti***	Gang (N = 59, 7%)	1.38	0.06
	Non-gang (N = 739, 93%)	1.13	0.02
Illegal drug use**	Gang (N = 59, 7%)	1.49	0.08
	Non-gang (N = 739, 93%)	1.21	0.02
Illegal alcohol use***	Gang (N = 59, 7%)	2.47	0.11
	Non-gang (N = 739, 93%)	1.55	0.03
Break and enter	Gang (N = 59, 7%)	1.03	0.04
	Non-gang (N = 739, 93%)	1.05	0.01
Overall group crime***	Gang (N = 59, 7%)	19.92	0.62
	Non-gang (N = 739, 93%)	17.39	0.17

Note: Means adjusted for age, gender, and ethnicity.

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

Regression model

As the above analysis established differences between gang and non-gang criminal activity, a standard multiple regression was conducted to see which psychological and social factors predicted gang-related crime. First, an interaction variable was created between group crime (a continuous variable that was centred) and gang membership (a categorical variable), which was labelled *gang-related crime*. The model consisted of attitudes toward authority, perceived importance of social status, moral disengagement, parental management, deviant peer pressure, individual delinquency, and neighbourhood gangs as the IVs and gang-related crime as the DV. Results showed a significant model, $F(7, 790) = 10.15$, $p < 0.001$, which explained 7.4% of the variance. Of the seven independent variables, individual delinquency and neighbourhood gangs were the most important predictors (see table 8.2 for beta coefficients and p values).

Table 8.2

Beta coefficients for social and psychological factors predicting gang-related crime

Variables	β	t	p
Anti-authority attitudes	-0.01	-0.15	0.880
Perceived importance of social status	0.06	1.69	0.091
Moral disengagement	-0.03	-0.60	0.551
Parental management	0.04	1.00	0.317
Deviant peer pressure	0.001	0.02	0.984
Individual delinquency	0.28	6.52	<0.001
Neighbourhood gangs	0.07	2.07	0.039

Adjusted $R^2 = 0.07$, $F(7, 790) = 10.15$, $p < 0.001$.

Additional analyses

The lack of significance between moral disengagement and gang-related crime when controlling for the other variables, parallels the findings from chapter six. However, Tarry and Emler (2007) argued that anti-authority attitudes could mediate the causal relationship between moral reasoning and delinquency. So, it was argued that anti-authority attitudes may mediate the relationship between moral disengagement and gang-related crime. The four criteria for full mediation were met (see figure 8.1): (1) moral disengagement had a significant relationship with gang-related crime; (2) moral disengagement had a significant relationship with anti-authority attitudes; (3) anti-authority attitudes had a significant relationship with gang-related crime when controlling for moral disengagement; (4) the Sobel z test

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confirmed that when controlling for anti-authority attitudes, a significant change was found in the relationship between moral disengagement and gang-related crime (z = 14.98, $p < 0.001$). This confirms that anti-authority attitudes significantly account for the relationship between moral disengagement and gang-related crime. That is, high levels of moral disengagement lead to anti-authority attitudes that result in gang-related criminal behaviour.

The lack of significance between the perceived importance of social status and gang-related crime when controlling for the other variables was contrary to the findings and implications of chapter six which showed that gang members perceived social status as more important than non-gang youth. So, it was argued that perhaps the relationship between the perceived importance of social status and gang-related crime was also mediated by anti-authority attitudes. Again, the four criteria for full mediation were met (see figure 2): (1) the perceived importance of social status had a significant relationship with gang-related crime; (2) the perceived importance of social status had a significant relationship with anti-authority attitudes; (3) anti-authority attitudes had a significant relationship with gang-related crime when controlling for the perceived importance of social status; (4) the Sobel z test confirmed that when controlling for anti-authority attitudes, a significant change was found in the relationship between the perceived importance of social status and gang-related crime (z = 11.14, $p < 0.001$). This confirms that anti-authority attitudes significantly account for the relationship between the perceived importance of social status and gang-related crime. That is, youth who value status are more likely to have anti-authority attitudes which lead to gang-related criminal behaviour.
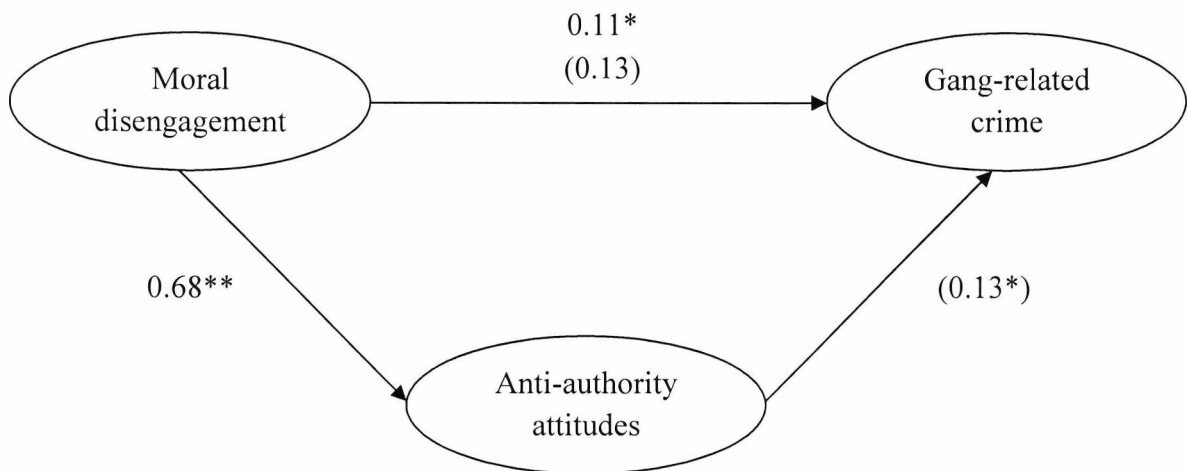
Figure 8.1. Full mediation of the moral disengagement – gang-related crime relationship by anti-authority attitudes. Beta weights are shown; betas in parentheses are controlling for other variable. z = 14.98, p < 0.001.

* *p* < 0.01. ** *p* < 0.001
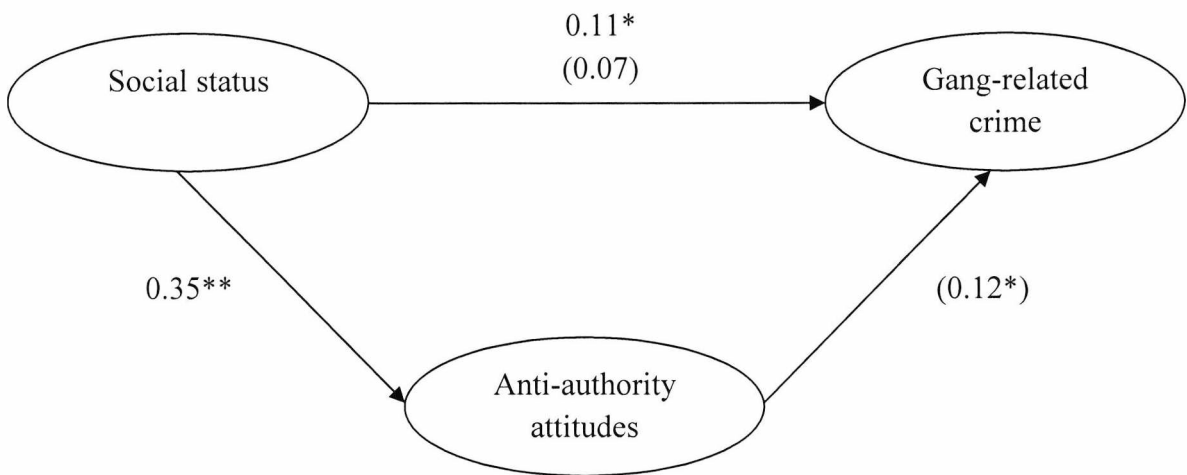
Figure 8.2. Full mediation of the perceived importance of social status – gang-related crime relationship by anti-authority attitudes. Beta weights are shown; betas in parentheses are controlling for other variable. z = 11.14, p < 0.001.

* *p* < 0.01. ** *p* < 0.001

8.5 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the social, psychological and behavioural factors that predict gang-related crime. The results showed that gang members were older (as seen in chapter seven) and committed more group crimes than did non-gang members. Results also showed that individual delinquency and neighbourhood gangs predicted involvement in gang-related crime. Further analyses showed that anti-authority attitudes mediated the relationships between moral disengagement and gang-related crime, and the perceived importance of social status and gang-related crime. Also in line with chapter seven, there were not, however, any differences in gender and ethnicity between gang members and non-gang youth suggesting that in line with previous findings (e.g. Esbensen et al., 1999), the results show that girls are becoming more gang involved and the ethnic composition of a gang is representative of its community (Bullock & Tilley, 2002). Gang members committed more overall group crime than non-gang youth. They were more likely than non-gang youth to commit some crimes but just as likely as non-gang youth to commit other crimes. In terms of the crimes gang members committed over and above those committed by non-gang members, they were more likely to: threaten people, commit theft, destroy property, and use graffiti, drugs and alcohol, than their non-gang counterparts. A fuller discussion of these findings is conducted in the next chapter.

This chapter examined the social, environmental and psychological factors that predict gang-related crime specifically, the behaviour that the public are most concerned with. Sullivan (2006) argued that researchers have invested too much into defining the 'gang' phenomenon, that they are distracted from the bigger, broader problem, i.e. youth violence. The findings of this chapter showed intrinsic and

extrinsic differences in gang and non-gang group crime, therefore, re-affirming the need to address both types separately. This chapter also demonstrated the extended insight psychology can provide when examining gang culture and its associated behaviours, and thus furthers the argument for more psychological input in gang research. The next chapter discusses the findings of these four empirical chapters and puts them into perspective theoretically.

CHAPTER NINE

Overall discussion

The overall purpose of this thesis was to shed light on the individual differences that predispose some youth to gang involvement and others toward an alternative life course regardless of their similar social and environmental circumstances. Chapters one and two reviewed literature predominantly criminological and sociological in scope. These approaches provided insight into the situational/contextual risk factors for gang involvement.

However, the main finding of the review of literature was that the individual differences and the impact of said differences had been neglected; a serious gap in literature. By expanding the scope of gang research, this thesis highlighted the importance of examining individual differences by way of psychology. The current research also utilised Interactional Theory as a theoretical framework to better understand and make educated inferences about the relationships between gang involvement and its correlates.

The main over-arching finding of this thesis was that the prevalence of gang membership in a representative sample of the London area was 7% which is in range with previous literature (Bradshaw, 2005; Sharp et al., 2006). In addition, the research presented in this thesis not only examined gang members specifically but also the effects gangs have on non-gang youth who are at risk of joining the gang and the characteristics of those who may be peripherally involved. It also examined the underlying mechanisms in which the associated attitudes, beliefs and cognitions inter-play with social and environmental factors resulting in gang involvement and gang-related crime. The current chapter summarises and discusses the findings in relation to the theoretical and policy implications.

9.1 Study one: Social and environmental factors

The purpose of this study was to examine some of the individual, social and environmental factors that differentiate gang-involved and non-gang youth in a British setting. The results from chapter five showed that gang-involved youth were older than non-gang youth, and individual delinquency along with neighbourhood gangs were significant predictors of gang involvement. There were not, however, any differences in gender and ethnicity between gang-involved and non-gang youth suggesting that similar to previous literature, girls are becoming more gang involved (Esbensen, Deschenes, & Winfree, Jr., 1999) and the ethnic composition of a gang is representative of its community (Bullock & Tilley, 2002; Sharp et al., 2006; HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2010). Contrary to the hypotheses, parental management, school commitment, and deviant peer pressure were not direct predictors of gang involvement. However, structural equation modelling showed that they had indirect relationships leading to gang involvement (further discussion below).

It was expected that gang-involved youth would be older than their non-gang counterparts. The findings support this age difference suggesting that joining a gang may need a certain level of maturity and development (Spergel, 1995; Rizzo, 2003). Members who are recruited at a young age may mature within the structure of a gang and continue their involvement well into their adulthood (Spergel, 1995). There is a growing discussion amongst researchers on how the gang problem may be transitioning from a youth/juvenile phenomenon to a young adult phenomenon, i.e., the youth gang maturing into an adult gang. The significant age difference in this sample may be indicative, however preliminary, of this trend.

It was expected that gang-involved youth would be predominantly male, however, the findings did not support this hypothesis. There were no significant

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gender differences between gang-involved and non-gang youth suggesting that girls are becoming more involved in gangs (Sharp et al., 2006). As mentioned previously, the proportion of female gang participation has been difficult to measure due to, in most cases, the nature of their involvement (Spergel, 1995; Bennett & Holloway, 2004). For example, police reports suggest females typically do not commit gang crimes (Spergel, 1995), therefore, studies based on police surveys may be biased towards those who only commit gang crimes. Self-reports, on the other hand, produce a higher gang membership prevalence amongst females (Bennett & Holloway, 2004). Researchers have discussed the female role as subservient and their recruitment is partly (if not wholly) for their income potential as sex workers (Thornberry et al., 2003). This supports why police data may include a smaller representation of females as their crimes, i.e., prostitution, may not be categorised as gang-related. The findings support that there are girls who fit the definition of a gang member and who are peripherally involved, however, further research needs to explore if there are differences in the roles and duties of male and female gang members.

It was also expected that there would not be any ethnic differences between gang-involved and non-gang youth. The findings support this hypothesis. Contrary to the American stereotype, close to a third of gangs in the UK are ethnically mixed and those that are homogenous are predominantly white (Shropshire & McFarquhar, 2002; Bennett & Holloway, 2004; Sharp et al., 2006). This has also been found in other countries (e.g. Gatti et al., 2005). However, past literature has presented contradictory findings (e.g. Bullock & Tilley, 2002). These studies found that gangs were more likely to be ethnically homogeneous, comprised of ethnic minorities, and reflected the ethnic make-up of the neighbourhoods they represented. This all

supports the precept that ethnicity can not be considered strictly as a defining principle (Klein et al., 2001) because the ethnic composition of gangs reflects the ethnic make-up of the neighbourhoods they represent (Bullock & Tilley, 2002).

Although these data are cross-sectional, there are some interesting inferences to be made. Interactional theory posits that a learning environment facilitative of gang behaviour contributes to a young person's decision to join a gang (Thornberry et al., 2003). For example, young people are at a greater risk of joining a gang if they live in neighbourhoods with an existing gang presence (Thornberry et al., 2003). The findings support that gang-involved youth were more likely than non-gang youth to report the presence of gangs in their neighbourhoods. This increased risk could be the result of several factors. For example, researchers have found that youth who reside amongst gang members are just as likely to be approached by police and assumed to be affiliated with local gangs by police (Ralphs, Medina, & Aldridge, 2009). This negative contact could push young people towards joining a gang rather than prevent young people from joining. Also, such negative contact could simply reinforce gang identities (Ralphs et al., 2009) further strengthening the influence gangs have on young people in their communities. Alternatively, previous literature has identified some gang members as 'reluctant gangsters' where neighbourhoods peppered with gangs may make youth fearful of victimisation and lead to perceptions that their world is a dangerous place (Pitts, 2007). Therefore, the findings suggest that gang members joined their gang for protection and/or because of the persisting negative contact with police.

As mentioned previously, young people's involvement in gangs can result from a learning environment that fosters gang joining and behaviour (Thornberry et al., 2003). A lack of parental management leaves young people without an

opportunity to depend on prosocial bonds; instead, they are left vulnerable to the influences of their neighbourhood and peers (Thornberry et al., 2003; Klein & Maxson, 2006). Even though parental management did not have a direct effect on gang involvement, it was found that the presence of neighbourhood gangs predicted low levels of parental management, and it was found that low levels of parental management predicted gang involvement via high levels of pressure from deviant peers and individual delinquency. These findings show that neighbourhood gangs burden the appropriate parenting practices that would circumvent gang involvement. They also show that young people look to their parents for guidance and support, and if left to their own devices, they succumb to the antisocial pressures from their peers resulting in increased delinquency and gang involvement. Thus, this study sheds some light on the potential risk factors and protective factors for gang membership, i.e. parental management can be considered a protective factor, and pressure from deviant peers, prior delinquency and neighbourhood gangs can be considered risk factors (Klein & Maxson, 2006). The implications of these findings could be similar to the consequences of neighbourhood gangs previously discussed; i.e. these young people are coerced or intimidated into joining a gang by the pressure they experience from their peers who arguably could be gang members (Pitts, 2007). This has been found in the delinquency literature whereby delinquent behaviour is a result of coercion from delinquent peers (Dishion, Andrews, & Crosby, 1995). However, due to the cross-sectional nature of the data the causal direction of these relationships remains uncertain, e.g. in line with Interactional Theory, the participants' delinquent proclivity could have attracted deviant peers; or, there could be bidirectional causality between the variables (Thornberry et al., 2003).

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There was no surprise when gang-involved youth reported higher levels of individual delinquency than non-gang youth. Family factors such as poor parental management (Thornberry et al., 2003; Sharp et al., 2006) and deviant peer pressure (Dishion et al., 1994; Monahan et al., 2009) provide young people with an environment that reinforces gang-related and delinquent behavior. This was exemplified in the model where both parental management and deviant peer pressure significantly predicted individual delinquency. However, consistent with the delinquency literature (e.g. Chung & Steinberg, 2006), no single factor can fully explain gang membership.

Commitment to school yielded an interesting paradox. There were no differences between gang-involved and non-gang youth on their commitment to their education. This suggests that gang-involved youth are equally committed to their education as non-gang youth. This could have a few implications. First, if truancy is a characteristic of gang-involved youth (Young, Fitzgerald, Hallsworth, & Joseph, 2007), then the sample may be skewed given the school context of the data collection. Secondly, the findings may support that schools could be a breeding ground for gang members. That is, gang members who have to attend school can actively recruit while in school. Low *school commitment* did predict high levels of deviant peer pressure and individual delinquency, and individual delinquency predicted gang involvement. Thus, these findings further add to the literature regarding the variable contribution school commitment makes in predicting gang membership, therefore, similar to ethnicity, it only provides a descriptive characteristic of gang membership and not a defining principle (Weerman et al., 2009).

In summary, study one expands on previous literature by examining both gang members and peripherally involved youth because the effects of gang membership are not only experienced by gang members themselves, but also young people in proximity of gangs who may or may not become gang members in the future (Curry et al., 2002). As a result, it was found that parenting practices, pressure from deviant peers, and commitment to school play indirect roles in gang involvement; while individual delinquency and neighbourhood gangs directly predict gang involvement. However, the variables studied here do not fully explain the gang phenomenon and further research is needed before any meaningful conclusions can be reached regarding the motivations for gang membership. For example, gang research has been primarily criminological and sociological in nature (Bennett & Holloway, 2004; Wood & Alleyne, 2010), and since criminological theories pay scant attention to the social psychological processes involved in joining a gang (Thornberry et al., 2003) there is a real need to understand more about the *psychology* of gang involvement (Wood & Alleyne, 2010).

9.2 Study two: Psychological and behavioural characteristics of gang members, peripheral youth and non-gang youth

The previous study shed light on the social and environmental factors related to gang involvement yet concluded with little learned on the psychological factors that support and reinforce gang involvement. The aim of study two (results presented in chapter five) was to identify some of the psychological factors that underpin gang membership and differentiate between levels of involvement. The results support previous research findings that there is fluidity to young people's involvement in gangs exemplified especially by the nature of the attitudes and behaviours of peripheral youth (e.g. Spergel, 1995; Stelfox, 1998). Significant age differences

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were found between gang members and non-gang youth, i.e. gang members were older than non-gang youth (as per study one); peripheral youth did not differ from either gang or non-gang youth, which suggests a developmental process involved in gang membership. There were not, however, any differences in gender and ethnicity between the three groups, which mirrors the findings of study one.

Gang members and peripheral youth were more delinquent than non-gang youth overall, however, gang members committed more minor offences than non-gang youth and peripheral youth committed more violent offences than non-gang youth. Gang members were more anti-authority than non-gang youth, and both gang and peripheral youth valued social status more than non-gang youth. Gang members were also more likely to blame their victims for their actions and use euphemisms to sanitize their behaviour than non-gang youth; whereas peripheral youth were more likely than non-gang youth to displace responsibility onto their superiors.

These findings allow for some interesting inferences. The age difference between gang members and their nongang counterparts (peripheral youth and non-gang youth) suggest that there may be an age-related developmental trajectory similar to previous findings (e.g. Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). This finding also adds support to Thornberry et al.'s (2003) developmental approach to gang membership, since the roles and responsibilities within a gang become more defined with age (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). However, due to the cross-sectional design, it is not certain whether peripheral youth will in fact develop into full blown members, or whether they will resist the gang in favour of a more pro-social lifestyle.

Compared to non-gang youth, peripheral youth were more likely to be involved in violent offending whilst gang members did not differ from either peripheral youth or non-gang youth. This finding counters Curry et al.'s (2002)

previous finding that gang members were more violent than peripheral youth. However, the Curry et al. (2002) criteria for peripheral membership were based on fewer decisive factors and could have resulted in the inclusion of minimally to non-involved youth. Conversely the current study's peripheral youth were identified from more precise criteria which would have limited the peripheral group to more highly involved youth who were not gang members.

Both gang members and peripheral youth valued social status more than non-gang members. These findings suggest that the acquisition of status equal to that of gang members may be the motivation that underlies the involvement of peripheral youth in gang activity. Also, since they aspire to gang membership they may feel a need to *prove* themselves to the gang by mimicking what they perceive as acceptable gang behaviour (Hughes & Short, 2005; Przemieniecki, 2005). Gang members, on the other hand, do not need to engage in as much violence since they can delegate orders such as acts of violence to more 'junior' gang members.

Gang members held more anti-authority attitudes than non-gang youth. This could be attributed to the experience gang members have engaging with authority figures such as the police. If this contact is negative, as it is likely to be, then this may well feed the anti-authority attitudes of gang youth. Ironically, as mentioned earlier, it is thought that such negative contact simply serves to reinforce gang identities (Khoo & Oakes, 2000; McAra & McVie, 2005; Ralphs et al., 2009). Also, since moral disengagement on its own did not have an effect on gang involvement, anti-authority attitudes may serve as a justification for gang membership, perhaps serving as a cognitive strategy to rationalise gang involvement. To put this in perspective, these findings may result from the selection process posited by Interactional Theory (Thornberry, 1987; Thornberry & Krohn, 2001) where gangs

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select and recruit previously delinquent youth and thus end up with members who have *already* set aside their moral standards, which enables them to become even more involved in delinquent activity. The data cannot speak to this, but this is certainly testable in future work.

Previous findings have shown how once a collective identity has been formed even the mere awareness of an out-group (possibly a rival gang) is sufficient to motivate the group to defend its reputation (Emler & Reicher, 1995; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1982). However, perceptions of out-group threat did not appear to have a significant relationship with gang involvement. It could be that threat could have a dynamic relationship with gang involvement (similar to self-esteem). Even though we might expect gang members to perceive higher outgroup threat due to the increased risk of victimisation gang members face (Decker, 1996; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996), it could be that the protection the gang offers ameliorates the perception of threat. In short, gang members feel protected by their membership and do not perceive other groups as a threat.

Further examination of each of the specific moral disengagement strategies provides a clearer idea of precisely how gang members view/justify their behaviour. Gang members, significantly more than non-gang youth, sanitise their language using *euphemisms.* This could be a mechanism they use to cope with the extremity of gang violence. Since peripheral youth did not score as highly as gang members on this subscale, it could also be argued that this is part and parcel of the developmental processes that underlie gaining membership in the gang. Peripheral youth, more than non-gang youth, *displace the responsibility* of their actions onto others. This finding, in conjunction with violent offending of peripheral youth suggests that they think they are fulfilling orders passed down from ranking gang members. This provides

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support for an implicit (or maybe an explicit) understanding of gang roles; and adds further support to Thornberry et al.'s (2003) developmental perspective. If we consider these findings in terms of the age differences mentioned previously, it adds further support to the idea that gang membership functions on a developmental process where, as noted above, membership roles are framed by gang member age (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). Lastly, gang members are more likely than non-gang youth to *blame their victims* for their behaviour. Arguably, if their victims are rival gang members, they justify their offending behaviour and the behaviour of their gang as an act of justified retaliation. However, the findings cannot identify the profile of gang victims and so no conclusions can be made as to why gang members take this view of their victims.

The results also showed no significant effects for *moral justification* (the end justifies the means), *diffusion of responsibility* (the more people involved in the harm done, the less I can be blamed), *advantageous comparisons* (comparing personal behaviour favourably to acts that are considered to be worse), *dehumanisation* (victims are sub-human, devoid of normal human qualities), and *distortion of consequences* (ignoring, minimizing, or disbelieving the harm done). These findings suggest that gang members and peripheral youth are fully aware of the consequences of their actions. That is, gang members, in particular, take responsibility for their actions rather than diffusing it among their gang peers. Perhaps this results from their individual identity merging with the collective identity of the gang (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1982); i.e. they see themselves more as a collective than a group of individuals and this collective is marked by an identity which includes a group language (i.e. euphemisms) and an ingroup/outgroup distinction where it is acceptable to blame outgroup members but not ingroup members. Future research

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could explore this concept further. Nonetheless, the findings indicate that gang members and peripheral youth make little attempt to disregard or minimize the consequences of their actions and for the most part they seem to accept responsibility for the actions they take. This is particularly disturbing when considered in terms of their violent behaviour.

The fact that the study found the prevalence of girl gang members (9%) to be higher than the prevalence of boy gang members (7%) may also reflect a developmental trend. For instance, previous literature shows that females age-in and age-out of gangs earlier than do males (Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993) and since the age range was 12-18 years this effect may have been captured. It may also be that gang members at the upper end of the age range (and hence more likely to be male) were less likely to be still at school. Alternatively the findings may reflect a geographical developmental trend. It may be that as gangs continue to develop in London, females feel more threatened. As such they may become more involved in gangs either because their friends have done so and/or because they feel they need protection from the escalating number of gangs in their area. This is an idea that future work could examine more specifically.

In summary, study two highlights the importance of examining individual differences in the cognitive processes that relate to gang involvement. It also expands on study one by examining gang members, peripheral youth, and non-gang youth independently and as such the psychological and cognitive processes associated with varying levels of involvement were examined. However, Thornberry et al. (1994) argued that psychological beliefs and social factors interact reciprocally, thus, there is a need to explore the nature of these relationships.

9.3 Study three: The mediating effects of anti-authority attitudes

The purpose of this study was to provide much needed insight into the nature of the relationships between social and psychological factors, and gang membership. In line with the previous studies, the findings showed that gang members were older, held more anti-authority attitudes, and blamed others for their behaviour, more so than their non-gang counterparts. Importantly, it was also found that anti-authority attitudes mediated the relationship between attribution of blame and gang membership. Contrary to the hypotheses, gang members did not differ from non-gang youth on deviant peer pressure. However, further analyses showed that high levels of deviant peer pressure predicted gang membership with high levels of anti-authority attitudes again acting as a mediator.

When a young person joins a group, the person adopts a new social identity and with it comes shared attitudes and beliefs (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1982). The findings show that anti-authority attitudes form part of a gang identity. This negative predisposition can manifest itself in two ways: (1) gang members are more likely to interpret/perceive encounters with authority as negative which counteracts the possibility of building a constructive and productive relationship between these youth and authority figures and (2) gang members are willing to provoke authority figures by committing crime, which attracts negative attention from authority, thus reinforcing the negative relationship between gang members and authority (Rosenbaum et al., 2005). This goes to show that how authority figures engage with young people has long-term consequences and that not only are these attitudes toward authority risk factors for gang membership, but that positive attitudes toward authority can act as protective factors against gang membership (Thornberry, 1996). However, until now, there has been no research that has explored the nature and

circumstances in which the authority attitude – gang membership relationship manifests.

It was also found that gang members are more likely than non-gang youth to blame others for their own wrong-doings. Research has shown that once a collective identity (e.g. a gang) has been formed even the mere awareness of an out-group can result in bias attributions of ingroup and outgroup actions (Emler & Reicher, 2005). It was argued that authority figures could be seen as an outgroup by gang members (Emler & Reicher, 1995; Tarry & Emler, 2007), and as a result, will be subject to the biased attribution of blame by gang members. The findings from the mediation analysis support that anti-authority attitudes account for the relationship between attribution of blame and gang membership. That is, a tendency to blame others leads to anti-authority attitudes which lead to gang membership. Alternatively, there are likely to be persons other than authority figures that gang members also blame for their behaviour. For instance, their victims may also be blamed. If their victims are rival gang members, they may justify their offending behaviour and the behaviour of their gang as an act of justified retaliation. The data cannot speak to this, but this is certainly testable in future work. However, the current findings certainly indicate that gang members do blame authority figures for their own antisocial actions.

Research has also shown that gang members experience more deviant peer pressure than non-gang youth (Esbensen & Weerman, 2005) and that deviant peer pressure increases the likelihood that a young person will become a gang member (Thornberry et al., 2003; Klein & Maxson, 2006; Sharp et al., 2006). Although the findings did not show a *direct* relationship between deviant peer pressure and gang membership, they did show that deviant peer pressure predicted gang membership indirectly via anti-authority attitudes. This suggests that associating with deviant

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peers fosters anti-authority attitudes, which then leads to gang membership. For example, Flexon and colleagues (2009) found that young people's views of police officers are significantly shaped by peer experiences of the police and not necessarily direct personal experience. Therefore, it could be that some gang members may never have had direct contact with authority figures but still perceive them negatively. Thus, authority figures need to be aware of the 'trickle down' effect of their actions and, more importantly, that even youth they have not directly encountered may hold anti-authority views. Lastly, if young people learn these negative attitudes toward authority from their peers, joining a gang could be perceived as their 'behavioural expression of alienation from formal authority' (Emler & Reicher, 2005, p. 221). Theoretically speaking, a *facilitation* effect could account for this relationship (Thornberry, 1987; Thornberry & Krohn, 2001). That is, before engaging with these deviant peers (who could arguably be gang peers), young people may not actually hold anti-authority attitudes, or may even hold pro-authority attitudes. Nonetheless, it seems they soon adopt these new attitudes and beliefs as they gain membership into the gang.

In summary, study three expands on previous literature by examining some of the psychosocial mechanisms that underpin gang membership. And as such it was found that anti-authority attitudes play an extensive role as direct correlates with gang membership and as mediators for the indirect relationship of blaming others and deviant peer pressure with gang membership. Also, the findings show that anti-authority attitudes are particularly important since they may stem from vicarious rather than personal experiences – so it will not be just youth known to the authorities who harbour negative views of authority figures. The findings do not, however, fully explain the contribution of psychological constructs in terms of gang

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membership. Further research is needed before any meaningful conclusions can be reached regarding the psychology of gang membership, develop theory (see also Wood & Alleyne, 2010) and devise appropriate interventions. For example, further work is needed to examine the direct links between social and psychological variables and gang-related crime specifically since this behaviour is of particular concern (Sullivan, 2006).

9.4 Study four: The social, psychological and behavioural correlates of gang-related crime

The purpose of this final study was to gain a better understanding of the social, psychological and behavioural factors that predict gang-related crime. The findings showed that gangs map out their territory with graffiti and intimidate via threats. The significant predictors of gang-related crime were individual delinquency and neighbourhood gangs. Contrary to the hypotheses, the perceived importance of social status, moral disengagement and anti-authority attitudes did not predict gang-related crime. However, further analyses showed that the perceived importance of social status and high levels of moral disengagement predicted gang-related crime with anti-authority attitudes acting as mediator.

Gang members committed more overall group crime than non-gang youth. That is, they were more likely than non-gang youth to commit some crimes but just as likely as non-gang youth to commit other crimes. This shows that gang membership results in an increase in levels of crime over and above association with delinquent others (i.e. non-gang group crime) and supports research that notes how gang members are more criminally inclined than non-gang members or even non-gang delinquents (Tita & Ridgeway, 2007). This finding also supports the focus of

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research on gang membership specifically and refutes Sullivan's (2006) argument that research should focus solely on youth crime.

In terms of the crimes gang members committed more so than those committed by non-gang members, they were more likely to: threaten people, commit theft, destroy property, and use graffiti, drugs and alcohol, than their non-gang counterparts. Since gangs tend to be territorial (Klein & Maxson, 2006; Tita & Ridgeway, 2007), graffiti is a typical manifestation of gangs 'stamping ownership' on their territory (Spergel, 1995). Spergel (1995) also argued that to protect their territory, gangs also use intimidation. The finding that gang members threaten people more than non-gang youth supports this notion. Thus, gangs mark their territory with graffiti and threaten the use of violence in order to protect it. Territorial conflict has been linked with gang violence (Spergel, 1995), therefore, such threats have potentially violent consequences.

Another finding was that the presence of neighbourhood gangs predicted gang-related crime. Interactional theory posits that a learning environment facilitative of gang behaviour contributes to a young person's decision to join a gang (Thornberry et al., 2003). Therefore, young people are at a greater risk of joining a gang (Thornberry et al., 2003), and the findings show that they are more likely to get involved in gang-related crime if they live in neighbourhoods with an existing gang presence. There are several explanations as to why this may occur. For example, territorial proximity has been found to instigate gang conflict (Spergel, 1995). Therefore, different gangs in relative proximity to each other may compete with each other for resources (e.g. drugs, weapons, etc.) or territories, or worse, engage in inter-gang violence. Alternatively, neighbourhoods peppered with gangs may make youth fearful of victimisation (Pitts, 2007). These findings may suggest that gang members

joined their gang for protection and feel a need to engage in gang crime to build up a reputation or affirm their value as gang members. It was also found that individual delinquency predicted gang-related crime. This supports Thornberry and colleagues' (2003) *selection* model where gangs select and recruit already delinquent youth. This prior delinquency provides these youth with the skill set to engage in crime amongst their peers.

Contrary to the hypotheses, anti-authority attitudes and moral disengagement did not predict gang-related crime directly. However, Tarry and Emler (2007) argued that anti-authority attitudes could mediate the causal relationship between moral reasoning and delinquency. The findings show that anti-authority attitudes fully mediate the relationship between moral disengagement and gang-related crime. Consequently, it seems that youth may disengage their moral standards *if* they develop anti-authority attitudes. This suggests that anti-authority attitudes may be acting as a cognitive strategy employed to enable youth to engage in gang-related crime. For example, research shows that non-gang youth living in gang neighbourhoods are just as likely to be stopped by police who may assume they are gang members (Ralphs, Medina, & Aldridge, 2009). This negative contact may help foster anti-authority attitudes and push young people towards gang membership. Also, considering that gangs select and recruit already delinquent youth (Thornberry et al., 2003), it can be argued that previous delinquency implies the existence of attitudes, beliefs and cognitions that support continuing delinquency; perhaps moral disengagement cognitive strategies and anti-authority attitudes.

Contrary to prior research (chapter six), the perceived importance of social status did not predict gang-related crime. However, additional analyses showed that anti-authority attitudes fully mediated the relationship between the perceived

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importance of social status and gang-related crime. That is, it is particularly important to a gang member's reputation that they hold anti-authority attitudes. Part of the appeal of gang involvement is the message that the gang represents, a message of survival from adversity, social disadvantage, and marginalization (Emler & Reicher, 2005; Hagedorn, 2005). And in many cases, authority figures are seen as the culprits that enforce this marginalization (Ralphs et al., 2009), thus, the appropriate response would be to break the law. In addition to chapter six's finding that peripheral youth are more violent and value status more than non-gang youth, this study suggests that status is earned by the criminal activity young people engage in. Consequently, gangs recruit members who share the same value system that again, support continuing delinquency.

The extensive role of anti-authority attitudes in gang membership and gang-related crime appears to be seamlessly integrated into gang culture. The findings of prior research (Emler & Reicher, 2005; chapter six) and the current study show that these attitudes provide young people with a common purpose, an outlet for their frustration, and a platform to express themselves, i.e. delinquent behaviour (Emler & Reicher, 2005).

In summary, study four's findings expand on the current literature by examining the social, psychological and behavioural predictors of gang-related crime specifically. Gangs map out their territory with graffiti and intimidate via threats (Spergel, 1995). Also, the contextual findings suggest that the mere awareness of an out-group (e.g. neighbourhood gangs) is sufficient to motivate the gang to engage in crime while anti-authority attitudes act as cognitive strategies to justify such crime and they provide a platform where status is earned via criminal endeavours.

Sullivan (2006) argued that researchers have invested too much in defining the 'gang' phenomenon, that they are distracted from the bigger, broader problem, i.e. youth violence. These findings show intrinsic and extrinsic differences in gang and non-gang group crime, therefore, re-affirming the need to address both types separately. That is, intervention and prevention strategies would have to vary according to group membership in order to remain effective (Klein & Maxson, 2006). This study also demonstrates the extended insight psychology can provide when examining the gang culture and its associated behaviours, furthering the argument for more psychological input in gang research.

9.5 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the findings of the four studies conducted as part of this thesis. It also discussed the inferences made and theoretical implications of the findings. Study one provided a baseline for the social and environmental factors related to gang involvement, i.e. neighbourhood, family, peer, school and individual factors. It also expanded on previous literature by examining both gang members and peripherally involved youth because the effects of gang membership are not only experienced by gang members themselves, but by a broader circle of youth who may or may not become gang members in the future (Curry et al., 2002). Study two shed light on some of the psychological characteristics that vary across different levels of gang involvement. Study three examined the nature of the relationships between social and psychological factors in response to Thornberry et al.'s (1994) argument that psychological beliefs and social factors interact reciprocally. This approach supports the need to examine these characteristics in tandem. Lastly, study four expanded on past literature by examining the social, psychological and behavioural predictors of gang-related crime specifically. The findings showed that gang and

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non-gang group crime are fundamentally different and should be treated as such. The next and final chapter examines the contribution these findings have made to the development of theory and intervention programmes.

CHAPTER TEN

<u>Theoretical contributions and intervention development</u>

As shown in the previous chapter, the four studies presented in this thesis all serve a common purpose: to outline the role psychology can play in gang research. The first study laid the foundation by illustrating the social context in which gangs manifest and sustain themselves. Study two showed how attitudes, perceptions, and cognitions interact with varying levels of gang involvement providing insight into the development of gang members. Study three demonstrated how psychological processes work hand-in-hand with social factors to reinforce the gang culture. And, finally, study four addressed the behavioural outcome of gang involvement, gang-related crime, by examining its predictors and correlates. These four studies expanded on the current literature and also highlighted areas for theory development. The main aim of this final chapter is to explore what the findings of this thesis mean for gang research and the intervention and prevention methods used to mitigate the harm caused by gangs.

<u>10.1 Theoretical contributions</u>

Traditionally, as described in chapter three, interactional theory posits that gang membership results from a reciprocal relationship between the individual and various social and environmental factors (Thornberry, 1987; Thornberry & Krohn, 2001; Thornberry et al., 2003). Early on, Thornberry and colleagues (1994) recognised that psychological constructs such as attitudes and beliefs also play a role. This bidirectional causality results in a learning environment conducive to gang behaviour and motivates young people to join gangs (Thornberry et al., 2003). The findings of this thesis showed that poor parental management results in young people probably having to either cope on their own or with peer guidance and support. Study

one demonstrated how this can result in gang involvement. The findings also showed that the presence of neighbourhood gangs not only puts young people at risk of joining a gang (study one) but their presence also predicted gang-related crime (study four). These findings, in conjunction with gang members having anti-authority attitudes (studies two and three), support interactional theory's premise that social/environmental factors interact with psychological factors which encourage young people to become gang members. Furthermore, young people *learn* these attitudes from their delinquent peers (study three).

Thornberry and colleagues (2003) also described three models that account for the criminality of gang members. They explained gang membership as a result of: *selection* where gangs select and recruit members who are already delinquent; *facilitation* where gangs provide opportunities for delinquency to youth who were not delinquent beforehand (Gatti et al., 2005; Gordon, Lahey, Kawai, Loeber-Stouthamer, & Farrington, 2004; Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, & Chard-Wierschem, 1993); and *enhancement* where gang members are recruited from a population of high-risk youth who, as gang members, become more delinquent (Gatti et al., 2005; Thornberry et al., 1993). The findings from this thesis provided extensive support for the selection model. That is, individual delinquency is strongly associated with gang involvement (studies one and two), gang membership (study two), and gang-related crime (study four).

Since the data are cross-sectional, the facilitation and enhancement models cannot be definitively explored. However, this introduces the first argument for theory development. The selection, facilitation, and enhancement models were designed to analyse and explain delinquent behaviour in gang members, however, these models should be expanded to include internal and external constructs

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intrinsically rooted in delinquency as originally premised by Thornberry and colleagues (1994). For example, anti-authority attitudes provide gang members with a justification for their criminal activity (study four) and gang members learn these attitudes from their peers (study three). Arguably, this supports the facilitation model where young people prior to gang membership may not have anti-authority attitudes or even may have pro-authority attitudes until they engage with delinquent peers (e.g. gang members). Cairns and Cairns (1991) argued that in order for deviant facilitation to take place the conditions for entry into a chosen group include a value system aligned with that of the group.

Further evidence for the inclusion of psychological constructs in the models can be found in study two. Peripheral youth engage in violent offending in order to develop their reputation. It was also found that anti-authority attitudes may be acting as a cognitive strategy employed to enable youth to commit gang-related crime (study four). This implies the existence of associated attitudes, beliefs and cognitions that support delinquent tendencies. Therefore, gangs recruit members who are motivated to achieve the same goals (e.g. status) and who have already set aside their moral standards, i.e. the selection effect. Anti-authority attitudes (Tarry & Emler, 2007), perceived importance of social status (Wood et al., 2008), and moral disengagement (Bandura et al., 1996; Wood et al., 2008) have strong links with delinquency and as a result it can be argued that they play an intrinsic role in delinquent behaviour and gang involvement. Therefore, Thornberry and colleagues' (1994; 2003) delinquent belief systems could be broken down into the aforementioned psychological processes along with others. These are areas that need further research and a longitudinal design would provide insight into the causality of these processes.

The findings of this thesis also provided evidence that these variables interact reciprocally. The main argument of the facilitation model, which was based on social learning theory (Thornberry et al., 1994), was that peers both introduced and reinforced beliefs and behaviours conducive to gang involvement (Thornberry et al., 1994; Thornberry et al., 2003). This uni-directional pathway was exemplified by study three where gang members learned their attitudes from their peers. However, studies two and four support the selection model, which was based on control theory (Thornberry et al., 1994). It argued that new recruits already exhibited the psychological traits of gang members, i.e. perceived importance of social status and moral disengagement. This uni-directional pathway is in the opposite direction. Therefore, the findings in this thesis add support to the bidirectional causality of the factors that put youth at risk of gang membership.

Considering the theoretical contribution this thesis has made concerning interactional theory, it still remains that no one theory can fully explain gang involvement. For example, Tajfel and Turner (1979) argued that intergroup competitive and discriminatory behaviour could be provoked by the mere awareness of the presence of an outgroup (see also Turner, 1982). This argument was formed on the basis of *social identity theory*: the process by which an individual's self-concept is partly composed of social and psychological membership in a group (or groups) (Tajfel, 1974; Turner, 1982). It is important to highlight the functional significance of group membership to an individual's identity, i.e. an individual does not simply express him or herself according to personal experiences and/or biology, but also with respect to the groups with which he or she shares commonalities with (Turner, 1982; Sherman, Hamilton, & Lewis, 1999). Also, these commonalities provide the basis for group formation (Turner, 1982). Therefore, the determinants of social

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identity within a framework of a group include: ingroup-outgroup distinctions (e.g., favouritism vs. discrimination), shared attitudes, values, and beliefs (Goldstein, 2002).

The presence of neighbourhood gangs was not only related to gang involvement (study one) but also predicted gang-related crime (study four). Research supports that an individual's response to a group threat is to form a group response (Abelson et al., 1998), thus a collective identity is formed. It has also become evident that the outgroup could consist of authority figures. Anti-authority attitudes and gang membership had a strong relationship in studies two and three and these findings could be a result of either real or perceived contact. Regardless of if the outgroup is a neighbourhood gang or authority, the inter-group conflict could be the result of what Cooper & Fazio (1979) termed as *vicarious personalism* where gang members perceive the actions of the outgroup as directed at their gang, further solidifying the gang's identity. Social identity theory also provides a framework for status differentiation and collective action (see Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008, for review). Study two demonstrated that the perceived importance for social status could be the motivation for violent offending in 'wannabe' gang members. Since both peripheral youth and fully fledged gang members are more delinquent (and peripheral youth more violent), they are willing to engage in illegal activity to protect their gang's identity (Van Zomeren, Leach, & Spears, 2010).

The findings that gang members take responsibility for their actions rather than diffusing it amongst their peers (study two) can also be explained by social identity theory. This could be the result of the individual identity merging with the collective identity of the gang (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1982). This newly adopted gang identity also includes a group language (i.e. euphemisms) and the

attributional biases that accompany group membership (i.e. ingroup favouritism and outgroup blame). Lastly, social identity theory can also explain the dynamic relationship Duke and colleagues (1997) described between self-esteem and gang membership. They claimed that self-esteem played a central role in whether a young person joined a gang, participated as a member, and decided to leave the gang. These fluctuations could be credited to the process of merging and stripping away identities.

Although social identity theory explains the attitudes, beliefs, and cognitions that are consistent with gang membership, it too is uni-directional. Social identity theory argues that psychological traits are learned from group membership (Tajfel, 1974; Turner, 1982), however, as discussed previously, gangs actively recruit young people who already have the attitudes and cognitions conducive to gang involvement (studies two and four).

The findings of this thesis provide support for interactional theory, although due to its cross-sectional design it can not provide definitive conclusions regarding all three models. However, this thesis expanded and elaborated upon the limited scope of interactional theory by demonstrating the role psychology can play in both protecting youth from gang involvement and putting youth at risk of joining a gang. These psychological factors need to be included in further empirical and theoretical research on gangs considering how resistant they are to intervention (Hollin et al., 2002).

10.2 Limitations

The data collection method for this thesis was based on a cross-sectional school-based sampling design and as such, there are some limitations. The prevalence of gang members (7%) was marginally high for a British context,

however, it was still in range with previous literature (e.g., 6%, Sharp et al., 2006; 4% - current members, 11% - past members, Bennett & Holloway, 2004). This discrepancy may be accounted for by the difference in definition. Sharp and colleagues (2006) may have yielded a lower proportion because they altered the criteria. That is, instead of criminality as part of the group's identity, they included a self-report measure of group criminal activity which may have yielded socially desirable responding. Also, they included two additional criteria: the group consists of three or more youth (including themselves) and the group has at least one structural feature (Sharp et al., 2006). In contrast, our measurement of membership followed the original four Eurogang criteria: youthfulness, durability, street-orientation, and criminal identity (Weerman et al., 2009). However, Sharp et al. (2006) also examined gang members as defined by the Eurogang Network and their study yielded a prevalence of 3%. An explanation for the difference, however disturbing, could be that youth gangs in London, where the current thesis was conducted, are on the rise.

The identification of peripherally involved youth (studies one and two) has its own limitations. The cluster analysis identified a subgroup of youth who belonged to a group that fit some but not all of the criteria for a gang. This examination was based on the previous finding that the effects of gang membership are experienced not only by gang members themselves, but by a broader circle of youth who may or may not become gang members in the future (Curry et al., 2002). Therefore, it must be acknowledged that the process of identifying peripheral youth may capture other types of delinquent youth groups, of which there are many (Thornberry et al., 2003). However, as discussed previously, when compared to the Curry and colleagues (2002) method of identification, the current method used more precise criteria which

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would have limited the peripheral group to more highly involved youth who were not gang members. Gangs have been found to be fundamentally different from other types of delinquent youth groups (Thornberry et al., 2003), therefore, to add further support to the current identification method, gangs differ from other groups in two ways: (1) hierarchical group processes (Klein, 1995; Thornberry et al., 2003) and (2) territoriality (Klein, 1996; Thornberry et al., 2003). The peripheral youth identified in study two are mindful of their role within the gang hierarchy exemplified by their displacement of responsibility (study two) and it can be argued that they are also mindful of the gang's territory considering the relationship between the presence of neighbourhood gangs and gang involvement (study one).

Although the proportion of female gang members in this thesis is relatively high (36%), this finding is within range of past literature. For example, Moore and Hagedorn (2001) reported that the proportion of self-identified female gang members ranged from 8-38%, whilst other studies have shown females can comprise up to 46% of gang members (e.g. Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993). Previous literature has also shown that the proportion of female gang participation has been difficult to measure due to, in most cases, the nature of their involvement (Spergel, 1995; Bennett & Holloway, 2004). For example, police reports suggest females typically do not commit 'typical' gang crimes (Spergel, 1995), therefore, studies based on police surveys may be biased towards those who only commit gang crimes. One explanation for this could be the finding that the female gang role is traditionally subservient and their recruitment is partly (if not wholly) for their income potential as sex workers (Thornberry et al., 2003). In this way, police data may include a smaller representation of females as their crimes, i.e., prostitution, may not be categorised as gang-related. Self-reports, on the other hand, produce a higher

prevalence for gang membership amongst females (Bennett & Holloway, 2004) and since self-report methods were used, this may also account for the findings of comparatively high levels of female gang membership.

The sampling of high school students was burdened with the standard vagaries of such a procedure. The sample excludes students who were ill, tardy, or truant. This could result in an under-representation of the target gang member population considering that gang youth are prone to truancy (Young, Fitzgerald, Hallsworth, & Joseph, 2007). On the other hand, even though the proportion of gang-involved youth is within range of previous research, the seriousness of the current findings must be acknowledged. It seems that gang involvement is more prevalent in London than previously reported. Another limitation is that participants completed their questionnaires in a classroom setting, which may have affected their responses. However, since the collection of data was overseen by the researchers and no interference was observed it can only be assumed that the responses were genuine. The data collected on ethnic backgrounds do not tell us how long the participants lived in the UK (i.e. if they were born, raised, or newly immigrated to the UK). This limits the ability to assess whether the extent of growing up within or outside the UK has an effect on gang involvement. However, the UK literature has shown that gangs develop more in terms of regional lines rather than ethnicity (Bullock & Tilley, 2002; Sharp et al., 2006; HM Inspectorates of Prisons, 2010), and this has been reflected in prisoners' group formation and involvement in gang-related activity (Wood, 2006). Furthermore, this cross-section limits the ability to firmly establish causal directionality. However, it does provide an opportunity to make educated inferences based on previous findings and the results of the mediation analyses. Lastly, the findings may have been biased by common method variance due to the data being

collected solely by self-reports. Then again, for the purpose of assessing the respondents' perceptual and experiential constructs, not to mention the sensitive nature of some of the items, self-report was deemed to be the most fruitful method (Chan, 2009). For example, this allowed assessment of gang membership to be implicit whereby participants were not asked to self-nominate themselves as gang members, thus avoiding any definitional issues.

10.3 Developing interventions based on psychological findings

Clearly more research examining the psychological processes behind gang formation and gang-related crime is necessary before we can fully understand why young people join gangs and how to circumvent these processes via gang prevention and intervention programmes (Wood & Alleyne, 2010). The intention of this thesis is not to negate the effects of social and environmental factors, but to integrate social, cognitive, and behavioural processes as a way forward. Previous research has taken a uni-dimensional theoretical approach to studying gangs and developing responses to gangs, however, the findings of this thesis demonstrate a need to merge theories towards a multi-dimensional, multi-heuristic, interactional formula (Wood & Alleyne, 2010). Also, the findings presented in this thesis do not provide an exact blueprint of what an effective intervention should look like. That is beyond the scope of this thesis, however, this thesis has highlighted areas that effective programmes need to address.

First, it is imperative to better understand the past and current methods and strategies used to combat gangs. In order to develop appropriate responses to gangs, the gang phenomenon needs to be conceptualised and its components realised. Spergel (1995) argued that the impact of gangs can be broken down into four key components: the individual, group, behaviour, and context. Previous intervention

strategies have been designed to address some, but not all, of these components. Spergel (1995) grouped these programmes into five types: suppression, social intervention, social opportunities, community mobilisation, and organisational change, each of which will be summarised below.

Suppression. The suppression method refers to the use of law enforcement agencies, i.e. police, probation, and the courts, to 'crack down' on gangs (Goldstein, 1994; Spergel, 1995; Thornberry et al., 2003; Klein & Maxson, 2006). Essentially it is a reaction to the moral panic stemming from gang crime and violence (Spergel, 1995). This approach is predominantly self-inclusive and narrowly defined because its focus is solely to arrest, prosecute and imprison gang youth (Spergel, 1995; Klein & Maxson, 2006), which is also referred to as penal populism (The Centre for Social Justice, 2009). This is further exemplified by legislative maneuvering to target the group as well as the individual gang member. Examples include anti-gang civil injunctions in the US (Klein & Maxson, 2006), and stop search legislation and gang-related anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) in the UK (The Centre for Social Justice, 2009). However, this method alone has been found to be counterproductive. Increased arrests and longer prison sentences have resulted in the development, spread and evolution of street gangs across territories and into the prison service (Spergel, 1995; Wood & Adler, 2001; HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2010), with no attempt to reform, rehabilitate, or deter gang members from continued involvement (Spergel, 1995; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Thornberry et al., 2003). This demonstrates the need to reach out and include additional agency support.

Social intervention. Another approach has been to target gang youth and/or youth who are at risk via outreach or street workers (Goldstein, 1994; Spergel, 1995; Klein & Maxson, 2006). "An important objective was to de-isolate youth, but first youth

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gangs had to be 'reached' and worked within their own setting and to some extent on their own terms" (Spergel, 1995, p. 175). Unlike the suppression method, social intervention suffered the ill-fate of being varied and fragmented. That is, different agencies had differing objectives (Spergel, 1995; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). Prior research has also shown that street workers' presence inadvertently reinforce gangs and is linked to an increase in gang crime (Spergel, 1995). In some instances, social interventions were implemented only at times of emergency, e.g. as a response to a gang shooting (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). Yet, it still remains that in order to desist from the gang lifestyle, gang youth need advocates to assist them in their transition into mainstream society (Spergel, 1995; The Centre for Social Justice, 2009).

Social opportunities. Gang members' lack of education, employment, and prosocial relationships limit their opportunities to engage with legitimate social institutions (Goldstein, 1994; Spergel, 1995; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Thornberry et al., 2003). The social opportunities approach to gang intervention is aimed at providing training and support that address the needs of gang youth (Spergel, 1995). This strategy differs from the social intervention method where the focus is not to develop the worker-youth relationship but to reform the value system of gang youth (Goldstein, 1994). Prior interventions have involved school-based programmes where youth are educated in the life-course consequences of both anti-social and pro-social lifestyles (Spergel, 1995; Thornberry et al., 2003; Home Office, 2008; The Centre for Social Justice, 2009). This approach lacks the appropriate efficacy evaluation, however, past research has shown that this approach has been effective in transforming attitudes. Yet, its ability to transform behaviour remains unknown (Spergel, 1995; Thornberry et al., 2003).

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Community mobilisation. Chapter two discusses how gangs form and thrive in socially disorganized communities (see social disorganisation theory), and as a result, "community alienation has had a profound impact on the development of gang culture in Britain" (The Centre for Social Justice, 2009, p. 212). In order to counter the effects of disorganisation, communities must organise and mobilise by coordinating a comprehensive programme where various agencies and residents work in partnership to combat gangs (Spergel, 1995; Klein & Maxson, 2006). In particular, inter-agency cooperation is necessary to better tailor to the needs of gang youth (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; The Centre for Social Justice, 2009). However, greater community participation and coordination are not always sufficient measures to combat gangs, especially those that are deep-rooted in the community fabric. That is, some agencies are not adequately equipped to address the needs, both social and economic, of gang youth (Spergel, 1995). Providing access to legitimate resources is usually constrained by the limited funding support directed to local agencies (Spergel, 1995; Klein & Maxson, 2006; The Centre for Social Justice, 2009). However, this intervention strategy targets the fundamental and structural causes of gangs (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996).

Organisational change. The organisational change method targets the proximate causes of gangs (i.e. gang threat, gang beliefs and values, and the lack of alternative, legitimate activities) by developing special task forces (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). Essentially, this strategy coordinates the resources of agencies over and above those of the community. "Common definitions of the tactics and services within as well as across agencies are required" (Spergel, 1995, p. 185). Therefore, organisational change must be mutually dependent with community mobilisation in order for the intervention to be effective (Spergel, 1995).

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As mentioned previously, all of these intervention strategies only address some of Spergel's (1995) key components, i.e. the individual, group, behaviour, and context. As a result, their efficacy to tackle the gang phenomenon remains limited. Prior research has found favourable support for the social opportunities and community mobilisation methods, yet ironically, they are the least employed (Spergel, 1995; Klein & Maxson, 2006). While the suppression method has been the more popular strategy, it has been found to be the least effective (Klein & Maxson, 2006; Thornberry et al., 2003). This approach alone is insufficient for two reasons (among others): (1) it ignores the risk factors (social, environmental and psychological), and (2) it places full responsibility for tackling the gang problem on the Criminal Justice System (The Centre for Social Justice, 2009). Ultimately, a comprehensive approach to combating gangs is needed in order to circumvent the proximate and structural causes of gangs.

Criteria for success? It is clear that "youth gangs are comprised of individuals who have needs for a wide variety of services" (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996, p. 262). In addition to the need to integrate all of the above strategies into a comprehensive model, Thornberry and colleagues (2003) presented six factors that need consideration when developing programmes that combat gangs.

1. Early prevention efforts should be given top priority. It is essential to target youth at risk in order to stunt the growth of gangs. Furthermore, there are long-term cost benefits to early prevention programmes that should be recognised (Spergel, 1995; Klein & Maxson, 2006).

2. Comprehensive, multi-faceted programmes are essential for addressing all four of Spergel's (1995) key components.

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3. Programmes need to consider the cultural and regional contexts where gangs flourish. By doing so, they provide opportunities to improve young people's participation in legitimate social institutions. "Enhancing the social capital of gang members provides a means to address both the cultural and institutional factors that make gang life compelling" (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996, p. 280).

4. Programmes need to include strategies that combat peer influences. Delinquent peers increase the likelihood of antisocial behaviour (Dishion et al., 1994; Monahan et al., 2009) and gang membership (Thornberry et al., 2003; Klein & Maxson, 2006; Sharp et al., 2006). However, peer-based interventions have been found to 'back-fire' (Dishion, McCord, & Paulin, 1999), adding further support for a multifaceted approach.

5. Female gang members should have equal access to intervention programmes. As made evident in this thesis and prior research (e.g. Esbensen et al., 1999; Sharp et al., 2006), girls are becoming more heavily involved in gangs.

6. If there is ever an opportunity to choose when to intervene in the pathway that leads to the development of a fully fledged gang member, it would be as early as possible. It is important to try and capture youth before they are enticed by the allure of the gang lifestyle (Thornberry et al., 2003). Study one showed that deviant peer pressure mediates the relationship between poor parental management and delinquency. Perhaps a programme that involved a family intervention could circumvent the effects of peer influences, as an example.

These factors encompass much of the current research findings on gangs, yet, the current thesis proposes an additional factor:

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7. Goldstein (1994) argued that programmes need greater involvement and utilization of psychological knowledge. Gang programmes would benefit from input from areas of psychology such as: clinical, developmental, social, cognitive, and community psychology. The research presented in this thesis exemplifies how psychology can provide additional insight into Spergel's (1995) four components. For example, the role of anti-authority attitudes is an extensive one that seems to have eluded practitioners. These anti-authority attitudes are the causes and consequences of gang-related processes within the individual, group, behavioural, and contextual domains. Therefore, they deserve the attention of prevention and intervention strategies.

The overall conclusion from research on intervention programmes is that to be effective in tackling gangs we must concert our efforts towards an integrated, comprehensive and multifaceted approach. To add, researchers have argued that the best way forward is to use and build upon what works. This would involve targeting youth who are at risk or fully fledged gang members and implement interventions that have been shown to be effective in reducing delinquency (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Thornberry et al., 2003) and its associated attitudes, beliefs, and cognitions (Hollin et al., 2002). By using this approach, young people can be removed from the context of the gang, thus avoiding the maladaptive ingroup/outgroup distinctions mentioned previously in this chapter. In order to identify these youth it is necessary to develop a screening instrument because none exists currently.

Once the young people have been identified, a multi-faceted programme must be implemented. As mentioned previously, a programme that addresses the individual, group, behaviour, and context would be most effective (Spergel, 1995).

Since criminal behaviour is intrinsically motivated by psychological processes (Hollin et al., 2002), there needs to be a psychological intervention administered as part of this multi-faceted approach. Cognitive-behavioural interventions have withstood empirical scrutiny and are considered highly effective in reducing aggressive and violent behaviour in both adolescents and adults (Hollin et al., 2002; Lipsey, Landenberger, & Wilson, 2007; Cole, 2008). Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) targets the beliefs, attitudes, and cognitions that directly contribute to the offending behaviour (Hollin et al., 2002; Lipsey et al., 2007; Cole, 2008). Typically, CBT includes programmes that address: skills development, affective education, and problem-solving; all of which can be integrated into current gang programmes. Also, these programmes have been shown to reduce levels of aggressive behaviour. For example, skills development programmes can help young people deal more effectively with social situations, e.g. harassment from neighbourhood gangs and/or authority. Affective education programmes such as anger management training can equip youth with the tools to better manage their aggression that would otherwise result in violence. Finally, problem-solving programmes can address cognitive distortions arising from moral disengagement.

CBT programmes remain just as effective on their own as when integrated into multi-dimensional initiatives (Lipsey et al., 2007). Also, they have been found to be effective in schools administered both universally and targeted (i.e. young people selected because of their risk). This is an approach worth exploring because schools are the only institutions with almost universal access to children (Wilson & Lipsey, 2007). Yet CBT has not been administered to gang-involved youth (Fisher, Gardner, & Montgomery, 2008). CBT shows promise considering its track history, however,

this is purely a recommendation. The next appropriate steps are to implement, test and evaluate this approach (Thornberry et al., 2003).

In summary, the review of literature presented in chapter one has outlined many risk factors associated with gang involvement, i.e. neighbourhood characteristics, family factors, peer influences, etc. Yet it is still not clear why some youth who seem most at risk lead pro-social, legitimate lives. There is a gap in the literature as to the individual factors that differentiate gang from non-gang youth (Wood & Alleyne, 2010). Psychology can provide insight into the internal and intrinsic characteristics most conducive to gang involvement as evidenced by this thesis. Also, psychology can allow us to measure these psychological processes implicitly and more effectively. Lastly, psychology has a proven track record with respect to behaviour modification, i.e. reduced criminal recidivism. Therefore, the next step forward is to develop, test and improve upon the current state of gang prevention and intervention programmes because it is empirically supported that the most effective programmes encompass social, cognitive, and behavioural processes (Hollin et al., 2002). In the UK, it is difficult to assess the efficacy of the current programmes because the response to the gang phenomenon by government and partnering agencies is too recent. Thus, there has been little time to conduct the appropriate evaluations (The Centre for Social Justice, 2009).

10.4 Concluding remarks

The overall purpose of this thesis was to provide insight into the psychological processes that underpin gang membership and gang-related crime. It is not meant to imply that psychology is the only way forward, but an integrated, comprehensive approach to studying gangs would be most informative. The theoretical and policy implications are made from the same fabric. The take-home

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message is that the development of theory and intervention strategies must be comprehensive and multi-dimensional in order to address all of the personal, social, and environmental needs of gang youth above and beyond what the gang culture offers.

Conducting longitudinal research would be the most informative method for examining gangs since it would help to clarify the developmental processes involved in gang membership. However, further cross-sectional snapshots would add to our understanding of the cognitive processes that underlie young people's involvement in gang-related criminal activity and help to devise interventions to target gang involved youth. The most successful intervention programmes targeting delinquency address social, cognitive, and behavioural processes (Hollin, et. al, 2002). One recommendation could be the inclusion of CBT within school-based interventions. However, to date, no current gang prevention programmes include cognitive-behavioural interventions (Fisher et al., 2008). This thesis showed that socio-cognitive processes deserve more consideration than they currently receive in the development of interventions to tackle gang activity. Future research also needs to consider the differences and similarities between different levels of gang membership.

The incorporation of the psychological processes that delineate non-gang youth, peripheral youth and gang members expands previous research and highlights the importance of examining individual differences in the cognitive processes that relate to gang membership. We are still a long way from developing the interventions needed to address gang membership. However, the findings presented here show that by identifying cognitive processes associated with gang membership there is potential for developing interventions to address youth interest in gangs *before* they

develop into fully fledged members. In short, the inclusion of more psychology in gang research will help to enhance our explanations of why it is that youth join gangs.

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Informed Consent Form (in loco parentis)
An exploration of the psychological characteristics of youth groups
Researcher: Emma Alleyne
University of Kent, Canterbury

Your students have been asked to participate in a research study for a postgraduate course. The details of the project will be given below.

Aim of the study:
The aim of this study is to examine the psychological characteristics that differ in youth groups who engage in social and antisocial activities. However, engaging in antisocial activities is not a criterion for inclusion in this study.

Procedure:
If you provide consent the procedure is as follows:
- Your students will be asked to answer a questionnaire, which will take about an hour to complete.
- Once finished, the questionnaire will be collected and you and your students will be provided with further information about the study and also an opportunity to ask any other questions you may have.

Risks:
The questions may touch on a sensitive area, especially if your students have had personal experiences with various types of antisocial activities. All responses are confidential and anonymous, and your students may choose to withdraw at any time (this will be explained further below).

Benefits of this study:
The benefits are an increase in understanding of young people's involvement in anti-social behaviour which may be needed to develop intervention strategies which will be useful for schools, parents, and the justice system.

Confidentiality:
Your students' responses on the questionnaire are confidential. The questionnaire does not ask them to write their names, but, the questionnaire they fill out will be coded with this consent form so that if they wish to withdraw their data, their responses can be identified. All records will be viewed only by the postgraduate researcher and supervisor.

Voluntary participation and withdrawal:
Participation is voluntary. Participants can refuse to continue or withdraw from any point onward without penalty. Also, participants can skip questions they do not feel comfortable answering.

Questions and/or complaints:
If you have any questions about this study, you are encouraged to contact the postgraduate researcher at eka7@kent.ac.uk or the research supervisor, Dr. Jane Wood at j.l.wood@kent.ac.uk. In addition, you are welcome to contact the researcher if you want to know the results of this study.
Lastly, if you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this study, please contact the chair of Psychology Research Ethics Panel (via the Psychology department office) in writing, providing a detailed account of your concern.

Consent Statement:
By signing below you are acknowledging the following:
   o   You have read this consent form and all your questions have been answered
   o   Your students may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty
   o   Your students understand that all of their answers will be kept confidential
   o   Lastly, a copy of this form will be made available to you

_____
Signature (in loco parentis)

_____
Print Name

_____
Institution

_____
Date

Researcher contact details: Supervisor contact details:
Emma Alleyne   Dr. Jane Wood
eka7@kent.ac.uk   j.l.wood@kent.ac.uk
Psychology Department, Keynes College   Psychology Department, Keynes College
University of Kent   University of Kent
CT2 7NP   CT2 7NP

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form (Youth)
<u>An exploration of the psychological characteristics of youth groups</u>
Researcher: Emma Alleyne
University of Kent, Canterbury

You have been asked to participate in a research study for a postgraduate course. The details of the project will be given below.

Aim of the study:
The aim of this study is to examine the psychological characteristics that differ in youth groups who engage in social and antisocial activities.

Procedure:
If you decide to participate the procedure is as follows:
- You will be asked to answer a questionnaire, which will take about an hour to complete.
- Once finished, the questionnaire will be collected and you will be provided with further information about the study and also an opportunity to ask any other questions you may have.

Risks:
The questions may touch on a sensitive area, especially if you have had personal experiences with various types of antisocial activities. All responses are confidential and anonymous, and you may choose to withdraw at any time (this will be explained further below).

Benefits of this study:
The benefits are an increase in understanding of young people's involvement in anti-social behaviour which may be needed to develop intervention strategies which will be useful for schools, parents, and the justice system.

Confidentiality:
Your responses on the questionnaire are confidential. The questionnaire does not ask you to write your name, but, the questionnaire you fill out will be coded with your informed consent so that if you wish to withdraw your data, your responses can be identified. All records will be viewed only by the postgraduate researcher and supervisor.

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Participation is voluntary. Participants can refuse to continue or withdraw from any point onward without penalty. Also, participants can skip questions they do not feel comfortable answering.

Questions and/or complaints:

If you have any questions about this study, you are encouraged to contact the postgraduate researcher at eka7@kent.ac.uk or the research supervisor, Dr. Jane Wood at j.l.wood@kent.ac.uk. In addition, you are welcome to contact the researcher if you want to know the results of this study.

Lastly, if you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this study, please contact the chair of Psychology Research Ethics Panel (via the Psychology department office) in writing, providing a detailed account of your concern.

Consent Statement:

By signing below you are acknowledging the following:

- o You have read this consent form and all your questions have been answered
- o You may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty
- o You understand that all of your answers will be kept confidential
- o Lastly, a copy of this form will be given to you

_____

Signature of the Participant or Guardian

_____

Print Name

_____

Date

PLEASE SEPARATE THIS PAGE FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND HAND IN SEPARATELY – THANK YOU!

Researcher contact details: Supervisor contact details:
Emma Alleyne   Dr. Jane Wood
eka7@kent.ac.uk   j.l.wood@kent.ac.uk
Psychology Department, Keynes College   Psychology Department, Keynes College
University of Kent   University of Kent
CT2 7NP   CT2 7NP

APPENDIX C
Debriefing (in loco parentis)
An exploration of the psychological characteristics of youth groups
Researcher: Emma Alleyne
University of Kent, Canterbury

Thank you very much for allowing your students to participate in this research. We would like to provide some further information about the purpose of the study and what we expect to find.

The aim of this study is to identify the characteristics of young people according to the youth groups they belong to and the activities they engage in, especially delinquent activities (however, engaging in delinquent activity is not a criteria for inclusion in this study). Previous research has shown that there are psychological differences in young people who engage in lone behaviour compared to those who engage in group behaviour. Therefore, it is expected that this study will show similar findings among young people in the London area.

If you have any queries about this research or would like to ask any further questions, please contact the researcher or research supervisor using the contact details below.

If you would like to withdraw your students' data at any point please contact the Psychology departmental office on **01227 823961**. If you have been given a participant code you need to cite this. You do not have to give a reason for your withdrawal.

If you have any serious concerns about the ethical conduct of this study, please inform the Chair of the Psychology Research Ethics Panel (via the Psychology Department Office) in writing, providing a detailed account of your concern.

Once again, we would like to thank you for your students' valuable contribution to this research. Their participation is greatly appreciated and will contribute to a greater understanding of this area of research.

Yours sincerely,
Emma Alleyne

Researcher contact details:
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Debrief (Youth)
An exploration of the psychological characteristics of youth groups
Researcher: Emma Alleyne
University of Kent, Canterbury

Thank you very much for your participation in this research. We would like to provide some further information about the purpose of the study and what we expect to find.

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If you have any serious concerns about the ethical conduct of this study, please inform the Chair of the Psychology Research Ethics Panel (via the Psychology Department Office) in writing, providing a detailed account of your concern.

Once again, we would like to thank you for your valuable contribution to this research. Your participation is greatly appreciated and will contribute to a greater understanding of this area of research.

Yours sincerely,
Emma Alleyne

Researcher contact details: Supervisor contact details:
Emma Alleyne   Dr. Jane Wood
eka7@kent.ac.uk   j.l.wood@kent.ac.uk
Psychology Department, Keynes College Psychology Department, Keynes College
University of Kent   University of Kent
CT2 7NP   CT2 7NP

APPENDIX E

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE (Pilot)
University of Kent, Canterbury

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 32 pages. It should take you no more than one hour to complete all the questions, so please take your time. Please read the following instructions CAREFULLY and then proceed on to the questionnaire.

Instructions:

1.   Do NOT write your name on the questionnaire.

2.   Your answers are CONFIDENTIAL – no one outside the project

    investigator and supervisor will know how you answered the questions.

3.   Please answer the questions in the order they appear.

4.   Circle (or check) the number that best shows your answer to each

    question.

5.   There are no right or wrong answers. Your opinion is what counts.

6.   You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer.

7.   You can stop filling out the questionnaire any time you wish.

8.   We hope you enjoy answering these questions.

We are going to start with a few questions about you and your background. Please circle the response that best describes you.

1.   I am: (1) Male   (2) Female

2.   I am _____ years old.

3.   Think of the place you live most of the time. Which of the following people live with you? (Choose all that apply.)

      (1)   Mother   (9)   Other adults
      (2)   Father   (Please specify:_____)
      (3)   Stepmother   (10) Sister(s)
      (4)   Stepfather   (11) Brother(s)
      (5)   Aunt   (12) Stepsister(s)
      (6)   Uncle   (13) Stepbrother(s)
      (7)   Grandmother (14) Other children
      (8)   Grandfather   (15) I live alone

4.   What is the highest level of schooling your father completed?

      (1)   Completed grade school or less
      (2)   Some secondary school
      (3)   Completed secondary school
      (4)   Some university/higher education
      (5)   Completed university/higher education
      (6)   Graduate or professional school after college
      (7)   I don't know

5.   What is the highest level of schooling your mother completed?

      (1)   Completed grade school or less
      (2)   Some secondary school
      (3)   Completed secondary school
      (4)   Some university/higher education
      (5)   Completed university/higher education
      (6)   Graduate or professional school after college
      (7)   I don't know

6.   In what country were you born? _____

7.   In what country was your father born? _____

8.   In what country was your mother born? _____

9. Did you have a job for which you were paid during the past 12 months?

    (1) No   (2) Yes

9a. (IF YES) About how many hours a week did you work? _____ hours

9b. How many weeks during the year did you work? _____ weeks

The next several questions are about your family. Circle or check the number that best represents your opinion. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers.

10. When you go someplace, you leave a note for your parents or call them to tell them where you are.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

11. Your parents know where you are when you are not at home or at school.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

12. You know how to get in touch with your parents if they are not at home.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

13. Your parents know who you are with if you are not at home.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

14. You enjoy talking over your plans with your parents.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

15. You can talk to your parents about anything.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

16. Your parents don't try to understand your problems.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

17. Your parents make you feel trusted.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

18. Your parents are always picking on you.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

19. You would like to be the kind of person your mother is.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

20. You would like to be the kind of person your father is.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

21. You depend upon your parents for advice and guidance.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

22.   Your parents praise you when you do well.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

The following questions are about school and your friends. Please circle or check the number that best represents your opinion.

23.   Homework is a waste of time.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

24.   You try hard in school.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

25.   Education is so important that it is worth it to put up with things about school that you don't like.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

26.   In general, you like school.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

27.   Grades are very important to you.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

28.   You usually finish your homework.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

29.   If you had to choose between studying to get a good grade on a test or going
      out with your friends, which would you do?

      (1)   Definitely go with friends
      (2)   Probably go with friends
      (3)   Uncertain
      (4)   Probably study
      (5)   Definitely study

30.   If your group of friends was getting you into trouble at home, how likely is it
      that you would still hang out with them?

Not at all   Very likely
   likely
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

31.   If your group of friends was getting you into trouble at school, how likely is it
      that you would still hang out with them?

Not at all   Very likely
   likely
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

32.   If your group of friends was getting you into trouble with the police, how
      likely is it that you would still hang out with them?

Not at all   Very likely
   likely
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

Studies have found that many people break the rules and laws some of the time. Circle or check how often during the past 6 months you have done the following things.

During the past 6 months, how often have you:

33.   Played truant without an excuse?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

34.   Lied about your age to get into some place or to buy something?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

35.   Avoided paying for something such as movies, bus or underground rides?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

36.   Purposely damaged or destroyed property that did not belong to you?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

37.   Carried a hidden weapon for protection?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

38.   Illegally spray painted a wall or building?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

39.   Stolen or tried to steal something worth less than £50?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

40.   Stolen or tried to steal something worth more than £50?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

41.   Gone into or tried to go into a building to steal something?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

42.   Stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

43.   Hit someone with the idea of hurting them?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

44.   Attacked someone with a weapon?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

45.   Used a weapon or force to get money or things from people?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

46. Been involved in "gang fights"?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

47. Sold illegal drugs?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

48. During the past 6 months, how often have you used drugs?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

49. If so, which drugs have you used?

_____

_____

_____

Have any of the following things happened to you during the past 6 months? That is, how often in the past 6 months have you □.

50. Been hit by someone trying to hurt you?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

51. Had someone use a threat, a weapon or force to get money or things from you?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

52. Been attacked by someone with a weapon or by someone trying to seriously hurt or kill you?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

53. Had some of your things stolen?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

54. How much do you feel threatened by other groups of youths?

Not at all				Very much
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

55. If so, who are these people that threaten you?

_____

_____

_____

The following questions are about your friends or the people you spend time with.

56. During the past 12 months, have you participated in any teams, scouts, sports club, or other formal groups in your school, neighborhood or city?

(1) No   (2) Yes   IF YES, SPECIFY _____

57. In addition to any such formal groups, some people have a certain group of friends that they spend time with, doing things together or just hanging out. Do you have a group of friends like that?

(1) No   (2) Yes

IF NO, PLEASE MOVE ON TO PAGE 16

IF YES, GO TO QUESTION # 58

If you belong to more than one such group, answer for the one most important to you.

58.   About how many people, including you, belong to this group?

2	3-10	11-20	21-50	51-100	More than 100
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)

59.   How many of your close friends belong to this group?

All of them	Most of them	About half of them	Less than half of them	None of them
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

60. Which of the following categories best describes this group?

All male	Mostly male	About half male, half female	Mostly female	All female
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

61.   How old is the youngest person in this group? _____ years

62.   How old is the oldest person in this group? _____ years

63.   Which of the following categories describes the people in your group? (CIRCLE OR CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

(a)   White British

All of them			None of them
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)

(b)   Black (Caribbean and/or African)

All of them			None of them
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)

(c)   Indian

All of them			None of them
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)

(d)   Pakistani

All of them   None of them
        (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(e)   European – state country _____

All of them   None of them
        (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(f)   Chinese

All of them   None of them
        (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(g)   Other _____

All of them   None of them
        (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

64.   Does this group spend a lot of time together in public places like the park, the street, shopping areas, or the neighborhood?

        (1) No   (2) Yes

65.   Does this group have an area or place that it calls its own?

        (1) No   (2) Yes

IF NO, GO TO QUESTION #69
66.   IF YES, Is this area or place ☐

        (1)   A park or playground
        (2)   A street, street corner or square
        (3)   A drinking or eating place (such as a pub, café, restaurant)
        (4)   Living space (such as an apartment, house, flat)
        (5)   A neighborhood or area of the city
        (6)   Shopping area
        (7)   Other – Please specify:_____

67.   Does your group let other groups come into this area or place?

        (1) No   (2) Yes

68.   Does your group defend this area or place against other groups?

(1) No   (2) Yes

68a.   IF YES, how do they do that?

_____

_____

_____

69.   How long has this group existed? (in months and/or years)

_____

70.   Does your group have a name for itself?

(1) No   (2) Yes

70a.   IF YES, What is the group's name?

_____

71.   The following is a list of reasons that young people give for joining groups.
        Which of them were important reasons for you to join your group? (Circle all
        that apply)

        (1)   To make friends
        (2)   To feel important
        (3)   To feel like you belong to something
        (4)   To prepare for the future
        (5)   To keep out of trouble
        (6)   For protection
        (7)   To share secrets
        (8)   To get away with illegal activities
        (9)   To participate in group activities
        (10)   To have a territory of your own
        (11)   To get your parents' respect
        (12)   Because someone in your family was a member of the group
        (13)   To meet members of the opposite sex
        (14)   To get money or other things
        (15)   To get money or other things from selling drugs
        (16)   Because a friend was a member of the group
        (17)   For company
        (18)   Any other reasons for why you joined your groups? (Please specify)

_____

_____

72. Which of the following characteristics describes your group?

(a)	Recognised leaders	(1) No	(2) Yes
(b)	Symbols	(1) No	(2) Yes
(c)	Boys and girls do different things	(1) No	(2) Yes
(d)	Regular meetings	(1) No	(2) Yes
(e)	Specific rules or codes	(1) No	(2) Yes
(f)	You have to do special things to get in	(1) No	(2) Yes
(g)	Special clothing	(1) No	(2) Yes
(h)	Tattoos	(1) No	(2) Yes

73. Is doing illegal things accepted by or okay for your group?

(1) No   (2) Yes

74. Do people in your group actually do illegal things together?

(1) No   (2) Yes

75. How often are the following things done by your group?

(a)   Threaten people

Never   Often
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(b)   Fight

Never   Often
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(c)   Steal things

Never   Often
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(d)   Get protection money

Never   Often
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(e)   Rob other people

Never   Often
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(f)   Steal cars

Never   Often
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(g)   Sell illegal drugs

Never   Often
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(h)   Carry illegal weapons

Never   Often
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(i)   Damage or destroy property

Never   Often
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(j)   Beat up someone

Never   Often
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(k)   Write graffiti

Never   Often
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(l)   Use drugs

Never   Often
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(m) Use alcohol

Never   Often
  (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(n) Break and enter (burglary)

Never   Often
  (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(o) Other illegal offences (SPECIFY)_____

Never   Often
  (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

76.   Do you consider your group of friends to be a gang?

(1) No   (2) Yes

IF YES, go to 79

77.   If you are not now, have you ever been in such a gang?

(1) No   (2) Yes

78. If you do not use the word "gang" for your group, is there some other term you would use? For example, some groups call themselves clubs, bands, crews, posses, taggers, bikers, party crews, and so on. If your group uses a term other than "gang", what is that term? _____

79.   Have any of your brothers or sisters ever been in a gang?

(1) No   (2) Yes   (3) I have no brothers/sisters

80.   Have any of your friends ever been in a gang?

(1) No   (2) Yes   (3) I have no friends

81.   Are there people living on your street who belong to a gang?

(1) No   (2) Yes   (3) I don't know

82.   Are there any gangs in your neighborhood or city?

        (1) No   (2) Yes   (3) I don't know

The next set of questions is about your group of friends. Please circle or check the number that best represents how you feel.

83.   Being in my group makes me feel important.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

84.   My group provides a good deal of support and loyalty for each other.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

85.   Being in my group makes me feel respected.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

86.   Being in my group makes me feel like I'm a useful person.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

87.   Being in my group makes me feel like I belong somewhere.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

88.   I really enjoy being in my group.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

89.   My group is like a family to me.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

You have reached the end of the questionnaire! Please look over the questions and make sure you have answered everything. Hand in your questionnaire to the research assistant.

Thank you very much for your participation in this research project!

Appendix F

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE
University of Kent, Canterbury

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 32 pages. It should take you no more than one hour to complete all the questions, so please take your time. Please read the following instructions CAREFULLY and then proceed on to the questionnaire.

Instructions:

1. Do NOT write your name on the questionnaire.

2. Your answers are CONFIDENTIAL – no one outside the project investigator and supervisor will know how you answered the questions.

3. Please answer the questions in the order they appear.

4. Circle (or check) the number that best shows your answer to each question.

5. There are no right or wrong answers. Your opinion is what counts.

6. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer.

7. You can stop filling out the questionnaire any time you wish.

8. We hope you enjoy answering these questions.

We are going to start with a few questions about you and your background. Please circle the response that best describes you.

1. I am: (1) Male   (2) Female

2. I am _____ years old.

3. Think of the place you live most of the time. Which of the following people live with you? (Choose all that apply.)

  (1) Mother   (9) Other adults
  (2) Father   (Please specify:_____)
  (3) Stepmother (10) Sister(s)
  (4) Stepfather (11) Brother(s)
  (5) Aunt   (12) Stepsister(s)
  (6) Uncle   (13) Stepbrother(s)
  (7) Grandmother (14) Other children
  (8) Grandfather (15) I live alone

4. What is the highest level of schooling your father completed?

  (1) Completed grade school or less
  (2) Some secondary school
  (3) Completed secondary school
  (4) Some university/higher education
  (5) Completed university/higher education
  (6) Graduate or professional school after college
  (7) I don't know

5. What is the highest level of schooling your mother completed?

  (1) Completed grade school or less
  (2) Some secondary school
  (3) Completed secondary school
  (4) Some university/higher education
  (5) Completed university/higher education
  (6) Graduate or professional school after college
  (7) I don't know

6. In what country were you born? _____

7. In what country was your father born? _____

8. In what country was your mother born? _____

9.   Did you have a job for which you were paid during the past 12 months?

      (1) No   (2) Yes

9a.   (IF YES) About how many hours a week did you work? _____hours

9b.   How many weeks during the year did you work? _____weeks

The next several questions are about your family. Circle or check the number that best represents your opinion. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers.

10.   When you go someplace, you leave a note for your parents or call them to tell them where you are.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

11.   Your parents know where you are when you are not at home or at school.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

12.   You know how to get in touch with your parents if they are not at home.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

13.   Your parents know who you are with if you are not at home.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

14.   You enjoy talking over your plans with your parents.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

15. You can talk to your parents about anything.

Strongly
Disagree
(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

Strongly
Agree
(5)

16. Your parents don't try to understand your problems.

Strongly
Disagree
(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

Strongly
Agree
(5)

17. Your parents make you feel trusted.

Strongly
Disagree
(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

Strongly
Agree
(5)

18. Your parents are always picking on you.

Strongly
Disagree
(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

Strongly
Agree
(5)

19. You would like to be the kind of person your mother is.

Strongly
Disagree
(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

Strongly
Agree
(5)

20. You would like to be the kind of person your father is.

Strongly
Disagree
(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

Strongly
Agree
(5)

21. You depend upon your parents for advice and guidance.

Strongly
Disagree
(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

Strongly
Agree
(5)

22.   Your parents praise you when you do well.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

The following questions are about school and your friends. Please circle or check the number that best represents your opinion.

23.   Homework is a waste of time.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

24.   You try hard in school.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

25.   Education is so important that it is worth it to put up with things about school that you don't like.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

26.   In general, you like school.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

27.   Grades are very important to you.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
   (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

28.   You usually finish your homework.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

29.   If you had to choose between studying to get a good grade on a test or going
       out with your friends, which would you do?

       (1)   Definitely go with friends
       (2)   Probably go with friends
       (3)   Uncertain
       (4)   Probably study
       (5)   Definitely study

30.   If your group of friends was getting you into trouble at home, how likely is it
       that you would still hang out with them?

Not at all   Very likely
   likely
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

31.   If your group of friends was getting you into trouble at school, how likely is it
       that you would still hang out with them?

Not at all   Very likely
   likely
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

32.   If your group of friends was getting you into trouble with the police, how
       likely is it that you would still hang out with them?

Not at all   Very likely
   likely
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

Studies have found that many people break the rules and laws some of the time. Circle or check how often during the past 6 months you have done the following things.

During the past 6 months, how often have you:

33.   Played truant without an excuse?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

34.   Lied about your age to get into some place or to buy something?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

35.   Avoided paying for something such as movies, bus or underground rides?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

36.   Purposely damaged or destroyed property that did not belong to you?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

37.   Carried a hidden weapon for protection?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

38.   Illegally spray painted a wall or building?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

39.   Stolen or tried to steal something worth less than £50?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

40.   Stolen or tried to steal something worth more than £50?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

41.   Gone into or tried to go into a building to steal something?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

42.   Stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

43.   Hit someone with the idea of hurting them?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

44.   Attacked someone with a weapon?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

45.   Used a weapon or force to get money or things from people?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

46.   Been involved in "gang fights"?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

47.   Sold illegal drugs?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

48.   During the past 6 months, how often have you used drugs?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

49. If so, which drugs have you used?

_____

_____

_____

Have any of the following things happened to you during the past 6 months? That is, how often in the past 6 months have you □.

50.   Been hit by someone trying to hurt you?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

51.   Had someone use a threat, a weapon or force to get money or things from you?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

52.   Been attacked by someone with a weapon or by someone trying to seriously hurt or kill you?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

53.   Had some of your things stolen?

Never	Once or twice	3-5 times	6-10 times	More than 10 times
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

54.   How much do you feel threatened by other groups of youths?

Not at all				Very much
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

55.   If so, who are these people that threaten you?

_____

_____

_____

The following questions are about your friends or the people you spend time with.

56.   During the past 12 months, have you participated in any teams, scouts, sports club, or other formal groups in your school, neighborhood or city?

(1) No   (2) Yes   IF YES, SPECIFY _____

57.   In addition to any such formal groups, some people have a certain group of friends that they spend time with, doing things together or just hanging out. Do you have a group of friends like that?

(1) No   (2) Yes

IF NO, PLEASE MOVE ON TO PAGE 16

IF YES, GO TO QUESTION # 58

If you belong to more than one such group, answer for the one most important to you.

58.   About how many people, including you, belong to this group?

2	3-10	11-20	21-50	51-100	More than 100
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)

59.   How many of your close friends belong to this group?

All of them	Most of them	About half of them	Less than half of them	None of them
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

60. Which of the following categories best describes this group?

All male	Mostly male	About half male, half female	Mostly female	All female
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

61.   How old is the youngest person in this group? _____ years

62.   How old is the oldest person in this group? _____ years

63.   Which of the following categories describes the people in your group? (CIRCLE OR CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

(a)   White British

All of them			None of them
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)

(b)   Black (Caribbean and/or African)

All of them			None of them
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)

(c)   Indian

All of them			None of them
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)

(d)   Pakistani

All of them   None of them
     (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(e)   European – state country _____

All of them   None of them
     (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(f)   Chinese

All of them   None of them
     (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(g)   Other _____

All of them   None of them
     (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

64.   Does this group spend a lot of time together in public places like the park, the street, shopping areas, or the neighborhood?

        (1) No   (2) Yes

65.   Does this group have an area or place that it calls its own?

        (1) No   (2) Yes

IF NO, GO TO QUESTION #69
66.   IF YES, Is this area or place ☐

        (1)   A park or playground
        (2)   A street, street corner or square
        (3)   A drinking or eating place (such as a pub, café, restaurant)
        (4)   Living space (such as an apartment, house, flat)
        (5)   A neighborhood or area of the city
        (6)   Shopping area
        (7)   Other – Please specify:_____

67.   Does your group let other groups come into this area or place?

        (1) No   (2) Yes

68. Does your group defend this area or place against other groups?

(1) No   (2) Yes

68a. IF YES, how do they do that?

(1) Fight
(2) Intimidate or threaten others
(3) Other (specify)

_____

_____

_____

69. How long has this group existed?

_____

70. Does your group have a name for itself?

(1) No   (2) Yes

70a. IF YES, What is the group's name?

_____

71. The following is a list of reasons that young people give for joining groups. Which of them were important reasons for you to join your group? (Circle all that apply)

(1)   To make friends
(2)   To feel important
(3)   To feel like you belong to something
(4)   To prepare for the future
(5)   To keep out of trouble
(6)   For protection
(7)   To share secrets
(8)   To get away with illegal activities
(9)   To participate in group activities
(10) To have a territory of your own
(11) To get your parents' respect
(12) Because someone in your family was a member of the group
(13) To meet members of the opposite sex
(14) To get money or other things
(15) To get money or other things from selling drugs

(16)   Because a friend was a member of the group

(17)   For company

(18)   Any other reasons for why you joined your groups? (Please specify)

_____

_____

72.   Which of the following characteristics describes your group?

(a)	Recognised leaders	(1) No	(2) Yes
(b)	Symbols	(1) No	(2) Yes
(c)	Boys and girls do different things	(1) No	(2) Yes
(d)	Regular meetings	(1) No	(2) Yes
(e)	Specific rules or codes	(1) No	(2) Yes
(f)	You have to do special things to get in	(1) No	(2) Yes
(g)	Special clothing	(1) No	(2) Yes
(h)	Tattoos	(1) No	(2) Yes

73.   Is doing illegal things accepted by or okay for your group?

(1) No   (2) Yes

74.   Do people in your group actually do illegal things together?

(1) No   (2) Yes

75.   How often are the following things done by your group?

(a)   Threaten people

Never   Often
(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(b)   Fight

Never   Often
(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(c)   Steal things

Never   Often
(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(d)   Get protection money

Never   Often
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(e)   Rob other people

Never   Often
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(f)   Steal cars

Never   Often
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(g)   Sell illegal drugs

Never   Often
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(h)   Carry illegal weapons

Never   Often
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(i)   Damage or destroy property

Never   Often
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(j)   Beat up someone

Never   Often
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(k)   Write graffiti

Never   Often
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(l)   Use drugs

Never   Often
  (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(m)   Use alcohol

Never   Often
  (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(n)   Break and enter (burglary)

Never   Often
  (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

(o)   Other illegal offences (SPECIFY)_____

Never   Often
  (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)

76.   Do you consider your group of friends to be a gang?

       (1) No   (2) Yes

IF YES, go to 79

77.   If you are not now, have you ever been in such a gang?

       (1) No   (2) Yes

78. If you do not use the word "gang" for your group, is there some other term you would use? For example, some groups call themselves clubs, bands, crews, posses, taggers, bikers, party crews, and so on. If your group uses a term other than "gang", what is that term? _____

79.   Have any of your brothers or sisters ever been in a gang?

       (1) No   (2) Yes   (3) I have no brothers/sisters

80.   Have any of your friends ever been in a gang?

       (1) No   (2) Yes   (3) I have no friends

81. Are there people living on your street who belong to a gang?

    (1) No   (2) Yes   (3) I don't know

82. Are there any gangs in your neighborhood or city?

    (1) No   (2) Yes   (3) I don't know

The next set of questions is about your group of friends. Please circle or check the number that best represents how you feel.

83. Being in my group makes me feel important.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

84. My group provides a good deal of support and loyalty for each other.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

85. Being in my group makes me feel respected.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

86. Being in my group makes me feel like I'm a useful person.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

87. Being in my group makes me feel like I belong somewhere.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

88.   I really enjoy being in my group.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

89.   My group is like a family to me.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

You have reached the end of the questionnaire! Please look over the questions and make sure you have answered everything. Hand in your questionnaire to the research assistant.

Thank you very much for your participation in this research project!

Moral Disengagement (Pilot and Main Study)

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. Your answers will not be seen by anyone other than the researcher so please be truthful

Moral Justification:

1. It is alright to fight to protect your friends.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

2. It is alright to beat up someone who bad mouths your family.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

3. It is alright to fight when the respect of your group is threatened.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

4. It is alright to lie to keep your friends out of trouble.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Euphemistic Language:

5. Slapping and shoving someone is just joking around.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

6. To hit horrible classmates is just teaching them a lesson.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

7. Taking someone's bike without permission is just borrowing it.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

8. It is not a bad thing to get high once in a while.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

Advantageous Comparison:

9. Damaging some property is no big deal when you consider that others are beating people up.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

10. Stealing some money is not too serious compared to those who steal a lot of money.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

11. It is okay to insult a classmate because beating him/her is worse.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

12. Compared to the illegal things people do, taking some things from a store without paying for them is not very serious.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

Displacement of Responsibility:

13. If kids are living in bad conditions they cannot be blamed for behaving aggressively.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

14. If kids are not disciplined they should not be blamed for misbehaving.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

15. Kids cannot be blamed for using bad words when all their friends do it.

.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

16. Kids cannot be blamed for misbehaving if their friends pressured them to do it.

.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Diffusion of Responsibility:

17. A kid in a gang should not be blamed for the trouble that the gang causes.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

18. A kid who only suggests breaking rules should not be blamed if other kids go ahead and do it.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

19. If a group decides together to do something harmful it is unfair to blame any kid in the group for it.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
  (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

20. It is unfair to blame a child who had only a small part in the harm caused by a group.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
  (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

Distorting Consequences:

21. It is okay to tell small lies because they don't really do any harm.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
  (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

22. Children don't mind being teased because it shows interest in them.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
  (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

23. Teasing someone doesn't really hurt them.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
  (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

24. Insults among children don't hurt anyone.

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
  (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

Attribution of blame:

25. If kids fight and misbehave in school it is their teacher's fault.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

26. If people are careless where they leave their things it is their own fault if they get stolen.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

27. Kids who get mistreated usually do things that deserve it.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

28. Children are not at fault for misbehaving if their parents force them too much.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Dehumanization:

29. Some people deserve to be treated like animals.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

30. It is okay to treat badly somebody who has behaved badly.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

31. Someone who is horrible does not deserve to be treated like a human being.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

32. Some people have to be treated roughly because they lack feelings that can be hurt.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

APPENDIX H

Social Status

Below is a number of statements about the things that might make students show respect to other students. Respect means behaving as if that person is liked or admired. Please show how much you agree or disagree with each one by putting a circle around the number that shows what you think.

IMPORTANT: **there are no right or wrong answers we would just like to know what you think.**

1. At school it is important to students to have other students' respect

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

2. At school students get respect if they aren't easily pushed around

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

3. At school students respect people who can fight

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

4. Students respect students if they act hard or tough

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

5. It is important to students that other students think they aren't afraid of anything

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

6. Students respect other students if they have money

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

7. If students aren't respected then they get pushed around

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

8. At school other students look up to students who can sort out students who are weak or disliked

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

9. Students who get pushed around are not respected by other students

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

10. At school students who are different don't get respect

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

11. At school if students show they are afraid they won't get respect

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

12. Students who aren't afraid of anything are respected by other students

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

13. At school there will always be students who are respected and students who are disliked

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

14. At school it isn't good to mix with students who are weak

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

15. At school students who are part of a popular group get lots of respect

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

16. At school good looking people are popular

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

17. At school people who are hard or tough are popular

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

18. At school if people pick on the 'nerds' they get respect from other students

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

APPENDIX I

Attitudes toward authority

Below is a number of statements about what young people might think about teachers, school, police, and the law. Please show how much you agree or disagree with each one by putting a circle around the number that shows what you think. IMPORTANT: there are no right or wrong answers we would just like to know what you think.

1. It can be OK to do something which is against the law if it is to help a friend

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

2. The police are often unnecessarily brutal to people

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

3. Teachers pick on me

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

4. It is all right to do something against the law, like stealing, if you can get away with it

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

5. Teachers have got more time for you if you have got a posh accent

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

6. Most school rules are stupid or petty

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

7. Breaking a bad school rule is OK

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

8. School would be a much worse place for me if there were no school rules

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

9. The police pick on me and give me a bad time

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

10. You should not worry about doing things against school rules if you can get away with it

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

11. You should always do what a police officer tells you

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

12. You should never break the law

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

13. Missing school is all right if you can get away with it

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

14. A lot of teachers care more about an easy life than about what happens to their pupils

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

15. School is a waste of time for me

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

16. A lot of laws are not to help ordinary people but purely to restrict their freedom

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

17. Trying hard at school is not going to get you anywhere in life

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree
    (1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)

APPENDIX J

Perception of Outgroup Threat (Pilot and Main Study)

1. How much do you feel threatened by other groups of youth?

Not at all   Very much

(1)   (2)   (3)   (4)   (5)