

# Eurogangs Paradox: Street Gangs in the US and Europe

By Malcolm Klein, H.J. Kerner, C.L. Maxson and E. Weitekamp

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This book is a fascinating collection of research and opinions about gangs in the US and in Europe. This is a good research book for any grant writer's library along with the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Modern Gang Reader (2007) (<http://www.amazon.com/Modern-Gang-Reader-Arlen-Egley/dp/0195330668> )

*This book: is the first comprehensive collection of original research reports on the status of street gangs and problematic youth groups in Europe, as well as a set of special, state-of-the-art reports on the current status of American street gang research and its implications for the European gang situation. Seven American papers are joined with reports from England, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Russia, Holland, Belgium, France, and Slovenia. Summary chapters by the American and European editors provide overviews of the street gang picture: the associated issues and problems of definition, community context, comparative research procedures, and implications for prevention and intervention.*

A lot of research is written so stiltedly that you get lost in the details and overwhelmed by the stats. This edition is written so that anyone can understand the details, the surveys, the results of the surveys and the conclusions. It is very interesting as well despite some of the research being more than nine years old. There are plenty of statistics that support suggested solutions to the gang problem whether in the US or Europe and much of that has not changed. There are four sections and 25 chapters. The following sampling is from the American researchers. Much of the European research focused on ethnic minorities within their respective countries (a growing problem because many are poor and in segregated neighborhoods) and some very interesting and novel strategies for coping. There was also research on communities like Stockholm and Oslo where there are more soccer hooligans and in Germany where there are neoNazi gangs.

## Editors

**Malcolm Klein** is the former director of the Social Science Research Institute at the University of Southern California and professor emeritus is one of the most well known gang researchers in the United States, and perhaps the world. **Books by Malcolm Klein:**

[Chasing after Street Gangs: A Forty-Year Journey](#)

[Cross-National Research in Self-Reported Crime and Delinquency](#)

[Gang Cop: The Words and Ways of Officer Paco Domingo: The Words and Ways of Officer Paco Domingo](#)

[Street Gang Patterns and Policies](#)

## [The American Street Gang: Its Nature, Prevalence and Control](#)

### **Background on Cheryl Maxson:**

**Cheryl Maxson** is assistant professor in UCI's Department of Criminology, Law and Society. Her other books include "Responding to Troubled Youth" and two editions of "The Modern Gang Reader".

Maxson's current research studies are on youth violence and the risk and protective factors associated with joining gangs, as well as evaluations of police and probation interventions for high-risk youth.

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**H.J. Kerner and Elmar Weitekamp** is well respected German researchers. They both have authored a great number of books on human development and criminology. Both are located at the Institute of Criminology at the University of Tübingen in Germany.

### **Sampling of quotes from the book:**

*“To prevent, intervene into, or control street gangs, it is not sufficient merely to apply more services and programs that have become traditional with other youth groups. To understand and deal with street gangs requires special knowledge – street gang knowledge. The gang is a group gone haywire, feeding on itself.”* Chapter 1, Resolving the Eurogang Paradox, Malcolm W. Klein.

*“Information-age capitalism has transformed the opportunity structures in poor neighborhoods where gangs have always been found. Many of the generic-labor jobs-factory work which requires little skill or education-have moved away from inner cities. **It was these jobs that had always helped young men "mature out" of their gangs.** Generic jobs today are the most unstable kind of jobs, with the flows of information capitalism ready to uproot low skill work from any one spot and move it to the other side of the world in search of higher profits. Most well paid jobs now require high levels of education or advanced technical skills, human capital which is in short supply in poor neighborhoods where gangs are found.* Chapter 3, Globalization, Gangs and Collaborative Research, John Hagedorn, University of Illinois-Chicago

*“Globalization has been seen by some as bringing to Europe **"Americanized" poverty** (Wacquant, 1997; Castells, 1997; 1998) with European trends toward greater inequalities following inexorably in U.S. footsteps. In 1995, according to the editors of the Economist, 46 percent of Europe's unemployed were out of work for at least a year (Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 1996: 206). Some observers argue that the "Rhine model" of social welfare capitalism cannot work in a global economy (Thurow, 1997: 31-322), and that globalization is inevitable (e.g., Kantor, 1995). On the other hand, others like Touraine (1995b) warn that free markets are a major threat to European life and call for resistance to what Gray (1995:181) calls the "hegemony of global markets and technology." Gray argues, as a conservative, that globalization demands England reconsider adopting a more equitable social policy.”* Chapter 3, Globalization, Gangs and Collaborative Research, John Hagedorn, University of Illinois-Chicago

*“The gang members we studied were immersed in the TV and movie culture of affluence. They don't lack successful role models, as some say, but are severely strained by having so many rich and successful role models invade their homes and minds **through the TV networks daily.** Some male gang members revel in the violent life of the drug seller as basically an act of rebellion from a lost capacity to be the revered breadwinner in a patriarchal family. On the streets, masculinity, to many cultural observers, is measured by the size of a man's gun (see Hagedorn, 1998f). **I've concluded the real problem of gangs is not some deviant ghetto subculture, but the nature of mainstream American culture, the definition of masculinity, and lack of economic opportunity.** Chapter 3, Globalization, Gangs and Collaborative Research, John Hagedorn, University of Illinois-Chicago*

*“Clearly, adolescents are attracted to gangs for a variety of reasons, and these reasons appear to be particular to specific sites. Contrary to common perception, very few (7%) indicated that they were forced to join. The most common reason for joining the gang was for protection (54%), although this varied substantially across sites (from 37% in Philadelphia to 74% in Will County). A common belief is that youths join gangs because their friends or siblings are gang members. This was not as common a reason for joining as anticipated with only 30 percent indicating they joined because a brother or sister was in the gang while 46 percent joined because a friend was in the gang.” Chapter 6, Young Gang Members in a School Survey, From Aage Esbensen and Dana Peterson Lynskey, University of Nebraska at Omaha.*

*While qualitative studies are most likely to find family problems at the heart of girls' gang involvement, **a number of studies based on surveys of juvenile populations note school-based problems.** Bjerregaard and Smith (1993) found that low expectations for completing school were a significant predictor of gang membership for young women. Likewise, Bowker and Klein (1983) report that female gang members are less likely than non-members to intend to finish high school or attend college. More recently, Esbensen and Deschenes (1998) report that while boys who feel that educational success is unattainable are more likely to be gang members, this was not the case Chapter 7, Young Women's Involvement in Gangs in the United States; An Overview, Jody Miller, University of Missouri at St. Louis*

### **European Research**

*In looking at the European situation, we have to conclude not only that gangs exist in Europe, but that the European countries are doing much to create more gangs and to develop a serious gang problem which might eventually look as bad as the American gang situation, a situation most people cannot even imagine for Europe. As we have seen above, all descriptions about European street gangs, despite some denial that they exist, share some common features. These are:- gangs exist in deprived communities - gangs often consist of minority or immigrant members of society either by race, nationality or ethnicity- gangs are predominantly male- gang members are almost always alienated, marginalized youth who are socially excluded from*

*society and whose opportunities are blocked - gang members are usually young and typically adolescents or young adults - gang members are involved in all sorts of criminal activities with quite a range in the level of delinquent and criminal behavior - gangs are stable over time and can exist for long periods of time.*

*From 1979 onwards... **the gap between rich and poor increased to pre-war levels, the amount and kind of state support for the disadvantaged was reduced dramatically; the quality of jobs available to young men decreased after union power to guarantee minimum wages and conditions of work was removed.** These changes coincided with an unprecedented increase in violence against the persons since 1987 (James, 1995, 74). Chapter 24, Gangs in Europe: Assessments At the Millennium, Elmar G.G. Weitekamp, Institute of Criminology, University of Tubingen, Tubingen, Germany*

*..a society which shifts more and more to a "winner-loser culture" makes it very hard for young people today to get a good education or jobs, they are often excluded from fulltime, career oriented work, leading to this winner-loser culture (James 1995). **Young immigrants in particular are the biggest losers since they are usually the least integrated and often live in poorer and neglected neighborhoods which can serve as breeding grounds for street gangs.** Chapter 24, Gangs in Europe: Assessments At the Millennium, Elmar G.G. Weitekamp, Institute of Criminology, University of Tubingen, Tubingen, Germany*