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*Educating 'Gangsters': Social space, informal learning and becoming 'Gang' involved*

MCHUGH, Richard

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# **Educating 'Gangsters': Social Space, Informal Learning and Becoming 'Gang' Involved**

**Richard McHugh**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Sheffield Hallam University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**February 2018**

# Abstract

This research focuses on the previously neglected topic of how people are educated into groups commonly described as 'gangs'; in particular, this thesis outlines the role that social space plays in such educative processes. This focus enables both a new contribution to knowledge in the field of 'gang' studies and understandings of the way social space is used, understood and perceived by those involved in 'gangs'.

Much research exists in the field of 'gang' studies spanning various disciplines and sub-fields. The existing literature on 'gangs' predominantly engages with typographies, definitions and prevention; the majority of which stems from a criminological perspective. There has been no direct attempt to explore the ways in which people are educated into 'gangs' thus far. Rather than begin from any predetermined assumptions, this research centred on people who have been involved with or affected by 'gangs' in order to begin from the lived experiences of those involved or affected.

In-depth interviews were carried out with twenty-two participants who are, or were: involved in 'gangs'; family members of 'gangs'; and professionals who work with 'gangs' (most of whom were previously involved in such groups themselves). Other ethnographic methods were utilised alongside interviews: primarily overt, with some covert participant observations. Ethnographic aspects of the research were undertaken during a twelve-month period in social spaces that were highlighted by participants as being synonymous with, and frequented, by 'gangs'.

This thesis highlights the conditions, structures, agentic responses and social spaces that form the educative processes for becoming involved in 'gangs'. My contribution to knowledge herein demonstrates how: education within 'gangs' takes place through stories, social haunting and reflection within third places and the wider community; occurs under structural conditions but is mediated by agentic choice; social space fosters a community spirit and offers the opportunity to become *someone*.

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# Candidate's Statement

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Sheffield Hallam University. The work is original, except where indicated by special reference in the text, and no part of the thesis has been submitted for any other academic award. Any views expressed in this thesis are those of the author.

Portions of data and concepts from this thesis were published as a book chapter and an academic journal article as follows:

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Signed:

Date: 07/07/2017

***In memory of P14 and for those who did not participate in the research because they were taken before it began. For those who feel stuck on the estate, but who seek knowledge – don't let them say what you can achieve.***

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# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

## 1.1 Preface

This research focuses on how education may take place within groups who are commonly described as gangs, particularly exploring the role that third places<sup>1</sup> play in such educative processes. As will be demonstrated in the chapters that follow, there is a wealth of literature that examines gangs. Primarily this literature is of a criminological perspective and predominantly focuses on youth and street gangs, and gang typographies.

However, there is no substantive literature examining how people are educated into gangs, nor specifically is there a literature that considers the role of third space in this education. As such the research in hand is able to fill this gap and make a contribution to new knowledge. In doing so it also identifies the assumption that being 'gang involved' is something that 'just happens' and is merely generated through structural constraint. Furthermore this indicates that the existing literature takes the starting point of gang involvement as being something unavoidable for certain demographics, something that is more akin to determinism than agentive actions.

This thesis will demonstrate that such a perspective is at best narrow and at worst ignorant of the complexities of the ways in which people *become* involved in such groups. The existing canon of *gang* literature prefigures 'gangs' as an inevitable problem for poor communities and one that can be

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<sup>1</sup> Third place refers to Oldenburg's (1997) conceptualization of place into three distinct categories: the first being home, second work and third place being social settings which are neither home nor work. This will be discussed in detail later in this thesis.

treated and eradicated epidemiologically like infectious disease (cf. Esbenson and Osgood, 1999; Peterson and Esbenson, 2004). This thesis argues, based on the data, that there are not only significant elements of choice in *becoming* involved in such groups, but also a complex series of educative processes involved in the *becoming*. As much as this research shows there is not an innate or deterministic being for those involved in gangs, there is still some influence of structural conditions that make fertile ground for such existential choices and subsequent educative processes.

The following chapters will demonstrate the conditions, educative processes and role of third place in the process of people becoming involved in gangs. In doing so, the thesis contributes new knowledge to the study of groups commonly known as *gangs*, as well as that of education and urban studies. To begin to open up this contribution to knowledge it is first important to understand the background and rationale to the research, which is detailed in the following section of this chapter, before outlining the gaps in literature, topicality of the research, policy implications and the unique contribution to new knowledge. Subsequent to this is an overview of the chapters to follow.

## **1.2 Born bad or breaking bad: Back(ground) to the future**

In order to understand the background to this research and how it came into fruition, it is essential to travel back in time, metaphorically speaking. Without further ado let us dust off the flux-capacitor and buckle up in the Delorian, setting the timer for the year 2000.

### 1.2.1 Revisiting the Tuffley Boys

Year 2000: I had begun a new job, a huge career change in fact, working in a secondary school as a teaching assistant. Ironically this was in the school that I had attended myself and narrowly avoided permanent exclusion from following a number of informal exclusions due to *challenging* and *disruptive* behaviours.

I was new to the whole education sector. Previously I had worked for a couple of years in a semi-skilled engineering role, prior to that I had spent long periods outside of legitimate employment. I had come from doing physical work<sup>2</sup> with tough men in tough environments to a different world, but not as different as I first thought. In fact it was a world that I was completely familiar with. I found myself working with young people who were doing the same things as me at their age, they were fighting with saws in technology lessons, turning up to lessons stoned, they were engaged in *guerrilla warfare* with the teachers (Cohen, 2002: iii) and they were winning. Some were involved with the local street 'gang', the same gang that existed when I attended the school; the only difference being that the group's name had changed. They were now called the *Young Tuffley Crew*; previously they were called *The Tuffley Boys* and in between were known as *Tuffley* and *Tuffley Crew* respectively<sup>3</sup>.

The young people did not know about my previous links with the school, my childhood engagement in the activities and knowledge of the 'gang' they were

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<sup>2</sup> And previously unofficial work.

<sup>3</sup> At the time of writing they are known as *NGC*, the *Newall Green Crew*.



now involved in. Likewise they had no idea about the lineage of the group's name and how it had changed over time. They were somehow *severed from their 'gangs' history, yet had somehow replicated and evolved the group's activity*. But how did this happen? This was a question that I came to ask myself for years later after observing the same, and similar, developments unfold across that community and others that I worked in over the years.

### **1.2.2 From Gladeside to BMD: Nothing changes but no one remembers**

Back into the time machine and travel forward six years to 2006. I am working as a youth and community worker on the other side of town from the school. I am working on a youth justice prevention programme with the 'top fifty most at risk of offending'<sup>4</sup> young people in the community. The majority of the young people<sup>5</sup> were involved in the local gang on this side of town. This group also had several name changes since I was a child, and again the young people involved were oblivious to this<sup>6</sup>. They were oblivious to who may have been involved previously over the generations as well, other than the few people still living and active at the street level. Yet, like the young people in the school, they were still enacting the same behaviours, activities and lifestyles as years ago.

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<sup>4</sup> This was the oppressive language of the funders for the project at the time.

<sup>5</sup> Almost all were young men.

<sup>6</sup> Originally known as simply 'Gladeside' after the road where the shopping parade was that the group hung around, then known as BCOG – Benchill Crew Original Gangsters, BMD – Benchill Man Dem, then again as BMD – Benchill Mad Dogs respectively.

### **1.2.3 From Miners to Minor Man Dem**

Back to the future again to the year 2008, I am seconded to manage all of the youth crime prevention and education projects that the national charity I work for provided in St Helens<sup>7</sup>. Here I found the same detachment from local history amongst the young people I had worked with elsewhere. Only this time it was not a detachment from the local gang culture history, it was a detachment from the industrial history, specifically mining and glass processing.

The young people here had also formed a myriad of street 'gangs' just like the ones I had known in Manchester. Whilst Manchester has a well documented history of youth street gangs going back to the industrial revolution, and equally well-documented lineage of organised crime *gangs* and *gangsters*, St Helens had no such history. Despite St Helens having a tough working class history steeped in the *violent* industry of mining, with a hard life and hard drinking culture associated with it, it had no such *gang* lineage. Yet somehow the young people here had developed the same ways of being as groups as their contemporaries in more metropolitan areas.

### **1.2.4 Same stories but with grey hair and wrinkles**

Set the timer two years forward and back to Manchester. This time in East Manchester, where I am now managing a larger group of projects including

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<sup>7</sup> Merseyside, North West England.

youth crime prevention, education and adult resettlement projects. The young people are still organising in the same way as elsewhere and previously into 'gangs' involved in crime and violence. However, this time I am coming into contact with adult ex-offenders across the all male resettlement projects. Many of these men had been and were still in the midst of the 'revolving door' of crime and violence followed by a custodial sentence, release and back again; many beginning in their youth, some had been involved in gangs. Around this period I also piloted and taught a project teaching Mentoring to prisoners in a male adult prison. Whilst working within the prison and the resettlement projects I came to hear the life stories of the men who had been (or still were) involved in gangs. These were familiar stories; they were the stories of the young people I had worked with over the preceding decade, the stories of the people I had grown up with and in part, they were my story too.

These were stories of:

- Being an average person who did not always get into trouble
- Structural pressures such as poverty
- Choosing to try and find a way out of poverty
- Seeking respect in a world where people look down on them

These were not stories of psychopathy, although there was always the occasional rare individual who presented as genuinely having no remorse or compassion for fellow human beings but I had come across those individuals in the highest level of the public sector, the police and politicians as well.

Crucially, the most common situation was that people had become involved in gangs and somehow been educated into their violent and criminal cultures.

### **1.2.5 No One Woke Up One Day and Knew How to be a 'Gangster'**

Over the years prior to me leaving professional practice to begin my Doctoral research it became acutely apparent that no one who has ever been involved in 'gangs' or 'gang culture' merely woke up one morning and intuitively knew how to be a *gangster* or in a *gang*. From the technical aspects of being involved in such groups such as how to weigh out an ounce of heroin into ten pound<sup>8</sup> wraps, or that the 'shot line'<sup>9</sup> SIM card needs to be snapped and replaced regularly. Through to the more affective aspects such as how to present, how to be and behave in certain situations, to know when to walk away and when to stand and fight, how to anticipate when something is going to go wrong, how to evade detection and arrest, how to survive. In the same way that no individual awakens from slumber one day to intuitively know how to be a heart surgeon, a hairdresser, a plumber or a stockbroker. In some way each must go through some continuous educative process of becoming and evolving to keep abreast of knowledge developments in their respective field<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Sterling.

<sup>9</sup> This is a cheap pay-as-you-go mobile telephone used by street level dealers to take orders for drugs from customers.

<sup>10</sup> Continuous professional development.

### **1.2.6 Breaking Bad**

Having spent a lifetime around people who would popularly be described as 'gangs' or 'gangsters', I would suggest that I have only on two occasions come across individuals who presented psychopathic traits and behaviours. Even if it were that those two individuals were clinically diagnosable by a trained professional as psychopathic, it would still be unfair to guess as to whether that was somehow congenital<sup>11</sup>. However, of the hundreds of people I have spent time with who are and were involved in gangs, it was always apparent that how they got to that point was more akin to the journey of the character Walter White from the hit AMC television series *Breaking Bad* (2008 – 2013) to becoming his alter ego Heisenberg (whereby he transforms from a chemistry teacher to a leading crystal meth manufacturer and dealer), than those depicted in the media which omit any relation to the idea of an educative process.

### **1.2.7 Back to the Future**

This brings this metaphorical time machine back to the future and beyond to the beginning of this thesis. The question of 'what are the educative processes in becoming involved in gangs?' is central to the foundation of this thesis. However, other questions emerged the more I thought about this prior to commencing this thesis. The other key question that emerged from my early pre-research musings was: where would these educative processes

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<sup>11</sup> Which of course is still a much-debated issue in neuropsychology and psychology more broadly.

happen? Subsequently came the question of: what role if any do these locations and spaces play in these educative processes? This was the beginning and the background to the research.

### **1.3 Social Spaces and Educative Processes**

Several considerations arose out of these initial questions outlined above, the first being the issue of where these educative processes occur? Many people living in the UK would likely associate the term 'educative' with schools; likewise many would describe literacy, numeracy and the physical sciences as being integral to an educative process within a school. If made more specific, say toward the educative processes associated with vocational learning and development for trades such as beauty therapy, or technical industries such as engineering, the spaces and places typically associated would include colleges or on-the-job site-specific education. The former may include beauty salons or spas, and the latter construction sites or manufacturing plants. Despite all of these examples above being different, they are all the same in that they not only will follow a set of educative principles, but also have clearly demarcated associated locations and sites.

But where are people educated into becoming involved in gangs? There are no schools, colleges, universities or training providers that run courses in being in a 'gang' or being a 'gangster'. From my professional and personal experiences I had some idea of where it would be possible to find people involved with 'gangs' and therefore where these processes may occur. The

places I had in mind included the *street*<sup>12</sup>, youth centres<sup>13</sup> and public houses<sup>14</sup>. These formed the foundational sites for the research.

### **1.3.1 *Why it matters: Topicality – policy – gaps in literature***

The question of why it matters what the educative processes may be in people *becoming* involved in gangs and the role of places and spaces in such processes is important for many reasons. Reasons span across **public interest (topicality), policy**, in particular gang and education policy, but **this research is also important as a means of filling a significant gap in the existing literature around gangs**. In doing so, this research also creates new contributions to knowledge in the field of gang study, and challenges the neglect of attention to educative processes, internal group dynamics, agency and complexities of becoming involved in groups known as *gangs*. Likewise **this research also contributes to new knowledge in understanding how gangs use, perceive and enact educative processes within third places**. This new knowledge is of value across policy and practice related to gangs, education and social space and place management.

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<sup>12</sup> As in physical streets and roads as well as the looser meaning of open places in poor estates as opposed to any street literally.

<sup>13</sup> Young people who I had worked with who were involved in 'gangs' often attended youth centres.

<sup>14</sup> Predominantly in poor communities that were synonymous with 'gang cultures'.

### 1.3.2 Gaps in literature

#### 'Gangs'

The following chapters will demonstrate that there is a wealth of *gang* literature spanning history<sup>15</sup>. The majority of which focuses on youth gangs, with other major contributions defining gangs or outlining ways to eradicate them (Esbenson and Osgood, 1999; Howell, 2000; Esbenson *et al*, 2011). There is also a literature exploring actions of gangs, their economies and composition (Thrasher, 1963; Yablonsky, 1967; Venkatesh, 2006; Roth and Skarbeck, 2014; Densley, 2014). Although there is a minor contribution looking at how young offenders within the secure estate learn 'gangsta' style (Bengtsson, 2012), there is not a body of literature that considers the educative processes involved in *becoming* part of such groups. Despite there being some mapping work with youth street gangs on the wider territories they occupy and claim an identity to (Pickering *et al*, 2011), *none of the literature considers the question of space and place in becoming part of the gang* and therefore understanding the intricacies of use of space in a micro sense. Likewise, there is no specific literature, which explores the role of space or place in the educative processes of becoming involved in gangs.

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<sup>15</sup> And continents.



## **Education**

Like the gang literature, the education literature completely overlooks opportunities to understand how or where education toward becoming involved in gangs may occur. The existing literature provides useful guiding boundaries defining education, and a background overview to formal and informal education; however there remains a significant gap in the literature pertaining to educative processes occurring within gangs. Even the informal education literature focuses on how education is carried out by people who are entrenched in mainstream systems with mainstream ideologies behind them (cf. Freire, 2007; Springer, 2016).

Elsewhere, the literature focusing on educative processes that transcend time, passing on local cultures of resistance through ethereal mechanisms often described as social hauntings offer another angle (Gordon, 2008; Derrida, 1994, 2006). Social haunting as an educative concept has been utilised elsewhere (Bright, 2011, 2012, 2016), although it has never been considered in relation to gangs.

## **Third Place**

The literature concerned with third place, is specifically focused on social space as being distinct and static (Oldenburg, 1997); that is spaces and places beyond the home, traditional places of work, schools or similar institutions. Although there is a literature that considers virtual spaces as third

places (cf. Steinkuehler and Williams, 2006; Soukup, 2006), there is still no understanding that the three *traditional* places depicted by Oldenburg (1997) can shift in meaning. Soja (1996) offers inroads to understanding space through other means. However, neither Oldenburg's (1997) nor Soja's (1996) concepts have been applied to understanding educative processes within *gangs*. Very little literature exists pertaining to social, or third spaces and places in relation to 'gangs' at all.

### **1.3.3 Topicality and Timeliness**

This research began at the tail end of a contemporary moral panic concerning youth gangs and youth violence. Throughout the 2000s politicians and the press made much of an apparently huge growth in youth street gangs. In 2011 following the shooting of Mark Duggan in Tottenham riots broke out across the country. A major proportion of the blame for these riots was initially assigned to street *gangs* by the Government (Cameron, 2011), which was later proven as completely unfounded (Lewis et al, 2011, Ball and Drury, 2012) and challenged as based on unreliable police arrest data (Hallsworth and Brotherton, 2011; Jeffrey and Tufail, 2015). However, the political and media interest continued for a while. As did the successive rounds of funding for preventative interventions aimed at diverting aspirant gang members away from engaging in gang activity, or helping existing gang members leave the gangs.

For a short while from 2012 onward the media and Government became quiet on the gang front; that is except for London where the momentum was never lost. However, in 2014 following an apparent dispute between rival *gangs* in Salford, a spate of intergroup violence ensued. This included the well documented murder of ‘Salford’s Mr Big’ Paul Massey; a seven year old child being shot in his home; car roofs being cut off with chainsaws whilst people were inside the car, hand grenade attacks; and a large number of related stabbings and shootings locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

With this ensuing spate of intergroup violence the media, politicians and the police turned their attention to these groups. Although this time around the groups were not being described by Government and the police as *gangs*, but instead as *organised crime groups*<sup>16</sup> (cf. GMP Appeal, 2016); the media however tended to stick with the descriptor of *gang* for the most part. This point of description is the first factor that makes this research of value in relation to contemporary and on-going concerns. The groups linked to these incidents all fit current accepted definitions of what a gang is<sup>17</sup>, yet they are now being described as OCGs, within official discourse. This is made all the more interesting in considering how the gangs describe themselves, which as will be demonstrated in later chapters, is none of the above.

Secondly, there continues to be public, police and Government interest in gangs or OCGs. Whether that is police and government interest in preventing entry to gangs and OCGs and eliminating the existing ones, public interest in

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<sup>16</sup> OCGs.

<sup>17</sup> This definition is outlined in the following chapters.

the safety of their communities, through to public interest from a voyeuristic perspective (as can be seen in the popularity of gangster films, gangster autobiographies, gangster rap, television programmes such as *Ross Kemp on Gangs* or *Danny Dyer's Hard Men* and games such as *Grand Theft Auto*). For better or worse there is a widespread, longstanding and ever developing interest over a long period of time from the public, media, police and government in gangs (Pearson, 1983).

#### **1.3.4 Policy Implications**

This widespread interest leads into considerations of how this research can impact on policy. As indicated above, successive Governments have demonstrated continued interest in *gangs* by shifts in policy interventions and policing focus. Examples range from Gang Behaviour Orders, Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, Joint Enterprise legislation and Gang Injunctions. However, the definition of what a gang *is*, is problematic for several reasons. The first of these reasons being that the definition could be applied to lots of different groups, including those that would not typically be understood to be criminal or deviant. Secondly, some of the groups that would have previously been described as gangs are now described as OCGs, yet the media and wider public still describe them as *gangs* or gangsters. This leads to the third problem that very few people involved in such groups describe themselves as gangs or OCGs, as will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters.

### 1.3.5 Flawed descriptions = flawed interventions

If people involved in ‘gangs’<sup>18</sup> do not describe themselves as such then surely the definitions that inform policy are flawed? Surely the instrument used to measure what is a complex range of people is blunt? Subsequently this instrument impacts on who may be prosecuted and how. It also impacts in identifying who may be *at risk* of becoming involved with ‘gangs’ for preventative intervention. Although this research does not set out to join the fray in the academic battle for defining what a ‘gang’ is, it does highlight the clear policy implications that a lack of nuanced understanding of the groups in question will have.

### 1.3.6 Choice Not Merely Structure

Additionally this research demonstrates how, contrary to current policy direction and popular belief, that risk of ‘gang’ involvement is not solely a structural issue but instead one also rooted in peer socialisation (cf. van Krieken, 1989, Powell, 2013). Instead this research shows that there are also significant agentic factors operating in the educative processes of becoming involved in gangs. This is important for policy makers in considering better preventative interventions for group orientated crime, thus shifting from policy focused on “civilising offensives<sup>19</sup>” to policy which combines grounded crime reduction with peer socialisation (cf. van Krieken, 1989; Powell, 2013).

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<sup>18</sup> From hereon the term gang will be represented in inverted commas in order to indicate the contested and problematic nature of the term.

<sup>19</sup> The term civilizing offensive refers to the deliberate attempt at projecting normative “civilized” ways of being onto ‘outsider’ groups by the dominant and (normatively) powerful ‘insider’ groups (cf. Powell, 2007).

Similarly, government policy currently does not consider there to be any educative aspect to *becoming* involved in gangs. Instead it is perceived more as a process of coercion. Within this research it is clear that there are educative processes involved in this becoming and little in the way of coercion. Again this is important for the development of prevention strategies.

### **1.3.7 Impact for Education Policy: 'Gangs' and Third Place**

This research is also important for education policy as it demonstrates the power of the educative processes at work *within* the groups. The educative processes toward becoming involved in the groups are taken on and put into practice rapidly and are effective in the *becoming* of the novice toward an expert. If these educative processes were to be applied to other, more mainstream aspects of education, they could enhance wider education policy and practice. In the same manner, by drawing on the understandings of place and space conducive to becoming involved in gangs, both educational establishments and gang prevention intervention could also be enhanced and improved.

## **1.4 Structure of this thesis**

The following chapters outline how educative practices occur within 'gangs' in spaces and places that are outside of traditional sites of education, the home (or not) and sites likely to be outside of mainstream employment settings. These chapters begin by exploring existing ideas around two central themes:

'Gangs' and urban space; education and third place / space, followed by the methods utilised throughout the research and then three findings chapters. This is then summarised in the conclusion chapter. The chapters that follow include:

**Chapter 2** begins by presenting and problematising the commonly referenced definitions of 'gang' and the incommensurability of 'gangs' as a concept. This is followed by an exploration of the interplays of urban space with 'gangs' and 'gang' cultures. The focus here is clearly fixed on leading the exploration of the processes of being educated into groups commonly described as 'gangs', specifically focusing on the role social spaces may play in this.

**Chapter 3** explores concepts of education in relation to third place and space. This chapter draws on Oldenburg's (1997) idea of Third Place and various understandings of third space (for example Soja, 1998) as a generative concept in exploring: 'gangs' and education; informal education; spectral / haunted education; resistance and education; ghetto[ised] education; education in third places / spaces. These alternative forms and modes of education are important as, noted earlier, there are no schools, colleges, universities or vocational training providers that offer courses to become involved in 'gangs'.

**Chapter four** outlines the analytical framework. This chapter explains the conceptual challenges from which the framework was derived. Along with this, the chapter also highlights why the analytical framework was chosen and which other concepts were considered. In doing so, this chapter first highlights

the conceptual challenges presented within the research and follows on by demonstrating point by point how these challenges were responded to.

**Chapter 5** guides the reader through how the research was carried out and why. This chapter provides a contextualisation of the spaces and places that the research took place in. It also highlights why these places and spaces, and the methods and participants involved were engaged. This chapter also explores the concept of positionality within the research and how this relates to the uses or abuses of self within ethnographic fieldwork. In exploring positionality, this chapter critically considers ‘insider – outsider’ reflections from the field, particularly merits and challenges.

**Chapter 6** is the first of the findings chapters and demonstrates the foundation factors of structure and agency as drivers within the educative processes of becoming involved in ‘gangs’. Within this chapter the seemingly contradictory drivers of structure and agency are exposed as not being separate and polar in the role they play in the educative process of becoming involved in ‘gangs’. Instead *they are actually parts of a whole*, they form the nexus of the push and pull of structural social constraint, and agentive free will in the foundational processes of be-coming for ‘gangs’

**Chapter 7** explores the *incommensurable* and *uncanny* aspects of the educative processes of becoming involved in ‘gangs’. These aspects of the pedagogic processes of becoming include education through social hauntings, stories, and reflections between insider and outsider positionalities.



Both stories and the positionality of being inside and outside simultaneously are a significant factor within the educative process of becoming involved in 'gangs'. This chapter highlights how these positions are both temporal reflections and parallaxed reflections of 'mainstream' and 'conventional' groups or organisations.

**Chapter 8** advances from broader themes of structural and agentic interplay and outlines how education and be-coming occur through space and place. This chapter demonstrates the role of space and place in the educative processes of becoming involved in 'gangs', inclusive of spatial alienation and social corralling, as well as considering how social spaces may be imagined and perceived in different ways for different groups at different times. These points are then further illuminated through interview and ethnographic data by utilising vignettes from three different spaces including a housing estate, a heavy weights gymnasium and a prison.

**Chapter 9** concludes this thesis by drawing together the key findings of the research. These are discussed in relation to the key theoretical concepts that were drawn on in understanding the data. Also discussed in this chapter are the four key contributions to knowledge, implications for policy and reflections on the theoretical framework. This chapter closes with a consideration of the cyclical and interlinked characteristics of groups commonly described as 'gangs'. This is both by way of reflection and provocation for future research that explores these cycles and networks over a broader geographical spread and significantly longer period of time.

## **Chapter 2**

# **'Gangs' and Urban Space**

## 2.1 Introduction: Gang problems?

The majority of 'gang' research in a UK context attends to two UK cities. These being: London (cf. Pitts, 2008; Hallsworth and Duffy, 2006) and Glasgow (cf. Patrick, [1973] 2013; Deuchar, 2010; Fraser, 2013), with other attention directed toward Manchester and Birmingham (cf. Bullock and Tilley, 2002, Ralphs et al, 2009). Overall this thesis moves away from the typical London and Glaswegian focus; instead directing attention across a range of locations (predominantly in the North of England<sup>20</sup>).

Significant volumes of literature exist in relation to the term *Gang*, this literature covers a range of disciplines and theoretical perspectives, yet has been described as a field of study in its own right (Sullivan, 2005); ironically a field that has, as yet failed to define a common perspective of what a *gang* is (Smithson *et al*, 2012 in Esbenson and Maxson, 2012; Sullivan, 2005; Bullock and Tilley, 2003, 2008), in particular in a US context (Klein, Weerman and Thornberry, 2006).

The bulk of this literature has a tendency to gravitate toward crime / gang prevention, typologies and violence. As well as continuously debated definitions of what a 'gang' actually is, or if 'gangs' exist in the UK in the same way they do in European countries or the US (cf. Gemert *et al*, 2008; Alexander, 2000; Decker *et al*, 2009; Huff, 1996; Bullock and Tilley, 2003, 2008; Pitts, 2008; Jütersonke *et al*, 2009; Deuchar, 2012; Thrasher, 1963; Yablonsky, 1967 and Pitts, 2008; Klein, 2001; Sullivan, 2005; Hallsworth and

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<sup>20</sup> With some in Southern England.

Young, 2008; Smithson *et al*, 2012; Smithson and Ralphs, 2016 respectively), or if their existence is denied within academia (Pitts, 2012).

Broadly speaking the existing literature has a focus on:

- 'Gangs' as a structural / social issue / pathological deviance
- How 'gangs' can be prevented or alleviated (White, 2013)?
- 'Gang' definitions / do 'gangs' exist (cf. Smithson and Ralphs, 2016)?

To enable a clearer focus this chapter will focus on literature covering four specific themes, which will help contextualise, the present research. These themes are:

1. Overview of definitions
2. Violence, fear and morality
3. *Special interest* 'gangs'
4. Urban space / place

## **2.2 Introducing Definitions**

A range of complexities exist in the use of the term 'gang' in contemporary popular discourse. The popular press, for instance, use the term 'gang' to refer to groups ranging from youth street gangs, One Percent Motorcycle Clubs (from hereon described as 1%MCs), armed robbers, football hooligan firms to groups of cyclists congregating in public spaces to hold unsanctioned races (Guardian, 04.09.15). Likewise, the police and policy makers shifted focus between the term gang and OCG in recent years. Yet predominantly in

the academic gang canon the term gang has become shorthand for a group of young people frequenting the street or public space and who are deemed to be 'at risk' of engaging in crime and / or anti-social behaviour, as well as having a defined group identity. The right wing think tank the Centre for Social Justice neatly eliminated any uncertainty and debate in putting forward their definition:

'A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who (1) see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernable group, (2) engage in a range of criminal activity and violence, (3) identify with or lay claim over territory, (4) have some form of identifying structural feature, and (5) are in conflict with other, similar, gangs.' (Centre for Social Justice, 2009: 3)

This definition was officially adopted by UK Government and reflects quite explicitly, Sharp *et al's* (2004) definition of 'delinquent youth groups' (Sharp, Aldridge and Medina, 2006: 1-2) via the Tackling Gang Action Programmes (TGAP) definition. All of which fit neatly with the Eurogang network definition (cf. Weerman *et al*, 2009). As well as having resonance with the US Federal definition of gang (cf. National Institute of Justice [www.nij.gov](http://www.nij.gov)); although the National Institute of Justice acknowledge that older, varied groups such as prison gangs, motorcycle gangs and hate groups can also be part of the 'gang' group-ology ([www.nij.gov](http://www.nij.gov)).

Dominant definitions squeeze out space for a broader appreciation of what a gang could be, referring only to a gang culture. Or conversely, they may be referring to something that only exists in the minds of policy makers and academics (Hallsworth, 2013). Sharp *et al* (2006) rightly point out that the term

gang has been utilised to refer to a range of groups from youth street based to organised crime networks. Also pointing out that there is a range of cultural, media and symbolic influences on what it may mean to be a *gang* (Sharp *et al*, 2006; Bannister *et al*, 2010).

It is important to briefly reflect on the route that has led<sup>21</sup> to such narrow understandings of the term 'gang'. In tracing this route it is possible to understand how this lineage progresses from high profile criminal cases involving young people such as the murder of James Bulger and the resultant changes made under New Labour to *doli incapax*<sup>22</sup>, through to evolving moral panic of youth and interlinked quasi-civil legislature such as Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs). Later, following the English 2011 riots came more policy direction change. This time the change was clear in the re-branding of a showboat Home Office initiative formerly known as Communities Against Guns, Gangs and Knives (CAGGK). This slid from the fore making way for the responsively and more assertively named Ending Gang and Youth Violence (EGYV). This *Prince*<sup>23</sup> like name change came very soon after the riots which, politically in the immediate aftermath, were blamed on 'gangs' and shortly after that caused political confusion as it was demonstrated that there were more non-gang affiliated perpetrators than gang affiliated (Home Office, 2001).

### **2.2.1 The artist formerly known as 'gangs'**

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<sup>21</sup> In the UK context.

<sup>22</sup> Within the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, albeit a policy direction inherited and taken up from the previous Conservative government, which reflected similar policy direction in the US under the Reagan administration.

<sup>23</sup> As in the name change of Prince to the Artist Formerly Known as Prince.

More recently, in particular in Northern cities such as Salford and Manchester, an elongated spate of shootings, killings and wounding's within what would have previously been described as 'gangs', have sparked another rebranding, with the addition of the term OCG. These attacks involved high profile incidents such as a leading figure in the Northern crime groups being shot dead outside his house and the shooting of a seven year old child and his mother in a separate incident in a neighbouring area. These and similar incidents directly preceded the step change in terminology, with OCG being added as a distinctive categorisation although in past and present media reports those involved as perpetrators and victims have been described as 'gangs' and 'gangsters'. The National Crime Agency (NCA) also utilise a similar defining description to that of 'gangs': -

'Organised crime can be defined as serious crime planned, coordinated and conducted by people working together on a continuing basis. Their motivation is often, but not always, financial gain. Organised criminals working together for a particular criminal activity or activities are called an organised crime group. Organised crime group structures vary. Successful organised crime groups often consist of a durable core of key individuals. Around them is a cluster of subordinates, specialists, and other more transient members, plus an extended network of associates. Many groups are often loose networks of criminals that come together for a specific criminal activity, acting in different roles depending on their skills and expertise. Collaboration is reinforced by shared experiences (such as prison), or recommendation from trusted individuals. Others are bonded by family or ethnic ties – some 'crime families' are precisely that.'

(NCA website <http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/crime-threats/organised-crime-groups> )

Even those involved in 'gang' cultures may be unclear as to where boundaries lie between gang, group, crew, family or other (Sullivan, 2005), or

self-identification may shift for those within such groups, between notions of 'gang', organised crime group, family and community (Maitra in Harding and Palasinski, 2016). In recent literature and policy direction 'gang' involvement has begun to be recognised as carrying integral heightened rates of victimisation (Fox, 2017), which is commonly described in terms of *victim offender overlapping* (cf. Pyrooz and Fox, 2016). With more complex inter-relationships between young people and OCGs which, have been described as exploitative in forcing young people to establish new drugs markets in counties beyond their own<sup>24</sup> (National Crime Agency, 2015, 2016; Storrod and Densley, 2016; Pitts, 2017).

## **2.3 Violence, Fear and Morality**

### **2.3.1 Fear**

To begin, it is worth exploring the most densely inhabited theme, this being *Crime, Violence, Fear and Morality*. John Pitts (2008) offers such a starting point; Pitts (2008) specifies that fear (of violence) is a core driver to young people becoming involved in gang *culture*. Yet elsewhere fear has been cited as a driver to leave gangs (Decker and Lauritsen in Huff, 1996; Bullock and Tilley, 2008). In pursuing fear as a driver Pitts systematically works through various other established theories of drivers toward gang involvement, picking out potential flaws. Pitts (2008), as a left realist, veers to a specific geographic London-centric, media (cf. Sullivan, 2005) / politico-favourable (Hallsworth

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<sup>24</sup> Known as 'county lines' or 'going county'.



and Young, 2006) formulae of the 'gang' as a generalisation, and as such is theoretically co-opted to the politics of the Right (cf. Pitts, 2012).

News / media representations are highly influential in producing and perpetuating popular conceptions of the term 'gang' (Sullivan, 2005; Muncie, 2010), as well as self-influential and self-censoring (cf. Bourdieu, 1998). From this perspective conceptions of gangs, are the stuff of moral panic (Cohen, 2002) and akin to a joint enterprise between academics, the popular press and the public of demonising the young urban poor (Hallsworth in Goldson, 2011; Katz and Jackson-Jacobs in Sumner, 2004). Such perspectives buy into populist stereotypes of urban density, violence and gangs going hand in hand (Jütersonke *et al*, 2009), and are counter-productive to social equality, social cohesion and inclusive public spaces (op cit).

Gangs have been almost exclusively been attributed to '... lower class neighbourhoods.' (Miller, 1958 cited in Lopez *et al* 2011: 108), '... socioeconomically deprived geographic areas ...' (Densley, 2012: 6), '... stressful social conditions or neighbourhood environments ...' (Vasquez *et al*, 2010: 132) and 'stressed families' with limited educational attainment (Huston *et al*, 1994: 327). With little challenge to how such environments perpetuate or generate animosity toward normative law and law enforcement (Jeffery and Jackson, 2012). In the same exclusive manner, gang research has mostly reflexively missed the trick that the violence of gangs is a part of a multi-directional milieu of violence; with some highlighting the structural-politico linkages with gang violence (cf. Pitts, 2008; Gunst, 2003), others leaning

toward meso structural-familial linkages (cf. Lopez *et al*, 2011), with less thinking space being given to gang violence as choice or active engagement with social status / control (Anderson cited in Fagan in Huff, 1996), power through alternative means (cf. Yablonsky, 1967) or as reflections of mainstream power and power semiotics (cf. Cohen, 1955; Skarbek, 2012).

Much demographic and place orientated research is founded on police (for example Decker and Curry, 2002) and deprivation / risk statistics (Pitts, 2012). Yet still discrepancies exist which remain unacknowledged, notwithstanding Klein and Maxson (2010) suggesting that risk statistics are of limited use in predicting gang member outcomes. One example of this being research targeted on police firearms in violent crime data (Bullock and Tilley, 2003; Decker and Curry, 2002), which has led to inner city areas such as Moss-side and Longsight (Manchester) being firm favourites in academic and media attention (for example Bullock and Tilley, 2003, 2008; Mares, 2001). However, such data only acknowledges reported crime, meaning unreported crime respective locations and demographic features are not considered. Likewise, the picture is skewed through academic inaccuracies in names, events and numbers of 'gangs' in Manchester (cf. Pitts, 2012: 37, 39; Bullock and Tilley, 2003: 23-25) and their apparent ignorance of groups that existed and exist at the time they write about that are non-populist and are not under the White gaze (cf. Pitts, 2012: 37; Williams, 2015)<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> As with elsewhere, Pitts (2012) focuses on the tripartite pseudo-axiom of Drugs-Race-Jamaica / London (place), which given the media attention over the years given to these and the symbolic violence back drop of political discourse such as the US 'war on drugs' and UK 'war on gangs' are easy targets compared with less accessible, yet arguably more violent groups such as Motorcycle Clubs / Gangs and human trafficking gangs. With the former

This all generates a public fear discourse in which ‘gang’ is a pseudonym for class and race (Madriz, 1997 cited in Lane and Meeker, 2000; Lucas in Skelton and Valentine, 1998; Alexander, 2000) via the white gaze (Lane and Meeker, 2000). Despite pockets of research demonstrating otherwise (cf. Venkatesh in Huff, 1996), thus rendering gang violence as racially visible, but the question of racial identities invisible (cf. Alexander, 2000). Racialization of gangs is not merely restricted to people of Black African and Asian heritage, the aim at the *dangerous ethnic Other* (Mawby and Gisby, 2009) and depicted as the ‘embodiment of a modern-day barbarism’ (Jones and Roger, 2016: 421). Other ethnic groups stereotyped include Albanian (Bennet and Holloway, 2004), Bulgarian and Romanian people (Mawby and Gisby, 2009), via moral panics regarding immigration and perpetuated by film and television shows depicting these nationalities as international drug / people traffickers and pimps (for example the film *Taken* and television series *Top Boy*), not to mention recent wider popular political discourse surrounding ‘Brexit’.

From an international perspective, in particular a South and Central American perspective, structural drivers for gang involvement are also brought forth. Although structurally leaning Jütersonke *et al* (2009) depict gangs as not being determined in membership composition by reified pathologies such as mental health and broken homes, but instead by broader factors such as social exclusion, inequality, religion, reverence of (hyper) masculine and national identity (Jütersonke *et al*, 2009; Taylor, 2013), cyclic amplifications of

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notoriously being predominantly white, with most groups not allowing non-white members and the latter being of significant political sensitivity both nationally and internationally.

violence left over from a legacy from war – immigration (to the US) – subsequent deportation (op cit). Elsewhere the idea of getting out of poverty and overcoming structural constraint has been cited as a driver for becoming involved in a gang (Jones and Roger, 2016). Interestingly the reported general non-participation of evangelical-protestants (in Nicaragua) in gangs (Rodgers, 2006 cited in Jütersonke *et al*, 2009), resonates with some descriptions of evangelical-Christian routes *out* of gangs in the US and Scotland (cf. Deuchar, 2013).

### **2.3.2 Violence: Macro and Micro**

It is commonly regarded that gangs emblemize urban violence (cf. Papachristos *et al*, 2013) and have higher rates of violent activity than that of peers within common communities who are not associated with gangs (Melde and Esbensen, 2013; Fox, 2017). Others also posit that not all gang activity is violent (Melde and Esbenson, 2013) and not all (urban) violence is carried out by or on behalf of ‘gangs’ (Hallsworth, 2014). Similarly, definitional contradictions in popular media reports of (youth) ‘gang’ activity and the simultaneous decrease in violent youth crime (Miller, 2001 and Butts and Travis, 2002 cited in Sullivan, 2005) compound the idea of all urban violence being rooted with ‘gangs’ is a fallacy, if not a fantasy generated by ‘gang talkers’ (Hallsworth, 2013, 2014). However, for Jütersonke *et al* (2009) what is not clear is the level and types of violence actually committed by gangs as opposed to the levels and types of violence they are accused of (Jütersonke *et al*, 2009). This resonates with historic reportage of street gangs in the UK in

the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century in which gun violence was cited as a significant issue among youth street gangs (Pearson, 1983).

Misunderstandings abound when considering the apparent void existing between on the one hand parochial actions of the gangs (Pearson, 1983) and the charge levelled at the gangs of being insurgents and capable of bringing down governments (Manwaring, 2005, 2006; USJFC, 2008 cited in Jütersonke *et al*, 2009), as well as (unfounded accusations of) being linked to groups such as Al-Qaeda and FARC (op cit). Although simultaneously there is an argument that gangs are a force for development (Jones and Roger, 2016), education and positive social change (Cortés-González *et al*, 2016) in localities and beyond.

Both sides of this argument resonate with the political (guerrilla) war legacies left behind in Jamaica from Alexander Bustamante and Norman Manley's<sup>26</sup> respective Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) and its' associated trade union Bustamante Industrial Trade Union (BITU), and the People's National Party (PNP) and its' associated trade union Trade Union Congress (TUC) (Gunst, 2003). The strong arm labour negotiations directed by the JLP and PNP and enacted through BITU and TUC have been described as '... where a lot of the first gang violence began [in a Caribbean and later US context].' (Gunst, 2003: 71). With the US and Cuba being affiliated with the JLP and PNP (respectively) (Pitts, 2008; Edmonds, 2016), the at the time evolving street gangs controlled their violently held 'garrison' communities (Pitts, 2008: 79) were *states within the state* demarcated in line with political allegiance

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<sup>26</sup> And later becoming Edward Seaga and Michael Manley respectively.

(Edmonds, 2016) later formed ‘... a geography of violence.’ (Gunst, 2003: 91): with arms supplied by the US to the JLP (Gunst, 2003: xviii).

Although other research suggests that instead of purely viewing gangs as a product of a System that its’ members are excluded from, gangs have also been successful in threatening ‘... dominant social and legal systems ...’ (Phillips, 1999: 92-93) through an *awry* incidental ‘revolution’ (Phillips, 1999: 92). Thus ‘gangs’ can, as well as being viewed as the product and under control of Politics, also be perceived as political agents in their own right (Phillips, 1999), and therefore effect and produce (subversively) – through their actions – political motivation and discourse (Lane and Meeker, 2000; Brotherton, 2008; Hagedorn, 2008).

These latter examples demonstrate some of the macro-violence often under-considered, with more overt micro-violence such as inter-group shootings and similar being more prominent. However, what is less considered within micro-violence (of gangs) is how it often is not well targeted, planned or executed (cf. Collins, 2009), which is dictated by the force of the violence being founded in fear or tension as opposed to anger (op cit). For Randall Collins (2009) the most successful micro-violence is that which transcends fear and tension, is planned and draws on the very same observational skills as a sociologist in waiting for specific interactional cues.

For both macro and micro links between the more localised *events* and wider *structures* exist (Collins, 1988). However, not all micro-violence is driven by

macro-structural violence (cf. Collins, 1988). Yet at varying points, structures of social good and zemiological structures reflect and reverberate with both localised and trans-spatial violent events. For example, violence exists in geo-demographic targeting of particular ethnicities (cf. Bullock and Tilley, 2003 who state that 79 % of known gang members in their research were Black), or non-normative family composition (Pitts, 2012). Such focus lends itself to the concept of wider criminological research being complicit in zemiological paradigms; reflecting popular acceptance of social harms such as the neoliberal dismantling of mainstream legitimate work (Hall, 2012; Hall, 2014; Hall and Winlow, 2015).

### **2.3.3 Morality**

In moral terms Yablonsky (1967) differs to Pitts (2008) stance. Yablonsky (1967) interprets the gang as less of a financial enterprise and organised than Pitts (2008) and more of an existential action. The two also differ in relation to motivation of participation; Yablonsky (1967) presents 'gang' participants as detached youth who hold themselves in low self-esteem, utilising the gang as a vehicle through which to seek opportunities to innovate, create and enact positions and set piece subversive manoeuvres (Yablonsky, 1967).

Yablonsky's (1967) existential tone could be described as semi-existential, as although the gangs herein are presented as making active choices to be a member of (a) *Gang Culture*, these choices are simultaneously rooted in a reactive relationship to a moralising history (Cohen, 1955; Bloch and

Niederhoffer cited in Yablonsky, 1967)<sup>27</sup>. Therefore this existential choice is due to inaccessibility to the foundational (mainstream) cultural means to literally replicate wider normative morality (Agnew, 2006, Aseltine *et al*, 2000 cited in Deuchar, 2011, also compare Bourgois, 1996 on 'hegemonic masculinities' reflected in relation to cultures of street and domestic violence as acts of power-play: 413-420).

Or to put it another way, a structural inversion of moral foundations for normative morally qualified 'success' (Cohen, 1955) in the form of *re-created* moral qualifications of success. Thus giving way to an inverted morality (Agnew, 2006, Aseltine *et al*, 2000 cited in Deuchar, 2011); an enactment of gang qua choice, yet only resulting from minimised access to opportunities to engage in normative subversive power-plays (op cit; also see Barry, 2006, Bassani, 2007 and Deuchar, 2009, 2010 cited in Deuchar, 2011). Although for some this idea of choice is overshadowed by structural factors (Agnew, 2006 cited in Deuchar, 2011), or has greater links to financial gain as a response to structural economic disadvantage (Deuchar, 2011), as well as potentially generating social capital as compensation to disadvantage and alternative social recognition (cf. Deuchar and Holligan, 2010; Deuchar, 2011).

A counter argument could be established in understanding gangs and OCGs as *fully existential groups* and individuals who are seeking out hedonistic pleasure from the group's activities (Adler, 1985; Katz, 1990). Most frequently the activities of these groups are understood from capitalist perspectives in

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<sup>27</sup> Or more specifically: *histoire morale*.



which the groups commit criminal activity purely as financial gain, yet it is less frequently considered as a free action 'driven by a search for fun and pleasure' (Adler, 1985: 149). Such understandings problematise a moralising of what is *good* and *bad* economic activity.

From a moral reason perspective Yablonsky (1967) instigates an exploration of potential rationales founding moralities within gang cultures. Especially in a polarised sense, based around: the individual as a self-fulfilling explorer of potential on the one hand; and morality within 'gang' cultures as symmetrical inversion to wider societal morality on the other. A point progressed by Skarbek (2012) on the inversions of prison governance in the clandestine self-governance of prisons by prison gangs. Or more specifically, as Cohen (1955) suggests, a "negative polarity" (Cohen, 1955: 28) whereby the *violent* action is a reflection of the norms of wider society (ibid)<sup>28</sup>.

This could be described as 'systemic' or 'dark matter' background violence that makes subjective violence possible (cf. Zizek, 2009: 2, 12). Thus aligning with peripheral concerns of *right* and *wrong* (cf. Nietzsche, 2003a); particularly with regard to the macro morality of privileged capitalism (Jeffery and Jackson, 2012) and its *reflections* (cf. Densley, 2012), respect and protection (cf. Phillips, 1999), and class based regressive reproduction of violence through rhythms of self-preservation and prowess through physical violence (Willis, 1978). Additional consideration here could be given to the concept of

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<sup>28</sup> Perhaps similar to Lacan's (1994) concept of the Mirror Stage; in which an infant upon looking into a mirror does not fully comprehend that it is their self that is looking back at them. In the same way gangs may be merely mirroring zemiological violence that is reflected at them and wider society across the life course, with the 'gangs', nor mainstream "legitimate" actors recognising the reflection from the other looking back at them.

*slave morality* (Nietzsche, 2003a: 19) and 'gang' as product and controlled within macro-moral frameworks.

Prior to Yablonsky's work is Thrasher's (1963) seminal study *The Gang: A Study of 1313 Gangs in Chicago*, which although conducted in the 1920s, demonstrates some clear resonance to the gangs and gang cultures depicted in contemporary political discourse and news reportage. An example of this is found in Thrasher's (1963) account of the way the Gangs control defined micro-geographies, and how the older strata of Gangs are built and perpetuated from younger tiers of feeder (affiliated) Gangs (cf. Pitts, 2008, Wing Lo, 2012). This resonates with more contemporary work such as Pitts (2008, 2012) depiction of the *youngers* and *elders* structure. Integral for Thrasher (1963) to this tiered feeder structure is a stratified system of gang by type and nature. Here Thrasher (1963) demonstrates how the lower strata, the '... spontaneous play group ...' (Thrasher, 1963: 23, 56) may evolve into a Gang through the potential stages of *Gang-hood*. These are: *Diffuse*, *Solidified*, *Conventionalised* and *Criminal Type* (op cit: 48 – 55).

Thrasher's stance on (gang) morality veers toward that of morality of gangs being an intra-gang function and not necessarily in synchronisation with normative morality. One example being, unwritten codes of conduct, such as not informing on contemporaries within gangs to law enforcement irrespective of circumstance (op cit). This means 'gangs' are less likely to report crimes, as is explicitly explained by the self-confessed gang member Ryan Florence who, in a media interview explained – "Guns are a way of life around here. ...

There are shootings every week but they don't get heard about because no one wants to grass" (Florence quoted in The Guardian, on-line 24/02/07); a point acknowledged by Bullock and Tilley (2003). This paradigm of not informing on the overt violence of 'gangs' could be described as cyclic in that both fear of and witnessing violence can become normative and therefore increase both proclivity and acceptance of all kinds of violence (Winett, 1998). Likewise, it has been argued that wider communities do not inform on 'gangs' due to the entangled relationships between 'gang' and non-gang within the community (cf. Evans et al, 1996).

Self-regulating processes of intra-gang dispute resolution (op cit) including inter (Decker and Curry, 2002; Vasquez *et al*, 2010), intra (Decker and Curry, 2002; Vasquez *et al*, 2010) and extra gang violence (Vasquez *et al*, 2010) (threat), may result in communities fearing 'gangs' (Weerman and Esbenson, 2005 cited in Deuchar and Holligan, 2010; Pitts, 2008). Other research suggests this is not necessarily widespread (Klein, Weerman and Thornberry, 2006), with revenge (Klein, Weerman and Thornberry, 2006; Klein and Maxson, 2006) and territoriality (Hallsworth and Young, 2008; Klein, Weerman and Thornberry, 2006; Klein and Maxson, 2006; Millar, Curry and Decker, 2003; Whyte, 1993; Deuchar and Holligan, 2010) being cited as of greater significance. Also exemplifying this moral stance is the gang's apparent ill regard for members of the wider community (Thrasher, 1963). Thrasher (1963) alludes that the gangs target the vulnerable within society such as older people, or those who are at a temporary disadvantage (also see Collins, 2009).

Thrasher (1963) also indirectly demonstrates how the moralities of gang cultures converge with those who hold normative power roles such as politicians, civil servants and other mainstream community organisers. For Thrasher (1963) the gang and gang culture is a potential training site for politicians yet to come (op cit, also compare Whyte, 1993). Reflections and convergences between gangs and mainstream politics is nothing new, St Augustine made the observation of the similarities between the state and gangs in his assertion that to 'Remove justice, what are kingdoms but gangs of criminals on a large scale?' (St Augustine, 2003 [1467]).

Although the more immediate and subversive aspect of the relationship between politicians and gangs is that in which the gang is groomed and commissioned to carry out '... strong-arm work ...' (Thrasher, 1963: 326) by-proxy of politicians / political factions as a means of applying leverage. Examples include influencing outcomes of electoral processes (Thrasher, 1963) or to break strikes / impact on labour (Gunst, 2003) and stem radical political opposition (Hill, 2004: 98).

It is widely understood that a critical interface between the morally legitimate and the morally illegitimate structures of society are essential for organised crime groups to flourish (Rawlinson in Ruggiero, South and Taylor, 1998). Most commonly, groups or gangs of organised criminals are understood through the lens of illegal markets and economies (Hobbs, 1988). Yet the groups or 'gangs' understood as organised criminals are not solely criminal

entrepreneurs nor purely developed out of criminal activity, they are actually always embedded in legitimate business and cultural life simultaneously (Paoli, 2002). This resonates with relationships between politicians and gangs in Jamaica through the 1970s as a means of physical pressure in order to influence electoral outcomes (Pitts, 2008) and similar relationships in Japan in the early twentieth century (Hill, 2004).

Over the passage of time it seems little has changed in relation to interest in the violence and perceived immorality of gangs; from the Scuttlers (Davies, 1998, Pearson, 2006), Viragoes and Vixens of Victorian Manchester (Davies, 1999), through to the media favoured “American Style” (Silverman, 1994, Thompson, 1995 cited in Mares, 2001: 154) / Caribbean / ‘Chav’ / Underclass street based form of ‘gang’; which appears to be the predominant form of gang under the academic gaze to date. This dominant focus is what Hallsworth (2013) describes as a mirroring of the literary fantasy genre, the gang talk that perpetuates fantastic yet familiar images and imaginings of *gangs* and *gangsters* (Hallsworth, 2013). With other forms taken out of view by being categorised as something else. For example organised crime on a global stage is understood as the commission of crime or enablers (World Economic Forum, 2012; Middleton and Levi, 2015), which is said to provide governance to the criminal economy rather than participate in it (cf. Skarbek, 2012).

Others have suggested that youth gangs exist at the precipice of organised crime (Thompson, 2004 cited in Deuchar and Holligan, 2010), and in some

instances the former is linked with legitimate companies (Densley, 2012), a point contradictory to the view that gangs having little to nil organisational capacity (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Decker and Curry, 2002; Klein and Maxson, 2010). Commonly the highly stereotyped US street 'gang' is held up as the benchmark for what a 'gang' is; such stereotypes are not only upheld by academics but also politicians (Klein, Weerman and Thornberry, 2006). Additionally 'gangs' are authenticated by typologies of violence (op cit), further perpetuating this typological status quo. These groups are typically more overt in nature and as such are less inclined to taking a guardianship role within their communities (Pitts, 2007); a point contradicted elsewhere (cf. Venkatesh, 2006). However, the picture is much more broad as 'gang' or group based illegal activity is not confined to urban streets. Such activity is also enacted in rural areas that are stereotypically regarded as morally superior and idyllic (Somerville, Smith, McElwee, 2015).

## **2.4 Special interest 'gangs'**

*'I'm a hammer from hell, can't you tell?  
I'm the wild one [...]  
I'm gonna own this town, you can't hold me down  
I'm the wild one [...]*

Suzi Quatro, The Wild One

Another little documented area of research is what I will term as *Special Interest Gangs*. For *Special Interest Gangs* the reasons for lack of research literature is twofold: firstly, definitions of 'gang' are highly contested (as indicated earlier) and tend to be concerned with younger people. Whereas *Special Interest Gangs* are more likely to predominantly consist of adults.

Secondly, some *Special Interest Gangs* are likely to be more difficult for researchers to access due to the covert fashion in which they operate and members may well lead dual lives - one within the 'gang' and one of a separate *mainstream* lifestyle.

One such set of *Special Interest Gangs* is *One Percent Motor-Cycle Clubs* or *Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs*<sup>29</sup> (Bjørger, 2016) as they are described by U.S. law enforcement agencies (Quinn and Koch, 2003). These groups perceive themselves as being outside of, or rejecting, of mainstream society (Bjørger, 2016) and only fitting in with other likeminded club members (Quinn and Koch, 2003).

They do not feel they can fully conform to mainstream life (Barker, 2005) and embrace the 1% outsider positionality as an important part of personal identity which should be upheld by any means (Harris, 2016). 1%MCs outwardly do not describe themselves as criminal gangs, however European research suggests that affiliation with one of these groups increases the likelihood of serious criminal activity (Klement, 2016). Likewise, the clubs have international spread and reach for both their legal and illegal activities (Barker, 2011 cited in Gottschalk and Markovic, 2016), a point similar to that of OCGs in that the legitimate and illegitimate are inseparable and symbiotic. 1%MCs straddle a positionality perceived as criminals, outsiders and movie star status all at the same time (Gottschalk and Markovic, 2016).

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<sup>29</sup> From hereon these groups will be described by the abbreviation 1%MCs as none of these groups outwardly describe themselves as 'gangs' and the law enforcement preferred name of Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs is problematic and confusing due to there being a club called the Outlaws MC who are distinct from the other clubs.

The five largest and most powerful (globally) 1%MCs are: Hells Angels; Outlaws; Bandidos; Pagans; Sons of Silence (Quinn and Koch, 2003; Barker, 2005). U.S. law enforcement describe 1%MCs as gangs (Quinn and Koch, 2003) and having links with other forms of crime and gangs such as *youth street gangs* (similar to Japanese Yakuza – cf. Hill, 2004), prison gangs and organised crime networks such as La Cosa Nostra (Barker, 2005; Quinn and Koch, 2003) and likened to the Mafia (Quinn and Koch, 2003). However, empirical research is limited; typically this body of literature is statistical or literature review based (Barker, 2005; Quinn and Koch, 2003), popular journalistic (Thompson, 2003), or biased by patronage (Reynolds and Barger cited in Quinn and Koch, 2003). Less still exists from ethnographic investigation, the most prominent of which being that of Wolf (1991 / 1999) (Quinn and Koch, 2003; Barker, 2005). Even this celebrated attempt only engaged with a conservative and relatively small inactive 1%MC (Quinn and Koch, 2003; Barker, 2005); a point attributed to the secrecy and challenges to access such groups (Barker, 2005).

Akin to a Nietzschean reading relating to ideas of a slave-morality and the *übermensch*, there is potential to explore linkages between structural / patriarchal instruction, and learning to be 'gang' and the mechanisms of being for 1%MCs. One starting point for this kind of exploration would be to examine potential links between organisation and hierarchy (Quinn and Koch, 2003) - space and place - name and rules. Examples to be explored might include: leadership and where it is enacted - *outlaw* or 'exuberant' cultural codes of



conduct (Quinn and Koch, 2003: 284). Also of interest are the potential contradictions between symbolic hierarchical structure and agentic 'exuberant' (ibid) ideology.

As with 1%MCs, there is little academic research on football hooligan or football casual firms ('gangs') (Redhead, 2012). The vast majority of literature in this little considered realm of gang cultures fits in the category of popular memoir or true crime, authored by ex-football hooligans / casuals (Redhead, 2010). Redhead describes this literature as 'hit and tell' and 'low sport journalism' (op cit: 627, 629). However, of relevance to the present research it has been claimed that orated histories are an integral aspect of football hooligan / casual ('gang') cultures as a sub-set of a wider working class culture (Redhead, 2010, 2015). The point of relevance here being the signal that there may well be mileage in the idea that oral histories play a role in educative processes for football hooligan / casual gangs (op cit: 635), which may in turn be nested within broader class based informal learning practices. Or how in a multi-directional manner *cultures* are learnt through observation and are blended into both the mainstream and other sub-cultures (Redhead, 2012).

Although the academic literature on football hooliganism tends not to describe the groups as 'gangs' the popular press often does, thus imprinting imagery into the public psyche. Recent research indicates significant drops in football violence, with an overall perception of football becoming a leisure activity subjected to demographic shifts and sanitisation (Cleland and Cashmore,

2016). Contemporary research into football hooliganism has explored the role of drug use and violent activity away from football (Ayres and Treadwell, 2011) and belonging, identity and desistance through autobiographical accounts (Poulton, 2012). However, no literature exists which explores how people may be educated into such groups, nor the role of social space within those processes.

## 2.5 Urban space / place

*'... Keep us trapped in the same place we're raised in.  
They wonder why we act so outrageous,  
Run around stressed out and pull out gauges<sup>30</sup>,  
'Cos every time you let the animal out o' cages,  
It's dangerous to people who look like strangers.'*  
(Dr Dre, *The Watcher*: 1999)

Much has been written on urban space / places. Particularly relevant to the present research, Northern industrial cities have been the subject of much academic interest from Engels (2009 [1845]) onwards. However, none so far have attended to the interplays, generative factors and potentialities of educative practices and processes in 'gang' cultures within urban spaces / places. In order to contextualise how 'gangs' may be affected and generated via urban space / place, it is important to first consider broader matters relating regeneration, abandonment of space, urban planning and crime prevention and surveillance.

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<sup>30</sup> Gauge is a reference to a firearm, as in 12-gauge shotgun.

As Garot (2007) indicates, public space can have a defining role in gang cultures, a point which is supported elsewhere in relation to territoriality within gang cultures (Brantingham *et al*, 2012; Foley *et al*, 2013; Kintrea *et al*. 2008; Whyte, 1993; Taylor cited in Curry and Decker, 2003; Padilla cited in Curry and Decker, 2003; Alexander, 2000; Klein and Maxson, 2006). Territorial space and gang inhabited space has been shown to (negatively) affect not only the use of space by gang affiliated people, but also non-gang affiliated people (cf. Garot, 2007; Kintrea *et al*. 2008; Ralphs *et al*, 2009, Foley *et al*, 2013). With perceptions of those living or using the space securitised (cf. Atkinson and Flint, 2004) irrespective of 'gang' (or criminal) involvement, thus adding further restrictions to spatial use (Ralphs *et al*, 2009; Brown, 2013), via neoliberal risk-averse space management and surveillance (cf. Hier, 2004). Territoriality of public space has also been attributed to competition for gang *resources* (Brantingham *et al*, 2012; Skolnick cited in Curry and Decker, 2003; Fagan in Huff, 1996; Chin in Huff, 1996), again raising questions of the reflective relationship between gang cultures and normative macro-moral concepts of being such as capitalism, war and religion.

Also, how territorialised geographies can be inherited from previous generations (Kintrea *et al.*, 2008) and perpetuated through both seeking hyper-masculine kudos and economic drivers (op cit). Yet, current literature generally tends to manoeuvre more loosely describing micro-environs where 'gang' members are known to frequent as 'set spaces' (Tita *et al* 2005 cited in Ralphs *et al*, 2009: 486, 489). Or on a global scale, through the lens of

migration and 'gang' formation / transmission (Decker *et al*, 2009; van Gemert *et al*, 2008; Gunst, 2003).

However, it cannot be ignored that there are clear factors which have potential to impact on forming conditions conducive to the generation and perpetuation of gang cultures through urban and closed<sup>31</sup> spaces and places. The following subsection outlines the key concepts relating to urban space / place, which align with forming these conditions. These include: urban planning / crime prevention, gentrification and abandonment, insider / outsider spaces.

### **2.5.1 Urban Planning: Crime Prevention**

Rioting / civil disturbances during 1991 and 1992 in various British cities involving large numbers of young men (JRF, 1997) aligned with an emerging moral panic around young men and crime across the 1990s. Cross party driven transatlantic crime prevention policy unfolded across the early to late 1990s born out of 'Broken Window Theory' (Wilson and Kelling in Dunham and Alpert, 2015), which Ronald Reagan's US administration translated into the Criminal Justice Bill<sup>32</sup> (cf. Wacquant, 1999). Other policies across time such as 'New Deal for Communities (1999-2011), Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders (2003-2011) and Urban Regeneration Companies (2005-2011)' (Jeffery, 2016) and the rotation of *bulldoze and build* integral to them, along with deindustrialisation in former heavy industry cities have contributed to negatively impacting upon social division (op cit).

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<sup>31</sup> Such as prisons.

<sup>32</sup> And the subsequent Crime and Disorder Act, 1998.

Planning paradigms of safety and prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour have been discussed in great detail elsewhere (cf. Jacobs, 1961; Newman, 1972); some approaching the topic from an 'economic and engineering' perspective (Glaeser, 2012: 112). Ideals, fantasies and markets for the fortification of the private space of the home have evolved exponentially in recent history (Atkinson and Blandy, 2016). The engineering approach is evident across Coleman's (1982, 1994 and 1998) work on crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) and social disadvantage; as is in Jacobs, (1961) and ideas of 'eyes on the street' and Newman's (1972) work on 'defensible spaces' (Newman, 1972). For Coleman the process of planning and architecturally designing out crime is a simple mathematical or deterministic one, whereby if planners and architects insert certain variables such as: defensible space defined by enclosure fencing; semi-detached housing units as opposed to flats; entrances facing the street (Coleman, 1994, 1998), then crime and 'social malaise' are eliminated by her self-styled trial (Coleman, 1994: 55, 118). Any designing out of crime should be culturally and locally aware (cf. Kitchen and Schneider, 2005), which can only be achieved through the community and local partnerships (Saraiva *et al*, 2016).

Some validity exists in Coleman suggesting that Le Corbusier-influenced planning and architecture did not work as a *community-building* project (Coleman, 1994). But perhaps designing out crime and security by design is not community building either. More recently designing out crime has become well advocated, and cited as a means for creating sustainable communities that are perceived from within and without as being safe spaces (Cozens,

2002). Caution should be given in relation to the popularity of designing out crime and security by design as both can raise fears (Atkinson and Blandy, 2016), and as a field it must continuously progress as crime itself progresses (Armitage, Monchuk and Secur, 2011). It should also be noted that designing out and security by design along with broader community safety policy and practices serve to domesticate public spaces in ways which can exclude some publics and include an idealised domesticated public (Atkinson, 2003).

Coleman (1994) overlooks the broader politico-social backdrop to her work; in the decades between the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 2000s there had been significant global economic shifts precipitating recession, deindustrialisation across various heavy industries such as mining and ship building and racial riots born out of oppressive legislation such as the so called *sus' law*. As such Coleman's (1982) planning determinism cannot be given credence in its own right when describing eventual un-tenability of urban spaces.

Also, Coleman (1994) omits consideration of polarised 'seclusion' (Wacquant, 2010b: 165), as well as appreciation of how higher crime intrinsically relates to close proximities of victim and perpetrator (Glaeser, 2012). Nor is there consideration of size and density of urban areas (op cit) and the '... 'creaming' [off] of the materially stable households ...' (Wacquant, 2010b: 172) via policy targeting increased home ownership; thus leaving an impoverished and economically homogenous population as the only people tenable to what may already be deemed to be a *no-go zone* (ibid). This for Wacquant (2010b)

would comprise all four elements of the Ghetto building process: stigma, constraint, spatial assignation and institutional parallelisms (op cit).

Earlier concepts of crime reduction through planning come from Jane Jacobs, who explains the more eyes there are on the street the safer the street is and will feel (Jacobs, 1961b in Carmona and Tiesdell, 2007; Jacobs, 1964 cited in Kitchen and Schneider, 2005). Contra to Coleman (1994; 1998) Jacobs describes division of space<sup>33</sup> through the creation of territories as barbarism is fuelled by depletion in free use of the 'sidewalk' (Jacobs, 1961b in Carmona and Tiesdell, 2007: 151). This argument is cyclic in that Jacobs suggests that people fear the street, therefore avoid using the street, in turn the street is emptier making it feel less safe, resulting in people less likely to inhabit it other than in a fleeting voyeuristic manner by car (op cit).

Interestingly Jacobs (1961) ideas resonate with the rap artist Dr Dre's (1999) statement of '*...every time you let the animal out o' cages, It's dangerous to people who look like strangers.*' and Jacobs comparison of traveling through the city by car with that of traveling through '*... the big wild-animal reservations of Africa ...*' (Jacobs, 1961: 151). This voyeur / animal imagery has perhaps evolved since Jacobs was writing, with new and entangled forms emerging (cf. Zizek, 2010<sup>34</sup>, 1998<sup>35</sup>) and commentary on ghetto tourism such as Northampton Chronicle and Echo, 2011<sup>36</sup> and academic work pertaining to the phenomenon (cf. Conforti, 1996; Xie *et al*, 2007).

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<sup>33</sup> Albeit on a seemingly larger scale than that discussed by Coleman (1994 and 1998).

<sup>34</sup> On the reduction of the person to the gaze.

<sup>35</sup> On the fantasy of voyeurism from a car journey.

<sup>36</sup> 26/04/11.

## 2.5.2 Gentrification and Abandonment

Waves of gentrification follow in the wake of urban regeneration directed under policy driving for mixed communities (Atkinson, 2000). Developing into gentrified neo-colonisation (Atkinson and Bridge, 2005) of urban enclaves via strategies such as HMR. In some areas this has been depicted as causing displacement and dispossession of urban spaces for urban poor (McLeod and Johnstone, 2012: 4)<sup>37</sup>. Previously, gentrification has been presented as a multiplying influx of the middle-classes squeezing out and displacing the former working-class inhabitants (Glass, 1964). More contemporary literature does not stray far from this, for instance Watt (2009) convincingly illustrates how not only those in the gentrified segments squeeze out their poorer neighbours, but they also disassociate from likened spatial identities. This is more cogently argued and advanced in Jeffery's (2016) work highlighting how not only are gentrified communities 'tectonic' (Butler and Watt, 2007 cited in Jeffery, 2016) in intergroup interaction, but their tectonic nature can also catalyse resistance from local working class residents. This point made by Jeffery (2016) is highly relevant in considering the potential for such resistance to manifest in the form of 'gangs' and related crime via perpetual cycles of alienation between the locals and incoming gentrifying groups.

Likewise, discourse and policy stemming out of eugenic lineages of 'troubled families' (Crossley, 2015) and related taint of place can result in a complex of

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<sup>37</sup> It must be noted McLeod and Johnstone's 2014 article lacks balance (cf. Cole, 2015).



disinvestment and investment through gentrification (Slater, 2015). This can give rise to poor residents being managed into segregated 'tectonic' communities alongside yet separate from affluent enclaves of influx communities (Butler cited in Jeffrey, 2016). In opposition, some suggest gentrification does not necessarily displace (Freeman *et al*, 2016), despite empirical studies showing otherwise (Atkinson, 2000; Lees, 2008). However, for some less attractive conurbations, taint of place can establish abandonment (Wacquant, 2010a, 2010b) where alternative economies and groups who control them emerge and develop (cf. Venkatesh, 2006; Winlow, 2001). Although policy, particularly that aimed at creating mixed communities and limiting concentrations of deprivation, has sought to establish more improved and equitable places (DETR, 1999), they have done so through a medium of private sector free market imperatives and discourse of diluting anti-social behaviour through an influx of *civilised* new residents (Manzi, 2010). Likewise, in social landlords managing place image and avoiding tenancy management difficulties, some groups who are deemed problematic will not be accepted as tenants (op cit).

Not only as a local / national but also global phenomena (Smith, 2002), gentrification could instigate what Wacquant (2010a) describes as symbolic denigration; this depicts how following civil unrest, policy shift and decline in industry, both racial and class division of occupancy can be established. At this stage in place change the neo-gentry has not yet entered the picture; what is left is an abandoned place – a seemingly social detritus; a stigmatised people who do not have the resources to join the abandonment (Wacquant,

2010a). Those left behind are a people discredited by difference (Goffman, 1963); advanced marginality, ignorance (Wacquant, 2008) and stigmatisation of place can generate targets for remedying *broken places* through gentrification (Kallin and Slater, 2014; Slater, 2016). Such remedial stances have been described as resonating imperialism and reflecting racial stratification (Mumm, 2016), which has potential to generate urban warfare between 'gangs' and the state (Winton, 2014). Likewise, there are also links between urban marginality and gang cultures (Winton, 2014).

Gentrification and revanchist regeneration policy may be instigated with the best intentions, such as: reducing crime levels in low socio-economic areas, improving the quality of housing stock or updating transport links with a view to increasing economic prosperity. However, where poor and marginalised urban communities have been subject to such policy, 'gangs', as well as the general population have been displaced into surrounding areas (Hagedorn and Rauch, 2007). Displacement of institutionalised 'gangs' into new already claimed areas catalyses inter-gang violence between the displaced and established groups vying for dominance of the drugs and other illicit markets (Hagedorn and Rauch, 2007). With this in mind a new angle is added in considering whether or not gentrification and revanchist regeneration policy is beneficial to the targeted area or those surrounding.

### 2.5.3 Insider – Outsider Public Spaces: Gaze and Perception

New technologies such as CCTV could be understood as an evolution of Jacobs' *eyes on the street*, or merely an addition of formal surveillance power to the informal. However, in considering *eyes on the street* and making public space *safe* through voyeurism it is vital to understand that perceptions of 'safety' are subjective. As such for CCTV monitoring, those who are the watchers may have a set of values that pre-determines who is a problem in a public space and who is not (Graham, 1998). Likewise for Jacobs' (1961b) version of *eyes on the street*, those who perceive a public space as unsafe will also have perceptions of who is making it unsafe. In this sense there is a pincer manoeuvre between Big Brother and as Castells described it the *network of little sisters* (Castells, 2010). As much as public life is evermore under the official and quasi-official gaze of CCTV (Fyfe and Bannister, 2006), so too is public life under the gaze of each other. The panopticon of CCTV and that of physical eyes on the street serve to establish moralised zones of being; some deemed civilised and others uncivilised.

For in some spaces the only sight a visitor might have of a homeless person is in a designated 'pitch' selling the Big Issue, with all other homeless people occupying the liminal spaces or as Wacquant (2008) may have it the 'dumpsters for the poor' or '... urban hellholes ...' (Wacquant. 2010b: 172). People *gazed out* of spaces and communities are presented with a multiplicity of semiotic *literature* giving instruction as to where, when and if they can occupy a given place or space (cf. Wagner, 2010) equates to a kind of spatio-

temporal territorialisation of acceptability (Millie, 2008) in which the most vulnerable in society are *swept from the streets* (cf. Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2010; Mitchell, 1995, 2003). It is evident that there are clear demarcations between space as it is *acceptably* used or *intended* to be used and space as it is *unacceptably* or *organically* used as sites for survival by the least well off in society (cf. Holston, 1999, 2008 cited in Pine, 2010; Wacquant, 2010b). In the formation of 'gangs', the worse off in society may be corralled from the street to other third places and spaces where educative processes of becoming involved in 'gangs' are accelerated beyond moralising gazes.

## 2.6 Summary

As is clear by the weighting of the literature reviewed above, much has been written on 'gangs' and 'gang' violence, albeit tending toward youth gangs by route of definitional bickering. Very little else has as yet come into the academic range, least of all with a clear focus on not just 'gang' cultures, but also education within 'gang' cultures and how they *play* out in third places; as well as the active role third places may have in both 'gang' cultures and education within gang cultures. Instead, as is evident above, academic focus at best has dwelled too long on researching the *gang* as a narrowly defined socially deviant type and at worst has both run parallel with right wing populist fears such as immigration and without a critical consciousness, researched gangs through the lens and language of Anglo-American imperialism. As such there is undoubtedly much terrain to cover from a post-structural perspective, with a view to a non-imperial exploration of 'gang' *cultures* as ethnography

with such groups who identify themselves or are identified by others as 'gangs'. Not least in the range of groups who operate with greater levels of secrecy and are therefore more challenging to engage in a research process.

## **Chapter 3**

# **Education and Third Place / Space**

### 3.1 Introduction

The field of education is broad, as is the associated literature, theoretical perspectives, approaches, histories and range of sub-fields. For example by age: such as primary, secondary, or by specialism: such as informal, vocational, professional and academic as an indicator of the fields breadth and depth. Given the focus of this research it is not practical to deal with all aspects of education within this thematic review chapter. Instead, a précis of the aforementioned sub-fields and histories will be provided as context.

However, the key areas of focus will be:

- *'Gangs' and education*
- *Informal education*
- Spectral education
- Resistance and *education*
- *Ghetto*[ised] education
- *Education in third places / spaces*

The literature is sparse with regard to how people may be educated into gangs, and non-existent regarding the role of social or third place / space in these processes. The following sections will explore the key areas of education relevant to this thesis.

### 3.2 'Gangs' and education

*'This ain't a gun talk, Champaign coke ting*

*This is revolution provoking* ’

Rodney P featuring Peoples Army, Live-Up

In contemporary urban music there is a recognised link between education in both an informal and formal context and ‘gang’ cultures. For example, both Damien Marley (2005) and Akala (2012) have alluded to the inferiority of formalised education ‘... *a ghetto education*’ basic ...’ and ‘... *if you saw me aged nine, reading Malcom [X] just fine, teachers still treated me stupid ...*’ respectively. Likewise there is an allusion to the likelihood of an *informal* education taking the place of the inferior formal state education ‘...*That’s when they take dem guns*’ replace it ...’ and ‘... *The irony is, Some of the first man to give me schoolin*’, *You would call gangsters ...*’ respectively; as well as the need to re-educate one’s self and peers as a practice toward freedom, as indicated in both Rodney P and Akala ‘*Learn a ting or two, Teach the others in your crew ...*’ and ‘... *Stuck on the block, READ, READ!, Sittin’ in the box*<sup>38</sup>, *READ, READ!, Don’t let them say what you can achieve ...*’ respectively.

Unfortunately the existing academic literature has far less to say about education in relation to ‘gang’ cultures than contemporary music does; despite acknowledgement that there has to be an educative process involved in (violent) crime, particularly for the most successful and longstanding criminals (cf. Collins, 2009). The literature thus far, with little exception (cf. Wing Lo, 2012; Bengtsson, 2012), only stretches as far as education as a means of

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<sup>38</sup> ‘Box’ is street and prison slang for prison or prison cell – also sometimes referred to as ‘boxing yard’.



crime prevention (cf. Esbenson *et al*, 2011, 1999; Winfree *et al*, 1999) and / or has a focus on young people (cf. Esbenson *et al*, 2011, 1999; Winfree *et al*, 1999; Wing Lo, 2012; Bengtsson, 2012; Reyes III, 2006; Vigil, 1999). For education as ('gang') crime prevention, the emphasis is on (young people) building better relationships with law enforcement and deterring gang membership (Esbenson *et al*, 2011) and is delivered by law enforcement officers (op cit); such programmes have been said to have mixed results and as such undergone and still undergoing changes (op cit).

The limited literature focusing upon learning to be 'gang' involved does not fully consider the complexities of educative processes within 'gang' cultures. For instance, Bengtsson (2012) considers the learning of 'gangster subculture' and 'style' (Bengtsson, 2012: 677, 678, 681, 683-684, 690). However, this does not explicitly consider the notion of third place within the learning depicted, despite being conducted within the intricacies of place and space of a prison (young offenders institute) (Bengtsson, 2012), which, as indicated earlier is potentially fertile ground in relation to both 'gang' cultures and third place.

Wing Lo (2012) does focus on gangs *per se*, particularly youth gangs in Hong Kong and the Triadisation of the gangs, instead of style. However, Wing Lo (2012) takes the view of the youth gangs being essentially different from the Triads. As such indicating the too well-worn path of perceiving gangs narrowly as a youth issue and separate to organised crime; gangs qua disorganisation and unstructured in their own right (Wing Lo, 2012), yet organised by

association with the Triad groups (op cit). The educative practices and processes in this case are thus patriarchal / hierarchal via the 'Dai Lo – Lan Tsai' or 'Big Brother – Follower' relationship between the youth gang and Triad group (op cit: 561-562, 574).

Despite the patriarchal and hierarchical nature of the 'triadisation' of younger gang members, there is clear indication that the educative processes although reflective of macro-patriarchal and hierarchical structures, are in some way informal. They are informal in that they have no apparent normative anchoring, yet are aiming to fulfil an ideological or productive output. The following section explores informal education in order to better understand how the educative processes involved in becoming involved in gangs may relate to pedagogic informality.

### **3.3 Informal Education**

Informal and community education stretches as far back as the 1790's with the faith based work of Hannah More who carried out elementary, religious, domestic, industry orientated and social work activity (Pugh, 1999). The early 1840's saw the advent of the ragged schools, again at a point when a moral panic regarding childhood was emerging. Rousseau, conceptualised childhood as a period in life which was of innocence and need of education and stimulation (Burman, 2000), a paradigm which continues to be prevalent in the global North in contemporary times and as such holds spatial, temporal and cultural boundaries (Valentine, 2003). This particular moral panic derived

from the notion that as a result of increased child labour from the onset of industrialisation, children would inevitably take up undesirable pastimes by means of their disposable incomes which they now had access to (cf. Burman, 2000; Smith, 1988).

Other linkages between informal education provision and moral panic are also apparent. Interestingly philanthropy and the generative factor in the moral panic concerning the young urban poor were both projected predominantly by the middle classes (Smith, 1988). With this in mind it could be argued that the foundations of informal education were ambivalently benevolent acts bred from fear of the unknown<sup>39</sup>. Also, that they were implemented as a means of control, as whilst young people were engaged in educational institutes (cf. Hager and Halliday, 2009) and clubs they were not succumbing to deviant or immoral activity; a point in keeping with Arnstein's (1969) intervention being oppressive and something that is done *to* people and not *with* them.

Contemporary theories of informal education suggest that just by the very fact that people are involved in dialogue through participation with informal educators, they will inadvertently absorb some of the pro-social ideals of the educator (Jeffs and Smith, 2010). This dialogical emphasis resonates with the work of Paulo Freire who placed great significance on the power of dialogue *with* people, as opposed to a dialogue projected *to* people (Freire, 1993, 2007; Beck and Purcell, 2010); as well as the importance of a 'problem posing' education rather than an instructional education (Coburn, 2011: 478).

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<sup>39</sup> The developing working class culture of which, the middle classes understood little.

The key difference between Jeffs and Smith's (2010) and Freire's (1993, 2002, 2007) work on the dialogical essence of informal / popular education is that Jeffs and Smith (2010) acknowledge the moralising processes involved in their project (Jeffs and Smith, 2010), whereas Freire, although writing under the rhetoric of Christian liberation theology (cf. Freire, 1993: 55) and '... phallogocentric paradigm of liberation ...' (hooks, 1994: 49) does not acknowledge that he is operating under a macro-moral venture.

Integral to Freireian educational theory are the ideas of "consientization" and *liberation*, with the latter being only achievable through achievement of the former via the stages of Magical, Naïve and Critical Consciousness (consientization) (Freire, 2002: 44-45). In a Freireian framework, consientization via an anti-banking or anti-depository educational approach; that is, one which does not rely upon knowledge being deposited from the *full* teacher to the *empty* student (Freire, 2002: 71-72, 76). Freire describes the "banking" process in terms of the teacher (oppressor) domesticating the student '... by mythicizing reality ...' (Freire, 2002: 83; also see Freire, 2002: 139).

Freire's critique is of another time and place, yet it arguably still stands up (in some ways) in the present Anglo-Americanised context. Particularly in relation to the dominant prescribed teaching paradigm and methods experienced in what has come to be termed *mainstream* education system in which the banking method is *de rigueur*. As such, as indicated by Freire (2007), the oppressed recreate and re-enact the acts of the oppressor in their own form.

Likewise the educational field repeats and accelerates its own inequities and separations (Batsleer, 2013).

### **3.4 Spectral Education**

*'Yes I've been accused [...]  
And wrongly abused [...]  
I'm a duppy conqueror'*

Bob Marley and The Wailers Duppy Conqueror, Burnin' 1973

Literature focusing on hauntings primarily focus on the 'city' and sense of place generally speaking (cf. Edensor, 2005; Edensor, 2008; Pile, 2008; Bell, 1997; Gordon, 1997), with attention given elsewhere to hauntings of ideology and identity (cf. Derrida, 1994) or as history in itself (cf. Foucault, 1967 in Dehaene and De Cauter, 2008: 14). The term 'haunt' holds as part of its definition '... giving signs of its presence ... be persistently in the mind of ...' (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1995). This and following sections, and the wider thesis, build on this literature and definition focusing on spectral or haunting education and related concepts of place / space.

#### **3.4.1 Educational Ghosts**

Current neoliberalisation of *mainstream* education signals a middle class educational moral panic concerned with keeping ahead and advantage during economic turbulence (Ball, 1998). Yet, is also concerned with a discourse of reducing costs and improving outcomes in a competitive educational interventionist market (Batsleer, 2013). Similarly Batsleer's (2013) point,

students continue to be alienated from their academic efforts and produce (Wrigley in Gunter, 2012), giving the effect of a dualistic in one-space-event haunting, a haunting of alienated labour (op cit) and of 'exchange value' (op cit: 145). This capitalist haunting having a kinship with Bollas' psychoanalytically founded idea that internal moulding may take place via a presence of another (Bollas, 1993 cited in Roseneil, 2009). The *other* being both the retroactive capitalist structure, and the yet to come apparition of the future (commoditising) self of the student, constituting the conduit of commercially driven and driving educational structures (cf. Gordon, 1997 cited in Roseneil, 2009 and Walker, 2010 on the 'Duppy'<sup>40</sup> comparative of neo-colonial racialised oppression).

Perhaps more pertinent to the point in question is the Jamaican folklore notion of the ghost, the duppy, in that the duppy is dually a retro-activation of the past (the past African folklore merged with cross cultural European folklore), as well as the human-form duppy as a person of a lived past (Leach, 1961). Yet simultaneously the duppy is a becoming, a becoming of a revised form (be it human or other), becoming an evolved version or rendering of what a duppy *is*, and becoming in its capitalist potential in that an Obeah Man or Science Man can be paid to remove or set upon a person a duppy (Leach, 1961, Thornton, 1904). Therefore a new potential entity that has not yet been and is not of the past nor dead (Leach, 1961). As such, like with the duppy the student is both *ghost* and *child* (Leach, 1961), yet *a priori* 'dispossessed' (Struselis, 2001: 98); a dispossession of the self-identification in the haunting

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<sup>40</sup> Duppy in its most simple description is Jamaican patois for ghost.

of the not seen / chosen self (Brown and England, 2004), much likened to the seen / not seen of the Lacanian Mirror Stage (cf. Brown, 2008).

### **3.4.2 Haunting stories – Controlling Stories**

Dispossession echoes in student learning also, in that via newly rhetorically formed versions of the *banking* process in the shape of coaching and Mentoring for clear and formative assessment criteria may erode the ability of the student to learn how to learn in an autonomous manner (Torrance, 2007). It is in such a vacuum that the current educational axiom of educational achievement being solely equated in capitalist-ultra-pragmatic terms (cf. Ball, 1998, 2007, 2012), via ‘policy entrepreneurs’ (Ball, 1998: 124), in league with state and voluntary sector in order to *cure* the ills of communities (Ball, 2007: 114). With achievement understood as the outcome based measurement, credentialisation (Batsleer, 2013) of passing a course or qualification (Torrance, 2007). This goes against the idea of education as enquiry and to *seek* knowledge as a natural experience (Lodge, 2001) but instead aligns with (capitalist) value matrices as a socio-normatively corralled schooling experience (op cit), inclusive of testing as an integral aspect of performance surveillance and intervention (Torrance, 1993).

Social corraling of the educational experience, however, could be of merit however if loosely interpreted in the Ancient Greek sense, in that the corral is not merely that of a few elite policy makers as interpreted by the professional teacher, but instead that of the whole citizenry and wider social institutions

(Lodge, 2001: 12); positive if akin to a radical democratically practiced co-operative school (cf. Glatter, 2013 in the Guardian). Although this was not necessarily the case for Plato, who was not only in favour of the state having a hand in education (Plato, 2007), but fervently advocating the censure of literature and topic studied within education ‘supervis[ing] the production of stories’ (Plato, 2007: 69) and presenting ‘only those we think suitable’ (ibid) in order to maintain the moral benchmark of the wider citizenry and corral educative processes:

‘[...] our first business is to supervise the production of stories, and choose only those we think suitable, and reject the rest. [...] and by means of them to mould their [young students] minds [...]’  
(Plato, 2007: 69)

The control of educational *stories* is an *a priori* setting for the introduction of students to ‘existing knowledge’ (Brown, 2010: 329) insisting on the creation of a ‘national culture’ (Apple, 2000 in Ball, 2004: 179) instead of resisting *stories* (Brown, 2010), and enabling students to create new (knowledge) *stories* and stretched boundaries (op cit). The core suggestion of the *stories* must all promote a morality of “good” according to the social assumption of *good* deeds and behaviour producing positive effects and *bad* deeds and behaviour producing negative effects (Plato, 2007). This being contradicted op cit in that to deceive is deemed a *bad* action for a citizen, yet for the state deception is permissible for the sound administration of the citizenry and the good of the state itself (op cit).



This fits with Nietzsche's descriptions of genealogies of corralled morality as thought parameters for the masses and self-serving for the originators (cf. Nietzsche, 2003a) and latterly Goldman's reassertion of religion as morality being anti-emancipatory (Goldman, 1969 cited in Love, 2012) through literacy (Apple, 2000 in Ball, 2004), as well as leading directly into the question of is it possible to teach *good* citizenship (Tonge *et al*, 2012). This is similar in the resonance with the educational policies and their rationalisation by way of presentation of an answer to a question (Brown and England, 2004) (both formal and informal) and benevolent acts of education in the U.K. such as the Scouting movement and religious educational and personal development organisations such as the YMCA<sup>41</sup>.

For example, when the YMCA was formed in 1844 by George Williams and others its' initial aim was to assess and meet the needs of other Christian young men (Smith, 1997). Later, responding to societal needs in that membership was opened up to non-Christians and the organisation's aims evolved to include cognitive development (Smith, 1997, Pugh 1999), as well as broadening their definition of 'Christian discipleship' to be an application of the Christian principle of betterment of the mind, body and soul (Pugh, 1999). From this it is possible to appreciate how informal education founded in religion (in this instance Christianity) has been described as a tool to convert and evangelise (Pugh, 1999), and how, like with Plato's state, faith systems could be seen an oppressive agent, which seeks to put right society's

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<sup>41</sup> Young Men's Christian Association.

immorality through indoctrination, as opposed to working toward critical consciousness (Theissen, 1993 cited in Pugh, 1999; Sweatman, 1867 cited in Beck and Purcell, 2010); or to protect young people from the prevailing youth cultures of the day (Ward, 1996 cited in Pugh 1999), not to mention serving its own ends in such a corralled educational manoeuvre.

Likewise emerging from fear of the effects of working class immorality and the potential threat to the strength of the British Empire, significant state involvement in youth and community orientated informal education came in November 1939 upon the issuing of circular 1486 *In the Service of Youth* (Hall, 1959). This document clearly expressed that they would be utilising existing youth organisations for the purposes of creating a service for youth (Davies, 1999; Roberts, 2004). The circular came about in response to the perceived detrimental effects of war on young people wherein it states that youth organisations should offer interventions that improve the moral fibre of young people (Roberts, 2004). Yet simultaneously there is an undertone of military conditioning in the fact that there was an emphasis on fitness, this could be seen as governmental reflection upon problematic experience in the recruiting of suitably fit soldiers during the Boer and First World wars (Roberts, 2004 and Ogilvie, 2013).

### **3.4.3 Haunting Stories – Eternal Return**

Here the ghost - duppy looms again always already as an 'Eternal Return' (Baudrillard, 2001: 101-102). For instance the Baden-Powell spectre returns in

the shape of the ResPublica invoked Military Academies programme, with recycled discourse of moral behavioural decline (Blond and Kaszynska: 2012a; Blond and Kaszynska, 2012b). This haunting corresponded with loss of full-time paid soldiers, decades of stalemate war (in predominantly Muslim Arabic countries). This intended an assemblage of a significantly increased reservist army, as civilian teachers wanting to teach in such schools will be encouraged to join the reserves (Blond and Kaszynska, 2012a) / have to join as a pre-requisite (Blond and Kaszynska, 2012b), or be ex-armed services personnel (Gove, 2011 cited in Roberts and Schostak, 2012). As well as building the reservists generally (Blond and Kaszynska, 2012a) through (indoctrination of students via) onsite cadet forces (Blond and Kaszynska, 2012b). The point being Military Academy qua Scouting movement; both a response to the state's perception of a lack of discipline in the citizens of tomorrow, both as the event of becoming the *same* (Baudrillard, 2011).

In order for such phantasmal manoeuvring to take hold, the desire to believe in the spectre must first be created and formatted through the moralising / civilising content of the *stories* available (Apple, 2000 in Ball, 2004: 185) in order to obtain its own consent to be and manoeuvre (Roberts and Schostak, 2012). The manoeuvre of 'regimentation' (Roberts and Schostak, 2012: 391) of thought and therefore actions through the schooling process is far from an educative and knowledge seeking act, but instead a violent, dividing and fear mongering action (Schostak, 1986 *et al* cited in Roberts and Schostak, 2012; also see Pillay and Ragpot, 2010 on the fear mongering of violence in schools based on racialised lines instead of the actual spread of violence irrespective

of place and race). Despite this *becoming the same* (Baudrillard, 2011: 104) within education the consent for the ghost-duppy is so well founded that the current education direction can be so bold as to retreat further into doctrinal practice with more emphasis on recital and less on democracy in the classroom (cf. [www.phoenixfreeschool.org.uk](http://www.phoenixfreeschool.org.uk)). Herein the possibility of equality of all participants in education (cf. Roberts and Schostak, 2012) and equal say from the student, teacher, as well as policy maker is possible without pre-conditioned codes (Batsleer, 2011) moves further from actuality. Or as others have put it, take instruction from the 'child' (Virno, 2005: 7) or student. Any reversal of this would halt the mirrored spectre of the 'phantom public' (Lippman, 1927 cited in Roberts and Schostak, 2012: 380, 392) reflecting the educational duppy and bring *back to life* the participants of education from the realms of the *hidden dead* (Batsleer, 2011).

Ulrich Beck, although taking an individualistic stance (Valentine, 2003), had mileage in posing that 'The educated person becomes the producer of [...] her own labour situation [and] social biography [...] education makes possible at least a certain degree of self-discovery and reflection' (Beck, 1992 quoted in Valentine, 2003: 42). If this statement were to be expanded in relation to the direction of this review so far, it may be re-written as *a borderless knowledge producing and seeking education allows for the production of choice for all and enables the old stories to be challenged, new ones created through omni-discovery and critical reflection*. In which case education becomes a site of resistance rather than stagnation; one which actively resists the *story* of the *story* and enact and 'reactivate' the child (Virno, 2005: 11) in a process of the

*possible* and hypothetical against the inscribed current status quo of the now (Virno, 2005). This transmits itself through the educative dogma to produce its self-referring view (Deleon, 2012); a status quo sitting on the foundation of existing knowledge(s) of approved texts (Apple 2000 in Ball, 2004), which in itself is a non-neutral (op cit) slow motion animated sedimentary (in)formation. To approach education with a playful will for boundless education is to transgress (hooks, 1994a) and begin a radical / democratic / non-hierarchical / anarchistic recognition of the presence of all in the process (hooks, 1994a; Thomas, 2004; Bakunin cited in Martusewicz, 2012; Deleon, 2012; Love, 2012; Luzon, 2016) may be understood as an education of resistance.

### **3.5 Resistance and Education**

Freedom in most contemporary educational establishments is limited, with huge areas of schools closed off to students during break and lunch times, creating privileged, privatised and barred spaces within the space of the school. Thus the territorialised being of the school space forces sub-third-places as sites of agentive learning. For example, in a secondary school the playground, toilets, interstitial spaces between buildings and hidden gaps under stairwells all become sub-third-places; spaces that become between the institution of the school and the home, and are sub-third-places because they have come to be in what would usually be constituted as not a third place as it is nested within what is representative of the work place for those engaged in education as opposed to work.

The learning which may take place in such spaces begins reflexively with the creation of its use, as in use not as it is intended to be used; thereafter a radical yet mundane range of education may take place (hidden) there amongst those frequenting it, from how to make a 'spliff' to the ground level micro-news of the school. Similarly, it has been noted that education is by no means bound by the physicality of a school / college (Illich cited in Love, 2012), but is staked across all spaces (Illich, 1971 in [www.nybooks.com](http://www.nybooks.com); Illich, 1971 cited in Love, 2012).

*'... And I grow angry, I struggle, I scream-I want out of this prison. But what prison? Where am I cloistered? I see nothing confining me. The prison is within myself, and it is I who am its captive.'* (Irigaray, 1981: 60)

*'Who are you? Who am I? Who answers for our presence in this translucency, before this blind obstacle? And if I leave, you no longer find yourself. Was I not the bail to keep you from disappearing? The stand-in for your absence? The guardian of your nonexistence?'* (Irigaray, 1981: 64)

*'And the one doesn't stir without the other. But we do not move together'* (Irigaray, 1981: 67)

These words taken from Luce Irigaray's *And the One Doesn't Stir without the Other*, although abstract and speaking of another context have great resonance for presence / absence stress of unplanned resistance in education. Whereas anarchistic approaches to education are consciously created as resistance to hierarchies and inequality, resistance in an unconsciously constructed manner also exists in parallel, as constraint within the agency of the self. With the self as a non-replica replication, perhaps with some idea of its constraint as a re-application, but somehow tied into a closed circuit; doors always already closed barring the route to knowledge of how to create new knowledge(s) of what might be and how it may not become.

Bright (2011) provides an example of this in his work in ex-coal mining communities. Bright describes the young people participating in his study as having 'resistant aspiration' (Bright, 2011: 63, 70, 75, Bright, 2012: 221, 225) that is retro-activated by genealogical resistances (Bright, 2011, 2012) that haunt the present in an un-known way (Bright, 2011; Bright, 2012; Pillay and Ragpot, 2010).

Interestingly this resistance is likened to anarchistic resistance in that it pushes against the tide of neo-liberalised aspirations of becoming (cf. Skeggs, 2004 cited in Bright, 2011) and is engaged in a combat against school, teachers and their associated commercial capitalist interests (Bright, 2012). A seemingly emancipatory move from a cerebrally constrained education system (Love, 2012), which would typically be depicted through a discourse of disorder (cf. Hart *et al.* cited in Thomas, 2004). Although attempting to unshackle from constraining educational dogma and indoctrination (Suissa, 2001; Shaffer, 2003; DeLeon, 2008; Luzon, 2016; Springer, 2016), are in their vary act self-constraining and indoctrinating (Thomas, 2004). Like Freire's project, it is possible to suggest resistant aspiration could only have fragmented success in disturbing, sabotaging (DeLeon, 2008, Love, 2012) and resisting (DeLeon, 2008; DeLeon, 2012) through direct action (DeLeon, 2008), if only temporarily, the status quo of an otherwise corralled educational system. Like with the *duppy* the haunting plays out actively and passively, living and dead, present yet absent, different yet the same, mystical yet actual, bound by place yet fluid in *itsplace* and flowing forward, backward (cf. Bright, 2011) and therefore static in time. This being a created and organic haunting simultaneously as it moves, unlike the common ghost, in a commercial,

structural, agentive and mystical manner absorbing and re-creating as anew and eternal return.

### **3.6 Ghetto[ised] Education**

*'The child needs a helping hand [...] In the ghetto ...'*

*In the Ghetto*, From *Elvis in Memphis*, Elvis Presley / Mac Davis, 1969

The haunting outlined by Bright clearly has a spatial aspect to it in that the eternal return of the same is specific to the place in focus; notwithstanding this haunting also has a psycho-social element as well. This duality of the spatial and the imagined / perceived / lived combined with the re-use of Luce Irigaray's words speaking of the prison-space of the self in relation to the Other is relevant to progressing this review into an exploration of the idea of ghettoization of education or ghetto education. It is acknowledged that there are no actual ghettos in the contemporary UK, however, when referring to a ghetto education or the ghettoization of education the reference herein is to a corralling, a segregation and control of education for *some*; with ghetto education pertaining to educations, educational practices and processes that may take place in a ghetto, be it spatial or psycho-social or organised / disorganised: with an appreciation of education taking place outside of the class room (Garcia Carrion, 2012).

Much has been said of the term ghetto, mostly in pejorative terms (Sung, 2013), or what and where ghettos may be and how they are formed / sustained (for instance Wacquant, 2011). Despite this propensity of commentary in the academic literature there is relatively little written on either



a *ghettoization of education* or *ghetto education*. Ideas of ghettoization spatially speaking are discussed earlier, however for the specific point in hand it is worth briefly drawing attention to some well-trodden explanations of what may constitute a ghetto.

In following Wacquant a ghetto can begin by the 'traditional domains' (Wacquant, 2011: 1) of a ghetto: these being a spatially bound urban locale (Wacquant, 2011; Sung, 2013), an institutional network of a distinct group (Wacquant, 2011; Sung, 2013) and a '... cognitive constellation [...] entailing the socio-moral isolation of a stigmatised category ...' (Wacquant, 2011: 1). Whilst the first of these three is undoubtedly the most worn discussion, with the second being a close runner up, the third has seen far less attention. Notwithstanding this weighting, for the spatial element of a ghetto there is little to challenge the axiom of the space under scrutiny being an 'urban' (Wacquant, 2011) space.

Paperson (2010) provides some inroads to disturbing the 'urban' core of what a ghetto is in suggesting that a ghetto is a '... dislocation from the metropole / metropolis.' (Paperson, 2010: 10, also see Sung, 2013) and that ghettoised space can occur in rural settings as well as urban (Paperson, 2010). Whereas Wacquant quite classically utilises the spatial as a physicalized (urban) space, Paperson (2010) allows for a more fluid appreciation of what a ghetto might be in blending the physicality with the psycho-social aspect (Leonardo and Hunter, 2007 cited in Paperson, 2010, also see Sung, 2013 on 'dislocated consciousness'). For example in suggesting a dislocation from the metropolis a ghetto becomes separated and disentangled from the location of the

metropolis, in that it is imagined (ibid), imagined to the point of a racialization aligned to blackness of non-black people (ibid) and imagined through the use of the colonial / post-colonial tool of (moral) cartography (Leonardo and Hunter, 2007 cited in Paperson, 2010) as opposed to a concretisation of the urban.

Likewise the dislocation is also that of the physical space in that those who are ghettoised in a space may be moved on to another newly or expanded ghettoised space in order to meet commercial and non-ghettoised people's needs (Paperson, 2010). Yet at the same time the imagined ghetto can be deferred to being elsewhere, beyond what may be ghettoised by the white / neo-colonial gaze, imagined by those under that very gaze as not being where they are (op cit). Or imagined as performativity, which may take at least two forms: the first being the farced ridiculous mocked performance of black otherness (cf. Leonardo and Hunter, 2007 quoted in Paperson, 2010), which follows the tragedy of the ghettoization of the people / place (to adapt and paraphrase Marx, 2008: 15 who in turn was adapting and paraphrasing Hagel); the second form being the acting 'ghetto' in the non-pejorative, but instead an *en vogue* version, which could perhaps be described as nouveau-marginal (cf. Paperson, 2010).

These ideas of displacement and performativity permit a clearer understanding of ghetto education and a ghettoization of education. For example one perspective, is demonstrable in Elvis Presley (1969) singing: -

*'Are we too blind to see, do we simply turn our heads, and look the other way [...] and his hunger burns, so he starts to*

*roam the streets at night, and he learns how to steal, and he learns how to fight [...]*

This can be read not merely as a 'hunger' for food, but as a hunger for learning / knowledge outside of a ghettoised space / imagining and what is sought out instead in its place is the macabre, interesting, overt violence of the street as a site of *an* education. There is also the imagined deficit self for those subjected to ghettoization of education. Herein the student may engage in a push / pull, choice / no-choice paradox, similar to the 'resistant aspiration' of the young people in the ex-mining communities discussed earlier (Bright, 2011: 63, 70, 75; Bright, 2012: 221, 225), of internalised trauma (Sung, 2013). Within this resistant aspiration is a combination of 'braining down' (Crouch, 1999: 103) and 'keeping it real' (Crouch, 1999: 104, 105) from within and without. From without is not just the obvious structural confines, or reflective *caste* systems imposed by teachers based on class / economic status / race (Rist, 1970), or other negative teacher attitudinal behaviours (Sung, 2013), but the psycho-social reverence for the 'braining down' and 'keeping it real' whereby those who revere such a mode of being and celebrate those who act down and real there is a confusion between misplaced heroism and anarchism (cf. Crouch, 1999: 105). A subservience to what is, because that is how it is, with an unconscious resistance and urge to seek something else; the what is missing of the duppy and Mirror.

### 3.7 Third place and Education

In order to explore the limited literature pertaining to education and third place / space and 'gangs', it is important to firstly define and disturb some of the key concepts relating to third place / space. Much has been written on the concept of 'third place' not least from the originator of the term Ray Oldenburg (1997). Derivatives of Oldenburg's idea of third place have included gerontology and eateries (Cheang, 2002; Rosenbaum, 2006), young people's occupancy of retail malls (Matthews *et al*, 2000), the street (*op cit*), libraries (Lawson, 2004) and neighbourhood infrastructure in deprived communities (Hickman, 2012). For Oldenburg (1997), the third place is always already constituted by the first and second place, these being home and work respectively.

Third place (Oldenburg, 1997) is useful as it enables distinct understandings of types of place, and therefore permits a focused exploration of social places. However, this concept is not without problems; for instance it could be viewed as paternalistic, hetero normative or dehumanising. Primarily this stems from Oldenburg's centring of *Home* as being of the highest importance '... the most important place of all. It is the first regular and predictable environment of the growing child ...' (Oldenburg, 1997: 16); likewise *Work* sits to the side of the Home: 'It [work] fosters competition and motivates people to rise above their fellow creatures. [...] improves the material quality of life, and structures endless hours of time for a majority who could not structure it on their own.' (ibid). Oldenburg's (1997) interpretation of the workplace is one of homogeneity, he seems to be of the opinion that work is primarily office based

and has working conditions conducive to socialising with colleagues at break times. In updated conceptualisations of place distinction there is also the fourth urban environment (Listerborn, 2017). Fourth urban environments seek to blend the second place (work) with the third place (social) with the intention of building and perpetuating creativity and innovation in urban space planning (op cit).

But what if the workplace that is not office based or conducive to social interaction, or does not have working conditions that have breaks at all such as non-declared or Othered work, such as selling sex or drug dealing? In such instances the opportunities or even inclination to seek out social interaction born in the work place may be minimal. Contra to Oldenburg's exclamation that the 'Problems typically encountered at work are not as onerous and depressing as family problems' (Oldenburg, 1997: 264); and that 'the best conversations of the day take place at work.' (ibid), for someone who sells sex such exclamations may appear absurd. A person selling sex may have become embroiled in such an economy as their means of *work* due to *family problems*, which in turn may create greater problems linked to how they work<sup>42</sup>. After some time, the problems of work[ing] and / from home may begin to blur, where the only problem becomes sustaining a drugs habit in which case the monetary value given to the *work* is indexed by the monetary value of the drug (cf. Wacquant, 2008: 126).

Place in Oldenburg's (1997) paradigm is a physical built environment of social experience of a centred and privileged view and discussed in axiomatic

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<sup>42</sup> Such as occupational hazards including violence, intimidation, sexually transmitted infections or long-term psychological and emotional ill health.

tropes. Although not explicitly, but certainly implicitly Oldenburg hinges his work on what appears to be the lived experience of middle-America. Nonetheless, despite this and the limited consideration of abstraction or multi-perspective lived experience of first, second or third places, Oldenburg (1997) does provide a solid foundation for considering places of social interaction.

Empirical work exists which demonstrates that people of a community may opt in or out (of a third place) at given intervals and times of day depending upon how they feel, if they have something on their mind or are more or less likely to be accepted or excluded in a given space-time (cf. Hickman, 2012). Sometimes people within a community may actively choose to occupy a third place, although not necessarily in order to overtly socialise with others but instead merely *be with* or around others outside of the home and work<sup>43</sup> whilst maintaining anonymity (Cheang, 2002); some preferring to dip in and out or have only superficial relationships with others using the given space (op cit). This *being with* reflects the conceptual kernel of informal / popular education outlined earlier. Although for Oldenburg such circumstances may be described as a 'deadly place' (Oldenburg, 1997: 169-170), where people are in company but are maintaining loneliness.

People may frequent third places for diverse and mixed reasons such as loose companionships (Rosenbaum, 2006; Cheang, 2002), safety (Cheang, 2002; Matthews *et al*, 2000), routine (Cheang, 2002), feelings of community (Cheang, 2002), proximity to others with a shared interest such as sport (Weed, 2008), a place of escapism and *play* or to *act out* alternative roles

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<sup>43</sup> Or other institutions such as educational establishments or training centres

(Rosenbaum, 2006; Anthony, 1985 cited in Matthews *et al*, 2000), freedom and place making (Mantey, 2017) and for some a space of home or belonging (Ahmet, 2013; Rosenbaum, 2006). A level of complexity beyond Oldenburg's (1997) representation of third place exists when considering the level of 'publicness' (Mantey, 2017) of a broad range of types of third places. With some third places being more public and others being more private in official and unofficial senses (Mantey, 2017).

*Place* can be given different meanings at different times (or the same time) for different people, groups, occupants (cf. Rosenbaum, 2006), observers, passers-by or others. These meanings are not innate and must, in some way, be learned by the various sets of people occupying them. This point relating to third place has been neglected, as to attend to it requires not only consideration of informal mundane educative processes, but also a de-privileging place, or inverting the space-place relationship inclusive of interplays between space and time; place and space; imagined space and *being(s)* imagined; *being* educated in space, place and time.

An example of this is the more challenging field of prison 'gangs', which has largely been neglected, predominantly due to access issues (Wood, 2006). This sub-field of third place / space, is generally omitted from the existing literature and has been described as the 'final frontier' in gang research (Fleisher and Decker, 2001: 2; also compare Brotherton and Barrios, 2004; Hallsworth and Brotherton, 2011). Theoretically much consideration could be given to how gangs utilise space within a prison. For example, the place (prison) constitutes home (albeit temporary for most), work / site of (formal) education, and place of socialisation / recreation. As such, the one place

contains and constitutes sub-spaces of which the sub-places interchange *in* time according to the relevant space use. An example may be a prisoner living in a given prison, who works as a Librarian in the prison library, but also uses the library as a third place in their recreation time; herein the place is no longer able to be considered just place, but shifts becoming an amorphic space located in *the* place as well as multiple spatial sites.

Another example of third space / place literature in challenging environments is that of Philippe Bourgois' ethnography of crack dealers in local shops and crack dens in Spanish Harlem (cf. Bourgois, 1989, 1999). Bourgois provides an example of how the *places* of work and socialising (or just being) collide and overlap as multi-spaces: such as is the case of the grocery store / illegal gambling den (Bourgois, 1989) (although Bourgois neither deals explicitly with 'gang' cultures or third places). Aside from Bourgois' insights into multi-spaces, there is also a limited exploration of '... how basketball courts, street corners and empty lots are sites where youths are harassed and face pressure to join gangs.' (Foley *et al*, 2013: 46). However, despite these, there appears to be sparse mention of third place / space specifically in relation to gangs and education.

### **3.7.1 Disrupting third place**

'Third Place' by the nature of the descriptor is a privileging of first place and second place. This has connotations of ownership and segregation or boundaries, yet space is a less colonised descriptor that can trouble the privileges of place. Existential use, and occupation, of a place could be interpreted as an unashamed being in the world, '... break[ing] down the walls



that say, “There should always be this separation between domestic space / intimate space and the world outside.” ...’ (hooks, 1994: 224). For hooks the disruption or erasure of spatial borders of being is a disruption or inversion of power; Kirsten Ross (2008) exemplifies this in describing the practice of barricading and piercing of houses in the Paris Commune. These practices were transformative to the houses and streets separated by walls as a pragmatic reconfiguration of space utilised by the insurgents which, permitted free-flow and new barriers through an inversion of the outside to the in.

Disruption is not the only manifestation of imagined space, other variants may include sentimentality or loyalty / belonging (Rosenbaum, 2006), utopias (More, 2009), virtual on-line space (cf. Ducheneaut *et al*, 2004; Soukup, 2006; Steinkuehler and Williams, 2006; Islam, 2010; Sela-Shayovitz, 2012; Sela-Shayovitz *et al*, 2016), popular cultural space (hooks, 1994; Clarke and Doel, 2005; Hallam, 2010), haunted space (Edensor, 2008) spaces of innovation and creativity (Ferrell, 1996; Borden, 2010; Edensor *et al*, 2012 in Jorgensen and Keenan, 2012), projected tele-visualised space (Baudrillard, 2009; Clarke and Doel, 2005; Hallam, 2010; Virilio, 1989, 2000) and spaces of being, becoming and ‘*being-toward*’ the world as existent space (Nancy, 1997: 7).

Rosenbaum (2006) indicates that for some a given third place becomes multi-imagined (Rosenbaum, 2006), but not as place as places are named, owned and therefore pre-legitimised. Instead they are imagined as spaces of belonging and loyalty in a place (op cit). As noted earlier, superficial relationships and companionship have been highlighted as of importance to some using third places (cf. Cheang, 2002; Rosenbaum, 2006). Such

relationships have also been highlighted as relevant in on-line third places (Stienkuehler and Williams, 2006; Parks and Roberts, 1998 cited in Soukup, 2006; Ducheneaut *et al*, 2004), as well as formations of communities (cf. Lawson, 2004).

On-line gaming interaction is considered as offering a third place (cf. Ducheneaut *et al*, 2004), yet this is a contested idea (cf. Soukup, 2006). In considering the Internet as a third place, it should be noted that interactions are not always of a light-hearted and superficial nature. For example, gangs usage of on-line interaction for purposes of demonstrating prowess (Sela-Shayovitz, 2012) or 'internet banging' (Patton *et al*, 2013) as some have termed it, cybercrime (*op cit*), networking / recruiting (Moule *et al*, 2014) or virtual battles with other criminal groups (*op cit*) and tracking outcomes of real-world altercations (*op cit*). Or the desecration of (virtual) places of worship and other *acts* of violence by neo-Nazi 'gangs' in *Second Life* through virtual avatars (cf. Islam, 2010). It has been noted that the higher level of organisation within a particular gang, the more likely they are to have a concerted Internet presence in the form of websites or video uploads (Moule *et al*, 2014); yet the type of online activity of 'gangs' differs between countries (cf. Sela-Shayovitz *et al*, 2016).

Like Borges's imagining of a small piece of space being occupied by all of space-time in the form of the Aleph (Borges, 1971 cited in Soja, 1998), the internet encapsulates a significant range of representations of spatial and temporal events, yet without being in any particular place other than that of the computer / server / mobile device. This is useful as an analogy for the

imagined aspects of place(s) be-coming multi-spaces. This imagining of place into spaces (with the places occupying spaces *a priori* and place appearing in a space *a posteriori* to the place becoming placed) can be categorised into individual (Lefebvre, 1998; Shields, 1992), cultural and societal imaginings of space (Shields, 1992). For Lefebvre imagining of space incorporates mirroring effects in relation to the body<sup>44</sup> (Lefebvre, 1998). To open this line of thought further attention could be brought to previous usage of the term Thirdspace by Edward Soja (Soja, 1998). For Soja Thirdspace is the milieu beyond dogmatic understandings of social and historic dual-faceted spatiality (Soja, 1998), yet simultaneously ‘... builds on a Firstspace perspective that is focused on the “real” material world and a Secondspace perspective that interprets this reality through “imagined” representations of spatiality.’ (Soja, 1998: 6).

### **3.7.2 Third Space**

Essential to Soja’s conceptualisation of Thirdspace is the idea of Thirthing (Soja, 1998: 60-61); Thirthing being an expansion on Lefebvre’s approach to working with ‘an-Other’ in conjunction with dialectics and binaries as a means of disruption of the dialectic (Soja, 1998: 60 and Lefebvre, 1981 cited in Shields, 1992: 52). Soja builds on Lefebvre here with Thirthing in that Thirthing is both already part of, and produced out of the dialectic via penetrative and deconstructive disturbance, which gives rise to a Third composite (op cit: 61). Given Thirthing as a foundation to Soja’s Thirdspace, Thirdspace could be interpreted as the space as imagined as well as the dialectical social and historicised space as a tripartite sum. Conceptually, Thirdspace is useful in

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<sup>44</sup> Lefebvre does not use the terminology of the ‘subject’ here, instead adopting the term ‘body’ or ‘bodies’.

pursuit of the present research, however it falls short in two ways: the first of which being that it does not necessarily deal with privileging of place over space, secondly it does not directly speak to, and of, what have traditionally been termed 'third places'.

Homi Bhabha (2006) takes a similar stance in the use of the term Third Space in relation to culture and cultural authenticity / hierarchy via the notion of 'hybridity' (op cit). Bhabha utilises Third Space not as the literal spatial but as phenomenological / metaphysical space of the *interstitial* polarities of politics / history and culture as a space *in* the split (Bhabha, 2006: 56). Notwithstanding, Bhabha (2006) utilises the term Third Space as a productive yet ambivalent space of utterance (of the cultural) (Bhabha, 2006), which is constituted in a weighted hybrid / original split (Bhabha, 1990 quoted in Law, 1997: 110). Although this revision of the term Third Space does hold some relevance to the research in hand, it does not relate to the spatial. A combined interpretation inclusive of that mentioned above (i.e. Soja's Thirdspace, traditional interpretations of third place and Bhabha's Third Place) may be useful for the present research.

For the present research similar gaps exist in related literature. Gaps include: the above-mentioned distinction between individual and socio-cultural imaginings with an emphasis on 'collective myth' (Shields, 1992: 29). For Shields the communal myths of space are ingrained by repeated human occupation of space, which transmogrifies into 'human[ised] space' eventually solidifying into place (Shields, 1992: 52-53). This being a process that is constituted by privileging languages which already corral understandings and

enactment of space (op cit). Although Shields (1992) acknowledges a multi-faceted hegemony of space (op cit) and associated marginality, which has been contested elsewhere in relation to spatial routines, poverty and place (cf. Robinson, 2011), he also begins to prise open the idea that marginal occupations of space can both expose the ideology of the centre[d] and that the margins are part of the same object as the centre (op cit). This resonating with Soja's (1998) Thirthing, yet still leaving a gap in the possibility of exploring how marginal occupation of space may breed counter and reflective hegemonic processes, for the research in hand an example could be guerrilla or street education; this being a gap common to 'poverty literature' and '(im)mobility' (Robinson, 2011: 139).

Likewise, Shields (1992) does not tackle examples of *margins of marginality*, in which class marginality is intersected by gender (cf. Massey, 1998), age (cf. Matthews *et al*, 2000), alternative activity groups such as skateboarders who have been described as '... 'urban guerrillas' or anarchists.' (Borden, 2010: 177; also cf. Howell, 2008: 476, 491), 'cleanliness' and 'respectability' / civility (cf. Watt, 786-787, 794; hooks, 1994: 199) or race (Spivak, 1993) and race / misogyny / sexism (hooks, 1994) marginality manifested in (third) spaces.

Spivak presents a version of marginality of the margins: Spivak would suggest that certain people (and therefore certain importance's of places) are accepted as central via the imposition of marginality of others, and that only in the process of making and maintaining the marginal other, can the intended product of the making and maintenance of the central take place (Spivak, 1990 cited in Soja, 1998: 134 – 135). For Spivak this marginality of other is

that which is beyond the realms of '... dialectical 'integration' ...', (Badiou, 2002: xxix); Spivak invokes her interpretation of the *subaltern*, as a being that is so deeply beyond recognised existence that at the very crisis point they may begin to transpire their *being* is undermined in transition. Thus the subaltern is always already silenced in a vacuum of *lived* space (Spivak, 1993 in Landry and MacLean, 1996).

Out-of-place-ness and dissensus (cf. Ranciere, 2007; also see Sibley, 1995) could be drawn upon in relation to the generation of vacuums of *lived* space, although perhaps of particular relevance are two examples. The first example being: young people occupying the third places of shopping malls (Matthews *et al*, 2000b). In the case of the mall although young people are in dissensus with the economically valid adults also occupying the space the young people are in effect Thirthing several dialectics, including: old-young, economically valid-economically invalid, invited-*uninvited*. The Thirthing taking place via maintaining occupancy despite marginality and in turn producing a challenge to hegemony of space (op cit: 292); this also shows some support for the question of can spaces of consumption simultaneously be spaces of resistance to consumption (Radner, 1999). In this unconscious anti-hegemonic occupancy the intended (third) place gives way to both a Thirdspace (as Soja presents) comprising of the (culturally) real and (culturally) imagined (cf. Bhabha, 2006), and a third space (as encompassing Third Space, Thirdspace and third place).

The second example being: the paradigm of perceiving *lived* third spaces as merely lived in in the present and through accepted or *naive* historicised

tropes, as opposed to being *lived* in in the present and past and pre-represented in the present (cf. Pile, 2008 on spectres of terror and fear and Massey, 1998 on the metaphysical cultural spatiality). The pre-represented, past and present elements of hauntings of space are reflective of the present deconstructive approach to reviewing literature on third places, but reflective only as an integrated triad combined with the above mentioned challenge to the already existing third place, Third Space and Thirdspace (equating to third space), in which third space takes an alternative view.

As noted earlier, education can and does occur in places and spaces beyond schools or educational institutions, yet there is an extremely limited literature on third place and its relevance to education or how education may play out in third places. This issue was also noted in an earlier section of this review in that little is written about gangs' use of third places or education within 'gangs', it seems least of all about the three key components of the research in hand; – third spaces; – 'gang' cultures; and education. Although there is a limited literature for third space and education, the focus is on conceptual third space and concentrating on teacher training and practice (for instance Klein *et al*, 2013), with other texts not directly dealing with third space but instead space use and perception with a focus on social exclusion taking a stance based upon Lefebvre's work (Thompson, Russell and Simmons, 2013; Smyth and McInerney, 2013).

However, of most interest to the research in hand is the work of Klein *et al*. (2013), this is due to their acknowledgement of third space not merely being

that of a physical space but instead perceptual as its starting point which may then in turn affect and effect the wider educational establishment and the community (Klein *et al*, 2013). Interestingly Klein *et al*. see third space in education as a utopian project (Halpin, 2003 cited in Klein *et al*, 2013). This is interesting on two levels, one being the question of utopian meaning a better place or utopian as perceived as something to aim for, the second point being are they abstractedly referring to the true meaning of the word utopia – nowhere? As Klein *et al*'s project is a conceptual based one and founded in the thinking and doing space between teacher training and teacher practice (op cit) the third space to which they are referring is actually physically *nowhere*. Although they do not allude to this at any point and seem to veer toward a simplistic interpretation of *better place*, I sense that there could well be mileage in exploring this link between conceptual-utopia-nowhere-third space.

Similarly Thompson *et al*. (2013), although not directly dealing with third space, inadvertently and interestingly point out one physical location can be all in one first, second and third place / space (Thompson *et al*, 2013), which shifts in its conceptual being as a space along a lived and temporal scale (op cit). Thompson *et al*. (2013) provide some discussion on how the occupants of such spaces learn to be within them and how, why and where they may be bound and bordered. Although this has not been given immense inspection, nor directly applied to third space or gang cultures. Thompson *et al*. speak of such conceptualisation and use of space as a constant friction and negation between intended use / illicit use and exclusion / agency, and as a constructive process (Thompson *et al*, 2013).



The largest component of literature on what may be described as a third space education focuses on outdoor education. However this literature focuses on professional training of those teaching or leading outdoor education (cf. Langmuir, 2001; Grant, 1997; Hill and Johnston, 2002; Long, 2004; Peter, 2004; Thomas, 2010), or does not take its gaze away from outdoor education from the *traditional* outdoor pursuits such as climbing, paddle sports, caving (cf. Ogilvie, 2013). The existing literature on outdoor education gives no attention: -

‘... to spontaneous adventure activity [...] informal coaching and mentoring in skate parks or dirt jump trails, apprenticeships in locating *street spots* and technical coaching for Parkour practitioners, street BMX’ers and graffiti artists. Not to mention street debates and learning through experience for groups [...] inhabiting urban spaces. Perhaps this omission is symptomatic of the elite or cure paradigms that outdoor education and learning discourse exists in ...’ (McHugh, 2013a)

Or again, zero attention to in-situ education and learning that may take place amongst those involved in gang cultures in third places / spaces.

### **3.8 Summary**

In summary education is a much discussed area in academia and has in modern times been the focus of government, primarily and continuously as a means of fixing a deficit in people and creating national thought and behaviours. Education is to a great extent today and in the past a classed, racialised (Rist, 1970) and gendered (Holloway, Valentine and Bingham, 2000) issue and constrains thought and knowledge accordingly; presenting unknown multi-dimensional hauntings, which are there but not, within and

without, commercial and mystical, but mostly veiling what might be. As there are spaces between what is in education, there are spaces between places of education and sub-created within these places as new interstitial spaces. One follows the other; the former has not yet been given a great deal of attention and the latter has been given no attention, yet combined and in relation to gang cultures the academic focus has been non-existent. Likewise, this is the case for conceptual third space in relation to gang cultures and education, as is the case for a combined understanding of the physical, emotional and conceptual aspects of third space and education within gang cultures. As such herein lies a vast untapped well of new knowledge to be explored, but not just explored, explored as a form of intellectual sabotage disturbing approved texts, questions, answers and lenses.

# **Chapter 4**

## **Analytical Framework**

## 4.1 Introduction

This research has a number of theoretical bases, which have aided a richer understanding of the data. These theoretical bases stem from the fields of sociology, social theory and philosophy. From sociology the foundational idea of Oldenburg (1997) and his concept of third place are important, from social theory, Gordon's (1997) interpretation of social haunting, and from philosophy Zizek's (2009) concept of parallax.

Oldenburg's (1997) concept of third place is important in aiding an understanding of the role of social spaces in the educative processes of becoming involved in 'gangs'. Specifically, in drawing attention to a distinction between first, second and third places, it is possible to frame the types of social space pertinent to and frequented by 'gangs'. Subsequently, this permits a sound foundation from which to explore more nuanced understandings of such social spaces through the lenses of social theory and philosophical concepts.

Analytically, for Zizek, the relevance and appropriateness lies in Zizek's interlude style methodology, (inter) playing with and flowing across disciplinary boundaries inclusive of popular culture, psychoanalysis and political theory, which arguably lends itself to ideas of 'inter-textuality' (cf. Kristeva, 1986: 37) and one 'text' being the '... absorption and transformation of another.' (ibid). Due to the multimodal nature of the research in hand with

Zizek's methodology, when considered within Kristeva's idea of inter-textuality will be of value in the analytical process.

Of interest and relevance is Zizek's (1998, 2009, 2010) application of Lacanian psychoanalysis to social and political phenomena through popular culture, in that from the literature review I have found a reflective and reflexive Mirror relationship between gang cultures and education. Likewise it appears that there may be a reverberation of the Lacanian Mirror Stage in the perception of third (s)places through the seeing but not seeing what the Other sees and attempting to reconcile that which is speculated and in between (Lacan, 1994). Not to mention how striving to learn / gain vital knowledge integral to being involved in 'gangs' could relate to the notion of *Jouissance* or the excess or surplus of enjoyment, the object of desire (cf. Lacan, 1994; Zizek, 2006) and associated psychoanalytically read concerns such as the Master / Slave dialectic (cf. Hegel, 1977). However, most specifically, it is Zizek's (2009) concept of parallax that is of most relevance. Parallax, simply, is the perspective or space between two alternative perspectives – the thing that is neither one view nor the other, but both.

Additionally, in relation to third places I have begun to adapt Avery Gordon's (2008) idea of hauntings, but instead of the ghost I apply the Jamaican equivalent, the duppy. The duppy is not merely a human form of the past but can be many things and may manifest in the living, and also has a commercial aspect in that a 'obeah man' can be paid to set a duppy upon or take one off a person (cf. Struselis, 2001 and Thornton, 1904). So as with gangs there are many hauntings: the duppy of capitalism, the duppy of morality, the duppy of

media and popular culture to name a few; all holding the potential of haunting and therefore altering each other in a similar manner to inter-textuality. Yet also as Tim Edensor (2005, 2008) has noted such hauntings may appear in public space as well.

Baudrillard's notion of the eternal return (2011) and hyper-reality (2008, 2009) also to a lesser extent come into play, in that 'gangs' are not new, they return as the same, but the same as, for example, education, morality, politics, war / armed struggle. And the same as overlaying spirals frequently temporally touching back on what has already been; this taking an oppositional stance to media hyperbole of 'gang' as a 'new' issue. Yet are perceived as such, not by Platonic shroud (Plato, 2007) but instead by the amplification and high definition of a *reality* (Baudrillard, 2008, 2009).

## **4.2 Developing an Analytical Framework**

Throughout both the literature review stage and the fieldwork, several conceptual challenges presented themselves. These challenges re-emerged over and over, winding back, overlapping themselves and presented themselves in varied forms. This section will, in the first instance, present these conceptual challenges before detailing the analytical framework that was conceived from the challenges.

## 4.2.2 Conceptual Challenges

### Challenge 1: Third Place and Space

As noted earlier Oldenburg's (1997) concept of third place provides an excellent foundation to framing the data herein. However, there were a number of challenges associated with its use, particularly when applying to the lived experiences of 'gangs'. For example: a group of young men who live in a disadvantaged community and due to lack of academic attainment and other structural factors cannot gain legitimate employment. The group spend lots of time sitting around one of their member's flats playing on a games console, chatting, smoking cannabis and possibly drinking. One or two of the group decide to start selling some of the cannabis that they smoke in order to generate some income in the absence of having a legitimate job. Orders from customers come direct to their mobile phones often whilst they are sat in the flat playing on the games console and generally socialising within the flat. The small enterprise develops its customer base and all of the group of friends become involved in it. They also continue to pass their social time playing games console, listening to music and chatting, whilst all the time they are taking orders for the cannabis that they are selling (and potentially storing it in the flat).

In this example Oldenburg's idea of Third Places being distinct from the first and second is problematised. The flat is a home (to the member of the group who lives there, if not also a *home from home* for the other members of the

group), as well as the group's primary social space (as they do not initially have the means to spend money hanging around coffee shops, bars or similar), additionally the flat develops as the group's place of work (it is the centre or head office of their enterprise). The same problem with Oldenburg's concept of third place emerges elsewhere, such as the space of the street and that of the prison. However, third place as a concept is extremely useful when considered with such shifts in meaning of place and how places such as a prison can, as an encompassing space, constitute first, second and third place in one.

In the case of examples such as those outlined above, it is not only the space itself that is fluid and unanchored in meaning, but also the individuals and groups that occupy given spaces. This presents a sub-conceptual challenge of space; an example here being that of an individual who is known to be part of a group that is described as a 'gang' who is known to engage in extreme violence and a range of crimes. Such people will behave in quite extreme ways in one set of spaces, for example engaging in violence against enemies or being abusive or intimidating to someone who sounds their horn at them at traffic lights. Yet in other spaces the same person will present as very humble, polite and respectful. Whilst this is still the same person in both spaces they are different within both spaces meaning like the space itself the person too is without an anchor and fluid. Simultaneously, this demonstrates a strong sense of self-restraint as the individuals adjust their behaviour according to the social setting and space (Powell, 2010).



As has been identified in the preceding chapters, in understanding third places as not simply distinct and neither wholly part of what Oldenburg would describe as the first and second places, it is important draw on concepts which will operate in tandem with third place. As third places are an integral aspect of an ever-flowing set of perceptual spaces that are only constituted insofar as they are experienced and perceived. This challenge in the existing literature of third place has necessitated turning to other disciplines including philosophy in order to thoroughly engage with a rethinking of third place. At first glance this may appear to lend itself to utilising an idealist lens, in that idealism allows for an exploration of the lived experience of 'gangs' and spaces they occupy from the perspective that any space only ever *is* insofar as it is constituted by the mind. However, as indicated in the first of the two examples above, there is also the issue of exploring the means of production and the means of assembly for 'gangs'. Here materialism is of use.

This leads to the second challenge of fluidity and unmoored being across spaces as outlined above. Here the analytical frame remains, in particular in considering that an idealist lens communicates directly with the notion that there is not a solid foundation of the *real* person as the manifestation of the person flows and shifts dependent upon the space. Although such spaces of being initially appear to lend themselves to a straightforward idealist conceptual framework, there is the additional problematic that these spaces of being appear to have an element of consistency indicating the possibility of some unknown non-perceivable reality. Whilst a conventional realist approach would not speak coherently with the experiences and challenges presented, it

is clearly necessary to engage in some way with areas of thinking that attempt to reconcile idealism and realism and materialism. As in drawing across all three allows for a pragmatic acknowledgement to this challenge.

## **Challenge 2: Groups described as ‘gangs’**

Almost all of the existing literature examines ‘gangs’ through a criminological perspective with few offshoots, but generally the field of study is confined to some quite dogmatic approaches to what and how such groups may be. Ultimately the literature splits between ‘OCGs’ and ‘street gangs’, with the latter typically being young people from poor communities. The dominant discourse of the ‘gang’ across academia has a general tendency to be fatalistic and underpinned by realist philosophy in that all groups described as ‘gangs’ *are* gangs and are factually described as a thing in its self, as opposed to being described as groups that are perceived as being through the foundational sensibilities of space and time.

The word ‘gang’, is frequently placed upon people and associated with certain places, but just as equally may be rejected by those same people and places. With those occupying the *space of being* within such groups simultaneously presenting and engendering aspects of the ‘gang’ stereotype, but more often aspects of conventional mainstream groups and organisations, as well as other forms of ‘outsider identity groups’. For instance groups commonly described as ‘gangs’ are frequently depicted as being hyper-masculine and in search of forms of masculinisation that they have been divorced from through

de-industrialisation and outsourced production (cf. Winlow, 2001). Yet the fieldwork within this research has also presented such notions, though not exclusively, with at times the seemingly alien realm of homoeroticism juxtaposed to hyper-masculinity. Or at other junctures, allusions of love, care, compassion and leadership are contrasted with the more familiar themes of violence.

Theoretically, this in some ways, leans away from some of the more well-worn theoretical stances from the sociological field. For instance, generally the data collected indicates both substantial leanings toward existential and structural factors being at play within the lived experiences of the participants. However, for example, Bourdieu's theoretical thrust has been described as not fully regarding individual agency, in favour of internalised class structures, which are '... internalized in individuals and determine[s] cultural choices that reproduce that class structure.' (Gartman, 1991: 422).

Although having dynamism and accounting for collective ways of being through habitus and field, Bourdieu never queried why the majority of people living in poor neighbourhoods do not fully become involved in 'gangs'. It is only a very small minority who do become involved in 'gangs', which some describe as being attributed to 'relational boundaries' (Harding, 2012: 196). As such, whilst habitus does have potential and relates to previous understandings of 'gangs', it does not apply in a more focused and nuanced way which speaks more closely to a minority who choose to attempt to move beyond class positions by any means. Particularly in the sense of the *being* of

people being multiplied in the lived experience and the process of be-coming that is more than one in one person, group and place (cf. Ranciere, 2006); constituting a kind of precariousness of *being*.

Wacquant provides for a solid understanding of precarity; Wacquant's interpretation speaks of constituents of 'the (sub)proletariat consigned to a life of marginal jobs and hustling by the normalization of precarious wage labor' (Wacquant, 2009: 273). However, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters, many participants would either perceive themselves as not being constrained by such positionality and / or perceive themselves and are perceived within their communities as being leaders and being powerful (cf. Wacquant in Loyal and Quilley, 2004). The Wacquant - Bourdieu paradigm being one of structurally constrained positions, yet for the present research whilst such positions are actively in play, they are also transcended and played out of, often reflecting in a distorted manifestation of sections of the *secure classes* (for example in representations of leadership and power).

Notwithstanding disjoints between key aspects of these two sociological powerhouses and the data presented, there is strong alignment with Wacquant in the form of the 'Janus faced' analogy. Here the concept of Janus that Wacquant applies of the *instruments and institutions of ethnoracial closure and control* (Wacquant, 2011) can be utilised within the notion of third place (as well as Zizek's concept of parallax) applied within the present research, albeit in an alternative manner. To elaborate, Janus as the Roman god of transition, beginnings and endings, past and present and often invoked

spatially between one place and another, facing one way and the other simultaneously, is applicable to the idea of third place (and space) as an interstitial and conduit thing that is neither one nor the other and both at the same time. This obviously differs from Wacquant's use of the Janus face analogy, most notably in that Wacquant uses this as a view from outside that imposes something, whereas within this present research it is adapted and utilised as a state of being that is exercised from within.

This application of the Janus analogy being in line with the postmodern commentary of legal pluralism, in which (localised) social norms are subliminally integral to the legal state (Teubner, 1991). By way of example of a Janus faced heterarchy reflective of the language of state legal binary (Teubner, 1991), and in direct relation to the research in hand, Teubner (1991) describes the local laws of Mafia groups offering protection for a taxable fee for businesses and others within communities as excluded in their illegal action, yet are simultaneously included as part of the social field in reflecting the 'binary code of [state] legal communication.' (Teubner, 1991: 1451).

This reflecting of 'binary code' is straight forwardly transferable to both the positions that many of the participants presented as occupying in *being*, as well as to the third spaces under scrutiny. The former having been briefly illuminated above in Teubner's (1991) example. The latter being explicable through the concept highlighted by research participant P1 who described the gymnasium that was the gateway to his involvement in what is commonly

described as gang culture as like “walking into the wardrobe and coming out in Narnia”. Yet, he also explained that this was not the case for all who entered the gymnasium, meaning that it held a different spatial reality for different people; the third place in this case being Janus faced and presenting different faces to different occupants. Although it is important to acknowledge that without question the gymnasium is *real* in its physicality, therefore in relation to its place in space and time. Here the Kantian framing of the Janus face becomes less abstract and points in the direction of such third places having a phenomenal aspect dependant upon the experiential and motivational position of the perceiver.

Also, Wacquant’s Janus faced concept and Zizek’s understanding of parallax can be considered alongside de Certeau’s (1988) notion of the *strategies* of the controlling organisations and the *tactics of the weak* of the individual players who are the target of *strategy*. In particular de Certeau offers a framework through which to view how oppressive structures (strategy) (such as poverty, class and race) and the existential manoeuvres of those living within them to transcend and create alternative ways of being through tactics of groups that are typically described as ‘gangs’. Also, in reverse, or reflectively the groups commonly described as gangs multiply oppressive strategy in their actions and at the same time diffusing macro strategy; hermeneutically winding back to its own and other Janus face, parallaxed within and without.

### **Conceptual Challenge 3: Education within groups described as ‘gangs’**

Following on from the fatalistic underpinnings of the ‘gang’ literature, the same general understanding runs through with regard to how people may gain the necessary knowledge to become involved and participate within such groups. Almost exclusively the literature conceives of a reality in which people are socialised into such groups purely through structural drivers such as poverty, fear of violence (from the ‘gangs’) and lost opportunity for developing an identity based on normative and or commercial axioms. This thrust does not permit for neither any element of agency or free will for those involved in the groups, nor a nuanced grasp of the possibility of people being actively and passively educated in informal and hidden ways. Dynamically the latter involves peer and group socialisation, as well as that of place, space and institutions, moving in and out and back again. For the former, the issue being that not all people living in poor communities or who have been somehow deprived of conventionalised means to form an income or identity based on axiomatic normative and commercial values become involved in ‘gangs’. This indicates the absent presence of free will within the process of *becoming* and being educated into such groups.

The structurally informed realist perspective undoubtedly must be revisited as part of the analytic process, yet at the same time so must an idealist lens in

order to begin to fully understand the existential aspects of the educational processes involved in becoming involved in 'gangs'.

### **4.3 Responding to Conceptual Challenges**

#### **4.3.1 Space**

The theoretical framework for this spatial aspect of the research must engage with ideas that are able to operate in a meaningful way with the idealist leaning of the phenomenon presented (hereafter). It must be able to accommodate for the structural forces presented. As noted earlier, the existing definitions of third place and third space are extremely useful when utilised in tandem; although alone are not fully able to engage across the concrete rigidity of built place and imaginings and (re)interpretation of them. Simultaneously, the analytical framework applied requires the ability to correspond with a notion of the possibility of third places as being constituted from perception of those occupying the space (and of those observing or imagining them from outside). In this sense the analytical framework must be able to approach third places as real in both a concrete and an unfathomable or spectral sense. For this reason a turn to philosophy is important, in as much as philosophy has a longstanding and substantive role in exploring transcendences between conceptions of the concrete real and perceived real.

Although Kant provides inroads via his ideas of the phenomenal world, or the world as we perceive it, which is not a concrete world but that constituted by



mind. The phenomenal world, for Kant, running parallel with the noumenal world, that is the world that is beyond perception that cannot be fully perceived and somehow has an aspect of consistency behind the perceived. However, as has been remarked there are many flaws with Kant's form of reconciliatory idealism, not least that for Kant (1943) although the phenomenal world is constituted in the consciousness of the individual, each individual constitutes the same reality via consciousness. This is problematic in that not all people perceive the same thing at the same time in the same space (nor in the same way). Yet by Kant's own ideas there is an acknowledgment that all things are already real and somehow material through the foundation of space and time being the backdrop for all cognition of things, with space being '... the form of all phenomena of the external sense ... the subjective condition of the sensibility, under which alone all external intuition is possible.' (Kant, 1943: 26).

This admission of the '*empirical reality*' (op cit: 27) of space combined with its '*transcendental ideality*' (op cit: 27) is important in an analysis of the lived experience of third spaces of the participants who engaged in the research. Although, with this said a strong materialism of space, that is that of the commercial and physical territorial aspects of space presented within the data, wind back into aspects of realism. Here the case of an underlying reflection of mainstream commerce and organisations implies the reality of capitalism in its self; with this the reinterpretation of the Janus face comes into play in all its plurality in that the commercial territorial activities of the groups and individuals are both part of the spatial reality and external phenomenal

world experiences of capitalism in itself. In short two of the many faces of the same thing.

It is at this point, with attention fixed simultaneously on both the materialistic aspect and the recurring theme of reflection, that Slavoj Zizek's combination of Marxist, Hegelian and Lacanian critical commentary comes into play. Zizek's work provides an illuminating lens through which to consider the problematic of a real and therefore material basis of space as presented in the data via Marx. Additionally Zizek allows for a meaningful and accessible starting point to explore ideas of reflection through Lacan's concept of the Mirror Stage in which the infant recognises itself in its own reflection, with the reflection and recognition seemingly continuous, yet always already not fully perceiving the reflection of the self (Lacan, 1994; Zizek, 2006). Again, the synergy between Zizek's parallax view point and the reinterpretation of a Janus faced view as an analytical tool becomes apparent; the thing that is reflected back is the same as the thing itself, yet perceived differently from what the thing in itself is.

The Lacanian interpretation of reflection provides a substantial means through which to begin to understand the apparent reflection between unconventional or outlawed groups, spaces and forms of education and the mainstream conventional versions of these. Specifically the disjoint between what is perceived in the reflective mechanism and what may be within the reflection, for example a mainstream organisation such as the army would not look at a group that is described as a 'gang' and perceive the ways of being of an

organised military force with those of the group described as a 'gang'. None the less, despite the disjoint in reflection and recognition the data presents substantial instances of a reflective mechanism between the mainstream and the outlawed, which demands the Lacanian insight as an analytical tool.

However, Zizek's Hegelian – Lacanian theorisation of parallax and mirroring cannot operate alone in forming a theoretical framework that is relevant to the data presented. Although Oldenburg's (1997) idea of third place has some downfalls, it does allow for distinction between *work – home – social*; as such it enables a solid foundation from which to establish a more nuanced reading of third place. The concept of parallax aids this as it allows for an understanding of the possibility of spatial interstice across Oldenburg's (1997) three places. However, along with this, there has to be the means to be able to grasp not only the spatial but also the social and historic factors of the places involved in the educative processes of 'gangs'. For this Soja's (1996) Third Space is important, as is a drawing on his reading of Borges' Aleph, which imagines a space that is all things in one place – an idea vital to understanding the fluid experiences of space within the data.

#### **4.3.2 Education and 'gangs'**

This latter point leads into the third and fourth components of the theoretical framework for this research. The third relates to the underlying themes of misrecognition in reflection and the shifting cognition of space and the ontology of the participants as is presented in the data, which alludes to a

sense of *being there, but not* or an absent presence; in particular the absent presence of the educative practices, mechanisms and experiences of the participants. As has been outlined within earlier thematic chapters, education is not typically discussed in academic terms in relation to 'gangs'. The existing literature instead concentrates on the trinity of school (and further / higher education), informal education (youth and community work; adult and community education) or training (vocational or continuous professional development). As such, much of the education literature cannot alone provide an adequate theoretical framework for the data presented herein. Based on the data collected within this research a significant leaning toward a concept of education taking place within the groups through stories; a subtle form of socio-educative process, which takes place unnoticed over time. The educative act as such presenting as being there but not (noticed) and stemming out from another time and unknown or unseen previous actions, yet always against the backdrop of the structural constraints of the lived experience.

This sense of education taking place within groups described as gangs through stories and as an absent presence lends itself to Avery Gordon's (1997) work on social hauntings and other conceptualisations of the sociological spectres or socio-historic geist. The term Geist fitting well with the data in that from German into English the translation can mean spirit, ghost or mind (cf. Hegel, 2005). However, as per the use of the term by Hegel, especially the extended term of *volkgeist* (collective spirit or spirit of the people), which, through the medium of language and shared practices of work

a collective spirit is engendered through shared experience, practices and traditions (Habermas, 1999: 140 discussing Hegel). Although Hegel utilises the idea of a collective spirit in a different, yet similar way, there is a resonance and points of confluence between the Hegelian *volkgeist*, Gordon's social haunting and Elias' civilising process (1978).

Elias comes into play, despite his abandonment of philosophy, as his ideas of groups or figurations of people being moulded through on-going civilising processes taking place over time as transference of knowledge reverberate the idea that a collective spirit materialises. Not least in considering Elias' statement that there is no such thing as a group (or society) without knowledge (Elias, 1987) and that to try to imagine such a group is challenging in that knowledge is transferred across generations as an important aspect of survival (ibid). For Elias the importance of knowledge (and therefore its transference) 'is as elementary as the need for food.' (ibid). Elias, rather than being bound to the present, explores the different sameness of the past and how it plays out for the here and now. He explains how, for instance, courtly behaviours of the aristocracy seep and absorb into the middle classes, becoming 'civilised' behaviour that bounds acceptable social benchmarks for *being* within society (cf. Elias, 1978). Within the present research, Elias' work enables a perspective through which, and in conjunction with Gordon, to explore the haunting and sociogenic reflections across time and space.

Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) interpretation of pedagogic acts being forms of symbolic violence has some relevance to this research in that they explain

how the dominant class impose arbitrary ideals on the people that form (mainstream) educative processes. However, for 'gangs', the educative process is beyond mainstream education, for them it is something which takes place beyond normative educational institutions. As such these normative processes merely form some of the structural conditions that catalyse the processes experienced in 'gangs'. Interestingly, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters, the educative processes are in some ways agentive responses against such arbitrary symbolic violence; they reel against the zemiological force of the dominant 'civilised' class. Paradoxically, in doing so these responses serve to reflect, repeat and mirror the dominant classes, thus exposing a reflection of the dominant classes. This is a haunting, an eternal return, educated into precarious positions. Anarchist theory has outlined that there are other forms of agentive fuelled educative processes. One example being the infant learning to walk; no one teaches the child per se, instead the child mirrors (and haunts) the actions of older people of its own volition (Springer, 2016).

Eternal return is the position of ghosts; beings existing between the land of the *dead* and the *living*. Not literally the phantom of the supernatural kind, but instead of the metaphorical variety, the thing and process that is present but is not; reflecting one position form the other. The thing that belongs in neither place, but has been educated into its own third (s)place and created its own volkgeist within that space. This of course presented some challenge for me as a researcher wanting to research such groups at a point in their organisational educational development; a wave of learning was lapping over

their shores, one that meant that the initial conversations tended to be difficult. Difficult in the sense that the conversations tended to go along the lines of: RM “I am interested in researching gangs ...” Prospective Participant “There’s no gangs around here mate”. I do not suggest that it is only in the time frame of this research that the groups have gone through this aspect of being educated by experience, as in the experience of traumatic loss (of friends, loved ones) through prison and death. (Although, as demonstrated in the following chapters, through key respondents and considered ethnographic methods, it was possible to understand why ‘gangs’ presented as absently present.)

Despite this appearing to be another form of circumstantial or structural imposition, traumatic loss also, as an educative catalyst, provides for the development of other versions of power. As Gordon (2008) explains, power relations ‘are never as transparently clear as the names we give to them imply’ (Gordon, 2008: 3). She adds that ‘Power can be invisible, it can be fantastic, it can be dull and routine. [...] it can travel through time and it can drown you in the present.’ (ibid). The power of the trauma experienced by the participants, which, was on the whole structural and related to loss, poverty and spatial separation was dull and routine, yet fantastic as well. This power had travelled through time from the beginning of the groups and the individual’s responses to the power exerted upon them, through to the power that they reflected back at that past. The power reflects out into the future as well, much like the Paul Klee etching *Angelus Novus* as described by Benjamin (1992). The Angel facing back toward the catastrophes of the past,

yet propelled into the future simultaneously. The motion of the movement is what Badiou (2009) would describe as *faire du surplus*: a movement in one place. The groups having learned to reflect the mundane and spectral power that affects their lives as a motion to correct the trauma of the past merely serves to maintain them in the space between two realities. This is both the result of an educational haunting process of becoming and the output producing a haunting:

‘The way of the ghost is haunting, and haunting is a very particular way of knowing what has happened or is happening. Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition’

(Gordon, 2008: 8)

In short the groups described as ‘gangs’ in their macro (through time and space) and micro (interpersonal and personal) educative journeys are constantly in a torsional overlapping cycle of be-coming: already somehow **being** and continuously **becoming**. Most importantly and in correspondence with the data, within this cycle they are be-ing visible and invisible, absent and present. They are not ‘gangs’ and they are gangs. This creates obvious issues for not only this research, but also future research with groups commonly described as ‘gangs’. In particular it raises the question of: How do you know you were talking and spending time with the right people? My response to this is that many of the people I spoke and spent time with were high profile figures. Some of whom had featured in books, part of their stories have featured in films, some make up the fabric of ‘gangland’ folklore. Others were and are key players in the drug markets in their communities. But most



importantly, the groups and individuals involved in the research presented at various points *fear* and *caution*. Whether in the form of becoming emotional, changing the subject, adding at the end of a sentence “you are changing names?” or skirting around and at points being vague about identifying features to stories and examples. In tandem with the data Gordon’s (2008) notions of social haunting, Zizek’s reading of Lacan provide for a relevant theoretical synthesis.

#### **4.4 Summary**

As indicated throughout this chapter, there is a demonstrable necessity in utilising a combination of idealism, realism and materialism. In this respect the analytical framework has foundations in Kantian philosophy, which accounts for dualisms between the phenomenal and noumenal. However, more specifically Zizek’s interpretation of parallax is of vital importance as it enables a nuanced understanding of the possibilities for understanding the interstices between first, second and third places. In applying a *parallax view* as an overarching analytical perspective in tandem with Oldenburg’s third place (and to an extent Soja’s third space) the constant of being one thing and the other and both at the same time (or the Janus face) in relation to place, space, groups known as ‘gangs’ and education presented in the data an appropriate epistemology is permitted. Within all three of the key areas of the research (space, groups described as ‘gangs’ and education) a normative and linear ‘either – or’ approach delineates the respective understandings of the field. With this in mind it is essential to move away from such analytic

approaches and explore the combined field through a means which not only considers both the 'either *and* or', but instead considers the *either – in-between – or* trialect that is provided through ideas of transcritique and parallax.

It is in this sense that the framework outlined above operates in that third place is not merely read as the third component of all social spaces (as per Oldenberg). But instead the first and second place (work and home) is read against each other along with the real and perceived place and so on. This leads into exploring the educative processes within groups described as gangs in a trans-critical way: for instance learning through structural imposition against the agentive drivers of creating alternative, learning in the moment to survive against learning from others and across time and space, precarity against power.

# **Chapter 5**

## **Methodology**

## 5.1 Introduction

The central research questions of this thesis focus on how education may take place within groups commonly described as 'gangs'. In particular questioning the role of social - third space within such educative processes.

As noted earlier, the key gaps in the existing literature are:

1. There is not substantive literature considering the educative processes of becoming involved in 'gangs'.
2. Education literature does not fully consider the role and potential for third places / social spaces as educative spaces.
3. The 'gang' literature does not consider the full extent of 'gangs' perceptions of self nor their perceptions and use of third places and social spaces.

This chapter outlines the methods utilised in answering the research questions. The primary research questions are:

- 1. What are the educative practices and processes of becoming within 'gangs'?**
- 2. What role do *third places* play in the educative practices and processes of education in 'gangs'?**
- 3. What are the social conditions, which are conducive to becoming educated into 'gangs', and to what extent do such conditions play a role in these educative processes?**

The secondary research questions are:

- 1. What are some of the sub-sets of space, which play integral roles in the educative processes of becoming involved in 'gangs'?**
- 2. What are the types of education, which function within the educative processes within 'gangs'?**
- 3. How are alternative modes of identification with 'gang' culture(s) and third places defined, amplified and / or deferred?**

This chapter demonstrates the *where, who and what* of the research process unfolded in answering these questions. In order to do this I will have to make myself “*vulnerable*” in presenting some of my story. This vulnerability generates across the *where, who and what*, but also in the sense of outlining my own positionality within the research process in order to draw on reflexive use of ‘sociological imagination and consciousness’ (Reimer, 1977: 467). I approach this chapter in an embodied and reflexive manner due to the research being ethnographically based and one which is formed with me as the researcher, co-researcher and collaborator.

As demonstrated in earlier chapters, this research stems from critique and observation of gaps in the existing literature focusing cumulatively on ‘gangs’, education and third place. Also, the research is founded in auto-ethnography: in my professional experiences within informal education, in my personal experiences growing up on a poor area, around ‘gangs’ and ‘gangsters’. Personal experience and the researcher are inseparable and these experiences, which are tightly bound to the research topic, should not be ignored. Instead experience should be utilised to better alert the reader, un-silence the participant’s life experiences and develop understanding (Ellis *et al*, 2011). Although this is not auto-ethnography per se, it does circumnavigate shared cultural identity (Ellis *et al*, 2011) and practice experience working with people living similar lives to the participants, as well as retroactively understanding and re-understanding these in the moment as a researcher.

Within the section covering participants and sampling I outline:

- The way in which (interview) questions were formed
- Research sites and why these were chosen
- Methods
- Journeys of recruitment to the project

Also outlined in this chapter are:

- Ethics
- Researcher positionality
- Who did *not* participate
- Why not other methods and approaches

## 5.2 Where?

The research predominantly took place in the North of England, although some fieldwork was in Southern England. The vast majority of the ethnography took place in North Conurbation 1, with some interviews taking place in South City or North Conurbation 2. With one exception all of the fieldwork took place in areas of relatively high socio-economic deprivation, areas that have ranked highly on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. Almost all of these areas at the time of the fieldwork were deemed to be regeneration areas.

All but one (South City) of the areas within the research were presented by participants<sup>45</sup> as having cultures of pride (of being from the place). Along with a sense of: this is a place that outsiders are cautious of or might avoid, where

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<sup>45</sup> For a breakdown of participants and frequently featured people who were involved in the ethnographic aspects of the research please see Appendix 1.

people do not 'take shit off anyone', of 'sorting things out' outside of official means such as police and of not grassing<sup>46</sup>. These were places where violent subjectivities (cf. Winlow, 2014) are well formed.

### **5.2.1 South City**

In South City I hung out for the day and interviewed P18 and later on in the day was taken to meet his friend who was an original member of the hooligan firm that they were involved in. This all took place within a city centre and in areas of the city centre that were economically prosperous and affluent. However, the firm that they were involved in was situated in a poor inner-city estate.

### **5.2.2 North Conurbation 1**

In the primary research site, North Conurbation 1, the fieldwork was more widespread; interviews took place across a range of areas and communities. These ranged across four towns and the central district of North Conurbation 1 centre. The specific interview locations included people's homes, youth centres, a police station and a heavy weights gymnasium.

All of the sub-areas or 'Towns' within the conurbations featured are ethnically diverse areas to varying degrees; the three most commonly featured sub-areas are Towns 1, 2 and 4. All of these areas, currently and in recent history,

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<sup>46</sup> All of which were described by most participants in various terms.

have high unemployment rates and high socio-economic deprivation. However, in the past Town 4 was an affluent area around the time of the industrial revolution. The housing stock in Town 4 is very different to that of Town 1 and Town 2. In Town 4 the majority of the residential buildings are large Victorian era houses, typically with three or more floors. Many of these have been converted into private let flats or bedsits. Like other areas across North Conurbation 1 these houses had been subject to *white flight* from a time of the demise of the core local industry (cf. Wacquant, 2008).

Town 2 is a combination of Victorian and Edwardian rows of terraced houses, 1960s maisonettes and high-rise flats, with patches of newer houses and low-rise flats built during the early 2000s, with new builds ever emerging. Town 2 is the most ethnically diverse of all of the featured sub-areas and has a long history of being a place where migrants from many countries have settled; historically Irish and then Caribbean islanders and more recently people from East African countries.

Town 1 has historically been a racially homogenous area and has, up until recent years, been almost exclusively a White working class area. Increasingly the area has become more ethnically diverse with influx of people from Eastern Europe and to a lesser degree African countries. The houses are typically gardenised and from around the late 1930s and were still being built until the 1950s. There are lots of low-rise flats and some high-rise flats still remain despite some blocks being demolished in the late 1990s. There are pockets of private housing scattered across Town 1.



### 5.2.3 North Conurbation 2

In North Conurbation 2 I carried out two interviews and spent an afternoon being shown around the community in which P9 lived and grew up. Again, this was an area of high unemployment and socio-economic deprivation. This area was very ethnically diverse, although it was also a racially segregated community. As I was being shown around by P9 we turned a corner and P9 explained “we’re in Black [area place name] now”. I questioned what he meant by that and he elaborated that we were previously in “White [area place name]”. The two distinct sections of this place were divided by a real, yet imagined (Soja, 1998) line. The people that lived there or close to this place were all aware of this boundary.

There were lots of young people hanging around the streets, P9 stopped to talk to one who he knew whilst we stopped at a local shop for milk. What was unusual about the amount of young people who were around during the day was that it was during school hours and within term-time. They should have been in school. There were also lots of men hanging around the streets. Not just outside the shops in the high street, but also in the residential areas, outside houses, leaning on cars and sat on fences. Some were pointed out by P9 as being local dealers. Most striking about this area was the amount of boarded up houses. P9 described how the area had become a regeneration area. It did not look like it was being regenerated at a very fast pace; it looked like it was somehow on hold, like a pause button had been pressed.

### 5.3 Who (sampling)

Recruitment methods were by no means straightforward; these ranged from quite traditional gatekeeper and snowball recruitment (Atkinson and Flint, 2001) through to auto-ethnographic recruitment, or more commonly described as *opportunistic sampling* (Riemer, 1977). In this instance, I drew on my own personal history in several ways. Firstly and most simply, immediately prior to beginning this thesis I was working in crime prevention and resettlement settings for a national charity. This gave me an understanding of the current (at the time of initiating the study) picture of groups commonly described as ‘gangs’ as mentioned earlier. I knew from speaking with service users and colleagues across the north of England on a regular basis the *who is who* of ‘gang’ crime. This provided for a foundation of prospective participants.

Secondly, I grew up on an estate that was not only synonymous with poverty, crime, low educational attainment and high unemployment<sup>47</sup>, but also had a thriving contemporary ‘gang culture’. Not only in the present day, but also across the estate’s temporal existence. The place I had grown up had a history in the inception of door security, clubs scenes, bare-knuckle boxing, drug distribution, infamy for people off my estate organising several raves that for sometime after held the title of ‘Europe’s Largest’, a Chapter of a 1%MC, the home of the leader of one of the countries biggest and most infamous

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<sup>47</sup> All of which are factors that are commonly associated with ‘gang cultures’ developing.

football hooligan clubs, an ex-title holder of *King of the Gypsyies*<sup>48</sup> and all too many shootings, stabbings and other violent acts that ended and destroyed peoples lives. Even prior to my professional practice in crime prevention and youth and community work, I already had a lived knowledge of who was who. To an extent I did draw on some of these contacts, both from professional practice and my own upbringing. However, it was not as simple as that; for various reasons I was not able to solely draw on these auto-ethnographic contacts. Some would not engage, for various reasons and others I actively chose to not engage with for various reasons.

### **5.3.1 Who did not take part?**

For those that chose not to engage, their reasons were not always revealed to me<sup>49</sup>. Some were cautious and were worried about the potential for prosecution or retribution from peers should anonymity be somehow breached. Although I talked all prospective participants through the protective factors that I had in place to ensure anonymity, many of them still declined. Safeguards included no real names or even pseudonyms, no place names, omitting identifiable features from dialogue to transcription. Yet only half of those I approached actually took part. Some ignored my requests, be they through a third-party or directly, some suggested *cross my palm with silver* and then you can talk to me. The latter were predominantly people who had developed media portfolios based on their exploits within 'gangs'.

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<sup>48</sup> The title of King of the Gypsy's is given to the country's champion of bare-knuckle boxing amongst gypsies and travellers.

<sup>49</sup> I did not want to know why as sometimes it is better to not know some things to remain safe and maintain peace of mind.

This group of prospective participants had had films made about them, they had written or had ghost written 'hit and tell' books (cf. Redhead, 2010). One prospective participant asked if I could "make a contribution to post-production costs" of his most recent film. This, I felt, was an unethical demand as no one else who had participated had received such a 'contribution', as to do so would potentially alter the types of responses or even respondents. As such, to pay anyone to participate would have been unethical. Others, after discussion indicating that they would participate merely vanished, almost into thin air. I could no longer physically find them, or get through by telephone, e-mail or through intermediaries. I can only speculate that they got spooked somehow, that they too became concerned about police or peer identification through participation. By far and away the two types of groups that opted out in this way the most were football hooligan firms and 1%MCs.

I also actively chose to not engage with some people as prospective participants. Those that I ruled out of participation were people that I either initially thought that I would engage with, or people who would have been excellent participants and happily participated. For the former, the reason that I chose to not engage with them after all was that I became increasingly aware and concerned at the potential for risk. Some of the people I had initially thought I would engage with had become increasingly active since I had known them in a professional capacity, both in terms of the level and severity of consequences of their activities. Some had been incarcerated or lost their lives; those who were still around and had not gone completely off

the radar and disappeared (presumably for self-preservation) were in danger of following their peers to prison or to the cemetery gates. I did not think it was safe for them or me to be tagging along at that point; I omitted them from my list of potential participants months before even starting the fieldwork.

For the latter group of potential participants who would have perhaps provided me with exceptional data and would have allowed me access without much question, I chose not to engage with them for very different reasons. This choice was primarily based on not wanting to stir up old and left behind acquaintances and friendships. In much the same way that Simon Winlow explains in his acknowledgements at the beginning of his Doctoral thesis, I too could have very easily been the subject of this research rather than the researcher. People that I grew up with, was friends with, got thrown out of school with, people who used to have a deep trust with me and me with them and especially people that I could have very easily been locked up with, killed with – for – by. I did not want to stir up these old and dormant friendships. On paper they would have been the most profitable routes for recruiting participants, in reality they are likely to have run at a great loss and would have been less of an asset and more a liability. Appendix 2 (*Old Contacts*) provides an ethnographically orientated reflection on participant recruitment, providing an insight into some of the complexities and journeys of participation.

## **5.4 What?**

The fieldwork was ethnographic and interview based with a spread across four key sites. These sites were multi-local and multi-sited in that the relations between and within the sites were of equal significance (Hannerz, 2003). The relation within the sites all had links between them, many of the stories were told across all sites, the same people were known across all sites (sometimes personally to each other and others known of each other). I never acknowledged my knowing people between sites (or prior to the research).

### **5.4.1 Interviews**

Within the ethnographic fieldwork, conversations with informants were on-going and formed an integral component of the impromptu fabric of the fieldwork; alongside these, planned formalised semi-structured interviews also took place. Semi-structured interviews, as with all social science methods, have both flaws and benefits (Diefenbach, 2009). One such flaw is the over reliance on verbal methods (Crang, 2002), however creative methods such as visual or arts based approaches would not have been appropriate given the nature of the research topic and participants. In-depth semi-structured interviews were of significant value in generating data with deep understandings and perceptions from respondents (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006).

Whilst the interviews attended to the questions co-constructed with participants, they also drew more broadly on integral life-narratives. Life-narrative provided a means of gaining deep understandings (Atkinson, 2007 in Clandinin, 2007) and patterns across formative social processes (Bertaux and Kohli, 1984) of how people become educated into 'gangs'. Narrative approaches, for some, are placed as having 'privileged' authenticity (Atkinson, 1997). However, narrative approaches alone can generate seductive representations of the conventions under examination (Atkinson, 1997), yet are still understood as important in researching educative experience (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). As part of a broader approach also including ethnography such risk was mitigated; yet it must be noted that a means of mitigating such seductions from an ethnographic perspective is for the researcher to bring forth their own narrative biography (Hobbs, 2013). It is important for sociological researchers to reflect on who they are in relation to the wider picture (Riemer, 1977), as well as how positionality may shift (Hellawell, 2006) in pursuit of exploring social phenomena.

Integration of narrative biography may be frowned upon as having potential to decentre neutrality, however, no research enquiry is fully neutral (Lather, 1991). Some, more imposing (interview) approaches may perpetuate symbolic violence and *other* the participant in the process (cf. Bourdieu in Bourdieu *et al*, 1999: 627). In initially asking key informants in the earliest fieldwork stages to propose themes and or interview questions that they thought relevant to the overall research questions, the barrier between researcher and researched was depleted bringing the two toward one (cf.

Collins, 1991). As such, establishing not a rigid imposing interview process, but instead an artistic one (Collins, 1991) founded in co-creation.

Interview location has been highlighted as potentially affecting responses (Elwood and Martin, 2000). With this in mind interviews were carried out in third places such as the gymnasium, youth centres, cafes or occasionally in respondent's homes. Each was chosen on the respondent's terms, as a place where they felt comfortable; this enabled a more nuanced and detailed understanding of the participant's experiences of their communities, lived environments and relationships with space (Elwood and Martin, 2000).

#### **5.4.2 Ethnography**

Ethnographically, the weighting of the four-way split of the sites was one of unequal sections of time spent. The largest of these being the time I spent *hanging around* the heavyweights gymnasium. The second largest section was spent across the two youth centres. The third being the boxing gymnasium and lastly the time I spent hanging around a public house in the city centre of North City 1. All of the research sites had the common feature of being identified locally, or in the popular media, or through early conversations with prospective participants as being or having previously been synonymous with 'gangs' and 'gang cultures'. Vignettes of key research sites are summarised through ethnographic reflections in Appendix 3.



### 5.4.3 Precarious Ethnography

Some prospective participants were apprehensive about *more 'gang' research*; some areas had been “over researched”. I was mindful that such research could be perceived as invasive or oppressive; I was genuinely sympathetic of the fact that there are still some academics doing research *on* and *to* people rather than *with* people. I attempted to both be *with* people and ask people what questions the research should ask. It would never have worked for me to even try to do the research not being *with* people; as I have alluded already and will further detail below in many ways I already am - have been - might have been - are not them. My being and personal narrative is cut from the same cloth as many of the participants in a range of ways. I could not be a calculator, an outside *scientist* temperature gauging a deviant other; also, I could not be them and would not be them (Hoggart, 1988, 2009).

I came to the field with an *a priori* knowledge base, one that is based on my own professional and prior to that, personal experiences (cf. Winlow et al, 2001). As mentioned earlier, I had worked with *aspirants* and *old hats* in the ‘gang’ world professionally. Prior to that I had been an aspirant, become involved in similar groups, plotted and executed similar activities, been involved in violence, sought respect and kudos through alternative economies and representations of masculinities. I am in this respect, embodying the research, as opposed to participating in a ‘textual disembodiment’ (Aldridge, 1993, 53). Such *a priori* experience has a potential to yield an ‘enhanced heuristic perspective’ (Wakeman, 2014: 706) of the phenomena within the study and is a clear example of how researcher and researched are

inseparable and on-going rather than separate and finite (Collins, 1991). Familiarity of setting can mitigate potential for 'culture shock' (Hockey, 1993) and permit 'enhanced rapport and communication, the ability to gauge the honesty and accuracy of responses' (Hockey, 1991: 199).

As with many ethnographers, particularly auto-ethnographers, there is sometimes some deep-rooted link to the field of study (for instance Hobbs, 1996; Winlow, 2001; Treadwell and Williams; 2008 to name a few). This has been argued as presenting potential for fieldwork problems such as making assumptions, familiarity or favourability excess or generalising (Hockey, 1991; Mannay, 2010). As suggested elsewhere such risks can be protected against in a constant wrestle with the familiar to ensure a strangeness is embedded in the already acquainted (cf. Hockey, 1991; Delamont and Atkinson, 1995; Mannay, 2010). However, this research is not insider research, it is actually insider-outsider research and therefore enables a balance between the presentation of a *they* who can be neatly packaged into a coherent other (Ager, 2008) and a favourable familiarity.

I was as much an insider as an outsider, both to the participants and my academic peers. I was not moving between insider and outsider research (Evered and Louis, 1981) but was both at the same time; I was native and alien simultaneously, a semi-native (Shapira, 2015) reflection of incommensurable precarity. Whilst this research takes elements of auto-ethnography as it has aspects and foundations that are of a personal nature (Chang, 2013 in Holman Jones *et al*, 2013), it is not an auto-ethnography as it does not utilise personal experience as primary data (op cit). Although at

points earlier in this thesis and others to follow, I draw on personal experience to aid framing the foundations of the research and to aid in identifying my positionality as a researcher who is both somehow an outsider and insider simultaneously.

In this sense it could not be pure auto-ethnography and at the same time my personal experiences expressed herein operate as a cog in a wider machine channelling the readers understanding of the social reality of the groups and individuals involved in the research (Chang, 2013) yet the method of being inside and outside rests on the brink of it. For this reason, I describe this methodological approach of utilising the researcher's outsider narrative and subjectivity, yet not fully detailing it or naming it and at the same time utilising the researcher's insider narrative and subjectivity, as *precarious ethnography*. This description of *precarious ethnography* lends itself to the work of other scholars working at the precipice of who they *were* and who they *are* such as Randol Contreras (2013); the precarity is that of understandings of *then* and *now*, but being able to make the familiar strange (Delamont and Atkinson, 1995).

I first had a realisation of this when I began the first round of interviews. These interviews were intended to be neat participatory consultative interviews that asked participants what they thought the questions I would ask in interviews should be. After a couple of interviews it became apparent that at the same time as the participants were naming what they thought were valid

questions<sup>50</sup>, they too were answering the questions. These interviews were reflexive in that they were asking the question of what the question should be and at the same time answering both questions; as such questions were generated and answered simultaneously in this early stage. I already had some stake in these questions as I was already positioned between the space of the inside and the outside.

I was asking for participants to create questions that were not only about their lives, but also about parts of my own previous narrative. This really was not a neat and pristinely packaged piece of participatory research that I envisaged it to be. It seemed messy at the time and I questioned if this was 'real' research. I felt inferior to my academic peers who seemed to be doing very 'controlled', conventional and well-ordered fieldwork. And there was me having an existential crisis, not knowing if what was going on was 'real academia'. It is only now at the time of writing this, in the final throws of this odyssey and having spoke with new colleagues who have done similar insider – outsider ethnography, that I realise that it was more than acceptable and valid.

Instead I engaged with the kinds of people who I had already lived with and asked them to ask the questions of themselves and others and, to some extent, aspects of my own life. This resonated with Jorge Louis Borges' *The Circular Ruins*, as the dreamer awoke to a realisation that they too were being dreamed just as they had dreamed of another. Or to put it another way: the researcher realised that they were asking the research subjects to ask

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<sup>50</sup> For a final list used of the common interview questions see Appendix 4.

questions about their own, the researcher's and all others being researched experiences. This precarious ethnography was not a walk in the park, it was a haunted walk amongst the infinite ruins of ex-working class genealogies of violent group activity.

Any research within an area of familiarity comes with potential problems. Not only the un-homely or un-comfortableness generated by the uncanny (cf. Freud, 2003), but also, as with any methodological approach, the potential for fears of lacking credibility authenticity (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). More specifically any insider research has the potential to generate what has been depicted by Taylor (2011) as the short-sightedness of the insider. Not to mention the potential for experiencing feelings of portraying stories from the data which may create an injustice to participants or perpetuate stereotypes (cf. McKenzie, 2015; Morriss, 2015). There are also physical and risk components such as those experienced by Bourgois (1999) when violence may emerge in the presence of the researcher; or those experienced by Wakeman (2014) when he was waking in the night tasting Crack in the early stages of his fieldwork, challenging his understandings of his position as an ex-addict. Some ethnographers have not problematised this insider and familiar positionality. For instance, Winlow (2001) does not appear to trouble such considerations to any great extent. In fact, some appear to some extent to be trading off such positionality with little in the way of reflexive self-challenging (cf. Winlow, 2001; also Hall in other public domains).

Following a description of how the data was analysed, this chapter will move onto demonstrating how some of the challenges noted above were dealt with through reflexivity. Reflexivity permits an acknowledgement of researcher positions and experiences and in doing so ensures an increased consciousness is accounted for in order to avoid and safeguard against potential for bias or misinterpretation (cf. Atkinson and Hammersley, 2003).

#### **5.4.4 Data analysis**

Data was analysed through a Grounded Theory approach, this was utilised as a means of breaking open the meta-text of how education takes place within gang culture(s) in third spaces. Grounded Theory as an analytical tool permits clarity in opening of data collected; also allowing for all aspects of the data collected to be analysed by the same means. The research was constructed through Grounded Theory (Corbin and Holt in Somekh and Lewin, 2005) allowing for an acceptance of multiple realities (op cit) and a process of generating theory as an evolving motion (Glaser and Strauss, 2008: 31-32). Triangulated data collection methods (semi-structured interviews, reflective ethnographic observations and deconstructive exploration of ethnographic positionality) will all be treated in the same manner and therefore creating equilibrium in analysis as a non-fragmentary whole (Dicks *et al*, 2006), yet through a range of analytical modes and tools (cf. Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Interviews, ethnography and positionality are discussed in the following subsections. This begins with interviews and moves into the description of ethnographic approach, positionality and experience in the field.

## 5.5 Ethics

The phrase 'gang', as indicated in the preceding chapters, evokes concepts and feelings of fear, sensationalism and danger in the public domain. Quite correctly, these are all issues relatable to 'gangs'; 'gangs' can be dangerous, instil fear and have very sensational aspects within them. These evocations, as I discovered in the ethical approval process, are not restricted to the general public domain. They too filter into academia, into broader paradigms of risk averse practices and sanitising discourse, which avoids the complex, untidy and difficult to define. 'Gangs' and their educative processes, as noted earlier and detailed in the following chapters, are complex and difficult to define. This friction of understanding and paradigm of risk management impacted on the ethical approval process prior to commencement of the fieldwork.

As is standard practice, I diligently completed my application for ethical approval in good time prior to the fieldwork. Having worked in justice services and with 'gang' members previously in professional practice, I was very well versed in writing risk assessments for projects. Many principles transfer between ethical approval and risk management approval. However, certain aspects of my ethical approval application raised concerns. These concerns primarily related to the combination of three key words: 'gangs' – 'street' – 'youth'. My application came under scrutiny in relation to these to the extent that I wrote six versions of the application, wrote an additional 1245 word

document answering further questions and was invited to meet with the chair of the ethics committee to discuss and clarify my application.

The aspects of my application which I envisaged may be problematic, such as the small covert observation element, proved to be of less consequence than others such as carrying out research within the street with younger (sixteen years plus) 'gangs'. The outcome of the application and meeting was positive and I was given very positive feedback too. However, despite this, there remained a disjoint between the perceived ethical and risk orientated issues of researching younger 'gangs' in public spaces such as the street and the more real ethical and risk potential of spending significant time ethnographically with older 'gangs' in quasi-public (third) spaces such as gymnasiums, public houses or 1%MC clubhouses. Ironically, the latter being a site, in which Hunter S. Thomson (1967) was famously beaten in his journalistic ethnography.

However, I did not point out such ironies or other examples of how the commonly perceived ethical and risk considerations and challenges may potentially be overshadowed by far more real ones. Such issues and challenges are not completely restrictive and can be highly fruitful and generate deep and rich data. For example Bourgois' exemplary ethnography in Spanish Harlem, yielded several books and articles finely crafted out of highly conscious situated observations and engagement on the themes of respect, masculinity and marginality (cf. Bourgois, 1989, 1996, 1999). Although Bourgois was at points in what may be perceived as dangerous or



risky places / spaces with groups who are perceived to be dangerous and generators of fear, it could be argued that at the time of the research Bourgois was living neighbouring these places and spaces. As such in his everyday life he was passing through these spaces and places and crossing paths and chatting with the very same people; with this in mind it could be argued that the risk in his research was no greater than the risks he or any of his neighbours faced everyday in their ordinary life experiences. Perhaps it is too often forgot that for some researchers there is not a classed, gentrified exclusion zone where they live out their life segregated and detached from the spaces and experiences of the field; for some the field is not a 'clocking on and off' space or experience.

As indicated earlier, I have lived and worked in closely related places, and have lived and worked with similar people to those within the research. For one of the conurbations within the research I still spend some time there due to pre-existing personal relationships. However, this place is shrouded both locally and nationally in discourses of fear. Such spaces, which transcend the professional, and personal remain the same regardless of time allocation of roles and I am one person, I cannot become someone else after the fieldwork. In my previous work as a practitioner I have worked late at night on the streets with 'gang' members and have visited various third spaces which are occupied by 'gangs' in conflict resolution work between hostile groups, I have conducted 'home visit' and outreach work to places that were utilised as crack houses, and homes and other spaces where shootings and stabbings have

took place or later taken place, as well as those that have had fire arms and hand grenades seized from them.

These have been and are places I pass through and occupy / occupied in my daily life, are they any more riskier in my researcher life? If so, why, what is different about me? Is it me that has changed or is it the *name* of what I am doing there changed? If the latter is the case, how once I have finished the research can I occupy such spaces and places again as me-not-doing-research? If the former is the case what in me is so different that I am now at more risk in the spaces and places I have and continue to occupy (in research)? Perhaps more pressing is the question of risk to all of the other people who occupy, interact, spend time in and pass through these spaces and places in their everyday life, but again, are those people forgot or never quite perceived, maybe they are part of the absent presence or a 'phantom public' (Lippman, 1927 cited in Roberts and Schostak, 2012: 380, 392) or the hidden dead (Batsleer, 2011: 431) who are beyond risk by cause of spectrality.

Perhaps the most pertinent question is not about the spaces / places being immediately viable, nor about at which points in time are they viable, but instead about my own and everyone else's situated-ness in such places and spaces, my *authenticity* and consciousness the versions of me; if at all there are or have become versions. As well as to what extent performativity or performance ethnography plays a role in the research process; as Punch's example referring to an actual field dilemma cited by Soloway and Walters

(1977 cited in Punch, 1986: 11) puts it – ‘How to cope with a loaded revolver dropped in your lap is something you have to resolve on the spot ...’ (op cit: 13). In this example performativity would be integral somehow in the moment just as it was for David Calvey in his covert ethnography of nightclub door staff in which he witnessed his colleagues throw a person in a canal as a form of revenge and had to barricade himself in a nightclub with door staff colleagues when rivals came armed with guns to ‘take over the door’ (cf. Calvey, 2000). These examples are undoubtedly at the harder end of performativity within ethnography, but none the less, my experience in the field required performativity of self from me in dealing with unforeseen situated ethics and risk balances that emerged.

My positionality was an enabler, yet also something I could not eliminate if I wanted to. Despite my positionality being an enabler, I did not mention any of it in my ethics application. The reason for this was the same as that of Wakeman (2014), the reason of fear of being asked even more questions. Questions which, having discussed this with Steve Wakeman we share opinion on, I do not want to fully discuss. Additionally there was a fear, a fear of not being understood; I was worried I may be perceived as an inferior academic or some kind of novelty. I still feel this to an extent as my positionality is one based in class and experiences of everyday life in poor and violent communities, yet academic focus on these is dominated by a different positionality, moreover the gates of ethical consideration tend to be guarded by other positionalities. This latter point being too big to discuss here, however there is undoubtedly scope for future scholarly activity relating to it.

## 5.6 Positionality: Knowing me, knowing you. Ah ha!

In working from an ethnographic perspective as a participant observer, I attempted to both perceive the links and uses of the spaces of the gymnasium and boxing gymnasium with what have previously been described as 'gang culture(s)'. Of particular interest was the pursuit of understanding the links between these spaces and the educative practices of be-coming involved in such groups. At the same time as attempting this observation I simultaneously 'felt' the lived experience of those under the gaze of the observations. For each of these components the crucial point of commonality is the third space of both of the gymnasiums, which have been described as having longstanding relationships with various 'gangs' and wider ideas of alternative economies and organised crime (P1: Obs2, 25/11/13 also compare Venkatesh, 2006). Effectively the ethnographic process was one of perceiving, being and experiencing situated knowledge(s) and ways of being.

Within ethnographic research this *experiencing* can be an alien experience. For instance although Philippe Bourgois (1999) conducted rich and deep ethnographical studies with a group of street level crack dealers and addicts in Spanish Harlem, his experience would have only ever been alien in that he had never been a crack addict or dealer. Notwithstanding, he was living in Spanish Harlem at the time of his research, so in that sense his *experiencing* was non-alien. However, there are researchers currently working in the UK in the same environments with the same groups as Bourgois who have been addicted to Crack (cf. Wakeman, 2014); perhaps in that sense they are

experiencing their ethnographic work as non-alien, in more nuanced, artisanal (Lopez *et al*, 2013) and poetic ways (Wakeman, 2014). Yet still in their new position as researcher, PhD. student and academic they may have mixed senses of *experiencing* the ethnographic event; or, retroactively be *experiencing* their previous identity through the ethnography in the event. Or perhaps struggling to make sense of their position and position-ing in identifying the space, event and self (reflection).

This was a different positionality to that of Wacquant (2006) in his learning to become a boxer, yet despite my familiarity with the types of groups and communities within the research I, like Wacquant was still an outsider to the participants. Others have spent time in locations where they have some experience of the field but do not know the participants, such as boxing gymnasiums (Jump, 2016), or know the participants as friends but lead a different lifestyle to them (Winlow, 2001; Salinas-Edwards, 2013). But it is Wakeman (2014) who most resonates here with his auto-ethnography of crack and heroin users whom he hung around with without ever disclosing that he previously had a crack and heroin addiction. His insider-outsider positionality permitted a deeper emersion into the field and a more nuanced representation of it. It could be argued that this could cloud the outcomes, but in acknowledging these experiences in the writing this risk is mitigated.

**5.6.1 'A jumped up pantry boy, who never knew his place,  
He knows so much about this place ...'<sup>51</sup>**

Such unease and questioning is born out of my lifelong relationship with the geographic area in which some of the research was situated. Having been born and growing up within an area of one of the research sites I have an intimate knowledge of the physical space and culture of the estate<sup>52</sup>. Living in such places I experienced an array of things that can be witnessed in walking through the town centre today, things that I saw and heard in the fieldwork - small children with a bottle of tea in one hand and a Greggs sausage role in the other, single parenthood, poverty, knowing what Heroin and addiction is and having made acquaintance with Heroin addicts before being a teenager, having an air of intensity and alertness in the gaze which can only be constructed out of having *experiences* of violence from a young age, knowing people who have been shot and killed, moving with the *wrong* crowds, forming violent identities and subjectivities, looking for a hustle, trying to avoid conviction for the hustle.

All of these were found in the field and also part of my professional and personal narrative. Of course this is not the same for all, these are not particularly common experiences, but their encounter is more likely in communities such as those within the research.

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<sup>51</sup> *This Charming Man*, The Smiths (1983).

<sup>52</sup> I will not identify which research site in order to maintain as much anonymity as possible whilst drawing on a reflexive approach toward the research

Through professional and personal experience my understanding of the genealogy of the local 'gangs', 'well known' families and those who people 'don't fuck with' as it is colloquially put were heightened.

These are things that could be discovered by any researcher, but would more than likely take a considerable amount of time to discover. Even at the point of discovery the subtleties of the knowledge gained may not entirely be grasped; although following and adapting Levi-Strauss' notion of transference of mythology across cultures through contact (cf. Levi-Strauss, 2014) or reconnecting as part of a whole (cf. Levi-Strauss, 2014: 30 on disconnected myth) it could be said that a relational comparative or metaphoric understanding could be appreciated.

I by no means subscribe to the much-debated<sup>53</sup> idea that you should be from the place in which you are working or have experienced the lifestyle of those you are working with. However, I do acknowledge that careful and considerate utilisation of prior experience can be utilised within the research without tainting or distracting from it. As I mentioned earlier, the research drew on auto-ethnographic understandings, yet was enacted as precarious ethnography.

Precarious (auto)ethnographic hauntings were experienced elsewhere across the field work including in the embodied positionality within the boxing gymnasium. In this site there was a constant push-pull processes – an insider

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<sup>53</sup> In the field of youth and community work

outsider experience. I was at once at home and alien; I was haunted by my past experiences. So much was I haunted in this site that as much as I wanted to exit the site I still returned – even when I got my rib broken – eventually exiting through the on-going internal struggle (for an ethnographic description of these experiences please see Appendix 5).

### **5.6.2 Summative Theoretical Reflections on Positionality**

The people occupying the spaces and places within the research and myself were all already *knowing me and you* (themselves). Yet at the same time I do not *know* the *you* (them) of the space, this is why I was there as an ethnographer and they did not know *me* (the ethnographer). In this sense we were, always already not *knowing me, knowing you* [ah-ha]. This being something I had to work with and explore in-situ, particularly in relation to notions of reflexivity, position-ing and affect in research.

This, is comparable to Zizek's (2006) interpretation of the line from Shakespeare's *Richard II*, which reads: '*Ay no; no ay; for I must nothing be*' (Shakespeare quoted in Zizek, 2006: 70). This Zizek interprets as 'Ay' in the sense of 'I' (as in a spelling of its time) and 'no' shifting from meaning 'no' and 'know', shifting, and thus interpretable as *I know, no I* as well as *I no [not], know I* (cf. Zizek, 2006: 70-71); as well as Shakespeare's typical use of 'Ay' as 'yes', therefore giving the meaning as 'yes, no; no, yes' (op cit: 71). The point here being that as Zizek (2006) points out for Shakespeare's marvellous play on words and mischievous multi-homonymies and against the grain



metaphoric charm (ibid), the position-ing within the ethnography occupied and defied normative affective and identity space and had multiple meanings all in one space and time.

Reflexivity, affect and personal narrative in research have previously been described as relatively taboo, in particular for men (Carter and Delamont, 1996) and early career researchers (Smith, 2007). Although positioning has been considered in far less contentious or challenging ways such as age and gender (Punch, 2012: 87) than more 'controversial' areas of consideration such as emotion (Weller and Cabellero, 2009 cited in Punch, 2012: 87 also see Dickson-Swift *et al*, 2009). However, more recently others have engaged with such controversial areas of consideration (for instance Wakeman, 2014). Importantly narrative approaches to experiences of affect and emotion are considered as an extremely useful ethnographic tool (Beatty, 2014). In entering a narrative terrain researchers may make their-self *other*, in attempting to draw emotional reflexive narrative comparison between themselves and the field (Beatty, 2010). Relevance and shared historicity can set richer understanding through narrative, but not without it (Beatty, 2010). This potential for and fear of academic subalternism or disapproval (Widdowfield, 2000) may prevent widespread engagement in this wilderness, yet simultaneously, repression of exploring affective positionality could increase the chances of data distortion (Lee-Treweek, 2000 quoted in Punch, 2012: 92). Likewise in ethnographic work with stigmatised and hidden groups (cf. Lopez *et al* 2013: 101) self-reflexivity and critique are essential in meeting the complex and evolving needs of the research (op cit: 102). Such an

approach, rather than be positioned as de-civilised or othered, could be better described as 'artisanal' (Lopez et al, 2013).

It is also worth pointing out that re-positioning from the perceived de-civilised othered to the artisan researcher is important. Likewise it is important to acknowledge the potential in exposure of affect, identity and position-ing of such work, extracting it from the position of novelty, token *other* 'bit of rough' to that of a non-utilitarian and considered research position. A positionality which, is carefully considered and must somehow be constructed for '*jumped up pantry boy[s], who never knew their place*' and '*know so much about this [space]*'. Although as I have mentioned elsewhere in a different context (BERA TAG, 2013) and has been quoted by Deuchar (2013) there is no place for tokenistic inclusion and fostering markets for *super exposure* based on *other experience*.

However there is a place for in-depth deconstruction of positionality and other experience that strives to enrich ethnographic data through this space of not being *inside* and not being *outside*, or *precarious ethnography*. For instance, in my brief deconstructive of my position-ing, it is demonstrable that at once I am inside the academy and outside the academy and inside the estates, gymnasium and boxing gymnasium and outside the boxing gymnasium and inside the community and outside the community. This leaves a feeling being inside-out, both turned inside-out in the process of working with spectres of identity, subjectivity and reflexivity and assuming the hyphen position of

'inside-out'; occupying the literal space between inside and out (Hoggart, 1957).

This instantly resonates with Bhabha's (2006) ideas on third space and also easily aligns with my own interpretations of thirdspace, incorporating the physical, imagined and metaphysical. But also interestingly it resonates with the position that the sub-estate occupies, the position of being inside the wider estate and simultaneously not. These sands seem to shift easily in the same way that others have encountered such as from the position of trust to the position of *gaujo*<sup>54</sup> for those working with travellers (cf. Vanderbeck, 2009: 322-323). Despite the shifting sands and unease, its associated questions and considerations, more questions arise in working through researcher positions and may continue to build as others encounter issues of position-ing in the field.

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<sup>54</sup> Traveller word for a none-traveller or outsider.

## **Chapter 6**

### **First Findings Chapter**

#### ***Structure and Agency: Educative Drivers***

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores structural drivers and the role of choice in becoming involved in 'gangs'. Specifically this chapter deals with the push and pull of control, social constraint, and free will in the educative processes of becoming for 'gangs'. The crucial aspect to this push and pull is that of the point of meeting, the bind between the two. From the data this bind appears, rather than adjunct to the two poles, as integral and part of a whole. Herein there is an active relationship between socially constraining structural circumstances and agentive free will. The data demonstrates a broad range of constraining structural factors impacting on the educative process of becoming involved in 'gangs'. However, such constraints are not all encompassing, as will be demonstrated later, the groups and individuals within the research do have free will, albeit a freedom of will that is constrained by severance from foundations of their existential positioning<sup>55</sup>.

As such it is important to consider the question of 'Why is it that everyone living in structurally constraining conditions do not become part of 'gangs'?' This question can be answered in alignment with the theoretical framework already outlined. If everyone living in such conditions does not automatically become involved in 'gangs', then there must be choice and likewise for those who do become involved in them there too must be choice. For the latter choice is a response to the structures through actions synonymous with 'gangs'. Choice, whilst intended, as actions of freedom and toward gaining forms of power, are choices constrained by the structures imposed externally.

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<sup>55</sup> Compare Geoff Bright's work on social haunting referred to in earlier chapters.

This presents challenges to a polar model of structure and agency; instead necessitating an approach that accounts for a third perspective (as outlined in the theoretical framework earlier).

## **6.2 Structural drivers for becoming involved**

*'Systematically stuck from the way suppression sets in, Survival on the streets, stand firm or get steppin'*<sup>56</sup>

Although structural factors are an often-cited causal factor in *why* people may become involved in 'gangs' (cf. Pitts, 2007, 2008) they are never considered as being an integral aspect, or foundational consideration for the educative processes of becoming. Where structural causality is considered, it is considered as a stand-alone factor eliminating the possibility of existential choice. To explore this it is vital, firstly to turn to key structural drivers identified within the data. These included:

- Abandonment, being an outsider or alienated from mainstream society
- Racial and class inequality
- Cultivation of conditions

### **6.2.1 Outsiders: Abandoned and Alienated**

The most prolific of these drivers being a sense of being outsiders, abandoned and alienated from mainstream society. One such example being a sense that the 'mainstream' professions with official responsibilities of local governance, leadership and education have on the whole been part of an

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<sup>56</sup> Skinny Man featured in Mongrel, *Alphabet Assassin* (2009).

exodus from poor inner-city areas<sup>57</sup>. P1 made this point on numerous occasions:

“[...] name a school teacher that lives locally, name a copper that lives locally, name a politician that lives locally. A’ mean they’ve all migrated, they’ve all left the area, kind’ve left us to our own devices, but y’know as they’ve left they’ve kind’a went ‘Oh by the way ‘ere’s a list of things that we don’t want you to do’. A’mean what would your response be? It’s ‘Fuck off y’knob ‘ed’ [...]”

(P1, GI)

There was a strong sense that the very people who make decisions about and govern the participants’ communities or govern them do not care about those who live there. Likewise, the ‘official’ leaders were out of touch with the wants, needs and cultures of the people living in poor areas. P1 succinctly introduces this notion in discussing official responses to street level violence:

“[...] I think the’ couldn’t care less.”

(P1, White, Male, 45-50: GI)

This was sharply emphasised in P1 discussing the potential of local indigenous leadership through the ‘real leaders’ and how this potential is not drawn on by the authorities:

“[...] if the authorities had anythin’ about them they would look at that and see a grand opportunity there, the very fact the’ don’t do that leads me onto say that they don’t give a flying fuck, they just, they just don’t care.”

(P1, White British, Male, 45-50: I2)

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<sup>57</sup> Comparable to Wacquant’s (2010) work on the hyper-ghetto.

Frequently these sentiments of abandonment were reiterated and recalibrated into a narrative of imposition and colonisation of values and cultural norms that were not wanted by those living in the communities. With the latter being symptomatic of a *civilising offensive* reaching into poor communities to *update* their existing civility<sup>58</sup>. P12 explicitly outlined this in describing three of the many substantive redevelopment and regeneration projects that have took place in her local community in recent years. The most potent and representative of these narratives of colonisation and imposition being that of the rebranding of the local market:

“[...] knocked down the shoppin’ centre an’ put the market up, the’ brought this French company [...] into run it an’ it had all like posh cheeses and wines an’ shit, it’s like *why would you do that* [participant emphasis], who did you think was gonna buy all this so the market was never gonna work, even if the’ changed everythin’ in it, the’ could see already alienatin’, y’, y’, alienatin’ everybody, it wasn’t for us [...]”

(P12, Female, Black Mixed British, 45-50)

Feelings of colonisation and imposition of cultural norms bred resentment and sarcasm, having the effect of a multiplied alienation amongst the participants; particularly where it was felt that money was being spent on things that were not culturally relevant to the community and could have been spent instead on social intervention projects:

‘[...] the’ not fundin’ Black projects, it really seems to be Black projects the’ not fundin’. [Park Name] has had five million pound

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<sup>58</sup> Cf. Skeggs, 2004 on working class culture as un-modern.



spent on it an' it looks pretty, [...] it's had tennis courts put in, which is obviously inner-city' favourite sport yeh, [...] the've had, this house 'as been done up really, really beautifully an' 'ave looked at this 'ouse, it's been dilapidated for years, an' thought that'd be a wicked youth project. But the've done up this 'ouse now, it's exhibition space yeh, it's exhibition space [...] so that's like, y' know it'd be like 'avin' everythin' look really nice, but actually people are livin' worse so that's why a' was sayin' y'know at the beginin', a' was like y' showin' us all this shit that people can 'ave, but we can't get it [...]

(P12, Female, Black Mixed British, 45-50)

### 6.2.2 Race and class

P14's described how he felt that for himself and many others in Town 2<sup>59</sup> there was a distinct rejection from mainstream employers due to stereotyped preconceptions of people from Town 2. These preconceptions being based predominantly on race, class and negative moral panic orientated press about the area and those who live there (cf. Wacquant, 2009a). Many participants echoed this idea that race and class are baselines for feelings of alienation and being outsiders. From P12 explaining "Black projects" are not funded in her community to P3's (Male, White British, 65-70) highlighting "[...] the're<sup>60</sup> totally different people to us, they're the rulin' class, all been to private school, all got' best educations, *they don't know what it's like* [...]". Other malignant catalysing aspects to learning to be-come involved in 'gangs' included overt prejudices and abuse suffered at the hands of officials:

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<sup>59</sup> And places like it.

<sup>60</sup> Referring to politicians and more generally the mainstream leadership other.

“it’s a slow, gradual process, there’s a them and us mentality, you learn not to trust suits, you learn not to trust the police ‘cos of the way they police the community, ‘cos you see racism, you get called nigger or coon by a police officer driving past in a car, you get stopped and searched four, five, six, seven times a week, you get the finger pointed at you like it’s your fault that you’re poor, it’s your fault that you live in a broken down area, it’s your fault that you’re uneducated, everything’s pointed at you so you develop a lot of resentment.”

(P14, Male, Black British, 50-55)

However, P14 also points out that this ‘slow gradual process’ of becoming is also affected by wider race and class discrimination:

[...] I think that within wider society there’s a set route and a set plan for you to go through, education, college, university then employment, but if you fall off that at some point, if you’re excluded from school or you don’t leave with any qualifications it doesn’t mean you’re dumb, it just means you’ve got no qualifications so you can see there’s no real opportunity for me to make a way for me in this world ‘cos nobody’s going to give me a job, nobody’s going to give me a chance. If you understand and recognise there’s an institutional racism or institutional discrimination within all walks of life, within all major organisations, not just the police or the fire service but in Tesco’s, in whatever business you want to look at, ‘cos all these businesses are is a cross-section of society and if you look at the representation of people from ethnic minorities within their workforce it will give you an idea. So people within senior management, you’ll be hard pushed to find someone from any ethnic minorities within senior management so that can give you an idea. I think certain environments, I think people look for different ways of supplementing their lifestyles, I think it’s not a coincidence that in impoverished areas and socially and economically deprived areas there’s high crime [...]

(P14, Male, Black British, 50-55)

P12 elaborates more broadly on this theme describing how it is not just groups that are commonly described as ‘gangs’ that form their own group membership born of feelings of alienation and being outside, but also others.

In this instance, again the foundation for this alienation is race:

“[...] this community then encourages group membership because it’s very social an’ people set up little official proper groups all over the place like even the old people ‘ave like old people’s dominos group [...], it’s like it’s almost encouraged, but a’ think that’s again because of the exclusion that we ‘ave for mainstream stuff an’ the lack of understandin’ that we will ‘ave for mainstream stuff, they don’t understand, everythin’s like very Eurocentric in mainstream so obviously [Town 2] is very mixed culturally so people set up their own groups an’ form their own groups to service their own needs [...].”

(P12, Female, Black Mixed British, 45-50)

Likewise social class featured significantly, although there is another aspect to social class; this being an exoticism about those who are described as ‘gang’ involved throughout popular discourse<sup>61</sup>. As much as having ‘outsider’ social class can generate alienation that acts as a driver for involvement in ‘gangs’, it also can manifest as being a *qualification*. Perversely, ‘outsider’ social class can also be something that attracts the *mainstream* (cf. Skeggs, 2004) as a two-way push and pull. P1 illustrates this contrast in describing his early involvement and at his career pinnacle:

“I think I hit all the buttons, I was brought up in a hostel, boys clubs, I lived with me Nana for a while so the’ was that, that was y’ level of entry, that was your acceptance, I was no different, absolutely no different from anybody else, any other kid on the estate. [...] Y’know it was almost a tick box of

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. Skeggs, 2004

normality, of acceptance of when a' come in, not sympathy, but more empathy, more 'Yeh, he's alright'

(P1, Male, White British, 45-50: I2)

These could be described as signs and symbols of class, experience and acceptability, or even *qualifications* for involvement in 'gangs'. Yet this also operates in reverse: during the ethnography when P1 was reminiscing on how at the height of his involvement in 'gangs' he had generated a *celebrity status* that was somehow exotic and attractive to his new affluent neighbours:

*'He went on to explain that at the time he had owned a large house in a very affluent area with a substantial amount of land, and although all of the neighbours were of a different class than he was from and were from a background where they had never been poor, he was accepted into their social circle. He explained this as he had a level of celebrity and they were somehow keen or even 'turned-on' to be around him as they knew what his business was and somehow found it attractive (perhaps through difference, or perhaps through some kind of exoticism?). He continued by describing being invited to a social gathering, which was related to a charitable event; the social gathering hosted by a neighbour was only a few days after someone had chased him "... down the road trying to shoot me ...".'*

(24/03/14)

Consistently the point of entry into or prerequisite qualification allowing the educative processes of be-coming involved in 'gangs' was cited as social class, resonating Winlow's (2014) work outlining how violent subjectivities are formed in ex-working class communities. There was only one exception to this and this disclosure of being middle class was self-defined by the participant. However, this exception to the rule was overcome through a process of re-

invention and blending in by the participant, which was only possible by the fact that he was placed into an environment (school) that was categorically working class. This absorption of working class culture and ways of being was only possible and equally necessitated through forced proximity. P18 explained this succinctly:

‘The point about football hooligan culture is it’s very much a working class culture, there’s no question about it. [...] with the exception of a handful of people including myself, it’s working class, there’s no question about that [...]

(P18, Male, White British, 50-55)

P18’s ‘group’ education began out of an initial alienation through social class that developed into an active choice to survive within the conditions he found himself in:

“I originally went to a very nobby prep school, private school [...] wearing pink blazers and iron crosses [...] it was very very exclusive [...]. And my parents decided I was unhappy at school, which I was, but I think that was more because I was just unhappy anyway, probably partly because I was growing up in a very dysfunctional family. But I was taken out of the private school system and thrown into a very very tough inner [City] comprehensive [...] I turned up there, my Mother thought it would be a good idea, she didn’t like the, the kind of, kind of the rough material blazers they, [...] so she got, [...] me a special flannel blazer, she got the school badge, she sewn the school badge on. I immediately stood out like a sore thumb, yet I’d also come from a school where everybody was [...] upper middle class [...] we all had posh accents. So I walk into a rough inner city comprehensive, [...] with a flannel blazer and a posh accent, y’know who’s number one target. [...] I was picked on, understandably you could say, and it was very nasty [...] I was bullied all the time, I mean physically bullied [...] my first term was really horrendous and I got beaten up, y’know I had my nose broken, smacked in every part of the

head, I was head butted in the head in the face, somebody tried to break my spine with a flying head-butt. I mean it was brutal, it was a brutal place it really was. Erm, in the time that I was there someone was stabbed to death in a playground fight [...] it was a tough tough working class world and I had to learn very very fast in order to survive [...] I did adapt and I was moved to a different class which made my life easier. [...] I was able to reinvent myself and I sussed out very very fast what I needed to do to survive, which was basically to become like them. So I became, when I was at school to all intents and purposes another working class kid.'

(P18, Male, White British, 50-55)

However, race and class are key anchor points for being placed 'outside' and othered, as well as exoticised in popular cultural narrative (cf. hooks, 1994a).

P1 engaged with this sameness and difference critically in a discussion during an observation session at the gymnasium:

*P1 saying that 'the word racism is spat and classism is just said' describing a divide and conquer between the poor of non-white and white people in relation to being of a 'lower class' and the oppression of such groups.*

(27/05/14)

Participants frequently alluded to a sense of oppression based on social class, with some explicitly stating that terminology such as 'lower class' can be a byword for being a 'gang' or gang related. Upon my asking P12 about groups that the police (for example) may describe as a 'gang', the response was quite unexpected in its directness:

'But the're generally underclasses aren't they, generally groups of people from urban communities not the suburbs

even if the people in the suburbs are the more powerful group  
it's not gonna be called a gang [...]

(P12, Female, Black Mixed British, 45-50)

This excerpt presents symbolic and spatial aspects of how although people living in affluent areas may have power and / or even be involved in group orientated crime. Yet despite this the finger is pointed at the 'lower classes' living in poor communities when the 'G' word is brought into play. This demonstrates how the term 'gang' is synthetically synonymised with certain spaces, neighbourhoods and communities. The exceptions to involvement in 'gangs' beyond the realms of those who would typically be described as 'working', 'lower' or 'underclass' are extremely limited.

The only other exception (than P18) was in the lawyer who used the gymnasium (Gym 1). Whilst the lawyer was not in any way able to be described as part of a 'gang', nor be described as fitting any of the social classifications above he was accepted within the space of the groups due to being P1's legal representation in some matters and who occasionally dispensed advice that was perhaps beyond the realms of professional practice.

### **6.2.3 Cultivation of conditions**

Often these conditions that, as P14 puts it, 'cultivate[d]' views and conditions of social exclusion, which can in turn cultivate violent responses and cultures,

are perceived as static and unbending in popular discourse. P8 (Female, Black British, 60-65) foreshadowed this idea of cultivated conditions for becoming involved in 'gangs' with the metaphors "germinate" and "fertile ground". This was developed further by P14 (Male, Black British, 50-55) in explaining his experiences of 'gang' cultures described a cultivation of social alienation and the direct response to that through creating new ways of being and thinking which of course requires an active choice as well as active thought beyond the structural constraints generating countercultures (cf. Willis, 1977):

"within certain environments, certain lifestyles and the way certain views are cultivated where people feel socially excluded, don't feel part of wider society so they develop their own way of thinking and their own way of behaving [...]"

(P14, Male, Black British, 50-55)

Throughout the fieldwork I heard stories of and encountered the unfolding of this kind of cultivation of violent subjectivities (Winlow, 2014) forming amongst the groups. On the first occasion I met R13 he had been out of prison for about a week. He had served a long custodial sentence for attempting to kill an enemy. R13 had lived in Town 1 all of his life, he had become a 'known person', one of the 'main 'eds', he had to maintain his status in these conditions that he had been cultivated in.

Upon his release the conditions were the same, yet in his absence his leaves had fallen and branches had wilted. Although, the conditions were still the same, and because the soil was rich and *fertile* with the optimum structural



climate, he was able to redevelop his group. I saw the group redeveloped over the year I spent hanging around the gymnasium in the very same way a gardener would watch the seasons pass seeing her plants grow and flourish. First he brought in and interpolated his faithful lieutenant (R15). R13 would train every day, at least once a day. After a few weeks his lieutenant was recruited, brought in from outside of the gymnasium regulars. He did not look like one of the regulars, nor R13 (Male, White British, 30-35). He was much slimmer; he did not hold himself with the same assertion as the regulars. At first R15 (Male, White British, 30-35) would just hang around and chat with R13, or sit around in the reception waiting for him, texting or occasionally going outside on the phone. After a month or so, he began to train too, after a few weeks of training his posture and the way he carried himself changed. He was be-coming. This was the beginning of the process; he was being 'made', created, and shaped: the *conditions* permitted it and so did he.

Next came the outer circle of the group (R16, R17, R18 – all Male, White British, 25-30), these were younger by around three to five years, they were of a slimmer build than that of any of the regulars, they were skinny and pale. They began to appear part way through R13s training session. They would go and speak with him, he would either tell them to go and do some errand or other or tell them to wait in the reception area. In the event of the latter, R13 would sit and question the younger men about various events. Usually, there were discussions about people who owed money to them. The younger men would typically be sent away on errands. After a couple of months, now toward the latter part of the fieldwork, the younger men occasionally came into

the gymnasium and trained, usually for short periods. Mostly they held the relegated, but faithfully occupied, space of the reception area where they would be questioned and allowed to talk freely about other peripheral events, sharing stories and knowledge.

These free talk sessions allowed R13 to keep his finger fully on the pulse of the 'street' without having to occupy the space of the street himself. The conditions were ideal for the cultivation of the groups; I was encountering the structural and constraining cycle of Spring and Summer; the leaves were falling in an Autumn and some time after the fieldwork the Winter would inevitably come again for R13 just like it had prior to the fieldwork beginning. After that, maybe it would be the turn of the saplings to grow more in the fertile conditions.

Although at first glance these conditions may appear to be static, the synopsis from my observations in the gymnasium above, show that they are very much active, multidimensional and moving. Other data also demonstrates that the educative processes within the groups living under these conditions are fluid and multi-dimensional; P20 draws on his own life course in demonstrating this:

“[...] when I was younger [...], where I was brought up it was like no matter what it cost to protect your investment, your property. [...] this is the way it's gonna be no matter what, no bendin' the rules, there it was, and that was through obviously defending it with violence. Whereas as 'ave got older, erm, a' prefer to use a more diplomatic approach to it like a' say I'll rather talk my way through it, [...] like I had an incident on, erm, Monday night, er, somet'ad gone on in the day with this

this guy that had come down from [Town 3] an', erm, basically through the day it turns out his 'ad a pop at, y'know, [Nickname 2] [...] big, big fella, 'is not an idiot, an', er 'is 'avin' a pop at 'im, 'n' to the point where 'is outside on the floor, an' he got fucked off. [...] I come on the bar later on and [...] 'ave heard about this guy [who] has got scars all over 'im. And he come back in, er, about half nine at night, [...] come in loud and aggressive [...] I went up to him nice and calm 'mate, I've been told you're not allowed in, you're kind've barred' and he's like 'why, why am a' barred?' [...] And I've walked into the door and basically stood at the door [...] Y'know quite a big fella, er, looks like he'd done a bit himself, erm, [...] standin' at the door and starin' at me [...] tryin to goad me [...] an' 'I go where I want' like 'I go where I want, I'm barred from nowhere'. Y'know, I'm stayin' calm sayin' 'Well not in this place, mate' just keepin' nice and calm at the door to the point the fourth time he did it [...] a' reminded him that I'd been quite fair to him for forty-five minutes. Y'know what a' mean, with 'im comin' back in after me, goin' back in, tryin' to intimidate some of the customers when I've gone to serve someone at the bar [...] in the end it was like erm, still keepin' me calm but y'know, but a' was like 'Have a' been a cunt with y'? [...] an' then it kind've sunk in a bit an' he was like 'Well no'. [...] so a' said 'Right, now you're takin' the piss' a' said 'You've pushed me like four different times comin' back into the pub to the point where I am now' I said 'I've not hit y', 'ave not been aggressive towards y', 'ave been calm towards y', er, now you're startin' to take me for a cunt'. And he looked down and within a few minutes he went [...]"

(P20, Male, White British, 30-35)

This is an interesting example of how in this case groups who may describe themselves as 'street leaders' continue to learn and develop tactics for dealing with conflict over time. P11 (Male, White British, 40-45) reinforced this point by adding that "When we was young on the door it was like 'That's it, you're not comin' in', 'Why not?', 'It's not negotiable, go away', three minutes later the guy was strugglin' to obviously breath [...]". Whereas now all of the group occupy less hands on positions of respect within the community and

are still deemed to be the people to go to for mediation between rival groups involved in violence, but rarely engage in physical violence themselves.

Although such conditions, as much as they may cultivate and “[...] influence people’s learning in that negative way.” (P17, Male, Black Mixed British, 40-45), they may also cultivate a drive to achieve economic stability or success through any means available. This perspective is opened up by P12:

“[...] a’m not justifyin’ like any violent behaviour or a’m not justifyin’ any of that but you can understand it, if y’, if you’re hungry or you’re strugglin’, anyone who’s hungry or strugglin’ or has ever experienced can understand why people’d get into certain lifestyles, a’ mean shootin’ each other over a girl or ‘cos y’ car’s better or somethin’ is all daft but a’ can understand why people go out there an systematically try an’ earn money by any means necessary if the’ve got nothin’”

(P12, Female, Black Mixed British, 45-50)

The data demonstrates how people arrived at participating in ‘gangs’ through attempts at generating economic stability or prosperity by any means available to them. Both the conditions that triggered the choice and the activities tended to be quite narrow. This indicating that the participant’s life chances and experiences were similar and that the means available to them to create economic stability or prosperity are very limiting.

These options included robbery, distribution of drugs, counterfeiting, night-time economy security and protection (inclusive of the inherent group based violence that goes with it), commercial burglary, extortion, unlicensed

entertainments (for instance illegal raves, bareknuckle boxing) and aspects of the sex industry (for instance running a brothel). Of these eight means of generating income under limiting conditions, it must be noted that the majority were predominantly involved in the distribution of drugs, security and protection. Some had niche (OCG) specialities such as P16 who specialised in commercial burglary emptying warehouses and taking truckloads of goods and R23 from the gymnasium only engaged in large scale apparel counterfeiting. With this in mind it is possible to grasp that the drive to 'achieve' within the structures can only be met substantially in a small number of ways.

As mentioned earlier, not all people affected by the structural constraints outlined thus far become engaged in 'gangs' or associated activities. Though for some, aspirations to have material items may affect their drive to engage in criminal activity based around 'gangs':

"[...] I was like sixteen, fifteen [...] an' the gang thing was kind'a at it's height then [...] people were strugglin', the riots happened just opposite [indicating from interview location] it was massive, people havin' hard time', there was lack of opportunities, y' can take everythin' away from someone an' they've got nothin' to lose y'gonna try doin' somethin'. D'y'know what a' mean y' watchin' y' Mum and Dad struggle'n' y' watchin' people 'avin' a 'ard time, people aren't achievin' anthin', people that are outside of these communities drivin' better cars, livin' in better houses, goin' on better holidays so if you've got nothin' to lose an' you've got no opportunity to gain anythin' [...] it's a way forward is to get involved in criminal activities t', t' ready y' own life an' yer parent's life an' yer children's, yer siblings, yer friends"

(P12, Female, Black Mixed British, 45-50)

P16 reiterates this, again with the active choice emerging from within the structural conditions:

“It’s the way the’ brought up innit an’ how y’ brought up. Like a’ say I was brought up with four brothers an’ three sisters so my Mam and Father couldn’t afford to give us the best, so for us, so for me I wanted to look smarter an’ like I chose crime to earn my money”

(P16, Male, White British, 40-45)

But what of the outstanding issue of not all people living with a sense of being ‘outside’ or alienated becoming involved in ‘gangs’? Why are the views and actions that P14 described as being ‘cultivated’ out of these experiences not taken on by all people living similar lives? It is suggested below that the phenomena is not experienced in the same way for all. This of course goes against a pure Kantian understanding in that Kant would have it that the phenomenal realm is experienced as the same for all (Kant, 1943).

### **6.3 Choice and becoming: power and freedom**

Whilst substantive structural issues can lay a foundation for participation in ‘gangs’, there is still a strong indication in the data that active choice and agency operate within these processes. Yet, as P17 explains, the process of be-coming is not an overnight or trivial decision:

“[...] deprivation, clearly the fact that people needed money, discrimination, racism, there is a wide variety of conditions and they’re not exhaustive [...] in my view there is a set of conditions, I don’t think we assume that they just go out and say right I’m going to be part of this group now’, you slowly

develop and learn and nurture and there's external factors that push down that road [...]"

(P17, Male, Black Mixed British, 40-45)

However, there are also substantial agentive manoeuvres within these structural constraints; as indicated by P17 these manoeuvres are typically played out in slow motion. These choices range from seeking out opportunities for excitement, fun and adventure through to urges to become 'somebody'. The latter being shorthand for developing a sense of self-value within structural situations that devalue and alienate, with this sense of self-value being gained through alternative means to those of 'mainstream society'. However, there would be no need or urge to seek out alternative sources of self-value or make choices to become involved in 'gangs' in order to become 'somebody' if it was not for the foundational structural issues outlined earlier. If the structural foundations did not exist, perhaps there would be less urge or need for responding through *any means necessary* (P12; P20).

The data demonstrates that the existential active choices expressed are a key component of educative processes of becoming involved in 'gangs'. In particular the themes of seizing power and freedom, and excitement, enjoyment, fun and adventure featured prominently across the field. Some of these factors not only provide the *key to the door* of learning to become part of the groups and the associated activities, but are also active in maintaining involvement. P14 opens this perspective in discussing his progression from living in poverty with racial discrimination and lack of parental input through

time constraints of his Mother trying to keep the household afloat, through to his earliest engagement as part of a 'gang' (this being the first of two he was involved in) as part of a football hooligan youth firm:

"I was a football hooligan for a number of years which was really hard for me to get out of 'cos it was something that was enjoyable, I enjoyed it, 'cos the camaraderie, the fun that you had going away out of town, not paying on trains, getting involved in beefs and fights with big men and we were kids and the whole North City 1 scene, I loved it"

(P14, Male, Black British, 50-55)

P18 reiterates this in discussing his first experience on the terraces prior to becoming part of a football hooligan firm:

"I just loved the whole buzz of it, I just the feeling of it and they were all doing knees up Mother Brown, everyone was falling down the terraces, rolling over, falling over. And it was around bonfire night, y'know it was fun, anyway they were throwing all these fireworks and, er, bangers exploding in front of people's faces and there was this kind of slightly dangerous feel about it. And also the police were nicking people [...] it was just like a real buzz about it, it was very exciting, and it gave me this kind of adrenaline rush and I loved, actually loved it"

(P18, Male, White British, 50-55)

For P18 this later developed through a process of learning to be like the other young people in his new school, through to seeking out ever more extreme situations in which to get the thrill (and test himself) that he first experienced when he punched one of the school bullies:

"every time that there was a violent situation I felt myself immediately drawn in to it. [...] I loved the rush of it, I loved the



buzz of it, y'know [...], an' I wasn't afraid, y'know I would run into situations"

This enjoyment and excitement can be both seen from the perspective of the 'buzz' of the physical violence or danger as well as that of being turned on by, or enjoying, the less commonly considered aspects such as camaraderie, banter, fashion and lifestyle:

"It doesn't necessarily involve caving anyone's head in, y'know, it's you can just enjoy the whole, the whole banter [...] there was this whole thing that I actually found that I was really drawn to, but having gone into it experimenting, I then found that I actually really liked it, I mean I liked the clothes, but I also like the culture, I, I liked the world that I was in, I enjoyed being in those situations"

(P18, Male, White British, 50-55)

This drive to seek out excitement and enjoyment is not restricted to groups orientated toward football or confined to spaces carrying the potential for violence. Although spaces and the group(s) related to them were of significance in choosing the sources of this excitement through the means of 'gangs'. P1 sums this up in comparing 'mainstream' gymnasiums with the type of 'back street' heavy weights gymnasium he was attracted to:

"[...] the' was certain gyms you wouldn't, the, the obvious the chalk and cheese, the [Town 1 Leisure Centre], the David Lloyd's, they were just commercial gyms where you went if you wanted to increase your level of fitness, and the conversation was as, y'know, as dull as custard, an' the' was no atmosphere. Y'know they just didn't excite me, there was no way on this earth an' if that was the only level of gym I'd 'ave played tiddly winks or squash, y'know a' certainly wouldn't have been. The gym enticed me in an' a' felt the gym was a massive attraction for me at that age'

(P1, Male, White British, 45-50)

Also, the sense of not knowing what may happen next was an integral part of the excitement. This ranged from the extreme in P14 saying to me after an interview that “tomorrow’s a promise to no one”, which contextualises the level of risk involved in being part of ‘gangs’; through to merely being around others associated with the group: “when I used t’ engage with certain people an’ that it, it’d be exciting” (P9). I got a sense of this unpredictability whilst hanging around in the gymnasium. Sometimes this unpredictability was quite clearly of a high stakes nature, such as the occasion when a group of men came looking for someone who uses the gym and covered all entrances while a man in a car waited outside. It was clear that the men, although respectful to others in the space, did not just want to discuss the weather with the person they were seeking.

The other end of this scale being the ‘banter’ and its extreme nature within the hyper-masculinised space of the gymnasium. This banter included highly performative set pieces of racing to view the page three picture in two different newspapers and declare which model had the most attractive breasts, as well as statements that were intended to be as outrageous and funny (to those saying them) as possible. I was on the receiving end of these on a number of occasions; one such time being in a conversation with R1 when we were talking about performance enhancing substances, which led onto addictions and smoking. Within the conversation, just as the sobriety had reached a level where I had been lulled into a false sense of security, R1

(Male, Other Mixed British 35-40) said “What about you, have you got any addictions, other than porn”. The question was solely designed as just another thread in the constant weave of outrageous banter. But throughout hanging around the gymnasium it was very clear that sometimes that was all that people came for, just to sit around, not workout and instead drink coffee and have what outside that space would be perceived as *uncivilised* banter.

The sense of adventure is broader than these vignettes indicate and is deep in reach. At the other end of the scale is the thrill and addictiveness of violence. This was discussed by several participants, but most succinctly summed up by Participants in a group interview:

**P11** (Male, White British, 45-50)

it’s very addictive violence and very [P1: Interjects]

**P1** (Male, White British, 45-50)

It’s compellin’, [...] you’re almost compelled, a’ mean everybody gets angry y’know and it’s that bangin’ on the table and, erm it’s motivational, y’know it can inform. It can often character form the wrong way [P11: Interjects].

**P11** (Male, White British, 45-50)

We enjoy it, you’ve been there a’n’t y’ [indicating to several members of the group] when it’s really goin’ off

**P21** (Male, White British, 45-50)

A’ don’t know how many times; you don’t want it to stop

This excerpt also begins to point towards the deeper presence of an urge to transcend oppressive structures in an existential manoeuvre for freedom and

creating forms of power within lives that have been constrained by such structural corrals. Important to this is that, just as participants cite structural barriers, equally the vast majority declare active choice in the be-coming process with vigour:

“the activities I got involved in, and quite willingly I might add, nobody hypnotised me and forced me against my will”

(P1, Male, White British, 45-50: I2).

Yet, this is almost always counterbalanced with a recognition that the choices are somehow always already fenced in, that there is some kind of unknowable reality to the reality that is being crafted by the groups and individuals in their pursuit for existential freedoms:

“from runnin’ the door staff agency early, opening the gym was, a’ mean that’s it, [...] an’ a’ think a’ did what was expected of me and a’ don’t think I did anything differently. Aw shit that makes me sound like a’m trapped in some kind of egg, what’s that shit film called now that the’ stretched it too long with Keanu Reeves? Matrix, it sounds like a’m trapped in the matrix. But no a’ think, a’ think we did what we did well and a’ just took the ball that was given me, took the pack of cards that were dealt me and we played a pretty good game and it’s not getting’ older is it?”

(P1, Male, White British, 45-50: I2)

Again it is also worth considering the range of structures that are in play; these are not restricted to the obvious and well worn tropes of life chances, but also venture off in more obscure directions such as hyper masculine image as normativity, family as well as the more obvious financial structural

foundation giving rise to what P1 frequently described as ‘crimes of opportunity’ or more specifically still, crimes of violent subjectivity (Winlow, 2014). Sometimes the existential action is one based more in imagery than actuality, as P9 (Male, 25-30, Other Mixed British) describes a conversation with his friend who was described in the media as a ‘gang leader’ whilst they were incarcerated together:

“he used to say to me *[P9’s second name]* a’ swear to god’ he was sayin’ ‘a’ can’t fight, a’m not a fighter, a’ never ‘ave been, but a’ wouldn’t think twice about puttin’ a bullet in someone’ an’ honestly a’ believed ‘im. Serious. Well ‘is experience is evidence d’y’know what a’ mean”

For P9’s friend the only versions of power and autonomy he could perceive as being available to him were making money from selling drugs and shooting people who he thought were obstructing or disrespecting him. Although P9’s friend was not physically big in stature or skilled at fighting he strived to project an image of hyper masculinised ‘hardness’, someone who should not be messed with. This was epitomised in the person in question orchestrating shootings prior and during his incarceration based on his feeling like he had been disrespected.

P9 also described a number of scenarios where he himself had gone looking for people who he too felt had disrespected him, on one occasion with a baseball bat. In this instance the attack was not carried out as it emerged that upon arriving at the location of his intended quarry, the other person was identified by a colleague as ‘a shooter’, thus he was subdued by the more significant threat. However, the main point in both instances being that the

micro-structure of hyper masculinised image as normativity formed part of the agentive decision and action of attempting to seize power, autonomy and freedom to *be*. Yet all within the structures which cultivate their possibility.

In terms of family, choice within structure emerges again, as an example of this concept it is worth considering P13 describing a friend of his:

“[...] he just wanted to live a normal life, be able to do what he wants, but because of his older brother, at them times it was a case of ‘*If we see y’ off side, we’re getting’ y’*” ‘*If we can’t see you, see y’ family members’* so what was ‘*appenin’*’, as he was walkin’, always walkin’ mindin’ his own business getting’ jumped, on a weekly basis he was getting’ jumped because, just because of who is brother was so in the end he just turned ‘*round an’* said ‘*Y’know what, fuck it a’m gonna go out there an’ back myself basically’* ‘*Defend myself*’ . ‘*Cos a’m on the road these man [sic], ‘cos over time he built up hate, he built up hate for the other cr’, the other group, he didn’t even want to do it, he felt like ‘Ra’ why you always pressuring me?’*. Y’know’at a’ mean so then ‘*Alright then, you wanna pressure me, here I am’*, an’ put himself in it [...]

(P13, Male, Black British, 35-40)

Other obvious aspects of choice are financial and economic choice. Here again dualities present themselves in the paradox of attempting to become free from economic constraint and feelings of powerlessness that is developed out of following the constraints of what is deemed to be civilised. For P16 this was the civilising forces of appearing to be ‘smart’ or smartly dressed in spite of not having smart clothing as a child, which was set against a rejection of the constraint of his life chances growing up in a community with high unemployment and low educational attainment:

“Slave labour but then y’ giro y’ve got to work fuckin’ voluntary for seventy pound a week. It’s not right is it, it’s slave labour. [...] if they get money, work for people to work for a giro, but why the fuck don’t they get them a job then? To get ‘em off the dole all-together, but no [...] ‘we’re getting’ ‘em to work ‘ere for seventy quid a week an’ the’ve got to do it or we’ll take that seventy quid a week off ‘em’. Fuckin’ ‘ell, fuck’ sake wh’ y’ stick y’ seventy quid a week up yer arse, I’ll go out an’ earn me money other ways. D’y’know what a’ mean, an’ that’s how it is, s’ it’s just fucked up innit. It is it’s fucked up [...]. An’ that’s how I chose to earn my money an’ for me to look smart [...].”

(P16, Male, White British, 40-45)

These seemingly contradictory parallaxed perspectives were marked out throughout the fieldwork, from P9 describing how he sought out advice from relatives and observed friends “fuckin’ up” their drugs distribution work and taking time to reflect on his economic position prior to deciding to move into selling Class A drugs:

“An’ then while a’m away, ‘n’ the more a’m thinkin’, ‘cos we’re on holiday an’ we’re comin’ back ‘n’ we’ve got no money, an’ *a’m thinkin’ a’m doin’ this definitely*”

(P9, Male, Other Mixed British, 25-30: 11)

The same issue of rejection of constraint through projection of imagery and sense of economic prosperity was evident in the gymnasium (and is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9). This was presented in the gymnasium in the form of apparel and striving to become ‘big’ through weightlifting. Becoming, or staying, ‘big’ was the overall goal of the majority within the gymnasium. This was not merely restricted to those identified as being involved in ‘gang’

cultures or 'street leaders', but also the peripheral regulars<sup>62</sup>. The imagery of being 'big' and having highly defined muscular lines was of high importance and unashamedly checked throughout long workouts in the four walled encapsulating mirrors. The larger and most muscularly defined regulars got the most credence from their peers, even in the case of those who were not central to the criminal activity of the groups.

Within the gymnasium, becoming 'big' is a means to counter the structural conditions outlined earlier in this chapter through the imagery of physical potency and instilling a sense of superiority within a wider framework of phallogocentric political discourse across wider society (cf. Frederick *et al*, 2007). Thus a cycle of reflection begins to emerge, also considered in the imagery of clothing as a means to present as powerful and free; particularly the regulars within the gymnasium who were key figures within 'gangs' who would turn up to every workout wearing expensive designer sportswear. Frequently their attire was discussed between themselves, mostly discussing the price of each item or how they had paid extra to have a pair of already expensive sports trainers customised, bringing the price up to in excess of one-hundred and eighty pounds. This was also reverberated by P2 (Male, White British, 45-50) in reflecting on his experience of working with 'gang' members within law enforcement:

[...] they take massive pride in their appearance an' it is all about wearing the best clothes, the best trainers, ev',

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<sup>62</sup> The peripheral regulars interestingly not being directly involved with such 'gang' orientated activity, but certainly were somehow part of the overall outsider identity group that gravitated to and orbited the space of the gymnasium.



everythin' y'know ev', everythin' i', is about a s', sign of wealth  
[...]

From the perspective of law enforcement, P2 describes how he views young people beginning their process of becoming involved in 'gangs' as a means of achieving an alternative 'higher' social status (or capital):

"[...] there were a lot of kids who were actively drawn to gang members like a magnet, an', an' it was all about the, almost like the status, y'know they were seen as a status symbols within, [...] their peer group and within the community [...]"

As will be outlined in the following chapter P9 demonstrates an example of this as an early stage of be-coming from the other side of the fence from P2:

"[...] it'd be social status really [...] status or to be someone, I always used to see people in fast cars an' I'd think 'or that's me that' [...] so it was just image [...] status that's, that's all down, sums it up [...]"

Although this is not simply a matter restricted to a winding back to be-coming represented through imagery, nor is it something that rests solely on the superficial and quickly achievable. This be-coming 'somebody' takes time, in fact significant periods of time, often over a lifetime. P3 embodies the long-term process of be-coming 'somebody' as was evident in the highly respectful way in which every person who used the gymnasium spoke to him and treated him with the utmost respect. P3 is an elderly man and has lost some of the size he used to have in his bodybuilding prime, he is visibly nowhere near as agile or fast in movement as the younger gymnasium regulars. Yet in spite of this even the very 'big' and visibly strong, the men who as P1 put it

prior to introducing me to them “run half of the drugs in [Town 1]”, all treat P3 as being on a higher platform of the alternative hierarchy that is inescapable within the space of the gym. P1 frequently described P3 as “the elder statesman” of [Town 1] and as his “Mentor”.

P3 explained his story of be-coming the kind of person who was described to me as a ‘street leader’ who was in a position to intervene, mediate and neutralise local issues within outsider identity groups. This process was one spanning a lifetime:

“[...] a’ think it was just progression really, from school [...] y’know y’ did what you did, er, an’ then as y’ got older yer mates, some of yer mates were doormen so I got introduced that way through other mates. [...] An’ that’s, an’ then another progression to that is the gym [...]”

(P3, Male, White British, 65-70)

Other examples of this lifelong self-learning to be-come were discussed by both P9 and P14. For P9 the be-coming somebody initially stemmed from the excitement and exhibitionism of low-level crime such as driving stolen cars to school, to impress girls, leading to being able to fit in in negative social circles wherever he found himself:

“I always seem to fit in, I always seem to be magneted [sic] towards, like a’ said last week when, obviously I went to prison straight away I was in with the wrong crowd [...] before y’ know it you’re in with them, d’y’ know what a’ mean. I’m next on pool, I’m playin’ pool with someone who, who even when he gets beat stays on the pool table, d’y’ know what a’ mean? An then a’m there straight in among it [...]”

(P9, Male, 25-30, Other Mixed British: I1)

For P14 the beginnings of be-coming came from his early days of not being financially well off and making his own way within the space of the street:

“I didn’t wear the best clothes but I wore clothes nevertheless, so that’s the contribution of mum, but mum was walking in the other direction so I was left to raise myself on the streets”

This progressed into football hooliganism as a means of (excitement and) becoming ‘somebody’. During his time as a football hooligan P14 realised that he had an aptitude for violence and began to question why people should take the risk of doing violence and getting arrested and incarcerated and there be no remuneration for it. This coupled with the structural constraints of being from a poor single parent family, limited parental supervision, low educational attainment and racial and class inequality in the job market gave rise to his career of becoming ‘somebody’ within the space of the street and putting the skills he had realised on the terraces to economic use.

Once more this illuminates the dual face of the foundations of the educative processes of be-coming involved in ‘gang’ cultures in that the very choices that are being made to become ‘somebody’ are an integral aspect of the self same *thing* that is represented as structural constraint. P16 further clarifies this torsional motion, which appears to be a journey from one thing to another at first glance. Yet upon closer consideration it is possible to perceive the space between and how choice and structure wind back into each other:

“The area y’ brought up in as well, y’know’at a’ mean, a’m from Estate 1, the in crowd was the grafters, criminals an’ if you wanted to be like a known person you chose the life of crime. An’, d’y’know what a’ mean and I thought ‘Oh it’s the it thing innit in these areas, the person to be”

(P16, Male, White British, 40-45)

## 6.4 Summary

The concept of *being someone* or becoming someone is reliant up on a foundational subconscious idea that the people themselves living their situations perceive themselves, in a phenomenological sense, as *nothing* prior to this process of becoming. The descriptions in the first part of this chapter clearly demonstrate how class position, poverty and spatial abandonment impact on the lived experiences of the participants. However, there appears to be a disjoint in consciousness that their actions of choosing to become someone are not merely a result of these structural conditions but also a part of them. Winding back further to the point of the actual structure being part of the choice; this is the parallax foundation for all other aspects of the educative processes of becoming involved in groups commonly described as ‘gangs’. This is the integral and hinter-space, the third space within the thirds spaces and places that is pivotal to these processes.

There exists a zemiological facet across this in that the social harm that is done to the communities that I spent time in is the thing that encapsulates all of the individual structural drivers. This is what Žižek describes as the zero level violence, the systemic violence (Žižek, 2009). Here the systemic

violence of abandonment, poverty, capitalist materialist ideology and depletion of previous sites of generating working class identities and economics (cf. Bright, 2011; Winlow, 2001, 2014) combine as part of the zemiological whole and the agentive choice expressed by participants. Here structure and agency are one in the same (parallaxed). This is why I utilise the hyphenated neologism of *be-coming*, as the experience of the groups herein is one of already *being* through the social harms that are done to and around them, and at the same time are *becoming* further. Becoming a symptomatic reflection of the systemic violence which they experience everyday and which continues to haunt them.

# **Chapter 7**

## **Second Findings Chapter**

### **Incommensurability: Hauntings, Stories, Inside and Outside**

## 7.1 Introduction

The theme of incommensurability, of not being one thing or the other and both at the same time recurs throughout the data. Crucial to this aspect of the findings is the concept of 'gangs' learning to be-come outside of the mainstream and all of its apparatuses, yet at the same time reflecting such apparatuses. Likewise, the closely linked theme of 'gangs' as an absent presence, also repeatedly emerges. The concept of absent presence strongly aligns with Gordon's (2008) work on social hauntings and in turn links with the idea of 'gangs' being educated through stories. These stories simultaneously promote moving beyond the normative, yet are highly controlling and reflective of normative state apparatuses such as police and politics. Often these stories are intended to instil fear, as well as perpetuate images of the heroic and legend. This chapter outlines: the role of social haunting in the educative processes of 'gangs'; how the past impacts on the present; the role of stories, particularly those of trauma and respect, within these educative processes.

## 7.2 Absent presence: ghosts and haunting

Although several participants described themselves as no longer active within 'gangs', they each in their own way also described how, as P1 put it "you can never give back the keys". Many participants presented as constantly precariously balanced on the cusp between being and not being. Appearing incommensurably balanced between being *in* and *out* at the same time, ever haunting and haunted between this life and their previous one.

This precarious haunting position is no accident though; this skill is learned and developed as all others are within the groups. This precarious incommensurable position, like the ghost, ghoul, poltergeist and duppy exists in various forms. Primarily it is a positionality that is essential in learning to become involved in the groups, and one that is also vital in learning to become other than the group or attempting to break away from the group's affective controls (yet, previous involvement may also be exploited as a means of maintaining power). To be active within the groups it is important to have learned the ability to be invisible. Likewise upon becoming other than the group, or inactive, it is also important to exercise this and continue to learn how to adapt this skill.

### **7.2.1 Incommensurability and Reflections**

The foundations of 'gangs' as an absent presence rest on the seemingly polar position of them being incommensurable entities as well as reflecting more normative actions and groups. To begin to demonstrate this it is noteworthy to consider how P9 described how his closest friends stole hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of heroin from another group of men involved in the trade of narcotics and as a result the victims of the theft kidnapped one of the group. The story unravelled to the point of the thief being water boarded in order to gain the whereabouts of the heroin. In popular discourse this type of action would be described as that of a 'gang' or possibly 'OCG'. Yet P9 who described this set of events to me also stressed at several junctures that he



and many of his friends and associates had never perceived themselves as being involved in 'gangs' or 'gangsters'.

Interestingly, whilst simultaneously engaging in non-normative / non-mainstream activity such as that outlined above, 'gangs' are inadvertently reflecting the apparatuses of the *normative / mainstream* such as the police or politicians. As will be demonstrated below, frequently 'gangs' mirror the 'legitimacy' of the *mainstream* as a means of survival or support. Equally interesting, although not directly relevant to the present research, is the finding that the mainstream also actually reflects the actions of 'gangs'. One of the most striking examples demonstrating this mirroring came in a group interview in the heavy weights gymnasium, which was led by the group in their description of themselves as 'the real community leaders'. Within the discussion they describe a conflict that they resolved in the community:

**P1 (Male, White British, 45-50)**

"We were sat all of us in reception [indicating Gym 1], you was there [Participant 6 name] and a young girl, a blonde haired girl gets into reception and burst into tears, proper sobbin'. So we've all thought 'Shit what've we done'. Every bloke in the room thought 'Bollocks'. And she went 'Me Nana's told me that if th'is ever any trouble in [Town 1] I have to come and see y'", so I said 'What's up?' and she told me the story of her boyfriend had got a job, the bullies of the area had took objection and they were just makin' there lives hell an' [...].

**P22 (Female, White British, 45-50)**

Even down to her kids couldn't even go out and play on the front because their kids were bullyin' the kids"

Reflection of mainstream authorities already begins to emerge. Not only had the young woman in question approached the group for help with her 'trouble', but her grandmother had in fact been the person who had previously told her that this particular group were the people to go to in the event of trouble; a reflection of the emergency services. This point is demonstrable of intergenerational learning of 'gang' lore within the neighbourhood. The reflection continues in the moral positioning of the group in relation to the event:

**P1**

"[...] the one thing that got me, the thing that I thought 'I have to do something here is she said to me 'I'm comin' down the stairs and the kids'll be watchin' T.V.', she had a couple of children, 'and say to the kids that's too loud so you're grounded' she said, 'but in reality I'm only groundin' 'em because every time they go out they're gettin' beat up by the other kids and there is nothing I can do, every time I try and intervene the bloke or the woman starts on me and there's nothin' I can do' [...] And I felt really awful"

This in turn warranted the response, again reflective of a police call out:

**P1**

"and you was there [indicating to other participants]. So we went [...] we actually went 'round to the house, which was more a show of strength [...] it was really just walkin' 'round, it was just our presence really [...] we did wag our finger and say 'Look it can't go on, y'know scratchin' the car, what's all that y'dick 'ed', but put it under no uncertain terms that that activity would stop here and there was no other option than that would stop dead. And it did it stopped dead. [...] Two or three of us have gone 'round, but that was enough. And we said verbally 'You don't do that no more, I don't want no more scratches on the car, certainly no more shit through the letter box, just calm down that's, that's none negotiable'. So they've gone 'Right O.K.'"

Interestingly, prior to going to the group in the gymnasium the woman had actually attempted to go through the mainstream authorities to mediate (specifically the local housing association). However, in this conflict, which was based on the fact that the young woman's partner had got a legitimate job and therefore stopped 'working' for the 'local bullies', the mainstream authorities intervention only served to throw fuel on the fire. This was perceived as an incendiary act as it was, in the local schema, deemed to be 'grassing'. The parallax of this event, being that both the housing association and the group from the gymnasium held the same moral position on the event and were carrying out the same act (conflict resolution). Essentially both were policing the situation in hand. Yet one was backed by the threat of physical violence and the other backed by (although not directly part of) the monopolization of violence, qua state violence through the state apparatuses of control (Althusser, 2001). Again, this is a parallax situation outlining the zemiological foundations of the situation.

This thread continues and appeared in various forms throughout the fieldwork; frequently participants questioned the similarity in reflection between themselves and the mainstream authorities:

**P1**

"it's a given if you're in that level, if you're on an inner city estate what's open to you is drugs, alcohol and steroids, that's, that's, [P3 agreed by saying "Yeh"] a' mean it's almost a crime of opportunity. A' mean, an' none of us are surprised that bankers broke the law, none of us are surprised that politicians broke the law, none of are surprised that the police broke the law. The only difference between that group of people breaking the law and us breaking the law is we have consequences, we will go to prison for any one for

them laws, when the bankers, police or politicians break the law they just get a mild tellin' off don't they. A' mean that is the stark difference between their level of criminality and ours."

## **P22**

"[...] they can afford to buy their way out of it can't they [P3 agreed]."

(GI, Town 1)

This is a clear highlighting and reflexive presentation of how the participants understood their and their counterpart's parallax relationship. Although some recognition of the normative mainstream authorities exists, there remained a blind spot (arguably on both sides of the mirror), as what they do not appear to recognise in this reflection is themselves as the 'bad guys'. Nor do the mainstream authorities perceive themselves as such. Both have a righteous self-perception and see their counterpart as the 'bad guys' (cf. Scotson and Elias, 2009). Yet both are the self-same thing on opposite sides of the mirror.

P18 demonstrated a similar event in which the football hooligan firm he is involved in mirrored normative authorities in protecting the community in which many of the firm live and which is synonymous with the team that they follow. In this example the mirroring effect is doubled in that P18 is not only describing his firm's 'policing' and 'protection' of the community, but also placing those who they are protecting the community from as 'outsiders' to his own groups 'outsider-ness':

"When those riots took place [...] about three years ago, when it went crazy here after that kid got shot in Town 25 [...] in fact he's got North City 1 connections too with that family, he's part of that y'know that erm, that gay gangster up there an' [RM: Oh, erm,

Gangster 11?] yeh, he's part of that family [...]. So when he's, so when he's when his Mum and Aunt turn up 'n' we're gonna fight for justice, they're all bloody members of that [Gangster 11 family name] family. Anyway when, when it went off [...] what happened was, this is the interesting thing, y'know, this *scum*<sup>63</sup> came onto the streets, as far as I'm concerned. [...] The police handled it badly, but they, the guy was a thug, and what happened was that y'know, it was a, it was a riot really that was started by thugs, and it brought thugs, people who are free loaders, people who wanted to fight [...]"

(P18, Male, White British, 50-55)

P18 begins by placing the 'thugs' who rioted and the person whose death initiated the riot, as well as his 'gangster' family outside of his own group. Although not just the wider football hooligan community, but specifically the firm that he is involved with, who are frequently described in the media as 'thugs'. He apparently misrecognises his own and his group's reflection in the individual (who was killed by the police), his family and the rioters. As P18's recollection of the story progresses the mirroring is doubled:

"[...] all these hard working Asians who've done so much to build things up over the years [...] their premises were being attacked by these scum y'know who were just looting them, targeting them and burning down. [...] Anyway, two or three different areas where large rival groups came out to confront the rioters [...] one I was pleased to say was the Sikhs in Town 28 [...] . The Sikhs came out, and of course they're allowed to carry their swords, their ritual swords. I love the Sikhs anyway, I think they're brilliant people, an' y'know I used to drink with Sikhs in a pub on City Road 4 in North City 1 after the game [...] They came out on the streets in Town 28 to confront these bastards [...] and Football Team 2 Firm A came out to confront them down in Town 29 and there's a huge firm of about five-hundred Football Team 2 Firm A led, [...] some of Football Team 2 [firm] old school hard core from around those areas basically they organised this massive firm to confront the rioters coming through from erm Town 30 and Town 31, from Town 31 around there. In Town 29 they basically had a five-hundred strong or whatever armed to the teeth, [...] they had a van drive in filled with

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<sup>63</sup> Participant's emphasis in intonation.

weapons [...]. So they, had this rioting trash got through they would have had that to confront with.

(P18, Male, White British, 50-55)

Here, P18 depicts how not only the firm, but also the Sikhs come out in force to defend the community from the 'outsider' rioters. This places both the firm and the Sikhs as insiders within this discourse alongside each other, specifically placing; this is particularly interesting as there is a well-known discourse of football hooligan groups traditionally being racist (Back *et al* 1998, 1999; Doidge, 2013). Moreover, P18 continues in describing the police almost as accessories to the rioters in their outsider position depicting how "[...] they tried to can them in whatever they call it, kettle them [the firm] in to stop them from going" (P18). P18s disbelief in the motivations of the police as to why they would obstruct the firm from protecting their community was clear:

"[...] why the fuck would they want to do that."

(P18, Male, White British, 50-55)

Central to this aspect of the data is the continued positioning of the rioters as being outsiders from the firm's (and the Sikh's) insider positionality:

"[...] they fucking had it coming to them these people. But it was Football Team 2 [firm] led [...] what they were actually doing was try to protect the community in that area against an incursion of free loading thugs from down the road."

(P18, Male, White British, 50-55)

P18 was animated in retelling this story, he had not only a sense of pride in retelling it, but also a very clear conviction that the firm were righteous 'insiders' and the rioters were immoral 'outsiders'. For him the rioters were 'thugs' and the firm were 'heroes' (cf. Scotson and Elias, 2009). Such examples illustrate the incommensurability and insider / outsider paradox of the groups within this research. Similarly, P1 described how local mainstream authorities approached him when he stood for a position of local office; upon visiting him the officials offered incentives for him to step down from the running in fear that he may gain (more official) local favour. Another example being P15 describing the re-positioning from 'Hang Around' or 'Prospect' to 'Full Member' of a 1%MC, which links back to the idea of incommensurability of being simultaneously visible and invisible:

"[...] when y' get that involved, like a' said before about y'know those groups who, who don't want to be seen erm, sometimes the' don't want to be seen because the've gone from y'know one, erm, one way of bein' involved t', to a way where the' don't want to be seen because th'is, th'is pressure an' th'is erm y'know more risk [...], with more risk the' comes more erm y'know desire not to be seen a' suppose. Erm then it becomes erm becomes a *chore* [change in intonation emphasising the word chore] to be honest with y' erm y'know from, from my y'know knowledge of it, it becomes a chore anyway."

(P15, Male, White British, 25-30)

Another example is the two solicitors who were regulars' at the gymnasium. Both were outside of the majority demographic of working class men, brought up locally on the estate, with experiences of violence<sup>64</sup>, who knew how to be violent and in general were happy to use violence in pursuit of their interests,

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<sup>64</sup> And therefore socialized zemiologically.

financial or otherwise. In contrast the solicitors, who would occasionally offer 'off the record' legal advice that "didn't come from me", who would arrive in their executive cars on their lunch break and get changed into clichéd vests with the Kronk<sup>65</sup> gymnasium logo on the front. Both the solicitors and the local regulars were insiders to the gymnasium, but the solicitors were also outsiders.

On one occasion upon one of the solicitors arriving and beginning to train, P1 explained that the solicitor had spoke to him a few weeks earlier about "having some trouble with a guy" from his local pub. P1 explained that in response he asked if he wanted someone to "go around and have a word". The solicitor eagerly replied in the negative and instead keenly suggested that he wanted to 'learn how to look after himself', asking if P1 could put him in touch with his colleague who runs a local boxing gymnasium.

P1 went on to explain that what the solicitor was really doing was finding an excuse to get safe passage and instant acceptance into a boxing gymnasium on a 'rough' council estate; a gymnasium that has a good pedigree of amateur and professional fighters and a reputation for who else trains there. P1 explained that he knew that this was only for the purpose of being able to tell his "posh" friends that he trains at a tough boxing gymnasium (as well as tough heavy weights gymnasium).

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<sup>65</sup> The Kronk is the world famous boxing gymnasium founded in Detroit, which has trained Thomas Hearns and had involvement in training other world champions such as Sugar Ray Leonard and Lennox Lewis to name a few.



This being demonstrable of how middle classes may accrue value through selective appropriation of working class spaces and culture(s) (Skeggs, 2004). The solicitor did not want to 'look after himself', this was fiction, the fact was he wanted to be an insider with the outsiders, yet would always remain an outsider to the other regulars due to his insider position within the mainstream. A stark contrast to the other regulars such as R13, who, as mentioned earlier, on the first time I met him had only been out of prison for a week following a significant sentence for attempting to kill an enemy. He stabbed his enemy several times with a large bladed article; the attack was carried out with such vigour that he broke most of his victim's ribs on one side of his body.

Over the course of the fieldwork I witnessed R13 rebuild his group, first establishing a faithful lieutenant and then an ever-developing group of followers. On the last occasion I saw R13 we were sat in the reception area of the gymnasium, several members of his group were present. They were chatting about other people from their group, more peripheral members. During the conversation two of R13's group were telling a story about one of their associates, describing him as "dirty". He was being described in these terms as they explained to R13 how this third party had asked them "for a load of pills [ecstasy tablets]". When R13 asked "what did he want pills for?" the group member explained that "he's got some slag pregnant" and was inviting the woman around for a drink in order to spike her drink with a view to terminating the pregnancy.

R13 and his wider group were all outsiders, as in outside of the normative mainstream and outside of the outsider-ness of the poor community in which they live. Their 'insider outsider' normalised experiences and use of violence are significant aspects of what places them as outsiders beyond the outside. Yet at the same time this outsider positionality is attractive to 'insiders' who want to somehow be a part of it, as well as having an element of shift in that even R13's close group identified the peripheral member as 'dirty', indicating they viewed him as being somehow outside of their own outsider-ness, as he had deviated slightly beyond the group's acceptable norms. This is also reflected in the major 1%MCs who have special prestigious terminology for those who have killed in the name of the club. The Hells Angels use the term *Filthy Few* and the Outlaws use the term *Secret Service* or simply *SS*. The outward facing definition as told publically is that these terms refer to a mark of outstanding service to the club. Inwardly these are actually terms for people who have killed in the name of the club (conversations with P15). For the 1%MCs the movement of becoming further outside of the mainstream (killing) actually places the individual, through reverence, further as an insider to the club; they are doubly absent and present.

### **7.2.2 Forgotten pasts and present ghosts**

The theme of absent presence features on a more macro level for the educative processes of 'gangs', operating on a larger temporal / spatial scale too. P17 described this lucidly:

“[...] look at old communities, old cotton communities and things like that, when industry have gone down and these communities, the old Northern towns and pit towns, and you look at attainments and lifestyle and other things in those communities and the next generations that don’t remember things about what happened about when the pits closed or the cotton mills went down or anything else, we didn’t go to college for qualifications back then, but they don’t know anything about that, but this generation is still like that. I don’t know how to explain that. It’s almost like I’m talking about that **you’re almost haunted by it**. We’ve still got severe deprivation and two generations ago their families worked in the pits or in the cotton mills and that industry went down and the political upheaval and the violence around that, the protests and all that of these communities going down and the level of education and attainment and other things, and the culture’s still the same. There’s still that mentality, you can’t get a job ‘round here, but they don’t know anything about what went on 20 years ago, but they’re still acting out the same scenarios. The parents or the generation above don’t know how to articulate that, the only comments they’ll make is ‘yeah fucking destroyed the community when they shut this, that Maggie Thatcher’ but they don’t know anything about that, but they’re still acting out the same thing [...] why is it that some young people of certain communities, if we look at without discussing names, the two most prominent gangs within our city, we’re talking about the black gangs, why is that there is, and I say a minority ‘cos it’s a minority of young people, that are still involved in this but don’t know anything about, and we’re talking 20 years so it’s two generations ago, they don’t know anything about the history or the movement [...] that the older members of the community went through, they don’t know anything about but they’re still almost doing the same things, and it’s where does that learned behaviour, what is it psychologically that they pick up that still acts out things that they know nothing about that happened two generations ago. So it’s strange for me in that sense [...] where that learned behaviour comes from. I suppose it’s around the psychology of the learning process but also taking in the community, the environment and other things, and the things that are said, the perceptions of other institutions within those communities as to what they have. It’s difficult to explain [...].”

(P17, Male, Black Mixed British, 40-45)

P17 is describing here how he perceives young people today are some how

haunted by the troubles and oppressions of previous generations. Specifically, in this instance in the very same community that an ex-gang member who spoke at a public event described his experience as “being children of a revolution”. The ex-gang member at the public event was describing growing up in a poor community in the immediate aftermath of riots in the early 1980’s and having a sense of *we have not got anything, but we can make something out of nothing by whatever means possible*. P17 was describing this and prior times and how each new generation, for him, is detached from such revolutions yet reenacts their struggles, which are added to their own new ones (cf. Bright, 2011; Winlow, 2014). P1 described this same macro haunting through what he perceived as a kind of traumatic loss of identity:

“[...] the demise of industry and certain industries being connected to certain geographical areas, Sheffield steel, mining towns. That industry doesn’t exist really any more in the UK and I question what we manufacture in the UK. When certain geographical areas have now lost their identity, utterly lost their identities, as an individual you’ve got an identity [...] If you were to suddenly lose that identity how would you feel? That’s quite uncomfortable.”

(P1, Male, White British, 45-50: I1)

When something is lost an urge to find it again is triggered by the sense of “uncomfortable[ness]” or the *unheimlich* (Freud, 2003). Traumatic loss of identity as described above as sense of something missing hints at how it can be mistakenly found in the form of a pseudo replacement in be-coming anew:

“Going back to my childhood, the people I have to say, the people I looked up to were actually the villains, the people that I had the most respect for”

(P1, Male, White British, 45-50: I1)

On this macro scale, a cycle is almost completed, rotating through the push and pull between structure and agency within the educative processes of becoming part of a 'gang'. P1 describes here the haunting effect of previous forms of masculine identity being absent, yet somehow present (structure); at the same time this masculinity is present in its pseudo form, the 'villains', yet somehow absent (agency). Both P1 and P17 are describing an 'uncanny', the 'once well known and [...] familiar.' (Freud, 2003); an absent presence of what was in a ghostly capacity.

P17 also drew attention to how the phantasmagorical educative process of reflective repetition plays out not only across socio-economic severed histories, but also across familial ones:

"I've seen it many times, particularly with large, extended families. It's almost like a haunting effect [...] I think it's a major factor in the learning process of for young people to become involved in gangs and that sort of culture, particularly where the families are involved and have been involved. I'm not sure whether some families have actively promoted their children to get involved in it, of course they have in some circumstances, but I don't think that's been prominent across the board [...] why is it that young people of certain large, extended families, where certain members have been involved in serious entrenched gang culture have then gone on to be gang members themselves [...] **It's a bit like that haunting effect.** They may not know what their families have been getting up to but then... I'm no geneticist but **there's some effect, ghosting effect almost, it almost translates that then younger members of a certain family have picked up the reigns after the older ones almost, without it being nurtured or learnt**"

(P17, Male, Black Mixed British, 40-45)

These ghosts, in various ways, reflected in the present; they were socio-economic, spatial and familial. As much as there is agency in the educative processes, it must also be noted that these ghosts are also structural or a kind of surplus of structures.

### **7.3 Educative ghost stories**

Within the data, stories, in various forms, were (and are) understood as both part of the fabric of reality and some kind of aide-mémoire which teaches and refreshes discourses of who the leaders within the groups and wider communities are, they too perpetuate (self) imagery of the groups and their (legendary) status. Stories also maintain control of the general discourse within the communities, lubricating the efficient continuation of the group's activities. Such stories in the latter instance would include those containing the core theme, or moral, of the story that pertains to 'not grassing'<sup>66</sup>.

Stories as educative mechanisms ranged from the localised oral story, stories of legend and mythology, through to stories told in the media and through popular culture (including music and film). This section begins with how stories can enthuse or turn people on to thoughts of be-coming involved in such groups through transference in third spaces.

P8 provides the beginnings of an understanding in how this takes place:

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<sup>66</sup> "Grassing" is a colloquial term for informing [to the authorities who are usually the police]. This phraseology was used in all of the areas up and down the country that I conducted fieldwork in.

“talkin’ that’s a form of education isn’t it? Talkin’ about things. Sometimes it is in places like [referring to barbers] that you get kin’v the worst education [...] people jus’ say things don’t they not realisin’ that other people are listenin’ are formin’ their own opinions by what they’ve heard an’ even their fears by what they’ve heard [...] a barber shop, an ideal place isn’t it because we have all kind of different people, gang members who’ll be comin’ in, everyone wants to cut their hair don’t they (laughter). Y’know, y’ have that and maybe hospitals, have’ appointment an’ you sit down next to somebody or two people an’ then you’re listenin’ an’ you hear what they say an’ an’, an’ they could be sayin’ oh y’know a’ve got a gun, I’ve got a BMW, I’ve got a this, I’ve got a that, I’ve got a that an’ you’re lookin’ at them with a big chain ’round the’ neck an’, an the’ think an’ the seem like the’ got it all. An’ y’ thinkin’ that’s what I want. So the more y’ hear it is the more ... a’ mean then what happen’ the’ go home an’ the’ think about it which is the worst thing”

(P8, Female, Black British, 55-60)

P8 is describing how although the story in this example may not be told with the intention of making those listening think *I could have these material things by doing what the storyteller ('gang' member) does*, it is going to stir the thought that material items can be gained in non-mainstream ways. Although, the storyteller may be merely showing off, the by-product of others potentially wanting to *have* and *achieve* through the same means is present. This corresponds with the idea of be-coming materially wealthy and successful (be-coming *someone*) within normatively constrained structural circumstances. Although this aligns with a paradigm of spatial structural effects, it is also relates to cultural stories of success in otherwise challenging environments.

Such stories also, by design or inadvertently, generate / perpetuate a legendary status for 'gangs'. Legendary status through the means of stories was demonstrable across the fieldwork and can initially be understood through

P18's explanation of how rival groups came to learn to counter the football hooligan firm he was involved via the legendary stories of their ferocity and numbers. This begins with his insight from having defected to another club's firm later in life:

“Up to this day it's a very very serious firm, but one of the, not only [North City Team Name 1] but most, most [South City 1] firms involved will say the [North City 1 Hooligan Group 1 Name] were one of *the*<sup>67</sup> top firms [...]. With absolutely no question they were as hard as fucking nails, they really were [...] we had such big numbers you could get into situations a lot, you would've described strength in numbers, but the corollary [...] was that we became targets, because we were causing trouble everywhere and everybody, every thug in every town we went to eventually ended up coming out on the streets so you had especially in places like [South City 1] so it just was not a picnic [...], it was actually very dangerous following [North City Team 1]”

(P18, Male, White British, 50-55: 11)

In P18 explaining how (from his current perspective from another firm) other firms circulated stories that “[North City Hooligan Firm 1] had a reputation for being very problematic and very violent” (P18), the learning of how to respond or pre-empt their presence emerges. While these stories have potential for embellishment and mythology, they were none the less a means of imparting knowledge and skills to survive, in that to over-react and be prepared is better than to not and potentially lose face.

Stories play an even more explicit role in learning how to be and be-coming involved in groups described as ‘gangs’. Whilst spending time with P14, I

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<sup>67</sup> Participant's own emphasis.



asked him his opinion of what the educational process of be-coming involved in 'gangs' was. Within the question I used the analogy of how education takes place in schools. The question finished with me asking "on the street there's no school teacher, so how does that [the groups'] message get put across [to aspirants or those be-coming involved]?". P14 replied by way of examples from his own experience:

"[it is] the same way that the message would come across to y' on road [...] **we tell stories, we story tell**, [...] I like to talk and how we learn people is we show them, [example] 'Y' *heard about my man, my man got nicked the other day, you know his boy?* 'yeah yeah' 'My man went QE<sup>68</sup>' 'What [participants emphasis] 'Yeh the rat, ratted him out' 'no way' 'he did, he's a dog [emphasis] 'Watch, listen, I tell you now if I go jail an' I catch that kid watch what I do to him', I could even like this kid who got nicked, didn't even like him, but you don't do that, and I'd say 'Bwoy watch, when I see him watch if I don't empty my clip on this guy' that's how it is, that's how you learn, [...] and 'my man owed some money you know' [...] 'how much they owe you?' 'they owe me 2p' 'two bags' 'right I'll shout him, I'll shout him' 'if you don't shout him bro' listen when I catch him I'm gonna wig 'im, I'm gonna push his wig, watch I'm going to kill him, I'm not joking, I want me money' so he gets the message straight away, what message is he getting? Pay [participant emphasis]. Don't play with this kid's p's 'cos this kid's looking to kill this kid and on the other hand he's learning this guy's a dog, when he catches him he's going to do him in."

(P14, Male, Black British, 50-55)

This story telling is reliant on the use of current factual information in order to form the behaviours of members of the group through the device of

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<sup>68</sup> QE means to turn as Queen's Evidence providing information to Crown Prosecution as part of a plea bargain that has potential to provide immunity of prosecution for the crime to the informant under the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act, 2005 ([http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/p\\_to\\_r/queen\\_s\\_evidence\\_-\\_immunities\\_undertakings\\_and\\_agreements\\_under\\_the\\_serious\\_organised\\_crime\\_and\\_police\\_act\\_2005/](http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/p_to_r/queen_s_evidence_-_immunities_undertakings_and_agreements_under_the_serious_organised_crime_and_police_act_2005/)).

prefiguring what they might do to be disloyal or disruptive to the group's activities:

“So we give people messages but we use [pause] a lot of it's done through situations that are currently occurring, like *'did you hear about such and such'* *'yeah yeah he got arrested, why'd he get arrested?'*.”

(P14, Male, Black British, 50-55)

Stories are strong educative tools in the on-going process of be-coming involved in the groups. Additionally the story maintains ties amongst the group through the development of mutual understanding of what is acceptable and expected of those within the group. The stories corral, building and maintaining parameters, which allow the group continued and fluid operation. Importantly, it must be added that the stories are often at a disjoint with lived reality. This is primarily due to the effectiveness of the story itself. For example P14 in the excerpt above explained that he would 'wig'<sup>69</sup> someone who owed money within a story he told others in his group. Yet in the interview he also explains that he never killed anyone; with the adage that if someone had “put it on him”<sup>70</sup> he would have killed them. The same principle applies to the stories that were told locally of P3 that he was someone who people would threaten others with, someone to be feared. Yet the reality was that P3, in person, was not the monster that the stories depicted him as. Quite the opposite, he was, as attested by many participants and experienced first hand in the fieldwork, very polite, reasonable and welcoming.

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<sup>69</sup> Wig here means to take someone's head off, sometimes also colloquially described 'blow' someone's head off or, in other words shoot them, with the phrase developing from the notion of 'scalping' in Western films

<sup>70</sup> Colloquial terminology for affronting or challenging someone.

Other prevalent stories included not trusting people and not informing on anyone. These were both of high importance, in particular the theme of not informing. P14 begins to depict this:

“[...] in Town 2 a few years ago, it was this guy that was going around an’ he used to be from the ends [...], an’ he was chillin’ with certain man, the kid was 5:0, under cover, he was sittin’ ‘round people in their cars and conspiring with them in these cars and having them on tape, pure kids got nicked, got big bird, so we tell this story, so from this story people are learning you keep your mouth shut, you don’t sit there and chat to nobody about nothing, you keep it all to yourself, set man you can talk to who you know and set man you know is ‘cos you’ve watched them grow up, you’ve been with them from day dot, he’s been around you from day dot, you know his mum, you know his baby mums, you’re the godfather to his kid.”

(P14, Male, Black British, 50-55)

Such stories and storytelling was common across the fieldwork. This commonality was enacted one day while I was sat hanging around in the gymnasium with P1 and several of the regulars. The conversation began following quite a tense discussion between P1 and P3. Following the agreeing to disagree conclusion to the discussion P1 offered to make P3 a cup of tea, which I took as a clear demonstration that despite the tense atmosphere from the conversation, P1 was showing his on-going respect for P3 (tea was only ever made in the gymnasium for P3, everyone else had to have coffee or buy bottles or cans of drink from behind the counter):

When P1 came back from making the tea a conversation was struck up along the lines of ‘where are they now’ with regard to someone who came up in the conversation. R4 came through, although he wasn’t in the conversation he must have been listening while he was working out near the threshold between the reception area and the gym, he said “he’s in witness protection in [county place name]” referring to the person that was being spoken about. P1 and P3 both said that they had heard something along those

lines, but added the question of how R4 knew this and why he thought this (both seemingly having their own ideas from the tone of the question). R4 said “im [sic] and his Father in-law fell out, so his Father in-law’s been goin’ ‘round tellin’ everyone where he is”, adding that the person in question was named on a list of police informants that “went missin’”. All three men then began discussing how on two separate occasions two different senior police from the city ‘lost’ documents containing the lists of all police informants across the city; the first time being in paper format, which was “... ‘left’ in the back of a taxi in a briefcase at [place name] station” (emphasis from Participant). The second time this information was on an encrypted device, which was ‘left’ in the back of a parked car.

(14/04/14)

The message within the story from R4 was that informants will be found out and will have no choice but to leave the community. Yet at the same time, the message that information about who informs will be gained through various means, in this case through police corruption.

In a previous interview P1 had explained that to be an informer, or a ‘grass’ as more commonly known, was deemed to be the worst thing anyone could do when he was at the height of his involvement in groups described as ‘gangs’:

“I use this as one example an’ it’s probably not the best example, but the grassin’ culture [as in not grassing] was really strong, an’ a mean rea’, y’know it was almost, y’know you’d be labelled a paedophile, again an awful example, but y’know before you would want to be labelled a grass. Think that is still the case but whereas you wouldn’t want to be seen to be a grass, labelled a grass, you wouldn’t want to be a grass, a’ think it’s a lot looser now, a’ think that’s a lot, lot looser”

(P1, Male, White British, 45-50: I2)

These examples demonstrate how people learn and be-come involved in ‘gangs’ through the educative tool of the story. Additionally they illuminate how

fear is created about speaking to people outside of the group and that only 'insiders' should be trusted. Thus setting a (version of) reality for the group through the means of what is essentially a *scary* spectral story, which maintains group controls, norms and opinions. In the examples above the stories of 'you will be found out if you inform', the supposed all seeing eye in this case through the medium of the 'lost' and 'found' police informant data and the two leading crime organisation figures who ultimately obtained it:

R4 said "[well known crime group leaders name] ended up with that" referring to the list on the encrypted device. P3 amended this by saying that "[name] the [nickname]<sup>71</sup> would have ended up with it" adding that the first person mentioned decoded the information and passed it on.

(14/04/14)

Another side to this setting of a reality is the idea that to be branded a 'grass' amongst the groups would be considered the worst possible label. This was emphasised in an earlier conversation I had with P1. In the conversation the subject of people infiltrating groups such as those he was involved in came up. During the conversation P1 spoke about how his group had found out that someone had infiltrated their group and had made recordings and photographic images of events and activities that they had been involved in. This was established following several people within the group being taken in to be questioned by the police and shown the photographs as part of the questioning. P1 explained his feeling of relief when he was questioned and shown by the police that he was in several of the photographs, which meant

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<sup>71</sup> This name being an even more notorious figure who is considered to be of higher status than the first man mentioned.

that the other people who had been questioned had seen this as well and ultimately this stood as evidence to the rest of the group that P1 (or any of the others in the photographs) were no longer under suspicion of being the informant.

## 7.4 Media stories and realities

Stories, which play a role in setting realities and engender educative process of be-coming involved in 'gangs' also emanate from popular media. P9 opens this concept in recounting his own experience and a conversation he had with his friend and cellmate during one of his prison sentences:

"[...] from me own experience 'ave watched film and music an' thought '*shit a'm gonna do tha', I'm gonna take over like they 'ave*', so it's clearly influenced me in a way. But with 'im, one-hundred percent. He told me this one time he went out with two guns listenin' to Fifty Cent on his bike, just rode 'round. Just 'cos it got 'im hype in the mood. [...] a' know his not chattin', a' know 'is not bullshittin', 'cos 'a can tell by the emotion d'y'know when the' sayin' it an', an' how 'is tellin' me what he's done."

(P9, Male, Other Mixed British, 25-30: I1)

This in itself may be considered to be merely inspiration or hype. However, upon closer consideration, especially in the light of the corresponding data, this demonstrates a link and interplay between stories from media and be-coming educated into 'gangs' and their activities. In the first part of the interview excerpt above P9 explains that as a young person he watched 'gangsta' films and listened to 'gangsta' rap. Both of which, inspired him to emulate what he had consumed; a point reverberated in the quote above for

both him and his friend. This was supported by P2 who described how young men in poor communities achieve a sense of “celebrity” via acting out or reflecting the imagery projected through film and music (notes from discussion with P2).

Such media stories were always described under terminology aligning with interpolation or self-fulfilling prophecy. P17 described media stories, which depict youth ‘gangs’ as *folk devils* as a two-way cause and effect that is both interpolation and self-fulfilling prophecy:

“media and their influence in shaping some of this and shaping some of the negative perceptions around young people that then forms the influences on them, or reinforces the fact that ‘yeah we’re like this’, it’s like the gold star on their shoulders.”

(P17, Male, Black Mixed British, 40-45: I1)

This further supports internalisation of labels and stigma through symbolic influence of the media stories. Once more the parallax space between the story and a direct realism can be understood as one in which a creative hybrid of structure and agency<sup>72</sup> is born out of a zemiological phenomenon (cf. Hall and Winlow, 2015). P13 reiterated this point in an interview:

“media’s very controlin’, a’ think media’s got a big influence over everythin’ we do, *everythin’* [emphasis in intonation]. A’ don’t think you can walk anywhere or go anywhere without seein’ a TV promotin’ somethin’, y’know’at a’ mean [...] a’ think media em, even if the’re reportin’ news the’ still, in a sense the’re still glorifyin’ it, the’re still promotin’ it an’ tryin’ to push it in people’s face like this is what’s goin on, for instance they always do it about [Town

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<sup>72</sup> As indicated in chapter 7.

2], now to where [Town 2's] got it's been tarnished with this label, even though it's not like that, ten years, twenty years it'll still have that label an' it'll still be known as [Guncity 1]"

(P13, Male, Black British, 35-40)

P13's description resonates with Wacquant's notion of the taint of place (Wacquant *et al*, 2014) along with the taint of poverty (Wacquant *et al*, 2014; Wacquant, 2008). Specifically, Wacquant acknowledges that such tainting is perpetuated via not only media, but also other apparatuses of control such as policy. Acknowledgement of broader aspects media stories are outlined in the earlier part of the excerpt above as well as below:

"[...] media does have a big part to play in them, an' a lot of kids see that at a young age an' think, especially from the area 'Ra' [sic] *this is what my area's about, this is what we're supposed to be about so yeh, yeh ,yeh so I'm gonna roll an' start goin' on' y'know'at a' mean so I think media's got a big part to play in it.*"

(P13, Male, Black British, 35-40)

These examples demonstrate how the media have regurgitated a story based on place. The story being that the place in question is notorious and synonymous with 'gangs'. This leading to young people hearing the story repeatedly over significant periods of time, in fact in these incidences across several generations, which in turn provides a platform for interpolation leading to a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Although, this interplay outlined in the data above appears as linear, it is also cyclical. Whilst spending time with P1 a conversation came about in which he referred to an incident that was reported in the national media. The incident



involved a young man who was a peripheral member of a 'gang' who was photographed by a journalist making a gesture that had violent connotations. Following the media coverage of the event more media outlets descended on the community to cover stories of 'gang' and gun violence in the area. The media found and interviewed the young man, who told them he was a 'gangsta' and made pretensions and postured himself in ways reflective of 'gangsta rap' music videos.

The media, now even more enthused by the potential of the story, extended their investigations across the community, walking around the area trying to find locals who would talk to them or trying to find 'signs' of 'gangs' and gun violence. In doing this they noted graffiti tags around the area in the form of an abbreviation. Not knowing the exact meaning of the abbreviated tag they guessed. The guess was based on the first letter of the tags having the first letter of the place name; this was the only word that they got correct in their speculation on the meaning; for the other two words in the abbreviation they guessed wrong. However, upon digesting the media coverage the following day with the guessed name incorporated into the reports, the young people involved in the group liked the media interpretation more than the actual meaning of the abbreviation. As such the group's name was changed overnight. Essentially the media had created a new name based on speculation and the young people adopted it as the new name sounded more dangerous and edgy.

Interestingly, P1 explained during this conversation that the initial action that the young man carried out which was captured by the media was in fact staged. He explained that the young man had been offered fifty pounds sterling to “do something stupid” for the camera. The young man obliged for this fee. P1 explained that the reason he knew this level of detail about the event was because several higher level groups did not like the negative attention brought to the community and targeted the young person and his family with threats of and actual violence. P1 added that he and his colleagues were involved in negotiating the young man’s departure from the community to another country in order to keep peace and avoid other groups carrying out more serious attacks.

(13/10/13)

This example demonstrates the incommensurability of be-ing and be-coming within ‘gangs’. The young man in question was a peripheral member of his group, yet due to him acting out an event for payment from a media outlet he further be-came perceived as a ‘gang’ member. He became the star of the show and centre stage briefly. Similarly the remainder of his group also be-came another group, a group now by another (more dangerous sounding) name. They too came to be known more locally; they learned that they were now perceived differently.

## 7.5 “Never give back the keys”: Stories of Trauma

Participants 1, 3, 9 and 14 (to name a few) all explained that they were no longer ‘active’, each variously noted how “you can never give back the keys”. This meaning they are incommensurably both inside and outside of their respective groups, thus remaining as an absent presence. Incommensurable hauntings emerged in various ways, such as E1 in Town 1 who used to be a notorious ‘gangland’ enforcer, but who latterly, as a number of participants put it, “lost the plot”. Many participants speculated that Spangler had “lost the plot” due to the many acts of extreme violence that he had committed, also some intimated that he had been violent toward his now deceased Mother. The violence of his past was reflected in his present; E1 was notorious in Town 1 for having tortured and traumatised people, now he himself was in a state of trauma. E1, by the accounts of various participants had “fallen over the edge” from previous traumatic experiences. One of the varied symptoms described to me, and which I had seen first hand whilst spending time in Town 1, was that Spangler was often out in public wearing outlandish costumes. These included large glittery belts, fur coats with shorts and sometimes women’s clothes (the latter sometimes speculated as being his Mother’s by one participant).

Another example is the participant who had over £20,000 of assets taken from him in order to be allowed to exit his group *on good standing* following an

internal disagreement<sup>73</sup>. Although he was allowed *out* on *good standing*, he was still concerned that there would be repercussions from his involvement, both from the group and police. He was *out good*<sup>74</sup>, but was always going to be haunted by *being in*. He was precariously balanced between a previous him and the present him; not quite over the precipice but balanced in an un-homely space between (cf. Freud, 2003).

Others described similar experiences; P1 explained that when he made his first moves toward exiting his lifestyle within the groups he was heavily involved with he had suffered from anxiety attacks. He explained that he had sold one of his key businesses at a point when inter-group violence was rapidly increasing. Following the sale, he and his wife had gone on an extended holiday as part of his exit and, as P1 put it “You try to avoid the phone calls”. P1 explained that he and his wife were in a restaurant on holiday having a meal and he suddenly felt very ill. He described how he thought he was having a heart attack, undone his shirt and told his wife what he thought was happening. He was rushed to hospital immediately, where upon carrying out tests, the Doctor gave the diagnosis of an anxiety attack.

These anxiety attacks carried on for several years; they were the result of trauma from his previous activities and encounters. P1 explained on several occasions “you never really give back the keys”. The implication being that a

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<sup>73</sup> I purposefully avoid detailing, which Participant I refer to here due to the significant risk that potential identification would cause for the participant and potentially myself. This may appear excessive, but due to the extremely serious nature and capacity for international reach and espionage of the group I feel that taking such additional steps in ensuring anonymity is appropriate.

<sup>74</sup> Colloquially meaning allowed to leave on good standing.

person is never really *out* of the groups and lifestyle they were involved in one-way or another. Whether it is that the individual always knows that they could be called upon at anytime due to loyalties, ties and favours owed. Or whether it is that the individual is somehow affectively, precariously or hauntingly attached to who they once were and cannot escape the self (cf. Levinas, 2003). Much like those participants who had left being involved in 'gang' lifestyles behind and latterly become youth and community workers, community activists or tried their hand at politics. Some of these participants chose to reveal to the people that they were working with that they were once involved in 'gangs'. Some explicitly trading off this identity of being an 'ex-gang' member. This being what I call the *Clark Kent paradox* in that the ex-'gang' member who chooses not to make public their previous involvement are free *of* gang involvement, by their publicising this, according to a Nietzschean reading would not constitute freedom *to* be. As in *to* be who they now are, as opposed to the freedom *of* being chained *to* who they once were. To not expose their previous lifestyle would appear *all too human* (in a Nietzschean sense).

Whereas, for the individual choosing to publicise their previous involvement the analogy is one of Superman exhibiting the superhuman element all of the time, with no retreat to the human form. For the Clark Kent Paradox, the hypotheses is that in (an ex-'gang' member) acting out a Clark Kent role they are in fact acting closer to Superman than when they are acting as *Superman* (cf. McHugh, 2013b). As for the character Superman, whilst *acting* as Clark Kent there is a temporary abdication of (need for) power. Whereas in *attempts*

*at being Superman* an instant need is enacted (the omnipresent need of being and not being: the absent presence).

## **7.6 Stories of Never losing respect**

Stories focused on retained 'respect' also featured strongly in the data. For example, P3 described how earlier in life, whilst running the doors, he had 'knocked out' people who had demonstrated ignorance or had not been respectful. Yet, locally there was a very well known story, which was retold in the interview with P3 and by P1 (and others). The story was of how before his complete retirement, P3 had been the 'owner' of a pub in the other half of the community and how one night one of the regular customers there, a street 'gang' leader, had started 'ballooning'<sup>75</sup> and when told to leave began attacking other people in the pub. He knew that he could not attack P3 because of his status and the respect he carried across the city and beyond. Instead, when P3's son told him to leave as well, he attacked him and in the struggle accidentally knocked down P3.

The aftermath meetings were held and a lot of people to instantly muster to deliver revenge motivated by respect. The 'gang' leader went to apologise to P3 explaining that he was not thinking straight and could not remember it happening as he had been high on cocaine, drinking heavily and had been using steroids for some time. The general agreement, based on P3's wishes was to not have any revenge. He told the 'gang' leader that he was stupid for

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<sup>75</sup> Colloquially meaning enacting a state of rage.

using steroids and other substances together. In the interview with P3, he explained that had the two brothers who run the other side of town not been in prison<sup>76</sup>, the 'gang' leader would not have carried out the attack at all. This synopsis of the story from multiple respondents (all of which correspond with each other) shows both how as P3 has got older he had learned to respond in different ways as well as how constraining structures play out like a Babushka Doll in the example of the two brothers being in prison when the attack took place. It was widely regarded that the incident would not have occurred if they were not incarcerated. Prior to their imprisonment they had united the two sides of the community and the respective drugs trade. They also had a family history that spans back to the heyday of P3. They controlled the behaviours of those who worked for them through stories of respect and fear.

## **7.7 Summary**

Hauntings present as being inside and outside simultaneously. This precarious positionality is essential to the process of learning to be-come involved in 'gangs'. The group's educative process in this instance is the hidden yet visible precarious third (metaphysical) space between these two worlds. There are genealogical residues that carry through time and space that inform the new from the old, changing yet maintaining the same in a different form in a different time. Similarly, stories in various forms carry through space and time as means of educating and controlling the processes of be-coming involved in 'gangs'. These stories are precarious and

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<sup>76</sup> For a multi-million pound armed robbery.

incommensurable, balanced between the lived experience and the quasi-fictional space presented by the story. Additionally, a dual insider and outsider positionality was clear throughout, not least for those who had left behind or decreased their activities with groups commonly described as 'gangs'. The phrase about not being able to ever give back the keys, the idea of not ever really being out of the groups epitomises this, as does the fact that not one participant spoke about their experiences present or past in negative terms. Not even in describing traumatic experiences and their long-lasting effects were the groups and their experiences described negatively. There may well have been steps taken beyond the perimeter of 'involvement', but the participants were still inside and had the lifestyle inside of them.



# **Chapter 8**

## **Third Findings Chapter**

### ***Space - Place - Education and be-coming***

## 8.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the integral role space and place play in the educative processes of 'be-coming' involved in 'gang' cultures. This progresses from the broader themes of structural and agentic interplay in that they lead out of structural ingredients to these processes such as spatial alienation and abandonment (see chapter 7); as well as agentic aspects such as choosing something other than that which is structurally presented within geo-social physical space, which may result in creations of new and imagined spaces.

This chapter not only explores spatial social corralling and separation via social class (cf. Wacquant, 2010a, 2010b) but also considers how social spaces may be imagined or understood as lived realities in different ways for different people (such as 'gangs' and non-gangs). Likewise, this chapter highlights how education within 'gangs' takes place and is transmitted through exposure and embedded-ness within a given space.

This chapter draws on examples from a range of space and places. The subsections of this chapter are interspersed by three case study places in order to provide vignettes of the transmission and dissemination that takes place within these processes over space and time. The three places covered within these vignettes are: estates / the 'street', the prison and the gymnasium. Prior to this the chapter will firstly draw attention toward the idea of space as a driver for learning and be-coming involved in 'gangs'.

## 8.2 Space as an educative driver

As outlined in the themed literature chapters' earlier, concepts of space, particularly third spaces, have been explored in relation to a broad range of empirical research. However, there is no academic empirical literature that has sought to explore the relationship to third places (or indeed the concept of third space) with regard to groups commonly described as 'gangs'. There have been pockets of research that have explored 'gang' cultures through geographic lenses (cf. Davis, 1998; Evans *et al*, 1999; Papachristos *et al*, 2013), particularly localised mapping and participant conceptual maps of place (Pickering *et al*, 2012). Although, these are primarily focused on issues around territories of the 'gangs' and more specifically they focus on youth street 'gangs'.

However, herein the educative role of space in be-coming involved in 'gangs' has shone through as not only being integral to the process, but also a complex, subtle and supple aspect. For instance P9, 13 and 14 explained:

"I truly believe that if I was brought up somewhere different [...] a' wouldn't 'ave been how a' was. Gods honest truth that's what it boils down to [...]"

(P9, Male, Other Mixed British, 25 – 30: I1)

P13's (Male, Black British, 35-40) also explained:

"I think erm, most people erm to become involved in gangs is by where they are [...] the area the' comin' from . A' think that,

that has a big part to play in, in how young people become involved with gangs”

Also supported by P14 (Male, Black British, 50 - 55) in saying:

“the reason why my life’s been the way that it’s been and I think a lot of it’s because of the environment I grew up in [...]. It depends on what environment you grow up in [...].”

However, an evolved or adapted understanding of third space has been imperative as a means of analysing data relating to space within the research. Place and space within the lived experiences of the participants, is both a driver of a ‘collective spirit’ (the Hegelian *volkgeist*) within the communities and the groups, as well as being dynamic and shifting entity with different meanings at different times and places (both ethereal and concrete).

### **8.3 Ownership of Space**

One of the supple reflexive aspects within the data is that space is invisibly divisible and owned yet public. This stems from the space being simultaneously perceived as being safe by the ‘in’ group and unsafe by the ‘out’ group. This perceptual divisibility generates a sense of ownership and loss respectively, as well as self-perpetuating a multi-layered perceptual space:

“You can almost document the trail if you’re involved in those types of groups, whether that be gangs or drug dealing groups or whatever, it moves forward between those social spaces that are generally used by the public, but more often than not looked away at by those people that may live in a community but they tell you ‘no don’t go there’ like a particular pub, but it’ll then become generally their space ‘cos they know they can

meet there quite comfortably and nobody else will come there because they know who these people are that are going there. And it goes on from there. So for me the social platforms are multi-layered. [...] it starts off the social space for them is the street, particular focal points like estates with local shops, outside of pub entrances, they come to the pub, inside the pub and so forth, youth centres, which is my experienced, it's recognised that there... and there has been ways for local groups to meet in those centres cos it's been safe for them and you can actually discuss and share what's going on in their lives and keep that collective together, that nucleus together [...] and they were safe places”

(P17, Male, Black Mixed British, age 40 – 45)

As well as resonating with Hagedorn and Rauch's (2007) work on defensible space, this perceptual crisis of space and its ownership, or more specifically, who is an 'insider' or an 'outsider' within that space continues in considering a range of locations. Within the present research a range of examples were highlighted by participants. These included the space of the street, special interest spaces such as gymnasiums and what may appear as 'closed' and 'uniform' spaces such as prisons.

### **8.3.1 Estates**

It is important to understand how a push-pull motion impacts on the structures of space and concepts of ownership. This push and pull is both tainting and alienating through gentrification. Likewise, it is important to consider how space may shift from one that is considered as *mainstream*, *legitimate* or 'inside', to one that is in some sense *relegated* through abandonment. P1 opens this up by way of analogy:

“my dad left when I was nine, I don’t think it had much bearing on me as an adult but he left when I was nine [...]. He had the choice to leave or not to leave, [...] Senior school teachers, headmasters, headmistresses [...], senior policemen, politicians exclusively do not live on estates like [Town 1], so when things go awfully wrong, and for a variety of reasons [...] crime, criminality, teenage pregnancy, obesity, failing schools, [...] people that are responsible for this neighbourhood chose not to live in this neighbourhood,”

(P1, Male, White British, 40 – 50: I1)

Ironically (even hauntingly) P1 is co-owner of an ex-police house from the times when the local constabulary lived on the estate. Likewise in another part of Town 1 a well-known family involved in organised crime own the other ex-police house.

P1 continued to explain that in the absence of these officials on the estate:

“when things go awfully awfully wrong what right have they got to step back in and go ‘why did you do that, you don’t want to do that, you want to live like we do, we’re civilised, don’t do it again, we’ll see you when you have the next atrocity’ in the way that my dad had no right to step back in our house and go ‘this carpet, I don’t like the colour, what are you doing, change it instantly, [...] they choose not to live on this estate, [...] because if they wanted to they could [...] nothing stopping them, and even further, we collectively did not push them out, we didn’t ask them to leave, they fucked off. If they’re in any way, shape or form interested in the moral compass of this area [...] how can they claim to be interested in the moral compass, they fucked off, it’s the same as my dad fucking off when I was little and he’s no right to come back in and go ‘wait a minute’. What right have the conventional leaders got to only step back in on the event of something unpleasant happening and wagging the finger”

(P1, Male, White British, 40 – 50: I1)

This gives rise to alternative control and ownership of spaces, which initially appear as 'public' and for all, yet on closer inspection are revealed as closed. In this example P1 is describing how the space of the estate has come to be "policed" by groups that he described as "community leaders", who the mainstream authorities would describe as 'gangsters'. He is outlining his opinion that in the place of mainstream authority abandonment, alternative axioms of ownership of space have developed. Moreover, these spaces are not merely *closed*; instead this is more a matter of perceptual boundaries and unwritten or unofficial boundaries.

Such boundaries, in various modes, define again, subtle and supple invisible lines between who is 'in' and who is 'out', between the 'them' and the 'us'<sup>77</sup>. P13 explains this through describing how people who are not involved or associated with 'gangs' are *free* to go anywhere without concern for passing through an invisible barrier (cf. Pickering *et al*, 2012). Yet for those who are associated with such groups, the physical space is divided and the boundaries must be learnt:

"obviously when [...] you're a freeman you call it yeh you can go anywhere, you' got no boundaries, [...] the're's no restrictions so you're just rollin' free, this is my free land innit, an' obviously when you align to somethin' you've gotta know these streets are our streets so it goes by post code, say for [North City 1 Postcode A] that's our area, anythin' outside [North City 1 Postcode A] their' not us so we can't go there. Y'know'at a' mean so that's how it becomes an' y' become very aware very quickly"

(P13, Male, Black British, 35 – 40)

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<sup>77</sup> It should be noted here that the 'them and us' is also flexible and shifting.

Invisible territories may necessitate being learnt when life and livelihoods depend upon it. However they can also exist for those P13 describes as the 'freeman'; for example in relation to social / spatial (im)mobility (Kintrea *et al*, 2008; Fraser, 2013). Although such boundaries exist for many, the boundaries of 'gangs' are much more acutely understood, defended and negotiated. These bound territories, although invisible through embedded normativity and being a key ingredient in the *volkgeist* of the group or community, when considered in the context of 'gangs', these somehow become understood (from the outside) as alien, uncivil or immoral. This being within the wider context of stigmatisation via poverty and discourse of abandoned relegated spaces caricatured as *dangerous* and *vice ridden*, which in turn is associated with the schema of 'gang' territories as new phenomena. P14 points out, such boundaries and territories are commonplace and are not new:

"As human beings we're quite territorial and I think that it's about understanding influence, what influences you, understanding how we learn. [...] within every community and I think associating yourself with a specific area, taking ownership of a particular area is something that human beings do, not just in this country, they do it all over the world, and within society people do that, form their own cliques and social groups, this country was built on a class system so why is it so alien to think that people within a certain class are going to develop their own rules"

(P14, Male, Black British, 50 – 55)

Such boundaries are reflections of the normative mainstream; in this reflective process the mainstream cannot perceive itself in its own reflection (cf. Lacan, 1994) in the same way the infant in the Lacanian concept of the Mirror Stage



does not recognise itself in the mirror until it becomes a little older. The reflection is still never in full view, or is not recognised, as is described in Zizek (2008), demonstrating the Mirror Stage through the analogy of the 1976 film *Taxi Driver* starring Robert De Niro. The particular scene being the most famous from the film in which the protagonist, Travis Bickle, turns to the mirror, gun pointed out, asking his reflection '*Are you talkin' to me?*'. In this question Travis is not actually rehearsing a question for those who he seems to seek vengeance on (the city *lowlife*), but is actually demonstrating his urge of violence toward himself (Zizek, 2008: 176). This same *Mirroring* process is occurring in the relationship between macro mainstream territorialisation and micro (of 'gangs') territorialisation. In short, the mainstream authorities do not recognise the way in which 'gangs' reflect their own ways of being (policing and leading) and visa versa.

### **8.3.2 The 'Streets'**

'Outsiders' to the particular space of the street, as in someone whose life, culture and social position (or class) does not necessitate or provide them with reason to occupy the 'street', the street may appear as a dangerous space and one they opt out of. Although they may think they understand what is taking place in the 'street', their understanding is skewed by the very fact that they are not active participants in the infrastructure and life of that particular space. P12 puts this in perspective in describing how the police and others misrecognise (Bourdieu, 1977) the everyday social activity of the street in ethnically diverse locations such as Town 2:

“ave always lived in these kind’ve communities where street, the street is very much like a social place an’ other people like police don’t understand that, police will see a group of people an’ think th’is somethin’ wrong but that, it’s just how it is ev, every nationality in [Town 2] socialises on the street [...] the’ is no crime, the’ just chattin’. But the police will see this an’ try an’ disperse it or think th’is gonna be a fight an’ it’s just very much a street community it’s just not what other people are used to yeh an’ a’ think that’s a big part of the problem, they need to understand how different communities work before the’ make the’ own assumptions based on their communities ‘cos we would go there an’ think their communities are dry an’ borin’ ‘cos there’s no one out there [...]

(P12, Female Black Mixed British, 40-45)

Again, P12 highlights how the space of the street can be easily misunderstood when viewed through mono-cultural and classed lenses that shut out the ‘why’ of occupying the space of the street. For example for an onlooker from outside of the community who has never lived in poverty and or overcrowded accommodation, they would not begin to understand that standing outside on a summer day is not only attractive but also a brief escape from the confined reality of the space of the ‘home’; thus the ‘home’ extends into the space of the ‘street’. On a theoretical level this also demonstrates that Oldenburg’s (1997) ideas of third place are lacking in flexibility. Though, here it also signals that Oldenburg’s perspective is not too different from that of many (including the police) who cannot perceive the space of the street as anything but the street, which has connotations of danger and difference:

[...] It’s like lively an’ vibrant an’ if you insist on putting people in on top of each other, it’s, you know th’is like six people livin’ in one room or one flat, of course the’ wanna go on the street,

the's too many people livin' in y'ouse y' need a break d'y' know what a' mean why not come out on the street it's like, it's common sense. It's a nice day, the music's out, the's bound to be someone out there with a big barbeque sellin' chicken or whatever, [...] it's nice, it's like an impromptu party when it's Summer everywhere, y' know what a' mean. I live just off [Town 2, Road 1] an' so it really is like an impromptu party in Summer, y' can't get to sleep, every weekend yer awake all night. But it's part of it. But a' know that like where, where a bought ma house was supposed to be, apparently supposed to be for [Town 2] people to buy houses but it turned out the' was like three lots of people bought 'ouses from round 'ere an' everyone else from [Up and Coming Affluent Area 1] and [Village 1] so when it first, which is y'know it's fine, [...] So erm when they first moved in these 'ouses'd been up for like three years an' the first year the' kept phonin' the police 'cos of the music an' it's like the police were sayin' to them '*we don't come out to music, we don't come to [Town 2] for music*'. But it's like you knew you were comin' to [Town 2], you knew [Town 2] likes to carnival an' 'ave music an' make food"

(P12, Female Black Mixed British, 40-45)

Another side to the space of the street and how the home and the public space of the street blend and blur at the edges is found in P14's description of how through poverty and government policy, members of communities can become involved in the activities of 'gangs' and alter where safe spaces within *the streets* exist. P14 described an example, which is resonant of Evans *et al* (1996) work around 'gangs' informal policing of communities, explaining how 'gangs' provide the means to alleviate problems of young people kicking footballs at their house and dropping litter in their garden, as well as alleviating financial difficulties from having to pay the spare room supplement<sup>78</sup>.

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<sup>78</sup> Otherwise known as the bedroom tax.

Such people were given the opportunity to look after a 'grow' of cannabis in their spare room, the salary for this service more than covering the bedroom tax, enabling retention of the family home. The instant the 'grow' is agreed, the young people no longer drop litter in the garden and certainly do not kick a football at the house. They also make sure no one else does this, they will look out for unfamiliar faces near the house. The occupant gains an income through the informal work, which has relatively high pay for limited labour and can live in peace (cf. Ancrum and Treadwell, 2017). If the police do raid the house, she is an elderly lady who is growing for personal medical use. The plants and hydroponic equipment will be confiscated and a new grow will be installed a few weeks down the line. As P14 explained in detail in one of our discussions, there are significant numbers of elderly people and others within his community who all have grows going on for the groups within the community and they, their families, their friends and neighbours will all protect the groups. They are all somehow invested in the groups directly or indirectly, they are not part of the groups and they are not outside of the groups. The symbiosis is strong as everyone is part of the street, not part of the 'gang', everyone is inside and outside through the tripartite blend of the home, street and 'gang'.

#### **8.4 The prison: ownership and control - first, second and third place**

The example above not only demonstrates the misunderstanding of those 'outside' of the experience of the 'street' but also how the spaces of the private (home) and public or social (street) blend into one at certain points in

time and places. This is also demonstrable in the space of the prison, in that the prison is at the same time home (albeit temporarily to varying degrees for some), social and work (or education<sup>79</sup>). As such the prison is all relevant lived space at that time for those whose reality is the space of the prison. Yet, shifting in perceptual meaning as the passing of time and interplay of agents flows through both the official and unofficial regimes of the space. By unofficial regimes, I mean that the space in all of its dynamism of perceptual meaning and agentive interplay has its own set of rules and processes that operate independently of the official ones. Again, this is comparable with the space of the street, P12 opens up this idea:

“[...] it is really independent and kind’a ‘as it’s own mechanisms, but only when you’re lookin’ at it y’ like oh yeh”

(P12, Female Black Mixed British, 40-45)

Some of the more complex nuances of this specific to the environment of the prison are highlighted by P9 in his description of how the hierarchy of the prison’s official regime is replicated in its unofficial regimes. From the mirroring of what is an ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ space and who owns the space through to control of the space and its unseen, yet known and acknowledged boundaries reflecting back from the physical and seen boundaries of the official regime:

“It was all stitched up by the erm, dominant group we’ll call it, every activity had a dominant group, so people’d, there’s the gate yeh to go to the gym, people are all standin’ at the gate,

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<sup>79</sup> Education is a space that is ignored by Oldenburg as an institution of similar character to that of work.

sprintin' over, yeh. We'd walk, we'd just be fuckin' about 'ere, as soon as the gates open we'd walk over, all our stuff'd be ready, the bar'd be ready with all the dumbbells we want, 'cos one of the lads was a gym orderly. His job was in the gym d'y' know what a'mean? So while the're sprintin' over to get what the' can, the scraps, we're casually walkin' over, our stuff's ready; it's chest day, we've got the bench and we've got the dumbbells there, waitin' for us. So they've sprinted over, waited for this gate to be open, sprinted over the astro waitin' at the next gate to be open, we're just casually walkin' over, we've got our stuff already. An' no one would argue about it, d'y' know what a'mean? But no one could argue about it"

(P9, Male, Other Mixed British: I2)

Although the official prison regime dictates that the gymnasium facility was for all to use equally, the unofficial regime is always already understood through the accelerated educative processes surrounding understanding who is in charge and who is not within the space within the place. This, in turn is dictated by actual violence or fear of it. Various forms of violence including physical, emotional, mental and state violence regulate both unofficial and official control. The unofficial regime, its responses and ways in which it is perceived reflect those of the official regime. One example of this reflection is in how although P9 was sometimes allowed out of his cell when everyone else was on 'lock up' to play pool and gamble with some of the prison officers, when he had a new expensive pool cue sent into the prison for him and one of the prison officers asked to use it and he refused, he later had his "pad spun" and one of the officers purposefully damaged his new cue. This, all being because he refused to loan out his cue. In the same way he could not argue about this damage to his cue from the enforcers of the 'official' regime, neither could fellow prisoners argue with the unofficial regime as experienced in the use and ownership of the prison gymnasium. Again this is replicated in the

space of the games and communal area of the wing. In particular the space of the pool table:

“[...] whereas if there was still like wrong’ens on the wing who wouldn’t even be allowed to come near table tennis or pool, d’y’ know what a’ mean? It, it was, not that they wouldn’t be allowed, the’ wouldn’t wan’ou, d’y’ know what a’ mean, for the awkwardness that they’d feel ‘cos everyone’d be takin’ the piss out of’em an’ the’ wouldn’t say ‘no you can’t play fuck off over there’ the’ wouldn’t say that, but if you hung around try’na wait ‘n’ play you’d get the piss took out’v’ya to the point where psychologically where you’ think ‘fuck that, I’ll just go’n sit over ‘ere’ see what a’ mean? That’s how it was run type of thing. It w’, that’s how it was [...]”

(P9, Male, Other Mixed British, 25-30: I1)

Again, as with the reflection of the official to the unofficial regimes with the fluidity of who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’ of control or ownership, the flow and ebb carries through the complex of hierarchies as agents move between spaces within the space and across time:

“ [...] you’d see the dynamics change when, at different periods of soc<sup>80</sup> so say for instance it’d be a different, it’d be like that, but it’d be different at different times; we’d all go the gym, ‘soon as gym time was gone and if I didn’t go gym then it was a complete’ different wing. Different people dominate different areas, d’y’ understand what a’m sayin’? So then once the hour was up in the gym and the lads, when we come back, then it’d all be different, d’y’ know what a’ mean? They’d had their time on the pool table so it, erm, it was us. But if we didn’t all go the gym they wouldn’t get any on the pool table”

(P9, Male, Other Mixed British, 25-30)

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<sup>80</sup> Pronounced ‘sosh’, meaning socialisation or ‘free’ time.

However, the places and spaces described herein are complex and nuanced. For example, space may be occupied by 'gangs' not merely as a means of staking a claim of ownership or control over it, but also as a means of being safe. Although, not necessarily in the way that criminologists such as John Pitts might suggest a kind of safety through being part of a 'gang', but instead through the safety of visibility in a public social space. This is exemplified by P15 describing his perceptions of youth street gangs within the community:

“[...] back to the safety stuff y’know a lot of the time y’ see these younger gangs an’ the’ lookin’ for trouble, the’ lookin’ to be caught as well [P15 laughs] so y’know sometimes the’ want to be seen by the police as well [...]”

(P15, Male, White British, 25-30)

This example runs contra to the concept of ensuring a visible presence within a given space as a presentation of dominance. Instead this example depicts ensuring a visible presence as a means of safety. This is not the case for all, others, like the group within the prison, utilise social space as a means of demonstrating control, authority and ownership of the space:

“ [...] but then y’ve got those other who want to be seen an’ they want to be seen because of completely different reasons, they might want to be seen to show erm their strength or their erm numbers or y’know show other people what their, what as a group they can sort’ve put together on, on y’know a patch or on the street or wherever it is they may be in a public space. It could be, it could be somewhere like a pub or y’know even a event, [...] y’know a big, a big concert or somethin’, but wherever that is y’know, but if they want to be seen, then they’re wantin’ to be seen for other reasons. Maybe t’ erm t’ y’know scare other, other groups [...]”

(P15, Male, White British, 25-30)



The range of use and perception of the space appears almost infinite. Again, even here in P15's description of what are typically described as 'organised crime groups' or 'gangs' it is not as simple as to suggest that they do not or do want to use, or even perceive, the space in set ways. The space may also be an advertisement or propaganda opportunity:

“[...] or to y'know maybe even influence people t', to aspire to be involved in that, y'know because people are lookin' at 'em thinkin' that's, that's a big group an' they're, they're bold 'n' brash, let's be involved so it's complicated”

(P15, Male, White British, 25-30)

## **8.5 The gymnasium: ownership and control**

During the ethnographic aspect of the fieldwork within the gymnasium I experienced examples of how it can be utilised as a means of demonstrating ownership of the space. One such example being a couple of weeks after one of the key players within the drugs economy within Town 1 (R11) had taken offence at being introduced to me as someone who is “doing research on gangs” (this will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter). It was a couple of weeks after this incident and I was working out in the gymnasium, several of the regulars who were associates of R11 had been in the gymnasium earlier on and some were still there. In particular (P20) was still around (R11 usually trains with P20).

R11 started his workout shortly after arriving, he never usually spent much time just hanging around and chatting like may of the other regulars - he was

usually there to just train and kept his conversations to a limit and only in between sets. On this occasion he was training alone; after a very short time of him entering the main weights room he came over and stood very close to me slightly to the left and behind of me, I too was stood up. He stood arms folded looking down at me (I am significantly shorter and smaller in stature than he is). This lasted for no more than thirty seconds. However, it felt like hours. It was clear that he was demonstrating that this was his space, his control of the space. I, like P9 and his damaged pool cue or his fellow prisoners who did not get to use the gymnasium equipment of their choice, *could not argue with this*; I was the 'outsider'. More specifically I was an outsider who had been given special privileges in that my presence was at best taken as a novelty type of popular journalistic figure, often despite explaining the research almost on a weekly basis to someone or other, I would be asked questions like 'how's the book going?', 'Are you writing a book on P1?'. At worst I was tolerated with occasional gestures of symbolic (unofficial) ownership of the space, as was the case in this instance; only tolerated as I had been given the seal of approval from P1.

The space of the gymnasium in itself is another example of complexity. Following on from the ethnographic excerpt is the continued fluidity of the space of the gymnasium, ranging from a place that as P3 described it, holds a key position in the existence of informal networks, gangs and criminal families, through to being a welcoming place. For the former, during another time that I was just hanging around drinking coffee with P3 and some other regulars, P3 (white male, aged 65 – 70 years) explained: "Pubs and gyms are

a hub of informal economies”. He also added that certain pubs, giving the example of a now closed down pub, were also places “where you could get everythin’, from videos to someone getting’ knocked off. It was better than Marks and Spencers”

(02/12/13).

This sentiment was reiterated by P1 (white male, age 40 – 50 years), again whilst I was hanging around chatting with him and some regulars. He was reflecting upon when he was involved in ‘door security’ and his firm were going to be doing work in another city, they would first go and visit the local heavyweights gym, as it was “where you were guaranteed to find the local ‘Mr Big””, in order for them to negotiate terms, including “having a few of the local lads” work with them and “throw a couple of their dealers in”. The proviso being that it was P1’s ‘door’

(22/05/14).

The reverse of this being that the space of the gymnasium is a welcoming one. I also experienced this during the ethnography, albeit as mentioned above as a kind of novelty or tolerated occupant. Despite the occasion when R11 was demonstrating his unofficial ownership of the space, I was always made to feel welcome. Whether it was the constant flow of coffee offered or the range of regulars who guided me through using the equipment in the gymnasium, or being brought in as a participant in the constant banter of the space. This welcome was emphasised in several interviews too:

“[Manager of Gym 1] has struggled, a’ mean this is personal, he has Asperger’s Syndrome, he doesn’t communicate very well, he’s worked at places like [Factory 1] and the dairy, he’s been knocked unconscious by his co-workers ‘cos of his communication. What other place in this entire universe could [Manager of Gym 1] work other than in a gym like this? He is utterly accepted, utterly accepted”

(P1, Male, White British, age 40 – 50 years: I2)

This sense of welcoming within the space of the gymnasium appeared also to expand beyond it. Many participants referred to P3’s gymnasium<sup>81</sup> in the same terms. This also extends as a concept to include notions of belonging, safety and identity aligned with the space of the gymnasium. P11 (white male, age 45 – 50 years) begins to open up this set of ideas in describing his first visit to P3’s gymnasium and his latter experiences of P1’s gymnasium; this story begins by outlining the idea that although the space may appear at first glance as unwelcoming and potentially unsafe, the reverse was experienced:

“it’s an environment where I went when I was 16 or whatever I was when I started going in there, and I was just accepted. But again it took a lot of courage to walk in that gym, even though I did a bit of boxing from being 14 and in a boxing gym environment which was more of a hall, like a church hall, and then walking into that gym where you’ve got the big, strong fellas and all the big body builders, and I remember going into [P3’s] gym, and many people do remember the first time they go into [P3’s] gym, I walked to the reception and it was intimidating, these big fellas about, walked to the desk and I just said ‘I’d like to start training’ and I was accepted so easily, but I had to get the guts up to go in on my own, it’s nice if somebody knows somebody and you go in with them, but [P3] was there and said ‘it’s great you just pay your visitors rate, there’s where you get changed, this is what you do’ and I thought ‘he’s not questioning me, he’s not asking me what am I going to do’ and I just wanted to be accepted and he accepted me like that. And that’s the environment of the gym, ‘cos everybody’s welcome, black, white, brown, yellow, green,

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<sup>81</sup> Which is closed as he is retired.

doesn't matter who or what you're about, what your religious beliefs are, you walk in a gym, you're just accepted no matter what your personal circumstances are. And I like that, 'cos you'd see how friendly people are within a gym and it just changes your persona [...], it makes you more sociably acceptable to other people [...] Sometimes a lot of them say 'I'd nowhere to go' again that's what this place is about 'cos whether it be 3 o'clock in the morning, it doesn't matter, if anybody involved in this gym had a problem there's always somebody he can ring, doesn't matter when or where or you just walk in, somebody would be there to speak to them"

(P11, Male, White British, 45-50)

The excerpt above, although demonstrating the welcoming sense of belonging and identity, must be considered in contrast with the seemingly contradictory issue that the space is only open and welcoming and providing a sense of belonging to an extent. This extent, or horizon of belonging, and later be-coming, is complex and challenging to grasp. Frequently, and from the outset of the ethnographic fieldwork I felt a sense, particularly strongly in the early stages, that I was missing something in my understanding of what was happening and who was 'in' a group that would commonly be described as a 'gang' and who was 'outside' of such groups. There was something that I could not get to grips with in experiencing the space. This I later realised was that those involved in 'gangs' rarely fulfil the 'gang' stereotype portrayed in the dominant Anglo-American academic literature (cf. Klein, 1995, 2001; Esbenson *et al*, 2001; Pitts, 2008 amongst others); nor did they present themselves as such.

Although within the communities and beyond, colloquially and through the popular press, people that I was spending time with were commonly described as 'gangs' and 'gangsters', yet none of the people occupying this

space understood themselves as being in a 'gang', 'group' yes, 'gang' no. This again highlights the aspect of the multifaceted process of be-ing and be-coming involved in 'gangs' pertaining to the concept of being both present and absent simultaneously (cf. Gordon, 2008) discussed in the previous chapter. Importantly for the present chapter this notion of absent presence applies not directly to the individuals or groups, but instead to the space, in this case the space of the gymnasium.

To begin to articulate this idea it is worth drawing attention to an excerpt from the second interview conducted toward the end of the fieldwork with P1. During the interview, P1 put into words the very thing that previously I had not been able to grasp. This being the idea lying at the border of being inside and outside, absent and present all at the same time in explaining his point of entry into 'gangs':

“[...] the gym was my level of entry into erm the lifestyle erm, it was erm, it was a quite well guarded door 'cos not everybody gained entry, it was only certain p', a' mean you, you could, anybody could use the gym obviously, it wasn't a private members club but for me the gym was like erm, it was the wardrobe in the *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. In that it was a wardrobe, it was a gym, but **some people went in an' ended up in Narnia**, some people didn't, **some people went in and it was just a wardrobe.**”

During the earliest stages of the ethnography I had walked into the wardrobe and caught a sense that there was a Narnia, but remained in the wardrobe. As the fieldwork unfolded, aspects of the participants' Narnia were revealed bit by bit, although never fully; I was inside, but remained outside, I was the absent presence, as was the space of the gymnasium. In exactly the same

way that participants and those that I spent time with are present as being involved in groups that are described as gangs, yet are simultaneously absent as being a 'gang'. This point has two key facets: firstly that there is the physical door to the gymnasium that anyone can walk through and be welcomed (into the gymnasium); secondly, there is also, as P1 explained, an imagined door, a metaphysical door, which can only be transcended through a mutual imagining of the space of *being* (into *Narnia*).

These two imaginings being, that of the Narnia beyond the door and that of the imaginer entering the door. Just like the dreamer who dreams the dreamed, only to realise they themselves are being dreamt by another dreamer in Borges story *The Circular Ruins* (2000); so too does the person be-coming involved in 'gangs' upon entering such transitional spaces that are catalytic to the processes of be-coming, have to simultaneously imagine the respective space as that of the space of the group and its identity, but also be imagined by those already within and integral to the space as being an authentic occupant of the space who is somehow able to perceive and use the space in the same way as themselves.

## **8.6 Space as a means of becoming *someone***

As noted in chapter 7 the notion of *being*, or *becoming someone* is an *agentive component* within the educative processes of 'gangs'. This section highlights how space and place play an important role in attaining becoming someone through 'gang' activity and striving for *legendary* status. The role of

space in this project of *being* or *becoming someone* is crucial throughout all aspects of the data.

The gymnasium and the street were two of the most significant initial spaces that were most commonly featured in describing the phenomenon of *being someone*. Interesting these two spaces have the commonality of being highly visible spaces. Both spaces are highly conducive with the theatrical spectacle, which P9 begins to expose in describing the beginning of his journey of becoming involved in 'gang' cultures. P9 describes his early urges and enactments of *being* someone on the streets as a means of generating a highly localised (geographic and age specific) legendary status / symbolic capital (cf. Bourdieu, 1985):

“[...] status or to be someone, I always used to see people in fast cars an' I'd think 'or that's me that'. Some of me mates Dad's and me cousins an' all that had nice flash cars, I wanted a bit of it. Used to be, in school when a' was, I wouldn't say a' was tryna find a reputation when a' went to school, 'cos a' didn't really like the kids in school, but a' used to go an' rob cars. So a' used to like the thought of drivin' to school, an' then obviously all the girls'll like it if, when y'know if y'drivin down the street in a Focus when the' first come out. [...] so it was [pause] just image [...]”

(P9, Male, Other Mixed British 25-30: 11)

However, this is not as clear-cut as merely wanting to generate an image of *legendary* status. It must also be noted that there is the integral aspect of generating at least an image of economic prosperity and interpolating with that imagery, if not as well aspiring to the actual achievement of it. This is made clear in P9 explaining he saw others in fast cars and saw in this a



projected image of himself to which he aspired. Similarly there is the added complexity here of the spectacle seemingly not being aimed at all who may witness the theatre of the stolen car being driven to school by a young person. Instead it was targeted specifically at the young women within his community, intending to impress them out of cultural assumptions of masculinity via the performative space of the street.

This was reverberated by others. P14 described in detail his be-coming and how it was both initially animated through the catalytic combination of a highly visible social space and beginning a process of image making. Specifically this combination being that of the football terraces (and streets neighbouring football grounds) and the image project aligned with football hooliganism:

“I’m a young guy, into football and that, I gravitated towards football and at that time there was a massive youth culture, a youth movement where you had casuals, an’ I was a casual, I was into football, it really appealed to me ‘cos I could go to the football and I was somebody”

(P14, Male, Black British, 50-55)

This process of be-coming for P14 stemmed from not having experienced economic stability as a child and his Mother (as sole parent) not being around much due to working a number of jobs simultaneously to keep food on the table. He described how, as he was walking in to the house after school and “[...] Mum was walking in the other direction so I was left to raise myself on the streets” (P14). As noted earlier, socio-economic position and exclusion impact upon the processes of learning and be-coming involved in groups that are commonly described as ‘gangs’. Here this concept is expanded upon in

P14 explaining not merely how this exclusion by proxy of space, place, race and class operates, but importantly how the space of the street can counter this. Countering in its' fluidity, lubricating aspirations and potential for *becoming someone*, as the street does not exclude those who are other-ed elsewhere based on where they are from, what they look like, their race or ethnicity, nor social class:

“[...] you're left to your own devices and they say that the devil finds work for idle hands to do and the thing about life on the streets, it's an equal opportunities employer, you will always have a job, it will never say that you didn't have enough qualifications or you're too young or you can't do it, you'll be able to do it, and if you're patient and you wait something will come along and you'll be able to jump on it and you'll be able to make money and move yourself on, make progress so to speak [...]”

(P14, Male, Black British, 50-55)

The concept of becoming or being someone is multifaceted covering a range of considerations including sense of belonging as described by many of the participants. Yet other facets of the notion of becoming and or being someone were equally evident throughout the fieldwork. In particular, and again, in a counter motion to the lived experience of socio-economic alienation experienced by many of the participants, the attempts at attaining a kind of legendary status were distinctly notable in both the interviews and ethnographic work.

P9 (I2) opens this up in explaining that the key to his involvement in groups described as 'gangs' was due to “[...] social status tha', that's what a', I'd guess led up to it.”. P9 expands upon this in describing some of his early

urges to attain a local legendary status within the commonly occupied social spaces of his peers. In this case the social space being that of parks and wasteland within the housing estate he grew up on:

“All our little crew were like ‘*Aw look there’s, there’s [Name] in a car*’ an’ the’ were made up, d’y’ know buzzin’ off ‘em. I must’ve wanted that little, wanted ‘em to say that about me, as any kid does don’t they so that’s where a’ reckon the ignition come from”

(P9, Male, Other Mixed British: I2)

In this early example, P9 is describing how one of the wider peer group had stolen a car and was “doing a show” on local wasteland. Specifically he was describing how other peers were impressed (“buzzin’ off ‘em”), and even more pertinent to his own journey of be-coming, that he too wanted to achieve the same legendary recognition from his peers. To achieve this, as with many others within the research, P9 saw the very activities of group related crime as a means of achieving this legendary status.

In other ethnographic encounters within the ethnography I found that the process of attaining legendary status through third places / spaces in various forms. These ranged from one prospective participant being introduced to me by P1 as “the elder statesman” of Town 1, through to almost all of the regulars within the space of the heavy weights gymnasium and their goal of ‘getting big’. The term ‘getting big’ refers to the aim of building up a far greater muscle mass than would naturally occur for the ‘normal’ size of their body. The space of the gymnasium was central to this processes of ‘getting big’ and was also a

space well populated by people attempting to transcend poverty through group orientated criminal means.

## 8.7 Summary

Central to this chapter is not only the effects of space in the educative and be-coming processes, but also the shifting ownership of space demarking who is **inside** and who is **outside** (of the groups). Likewise, this chapter demonstrates the role of third / social spaces / places in be-coming 'someone'. In respect of who is inside and who is outside, this rests on the temporal consideration described by P9 in the dominance of space within the prison. In this space, ownership shifted with the cyclic passing of time. Similarly, in the example of ownership of the space of the street the space shifts from being public and private with segments of the street be-coming and be-ing perceived as either *no go zones* or places perceived as 'gang' spaces, as described by P17 and P12 respectively.

This not only demonstrates an extension of the 'be-coming' process associated with groups described as 'gangs' in relation to space, as in the space becomes known as an outsider space or a dangerous space, but also how the space in question can be perceived (and not just used) in multiple ways all at the same time. This is absolutely clear in P12 describing overcrowding and the space of the home spilling into the space of the street, thus extending what is home (private) into the street (public), which culminates in the seemingly separate spaces being lived and experienced as

one. This gives rise to confusion from outsiders of the *outsider* or *other-ed* groups in their perception of the street within such communities.

This multi-perception of space is explicitly apparent upon inspection of my ethnographic encounters within the space of the gymnasium. As noted earlier, early in the fieldwork I had an intuition that there was the presence of a *je ne sais quoi* in the sense of my experiencing the space in a different manner to the regulars who frequented the gymnasium. This absent presence was later revealed incrementally during the fieldwork as I gained an evolving depth of understanding of the space. More specifically in a second interview toward the latter stages of the fieldwork, P1 who by this point had become more candid in our encounters, explained that the space of the gymnasium and others like it were multi-dimensional.

This was elaborated on (as noted earlier) through the analogy of the wardrobe from Lewis Carol's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. In this famous book the crux of entry to Narnia is the wardrobe, which for some once opened leads into a mystical and enchanted place synonymous with both adventure and danger, for others the wardrobe merely leads into a storage unit for clothing. The difference between the explorer of Narnia and the explorer of coats, shirts and socks being a fundamental one and one that is crucial to ideas of *insider-ness* and *outsider-ness*. To enter Narnia is to somehow share in experiencing signifiers of a micro Volkgeist of the insider space, a volkgeist that is inside and outside simultaneously. Across all of the research, insider-

ness equated to somehow being outside of the mainstream, and enabled perceptual and experiential entry.

This process shows how such spaces exist beyond existing concepts of third place in that the terms first, second and third do not merely apply to work, home and social and / or public. They too apply to outside, inside and outside-in (first, second and third respectively), with the third space of outside-in being the space in which the *outsider* to the mainstream (in this case groups described as 'gangs') be-comes the insider of the given space. With the reverse applying to the mainstream, in that the normative insider be-come 'outsider' to the given space and therefore cannot perceive or experience the space in the same way as those explorers of Narnia.

It is this closed yet open door that, only through demonstrable signifiers of somehow sharing in the micro volkgeist of the space and groups that the process of be-coming may commence. Of specific concern to this chapter is the question of be-coming who or what, which is answered in the data in the simple term of becoming *someone*. This meaning be-ing *someone* as opposed to *no-one*: a resistance to being outside of or other-ed by mainstream normativity. Whether this is achieved through bodybuilding, as is the case for those I spent time with in the gymnasium and others such as P9 who at one point described his younger self as a "juice 'ed"<sup>82</sup>. Other examples included building a reputation of being "flash" (P9); or entering other life-worlds where development of reputation through violence in a third place such

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<sup>82</sup> Meaning someone who used steroids for bodybuilding purposes

as sites of football violence (P14) acted as a kind of hybrid escapism and personal development. All of which were means of reeling away from oppressive (through race or class) and impoverished realities.

Outsider spaces play an integral role in this process of learning and becoming involved in groups described as 'gangs', for instance such as how P14 describes how due to the lack of opportunity born from discrimination of where he was from, being Black and being poor he could not gain mainstream employment. Yet the outsider space of his neighbourhood, the street and associated sites provided alternative opportunities. As P14 explained, the street does not ask for experience or academic qualifications, meaning that the third space of the street provided the foundation for his becoming *someone* as opposed to existing as poor, from a deprived neighbourhood and being Black and treated as less than the *mainstream*. As with the previous chapter, this indicates an existential action against and within structural constraint.

Again the friction and interplay of space, constraint and choice comes to the fore. As the constraints of living in a poor community, racial discrimination, class discrimination, lack of educational opportunity and lack of employment opportunities all inform a choice to become *someone*; someone else yet the same. To become free, yet at the same time not free, free from the constraint of structural oppression, yet newly constrained by issues such as limited freedom to move from one area to another for fear of territorial violence (P13). This brings the Lacanian back into play as the outside and inside reflect each

other, yet do not recognise each other as being the same yet pointing in different directions. Like the Lacanian Mirror Stage the one side of the Janus face cannot see the other, yet this does not mean they do not both still exist as the one in the same.



# **Chapter 9**

## **Conclusion**

## 9.1 Introduction

This research developed over a lifetime immersed in communities affected by 'gangs', OCG's and broader violence and crime, either as a resident, youth and community professional, or researcher. During this time I became increasingly conscious of a homogenizing of the term 'gang', associated research and related media focus. As noted, the vast majority of the existing literature on 'gangs' has been concerned with youth street 'gangs'<sup>83</sup>. With little attention given to how 'gang' cultures educate<sup>84</sup> and are educated on being 'gang' or if / how third place / space<sup>85</sup> may play an integral role in such educative processes; a point ironic given that 'the street' is a significant third place for youth street 'gangs'.

Preceding these existing gaps in the literature is the problematic nature of the term 'gang'. This problematic, stigmatizing / racially codifying (Sharp *et al*, 2006; Lucas in Skelton and Valentine, 1998) homogeneity is now well ingrained, not least due to the ability of the term to attract Government funding to communities (cf. Smithson *et al*, 2013) and makes any reclamation or reassertion of the term 'gang' extremely difficult, if not impossible. The present study has taken an evolved and nuanced approach to researching 'gangs', seeking to facilitate a shift away from such well worn tracks that have neglected consideration of the educative process of becoming involved in 'gangs and third place / space.

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<sup>83</sup> Which due to its political torque has a higher tendency to attract funding.

<sup>84</sup> There is an extremely limited literature on learning to be 'gang' in the secure estate.

<sup>85</sup> There is a broader literature focusing on territoriality and mapping.

The core research questions of this thesis have explored the educative processes connected to becoming involved in 'gangs', with particular consideration of the educative dynamism of third places and spaces. As outlined earlier, the primary research questions are:

- 1. What are the educative practices and processes of becoming within 'gangs'?**
- 2. What role do *third places* play in the educative practices and processes of education in 'gangs'?**
- 3. What are the social conditions, which are conducive to becoming educated into 'gangs', and to what extent do such conditions play a role in these educative processes?**

The secondary research questions are:

- 1. What are some of the sub-sets of space, which play integral roles in the educative processes of becoming involved in 'gangs'?**
- 2. What are the types of education, which function within the educative processes within 'gangs'?**
- 3. How are alternative modes of identification with 'gang' culture(s) and third places defined, amplified and / or deferred?**

In responding to these questions this thesis has made three key contributions to knowledge:

- 1. The importance of third place / space within the educative processes of becoming involved in 'gangs'** – This contribution to knowledge shows how third place (and space) play an integral role in providing a platform for the educative practices to take place. Also, this contribution demonstrates how the perception and use of place shifts for different people and times, and how the meanings of a given place are educated within 'gangs' and across communities.

2. **How ‘gangs’ are educated and be-come through stories and social hauntings within third places and spaces** – This area of contribution to knowledge emphasises how stories and social haunting within third places and spaces are utilised as educative processes, which aid survival and agency production.
3. **The ‘sticky’ point of how ‘gangs’ occupy the spaces of being ‘Outside’ and ‘Inside’ simultaneously** – This contribution is twofold and include:
  - A nuanced understanding of how ‘gangs’ occupy the parallax position of both *insider* and *outsider* simultaneously. This positionality shifts dependant upon the freedoms and constraints afforded by different spaces and places. Likewise this parallax positionality between the inside and the outside demonstrates another key educative process within the groups; that in which the education takes place through an unrecognised mirroring of their opposite (mainstream groups and officials). This relies on conditions that stimulate and perpetuate the be-coming, formation and evolution of ‘gangs’, which are established at the hinter-space between structural constraint and agentive manoeuvres toward versions of freedom (choice).

**Additionally, the methodological contribution to knowledge is the:**

- **Articulation of the importance of an *ethnographic approach* at the neighborhood level. – Without utilizing an ethnographic approach it would not have been possible to ascertain the nuances of ‘gangs’ not identifying themselves as such, yet clearly carried out actions and lived lifestyles** which would, without question, be described as those of ‘gangs’ in the media, policy and popular discourse. This raises questions not only for access for further and developed research, but also following the work of others (Hallsworth and Young, 2008; Hallsworth, 2013; Hallsworth, 2014; Smithson et al, 2012a, 2012b, 2016) challenges the whole notion of there being such a thing as a ‘gang’. In short, how ‘gangs’ have been researched previously is not going to prove fruitful or robust in the future as ‘gangs’ have been educated over time to not identify as such in order to minimise disruption to their activities and as an evolved sense of self.

These contributions to knowledge are discussed in greater detail in the following sections of this chapter.

## 9.2 Third Place / Space

Third places (and spaces) enable and play a vital role in the educative processes of becoming involved in 'gangs'. Third places provide spaces of belonging, safety, camaraderie and most importantly, as will be discussed in the following section, spaces where educative stories are told which enable the essential and on-going development and survival of the groups. Oldenburg's (1997) concept of third place proved to be a crucial foundation to understanding the educative processes explored, as is demonstrated in the data (see chapter 8). Although, contra to Oldenburg's (1997) understanding of the three archetype places being set fixtures, third places also have the potential to be all things at all times, depending on the individual or (sub)group perception and interpretation of it. The data herein demonstrates temporal and perceptual shifts in meaning of place, giving rise to fluid spaces that are different things for different people at different times.

Whether that be the space of the 'street' and respective communities and neighbourhoods, gymnasiums, prisons or pubs, each of these spaces depicted earlier illuminate how the meaning of the place can be perceived as closed – open, dangerous – safe, inside – outside, exclusive – inclusive. For example, the space of the gymnasium engendered different understandings and experience depending on the individual. For some the gymnasium was exactly that, a gymnasium, for others it was a catalytic space of becoming and being; or as P1 put it *the wardrobe or Narnia*. They each change in meaning dependant upon the perceiver and the time at which it is perceived. However, these binaries are problematic in that the third places encountered in the

research were both ends of the binaries in one space; they are Janus faced or parallaxed places encapsulating myriad spaces. The participants consistently described the various spaces within the study as being all things in one place at one time, much like Borges' Aleph, as utilised by Soja (1996). Soja's concept of third space has resonated widely, yet it has never been applied to 'gangs' or to educative processes of becoming.

For different people at different times the spaces were real, imagined, shifting and supple (cf. Soja, 1996) and simultaneously interrelated in the educational process both as drivers of the collective spirit (*volkgeist*) (cf. Hegel, 2005) and also spaces in which the educative processes occur. The gymnasium was a *no go zone* for some, but for others a welcoming place of care and compassion; the 'street' could be both dangerous and unsafe at the same time as being an extension of people's living rooms. The key factor for deciding this is the individual and their agentive choice to engage with the history of the place or explore it through other stances. However, these choices are set within the commonality of the educative socialisation haunting and experience of place / space. This interplay is integral to the ignition of the educative journeys expressed in the data.

Although some, such as "the wrong'ens" (P9) or the "grasses" (various participants), were *a priori* excluded from engaging in these spaces and process. They had learned through wider historicity of the spaces that they were *outsiders* to the outsiders. This is bedded against the backdrop of structures such as the professional / middle-classes abandoning the estates,

or the regimes of the prison, or the hyper-masculinised patriarchy of the gymnasium. These understandings, interpretations and perceptions are developed over years, lifetimes and generations.

On a wider neighbourhood scale a different understanding of alienation emerges, as the people I spent time with reinterpreted their segregation and abandonment as an opportunity and parallax (Zizek, 2009) space within which to lead their selves (cf. Wacquant, 2011 on the Janus face and the 'ghetto'). The lived reality straddles structural constraint to place, space and positionality, and the agentic (re)claiming of such – a push and pull in the same place and direction.

In this sense 'gangs' are integral to their community as well as problematic. Within their ranks are entrepreneurs, politicians, managers, negotiators, labourers, accountants, entertainers and heads of state (cf. Venkatesh, 2006). Not literally, but as a mirror society, a society reflecting the one that they feel abandoned from, with a reflected economy, which flourished after the death of industry. In the same way that Winlow (2001) described the participants in his Doctoral research as finding new forms of masculinity in a post-industrial paradigm, the communities and people I spent time with had now had chance to embed and refine these new ways of being. Instead, of reinventing they had begun to reflect and mirror rather than revolt.

In exactly the same way the middle and professional classes had (in most neighbourhoods) *cached out* (as described by several participants) and set up

gentrified enclaves where they felt safe, have a sense of belonging and being someone through shared group benefits (Manzi and Smith-Bowers, 2005). So too had the 'gangs' in the communities they were left behind in. As much as the "new middle-class" had seized ownership of mundane new builds, leafy suburbs and gated enclaves (cf. Atkinson and Flint, 2004; Atkinson and Blandy, 2016), so too had the 'gangs' in the very places that had been left to people deemed to be none commercially productive. Both the 'gangs' and "new middle-class" had sought and established 'club goods' by colonising space as an act of free will within structural constraint (Buchanan, 1965 cited in Manzi and Smith-Bowers, 2005). Ironically, some of these newly gentrified enclaves that the *better off* decamp to, are in fact newly regenerated areas (cf. Jeffrey, 2016), as is described by P12; thus establishing tectonic frictions (op cit) and feelings of alienation.

The 'gangs' had made the agentive act of infiltrating and seizing the 'world of men [the middle and professional classes lifestyle]', yet did not fully succeed. Instead they were banished to the mirror, 'reduced [...] to mere slavish reflections' (Borges quoted in Baudrillard, 2008) and were living the reflection of the mainstream. The 'gangs' have previously revolted and now given rise to a mirrored and equal set of 'sovereign peoples' (Baudrillard, 2008: 150). Unlike Winlow's (2001) suggestion of there merely being a seeking of new forms of (masculine) power in the absence of old industries, the present research indicates a mirroring of the forms of *official* power and structures that the working classes have historically been alienated from; revolution had become reflection.



'Gangs' have reached the Baudrillardian point being 'perfectly alien to' the middle professional classes, yet 'in perfect collusion' (ibid) with them. This is clear in examples from P1 and others in the gymnasium who spoke about having police on their payrolls, being threatened by corrupt police who wanted a pay rise, through to wealthy professionals and the upper classes courting their favour and presence at dinner parties and charity events due to their counter-celebrity status, and the imbalanced symmetry (Zizek, 2012) of 'hit and tell' (Redhead, 2010) media output and requests.

### **9.3 Stories and social hauntings**

Not only are the modes of being part of a 'gang' educated through stories and social haunting, so too are the rules of the third places / spaces. The knowledge is quickly educated to and transmitted amongst and beyond the aspirant and 'gang' via spatial, social and historic factors of place (cf. Soja, 1996 developed from Lefebvre, 1998). The aspirant and 'gangs' progress through continuous professional development via *offensive* stories that are told within and beyond third places. Stories that, like with children's fables, have a message embedded within them; as Plato (2007) noted, stories control and those who control the stories also control the people. However, unlike Plato (2007) it is not the state controlling the stories, this power sits instead with the group / 'gang' and is mediated by the story. Aspirant members learn the correct behaviours through stories, which may have a central figure or event (hero or legend) with a micro civilising or moralising ideal such as those told by P14 or within the gymnasium. These educative stories are told on the

street or gymnasium rather than a classroom and are the product of the specific socio-spatial relations of the third spaces and groups within this study. These stories draw upon the power of internal group opinion, with the heroic celebrated and the anti-heroic (for example 'grasses') ostracized. Educative stories socialise 'gang' members and steer them towards 'correct' behaviours from an early age moulding conduct even *a priori* to actual 'gang' involvement.

This latter point illustrates how the story links to social haunting, harking back to wider working-class narratives of *them and us* (cf. Hoggart, 1957) in specific places. Stories help produce identification with internal pasts including glories and lessons learnt, creating group limited civilizing offensives. As argued by van Krieken (1989) and Powell (2013) concepts of civilizing offensives neglect the importance of peer socialization, and instead focus on the state, family and school as core sites of socialisation. However, this research has shown other sites as being central to education taking place via stories especially where parental relations are problematic and disengagement with mainstream education and authority is prolific. These stories form part of the fabric of the spaces in which they are told. This is almost a cycle, but not fully as the components wind back on their selves, dynamically contorting in a torsional manner (cf. Badiou, 2009) creating, being and consumed all in one space. The following two sub-sections outline these processes in greater detail.

### 9.3.1 Stories

The stories are not merely oral histories or written canons studiously learnt and revised. They are stories in a much broader sense; these stories are embedded so deeply that they are a part of the fabric of the spaces and respective communities. They are told beyond the verbal, reaching into the visual, semiotic, imagination and the unconscious. They also shape policy and inform regeneration through symbolic production of place image (Shields, 1992; Wacquant, 2010a, 2010b; Lefebvre, 1998).

Stories of import to the educative processes of be-coming included those demonstrating that the groups are *not to be messed with*; that people within the group and wider community *should not inform*; that *the 'gangs' are the people to turn to in times of trouble*; stories of *solidarity*. Ultimately they are stories of *who and how to be*, forming a micro-moral education. Although these stories form part of an action toward freedom for the individuals as a means to attempt to escape poverty, they are paradoxically delivered through oppressive covert *banking means* (cf. Freire, 2007).

Some stories are told orally over generations within these spaces and associated communities. However, some are visual, physical and non-verbally audible as they are performed in the everyday. Examples include the highly performative demonstration of *strength* in P1 and some of his colleagues going to *tell off* a local drug dealer for bullying the family of a man who had stopped dealing for him in order to take on a mainstream legitimate job and

P9 'putting on a show'. The community watch, hear, smell and feel these play-out; they consume every theatrical aspect of these big men exerting their authority on the local dealer and the dealer taking it graciously or whatever other everyday 'shows' are playing out. The stories are there to be seen at that moment, in the moment, in the same way a reality television show tells an instant story about the show and its protagonists.

The theatre of these public encounters are retold by those who were there, and then by those who were told, and eventually by those who have never even met the people involved. Here there is a fascination and fetishism, which is somehow attractive to those not involved, but who want to appropriate dangerous and exotic stories (cf. Skeggs, 2004). At the latter point the story enters the realm of legend and folklore and like all great legends and folklore, there are those amongst the young who are inspired by the stories and want to be like their 'heroes'.

This resonates with the opening monologue of *Goodfellas* (1990), in which, the protagonist Henry Hill pronounces, "*As for back as I can remember, I always wanted to be a gangster*". Some kids want to be Superman or a nurse - someone who saves others. A minority of kids living in these spaces and associated communities feel closer to the 'community leader' who can save women and children from being bullied by local drug dealers. To them this is more realistic than a man who wears his underpants on the outside of his trousers: through the stories available by opportunity, or "crimes of

opportunity” (P1) the ‘gang’ / community leader is a more attainable story to aspire to.

However, **media presented and orientated stories also play a role in the educative processes of be-coming involved in ‘gangs’**. As much as participants frequently described observing the story of the space of the street unfolding and being influenced by that, there are also the more zemiological media stories. These too operate at a hinter-space, not only between realities, but also between representation and reinterpretation and the concepts of being and becoming. This is a particularly complex issue in that the media stories are varied and could include film, news, music and not to mention new forms of social media. The stories present, re-present and even create what is and in turn these stories are re-presented, re-represented and reinterpreted by those that receive them, thus layering a hyper-reality (Baudrillard, 2008, 2009).

These stories often orbit communities and spaces of *otherness* and stigmatisation, focusing on places or categorisations of people. As outlined in Chapter 9 **the educative process within the space of the media story has an air of the self-fulfilling prophesy** about it. The media stories are told and there is an interpolation, whereby people somehow understand it is they who are being spoken of (cf. Althusser, 2001). **The ‘gangs’ and aspirants are already in place, they already have their aspirations and / or carry out violence, crime, and community leadership / control, but when the media news story is told they know it is they who are being spoke of, they**

**respond with the most violent act: they do nothing** (cf. Žižek, 2008). In doing nothing the 'gangs' have not decreased their activity nor added to it, they have merely done what they did before. They are already being and always already becoming, the story is the recognition, underlining or the utterance of a version of their actual lived stories.

**Crucial to this research is that parallel stories exist. There are the stories of the 'gangs', their communities and all those who live within them and then there are the stories of those beyond, the media, political discourse and popular culture and discourse. There are so many stories that they are seemingly rendered void of content, yet it is this void that is actually the content. The sum of the stories and the space left between them are, as this research has shown, the parallax point of substance<sup>86</sup>. The polar points of the stories are merely constitutive to the real story; one set of stories sit within another and interplay (cf. Borges, 2000). The localised and national *insider* stories that educate within the groups and beyond outwardly also sit within the anterior stories of the media, and in reverse the insider stories of the groups encompass the anterior media stories. They both are convinced that they are the real, yet the reality is precarious and mutually reliant between the two in uneven symmetry (Žižek, 2012) ensuring perpetuation of the educative stories of the groups.**

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<sup>86</sup> However, it must be noted that some of these narratives are those of dominant power such as Government and (academic) elites.

### 9.3.2 Social Haunting (reflection)

This thesis demonstrates how social hauntings (Gordon, 2008), that is, traumatic social relics from recent past, pass through time subtly informing the present of 'gangs'. Hauntings manifest as resistance and organising for survival (cf. Holston, 1999, 2008 cited in Pine, 2010; Wacquant, 2010b), or repeated and mirrored tactics (cf. De Certeau, 1988), which stem from feelings of alienation from mainstream work opportunities, oppression, or abandonment. Additionally, the groups had, over time, learned through the *ghosts* of others incarcerated, that to name themselves as a 'gang' is to optimise the potential for detection and prosecution. They had learnt to be absent presences (Gordon, 2008) through social haunting. Others who were estranged from the 'gangster' lifestyles of their parents still somehow re-enacted these same lifestyles (P17) presenting an absent presence in another way.

Many participants were precariously haunted by direct traumatic experiences. They were affected by things they have done and seen: P1 suffered from anxiety attacks and repeated the mantra of ***never being able to give back the keys***; P15 was concerned about his past involvement having repercussions; P9 was still being asked to 'flip' some of the heroin that his friends were stealing off rival groups; E1 had "lost the plot" after a lifetime of abducting, torturing and killing people. However, other forms of precarity existed which orbit around the parallax, haunting and the mirror nexus. The

Lacanian mirror stage resonates throughout as the 'gangs do not recognise themselves as such and at the same time reflect the 'mainstream' authorities.

As noted in the following section, 'gangs' do not stand alone as wholly outside of the rest of society; they coexist in symmetry, symbiosis and even solidarity. Likewise, the gangs also emerge out of the social conditions they are located in across time, yet they often do not recognise these lineages. They do not recognise these temporal reflections, yet they are haunted by them. From traumatic loss of a sense of belonging, self and mutual respect through industrial identities and the development of managerial axioms, the groups manifest as resistant re-enactments of the past.

Haunted by the violence of the workhouse or pit (P1; P17), the oppression of poverty (various participants), of protest and trauma of the transatlantic slave trade and overseers / colonisers in contemporary hegemonic forms (P12; P14; P17). These groups are the ghostly time travelling reflections living out a *volkgeist* (Hegel, 2005) of what has gone before through new, yet the same tropes. Here the educative aspect is one of both the unconscious and the uncanny (Freud, 2003). The modes of being are subtly passed on over generations, what is left behind is the context of these modes. Instead of understanding these resistive actions (of the 'gangs') through the context of the social, political and industrial, they are understood through the context of crime. As much as there is a reality of these groups being (as one ex-'gang' member described it) "children of the revolution", there too is a reality of a pedagogical revolutionary act of reflection. Both are realities, and within the



hinter-space of the two is the Lacanian Real qua the parallax space (Zizek, 2009) or Janus face (Wacquant, 2011) of learning to become in the macro sense; neither being separate and the being is neither one or the other but instead the space in-between both.

#### **9.4 Insiders - Outsiders: In search of 'gangs' - finding *insider outsider* groups**

As noted earlier, unlike the majority of the existing 'gang' literature, which portray 'gangs' as being 'outsiders', 'bad', 'deviant' or 'problems', this research shows that 'gangs' are actually both *outsiders* and *insiders*. This is due to the complex ways in which 'gangs' occupy social space, as well as conflicting interpretations of them from neighbourhood level to official discourse. Some participants could easily be classified in negative terms, but so too could they have been described as 'insiders', 'good', 'normative' or 'solutions'. The actions of participants, in their past and present, in popular terms may be described as those of 'gangs', 'gangsters' or 'OCGs', yet typically they did not describe or identify themselves as such. The data, in various ways demonstrates how 'gangs' have engendered an on-going education for survival that perpetually positions them as being both inside and outside.

As much as the 'gangs' are perceived as *outsiders* they are simultaneously, through reflection, through simulacra, also *insiders*. Yet in being so are simultaneously outside and beyond their own communities. From the fieldwork, it was clear that many of the groups perceive themselves as the minority who will do anything, anywhere to achieve their economic,

commercial and image outcomes, or to protect what is theirs (be it capital in the economic sense or cultural). Like Nietzsche's (2003b) *übermensch* they were prepared to go above and beyond the realms of normativity, mainstream morality and legitimate industries. They had apparently resisted civilising offensives (cf. van Krieken, 1989; Powell, 2007), but were also establishing versions of their own. This is a process of simulacra and is founded on the base of structural constraint. Arguably, the educative process of becoming *someone* who is part of such a group is a kind of (micro) civilising offensive (van Krieken, 1989; Powell, 2007); one situated between 'convention and crime' (Matza, 1964: 28), yet simultaneously reflecting both convention and crime.

Juxtaposed to this are elements of the *secure* professional middle classes who are easily identified as 'conventional' yet at the same time, in some instances, reflect the criminal and in the reflection of criminality therefore occupy the interstitial, precarious and transgressive space between 'convention and crime' (in-between and of the whole). In these two ways the precarity of parallax positions emerge; the normative 'bad guys' and the normative 'good guys' both carry out similar actions. From P1 and his colleagues who have provided policing and conflict resolution within their community through to the police who threatened P1 to get a better *pay off*. In reverse the police also police the communities and resolve conflict, yet have also carried out violence, made threats and extorted money from people in order to generate a better pay off.

A normative uncritical perspective could easily perceive the two as polar opposites. However, this thesis demonstrates that things are not so simplistic and clear-cut binaries do not exist. Instead only constant shifts in perspective, which sever the various realities rendering them perceivable only as distinct (cf. Zizek, 2009). Whereas the severance is actually only constituted by the Real (in the Zizekian sense); that is, the space between the perspectives (op cit). Somewhat the same as the idea of the mirror being swallowed in Baudrillard (2008), the reflection herein is integral; the apparent polarizing space between the journey from the 'gangs' and their counterparts is a joint within the object, the thing that reflects the one from the other and in reverse.

#### **9.4.1 Ethnography**

Ethnography ensured that the nuances and richness of complex lived realities of the groups and third places were captured. As such this research presents a call for ethnographic activities to form a key component of any future research on 'gangs'. Very early in the research process it became apparent there was a general move away from identification with the term 'gang' from prospective participants and wider enquiry within and beyond the identified communities; this became increasingly apparent as the research progressed. Things had changed since I worked in practice, and things seemed very different from the London - and US - centric depictions still dominating the 'gang' literature. As noted above, this insider – outsider positionality and identification is a finding in its own right.

Like the 1%MCs, after many decades of detection and conviction ‘gangs’ have learnt that by avoiding the criminogenically loaded word ‘gang’ they can avert some law enforcement pressure. The imperative descriptor (and reflections) of ‘gangs’ not being *gangs* necessitated alternative terms<sup>87</sup> and understandings, as people did not “bang<sup>88</sup> like they used to” (P14). Paradoxically, as much as people were saying there are no ‘gangs’ anymore, the groups were carrying out the same actions as groups previously known as ‘gangs’.

These actions were indicative of a ‘gangster’ lifestyle; from getting what they want by any means to making money as a collective with a strong group ethos and identity. The ‘gangs’ had learnt that to keep on doing what they do and remain *someone*, they would have *to be there but not be there*. As such the important question of ‘how do you research ‘gangs’ if no one sees their self as being in a ‘gang?’ comes to the fore. It is essential that future research considers the scope and validity of following traditional and popularised versions of ‘gang’ research in order to avoid perpetuation of stale and out of date frameworks.

Without having utilised a grounded ethnographic approach, combined with in-depth interviews to explore the phenomena in question at a neighbourhood level, it would not have been possible to garner these changes and outcomes of cultural educative processes. Investment at a neighbourhood level from the researcher has proven to be vital for this research in order to find key

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<sup>87</sup> Including ‘groups commonly described as gangs’ or ‘outsider groups’.

<sup>88</sup> Bang in this sense refers to the term gang bangin’, which in turn means being involved and carrying out gang related activities and lifestyles.

educative processes and some of their outcomes for 'gangs'. Difficult to engage with groups such as 'gangs', as is indicative throughout the findings of this thesis, are unlikely to respond to short term approaches. Moreover, accessing such groups ethnographically may require significant consideration of the positionality of the researcher. Whilst my insider – outsider positionality in some ways enabled a degree of (sub)cultural capital, which inevitably lubricated access indirectly through interpolation (Althusser, 2001), it must be stressed that it is not essential. What is essential is the ability to approach the field with a highly reflexive and non-judgemental (positive or negative) understanding of positionality. This aspect of the methodological findings presents a call to ethnography for future research.

#### **9.4.2 The Incommensurable 'Gang'**

A rethinking of what a 'gang' is, is essential for future research; if indeed there is actually such a thing<sup>89</sup>. Even the research in hand has followed some of these types of group, yet it has also unearthed that there are many other groups that fulfil accepted definitions of 'gang' or 'OCG'.

One example being groups of young street BMXers who have well coordinated groups and networks who regularly commit crimes such as trespass, breaking and entering and criminal damage as part of their riding activities. Increasingly these groups are developing names, clothing (including hooded tops with markers and iconography that identify the group similar to

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<sup>89</sup> Likewise for OCGs.

1%MCs) and organising themselves to carry out their activities as a group and without detection and prosecution: this is technically crime and it is very well organised. It does not make them a 'gang' or 'OCG' though. However, it does emphasise the point that current descriptors such as 'gangs' or 'OCG' are not fit for use, as well as pointing out there is an abundance of future research to be carried out. Likewise, significant potential exists for rigorously exploring the potential of testing the scope of outsider-insider positioned research, particularly in relation to groups described as 'gangs', third places and groups that position themselves as outsiders to mainstream society.

There have been significant shifts in descriptors in political discourse around such groups, with a shift from 'gang' to 'organised crime (OCG) group' in a UK context. Arguably, this terminology is still in limbo and is interchangeable dependent upon place, race and crime type. Despite this political discourse almost none of the participants in the research described themselves in these terms. Instead, they would typically describe groups as 'friends', 'brothers', and 'community leaders', or in any other term but 'gang' or 'OCG'. The reasons for this are clear: if a group is not a 'gang', they can not be held to account under gang specific legislation such as Gang Injunctions or 'gangbo's' as they are more commonly referred to. These injunctions were designed to disrupt people suspected or 'known' to be involved in gangs and can be used to disrupt group association and prevent aspirants from becoming fully embedded, and therefore educated, into the groups (HM Government Serious Crime Act 2015 Fact Sheet, also see Criminal Behaviour Orders).

Whilst these fall into civil legislation and only become criminal at the point of breach, they are sufficient in influencing trends in groups branding themselves as 'gangs' with identifiable names. This follows how in the US 1%MCs detach themselves from criminal group identity in fear of being prosecuted under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organisation Act (RICO) (1970). Whilst the 1%MCs describe themselves in public facing terms as being motorcycle enthusiasts who merely do not want to live mainstream lives, their inward or club facing image is that of the outlaw. That is, people who will do anything anywhere and who have longstanding violent rivalries with other MCs (Thompson, 1967).

## **9.5 Implications for policy**

These contributions to knowledge have implications for policy, as nowhere else has there been any substantive consideration of how people are educated into groups described as 'gangs' and the role of third place / space in these educative processes. Importantly, particularly for policy directed at 'gang' or 'OCG' diversion or prevention, are three contributions to knowledge. These distillations of new knowledge derive from those outlined above and in the findings chapters; these include:

- 1. 'Gangs' do not actually describe nor perceive themselves as 'gangs' today. This finding is significant for policy makers in the field of crime prevention, justice and policing, in that policy and**

**legislature, in the pursuit of more accurate policy responses, must recognise and account for this. Doing so will allow for more accurate, concerted and considered approaches to the important issue of prevention, as well as detection and prosecution of serious group related crimes and violence.** This research has shown that static conceptualisations of 'gang' are of little use and has captured some of their dynamics and organisation of perpetuation. The current policy perspective is that 'gangs' or OCGs identify as such and they fit specific typographies. However, this research shows that the groups do not identify as 'gangs' or OCGs and most importantly do not match well with such monochrome typographies; instead they occupy complex positions between 'convention and crime' (Matza, 1964).

2. 'Gangs' take on and fulfil alternative community governance, influencing, controlling and mediating. This role is a **parallax, reflection and precarity** between outlaw and police / politician. This is not only an important new way of understanding precarity, but also **in policy terms is relevant in that rather than purely resisting the influence that the groups have in their communities as leaders, this could be tapped into** (cf. Brotherton and Barrios, 2004 and Hagedorn, 2008. As to engage 'the real community leaders' as P1 puts it, could engage communities and provide new insights to the feelings and needs within them.
3. Unlike formal education taking place under the structural constraint of legal obligation for attending school or training up to the age of



eighteen years **the ‘gang’ educative processes are fluid and open. If the principles of these educative processes were to be explored and exploited a radical shift in effectiveness could be experienced within the education system.** The processes shown within this research, which could be exploited within ‘mainstream’ education, would require the *fertile ground* of structure being balanced with agency and include: stories; social haunting (reflection) and considered use of third place / space.

## 9.6 Future Research

As indicated above there are three key policy implications, each of which could be generative points from which further research could develop. Below are the three key areas of future research, identified from this thesis:

1. Research identities of individual sub-sections of ‘gangs’ or OCGs as well as other groups who are positioned between ‘convention and crime’ (Matza, 1964). Research projects may, for instance, focus on: 1%MCs; football hooligan firms; street-based youth groups; skateboarders. Instead of approaching this research from the perspective of exploring the phenomena of their activities – be they illegal or legal – this would specifically explore their self-identity. In carrying out this research new understandings could be gained not only into how the groups understand themselves, but also provide new

and nuanced insights into the spectrum and differences between groups commonly described as 'gangs'.

2. Explore the role of groups / 'gangs' who are outside of the law in community leadership and governance. This would examine not only the roles, but also structures, functions and range of influence in unofficial leadership and governance in communities, which feel, abandoned or colonised by *professional* classes. This would draw on the lived experiences of those involved in such groups, but more importantly, would draw on the experiences of people within the communities who are not involved. This would better explore the extent and ways in which those who described themselves as 'leaders' within the communities are viewed by others beyond the groups. Similarly, this research could also explore the role that others who are not involved in 'gangs' may play in leadership of such communities.
3. Examining intersections between 'gang' pedagogies and other outsider – insider groups. This would explore how such groups learn: ways of being and being within the group; norms; technical aspects integral to the lifestyle of the group. This would not be restricted to criminal groups, instead including various subcultural outsider-insider groups such as skateboarders, BMXers or Bikelife groups. This list is not exhaustive, but indicative of how the present research could be reapplied to consider the educative processes of other groups commonly perceived to be outsiders, yet reflect more mainstream groups in their organisational behaviours.

For all of these possible future research projects it would be important to further explore the limitations of the ethnographic and interview orientated methods within the present research. Mixed methods research would be useful in this pursuit, however, that is not to say merely utilising ethnography alongside quantitative methods would be sufficient. Other creative and participatory methods could also be utilised as a means of generating more well-rounded and representative data. Creative participatory methods for future research could include: community audit; geographic information system mapping combined with articulated photo-documentary and elicitation; oral histories.

## **9.7 Postscript**

As already noted, in the early stages of the research I realised 'gangs' (and third places) were in no way so static or simple. 'Gangs' and many previous contacts had vanished in name and sometimes in person. At the time, I thought that this was very unfortunate timing for me as someone who wanted to research 'gangs'. However, as time went by I realised that this was actually fortunate. 'Gangs' had not really vanished, they had merely learnt that to appear as not existing is to avoid detection and ultimately prosecution.

The groups had worked through one whole macro educative cycle of becoming, the point of being but not being. In order for the groups to continue, these ghosts would have to re-manifest as the stories would have to be backed up and replenished with action in order to perpetuate and recreate. As

the fieldwork drew to a close 'gang' media stories and group brand names began to re-emerge. Fast-forward through many of these stories by a year and a key figure in so-called 'gangland' is shot dead. Over the next year a mass of shootings take place, people get killed, children get shot. A young person is shot; I used to work with both the victim and perpetrator as a youth and community worker. Machetes, swords, guns, hand grenades are deployed. Brawls with weapons take place as cars stop in the middle of main roads at rush hour to take each other on in the most public of spectacles. Arrests are made; people get locked up. It continues irrespective of police operations and target hardening. People are still getting shot, and still getting taken off the street by the police and each other. They continue, the phoenix is arising from its faux funeral pyre. It has to, how else would the stories and haunting continue?

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# Appendix 1

## Participant Demographic

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Primary Location</b>	<b>Involvement with 'gangs'</b>
<b>P1</b>	Male	45-50	WB	Town 1: North Conurbation 1	Former leading figure within groups who would commonly be described as OCGs and is still peripheral to such groups
<b>P2</b>	Male	45-50	WB	North Conurbation 1	Lead senior law enforcement officer who has focused on 'gangs' and OCGs for over twenty years
<b>P3</b>	Male	65-70	WB	Town 1: North Conurbation 1	Former leading figure in an infamous OCG who is retired and is still peripheral and in contact with contemporary groups
<b>P4</b>	Male	15-20	BB	Town 2: North Conurbation 1	Young person identified by local youth workers as being peripheral to 'gang' involvement and living within an area synonymous with street 'gang' cultures
<b>P5</b>	Male	15-20	BB	Town 2: North Conurbation 1	Young person identified by local youth workers as being peripheral to 'gang' involvement and living within an area synonymous with street 'gang' cultures
<b>P6</b>	Male	15-20	BB	Town 2: North Conurbation 1	Young person identified by local youth workers as being peripheral to 'gang' involvement and living within an area synonymous with street 'gang' cultures
<b>P7</b>	Male	25-30	BB	Town 2: North Conurbation 1	Youth worker originally from Town 2: North Conurbation 1 who works across areas affected by 'gangs' within North Conurbation 1
<b>P8</b>	Female	60-65	BB	North Conurbation 1	Community worker who has over twenty years experience working with people involved in and affected by 'gangs'; also has equal experience in activism and campaigning against 'gang' violence; also has lost a close relative to 'gang' violence
<b>P9</b>	Male	25-30	OMB	North Conurbation 2	Formerly involved in groups which would commonly be described as 'gangs' and OCGs and is still peripheral to such groups; also has recently become involved in youth and community work but still peripheral to the groups he was involved in
<b>P10</b>	Female	30-35	BB	Town 2: North Conurbation 1	Youth worker originally from Town 2: North Conurbation 1 who works across areas affected by 'gangs' within North Conurbation 1
<b>P11</b>	Male	45-50	WB	Town 1: North Conurbation 1	Former leading figure within groups who would commonly be described as OCGs and is still peripheral to such groups; now is a business man operating a security business but still peripheral to the groups
<b>P12</b>	Female	45-50	BMB	Town 2: North Conurbation 1	Formerly involved in groups who would commonly be described as 'gangs' and OCGs directly; currently working as a Youth worker from and still living in Town 2: North Conurbation 1 who works across areas affected by 'gangs' within North Conurbation 1; still in contact with people from the groups
<b>P13</b>	Male	35-40	BB	Town 2: North Conurbation 1	Youth and community worker; formerly involved in a group who would commonly be described as a 'gang'
<b>P14</b>	Male	50-55	BB	Town 2: North Conurbation 1	Formerly a leading figure in a well known 'gang' who although still

					peripheral to the groups also became involved in community work and conflict resolution
<b>P15</b>	Male	25-30	WB	Town 1: North Conurbation 1	Formerly involved in an international OCG up until recently
<b>P16</b>	Male	40-45	WB	North Conurbation 3	Formerly involved in large scale commercial robbery organised crime and through which was associated with several OCGs during involvement in such activity
<b>P17</b>	Male	40-45	BMB	North Conurbation 1	Youth and community worker who was formerly involved in a 'gang' in North Conurbation 1
<b>P18</b>	Male	50-55	WB	South Conurbation 1	Formerly a member of a well know football hooligan firm in North Conurbation 1 who since defected to an equally well known football hooligan firm in South Conurbation 1
<b>P19</b>	Male	30-35	BB	North Conurbation 1	Youth worker working across areas within North Conurbation 1 and who was formerly involved with groups who would commonly be described as 'gangs' who were specifically involved in distribution of drugs
<b>P20</b>	Male	30-35	WB	Town 1: North Conurbation 1	Son of a 'gang' and OCG enforcer who runs a local pub in Town 1: North Conurbation 1 and is peripheral to contemporary 'gangs' and OCGs
<b>P21</b>	Male	45 - 50	WB	Town 1: North Conurbation 1	Formerly involved in groups who would commonly be described as OCGs and is now still peripheral to them
<b>P22</b>	Female	45 – 50	WB	Town 1: North Conurbation 1	Formerly peripherally involved in groups who would be described OCGs as the partner of P1

<b>Featured Regulars</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Primary Location</b>	<b>Involvement with 'gangs'</b>
<b>R1</b>	Male	30 - 35	WB	Town 1: North Conurbation 1	Associate of P1 who used to work for P1's security firm
<b>R4</b>	Male	50 - 55	BMB	Town 1: North Conurbation 1	Well know figure involved with local OCGs
<b>R11</b>	Male	25 - 30	BB	Town 1: North Conurbation 1	Leading figure in what are commonly described as 'gangs' and OCGs across one half of Town 1
<b>R13</b>	Male	30 - 35	WB	Town 1: North Conurbation 1	Leader of what would be commonly be described as a local 'gang'
<b>R15</b>	Male	30 - 35	WB	Town 1: North Conurbation 1	Lieutenant to R13 in local 'gang'
<b>R16</b>	Male	25 - 30	WB	Town 1: North Conurbation 1	Outer member of R13s group
<b>R17</b>	Male	25 - 30	WB	Town 1: North Conurbation 1	Outer member of R13s group
<b>R18</b>	Male	25 - 30	WB	Town 1: North Conurbation 1	Outer member of R13s group
<b>R23</b>	Male	55 - 60	WB	Town 1: North Conurbation 1	Formerly involved in large scale counterfeiting organised crime and was associated with several OCGs
<b>E1</b>	Male	60 - 65	WB	Town 1: North Conurbation 1	Former notorious gangland enforcer

**Key:**

BB – Black British

WB – White British

BMB – Black Mixed British OMB – Other Mixed British

# **Appendix 2**

## **Old and New Contacts**

## Old contacts

During the fieldwork period of the research I was visiting my Mother one morning when I did not have anything in my diary and I could not face sitting at my desk all day. She asked about my research, well actually she asked what it was, again. She, along with most of my family did not know what a PhD. was until I was doing one and then she still did not really *get it* for a while. Once I had explained the PhD. bit again she asked me to tell her, again, what it was about. I explained and she asked how it was going; I had had a tough week previously in terms of prospective participants not engaging, in particular those who were involved in football hooligan firms. I explained this, not because I thought that she was that interested in that level of detail, but more to get it off my chest. I was not expecting a response. She then said “you want to speak to (Football Hooligan Name), he was me [sic] mate in school. He used to say t’ me “Julia, you tell me if anyone ever gives you any shit”” she explained that he used to live on the road across the road from where we used to live and how great friends they were from being young children to young adults. I could not tell her that he was one of the people that had recently declined by ignoring me.

Not all of my contacts were as complex as this example or those outlined in the section above. Some were far more straightforward and felt like they were lower risk. By far and away the most straightforward of these was the youth centres. In order to access these I utilised my professional network of youth and community work colleagues from across the North of England. Generally I

called them up or sent a e-mail. Sometimes this was direct, as I already knew them and sometimes it was indirectly through a third party. Youth and community workers tend to not be elusive. This lack of elusiveness and my previous practice in youth and community work allowed for fluid access and these research sites were established with relative ease. From these I was given access to open access youth provision in the settings described above and in turn the young people who accessed these provisions.

For other participants it was similar in that they were people who I had met or known through professional means. Some of these were 'ex-gang members' who I had met in passing, some of these had become youth and community work practitioners themselves now. Some were doing other forms of legitimate work. Many of these participants in this category still had existing links with groups described as 'gangs'. These links were both familial, with brothers, cousins and sons still involved substantively with the groups, as well as through longstanding friendships. The latter applying also to those who still had family members involved in the groups. Although they professed to have left their respective groups behind, they were still very much connected with them. They knew what their friends and families were doing in absolute detail. Some were still being asked to get back involved, even if only as a one off, others straddled the line between 'convention and crime' (cf. Matza, 1964) and from the conversations I had with all of the participants they were all precariously balanced at the precipice of being fully involved in the groups and their activities again. There were other participants who where not nor ever had been involved in groups described as 'gangs'. These included youth

and community workers working in areas described as 'gang' affected, police who work on 'anti-gang' units and people who have been affected by such groups including those who have lost family members to inter-group violence.

Some of the participants who still somehow straddled the line between the groups and conventional lifestyles were more difficult than others to engage with. Whilst some agreed quite quickly to participate, others put me through the paces to ascertain if I was trustworthy enough to engage with. One participant kept me held out of reach occasionally drawing me back within reach for the full year of the fieldwork. Very close to twelve months of to and fro he agreed to arrange the interview after telephone calls, arranged and accidental meetings where we bumped into each other and e-mails. At a point I had actually given up and thought that the interview would not happen. Yet at the eleventh hour he got in touch and we arranged the interview. For others the difficulty came not through their own distrust, but through that of others such as partners. I turned up at a participant's house for an interview one day and was quickly ushered away from the house. The participant explained that his partner was not happy about it taking place in the house. He drove me to a local restaurant instead where we carried out the interview alfresco away from other diners. The mood of the interview was challenging at times; the participant had me hide the Dictaphone and we had to pause a couple of times. He became concerned about two young men sat at the window looking out to where we were sat. A helicopter flew low over the restaurant, which added to the sense of tension. Although he wanted to participate and we had built a rapport, he had been planted with a suspicion and it was showing.

The participant who was to become the key gatekeeper for the ethnographic aspects in the gymnasium and the boxing gymnasium was also a person who I had met some years earlier at an event. Our meeting was by sheer chance. I had heard of them from the type of folklore tales that circulate about people who have reached notoriety for their involvement in groups commonly described as 'gangs'. I had also read books of the populist 'gang' variety in which he and some of the events and exploits he was involved in were mentioned. A person that I knew was at this event and they had travelled there by train. I offered the person I knew a lift back afterward in order to not have to wait for the train. They accepted, they then said, "can my friend [name: P1] have a lift too". I was a bit reluctant to say yes, but did not want to insult the person that I knew nor their friend. I said yes. On the journey the person who came to be known as P1 in this research spoke very openly about his life and lifestyle. He explained how he had run doors on clubs through to brothels and how he had accidentally uncovered a listening device in a drinks machine in the gymnasium that he owns.

As the fieldwork approached I recalled this encounter and how we had politely exchanged contact e-mail addresses. I thought, as P1 had been that open he would be likely to be happy to participate in the research. I contacted him and he was happy to be involved. I got in touch with P1 and a few weeks later was invited into the gymnasium to discuss my research. The following week I was invited back into the gymnasium and that was the beginning of the



ethnographic fieldwork. This and P1's contacts led onto other participants and spaces.

### **New contacts: Snowball**

As indicated above P1 helped me gain access to the boxing gymnasium that I spent some time in during the ethnographic fieldwork. Also, he introduced me to many of the regulars in the gymnasium and several of his close friends and colleagues. He invited me to a charity concert that he and his colleagues had arranged and were running the security for. He also arranged for a group interview with several regulars and close associates; this being something that would have been close to herding cats had I attempted it myself, however due to his standing amongst his peers and within the community it was arranged with relative ease. On occasions I did wonder why he was being that helpful to me and why he tolerated me hanging around. More to the point why here, why this group and not other groups who were this accepting? Potentially it may have been that we were introduced through a mutual contact, maybe it was that although I do not look like the regulars in the gymnasium I do sound like them and get what they are saying and doing without much clarification. Perhaps they got me because I got them; perhaps it was simple interpolation in the Althusserian sense. It certainly could not have been my stimulating conversation? Well, actually on two occasions toward the close of the fieldwork P1 explained that he would miss our conversations, as the typical level of conversation in the gymnasium was "mind-numbing". Perhaps this was an attempt at conscious interpolation, I

was very aware at several points in the research that various participants were attempting to manage me and this was another one. My ego was not fed by this. P1 wanted the story of him, his associates and the community told, he saw it as a means of getting the story of the ex-working classes who were marginalised and pushed into the otherness violent subjectivities (cf. Winlow, 2014).

Nonetheless, almost full access was granted at the gymnasium. Others were more guarded. Those who were more guarded tended to be those in communities that have been 'over researched' due to being labelled as 'gang affected', or groups that fervently and very publically refute that they are involved in any form of group based crime. These latter groups included 1%MC's and football hooligan firms specifically. For the former, people living in communities frequently described as 'gang affected', once an individual had given me access and built up a trust the snowballing occurred. However, this snowballing did not gain as much momentum as it did in the gymnasium. Frequently there were blockages, occasionally there were difficult and challenging initial meetings and conversations in which people from such communities would tell me that they had had enough of researchers parachuting in, doing *their* research and never being heard or seen of again.

There were other bottlenecks too; many of those involved in the research put me through my paces to engage with them. For example by meeting me several times before they would sit down for the interview, having me hide the Dictaphone during an interview as the participant in question thought we were

being watched (not by police but by other interested parties) or by long winded processes of proving I was who I said I was. One example of the latter being the 1%MC that I spent time communicating with attempting to negotiate access; I sent them e-mails from my university account and passed on the contact details of my supervisors, I explained that I was not interested in asking about criminal activity nor was I interesting in asking if they were a 'gang'. After a long period of providing explanations and evidence I was eventually silenced out and the answering and replies ceased. Not long after this whilst updating the literature review, I found a piece of on-going research commissioned by the national police college<sup>90</sup> which aimed to identify if the police should categorise 1%MCs as 'gangs' or if they should be identified merely as special interest groups. Given the fact that MC club houses tend to have signal scramblers in order to disrupt attempts at police listening in to their 'church' meetings and that at least one of the big four clubs in the UK have a global ban on speaking to the press and researchers, the implication is that the clubs have opted for no response as a means of preventing the possibility of a negative outcome.

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<sup>90</sup> This research took the methodology of sampling only data gleaned from known members who have been incarcerated. The likelihood is that these members speaking to researchers linked with the police college, if not already, will be ex-members who are out on 'bad standing'. Members who are current would not speak to anyone associated with the police.

# Appendix 3

## Vignettes of Research Site Reflection

## **Some Research Site Vignettes: Ethnographic Reflective Descriptions**

I will begin with the two smallest sections of the ethnographic sites: the pub and the boxing gymnasium. The idea of spending time around a pub and a boxing gymnasium came from discussions with participants and prospective participants. Whilst chatting with participants or explaining the research to prospective participants I often asked where they thought would be useful places to spend time that would be relevant to the research. Frequently people mentioned pubs (or certain pubs) and boxing gymnasiums when I asked. One participant, who was a member of a 1%MC explained that if I wanted to spend time hanging around one of the 'big four' 1%MCs I should go and hang around in a particular pub in North City 1 city centre. I asked why and was told that it was their pub, as in someone linked with the club was the licensee and therefore they frequented it.

I asked about the likelihood of gaining access to a Motorcycle Club clubhouse; the response was little to none. Several sources including academics from the U.S. and participants indicated that it is not wise for a non-member to enter a club house as the club's rules apply and if a non-member was to upset someone whilst there they would be fair game for a serious beating. I quickly dropped the idea of trying to push my luck and access a clubhouse, although I nearly did decide to travel to North City 4 to an open house party at a different 1%MC. I agonised for about two weeks whether I should attend or not. I was keen to gather what could be exceptional data. But at the same time I understood that I would be some way from home,

I would be presenting with a very different accent and would either have to drive and not drink or drink and get the train.

The latter would have meant leaving at the very un-outlaw time of pre-midnight and the former would mean standing out like a sore thumb and likely attract the wrong kind of attention, probably suspicion that I was police or someone sent to spy on behalf of another club. Between the potential of a beating and raising the kind of suspicion that would more than likely generate a beating I decided against attending the party. However, I did go to the pub in North City 1 over a period of two months. When discussing the potential of spending time in this pub, my supervisors and I discussed how it would look me turning up as a covert researcher in a city centre pub, I explained that the premise of me being there would be that it was a real ale pub that had won awards for serving quality real ales and that it would not be unusual for ale enthusiasts to turn up at a pub on their own for a few pints. This was agreed. I started hanging around the pub on the busiest night, Saturday night. The place was always quite busy; most of the time there was rock music playing, often heavy rock. There were always lots of stocky looking men with triangular goatee type of beards who all appeared to know each other very well; there were also other people who did not. The vast majority of the customers had to some extent or another a heavy rock style in their clothing and make-up. The place had wall-to-wall references to a motorcycle lifestyle, both overt and subtle semiotic indicators. These ranged from Harley-Davidson pictures to charity collection pots for disabled biker charities. There were also

innumerable skull references around the pub; the skull features heavily in the symbolism of many of the 1%MCs.

All of this was great, it was crystal clear that this place was an MC hang out pub. I had it on the authority of those who know and I could see it for myself. This, I thought, was going to be a very fruitful research site, plus the beer was great! I was wrong, not about the beer I may hasten to add, but about the fruitfulness of the research site. Although I knew from both participants, news reports and speaking to others involved in the alternative illegal economies in North City 1 that this was the MC's pub and they were always there, they were somehow at the same time not there. They were not wearing their cuts and patches, they were in civilian wear, often they were with their partners. They were a kind of absent presence within this space, as they did not want to be seen or known there. After six weeks "hanging around" I had to admit defeat, I drank up and left.

The boxing gymnasium was similar in that other participants told me that boxing gymnasiums were a space in which I should spend time during the research. P1 in particular thought that heavy weights gymnasiums, boxing gymnasiums and public houses were prime spaces in which groups described as 'gangs' and individuals involved or aspiring to be spend their social (and business) time. When I asked about where I might be best going to spend time in a boxing gymnasium P1 explained that he had a friend who runs a boxing gymnasium and he would ask him if he would speak with me about hanging around there. P1 was true to his word and arranged for me to speak

with a representative of the gymnasium. His friend declined to speak with me personally, his friend he later told me was, in their heyday running the doors, from a different firm. They were now friends and P1 sponsors the boxing gymnasium owner's son who had recently turned professional from amateur boxing. I had to meet the boxing gymnasium owner's son instead.

Following a relatively brief meeting with the owner's son explaining the research, he told me that I was fine to hang around whenever I wanted, but insinuated it might look a bit odd me sitting there and watching a load of half-dressed sweaty men sparring. I explained that I would join in if that was O.K. He looked at me with an expression of half about to burst out laughing and half confused. He paused<sup>91</sup>, and then replied 'yes'. This was the beginning of me hanging around the boxing gymnasium. The gymnasium itself is located within what could be described as a small sub-estate of a large housing estate; although the area is within the boundaries of the overall town and estate it has a long history of being perceived locally as somehow separate, yet not detached. Many people living in this area have long-standing familial links with the area. It is also unusual for people not living within the area to go into the area other than for official 'professional' reasons surrounding the community centre or individuals and families living there. There is no logical route through this sub-estate that would be used as a shortcut, neither by car nor on foot. If anything going through there to get somewhere else would add time onto a journey. The roads all wind around and many return back on

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<sup>91</sup> Maybe to wait and see if I added 'only joking' to the end of my sentence.



themselves in uneven arcs. The roads all have very aggressive speed bumps. These roads utter of themselves that they lead nowhere fast.

In the centre of the sub-estate there is a small shopping parade intended to house around six shops, only four of which have retailers in them (one of which only opens a handful of times per year to sell fireworks at seasonally appropriate timings such as Bonfire night and New Year), another is a general shop and newsagent, the others are takeaways. The general condition of the parade is one of extreme disrepair and has a distinct appearance of decay and neglect, with roofing tiles missing, doorframes rotting and long overdue cemented pointing showing signs of depletion in-between the brickwork. One participant described the area (inclusive of specific reference to the shopping parade) as 'Victorian'<sup>92</sup> and being a symbol of urban decay and deprivation.

The gym itself is based in the local community centre, which although being an older building (built in the 1930's) is in a sound state of repair and therefore a stark contrast to the neighbouring shopping parade. A range of other activities take place within the community centre, although one side of the building is dedicated to the boxing gym and for its exclusive use. This side of the building contains the usual artefacts associated with a boxing gym such as a ring and an array of different types of punch bags, as well as skipping ropes, gloves and focus mitts and the all-important ceiling to floor and wall-to-wall mirrors enshrining the room.

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<sup>92</sup> Even though the shopping parade was built in the mid 1900's.

Again, this research site was short lived despite me coming into contact with a range of relevant individuals there: from low level and peripheral groups members, people who had been 'big' on the unlicensed boxing scene and a member of yet another 1%MC (identifiable by his club tattoos). P1 was right in his declaration that this boxing gymnasium would be of relevance to the research. Unlike the pub described above, people were talking to me there, people were open, both verbally and non-verbally. To the point where one of the regulars there just fell short of asking me for a fight. He made it very clear he did not like me and did not like me being there. He made a beeline for me when he could to spar, and when we did spar he took it further than sparring should be taken. He sparred with me full force, I could see him change when he came to spar with me, he switched to fight mode. However, this is not the reason for this site being a short lived one.

The youth centres that I spent time hanging around were both in neighbouring communities to each other and both predominantly non-White communities. All of the youth centres were situated in areas identified by the local and national press, as well as the police<sup>93</sup> as 'gang' affected. There were three youth centres that I spent time in. this was semi-covert research in that most of the staff at these youth centres knew that I was a researcher and why I was there, however, with the exception of one of the youth centres the young people thought I was one of many youth workers or volunteers that rotate in the fast turnover within those settings. The first one of these was a small community building which housed two different youth and community work

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<sup>93</sup> In their targeting of specialist anti-gang strategies and units historically

providers. I only spent time around one of the organisations here. They were a small youth work provider within the voluntary sector and registered as a charity. They were mostly funded through local authority commissions as well as a patchwork of small to medium grant funds. The geographic area that the organisation is situated in is known and described by residents of the city as a Muslim community. The vast majority of people living in this community are of Pakistani or a range of Middle Eastern heritage.

The organisation that run the youth club that I spent time in describes itself and strongly identifies as being 'grass roots'. The staff there are very caring of the young people attending and every session I went to included staff and young people cooking a meal together. They were extremely inclusive, inclusive to the point that they flouted their funders' requirements and standard definitions of youth in order to accommodate a man over the age of twenty-five years who had severe special educational needs. There was no other suitable provision for this person. The staff described him as having the mental age of a ten year old. The young people accepted this too. Yet they also had their own clear factions within the wider group and could be aloof through to confrontational with newcomers. I was accepted relatively quickly in this setting. Mainly I spoke with the older young men there. One of the members of staff from the centre tried to set up a focus group one night with some of the younger men<sup>94</sup>. This did not really work as the young people that the member of staff had corralled into a small separate room in the building were simply too young and did not really grasp the situation. Nor did I to begin

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<sup>94</sup> There were very few young women who attended the centre and mostly there were none at all

with, it was only later upon reflection that it occurred to me that the focus group was coordinated in order for it to be utilised in their monitoring reports as a targeted 'issue based' youth work session. I was kind of being used as cheap labour as the staff were aware of my professional background in youth and community work.

The other two youth centres were part of one youth organisations provision within the community that they operate in. One is a small community centre with rudimentary facilities; the other is a large state of the art purpose built youth centre. This organisation has a long-standing history within the community and its founders, past staff and present day staff are well-known and well respected figures in the community. Most of whom are known as community activists. The organisation and its buildings have famously accommodated the local street 'gangs' within the community. Staff recalled the larger building being shot at in its first few weeks of opening and one member of staff recalled his first day working for the organisation that he was delivering an education project for young men excluded from school in the smaller building, the majority of the young men in the project were affiliated with one of the local 'gangs'; the 'gang' that claimed ownership of the estate in which the project is situated. On this particular day something had occurred in the community and the rival 'gang' had come to the project to seek retribution knowing that many of their rivals would be there. They surrounded the building and tried to gain entry. The police were called and people hid under tables knowing that outside they were surrounded by young men with firearms.

During my time there things had changed, I came to understand from conversations and interviews that the 'gangs' structure and appearances had changed. Also, importantly there appeared to be a conscious attempt within the community to shake off its negative stereotype as a 'gang affected' area. Things here, at the time of the fieldwork were different but the same. I did not experience the Wild West like showdowns that were described from the past. But I did experience the young people who controlled what went on; control through the group of the wider groups. Whether it was the music being played or who was allowed to use the Playstation or who was least likely to be reprimanded by the staff. The groups were there, they were there in a less conspicuous way. Here I would hang around and chat with the young people and staff. The sessions tended to be far less structured, in fact they had little in the way of structure. This meant that my presence had to follow suit and was far freer flowing than within the other youth organisation. I also found it difficult in this organisation as there was a distinct lack of critical engagement with the young people. I found it to be more of an indoor park than a youth centre. I was used to working in practice with youth workers who would weave in critical dialogue and problem posing education within the space of a free flowing open access session. However, here this did not happen. I had to remind myself several times why I was there and who I was there. Again I will discuss this in greater detail below in the section on positionality.

Lastly, but not least, was the heavy weights gymnasium. The gymnasium is located in the heart of a housing estate. It is run and owned by P1 who

described it as not being “your David Lloyd Club”. It is what would commonly be described as a ‘back street gym’; a blood, sweat and tears gymnasium. As with the boxing gymnasium there is wall-to-wall and ceiling to floor mirrors. Everyone using the gymnasium frequently and unashamedly spent time looking at themselves in the mirrors, both whilst training and in between sets. There are also lots of large framed photographs all around the building. There are three set themes to these photographs. They either fall into the category of: black and white or colour professionally taken photographs of the gymnasium owner and his closest friends and colleagues training or doing body-building poses, or mock wanted or mug shot posters (again professionally taken, or are of events that the gymnasiums past or associated security firms have done the security for or have arranged. Additional to these framed photographs and posters there is another large framed photograph, this is of several members of the gymnasiums ‘management’ with one of the local professional boxers and a belt that he won who the gymnasium ‘management’ team sponsor.

With one regular exception women do not use the gymnasium; three other woman trained there for a very short time during the year that I spent there. The only other women to frequent the gymnasium were the owner’s wife and oldest daughter, as well as one part-time receptionist who worked occasional shifts. Other than that the gymnasium is very much a male dominated space. With only three exceptions all of the men who use and frequent the gymnasium are very muscular and would be described locally as ‘big’ by people sympathetic of the gymnasium lifestyle or by outsiders of the

gymnasium as 'sted 'eds'<sup>95</sup>. Although, this would not be said within earshot of the people occupying the gymnasium. The vast majority of my time in the gymnasium was split between sat in the reception area and 'attempting' to lift weights in the main training room. The former gave me the opportunity to not only see most of the people coming in and out of the gymnasium (some came and left by the backdoor), but also to sit, talk with, listen to, observe and generally hang around with everyone who was having a rest between sets or had merely popped in to say hello, have meetings with others using the gymnasium, speak to P1 or 'have a brew'. The filter coffee was always on the go meaning that vast quantities of 'brews' went down. So much so that there were a couple of occasions when I had overdosed on caffeine and had palpitations; twice I had an anxiety attack whilst hanging around in the reception area.

This latter experience was very unpleasant to say the least. I understood prior to the fieldwork that in many ways the ethnographic aspect of the research would be embodied. I certainly knew that hanging around in the gymnasium would be embodied. But in no way did I imagine that I would experience an anxiety attack. These two experiences were definitely impacted by the extreme levels of caffeine I had been sucked into the habit of consuming, but I knew that that was not the whole reason. The other contributing factor was the sheer sense of gravity, which I felt on several occasions whilst hanging around in the gymnasium. I was hearing discussions that I found to be personally challenging. I was seeing people week in week out whom in some

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<sup>95</sup> 'Sted 'ed' is a local phrase describing someone with a large and or disproportionate muscular build who uses steroids to modify their body.

instances looked like their heads were ready to pop off due to stimulants that they were using pre-training to boost explosive energy; they had veins pulsing and protruding in their foreheads, eyes like saucers. I was having conversations with people who had tried to kill people, people whose Father's had killed people, people who 'run things', people with quite severe and in most cases undiagnosed mental health issues. I have not led a sheltered life and I am from a similar poor community, yet even with my own related experiences prior to academia I still felt that the situations I was spending time within were heavy duty. I felt a gravitational burden and was completely and utterly challenged by it. Again I will discuss this in greater detail below in the section on positionality.

Unlike the youth centres, the extent of my social capital within the gymnasium was limited. Physically I am as far removed from the gymnasium's patrons as is possible. The general appearance of the gymnasium users is big, muscular, short hair or shaven heads, sports clothing such as tracksuits, very expensive designer training shoes, clean shaven or meticulously well-groomed stubble. My physical contrast was stark: skinny, jeans, polo-shirt, water-proof jacket, running shoes, long scruffy hair and mostly unshaven. I had to play some kind of role (t)here in order to fit in enough to be able to speak and spend time with people.

After a few months this role was created for me by the regulars in the gymnasium. I had been positioned somewhere between a figure of fun in the weightlifting department, often being directed to the "women's weights" or the



“kids weights” and the position of novelty discussant. The latter taking two distinct topic fields. One being running as I am a competing endurance runner; several of the regulars were interested in talking about this, they related to it. They were interested in my training routine, they were interested in my personal bests and they were utterly bemused that my average weekly mileage was between 55 and 60 miles, much in the same way that I was utterly bemused at the immense weights that they could repeatedly lift. Some became interested to the point that they were offering me ‘training advise’, much of which conflicted with general axioms of endurance running training and some of which could result in disqualification and ill health: I was offered ephedrine and a number of other performance enhancing substances that some regulars were not using anymore so I could *get some wins in*. I declined, after all the caffeine levels were proving to be problematic enough for me.

## Appendix 4

# Semi-Structured Interview Guide

## Semi-structured interview guide

*This is semi-structured interview topic guide. It will be used to guide the discussion. As it is semi-structured not all questions will be directly asked or relevant to each participant.*

My name is Richard McHugh, I am a PhD. student in the Centre for Regional, Social and Economic Research (CRESR) within Sheffield Hallam university (SHU). I am carrying out research exploring how education may take place within and for individuals associated with groups commonly described as 'gangs'. In particular the research is interested in exploring what role social places and spaces may have within such educative processes.

This research will be based on data primarily gathered through semi-structured interviews, (ethnographic) participant observation.

The purpose of these interviews are to explore your experiences, understanding, feelings and reflections of how education may take place in social places and spaces for people involved in groups commonly described as 'gangs'. The interview(s) are likely to take between 45 and 90 (but may take less or more time depending on what you would like to say). Your responses will be anonymous and treated in the strictest confidence. More detailed information on this can be found in the participant information sheet; should you want to please ask me to answer any questions you have about this. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to answer any questions. You can also withdraw from the research at any point during the interview and within two weeks of participating. After this time, your responses will be inputted for analysis. If you wish to withdraw, please contact me using the contact details on the information sheet.

The information you provide will be used, alongside the other research participants, to inform the final thesis and related publications.

Are you happy for the discussion to be recorded to assist the process of analysing the responses? All responses will be confidential and you will not be personally identified in the thesis or related publications. All data will be securely stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act and only I will be able to access your data in original form prior to being anonymised.

Do you have any questions about the research or your participation?

*Complete separate consent form before starting the interview  
and check participant is willing to proceed*

### Questions

1. How do you think people involved with 'gang' cultures might learn to be / become within those groups?
2. Do you think public and social place / spaces might play a role in learning to become involved in such groups? If so, how?

3. Do you think family may play a role in learning to become involved in such groups? If so, how?
4. What role (if any) do you think family might have on people learning to become involved in groups commonly described as 'gangs'?
5. What role (if any) do you think social space(s) have on people being educated into becoming involved in groups commonly described as 'gangs' In particular how public and social spaces might affect becoming involved in such groups?
6. What role if any do you think communities, be that physical communities such as the place where people live or other forms of dispersed communities have an effect on being educated into becoming involved in 'gangs'?
7. What if any role do you think media (in the broadest sense inclusive of, news, newspaper, contemporary music, film or television, new media, information communication technology) plays on people in people becoming educated into groups commonly described as 'gangs'?
8. Do you think group cultures commonly described as 'gang' cultures' have changed over time or remained the same (from any point in time you choose through to present day)?
9. As an individual what do you feel were the main points in your educative journey in becoming involved in groups and group cultures commonly described as 'gangs'? (Subsidiary autobiographical question)
10. How was knowledge passed on to you (or others) within this journey? What tools would you say they'd use in that process? (Subsidiary autobiographical question)
11. Do you have any questions or other points you would like to discuss?
12. Are there any other questions you think I should ask other participants?

# **Appendix 5**

## **Haunted Ethnographic Reflections on Boxing**

## Haunted Ethnographic Reflections on Boxing

*'[...] we punched real blood and did someone some good ...'*  
(Dennis and Lois, Happy Mondays)

A reflexive point derives from my lifelong relationship with boxing and broadly speaking the fighting sports. Here I again make myself vulnerable in exposure, exposing an identity event previously *experienced*. From a very young age as a toddler I was taught to box by my Grandfather, with whom I lived along with my Mother and Grandmother. My Grandfather had been a champion boxer in the army, having joined the army at an early age lying about his true age. He had continued as an amateur and elsewhere, latterly teaching an infant child who was frequently disinterested and occasionally excited by the unorthodox private tuition from an accomplished boxer.

At an early age I have memories of being taken to various boxing gyms; I was too young to train in an organised gym but was taken anyway. Later in my childhood after a period of rejecting boxing, I took up various martial arts; this continued throughout until early adulthood. In early adulthood after another brief rejection of combat sports I took up Muay Thai and trained under an ex-world champion. During this period I took part in organised bouts at Light Weight. Later I went onto train under a leading figure in full contact Karate and eventually fully rejecting all combat sports, dismissing them as forms of approved violence and promoting virulent, yet subliminal forms of hyper-masculinity.

These experiences left me scarred for life both physically from injury and muscle memory, as well as metaphorically in *knowing* how to behave in such environments, how to communicate and how to *be* in these spaces. Again the issue of prior experiencing comes into play, although here the issue is slightly different. The difference being that the prior experience may be of positive consequence in that the duppy identity and associated physical and affective hauntings (Gordon, 2008) permitted a level of subconscious action in the act of boxing in the boxing gymnasium, in turn allowing for easier concentration on the observational task and not having to concentrate on the physical and etiquette aspects of *being there*. During a supervision meeting the question was raised of how I would observe if I was participating and learning what to do myself<sup>96</sup>. My answer was that I already knew what to do, I did not have to think about it; I was in an unusual position in that it is second nature.

Despite my prior experience, the duppy was on me, affectively haunting me, causing feelings of not wanting to acknowledge spectres of what I had rejected and could easily ignore as it lay dormant. In the space of the boxing gym I was confronted with that which I discarded, in the pursuit of a new *experiencing* (of the ethnographic event). These haunting experiences in the gymnasium became very challenging for me. I did not even imagine that these would exist, let alone emerge, but they did. From the young man who was always confrontational with me, trying to provoke a violent response from me by going in too hard in sparring or giving a sucker punch after the bell had gone. He was breaching the unwritten rules of the space on purpose to solicit

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<sup>96</sup> An interesting question to be posed for Wacquant's 2006 research on boxing?

a response. Through to the ethos of the space being a generator of people who are able and more than willing to fight. I resisted for weeks my temptation to withdraw from this ethnographic site. I was growing to hate it, it reminded me too much of another me, of the vapour trail that I thought had dissipated into nothing. *I liked it that I fitted in as it eased access - I hated it that I fitted in as it un-eased me in that I did like it.* Levinas (2003) returns with that which cannot be escaped.

Even when I got my rib broke during a sparring session I still resisted the urge to abort the site. I even avoided telling my supervisors that I had got a broken rib in case they told me to not go back. I waited for it to heal and then returned, eventually telling my supervisors afterwards about the injury. Each time I was due to go to the boxing gymnasium I was wrestling with myself; one side of me saying keep going the other looking for an excuse not to. I am not at all superstitious, but one night I pulled up outside the gymnasium in my car, got my bag containing my gloves and kit, and locked the car. Then a white cat walked across my path. I decided that I could be superstitious this once and packed up my bag back in the boot of the car and drove home. The duppy had haunted me out of this research site.

Because of the affective identity haunting I was easily accepted into the space through the recognition of ability and my without thinking adherence to the unwritten rules of *being* in a boxing gym. Whereas a novice in attempting to become accepted into such an environment as a researcher may face a harsher battle in proving their validity as an occupant of the space, perhaps



having to go above and beyond to be accepted into the hyper-masculine space of the boxing gym. Despite this the identity of me, as in of the present was still apparent and on view for all to perceive; some of which being physical and obvious and other aspects subtle and only perceivable from the awry or fleeting recognition. Most obvious of the physical is that I have much longer hair than anyone else using the gym; everyone else has either a shaved head or very short around the sides and back with a side parting and slight quiff. My messy longer hair presented a disturbance to the 'normal' way. On the subtle side of this is my experience of working in youth and community work and my sense of caring about the thoughts and feelings of others; this became most apparent in doing 'technical sparring' partnered with a young man who after only a few minutes of sparring with him I recognised that he was in some way on the autistic spectrum. The young man was extremely serious; at first glance some would perceive him as borderline aggressive even. However this seriousness was actually his concentration and frustration of 'wanting to get it right'; he was not well coordinated in his physical movements and even less fluid, to add to this he was southpaw, which added to his confusion in interpreting the coaches prescribed combinations demonstrated in an orthodox stance. The young man's frustrations visibly built within less than a minute, building within that time to the point where he threw off his gloves saying 'I can't do it!' and stomping around for a minute before sitting down sighing and putting his head in his hands.

Eventually he came back after some coaxing. I tried to encourage and support him, giving him constructive feedback and guidance on technique, telling him

when he was doing well. This was to no avail, he soon became frustrated at not being able to do it to his intended level of perfection; this time my encouragement (nor that of the coach who had now got involved) was of any use. I was told to shadow box while my sparring partner stayed sat making the occasional moan of annoyance before he eventually packed up his gloves and stomped out. The coach and assistant coach did not seem to be bothered by this, I felt mixed feelings: pity for the young man who just wanted his level of perfection but physically could not achieve it and frustration in wondering if I could have been more help in aiding him achieving his goal. After the session the coach approached me and apologised for the behaviour of the young man, I explained that there was no need to apologise, yet he remained apologetic explaining that 'he's got difficulties, he's a bit autistic ...', instantly without thought, with my educational background instinctiveness I replied 'Yeh, I realised that he may be on the autistic spectrum'. I stopped myself. I realised that I had momentarily ventured into the borders of education professional speak.

The coach had realised something of this as well, perhaps not being able to name it as such instantly, but he did catch an awry glance of one of my identity duppies as the spectre of another me fled from its other world into this one. Conspicuous in its alien-ality, yet only just (somehow) perceived in its gossamer spectrality. The instant look of questioning an out of place-ness and confusion on the face of the coach told me of his experience of this haunting. Another identity confusing the present one in the covert ethnographic event that could have destabilised the covert position. This

reflexivity is of course me knowing me in the transitory nature of the event and attempting to make sense of how I am knowing me and working with me in a situated manner. The awry glimpse of an-other gleaned by the coach was an event in him knowing me, as is the engrained boxing ability that all of the occupants of the gym have recognised as their knowing of me; all of which taking place in the event of me trying to know them (and their be-coming within the space) as an ethnographer and simultaneously somehow *always already* knowing something of them through the self-same identity that permits ease of access to the space.

