

Gangs, Race, and ‘the Street’ in Prison: An Inductive Analysis



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ABSTRACT

Gangs, Race, and ‘the Street’ in Prison

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This thesis investigates the practices and compositions of gangs in Greater Manchester, England. Primarily drawing from qualitative data gathered in two adult, men’s prisons, it explores gang members’ activities, how these practices develop on ‘the street’, and how they are later affected by imprisonment. The thesis also explores the links between race, geographical area and gang affiliation, analysing how a gang member’s racial background and area of origin may relate to his gang. The results show the strong influence of gangs at the sample prisons, and how gangs affect the ways in which prisoners negotiate the carceral space: violent practices, gang allegiances and rivalries developed on ‘the street’ are regularly transplanted into prison. These high levels of gang ‘importation’ into the sample prisons result in the social and cultural significance of street gangs often penetrating prison walls. Area of origin and shared racial background are strong unifying ‘banners’ under which many prison gangs operate, and violence is an integral part of life in ‘the gang’. However, reflecting the academic literature, gang members often contest the terminology around ‘gangs’, showing the polarized discourse around these topics. The thesis attempts to resolve some of these debates by presenting a comprehensive gang typology shaped by theory and prisoners’ testimonies.

DECLARATION

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text

This thesis, including footnotes, does not exceed the permitted length as set out by the Faculty of Law Degree Committee.

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Dev R Maitra

Date: 20th September 2017

In memory of my father, S. K. Maitra.

Thank you for all you did, and sorry you were not here to witness any of this.

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Dev Maitra

University of Cambridge, 20th September 2017

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASBO	-	Anti-Social Behaviour Order
BME	-	Black and Minority Ethnic
CPS	-	Crown Prosecution Service
ESRC	-	Economic and Social Research Council
GMP	-	Greater Manchester Police
HMP(s)	-	Her Majesty's Prison(s)
ISIS	-	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
MAPPA	-	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
MMAGS	-	Manchester Multi-Agency Gang Initiative
NCA	-	National Crime Agency
NOMS	-	National Offender Management Service
OCG	-	Organised Crime Group
PO	-	Principal Officer
POCA	-	The Proceeds of Crime Act 2002
SOCA	-	The Serious Organised Crime Agency
SIR	-	Security Information Report
SO	-	Senior Officer
VPU	-	Vulnerable Prisoners' Unit
YO	-	Young Offender
YOI	-	Young Offenders' Institute

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“And at one level, it is all about money. Real men make real money. Money is frozen desire, the commodification of everything that was ever missing from their young lives; it’s the way they keep score; the way they know how valuable they are. The ability to amass, hold on to and take money from other people is the pre-eminent source of respect in gangland and this respect is their ultimate validation. It’s something worth dying for.”

Reluctant Gangsters - The Changing Face of Youth Crime

John Pitts (2008:1)

“What is the attraction of joining a gang and staying in a gang? Because they promise. They promise status, belonging, respect, solidarity, security, and love. Outreach tries to compete in providing this. And if we achieve this, we have won.”

Walther Specht, Plenary Speech, International Conference on Outreach Work: Youth Gangs, Violence and Female Delinquency. City University of Hong Kong (2015)

CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH OVERVIEW AND AIMS

1.1 Research Objectives

The principal objective of this thesis is to present a qualitative account of gangs on the streets and in the prisons of Greater Manchester, England. Through having conducted field research over a period of two years, this study delineates the compositions, characteristics and activities of gangs in the region. Placing the findings within the existing body of criminological scholarship, the study critically analyses the contested notions of ‘gangs’ and ‘gang activity’, integrating the existing literature with qualitative data drawn from active gang members.

This is a new contribution to the current body of criminology and penology for two primary reasons. First, it presents a sociological analysis of street and prison gangs within a defined geographical area. Although there is some existing literature on these topics, these studies do not present accounts which link the practices of street gangs with their prison counterparts: this thesis, however, delivers a holistic account of one region’s gangs, aiming to present a panoramic view of the linkages and relationships which exist between street and prison gangs. Second, the vast majority of the existing penological research on gangs dates from the mid to late twentieth century and originates from America. There are fundamental differences between the penal practices of America and England, as well as in racial compositions and activities of gangs in the two countries’ prisons. By conducting a methodologically rigorous, sociological analysis of gangs within a specified geographical region, this thesis sheds light on an important area of study to which little academic attention has thus far been paid.

Through conducting research in the County of Greater Manchester and two of its local prisons, data were gathered to provide a detailed, narrative account of the street gangs which operate in the region, tracing their histories, compositions, and activities. The thesis has the following research objectives:

- To explore the development of gang identities in Greater Manchester, particularly focusing on the reasons which lead individuals to become gang affiliated;
- To investigate what linkages exist between street gangs and prison gangs in the region, and how street gang members’ activities develop in a prison environment;
- To examine the carceral experiences of prison gang members and non-gang members;

- To explore the relationship between racial identity and gang affiliation, and the wider role played by race in the prison experiences of gang members and non-gang members.

1.2 Thesis Structure

This first chapter of the thesis outlines the study's research objectives, structure and justification, and provides an overview of its theoretical framework, methodology and limitations. This is followed by Chapter Two, which begins with an introduction outlining the history of street gang activity in Greater Manchester¹. I use this chapter to situate the study within its wider social and historical context, providing an overview of the existing data on gang violence in the region, as well as detailing the historical evolution of Mancunian street gangs. Through using statistical data and a range of secondary sources, this chapter also outlines the more recent history of the region's gangs, both within and outside a carceral setting; the chapter ends with a description of the current academic deficit in this area of research. Chapter Three then presents the study's methodology, explaining in detail the research methods that were used to conduct fieldwork; justifications are provided for the methodological frameworks which were used, and the research methods deployed to gather the data.

This is followed by Chapter Four, which begins with a review of the existing literature on gangs, including street gangs, prison gangs and the functions of gangs. The chapter critically analyses the present body of scholarship, as well as identifying gaps in this existing research. It also engages with the debate around the definition of gangs, drawing on labelling theory to inform this discussion. The chapter goes on to 'redefine' the gang, presenting a range of primary data on gang definitions, and integrating these participant testimonies with Lewis Yablonsky's (1962) theoretical framework on gangs. Chapter Five then presents an account of the contemporary situation around the region's street gangs, situating their present practices and compositions within recent events. I present a detailed account of the prolonged, internecine conflict between Gooch and Doddington gang, as well accounts of their contemporary street activities. I go on to explore the effects of recent migratory patterns into Greater Manchester, as well as presenting an extended account of the Salford Lads – one of the

¹ Throughout this study, there are references to both the *county* of Greater Manchester (which encompasses 13 different boroughs) as well as the *city* of Manchester (a smaller region within the county). I refer to the city as 'Manchester', and the county as 'Greater Manchester'. This is following the style of reference used by the region's newspapers, journalists and existing academic works (e.g. Walsh 2003; Black 20012).

largest and most powerful gangs I encountered during fieldwork. Thereafter, Chapter Six analyses the effects of racial background on gang affiliation. It primarily examines the complex linkages between the different facets of a gang member's identity and attempts to discern how race affects the compositions of gangs, recruitment into the gang, and inter-gang associations. Chapter Seven then goes on to focus on the activities of the region's prison gangs. The chapter focuses on factors which affect gang-compositions, and how prison gangs adapt to the penal environment. Its analytical account investigates a broad range of issues, ranging from 'signals' emitted by gang members, to ideas around 'presentation of self', violence capital, and contemporary life within prisons for gang members. The thesis ends with Chapter Eight, the study's conclusion, summarizing its main findings and presenting its concluding thoughts.

1.3 Justification for the Study

The focus of this thesis is an important area of study, as the existing literature does not analyze the interaction between street and prison gangs in England. There has also been limited study towards investigating how, and to what extent, prison gangs shape the penal environment in England: what, if any, are the deleterious effects of such gangs, and, conversely, whether prisoners perceive there to be benefits in being affiliated to a gang during their time in custody. Several American penologists contend that "many gangs owe their fruition to the prison context" (Garot 2010: 7; see also Kahn 1978; Blatchford 2008) and that "prisons are especially efficacious in ensuring the growth of gangs; depended upon as a source of social control, [prison] gangs have become firmly institutionalized" (Garot 2010: 7; see also Trulson and Marquant 2009; Skarbeck 2014). However, there has been surprisingly limited attention directed towards the linkages between prison gang identities and street gang affiliations in England. This becomes apparent when considering that Greater Manchester has one of the highest rates of gang-related violence in England (Bullock and Tilley 2002; Walsh 2003; Black 2012; Pitts 2011), yet there is a conspicuous absence of literature on the region's prisons. This study seeks to rectify this, and other omissions, through primarily presenting data obtained from active gang members and others who have had direct experiences of crime in Greater Manchester.

The limited research that exists on gangs in English prisons primarily focuses on analysing gang members' geographical origins, documenting the role played by area in shaping prison gang members' identities (Phillips 2012a; 2012b), as well as the shifting nature of allegiances once individuals have moved into the national penal system (Pitts 2008); within this national

framework, rival London gang members, for example, may bind together when faced with greater threats from gangs originating from other regions of England (ibid). However, most of these studies are limited to local prisons in London and the south east of England². There have been very few analyses of prisons in the North of England, in spite of the high crime and imprisonment rates in the region. Additionally, more recent research has focused on the national, high-security prison system (Liebling et al. 2016), identifying the growing importance of prisoners' collective religious identities (Liebling et al. 2011; Earle and Phillips 2013), and the important role of race in local prisons (Phillips 2012b). More broadly, there had been a longstanding consensus that "while prison gangs in the U.S are almost exclusively based on race and ethnicity, those in England are more likely to be form based on region" (Levan 2012: 29). However, Levan's analysis is one of the few such studies to focus on English prison gangs. The thesis attempts to add to this limited literature and explores the effects of nationality and culture on inter-prisoner relations (Bhui 2009), which is an important area of study when one considers the increasingly multicultural environment of contemporary prisons in England (Phillips 2008, 2012b).

A theme underlying many of these questions concerns the surveillance methods prisons employ to combat the activities of gang members (Petersilia 2008; Marchese 2009; Pyrooz and Mitchell 2015). Indeed, prison gangs are directly affected by prisons' responses to them, and their collective activities are modified in reaction to such efforts (Kahn 1978; Griffin 2007). To monitor gangs – whether in prison or on the streets – state authorities inevitably need to engage in surveillance, intercepting communications between, and tracking the movement of, 'suspect' individuals. There is a growing body of literature surrounding this surveillance of 'suspect' populations in society (Kundnani 2014; Goffman 2014), much of which is undertaken due to pre-existing notions around racial stereotypes and 'othering' ethnic minorities; something that has been heightened during the West's War on Terror, post-9/11. Indeed, this continues to be a contentious area of study, with some arguing that much of contemporary surveillance is not evidence-driven, but rather based around prejudices disproportionately targeting certain groups in society (Phillips 1999; Kundnani 2014)³. According to these arguments, communities and

² Such analyses of prison gangs in England form just one component in wider studies on English street gangs (Pitts 2008), ethnicity and social relations in English prisons (Phillips 2012; Crewe 2009). Accordingly, there does not exist a detailed study where the sole or primary focus is on English prison gangs.

³ However, as was highlighted by serving police officers who were interviewed as part of this research, surveillance by its very nature is an evidence *gathering* exercise. Therefore, in practice, it will often be predicated

regions with high populations of ethnic minorities have seen a steep increase in the levels of police presence, not simply to prevent crime, but more to monitor these communities for any minor infractions of the law by its members (Goffman 2014). Just as the panopticon gaze of the prison has led to it becoming an institution under disciplinary power (Foucault 1975 in Maitra 2014), so too has the increasingly pervasive nature of CCTV (Phillips 1999) led to feelings of an overbearing, overzealous state disproportionately targeting disadvantaged and minority populations (Kennedy 2005). The result is that youths from such communities often have their first experiences of state actors in confrontational, humiliating encounters (Rios 2011), leading to more chance of future acts of resistance, rebellion and defiance (Rios 2011; Sherman 1993), including in a carceral setting (Reiter 2014).

1.4 Methodological Overview

The data contained within this thesis have been gathered from fieldwork conducted over two years, undertaken in Greater Manchester, England. Through engaging with a range of primary and secondary sources, the research deployed a qualitative methodology, using inductive reasoning and a ‘bottom-up’ approach to arrive at its core themes and findings. The two main sample-sites for this research were HMPs Manchester and Forest Bank, and most respondents were gang members, located through purposive or snowball sampling. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with research participants – the majority of whom were gang-affiliated prisoners – and these were combined with informal conversations and intensive observations. Outside of the prisons, participants were located through personal contacts, snowball sampling and directly approaching voluntary organisations. Secondary sources included newspaper articles, court documents, police records, and prison records. Some of this information was in the public domain, whilst other data were collected through Freedom of Information Requests. Indeed, some secondary sources were supplied in redacted form specifically for the purposes of this research.⁴ During fieldwork, I spent time in areas of Greater Manchester with prolonged histories of gang-violence and an established presence of street

upon prejudices – that is to say, police will target their evidence gathering efforts towards those communities and individuals with whom they have previously witnessed high levels of crime and disorder. Despite this candid account given by several policemen participating in this research, the wider academic literature has acknowledged that such efforts often lead to hostilities and suspicion (Anderson 1999; Goffman 2014).

⁴ All individuals and bodies who supplied information were explicitly informed that the data gathered from them would be included in a thesis. All parties consented to the information being gathered, and as a further precaution, the data were anonymised. This included the use of pseudonyms, anonymizing place and gang names, and omitting certain details that may readily have led to the identification of the parties in question.

gangs. Thereafter, the data were fully transcribed and manually coded, and then analysed. A comprehensive account of the study's methodology and research design are contained within Chapter Four.

1.5 Limitations

As with any study, there are limitations to this thesis arising out of research design, the topics covered, and feasibility; these limitations ought to be borne in mind when reading this thesis and its results. First, the prisoners interviewed at HMPs Manchester and Forest Bank were disproportionately from certain parts of Greater Manchester. Although this reflected the higher rates of crime and gang activity in these parts of the county, the wider point to note is that the sample of active gang members interviewed was from a limited number of geographical regions. Although this study aims to draw a degree of generalizability from its results, future researchers could aim to draw participants more widely from the county of Greater Manchester, which has a substantial population of 2.7 million residents.

Another limitation to this research arises from the topics that are omitted from the study. As this thesis principally focuses on data gathered from active gang members, two themes that received limited attention were prevention and deterrence. Although these were subjects on which some participants made limited contributions, future research could build on this area (but see Arberton and McClanahan 2002; Braga and Weisburd 2010; Wong et al. 2016). A final limitation that ought to be acknowledged is the lack of data gathered on the role of women and girls in gangs. This is another area of study on which there is a growing body of scholarship (see, e.g., Densley et al. 2013; Alleyne and Pritchard 2016). However, the research conducted for this thesis exclusively focused on male prisoners (as both sample sites were men's prisons) and during interviews more generally, the topic of women's involvement in gangs rarely arose. This is not to state that female involvement in Greater Manchester's gang-related offending is non-existence or limited; rather that only limited data were gathered on this topic. Nevertheless, discussions around gender and social relations generally did feature in some interviews with participants, and, where relevant, have been included in this thesis.

CHAPTER TWO: INTRODUCTION

2.1 The History of Greater Manchester

To fully comprehend how the situation regarding Manchester's gangs became so serious, one must delve into the city's history, most notably in relation to its position as one of the 'key cities in England's industrial and political history. The Industrial Revolution played a central role in the development of Manchester's political, economic and social development. Wyke (2009:1) writes that "history divides itself into two parts: the world before the industrial revolution and the world after the industrial revolution...the transformation began in Britain in the 18th century... Cotton and coal were the drivers of the transformation, which had many factors behind its transformation into the world's first industrial city". The industrialisation of Manchester led to the city growing at "astonishing rate, and its booming economy attracted migrants from all over Britain" (ibid). The Industrial Revolution, then, had a profound impact on the city of Manchester, which acted as the principal site for the processing of the natural resources extracted from neighbouring Lancashire. Liverpool, too, played a significant role, acting as a key 'port city', through which much of the country's imports and exports could be transported (Mah 2014): North-West England soon became characterised by production, enterprise, and industry. However, rapid migration into the region also led to pressures on the area's infrastructure: limited housing, cramped living conditions, coupled with environmental pollution and low-living standards were a fact of life for much of the population (Holland 1843). Therefore, just as there was increased economic output, so too was there poverty and crime.

The economic opportunities which arose overwhelmingly favoured the middle and upper classes, whose living quarters, schools and places of work were all distinct from those of the working classes (Cooke-Taylor 1842). Such was the inequality that at one point almost half the children of "the poor" died before the age of five (Kay 1832). These stark inequalities led to the establishment of a political consciousness within the city, and by 1819 Manchester exemplified "the emergence of the self-disciplined patterns of the new working-class movement" (Thompson 1963: 75) which centred around trade unions and was characterised through the "continuity of political and cultural traditions in the making of working-class communities" (Thompson 1963: 193). This influenced each wave of Manchester's industrial development, from the cotton mill workers to the factory workers and later the domestic servants of the city. Indeed, as early as the 1750s, Manchester's weavers had established strong

trade unions (Thompson 1963:274). Throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the city's weaver's unions were particularly forceful in staging strikes and demanding greater rights, although their demands were usually met with only limited concessions (Thompson 1963:278-279). All of this created a socio-political climate which was set-against the region's history of economic hardship, class struggle and the development of radical political movements. The region became characterized by a distinct culture, composed of "conscious working-class endeavour...and community purpose" (Thompson 1963: 418), of "industrial and political organisation" (ibid: 429). However, later waves of migration into the city also led to new problems in relation to law and order, including higher levels of alcohol fuelled violence such as mass-brawls on weekends (Thompson 1963: 435). Moreover, in addition to these emerging problems, the continuous presence of poverty led to the growth of crime and disorder, including Manchester's first documented gang, the Scuttlers (see further 2.2.1). The stark inequalities between the region's wealthy citizens and its working-class residents led to the cementing of self-contained, separate 'classes' of people, and the normalization of violence within some segments of this society. Upon the eventual exhaustion of the Industrial Revolution, there followed a precipitous rise in unemployment, crime and group delinquency (Hagedorn 1998; Davies 1998).

After the Industrial Revolution ended, and throughout the following decades of Victorian Britain, many of the societal problems that had begun in the early nineteenth century were amplified due to the country's economic circumstances. Specifically, there began to emerge an entrenched pattern of crime in certain regions of Britain (Pearson 1983; Davies 2009). These areas had been neglected throughout the Industrial Revolution, and, in the period thereafter, witnessed ever greater levels of deprivation and disorder. Greater Manchester was one such area, where regions such as Salford and the City of Manchester witnessed the emergence of violent street gangs (Davies 1998). These areas were like Thrasher's (1927) description of 'interstitial' spaces – small, self-contained regions characterised by distinct social mores. Indeed, although the rise of crime and violence in post-Industrial Britain is well documented, the reasons behind this are disputed: whilst some argue that certain waves of migration into British cities imported specific criminal values (Thompson 1963) others argue that these law-breaking characteristics were inherent to the British Isles, merely exacerbated by societal forces and the population's reaction to new, emerging groups (Pearson 1983).

The following significant events in Britain were WWI and WWII. The enormity of the two World Wars meant that much of the academic attention about this period focuses on the devastation wrought in Britain by warfare and on the country's efforts to rebuild in its aftermath. Nonetheless, there are still accounts that show the chaos of war being exploited by some offenders to commit crimes (see, e.g. Fraser 1995). Post-WWII, there was a large amount of immigration into many parts of the United Kingdom, including the North-West. The arrival of immigrants into the U.K. often precipitated tense race relations (Trilling 2012), and, in many places, engendered informally segregated communities (Din 2006; Quraishi 2005). Such problems were particularly acute in certain areas of Greater Manchester and Lancashire, regions which experienced largescale immigration throughout the remainder of the twentieth-century. Whereas certain districts in the region, such as Liverpool, witnessed gradual migration over several decades (Mah 2014), migration into regions such as Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire was concentrated into a shorter timeframe. This rapid migration focused on specific areas in the region, and, consequently, towns such as Oldham, Rochdale and Keighley have been identified as being some of most racially divided areas of England (Cantle et al. 2006). This included separate living arrangements, minimal social interaction across racial lines and wider social segregation (Ritchie 2001; Cantle 2001). Migrants to Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire predominantly originated from certain countries and geographical regions, most notably the Mirpur region of Pakistani Kashmir; these migrant communities went on to replicate social structures, cultural practices and norms that were to be found in rural Pakistani (Din 2006). A lack of shared language, religion and cultural practices meant that the Pakistani and White English communities of the region largely led separate lives. Moreover, lack of access to fair housing, jobs and racial discrimination led to the newly arrived Pakistani diaspora to congregate in specific areas (ibid). In later decades, repeated experiences of victimization and racist violence cemented the divided nature of the two communities in the region, whereby "certain urban spaces became associated with each ethnic group" (Quraishi 2008: 11). Moreover, the social tensions faced by both migrant and non-migrant communities in the North-West were exacerbated by the wider economic problems faced by Britain in the 1970s and 1980s; under Thatcher's premiership, for example, mine closures in the North of England had a particularly detrimental effect on the region's economy and its population's morale (see, e.g., Benn 1990).

Migrants also arrived in the region from other countries, with the Moss Side region of South Manchester being the seat of a predominantly Caribbean migrant community. Accordingly, the

North of England still contains a significant BME population. For example, census data from 2011 show that 9.8% of residents in the North-West of England and 11.2% of residents in Yorkshire and the Humber identified as being non-white, as compared to far lower figures in other parts of England (4.7% in the North East and 4.6% in the South West, for example). There continues to be significant minority communities in many parts of the region, with the City of Manchester housing residents from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, including substantial Chinese, Bangladeshi and Somali populations, as well as more recent migrants from North Africa, Central and Eastern European. Moreover, Manchester and Liverpool both contain large Irish populations, who have been in the cities far longer than its newer migrant communities (Thompson 1963).

Although many parts of England experienced similarly high levels of migration in the decades following WWII, particular regions have more acutely felt tense relations between different cultures and racial groups (Gilroy 1987; Alibhai Brown 2000; Alexander 2000). The North of England was one of the regions to experience significant social changes during the twenty-first century. Burdsey (2006:14) summarizes the social transformations which occurred in areas such as the field sites for this research, noting “a rapid and sizeable migration of South Asians to Britain [which] began to take place, influenced by a demand for labour within Britain’s manual industries and public services”, leading to “residents of previously ‘white’ working-class districts finding themselves with South Asian neighbours and work colleagues...these transformations provided the antecedents for the emergence of ‘cultural racism’”⁵. Accordingly, the twentieth-century saw the development of racism, racial tensions and divided communities across many regions in the North of England. The Oldham Riots in 2001 were one of the clearest examples of such tensions being expressed, symbolic of the deep-seated frustrations of Oldham’s British Pakistani population. Indeed, it can be argued that racial tensions in the North of England reached their nadir in the early 2000s, with a series of riots occurring between its White English and British Pakistani youths. First, riots occurred in Oldham, in May, followed by similar disturbances in Burley, in June, and finally riots in Braford, which began on 7 June 2001. The majority of those who took part in this series of disturbances were British citizens (Amin 2003), with race and religion being the main dividing line between the two ‘sides’: British Pakistani Muslims on one side, White English non-

⁵ The term ‘cultural racism’ refers to a racism which is based on attributing unfavourable attributes to certain cultures and races.

Muslims on another. Amin (2003: 461) describes how the riots which affected these Northern, mill towns were a “rampage to protest against a long history of economic deprivation and hopelessness, white racist threat and violence, police intrusion and incursion, public-sector neglect and failed ethnic leadership”. Certainly, these riots were not unforeseen and were a culmination of decades of incremental, racist violence and injustices (Cantle et al. 2001; Ritchie 2001; Trilling 2012). Whilst these riots clearly illustrated the region’s socio-cultural schisms, the twenty-first century also witnessed regions in the North of England experiencing the more generally deleterious effects of a post-industrial age. Whilst much of England, and indeed much of the western world has been subjected to these economic forces (Moyo 2008), many of these changes have been most acutely in the North of England (Winlow 2001; Guyoncourt 2016). Manifestations of this have included increased rates of unemployment, decreases in the numbers of new homes and educational opportunities. This has been coupled with a rise in crime, homelessness, drug addiction and mental health problems (Goodman 2018) As much of the criminological scholarship notes, it is in such environments that crime and gangs can often thrive (Wilson 1987; Anderson 1990).

2.2. The History of Manchester’s Street Gangs

2.2.1 The Past – The Beginnings of Greater Manchester’s Street Gangs

Historically elevated levels of deprivation in Manchester and its surrounding regions is one of the factors behind the large numbers of gangs which have long been populating much of the city (Davies 2009). Indeed, the Scuttlers were identified as being one of the earliest manifestations of the twentieth-century ‘youth gang’. The Scuttlers were collectives of working-class Mancunian youths who engaged in inter-group violence, primarily between 1870 and the late 1890s (Davies 1998). The Scuttlers based their activities around protecting territory, identifying themselves with specific regions of Greater Manchester, and engaging in street fights which often involved knives and blades, as well as hand-to-hand combat (ibid). They “patrolled territory across Manchester, including Openshaw, Gorton, Newton Heath and Miles Platting. They were the ‘hoodies’ of their day and held the city's streets in a grip of fear for 30 years”. (Davies 2009:1). The Scuttlers can be classified as one of the first documented ‘gangs’ of Manchester.

There exists little data to identify which gangs populated Manchester in the intervening decades. The little literature which does exist in relation to more general crime in the early twentieth-century suggests that much of it was caused by severe deprivation, elevated levels of

unemployment and the austere conditions of England. If one views the Scuttlers as being the forerunners to Manchester's later gangs, it is apparent that their focus on territoriality, defending their 'home turf', and their youthful membership base, all foreshadowed the importance many of the region's more contemporary gangs place on place and areas (Ralphs et al. 2009).⁶

Following the Second World War, the criminological scholarship suggests that England's underworld began to be characterized less by street gangs, and more by crime families, 'gangsters' and groups of older offenders who would collectively engage in certain offences such as bank robberies, breaking safes and money laundering (Hobbs 1993, 2013). This is not to suggest that collective activities were absent in the milieu of England's underworld; however, gangs did not operate with the same frequency or collective identity as they do today. Accounts from organised crime figures from across England suggest that a similar model of offending was prevalent throughout the country: of specific individuals who operated with groups of likeminded peers, engaging in law-breaking acts (Foreman 1994; Parker 1994). These individuals were not street gangs, and, in London and its surrounding regions, were informally known as 'the faces'. Such law-breaking practices were able to thrive in the economically austere conditions of 1970s and 1980s Britain, often occurring in parallel with legitimate businesses and employment (Hobbs 1993; Winlow 2001). In Greater Manchester, one of the first such groupings to be noted was the Quality Street (or QS) Gang.

2.2.2 The QS Gang

The QS Gang is identified as being the first post-WWII criminal grouping in Manchester to operate under a name, with a defined membership base. Its core members consisted of older men who were involved in crime but also owned legitimate businesses (Donnelley 2011). The gang was at the height of its powers in the 1970s and 1980s, although its members remained active until the late 1990s. Moreover, although the QS Gang included the word 'gang' in its name, its composition and activities aligned more closely with academic definitions of

⁶ There are also existing studies which suggest that throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, the North of England experienced both the presence and the fear of low-level crime and disorder. This included the emergence of 'gangs' of youths hailing from specific regions and districts, the fear parents felt of such 'gangs' victimizing their children, inter-generational conflict, and a fear of 'scallies' (Girling et al. 1999). In many ways, 'scallies' could be seen as a latter-day incarnation of the Scuttlers. Central to such 'little tribes' or 'gangs' was "the significance some young people attach to belonging to an identifiable place ... but also to the importance of knowing the relationship that exists between 'your place' and 'other places', and of being able to defend the former against the latter" (Girling et al. 1999: 72).

organised crime: its membership base did not consist of any youths (indeed, its youngest members had been in their late 30s, and others considerably older); the primary locations where they congregated were businesses such as scrap metal yards, car showrooms, and internal spaces away from the streets; and their principal activities included providing protection, extorting businesses, money laundering and the distribution of Class A drugs (Donnelley 2011). Its members were noted for operating along a business-model, something which gangs endeavour to do to increase their financial revenues (Venkatesh 2008). The QS Gang, then, were one of the earliest gangs noted to have taken what Saviano (cited in Hernandez 2013: vii) terms the ‘capitalist turn’. This ‘turn’ involved a primary focus being placed on pecuniary activities.

Similar to the position held by the Krays and Richardsons in London’s social history, there has been an element of mythologizing gangs of old, reflective of the ‘myth making’ around gangs more generally (Quartararo 2012; Hagedorn 2008; Coluccello 2015; Lauger 2016). However, any such myths around the QS Gang are also substantiated by the detailed recollection of provided in several academic and biographical sources. These refer to the QS Gang as having a central role in Manchester’s drug economy. Through becoming established in Greater Manchester’s drug economy, the QS Gang were able to dominate the landscape of Greater Manchester’s underworld for several decades. However, the limited number of members affiliated to the QS Gang meant that they did not have the substantial membership bases of Manchester’s later street gangs. In this respect, the “the QS Gang operated in small numbers but powerful reputations. The smaller membership base of the QS Gang is indicative of the fact that it was closer to a ‘corporate gang’ than an orthodox street gang, the former typically containing far-fewer members and operating on a ‘business-model’ (see, e.g. Venkatesh 2000; Amenta 2010). In corporate gangs, ‘associates’ are often hired in roles akin to ‘sub-contracts’, engaged to undertake specific ‘business’ duties – such as the dealing and distribution of drugs, or the laundering of money.

It was through this formation that the QS Gang were able to successfully accumulate financial profit, a fearsome reputation, and secure their place in the public consciousness of Manchester. Nevertheless, they were not the sole gang which operated in Manchester during this time. Members of the gang would often work alongside – and sometimes engage in rivalries with – other organised crime syndicates, crime families and independent ‘gangsters’. Whilst such entities dominated Manchester’s underworld in its post-war years, beginning in the 1980s, there

was a noticeable proliferation of street gangs throughout Manchester. Specifically, there was the genesis of street gangs amongst many of the Manchester's migrant communities, particularly in the south of the city. It was in this time period that two major changes occurred to the region's 'underworld': the introduction of firearms and the wider presence of Class-A drugs.

2.2.3 Gooch and Doddington

The 1980s heralded the introduction of gangs whose members came from different ethnic backgrounds, as compared to the exclusively white gangs of the past, such as the QS Gang. Indeed, two street Gangs – the Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang – dominated Manchester's underworld from the 1980s onwards. Both were predominantly composed of second-generation Afro-Caribbean males, although their ethnic compositions varied with the passage of time. Both gangs also began in and around their members' home areas in the south of Manchester, an area which had long been characterized by economic marginalization, high unemployment, low-levels of government investment and high crime rates (Beatie 1981). It was in this environment that collectives of youths, often beginning as friendship groups, gradually began developing into gangs engaged in law-breaking activities. As much of the existing literature identifies, gangs do not always begin as anti-social entities. Indeed, the law-breaking component is something which may develop later (Garot 201; Rios 2011), with many gangs first manifesting as youth friendship groups (Deuchar et al. 2009; Fraser 2015). This was the case for both the Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang (Walsh 2003; Black 2012). Indeed, both gangs began as what Sageman (2008:69) terms a "bunch of guys": groups of peers, based in a specific geographical region in the south of Manchester, bound together by an ethos of "togetherness". At this point in time, both gangs were racially homogenous, characterised by strong in-group unity and racial solidarity demonstrated by their members (Black 2012). Accordingly, the Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang were the close to what Jacobs' (1977:144-145) terms the 'politicized gang': street gangs which adopt radical ideologies, become committed to social change for their community and develop a political consciousness. At their earliest stage of development, both gangs were loosely based on ideologies around black identity, camaraderie and 'oneness'; they occupied central roles in the social fabric of South Manchester, involved in protecting the interests of its residents. However, unlike many African-American gangs of a similar era, neither gang could develop their embryonic politicized ideas into anything further. Rather, the gangs gradually began to deliver all their focus on financial gain, principally through the dealing of drugs (Walsh 2003; Black 2012).

These transformations saw their pro-social, protective groupings become anti-social gangs (see also Densley 2013; Alexandre 2000; Bjorgo 2016). Moreover, both gangs were part of what Venkatesh (2013: 210) terms the ‘informal regulation mechanisms of the underground economy’: whereby threat and use of violence are used to resolve conflicts in arenas such as drug dealing (see also Jacobs 2001; Contreras 2013; Densley 2013:64). Drug-dealers have very limited recourse to the law as their activities are illegal (O’Donnell and Edgar 1998; Crewe 2009:273). Accordingly, they need to devise strategies to protect themselves and their interests; gangs prove to be one of the most effective ways of ensuring this. This need for protecting their territories and securing the drug-market led to the protracted ‘gang war’ between the Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang throughout the 1990s (Walsh 2003). Problems were compounded by the fact that the two gangs were based very near one another, on two sides of an expansive road in south Manchester. Not only was territoriality the foundation upon which both gangs were built, but their geographical proximity meant that there was increased likelihood of violence occurring between the two gangs, and violence between the two gangs became commonplace (Black 2012). By the 1990s, when the two street gangs had become recognised enemies, the regular inter-gang shootings led some of the popular press to refer to Manchester as ‘gunchester’. It was a journalistic moniker indicative of the escalating rate of shootings, and the lack of a resolution to end the feud between the Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang.

2.2.4 ‘Gunchester’

The ‘gang war’ between Manchester’s two primary street gangs did not cease in the 2000s. Instead, it escalated: the city of Manchester continued to witness some of the highest levels of gun crime in England. At its height, there were 1,160 ‘firearm incidents’⁷ recorded in Manchester in one year, of which 146 were shootings⁸. These figures were far from unique at the time. There were sustained high levels of gun violence throughout the two decades between 1990 and the late 2000s – far higher than the national average in England. This culminated with Manchester witnessing 266 shootings in a two-year period between 2006 and 2008 (Figure 1).⁹ These elevated levels of shootings were accompanied by high levels of more general crime:

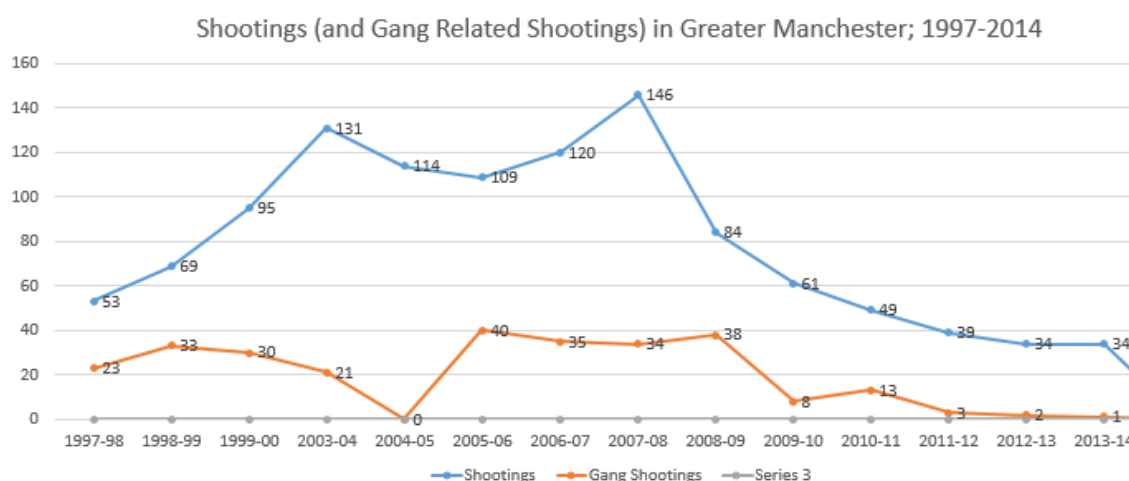
⁷ ‘Firearms incidents’ refer to any arrest, charge or prosecution in which a firearm featured as the sole component, or one component of the offence.

⁸ Figures from GMP incident and crime statistics, publicly available at www.gmp.police.uk. The year (2007/08) refers to a time period from the 1st of January 2007 to the 1st of January 2008; all dates are presented in the same format, in line with GMP’s recording of incidents.

⁹ Ibid.

including violence, drug-dealing and organised criminal activities. However, the steadily escalating feud between Manchester's two largest street gangs was identified as one of the primary causes of this shooting 'epidemic'. For example, of the 146 recorded shootings in 2007/08, 34 were directly linked to gangs; and of the 109 recorded shootings in 2004/05, 40 were directly linked to gangs (Figure 1)¹⁰. These figures reflected previous trends, where 60% of shootings between 1997 and 2002 were gang related¹¹. (Bullock and Tilley 2002; Figure 1). Moreover, firearm violence was disproportionately concentrated in specific locations of the city: residents in Manchester's two main gang affected neighbourhoods were 140 times more likely to be shot than residents elsewhere in Manchester (Bullock and Tilley 2002 cited in Pitts 2011: 165). Because the city's two main street gangs were based in South Manchester, gang-violence disproportionately affected the residents living in these areas. For example, in 1999, 68% of shootings in Manchester occurred within the gang-affected neighbourhoods in the south of the city (ibid). Moreover, the region's two largest street gangs were responsible for 639 firearm incidents between April 2001 and March 2002, 11 of which were fatal shootings, and 84 of which resulted in the victims being seriously injured (ibid).

Figure 1¹²



It should also be noted that these figures do not take not consider the city's unreported incidents of gun crime, and do not include shootings by groups other than those which GMP designated

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ 'Gang Related' refers to any shooting in which GMP or the CPS identified one or more the parties as being gang-affiliated and the shooting to be materially affected by these affiliations. However, is it conceded that this raises problems to do with definitions (see literature review, below), and subsequent validity of the data.

¹² Compiled from GMP crime statistics (available at www.gmp.police.uk) and data from Bullock and Tilley (2002).

as ‘gangs’¹³. Indeed, whilst much of the police and popular press attention was directed towards the feuds between the Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang, the city of Manchester and the wider county of Greater Manchester continued to suffer from the effects of crime committed by a range of individuals. This included crime families, OCGs, street gangs, and other ‘firms’ whose machinations were more discreet – hidden from the gaze of the news media and carried out under an opaque veil. This reticence to engage with authorities has been an enduring feature of many marginalized communities in Greater Manchester (Evans et al. 1996; Walklate and Evans 1999; Walsh 2003).

As the Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang were predominately composed of Afro-Caribbean males, the media’s heightened attention on their activities was viewed by some as being an excessive scrutiny on the region’s young black men (Black 2008), also illustrated through increased police-attention directed towards the city’s black population. Others, however, viewed a focus on these gangs as being aimed at reducing the escalating levels of inter-gang fatalities, injuries and wider deleterious effects of the city’s ‘gang war’ (Walsh 2003). Regardless of the perspective adopted, GMP’s crackdown had the desired effects, at least in the short-term: shootings in the Greater Manchester area were down to 34 by 2013/14, with only one of these being gang-related¹⁴. The arrests and lengthy prison sentences handed down to some of the city’s most infamous street gang leaders were widely seen as having both symbolic and deterrent effects, as well as disrupting the gang’s operations. However, any respite gained was hard won and short-lived. Soon, gang violence was in the ascendancy across Greater Manchester. For example, there were 21 shootings in the city of Salford between May 2014 and October 2015 (Figure 2). It should be noted that Salford’s population (216,103) comprises a relatively small proportion of Greater Manchester’s total population (2,514,757). This combined with the concentrated distribution of shootings within the city of Salford (see Figure 2) to highlight the severity of Salford’s gang violence. Indeed, the assassination of a major underworld figure in the summer of 2015, followed by a spate of ‘tit for tat’ shootings throughout 2016 was played out against a backdrop of serious, sporadic incidents of violence committed by Salford gang members. This included a fatal machine gun and grenade attack on two police officers; numerous shootings in Salford pubs, often in broad daylight; two Salford

¹³ GMP’s informal policy of the 1990s/2000s saw the main focus placed specifically on three Manchester street gangs (Former Police Officer, GMP, pers. comm.) In more recent years, this focus has shifted to primarily targeting OCGs and crime families operating out of Salford (Ibid).

¹⁴ GMP incident and crime statistics.

murders committed in front of dozens of witnesses, none of whom would speak to the police. Additionally, there was a re-emergence of gun violence in the Moss Side region of Manchester, with six shootings in the first two weeks of 2016 alone (Abbit et al. 2016)¹⁵.

Figure 2

(Source: Keeling and Coyle 2015)



The question remains, then, as to whether GMP had adequately dealt with the region's intractable gang problems, or whether the temporary lull in gun violence between 2009 and 2012 was simply a reduction in crime analogous to the yearly variations in crime figures that occur more generally¹⁶. In other words, could the police, governmental bodies and public authorities take credit for the decrease that occurred, and if so, should they largely receive the blame for the more recent increase? One reason these questions are difficult to answer is due to the expansive area GMP is tasked with policing. Indeed, the force is responsible for policing across the county of Greater Manchester, a metropolitan county encompassing ten districts (Figure 3) in the North-West of England with varying rates of crime, deprivation, ethnicities, and populations. There are, inevitably, overlaps between gangs in the county of Greater Manchester and its surrounding regions, including both alliances – with gangs in Lancashire, for example – as well as conflict and competition with gangs in the nearby counties such as Liverpool (Black 2012). Despite earlier successes, the current situation is one where GMP once again seem to be losing control over the districts gangs, and the associate gang-related crimes.

¹⁵ This had been preceded by several shootings in 2015 (Keeling and Coyle 2015) and followed by several instances of what were reported as 'targeted' attacks in the area, including an incident where a teenager was seriously injured and eventually died after an attack (Keeling 2016).

¹⁶ Indeed, gang-related violence can often be characterized through 'waves' (Bouchard and Hashimi, 2017): increases in violence, followed by down-turns.

Figure 3



2.2.5 The History of Manchester's Prison Gangs

There is a marked absence of criminological literature on England's prison gangs, and this is reflected by the limited amount of literature about Greater Manchester's prison gangs: past and present. Even within the United States, gangs have been identified as a relatively new presence within penal institutions. The earliest American prison gang has been identified as the Gypsy Jokers, which formed in the state prisons of Washington in the 1950s (Camp and Camp 1985; Fleisher and Decker 2001). There is a consensus that prison gangs in England began forming far later. The limited research in this area has identified the presence of some prison gangs within Greater Manchester, ranging from structured gangs to looser collectives and 'sets' of prisoners, which may function along similar lines to gangs, but are more malleable entities (Walsh 2003). Additionally, there is some research to suggest that organised crime groups and street gangs have also affected Manchester's prisons, shaping the activities and practices of gang members within the region's prisons (see, e.g., Black 2012). The little research existing in this area shows linkages existing between Mancunian prison gangs and their street counterparts, and that such links exist both due to practical reasons (for example, for the facilitation of drug trafficking into prison) as well as for wider, symbolic reasons, such as the importance prison gang members place on their street identity, and the cultural links they maintain with their street counterparts (ibid).

The limited nature of the scholarship on Manchester's prison gangs becomes further apparent when one considers recent developments in the region's 'gang scene.' For example, from

accounts about Greater Manchester's street gangs, it is clear that in the past two decades many of the region's gang members have been imprisoned (Black 2012). This is significant in relation to the region's prison gangs because many gang members were sentenced *en masse* and were sent to the same prisons: this is particularly true of members of the Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang, well as for gangs from Cheetam Hill and Salford (Black 2012). It is probable, then, that such methods of imprisonment may lead to the 'importation' of the region's gangs into its prisons, following the wider importation perspective around gangs more generally (Jacobs 1974, 1977).

2.3 The Academic Deficit

Many districts of Greater Manchester have witnessed consistently acute levels of social deprivation, with the concomitant high-levels of crime that are associated with such areas. Southern regions in the city of Manchester experienced extremely high rates of shootings and gang violence in the latter-half of the twentieth century (Walsh 2003; Black 2012), and the city of Salford has witnessed the development of entrenched OCG cultures (Walsh 2003; Walklate and Evans 1998). Despite a limited amount of academic attention directed towards these regions and their problems, there has been focus on these areas from journalists, charitable organisations and other public bodies. The increase in shootings across Greater Manchester at the time of writing is indicative of the lack of permanent, workable solutions which have arisen so far.

One reason it is difficult to gain understanding of this topic is due to the way Manchester's 'gang problem' has often been viewed. Specifically, there has been a conspicuous absence of analyses that focus on the role prison gang members play in continuing street-conflicts. Most scholarly contributions on gangs in Manchester avoid the issue entirely (see, e.g., Walsh 2003), and accounts in the popular press focus on singular incidents of gang-related violence (see, e.g. Scheerhout 2015), allowing little opportunity for verification of findings or for wider conclusions to be drawn. A further gap that exists in the existing literature is regarding the interaction between English prisoners' racial or religious identities and gang affiliation. Although there exists a growing body of research exploring the effects of race (e.g. Phillips 2012a; Phillips and Earle 2011; Crewe 2009; Earle and Phillips 2013) and religion (Phillips 2012a; Liebling et al. 2011; Earl and Phillips 2013) on English prisons and prisoners, the interplay between *prison gangs* and these facets of identity has yet to be explored in detail. This absence becomes more apparent when faced with the extensive levels of American

research on the relationship between race and gang practices (see, e.g., Kahn 1974; Jacobs 1977; Fleisher and Decker 2001; Decker 2001; Noble 2006; Skarbeck 2014), as well as American studies on the interaction between religion and pre-existing gang affiliation (Hamm 2009; 2013). Although a limited number of studies in England scrutinize these nexuses (e.g. Liebling et al. 2011), there are few contemporary studies presenting a detailed analysis on the interactions between racial identities and gang practices. Moreover, gang members' activities are distinctly different from that of non-gang-affiliated individuals. Such differences are especially apparent in a penal environment, where gang members are responsible for disproportionate levels of rule violations, including: the perpetuation of violence; committing assaults against other prisoners and staff; victimizing non-affiliated prisoners; and engaging in the prison's sub-rosa economy. Existing American studies also trace the linkages between racial grouping and gang related activities in prison: for example, the relationships between a prison's race, and whether he is more likely to be the victim or perpetrator of sexual assault (Human Rights Watch 2001; Noble 2006). Little such research has been conducted in English prisons. This is especially surprising in the North of England.

The research contained within this thesis, then, is important for both academic and practical purposes. As well as contributing to the existing body of criminological and penological research, I examine topics that are relevant to public policy and wider discourses around violence and crime within marginalized communities. This is starkly illustrated by the contemporary crime figures in the region where I undertook fieldwork. For example, there were 34 recorded shootings in Greater Manchester between 2 May 2014 and 2 August 2015, four of which were fatalities (Keeling 2015); the majority of these were gang-related. Moreover, the number of violent offences in Greater Manchester increased from 3,676 in May 2014 to 5,119 in May 2015 (GMP Crime Statistics, 2015). Accordingly, this area of study continues to be highly relevant and a pressing social concern for the region's residents.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample

The data presented in this thesis were primarily collected from research conducted in two adult men's prisons in the county of Greater Manchester: HMPs Manchester and Forest Bank. Twenty-five prisoners were interviewed at HMP Manchester, and thirty-five prisoners at Forest Bank. Therefore, a total of sixty prisoners were interviewed as part of this research. Most of the prisoners who participated in this research were gang members¹⁷, and were selected through purposive sampling: at HMP Manchester, twenty of the prisoners interviewed were gang members, and at HMP Forest Bank, thirty of the prisoners interviewed were gang members. Thereafter, I used opportunity sampling to select non-gang members at both HMP Manchester (n=5) and HMP Forest Bank (n=5)¹⁸. Of the total number of formal interviews, most prisoners were interviewed only on one occasion (n=55), but a few were interviewed on more than one occasion (n=5). Repeated contact with these five prisoners helped develop rapport and enabled easier discussion around more sensitive topics. These five individuals were chosen as they presented as particularly willing and eager to participate in my study, pro-actively seeking me out during fieldwork.

In addition to the total sample of prisoners, I interviewed 10 prison officers, using a semi-structure format, with questions drawn from a prepared interviewed schedule (see Appendix A); I interviewed 5 prison officers from HMP Manchester and 5 prison officers from HMP Forest Bank. The limited sample size of prison officers was partly due to a reluctance of the sites to allow for extensive sampling of staff. Although prison officers play a vital role in shaping the experiences of prisoners (Liebling 1991; Liebling and Price 1999; Crawley 2004), and in controlling the activities of prison gang members (Wells et al. 2002; Trammell 2011),

¹⁷ For the purposes of sampling, a prisoner was classified as a 'gang member' if he appeared on the prison records as a gang member and self-identified as such (see further, Chapter Four).

¹⁸ Included in this selection of 10 non-gang members were individuals who had never been gang-affiliated and individuals who had previously been gang-affiliated. Members of the former are each referred to as 'non-gang member' and members of the latter are each referred to as 'former gang member'. I included a small number of non-gang members in my sample to assist the process of data triangulation, ensuring that the research included perspectives from outside of gangs, and to counteract any biases in gang members' accounts. I selected non-gang members on-gang members who were 'informed participants', knowledgeable about the areas of my study. I have only included data from non-gang members who presented as being knowledgeable on the subject and the multifarious activities of gangs

the increasing strains on prisons throughout the duration of my fieldwork, such as rising levels of violence and reductions in staff numbers, meant that an extensive sample of prison officers could not be drawn. Prison officers at both sample sites were selected through opportunity sampling, being interviewed on an 'available and willing' basis. Additionally, I interviewed one member of prison management and one probation worker at HMP Forest Bank, and two members of prison management at HMP Manchester; all four of these individuals were chosen through purposive sampling: to achieve this, I ensured that I was directed towards members of prison management whose specialization was in dealing with gang members. Finally, as one of the principal aims of this research was to compare prison gangs with street gangs, I conducted a limited amount of research outside of prisons: this included interviews with a current street gang member (n=1), reformed offenders (n=2), youth workers (n=4), gang researchers (n=3), police officers (n=2) and residents of communities affected by gang violence (n=2). An overall total of 88 participants were interviewed as part of this research.

Alongside my research within two prisons, I spent some time on the streets of Greater Manchester. I acknowledge the limited nature of my street-based research, and to improve data validity, I asked prisoners detailed questions about their experiences of 'street life', gangs, and how these compared to their 'in prison' experiences. I sought to integrate the perspectives of prisoners with that of street offenders and other street participants who were knowledgeable about gangs. Magnusson and Marecek (2015:118) state that an extensive sample, drawn from different groups of individuals, allows for differences to be explored adequately as "tellers' perspectives shape their stories. Individuals in different social locations recount events differently. Comparing such different accounts can tell researchers ... about, for example, social hierarchy and intergroup conflict". Following this advice, I ensured that my street-sample included a wide range of individuals such as police officers, prison officers and community residents. When in prison, I also purposively selected participants from rival gangs, and later compared their accounts of my research topics. Through employing such methods, I aimed to uncover inconsistencies and biases which may have affected the validity of my dataset. Most days conducting fieldwork in prison involved spending an average of seven hours engaged in active research, although there were some days when I spent considerably longer in prison. For the street-component of my research, on average I spent five hours engaged in active research each day. Fieldwork was a physically demanding process, and these lengthy days spent 'in the field' took an emotional and physical toll on me. Following each day of fieldwork, I would write up field notes, and review my day's research. Although data

transcription and analysis occurred once I had returned to Cambridge, I was mindful of the trends and themes that were emerging throughout the fieldwork.

The process of sampling participants had to be conducted with several issues borne in mind, including matters concerning research feasibility, ethical principles and giving due regard to the autonomy of research participants: viewing them as independent agents who were free to choose not to participate, or withdraw their consent at any stage. I was also aware that the limited nature of my street-based research meant that I would have to gather data on street gangs from additional sources; this was primarily achieved through asking prisoners about their experiences of gangs outside prison and consulting a range of secondary sources. As most prisoners interviewed for this research were serving relatively short-term sentences, or were held on remand, their retrospective accounts of street gangs encompassed relatively contemporary events; prisoners also exhibited few problems in recalling information, something which can impede the validity of results (Polsky 1967:123). Moreover, several prison gang members sustained contact with fellow gang members on ‘the street’, which further allowed them to be aware contemporaneous street gang activities. Whilst history and context were important in providing a background to my study, above all, I wanted this project to be shaped by the perspectives and voices of contemporary gang members in Greater Manchester: I had identified the absence of such an account in the existing body of scholarship, and therefore, took care to engage with participants who could contribute to a timely, relevant study of the region’s gangs.

3.2 Background to the Study

At the outset of this research project, I had intended to conduct intensive research of prison gangs at a single adult men’s prison in Greater Manchester; I hoped that conducting research in one bounded field-site would act as a valuable contribution to the canon of criminological scholarship. To explore the feasibility of my planned research, I consulted a wide range of individuals, ranging from personal contacts to members of prison management at my intended sample site. With the help of my supervisor, I had a face-to-face meeting with a former Governor of HMP Manchester. I was also in e-mail correspondence with the prison’s psychologist, members of HMP Manchester’s management, and members of NOMS’ National Research Committee. Through contacting these individuals, I was able to refine my proposed research methodology and the parameters within which I would conduct fieldwork.

Eventually, I conducted a one-week pilot study at HMP Manchester; this acted as a ‘scoping’ exercise, introducing me to the prison and potential participants, as well as allowing me to further gauge whether the proposed research was feasible. Later in this chapter, I discuss my experiences during the pilot study, which allowed me to discuss the research topic with prisoners, prison officers, and other members of prison staff. By coincidence, I had also become friends with a former police officer from the region, who was enrolled on my course at the University of Cambridge. I was able to gain a further perspective on my proposed research by discussing my plans with this former officer; he was also able to offer me ideas and referred me to ‘contacts’ in the region – individuals I would later contact to facilitate fieldwork. Through this preparatory work, it became apparent that gangs were a serious problem in contemporary Greater Manchester, and that a multitude of gang members existed at Manchester Prison. However, it also became clear that practical considerations would make it unlikely for me to be able to conduct a prolonged period of research solely at one prison. For example, several individuals emphasized that limited resources – such as the decreasing numbers of staff across English prisons – would make it difficult to spend an extensive amount of time at one site. Many of these observations were underscored by my pilot study, which I describe later. For example, it became clear that solely interviewing gang members, or indeed, prisoners, would not expose me to the varied perspectives needed for the collection of valid data. Bearing all these potential barriers in mind, I reframed the research so that it became a ‘multi-sited’ study, a mode of study which “takes unexpected trajectories in tracing a cultural formation across and within multiple sites of activity” (Marcus 1995:96). By this point, I envisaged my study to involve conducting fieldwork across two prisons, as well as on the streets of Greater Manchester.

There was wide agreement that this planned research in its reconstituted format could lead to the collection of a substantial set of data. I also decided to include the perspectives of prison officers and those in the wider community who had knowledge of gangs. Reframing the project included arranging interviews with active street gang members, ex-offenders, youth workers and other members of the community. As Scott and Garner (2012) note, interviewing for criminological research usually involves interacting with populations whose members are actively engaged in illegal practices and living on the margins of society; therefore, it will not always be easy to generate or maintain contact with such individuals. Time was taken, then, to forge links, develop contacts and ensure that a wide number of individuals in the relevant communities were aware of my proposed research. These methods of sampling have previously

been used when researching gangs and are bolstered when a member of the community volunteers to act as the ‘gatekeeper’ for the research (see, e.g., Venkatesh 2008; Densley 2013). However, there was still the question of which prisons I would choose as the primary sites for my research. This was something I continued to explore, whilst at the same time making progress regarding the street component of my fieldwork. Studies of street gangs and groups engaged in illegal activities are classified as being ‘restricted entry social situations’: social environments which are highly difficult to observe or enter due to the nature of acts taking place (Spradley 1980:50). This was borne in mind throughout fieldwork. I aimed to overcome some of these problems through conducting fieldwork at several sites in the region. I planned to collect data that would include information about both street and prison gangs; this was consistent with my aim for this research to link the prison and ‘the street’. Therefore, I began making plans to combine my prison-based research with street-interviews to enrich the value of the gathered data.

From early in the study, I decided to frame the body of my research in accordance with appreciative inquiry and humanistic research principles. As a theoretical model, appreciative inquiry seeks to involve participants in self-determined change (see, e.g. Bushe 2013). When applied specifically to penological research, it ensures that research reflects ‘I-thou’ rather than ‘I-it’ relationships (Liebling 2015), ensuring that communications between researchers and participants are “direct, equal, non-judgmental and giving relationships with the whole person rather than with only one aspect of them or with an identity that has been ascribed to them” (Ludlow 2015). I discovered that many similarities exist between the appreciative and the humanist perspective. Indeed, criminologists such as Toch posit that the humanist perspective should pervade all aspects of prison life, affecting everything from the running of the prison regime to staff-prisoner interactions. Toch (1997:72) states that, “the word community ... denotes the climate that we would need to generate fellow feeling amongst prisoners and open lines of communication between prisoners and staff ... prisoners must feel comfortable about sharing information with staff about what is happening to them. In a cops and robbers atmosphere this cannot be done”. Although Toch specifically describes the relations between staff and prisoners, the wider point is something which influenced my research from the outset: that the research should be based around dialogue and openness rather than suspicion, viewing prisoners as equals, and listening rather than judging. As I outline later in this chapter, some of these viewpoints were different to the institutional cultures of the sample sites. However, I

persevered in shaping my research methodology and wider conduct with such principles in mind. These ethical principles shaped my conduct during fieldwork, and the analysis.

3.3 Sample Sites

In the following section of this chapter, I describe the places and locations which acted as field sites for my research. Both prisons which acted as my sample-sites were based in Greater Manchester. My street-based research was also conducted within the county, specifically in the areas of Moss Side (an inner-city district located in the south of Manchester) and in the city of Salford (a metropolitan borough bordering the city of Manchester). In this portion of the chapter, I outline why I chose Greater Manchester as a field site for my research, and why I chose HMPs Manchester and Forest Bank as the prisons in which I would conduct most of my fieldwork. Although I spent a total of four and a half weeks conducting the prisons-based research, this was not one, continuous piece of fieldwork. I later go on to describe the various complexities of the research, but first I outline the reasons why I chose to conduct my fieldwork within a relatively concentrated space in Greater Manchester.

3.3.1 Greater Manchester

This research project was based in the county of Greater Manchester, a large metropolitan county in the North of England; it is a county comprised of 10 metropolitan districts, including two cities. I felt that situating my study within a post-industrial, Northern city – whose history was inextricably linked to the Industrial Revolution, political activism and the presence of a large, economically marginalized population – would complement my study's aims and objectives. However, I was equally aware that I would need a firm methodological base from which to proceed, and that I would need to carefully consider the exact locations for my research, why these were chosen, how I would secure access, and how I would find and engage participants for my research. I began reading widely around the subject of crime and gangs in Greater Manchester, as well as acquainting myself with the region's social and political history. I telephoned and e-mailed numerous charities and third-sector organisations based in the county, ranging from youth outreach programmes, youth centres and organizations run by ex-gang members, to soup kitchens, half-way houses and drop-in centres for sex workers. Many of these organisations were interested in participating in my research, and I made plans to establish further contact with them. In the interim period, I continued reading the literature on gangs, keeping up to date on news developments in Greater Manchester, and maintained my contacts with members of NOMS' National Research Committee and HMP Manchester's

prison management. Eventually, I had my face-my-face meeting with the former Governor of HMP Manchester, and after some phone calls were made, a day visit to the prison was duly arranged and a date was set for our meeting.

3.3.2 HMP Manchester

Manchester Prison, formerly known as ‘Strangeways’, was originally built in 1868. It is a ‘core local’ adult, men’s prison, with an operational capacity of 1238: although it predominantly holds Category B prisoners, its grounds also include a self-contained Category A Unit. It is a public prison and became part of the high-security estate in 2003. The prison is widely known for being the location of the most serious prison disturbance in British history, commonly referred to as the Strangeways riots of 1990. Carrabine (2004) presents a detailed account of this disturbance, as well as of the history of HMP Manchester, outlining how an accumulation of prisoner grievances, the prison’s systematic oppression of prisoner rights, and an entrenched institutional culture which was opposed to prisoner rehabilitation and well-being led to ‘the siege’. Carrabine (2004:152) goes on to argue that “the main reason why the riot at Strangeways lasted for 25 days and came to signify the chronic problems inherent in the prison system is explained in large measure by the reactions of the authorities to the protest”. These ‘reactions’ have been described as overtly punitive, perpetuating prisoner grievances through the deployment of excessive force, a lack of concern for prisoner well-being and an adversarial approach based on counteracting prisoners with force rather than respecting their rights (Allison and Jameson 1995; Carrabine 2004).

All these facts loomed large in my mind when I arrived at the prison for my first visit. I began the day by handing over some identification documents and spent the remainder of the day being escorted through the prison by a member of senior management. I came to realize that I might lack agency in much of the research process: the prison administration clearly wanted to ‘guide’ me, and I realised that it would take skill and effort to become immersed into the prison world, rather than be a ‘by stander’ who gazed in. I was introduced to some prisoners, but these conversations were brief, a member of prison management always beside me. I also talked to several prison officers and found that some members of staff were interested in the research. I spent most of the day walking around the prison and spent about an hour with the prison’s gang intelligence unit. “Being with me gives you special access, today”, my ‘guide’ told me, “You won’t be coming back in here”. I sharply came to realise that this was a prison which operated on ‘old school’ rules: from the outset, I could sense that conducting research in this prison

would be a challenging feat. I walked around the prison grounds, talked to a few more prisoners, and met a Governor-grade member of staff towards the end of the day. As I noticed the portraits of the Queen and Winston Churchill which dominated the wall-space of the office where I ended the day, a few members of staff quizzed me as to why I wanted “to come to a place like this”. I did my best to explain. As I left the prison, I noticed several security-vans with blacked out windows, followed by police officers armed with sub-machine guns. I could see police helicopters circling above the prison, accompanying a security van which was in a convoy that stretched into the distance. I later read in the news that the convoy I had witnessed contained several bombproof vehicles, bringing back an ‘exceptionally high risk’ prisoner from Manchester Minshull Street Crown Court.

After returning from the prison, I began reassessing my research plans. Clearly, it was not going to be practicable to conduct my whole study in HMP Manchester. During my time at the prison, several prisoners and staff members had commented that I should also consider conducting research at HMP Forest Bank: I had spoken to prisoners who had spent previous custodial sentences at the prison, and staff were also keen to emphasize the ‘overlaps’ between the two prisons’ gangs, populations and their geographical proximity. I was advised that I would need to submit a separate NOMS research application to enter HMP Forest Bank. My classmate from Cambridge University had a friend who worked at the prison, and this served as a good ‘personal contact’. Therefore, after returning to Cambridge, I began to draft proposals to enter both prisons.

3.3.3 HMP Forest Bank

There were numerous reasons, then, why I chose HMP Forest Bank as my second sample site. The adult, men’s prison is located three and a half miles from HMP Manchester, and this geographical proximity means that there is a large degree of ‘overlap’ between the two prisons. They have bordering catchment areas, and it was clear that many of the gangs who operate in HMP Manchester are also present in HMP Forest Bank. Both prisons occupied similar geographical regions: HMP Manchester was located on the border between the cities of Manchester and Salford, and HMP Forest Bank was a short drive away, located in Salford. Through my communications with staff at both prisons – as well as reading widely about their organisational structures and histories – it became clear that the two prisons would complement each other in many ways, allowing me to interview many members of the same gangs, as well

as prisoners who had had experiences of both prisons. However, the two were also different in their institutional cultures. Unlike HMP Manchester, HMP Forest Bank is a private prison, run by the firm Sodexo. Its 'main jail' is a Category B prison, with an operational capacity of 1460; it holds both sentenced and remand prisoners. As well as the 'main jail', it also contains a self-contained Young Offenders' Institution which holds sentenced and remand prisoners aged between 18 and 21. Located in Salford, HMP Forest Bank is a relatively newly built prison, opened in 2000, and stands in expansive concreted grounds. This contrasts to HMP Manchester, which is in the heart of an urban, formerly industrial, conurbation.

The process for gaining access to the prison was, again, via NOMS; the responses were positive. The fact that HMP Forest Bank mainly held short to medium term prisoners meant that I would have access to a population who had relatively recent experiences of 'the street'. Moreover, the prison's high 'turnover' would further assist me when exploring the interactions between prison and street identities. I emphasized all these points when drafting my application, and soon received informal approval of my research from the Acting Governor: I was told that this should expedite the research process. However, in the meantime, I had heard back from HMP Manchester, with instructions to contact the prison to arrange a one-week pilot study. This pilot study involved interviews with five prisoners with varying levels of gang involvement and conducting observations. I conducted interviews with several prisoners, the majority of staff were willing to assist me in my research, and the research complied with ethical guidelines. However, as well as acting as an introduction to the prison, the pilot study also illustrated an important point: that due to the sensitive area of my research topic, it would require more time than I had to fully gain the trust of gang members. Previous studies have identified prison gangs as being 'closed' networks, characterised by a lack of transparency to those outside of the gang (Camp and Camp 1985; Fong 1990). Mindful of the limited time I would be able to spend in prison, it was clear that I would have to supplement my prisons' research with data collected from individuals outside of prison. Despite problems around gaining the complete trust of prisoners, I was confident that, with the help of interested staff, I would be able to utilize the prison environment as one arena from which to gather data.

3.4 'Getting In, Getting On, Getting Out'

Taylor and Bogdan (1998) refer to the research process as being comprised of three principal stages: 'getting in, getting on and getting out' (see also Sloan and Wright 2015). However, I will first outline my wider orientation towards this project. From the outset of the research, I

sought to be guided by a set of ‘core values’, conducting research that was both methodologically rigorous and abided by ethical principles. Some criminological researchers contend that the existing body of scholarship does not pay adequate heed to the voices of those who are being studied (see, e.g., Glynn 2014), and one of my primary methodological objectives was that my research should be ‘participant-centric’. To this end, I had considered several potential methodologies, all of which put the participant at the centre of the research process. This included qualitative and phenomenological approaches (e.g. Husserl 1954/1970) and appreciative inquiry (e.g. Liebling et al. 1999). I had engaged in informal conversations with academics both at the University of Cambridge, and at other universities, and the consensus was that I should choose a methodology which was both ‘true’ to the aims and orientation of my project but was also practicable to implement in the limited time I was going to be able to spend in prison. I eventually settled on a methodology which was primarily shaped around a qualitative, inductive approach, whereby data would be collected through one-on-one interviews and observations and would thereafter be analysed so as to identify key themes which emerged from the gathered data. I sought to engage prisoners in interactions which would lead to self-insight, considering historical backgrounds and other important sociological factors (see also Kelly 1955; Awan 2014). Furthermore, I wanted my research to be ‘appreciative’ in its tone. But there were stresses which continually emerged throughout the research process. I now go on to outline this process, the achievements of my research, and how I overcame barriers which arose.

3.4.1 ‘Getting In’

3.4.1.1 Getting in to HMP Manchester

Gaining access to prisons has been described as a potentially lengthy, and often bureaucratic process (Jewkes 2005). Indeed, I had to make many changes to the parameters of the research, including how prisoners would be sampled (NOMS’ National Research Committee were initially opposed to the idea of any random sampling being undertaken as part of this research), how data would be recorded (I was not allowed to carry out digital recording at the prison), and issues surrounding the retention and destruction of data (a clear time frame had to be presented regarding how long I would retain interview transcripts, and how these would be destroyed afterwards). Some of these issues, such as those regarding the retention and destruction of data, were standard procedures which apply to all requests for conducting research in prisons (Senior Prison Psychological, HMP Manchester, pers. comm.). However,

other issues were complicated by the fact that HMP Manchester is a high-security prison, which I go on to outline later in this chapter.

In my attempts at ‘getting in’ to the prison, I made my methodology clear both to NOMS’ National Research Committee and to the prison management at HMP Manchester: through a combination of interviews, observations and consulting a wide range of secondary sources, I aimed to produce a study with a high-level of content validity, filling gaps in the existing body of scholarly research on this area. Taylor and Bogan (1998) advise the researcher to combine extensive participant observation with multiple day visits, which help foster a sense of familiarity and enhance the chances of ‘getting in’ to the research site. As both of my principal research sites were prisons, official procedures had to be followed to gain entry. Therefore, unlike in street-based research (see, e.g., Whyte 1943; Anderson 1976; Liebow 1967), fostering informal relationships could not be the sole means of gaining access to the research population. Accordingly, my methodology incorporated the formalities required to gain access to a high-security prison: obtaining further security clearance; passing the prison’s counter-terrorism check; fulfilling the requirements of the prison’s ethical guidelines; and cross-checking my methodology with the prison’s psychologists¹⁹.

I had already visited HMP Manchester several times. I had informally met a former prison Governor and my name was ‘known’ to several members of management at the prison. Although my application to ‘get in’ to the prison followed the official route through NOMS’ National Research Committee, these pre-existing connections with the prison benefitted the process of securing access. I am also sure that the familiarity I was able to demonstrate in my NOMS application – both in relation to the prison’s wider culture and my research topic – was greatly assisted by the time I had spent at HMP Manchester. I had, then, ‘got in’ to the prison a few times before formal access was granted through by NOMS’ National Research Committee for fieldwork in 2014. ‘Getting in’ was not a linear process, and I felt that my ‘backstory’ and various preparatory activities benefitted and enhanced my research experience.

3.4.1.2 Getting in to HMP Forest Bank

The process of gaining access to HMP Forest Bank was an especially protracted and frustrating one. On the one hand, gaining security clearance for the prison was not as extensive as it had

¹⁹ See Polisenska (2010: 273) for the central role a prison’s psychologist plays in facilitating access for research.

been for HMP Manchester, as it is a lower security-category prison. For example, I did not have to attend the prison with identification documents prior to commencing the research. On the other hand, I could sense from the beginning that it would be difficult to gain access from NOMS' National Research Committee. It became clear that I would effectively have to draft a separate proposal for HMP Forest Bank. By the middle of 2015, I had submitted by application twice to NOMS' National Research Committee, and both were rejected, despite the willingness of the senior managers at the prison to host it. The process of 'getting in' was turning out to be an exasperating procedure. This affected my confidence, and I was unsure as to what more I could do to improve my application. As time passed, it became clear that the reasons for these rejections were not always linked to the substantive content of my proposal: for example, I was later told that NOMS' National Research Committee had been satisfied with my second application, but once they had cross-checked their decision with HMP Forest Bank, the prison's management team said they did not know who I was or what my research was about: it later transpired that the Acting Deputy Director whom I had spoken to on the phone had left the prison, and there was now no-one at the prison who knew of me or my research. There were various issues which had to be re-formulated on several occasions to fit with the expectations of the various parties involved, all the while maintaining the true 'essence' of the research; this was a difficult balance to achieve and took considerable time to attain. However, by the beginning of 2016 I had eventually submitted another redrafted proposal of my research, and in April 2016 I received a response from NOMS' National Research Committee stating that approval had been granted for my research. I therefore began liaising with a member of prison management who had been tasked with organising my research. Nevertheless, I was aware that a large amount of time had elapsed since I had last been in Greater Manchester. I knew that this meant many changes had occurred both across the English Prison System as well in relation to the region's street gangs.

3.4.2 'Getting On'

My experiences of fieldwork²⁰ at the sample sites were varied and contrasting. The two prisons had different institutional values, and my daily interactions showed that the environment of each prison was different: HMP Manchester's staff were older, more often drawn from a

²⁰ As most of my research was conducted within prisons, my references to 'fieldwork' in this chapter are about the research I conducted within prisons.

military background and the regime was stricter than HMP Forest Bank, where prisoners had more autonomy over their daily decisions. These points were all noted by several prisoners who had served sentences at both prisons. Staff attitudes, institutional practices and ‘operational’ issues differed across the two prisons²¹. Moreover, the one-and-a-half-year interlude between my fieldwork at Manchester Prison and Forest Bank Prison had led to many changes in the wider, Greater Manchester ‘gang scene’. For ease of reference, I go on to detail my experiences of ‘getting on’ in both prisons under separate sub-sections. Nevertheless, whilst there were differences in my fieldwork experiences at the two sample sites, I attempted to ensure that I applied the same overriding ‘ethos’ during all parts of my research, including how I positioned myself in relation to research practices. It was important for me to bear in mind that my research should be driven by ethical conduct, concern for prisoner well-being and wider adherence to research ethics. Accordingly, before detailing my experiences of ‘getting on’ at both sample sites, I set out the overarching humanistic and ‘appreciative’ perspectives which guided me throughout my fieldwork in prison and on the streets.

3.4.2.1 ‘Do No Harm’ - Ethics and Fieldwork

I ensured that my research abided by ethical principles, both fulfilling formal ethical requirements as well as demonstrating a wider ethical ‘ethos’. As regards the former, I sought, and was granted, ethical approval for my research from the Ethics Board at the University of Cambridge’s Institute of Criminology. I also abided by the British Society of Criminology’s Statement of Ethics. I was also mindful that I dealt with the subject under study with care and understanding. Damsa and Ugelvik (2017:4) describe how this approach involves being “mindful of the need to actively cultivate rapport...to be sympathetic and active listeners...maintain awareness of the status differences (power, privilege and perspective) ... [and] adopt a non-judgemental stance”. These perspectives are developments of the orthodox research principle to ‘do no harm’, the origins of which can be found in the Hippocratic Oath.

²¹ From the outset of my research, I considered the nature of each establishment: the distinctive characteristics of each prison, the ages, genders and ethnicities of prison officers and their social classes, and what made each prison distinct as a field site. Prison officers often acted as my ‘guides’ and ‘gatekeepers’. Therefore, I had to spend time with them throughout the research process. By engaging them in both informal conversations and formal interviews, I was able to comprehend and apprehend the cultures of both establishments. The different cultures of the two sites became clear: this ranged from the attitudes and backgrounds of staff through to the critical incidents that had occurred in each field site, and reverberations on their wider cultures, staff-prisoner relationships, order and security.

Indeed, Hugman et al. (2011) argue that when conducting participatory research with vulnerable groups, the researcher ought not just to abide by the principle to ‘do no harm’ but should exert even further caution to ensure participants are not harmed during or after fieldwork. This includes an awareness of any factors which may render participants to be especially vulnerable, and in following up one’s research with after-care for participants.

Toch (1997:156) describes prisons as often being characterised through “emotionally charged” incidents. Accordingly, Toch argues that both researcher and prison officer should adopt humanistic principles, as “one can talk to a protector but not to an enforcer” (ibid). Toch further suggests that interacting with prisoners within a humanistic framework may help ameliorate some of the daily vicissitudes faced by prisoners. Influenced by these perspectives, I sought to create a project which was humanistic and appreciative in its tones and aims, and I aimed for my conduct during interviews and observations to reflect the project’s wider ethos. However, as I go on to outline in this chapter, I often had to ‘think on my feet’ to implement the project’s ethical requirements both in spirit and letter and had to morally deal with any departures. Bearing this in mind, I continuously placed importance on issues around participants’ well-being both during and after the research process: this included consistently respecting the autonomy of all those who took part in my research, and a concern for post-research ‘after care’ when required. In addition to this, I abided by the central sociological principle which states that participation in research should be entirely voluntary (see, e.g., Bachman and Schutt 2011; Comstock 2013:170-173). Reflecting Bachman and Schutt’s (2011:297) findings, informed consent was not difficult to achieve during the ‘intensive interview’ stage at the two sample sites: all participants were asked to sign an informed consent form before interviews began (Appendix B), and it was made clear that participating in the research was entirely voluntary. I also made it explicitly clear that prisoners who chose not to participate would not be adversely affected in any way. Prisoners appreciated the chance given to read the form after it had been explained to them, with many taking the opportunity to carefully do this. Some prisoners chose not to participate, and I ensured that the overall ethos of the research was one in which prisoners did not feel ‘pressured’ into participating²². Ensuring subject well-being did not, however, only extend to interviews: it also included treating participants with dignity more generally. There were instances where I was asked if I would like to observe a cell-search, and the prisoner

²² The practicalities of implementing my ethical framework were different for the street component of my research, something I go on to outline later in this chapter.

being strip-searched – I agreed to the former (on condition that the prisoner did not object) but declined the latter. I respected the autonomy of prisoners, ensuring that their rights were protected and that they were respected throughout the research process. These perspectives greatly shaped my efforts at ‘getting on’ at both sample sites.

3.4.2.2 ‘Getting on’ at HMP Manchester

In many ways, my experiences at HMP Manchester were formative: there were good and bad moments, triumphs as well as pitfalls. I found that conducting research in the prison was often challenging, and I had to remain alert throughout. From the outset of fieldwork, I was aware of the difficulty I faced in finding prisoners who were knowledgeable about the subject-matter and willing to take part in the research. I had only been granted access for two and a half weeks’ fieldwork, and although not an unsubstantial period, I would ideally have wanted more time in the field²³, as time is taken to cumulatively build trust with participants. Moreover, the researcher ought to aim for maintaining a close-degree of contact with participants over a prolonged timeframe (Taylor and Bogdan 1998). To overcome such problems, I ensured that I had devised a methodologically rigorous research design, developing on the successful techniques I had deployed during my pilot study. I re-approached some of the officers and other staff whom I had interviewed during my pilot study. I also sought out the few prisoners who participated in my 2013 pilot study and were still present at HMP Manchester in 2014. Through re-engaging with these ‘key contacts’, I was able to develop rapport with participants, which often led to candid responses and lengthy conversations. I also combined formal semi-structured interviews with informal conversations on prison wings, landings, and workshops. However, much of this momentum was gained once I had spent some time at the prison, re-acquainting myself with the environment. My research design was shaped through a qualitative methodological approach, gathering data from interviews with gang and non-gang members, and aiming to operationalize the term ‘gang’ through synthesizing these responses. I was conscious of the epistemological status of relying excessively on non-gang members’ accounts, wary that ‘lived’ accounts are essential to reliable sociological data, and thus, that an excessive ‘distance’ between participants and the events they are reporting can affect the reliability of

²³ I was initially granted access to the prison for just under two weeks, which I was able to extend through negotiating with members of prison management.

data²⁴. One of the central concerns of epistemology is around perceptual awareness and representations of reality: “part of the problem is that the way things look isn’t always the way things are; appearances can be deceptive” (Pritchard 2018: 5). There is a higher likelihood of such ‘deceptions’ arising the more removed an individual is from the events that he or she is describing. These philosophical concerns were borne in mind throughout my research, and I sought to contact as many gang members as practicable. However, when considering the overall research design of my study, I also had to be conscious of issues around feasibility, and the difficulty in locating gang members and gaining their trust. These concerns were often borne out to be true, whether in the case of some prison gang members who were reluctant to talk to an ‘outsider’, or those prison wings and other, external locations where there were few gang members present. The research design, then, was formulated to withstand the exigent demands of researching gangs, and non-gang members were, therefore, sometimes relied on for their indirect accounts. I sought not to rely excessively on these accounts, and before their inclusion in the thesis, I attempted to corroborate them through consulting a range of secondary sources.

Locating participants was also initially a challenging task for several reasons. First, due to the lapse in time between my pilot study and fieldwork. I only encountered a few of the same prisoners whom I had interviewed in 2013. The subject-matter of my research was one which prisoners had rarely been asked to talk about: most prison gang members were initially reticent in engaging in the research process; and, similarly, many non-gang members were initially hesitant to participate, fearful of recriminations if they were seen talking to an ‘outsider’. Consequently, I had to deploy several innovative methods to successfully start my research and begin to eventually gather my data. For example, on the first day of fieldwork, I hosted several focus groups with prisoners to introduce the research and build trust. Such groups are particularly suited to situations where there is an attempt to reach a consensus on different perspectives (Loden and Rosener 1999); they have also been successfully used in prison research, facilitating an exchange of ideas and developing rapport between prisoners and researchers (Liebling et al. 2011). I was mindful of the fact that focus groups can enable the creation of trust-based relationships between individuals, allowing for free-flowing discussions around themes (Loden and Rosener 1999). I also felt that hosting these groups would fit the

²⁴ I was also cognisant of how community ‘leaders’ may have certain biases; especially as regards how they wish to project their community to outsiders (Anderson 1999).

‘appreciative’ ethos of my research, which aimed to give prisoners the ‘space’ in which to express their perspectives and emotions. I used opportunity sampling to choose prisoners for the groups, and these were largely successful. As I had already been in the prison for my pilot study, I deliberately began my study on the same wings, and explained my research to prisoners on the wings and landings. Once I had spent some time in the prison, prisoners became enthusiastic and eager to participate, and would often approach me on prison wings. Although I only encountered a few prisoners from my pilot study, when I did re-engage with them, other prisoners could see that I was ‘known’, and these ‘connections’ demonstrated that I was someone who was trusted. Throughout fieldwork it was clear that due to the sensitive area of my research topic, it would require time for gang members to ‘open up’ to me: prison gang members were difficult to locate and engage in the research process when first approached. Previous studies have identified prison gangs as being ‘closed’ networks, characterized by a lack of transparency to those outside the gang (Camp and Camp 1985; Fong and Buentello 1990; Fong 1990; Brotherton and Barios 2004), and this was borne out during my pilot study. I became aware that trust would have to be cultivated with participants, and time would have to be taken to establish and develop rapport.

Soon, I began interviewing prisoners for my research. I used purposive sampling to choose known gang members and gang leaders to take part in the study. I was aware of the sensitivities in researching the topic of prison gangs (Fong 1990; Fong and Buentello 1991), and, aware of the hesitancy some prisoners showed, I sought to reassure them of the principles of anonymity and confidentiality. During the previous day’s focus groups, I had been aware that individuals would freely talk about many topics in front of other prisoners but became extremely cautious when talking about gangs in a group setting. This was especially apparent when ‘influential’ prisoners were present in the room. Aware of these dynamics, as well as concerned about the safety of participants, I conducted all my interviews in a one-on-one setting, with only myself and a prisoner in a room. This was true for my research at both prisons, and unlike my pilot study, this time I ensured that prison officers were not present during. As a high-security prison, HMP Manchester did not permit the use of recording equipment, and so I used pen and paper to write down interview responses. I engaged all participants in semi-structured interviews, drawing many of my questions from Hagedorn’s (1988) ‘gang questionnaire’, which formed the basis for the prisoner interview schedule (see Appendix A). However, the semi-structured nature of the interviews meant that I could tailor each interview in line with participants’ backgrounds and personal circumstances.

Through spending more time at the prison, I could sense that prisoners were becoming more relaxed in my presence: they were becoming aware of who I was, what I was doing at their prison, and felt they could deliver advice in relation to my research, such as which wings I should move on to in the following days of fieldwork. As well as developing rapport, I gained insights into the ways I should shape my research and the potential barriers I would encounter. Besides engaging prisoners in semi-structured interviews, I would often be present on the prisons wings, in workshops, in the gym and on exercise yards. I was aware that the prison was a place of residence for the prisoners (see also Crewe 2009; Phillips 2012a) and was careful not to intrude on their daily routines. Indeed, I was always respectful of prisoners' privacy, and did not disrupt their daily activities. My presence on the prison wings and landings led to some informative conversations, including one instance where a prisoner told me: "If you're looking at gangs, the only thing you're gonna get is stories from the old timers. But those guys have finished – they've hung up their gloves, hung up their clothes. The actual gang members who are active aren't going to talk". It was a prescient comment, and one that proved to be true throughout much of the fieldwork. Indeed, several of my interviews were conducted with former gang members, and although these accounts provided substantial data, I had to be aware of how these retrospective perspectives shaped the data and affected its validity: the time that had passed between the events being recollected and the interviews meant that there would often be problems around recall of information, especially regarding specific details of incidents. Moreover, former gang members would be less cognisant of contemporary gang events than current gang members. Despite such limitations, I was able to gather substantial amounts of data from former gang members and would later supplement these data with accounts from current gang members.

Alongside such informal conversations, I was continuously engaging in the process of data collection. Throughout fieldwork, I ensured that I developed contacts and fostered good relations with members of uniformed staff. I was able to 'draw keys', and this access to prison keys meant that I was granted more autonomy than in my pilot study. Previous studies have noted that 'drawing keys' helps researchers embed themselves in a prison environment (Beckford et al. 2005; Quraishi 2008), and this is something I found to be true during my research. This independence meant that I was less reliant on prison officers, and they viewed my presence as less of a 'burden' than might have otherwise been the case. Although prison officers were not the main subject of my research, such seemingly minor details affected the overall 'position' that I, as the researcher, occupied at the site. Being able to 'draw keys' also

gave me more freedom in my movements around the prison, which helped me to interact more deeply and fully in the environment which I was studying. One of the main lessons I learned during fieldwork at Manchester was the precarious position in which the researcher is placed when in a prison environment: that a balance must be struck between extracting the relevant data and being seen as an obstruction to the daily prison regime. Indeed, “for staff and inmates alike, the role of researcher is that of observer, and listener. The most difficult aspects of the researcher’s role are the don’ts: don’t get involved, don’t take sides, express opinion, breach confidences or react to very much at all; don’t be mistaken for a probation officer, social worker, psychologist, volunteer or governor grade...don’t be dependent on the staff, but never overlook them; don’t get in the way, but don’t neglect to explain yourself” (Liebling 1991:118). Some of this was borne in mind from the outset, some of it learned from words of advice delivered by prisoners and prison officers, and, at other times, learned through the experiences of ‘trial and error’. For example, one prison officer, who sat in during my pilot study interviews, noticed the prisoners’ unease at being asked a series of formal questions, and asked me to “speak to the lads on *their* level: if you just read the questions off the sheet, you sound like a teacher or a lawyer – have a conversation with them”. This proved to be helpful advice and was something I remembered through the rest of my fieldwork: not to look down at the questionnaire too often, to be engaged with participants, and not to treat interviews as wholly different from normal conversations; small pieces of advice such as this made the process of fieldwork smoother, allowed for better data collection, and benefited the research process overall.

My research at HMP Manchester made clear the central role that is played by gaining the trust of ‘gatekeepers’ when conducting research at a particular field site²⁵ (Taylor and Bogdan 1998). I was often questioned by members of the organization being researched (in my case, prison officers), who would try to discern whether I was hostile or sympathetic to the organization’s overall aims and objectives. There were instances where prison officers asked my opinions on matters of law and order, such as the death penalty, and on other topics such as immigration. I was aware that my primary role was that of a researcher, and so, whilst engaging in such conversations, I tried my best to keep my personal opinions brief, whilst not appearing curt, and impartial whilst not appearing devoid of character or emotion; again, these

²⁵ A ‘field site’ inevitably exists prior to a researcher’s interaction with it; however, a research is still able to *construct* a field site through defining the subjects and objects of his research (Burrell 2009:181 – own emphasis)

were difficult balances to strike in the traditional ‘old school’ environment of HMP Manchester. I would often overhear prison officers expressing controversial opinions to one another (see also Gelsthorpe 1990), and as I was based in one of the officers’ quarters for much of my fieldwork, I could not help but to be in the presence of such conversations. The process of research was one where I had to ‘bite my tongue’ on many occasions, something which past criminologists have noted in relation to their studies in prison (ibid).

I had begun my research through employing purposive sampling, whereby prison management had passed me the names of all the gang members in the prison, whom I systematically approached for participation in my research. However, as my study progressed, I also began to employ snowball sampling. Initially, this would involve senior gang members recommending their junior counterparts to me, but I was not wholly comfortable with the dynamic whereby senior gang members would ‘ask’ their junior counterparts to participate in my research: I had concerns as to the effects this was having on voluntary participation. After the experiences of my pilot study, I tried to be clear in ensuring that the fundamental rights of prisoners would not be eclipsed for methodological gain. Accordingly, I modified my technique of snowball sampling whereby junior gang members would recommend their fellow gang members for my research. Engaging in a form of snowball sampling where all the participants were of a similar age and ‘rank’ allayed my fears around coercion being exerted on participants (see, e.g. Venkatesh 2008), and this reassured me that the research was progressing in line with the overriding ethos of my study. I spent most of my fieldwork at HMP Manchester on wings which had an established presence of gang members, and elevated levels of gang activity.

Unlike some American prisons (see Gransky and Patterson 1999), there are no specifically designated ‘gang free’ sections in English prisons. However, during my fieldwork I found there to be fewer gang members in certain sections of both prisons, particularly the drug-rehabilitation wings. Accordingly, the research was conducted less on such wings, with more observations, informal conversations and interviews being conducted on the prisons’ remand wings, VPUs and induction wings. Indeed, I managed to draw a sample of prisoners from the VPU at HMP Manchester. VPUs house sex-offenders and other prisoners at risk of victimization, and I had spent some time here during my pilot study. I found the environment of the VPU to be very conducive to candid discussions around gang-activity. Prisoners on the wing included ex-gang members who had sought protective custody from their former fellow gang members. As they were already in conflict with their former gangs, the usual hesitancy in

talking to an external researcher was not as prevalent on this wing as other parts of the prison. With these observations in mind, I returned to the prison's VPU during fieldwork at the prison. I was initially concerned that the VPU might contain prisoners who were especially vulnerable but found the prisoners whom I engaged in research to be confident and self-assured. It became apparent that sex-offenders in the prison's VPU were its most marginalized population, rather than the former gang members with whom I engaged for my research. I conducted lengthy interviews with several former gang members who were housed on these wings, on some occasions returning to ask follow-up questions. My success in gathering data on my first visit to a VPU meant that, on visiting HMP Forest Bank, I would ask officers to take me to this section of the prison, and, again, these were successful visits.

Towards the end of my 2 ½ weeks at the prison, I was pleased with how the fieldwork had progressed. I was aware that there had been many barriers to overcome: the scepticism some staff had initially expressed towards the research; developing ethically sound and intellectually coherent methodologies under sometimes challenging circumstances; and maintaining my 'research presence' on the prison wings whilst at the same time understanding operational demands and prisoners' privacy. I felt I had learnt a lot, developing my research abilities so that I could complete a competent and ethically sound project. I had discovered that opportunities could often arise in unexpected locations within prison, and that significant safeguards had to be in place to ensure appropriate 'handling' of sensitive issues, most notably to avoid the coercion or exploitation of vulnerable participants. Through spending over 3 ½ weeks at HMP Manchester in total, I had been able to cumulatively build my knowledge-base, gaining credibility and trust amongst participants and developing deeper knowledge of the subject-matter. I felt that I would be able to successfully deploy much of this knowledge and methodology at HMP Forest Bank, the site for my next piece of fieldwork.

3.4.2.3 'Getting On' at HMP Forest Bank

I began fieldwork in HMP Forest Bank almost eighteen months after my research at HMP Manchester. This 'gap' in the research period was not ideal, borne out of the arduous process of negotiating access to the prison. Nevertheless, I had kept in contact with several prisoners from HMP Manchester in the meantime and had travelled up to the city on a few occasions to maintain my ties and 'closeness' to the field. I had also been analysing and reflecting on my data gathered at HMP Manchester. When I eventually did 'get in' to HMP Forest Bank in the summer of 2016, the English Prison Service was facing reduced staffing levels and increased

rates of assaults, self-harm and suicides. I was, therefore, apprehensive about returning to prison.

From the time of entering the prison, I could see that the culture of HMP Forest Bank was more ‘modern’ than HMP Manchester: the views expressed by uniformed staff and members of management were more focused on prisoner well-being and rehabilitation than was the case in HMP Manchester; prisoners generally held favourable opinions about staff, and my presence as a researcher did not seem as ‘unwelcome’ or incongruous as it did at HMP Manchester. At HMP Forest Bank, I spent much of the first day getting acquainted with the prison, including spending some time in its ‘Gang Intelligence Unit’, and although I was not able to ‘draw keys’ at this prison, I noticed that most officers and staff were receptive to the research. Not having my own keys meant that I had to be accompanied by a staff member when moving about in the prison. Prior to starting my PhD, I had taken part in a project where I also had to rely on prison officers to guide me around their establishment. However, in this project, I had been guided by a different prison officer each day. Remembering the problems this had caused, prior to my research trip I had asked the management of HMP Forest Bank if I could be ‘guided’ by the same officer throughout the two weeks of fieldwork. This request was met, with my ‘guide’ being a member of the prison’s senior management team, who acted as my contact throughout fieldwork at the prison. This greatly assisted the research process, particularly as the member of staff was enthusiastic about my research project. It also helped that one officer at the prison was a ‘friend of a friend’; this officer was especially accommodating to my research and offered me great practical assistance on the days I spent on his wing.

As my fieldwork continued at the prison, I had honed many practical aspects of my research, although the substantive content of my research remained the same. Most interviews were semi-structured and followed one of two interview schedules (see Appendices A and B), and these were combined with many informal conversations which took place with prisoners; including conversations in prisoners’ cells, in workshops, during periods of association or at mealtimes, in the gym, and on wings or on landings. Similar conversations occurred with prison officers in their offices and resting quarters, and, likewise, with members of prison management in their offices. Overall, I used whatever opportunities I could to engage in conversations with prisoners and prison officers. I was keen to experience as much of the prison and its institutional cultures as possible and noted down my thoughts and observations in detailed field notes, which were either compiled during break-times at the sites or at the end of

the day. Throughout fieldwork, I took care to ensure that questions were not leading in anyway: they were ‘open ended’, allowing for participants’ own opinions to emerge within a free-flowing discussion. I continued to carry out my research within an inductive framework, that was reflective as well as evidence-based and methodical: I reviewed the research process as I went on, evaluating the progress made and the data collection tools used.

Aware of my lack of success in negotiating access to the Segregation Unit at HMP Manchester, I was able to persuade officers at HMP Forest Bank to allow me to interact with prisoners in their Segregation Unit. I spoke with some prisoners in this unit, many of whom had grievances against the prison, and who were housed in particularly punitive conditions. During the following days, I also witnessed several fights between prisoners. I was helpless to intervene in these situations, although I felt for the prisoners who were experiencing these harrowing events. Indeed, these incidents all gave rise to questions around power, human-dignity and ‘allegiances’; issues which can affect the researcher’s perspective and the wider research process (Liebling 1999). As Fassin (2017:299) memorably states, “As a participant observer, should the anthropologist...take sides? This question may seem surprising. Yet it has lain at the heart of social sciences for at least 50 years. ‘Whose side are we on?’ asked Howard Becker”. In answer to this question, Fassin outlines how social anthropology aim “to grasp the facts observed in their entirety, to understand the rationale of all protagonists, to give an account of the diversity of their points of view...all knowledge is the product of a perspective that is bound to both a historical context and a social position. The perspective of the inmate and the guard, the judge and the director ... the perspectives of a middle-class white inmate and a working-class inmate of African descent, of a director who has climbed the career ladder from the post of correctional officer and one who came into the job direct from university can of course be very different. None can claim to hold *the truth* of prison” (ibid – my emphasis).

Attempting to comprehend ‘the truth’ of any situation or institution may seem to be an insurmountable task. Nevertheless, from the inception of this project, I did my best to ensure that my research was shaped by incorporating a plurality of participant-perspectives (see e.g., Fassin 2017:299) including gang and non-gang members, prison staff and members of the community²⁶. I was particularly struck by the very different accounts prison officers and

²⁶ Although this wide range of perspectives led to some benefits, I was also aware of the limitations which could arise from relying extensive on the indirect accounts of non-gang members, as previously discussed (see p.36).

members of prison management often delivered on the same events. At HMP Forest Bank, having refined many of my methodological techniques, I felt I was able to deeply engage with many participants, attempting to uncover their ‘truth’ of the situation. On a few days of fieldwork at the prison, I also spent part of the morning shadowing officers on the prison wings, and part of the afternoon with members of prison management. Engaging with both arms of the prison administration allowed me to gain a more complete picture of how prisons in the region dealt with prison gangs. This plurality of perspectives allowed me to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the prison, as well as strengthening the validity of the data through triangulation, something which is integral to a methodologically sound study (Bachman and Schutt 2011).

Nevertheless, the research still centred on conducting interviews with prisoners. Alongside my ‘guide’, prison officers usually accompanied me upon entry into each wing. I would be holding a list of the gang members present on their wing, and would then approach each gang member, explain my research, and would give the prisoner a chance to ask preliminary questions. Once prisoners expressed interest in the project, I followed Taylor and Bogdan’s (1998:95) advice “to ‘come on slow’ with informants initially. Tell them that you would like to set up an interview or two with them, but do not ask for a commitment to spend a lot of time being interviewed.” This advice is particularly relevant in the prison environment, where the prison regime meant that it was seldom possible to spend extensive periods of time with prisoners. Nevertheless, I tried to ensure that I ‘came on slow’, ensuring that participants did not feel pressurized or obligated to participate. Most interviews lasted for about an hour, with the longest lasting for two hours, and the shortest fifteen minutes.

During my time at HMP Forest Bank, I had become a more experienced researcher, more aware of the difficulties which can arise when one is engaged in qualitative research. Chief amongst these include the sense of intrusion some prisoners feel at the presence of an external researcher in their prison (Crewe 2009; Phillips 2012a). Researching within a prison is inevitably going to feel like an intrusive activity, as the prison is not only the prisoners’ daytime residence, but their home (Sparks 1989 cited in Liebling 1991; Crewe 2009). In this regard, maintaining cordial relations with prison officers was vital in conducting the research: being seen with prison officers who were trusted by prisoners offered a sense of reassurance that I had a legitimate purpose and presence at the prison. Once I had become familiar with several prisoners, others were more willing to trust me, and more readily assured that I was not working

on behalf of Greater Manchester Police or the Courts. However, negotiating my presence in the unfamiliar and very particular surroundings of a prison continued to be a complex process. During my research, I found that my presence in the prison proved not only to be an intrusion on the daily lives of prisoners, but also on prison officers. I was conscious that my presence, at times, placed a burden on the officers who were tasked with directing my research: they had to spend time with me on wings; they had to lock and unlock those prisoners willing to participate in my research; they had to free up office or wing space for my research; and they sometimes provided me with tea. This was all in addition to the time taken by the member of prison management who acted as my 'guide'.

I was particularly mindful of the pressures my research placed on staff during my fieldwork at HMP Forest Bank, as there were extremely low staffing levels across English Prisons at this time (the summer of 2016), compounded by the fact that more staff take their annual leave during the summer months, as I was informed by a Prison Manager. Moreover, the fact that I did not have 'keys' for my time at HMP Forest Bank meant that I was more reliant on staff. I had refined the methodology so that staff were aware of the content of my research before my arrival. Staff at HMP Forest Bank were very giving with their time and assistance. However, there were many 'operational issues' which arose during my time at the prison: there were assaults on almost a daily basis, mostly centred on the wing where I was based. One violent incident involved negotiation teams having to be brought in, as a prisoner was refusing to come down from a set of railings; I was very conscious of my incongruous presence on this day, on an empty wing where all the prisoners had been locked up, and all available staff were attending to the incident.

Despite these hurdles and challenges, my fieldwork progressed at a good pace at HMP Forest Bank. I gradually began to understand the intricacies of prison-research, and there were many days where I would conduct back-to-back interviews with numerous prisoners. I learnt that introducing myself to 'key players' on each wing at the start of a week's fieldwork greatly helped the research process (see also Liebling et al. 2011). These individuals were usually gang leaders, and I found that gaining their 'seal of approval' would greatly assist the number of prisoners who were comfortable in engaging with the research. At times, I would informally talk to gang leaders in a visible area of the wing, so that other prisoners could see that this process was occurring; interviewing such individuals at the beginning of the day also helped

to persuade other prisoners that my identity was legitimate: that I was an external researcher with no links to law enforcement.

At HMP Forest Bank, I purposively sampled most participants. I would often begin the day asking my accompanying staff member if he knew any of the ‘key players’ on the wing. Thereafter, I would approach these individuals, later going on to purposively sample the remaining prisoners on the list. I realised early on that for my research to progress smoothly, I would need to allay the fears of junior gang members: gaining informal approval from the ‘main men’ on the wing often proved to be as crucial as gaining approval from NOMS! To do this, I had to forge relationships and gain trust. Although the ‘main men’ were usually easy to locate at HMP Forest Bank, I found that many of them wanted to first talk with me about topics other than the research. These general conversations would act as a prelude to my interviews with them, and I was gradually able to move on to interviews with more junior gang members. This was a ‘slow-burn’, cumulative process which was greatly assisted by the fact that I through my repeated visits to Greater Manchester I had developed a substantial familiarity with the sample region.

Nevertheless, I tried to remain conscious of the research process throughout my study, careful in my dealings with participants so as not to alienate those who chose not to participate in my research, whilst ensuring that I was able to ask enough questions to accumulate substantial data. I realized that being too demanding could risk ‘instrumentalizing’ participants, and so had to be careful in my attempts at building up a picture of the ‘gang scene’ in Greater Manchester. Many participants were in physical and emotional pain, some anxious about their fate post-release, and others weary from long custodial sentences which had been imposed upon them. When interviewing participants, I was mindful of the socially marginalized positions which they occupied, reminded of Fassin’s (2017: 292) account that “the carceral condition is characterized by the fact that inmates are recruited predominantly from the lower sectors of...society...But penal policy is not the only issue, since, prior to this, it is the ensemble of economic, residential, and ethno-racial disparities that explains the chaotic life journeys, curtailed education, chronic underemployment, and family instability known to increase the risk of a criminal career”. Many of these characteristics were brought into stark relief during fieldwork, with participants speaking movingly about their childhoods, home lives, school, and other formative experiences. It was an intricate balance which I had to strike: to be ‘bold’ enough to approach participants and fully engage in my research, but also to be sensitive to

their needs, and to provide after-care where it was required. Such ‘after-care’ could involve visiting the prisoner later in the day, to further talk about their ‘issues’.

I learned much about the etiquette of prison life: I only ever entered a prisoner’s cell if he offered to show me around; I learned that many prisoners did not like to talk about their offence history, and so it was better not to broach the subject unless they mentioned it first; I learned that almost all prisoners in the protective custody did not like to talk about their offence history; I never mentioned prisoners’ names to one another; and, in essence, I learned that in prison, less was always more. By this, I mean that the research process would often work best when I did not ‘over sell’ the project: if a prisoner chose not to participate, I would let him leave the room without trying to convince him of the benefits of the research; if a prisoner was disinterested (which only occurred on a few occasions) it was better to end the interview earlier, rather than forcefully persevere. There were a few instances where prisoners who had initially chosen not to participate were later drawn to the informal group discussions I conducted on landings and on wings. Throughout my time at both prisons, I learned that it was best to ‘hang back’, let my research do the talking, and wait. Often, participants would eventually be drawn (back) to the project, curious about the fact that several of their friends and associates were engaging in the research. Overall, I felt that my time at HMP Forest Bank was a successful period of fieldwork: Despite considerable strains around issues such as staff numbers and violence in the prison. I left the prison confident that I had done my best, eager to transmit the voices of the many prisoners in my research.

3.4.3 ‘Getting Out’

Once I had completed fieldwork at each prison, the process of ‘getting out’ was similar for both sample sites. Mirroring Taylor and Bogan’s (1998) study, I aimed to ‘get out’ through leaving on good terms with uniformed staff and participants. I felt this was important for practical reasons as well as being in line with the overall ‘ethos’ of the project, showing respect to participants for the time they had sacrificed for my research. I had already ‘exited’ HMP Manchester once after my one-week pilot study but knew that, after the new periods of fieldwork at both sample sites, the ‘exits’ would be final. After each period of prison fieldwork, I was invited to meet Governor-grade staff; these meetings were short and informal. I met the Acting Deputy Governor at HMP Manchester and the Deputy Director at HMP Forest Bank, both of whom wanted to formally enquire about my experiences during fieldwork, asking me whether I had found the experiences interesting and useful, and what I planned to do with my

data. I was also debriefed by members of prison management at both prisons. After returning to Cambridge after each bout of fieldwork, I also reported back my preliminary findings to NOMS' National Research Committee.

3.5 Development of the Research Process Post-Prison

After I had completed fieldwork at my two sample prisons, I began to search for opportunities to conduct the next stage of research. My aim was to draw comparisons between the region's street and prison gangs, and I was hoping to develop my research techniques for the 'street' component of my project (see, e.g., Liebow 1967; Spradley 1977; Anderson 1978, 1999). It soon became clear that negotiating access in a street context would prove as difficult as gaining access to prison. Youth clubs and outreach groups were hesitant in allowing individuals access to their vulnerable populations, and I therefore had to devise effective plans. One method was contacting gang researchers and criminologists/academics in Greater Manchester who focused on studying gangs. I sent around e-mails, and two gang researchers said they were willing to be interviewed. I arrived in Manchester in the following week, conducting two successful interviews with these individuals. One of these gang researchers also provided me with the name of a former gang member whom he said I ought to contact. I then went on to phone this individual, whom I met the following day: I interviewed him and engaged him in informal conversations; it was a productive day of research and offered a fresh perspective.

My next step was to conduct research with some participants who were active on 'the street'. However, existing criminological scholarship highlights the benefits of being assisted by a local 'gate-keeper' or 'facilitator' to gain entry to these external sites of research (Taylor 1984; Peltó 2012:60). Having a member of the community to verify a researcher's presence and provide practical guidance can be crucial in an unfamiliar research setting (cf. Fader 2013). This is especially apparent when conducting research within deprived communities, whose members have often experienced intense surveillance from state authorities (Davis 1990; Gilmore 2007), leading to a reluctance when 'outsiders' attempt to observe and study their residents (Whyte 1948; Thomas 2011). I was unsure of where I would find such a 'gate-keeper'. However, as the research progressed, I was informed that a prison officer from HMP Manchester would be willing to act as my 'gatekeeper' for some of my street-level fieldwork. Perhaps counterintuitively, the presence of this prison officer – who was on good terms with many former prisoners, and from the area where I was conducting the research – served as an effective gatekeeper to the community.

Although I was not always able to achieve the degree of embeddedness and intimacy I would have ideally desired, I managed to deploy a range of techniques to comprehend the culture I was studying as fully as possible. Primarily, this relied upon interviewing and observing participants. At times, this would involve interviewing participants in youth centres, and, at other times, my gatekeeper would introduce me to gang members who were congregated on street corners. Perhaps surprisingly, having a prison officer alongside me, who knew the community and gang members, greatly assisted the process. During the week, I interviewed a range of other individuals with whom I had been put into contact by my 'gatekeeper'. At first, I was concerned that his involvement in my research process could give rise to ethical dilemmas. Indeed, it was somewhat counter-intuitive to follow this research methodology, as many critics of the prison characterise the relationship between prison officer and offender in negative terms. However, like my fieldwork at HMP Manchester, the prison officer was from one of the communities I was studying: he was on friendly terms with many of the participants, and the serious ethical dilemmas I thought might arise did not materialize. Towards the end of the two weeks, I attended a 'gang conference' at Greater Manchester Police headquarters, and a similar meeting which was mainly composed of youth workers. As well as allowing me to collect data, these events gave me opportunities to expand my sample through gathering further individuals' contact details. I talked with some of these individuals after I had left the field, and these informal conversations added further depth to my understanding of the subject-matter.

From the outset, I was aware that many of my research participants would inhabit a specific culture, as "people who spend much of their lives on city streets have acquired a culture" (Spradley 1977:13). I, therefore, adopted a perspective which requires the researcher "to view his subject's culture as a cohesive, internally consistent social and cultural unit, the members of which share a system of cognitive and symbolic orientations and a system of culturally relevant rules" (ibid). I interacted with a range of participants on the streets, ranging from outreach workers to youth workers, active and former gang members, and other members of the community. Although not all of these individuals were direct actors within gang activity, their central roles in gang-affected areas meant that they were not 'distant' from the locus of the subject being studied but were knowledgeable and cognisant of my topics and themes of research. Engaging in this form of research gradually proved to be a successful means of collecting data which allowed me to gain insight into the lives of gang members, and to draw comparisons between street and prison gangs.

My fieldwork on ‘the streets’ occurred in a limited area of Greater Manchester. One of the principal reasons for choosing this limited geographical region to study was because there are significant variations in the activities and compositions of gangs in different areas (Scott and Garner 2012: 35). This is one of the reasons existing studies on street gangs often focus on individual cities (see, e.g. Venkatesh 2008; Deuchar 2009; Fraser 2015) or even in specific boroughs of a city (e.g. Densley 2013; Harding 2014). Such studies acknowledge the substantial variations in gang activities across different regions. Therefore, from the outset of my fieldwork on the streets, I focused on two primary regions of Greater Manchester: Moss Side, in the south of Manchester City, and the city of Salford.

As I spent further time in the region, I was able to engage an increasing number of participants in my study. There were other instances where youth workers would pass me details of other members of the community, and more interviews would follow. My research focused on urban conurbations, although I also sought to achieve an ethnic balance by conducting fieldwork in a range of urban settings. Most often, I utilized snowball sampling to gather more participants whilst in these settings: for example, after spending a day with a gang researcher, I asked if he had any contacts I could approach. He gave me the telephone number of an ex-gang member, who I telephoned, met and interviewed the following day. Throughout the following days, I interviewed several more people, often community residents involved with outreach projects. I also interviewed one active gang member and continued using Hagerdorn’s (1988) questionnaire as the basis for my interviews, asking biographical questions which focused on themes such as family background, schooling, adolescence, and experiences around gangs and crime (ibid: 126)²⁷. I modified the questionnaire when appropriate and combined these questions with observations to gather data. Moreover, just as my fieldwork in prisons had been characterised by humanistic principles, I aimed for my research on the streets to be characterized in a similar way: relaxed interactions, mutual respect, and a learning-centred approach. Nevertheless, the purpose of my street-based research was to gather further, supplementary data to analyse, in addition to my prisons’ research. I asked participants about the compositions and activities of street gangs, the narrative account of gang developments within the county, as well as police and community responses to gang violence; those street-participants who had been in prison were also asked about prison gangs. I was aware that most of my street participants were not active gang members. Nevertheless, I was careful to select

²⁷ Hagedorn combines primary quantitative data with statistics already held by governmental agencies (p.118).

these participants, often using referrals and recommendations of other individuals, and carrying out background research into organisations, if the individuals were members of such charitable bodies. These considerations were taken into account to increase the reliability of street-participants, and to establish that they were well-informed about the subject-matter. Moreover, street-participants comprised only one component of my research. The difficulties inherent in researching with active gang members meant that far from weakening the data set, engaging in street-based research, in addition to fieldwork in prison, provided more nuanced, less partisan accounts from practitioners not as emotionally-invested in particular gangs²⁸.

3.5.1. Ethics on ‘the street’

Existing studies on gangs underscore the difficulties in achieving written, informed consent when conducting research with active street gang members (see, e.g. Venkatesh 2008). Nevertheless, I was still mindful that I was researching vulnerable populations on the streets. Accordingly, I verbally explained the concept of informed consent to participants. Alleyne and Pritchard (2016:126) summarize informed consent as “voluntary participation, anonymity, confidentiality, support if needed and [the right to] withdrawal” (see also Chin: 2014). This was the ‘blueprint’ which I followed during my street-based research, and most individuals who were approached during this part of my fieldwork agreed to participate. One part of the informed consent ‘blueprint’ was regarding the issue of confidentiality. For the prison-component of my research, the informed consent form which all prisoners signed stated that all information was confidential and “*the only cases in which information cannot be kept confidential is if it involves causing harm to yourself, harm to others, or disrupting order and control within the prison*” (see Appendix C). This wording had been developed in consultation with Manchester Prison’s Head Psychologist and the National Research Committee of NOMS. However, there were no such external bodies who held ‘control’ over my street participants. This was one reason I became aware of the legal difficulties which can potentially arise when conducting street-based research. The street-researched ought to be aware of the limits that

²⁸ As can be seen from the data within this thesis, even the responses of some gang members were influenced by popular culture and the media: primarily conducting the study in a prison environment meant that, although participants in captivity had less agency than would be the case in the outside world, the prison environment takes away the added distractions in the outside world. On the streets, there are other sets of power dynamics which may inhibit individuals, and this is deeper than surface-only limitations. Therefore, there were advantages and disadvantages to both research environments, and these had to be considered and balanced to achieve reliability.

exist to confidentiality, and their legal position, taking into consideration how far exposure to illegal activities puts them in a compromised position (Soloway and Walters 1977; Venkatesh 2008: 186). Following, Densley's (2013) methodology when researching active street gang members, my verbal consent to street participants indicated that they ought not to mention planned illegal activities during interviews. During the fieldwork, no street participants mentioned future illegal activities. Furthermore, I continued to follow the ethical procedures of the British Society of Criminology, as I had done during my research within prison.

3.6 Questionnaires and Methods of Data Collection

For both the prison and street components of my research, most participants were asked questions from a standard questionnaire (see Appendix A). Not all participants whom I interviewed were gang members, and I selected which questions to ask accordingly. There was a separate questionnaire for prison officers (see Appendix B) and all prisoners were asked to sign informed consent forms prior to the commencement of interviews (see Appendix C). Interviews were semi-structured and allowed for the emergence of new topics as well as discussions around the 'core' research questions; although the questionnaire formed the basis for each interview, I still ensured that there could be a free-flow of discussions and participant-led responses. Magnusson and Marecek (2015:62) advise that one feature of semi-structured interviews is that "neither the questions nor the answers need to appear in the order they are set out in the interview guide...participants are allowed to talk freely and in the own words [and] their answers often expand beyond the specific questions that they were asked". For example, I found that asking the question "How would you define a gang?" at the start of an interview would often confuse participants, who had rarely been asked to provide this definition. Therefore, as the research progressed, I would often ask this question later in the interview, once rapport had been established and the interview was in 'full flow': I found that doing this more often led to participants being able to provide their definition of a 'gang'.

3.7 Recording and Transcribing of Data

My data were collected in a range of forms: hand-written interview notes at HMP Manchester, interviews recorded on Dictaphone at HMP Forest Bank and during my street-based fieldwork, and handwritten field notes compiled for both the prison and street elements of my study. Although it is possible for individuals to become more guarded in the presence of a recording device, in practice, I generally found the presence of the Dictaphone to not adversely affect the

interview process. Similarly, I did not find that taking handwritten notes during interviews at HMP Manchester hindered the conversation process (cf. Anderson 1976).

Although there were a few occasions when I transcribed data after a day of fieldwork, most of my data transcription occurred after completion of my fieldwork once I had returned to Cambridge. Interviews were transcribed, and “faithfully reconstructed... [to reflect] the language and intentions of interviewees” (Densley 2013:10). Although the process of data transcription was lengthy, I transcribed all data myself, as “there is no substitute for transcribing interviews oneself, and in full, as the coding, writing and understanding of the research data required an extensive familiarity with the material used” (Liebling 1991:126). I was careful to ensure that my transcriptions captured the nuances of participants’ ‘voices’, and I tried to achieve a verbatim transcription of recordings to faithfully reflect participants’ words, including slang and grammatical inaccuracies (see also Taylor 1993). I set aside a substantial period to transcribe my data, and the final transcripts were lengthy documents: for example, transcribing five days’ worth of HMP Forest Bank interviews amounted to over 66,000 words. After the data were fully transcribed, they were stored under a secure coding.

3.8 Data Analysis

Once the data were gathered and transcribed, I began to the process of analysis, asking what meaning could be drawn from the gathered data. This was not done prematurely, and I was conscious of ‘observational biases’ – the pitfall of shaping the gathered data around pre-existing prejudices and opinions (Comstock 2013:68-69). I subjected the collected-data to a thematic analysis: identifying codes and themes which emerged from interview transcripts and observational field notes. The data collected were fully and manually coded, after which I identified these codes and themes, as well as sub-themes and sub-codes. The themes which emerged from my analysis were central in shaping my study and attributing meaning to my participants’ responses. A central aspect of analysing the data was to ensure that it could be thematically coded, and these themes emerged through a process of inductive reasoning (see, e.g., Glynn 2014). Past researchers have spoken of how manual coding can be a painstaking process (ibid). However, because of this, I became familiar with the data-set, their deeper meanings, as well as the specific content and context of the data.

I opted for a thematic analysis of the data as this method can produce insightful, trustworthy findings (Nowell et al. 2017). As well as producing such rich and detailed findings, this

methodology also allows the researcher to gain familiarity with the data through the iterative process of analysis, whereby the researcher generates codes, searches for themes, and then reviews and names these themes (ibid). In so doing, the process can be rigorous and methodologically sound. Through primarily using this inductive process to analyse the gathered data, themes emerged, and these formed the chapter titles of this thesis. Moreover, when analysing data, an effort was made to focus on ‘critical incidents’ whenever possible: that is, experiences that were most significant to participants (Hagedorn 1996; Noyes 2004 cited in Deuchar 2009: 109). By the time of analysis, I had been in possession of some of the data for an extensive period: I felt I was well-acquainted with the data and their meanings and would often remember the participants who had spoken the words. As has been my aim throughout this project, I sought to maintain the authenticity of the data, whilst, at the same time, ensuring that the data were subjected to a methodologically rigorous analysis.

3.9 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Throughout the process of writing up the data, I ensured that individuals’ names were not revealed anywhere in the thesis, using an online random name generator to select pseudonyms by which participants are identified in the thesis. Further, participants were made aware of this process of anonymisation²⁹. Nevertheless, the body of this thesis refers to individuals in terms which indicate their ‘gang status’ (‘Gang Member’/ ‘Non-Gang Member’/ ‘Former Gang Member’), or, in some cases, the title of their job, such as ‘Youth Worker’. In the case of prisoners, the name of their prison is included after their ‘gang status’, and, in the case of street participants, I refer to their geographical home location; all participants have been anonymised in accordance with their ethnicities. In instances where I include excerpts of conversations between myself and participants, I present my questions in bold font, and participants’ responses in normal font; if there was more than one individual in the conversation, I include the pseudonyms of both individuals and refer to myself with the initials ‘DM.’

Anonymising gang names and geographical areas was a more complex issue. I was aware that the decision to render anonymous the names of people or places in research can have a bearing on the overall quality of research. Guenter (2009: 412) states that “the business of naming is not simple, often involving on-going dialogue between a researcher and his/her respondents,

²⁹ Younger gang members were particularly concerned about their names not appearing in the project, and several sought verbal reassurances from me during interviews that their anonymities would be maintained.

research goals, analytic strategies, and personal and professional ethics.” From the outset of my study, I was aware of balancing the need maintain participants’ anonymities with the fact that the quality of the study would be affected if anonymised all my data – for example, anonymising gang names, place names and prison names. Accordingly, I finally decided that whilst I would maintain individual participants’ anonymities (by not revealing their names), I would include the names of geographical areas, gangs and prisons. I was conscious of the fact that not all researchers choose to name gangs (see, e.g., Aldridge et al. 2001). However, I felt that naming gangs and locations would add significantly to the thesis narrative. I feel that this struck the correct balance and added to the overall comprehensibility of the data set contained within in this thesis, as well as adding to its intellectual coherence. Nevertheless, I did not include any details about participants that were so specific that it would compromise their anonymity (Bachman and Schutt 2011: 298). For example, I did not include details on participants’ specific offences, sentence lengths or any highly unusual or remarkable aspects of their life histories. I also did not reveal individuals’ gang nicknames. The fact that participants for this study were interviewed over a period of several years, and at a number of research sites, meant that I was further satisfied that naming gangs and areas would not compromise the anonymity of research participants. Indeed, several gang members specifically sought reassurances that their names would not appear in the study or in any published material. Finally, the fact that the gangs I studied were well known, with large membership bases, meant that I did not feel naming the gangs and their areas of origin would be detrimental to maintaining the anonymity of participants.

3.10 Personal Safety

Although I aimed to conduct my research within an ‘appreciative’ and collaborative ethos, I was not naïve to the potential risks to personal safety which can arise when conducting research in prisons and on the streets. Prior to the commencement of research, members of staff from both sample prisons provided me with security briefings. I was informed of where alarms were in interview rooms, what to do in the case of a hostage situation and was given other pieces of advice such as always sit facing the door in interview rooms, and to walk in front on prison officers when being guided around the prison; such information was also delivered to me by several prison officers. Although I did not want to be ‘suspicious’ of participants or operate my research within an overly ‘securitized’ framework, I took heed of the advice which I was given. There were no instances in my fieldwork in prison where I felt threatened or where it felt that my personal safety could be compromised.

When conducting the street-based component of my research, I was also aware of the potential safety risks a researcher can face ‘in the field’ (see, e.g., Hamm 1998; Jacobs 2001). These risks were, overall, minimal during my research as most of my interviews were conducted in internal settings such as the offices of youth workers and gang researchers (cf. Hamm 1993:89). Additionally, if one’s fieldwork coincides with a government ‘crackdown’ on crime, previously cooperative participants may become uncompliant (Zhang 2010:197). This could potentially have been a problem during one point of fieldwork, where the area of Salford where I was conducting fieldwork had recently experienced an increased police presence after a high-profile shooting. However, the ‘cumulative’, considered research methodology I employed, and the services of my ‘gatekeeper’ meant that participants’ fears were allayed.

Throughout fieldwork I was careful of continuously re-evaluating my modes of data collection and any challenges which arose from the research process. From the outset of my research, I sought for my methodology to be consistent, ethical and was mindful of the myriad changes and challenges which could arise. In doing so, I was able to collect data whilst taking heed of ethical considerations; I was mindful of my position as a researcher, of the ethos and aims of my project, and of my relationship with participants. Through constructing a rigorously designed project, I was able to be both reflective of the research process, and proactive in the task of data collection; my participant-centred approach, combined with a realistic appraisal of the challenges inherent to prisons’ research, were values which permeated the research project, and allowed me to deal with any challenges which arose throughout its duration. Personal safety, then, was just one of the practical considerations I had to bear in mind whilst conducting a methodologically rigorous research project: gathering data from multiple sources (both primary and secondary) and analysing the results within an intellectually coherent framework.

CHAPTER FOUR: DEFINING ‘THE GANG’

4.1 Defining ‘the Gang’

The existing criminological scholarship acknowledges that it is highly problematic to formulate a unifying definition of ‘the gang’. By its very nature, the term ‘gang’ can be said to include many criminal groupings, with a wide range of characteristics and individuals engaged in various activities. Despite these differences, much of the existing literature seeks to identify similarities between criminal gangs to produce a generalizable definition. To this end, Thrasher’s (1927) seminal work *The Gang* is an apposite point at which to begin. Thrasher identifies a gang as “an interstitial group originally formed spontaneously and then integrated through conflict. It is characterized by...meeting face to face, milling, movement through space as a unit, conflict and planning.” (1947/1927:46). However, even this extensive study of 1,313 Chicagoan gangs is of limited generalizability as it focuses on youth gangs in a specific place, during a specific time: namely, the early part of the twentieth-century. Thrasher acknowledges this, conceding that “no two gangs are just alike...wide divergency [sic] in the character of its personnel combined with differences of physical and social environment...give to every gang its own peculiar character. It may vary as to membership, type of leaders, mode of organization, interests and activities, and finally as to its status in the community” (ibid: 45). Thrasher’s analysis seeks to acknowledge that whilst there is no unifying definition of ‘the gang’, there is a set of characteristics shared by most gangs; this includes a street presence, involvement in conflict and delinquent activity, and a youthful membership base. A more recent study by Klein and Maxson (2006:4) describes a gang as a “durable and street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity”.

Other contemporary studies further acknowledge that violence and conflict are key characteristics of many gangs (Lien 2005; Laidler 1997; Hunt and Laidler 2001), with some studies contending that violence is the *sine qua non* of a functioning gang (but see also Weerman et al. 2009)³⁰. Although not all violent groups should be classified as gangs (Carlsson and Decker 2005), the dominant consensus is that all gangs engage in some level of violence (Thrasher 1947/27; Yablonsky 1964). If a group does not engage in any violent activity, then

³⁰ This Eurogang definition – formulated by the multidisciplinary Eurogang Research Network – is one of the few academic definitions to omit conflict when operationalizing the term gang.

it cannot be said to constitute a gang, even if all the other definitional dimensions are satisfied (Aldridge et al. 2012). Although violence is an underlying characteristic within many economically marginalized regions and is not exclusively perpetrated by gang members (Mohammed 2011), gangs are one means for the collective expression of this violence, something which is a normalized characteristic in some acute deprived communities (Anderson 1999; Harland and McCready 2015). This violence may serve an instrumental purpose, such as in the furtherance of financial gain (Jacobs 2001) or be purely expressive of violence *qua* violence (Yablonsky 1962). However, gangs may also deploy violence to secure pecuniary advantages, whilst simultaneously ensuring that their violent acts serve a symbolic role. For example, gang members may use excessive force to rob rival drug dealers (Contreras 2013) or employ violence to informally govern communities (Venkatesh 2008). Both actions are ultimately to secure a gang's financial interests, but through using greater levels of violence than is necessary, there is an explicit attribution of violence to gangs which are seeking demonstrate territorial control. There is also an additional, symbolic facet to gangs. Within many marginalized communities the value of aggression is heightened (Anderson 1999), and gangs serve as one of the means to articulate this aggression. Indeed, "although aggression is seen as a valued masculine trait in the general population [various criminal] subculture[s] take it to an extreme" (Human Rights Watch 2001). This places an acute focus on the need to fight, maintain strength, and deploy violence both preemptively and in defence. Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967) state that "aggression is an outcome of learned responses and social conditions and contributing to criminality" (cited in Human Rights Watch 2001: 266), and such an assessment has been applied to post-industrial English towns and cities (Winlow 2001; Hobbs et al. 2003; Deuchar 2009; Fraser 2013) as well as to African-American ghettos (Anderson 1999; Venkatesh 2013; Goffman 2014). As gang members predominantly originate from, and live in, these areas, it is unsurprising that values such as aggression, violence and hyper-masculinity are closely linked to gang practices.

Another central facet to gangs is their interaction with space and place. To comprehend the phenomenon of gangs, attention must be paid towards the geographical areas from which gangs emerge and where they operate (Mohammed 2011). Territoriality serves as the lynchpin of many gangs (Deuchar 2009), with gangs limiting their activities to particular places where geographical areas are delineated by post-codes or housing estates (Pitts 2008). Indeed, Thrasher (1927) refers to gangs as being 'interstitial groups' – that is, groups that originate from and operate within spaces that are isolated from wider society and "that intervene between

one thing and another...a region characterized by deteriorating neighbourhoods, shifting populations, and the mobility and disorganization of the slum. Abandoned by those seeking homes in the better residential districts...it is to large extent isolated from the wider culture of the larger community” (Thrasher 1927:23) The migration of law abiding citizens away from such areas leads to the formation of acutely deprived communities (Wilson 1987; Anderson 1999; Venkatesh 2008), and gangs are able to thrive in such regions. Whilst this is an accurate characterization of the situation in America, the United Kingdom has witnessed the emergence of gangs in more mixed income neighbourhoods, where the process of ‘gentrification’ has led to different socio-economic groups living near one another (Pitts 2008). However, there are also areas of the United Kingdom³¹ where the emergence of gangs has occurred in more economically marginalized ‘interstitial’ regions, particularly in the North of England (Aldridge et al. 2012; Ralphs et al. 2012) and cities such as Glasgow (Deuchar 2009). Accordingly, it is accurate to conclude that parts of Thrasher’s analysis continue to be relevant in contemporary society. Moreover, there is extensive discussion regarding how important a *street* presence is order for a group to be classified as a gang. Aldridge et al. (2012) contend that street presence is neither necessary for a group to be categorized as a gang, nor is it a prominent feature of many gangs in Western societies. However, this opinion is directly contradicted by other criminologists, who contend that a gang must be ‘street-orientated’ (Weerman et al. 2009), as “the gang inescapably occupies public spaces” (Venkatesh 2006: 290).

There is a growing body of contemporary American scholarship on gangs, indicative of the substantial changes that have occurred to gangs in the century since Thrasher’s initial study. For example, American gangs have experienced changes in their racial compositions, in the types of crimes they commit and the areas where they are most prevalent. Structural changes to gangs have also become apparent, affecting their internal patterns of leadership (Hunt et al. 1993). Similar changes have occurred within contemporary gangs in England, characterized by their greater levels of formalization (Pitts 2008). This can be compared to the less structured youth groupings which were present in the United Kingdom throughout the mid-to-late twentieth century (see, e.g., Downes 1966; Stewart 1966); a characteristic that continues to apply to youth delinquency in certain parts of the United Kingdom, such as Glasgow (Deuchar 2009; Fraser 2013). These variations of gang ‘types’ illustrate the difficulty in gauging a

³¹ Although most of this thesis focuses on *English* gangs, I also make references to the United Kingdom during this literature review, primarily because of the extensive literature which exists on the topic of Scottish gangs.

contemporary definition of ‘the gang’, especially when incorporating a wide range of global perspectives. However, until very recently there has been limited criminological focus on gangs in England. Gang practices vary widely according to the time in history, country of origin and societal context. Accordingly, recent English studies have taken on board the various influences on and manifestations of youth gangs, highlighting their regional variations (see, e.g., Pitts 2008; Densely 2013; Harding 2015). However, as much of this research is focused on London, a gap exists in the literature regarding contemporary youth gangs in other parts of England. Although limited research exists on England’s regional gangs (see, e.g., Mares 2001; Aldridge et al. 2012) these are relatively short studies. Therefore, new research often relies on these older American studies when laying the foundations for how to define gangs. One such study is Yablonsky’s (2000) research, which provides a two-part definition of the gang. First, he identifies three principal types of gangs: the social gang, which is a non-criminal peer-group; delinquent gangs, which are “collectives...primarily organized to carry-out various illegal acts: the ‘social’ interaction part of the gang is a secondary factor... [and] violence is employed as a means of acquiring material of financial profit” (ibid: 179); and, finally, violent gangs. Yablonsky’s classification of the violent gang is the most extensive, and includes several attributes a group must possess to be a violent gang: i) a name and territorial base; ii) rituals to join the gang; iii) delinquent and criminal acts forming the core of the gang’s activities; iv) senseless violence forming a basic gang activity; v) the commerce of drugs being part of the gang configuration; and vi.) the gang providing social life and camaraderie (Yablonsky 2000: 181). This typology of the ‘violent gang’ is perhaps closest to the gangs which are discussed by contemporary criminological studies.

One example of this contemporary research is the Eurogang Network, an academic project that seeks to synthesize much of the existing data, attempting to reach a more generalizable and valid definition of gangs. The initial term formulated by the network refers to a gang as “any durable, street-oriented youth group whose identity includes involvement in illegal activity” (Weerman et al. 2009: 20). However, even this definition has been subjected to criticisms for its limitations in referring to gangs as only “street-orientated youth”, and, conversely, its over-expansiveness in referring to all such groups engaged in illegal activities as gangs (Aldridge et al. 2012). To address some of the inevitable problems that arise when formulating a broad definition of ‘gangs’, Maxson and Klein (1995) formulate a five-part typology, dividing gangs into traditional, neo-traditional, compressed, collective and specialty. Decker (2001:32) summarizes this typology in the following terms:

Traditional and neo-traditional gangs are large, with subgroups, territoriality and versatility, though neo-traditional gangs are of more recent emergence, typically less than ten years. Compressed gangs are small and recent with a narrow age range and versatility in their offending. Collective gangs are medium in size, age range and duration, and versatility in their offending. Specialty gangs are small, of recent vintage, but specialize in one particular form of offending.

Decker (2001:32-33) applies the above definition to street gangs and prison gangs operating in America, asserting that “leadership roles are better defined in those gangs and gang cities where gangs have operated the longest [traditional]...In other cities, those we have called emerging gang cities, leadership roles have a far more informal character. In these [compressed] gangs, the leader of a gang can change from one day or one function to another...these [are] less organised gangs”. Indeed, such an analysis is highly relevant in America, where many of the most prominent gangs have substantial membership bases and lengthy histories (Decker 2001; Kahn 1978). The more recent genesis of formalized gang activity in England suggests that Maxson and Klein’s (1995) typology is more difficult to apply in an English context. Nevertheless, several gangs operating in Greater Manchester (the sample area for this thesis) have been identified as “newly emergent, neo-traditional and compressed” (Mares 2001 cited in Bradshaw 2005).

Distinct from these largely theoretical conceptualizations of gangs, a more ‘operational’ definition is provided by Stelfox (1998:398), which classes a gang as “any group who uses violence or the threat or fear of violence to further a criminal purpose but excluding football hooligans and terrorists”. At first glance, this appears to be an extremely expansive definition of gangs. However, Stelfox’s later analysis also refers to the loose organization of such criminal groupings and their daily operations; that “individuals or small groups, based within their local communities... [act] independently within networks which facilitate their criminal activity. This activity takes place locally, nationally and internationally, and there is no identifiable structural division between these levels of offending (ibid: 401). However, a problem that exists with this definition is the lack of differentiation made between gangs and OCGs. Although police forces and law enforcement draw operational distinctions between street gangs and organised crime, much of the academic research fails to make this distinction.

Documenting the differences between gangs and OCGs is an inherently subjective exercise, and just one example of the highly subjective nature of defining gangs. As has already been highlighted, this leads to theorists interpreting ‘the gang’ in significantly different ways. As Aldridge et al. (2012) write, “there is considerable academic debate and disagreement regarding the definitions of gangs. Such definitional disputes have exercised researchers from the seminal work of Thrasher”. There have, however, been attempts to remedy this by the creation of more precise definitional frameworks. One example of this is Hamm’s (1993:154) typology of street gangs, which posits that there are four principal components to them, comprising of:

- i.) The role played by “deviant peers in facilitating criminal values...
- ii.) The role of social bond formation in the domain of neighbourhood
- iii.) The role of these neighbourhood influences on the propensity of a gang member to use drugs and alcohol; [and]
- iv.) The role of religious influences in the social development of violent subcultures”

Through providing this definition, Hamm not only underscores several of characteristics of the gang – such as “deviant peers...criminal values... [and the] use of drugs and alcohol” – but also integrates several factors behind gang affiliation into his definition. Hamm’s definitional criteria provide a more holistic appraisal of the gang than the more orthodox definitions. These invariably focus on the roles played by territory, street-presence, engagement in law-breaking acts and the ages of gang members. Indeed, from the beginnings of gang scholarship, attention has been drawn towards the youthfulness of gang members (see, e.g., Thrasher 1927). This is something which has been reflected in more recent research (see, e.g. van Gemert and Fleisher 2005; Lien 2005). Indeed, some studies explicitly refer to ‘youth gangs’ when in their studies of gangs (e.g. Gatti et al. 2005; Bradshaw 2005). Criminological studies have also found that gangs within Britain place a heightened focus on regional identities, with gangs regularly forming along regional lines (Pyrooz et al. 2011; Crewe 2009; Phillips 2012). Further, recent research has highlighted the elevated levels of offences committed by gang members as compared to non-gang members (Pyrooz et al. 2011).

4.2 Prison Gangs

Prison gang members have also regularly been identified as committing disproportionate levels of offending within custody (see, e.g. Wood and Adler 2001; Wood 2006). However, there has been surprisingly limited academic scrutiny directed towards prison gangs in England. A further problem in this area of study is that research which has identified the presence of prison gangs in the England has often adopted too broad a definition of what constitutes a gang. For example, Wood and Adler (2001: 1) suggest that “any group of three or more prisoners engaged in illegal activity” constitute a prison gang. Based on this definition, their results illustrate the presence of high gang-activity at their sample of English prisons. Research has also shown that English street gangs formed along regional lines often maintain such allegiances once in prison (Wood 2006)³², leading to regional demarcations being the principal marker of many English prison gangs’ identities (Phillips 2012a, 2012b). The prison, then, often serves to facilitate the continuation of street gangs. Although such gangs may not be as formalized as their American counterparts (Phillips 2008), it is also apparent that gangs are in operation within many English prisons (Pitts 2008; Criminal Justice Joint Inspection 2010; Phillips 2012a). However, from the limited existing literature available on this subject, the precise level of prison gang membership in England or their distribution according to region are not known. To date, there have not been the completion of any systematic studies to gather data on numbers of prison gang members and their distribution according to region (see Wells et al. 2002 for such a study in relation to America). This lack of data, and the lack of qualitative research into prison gangs in England, leaves a substantial gap in the existing literature, rendering it difficult to comprehend gang members effects on the penal system, and their interactions with street gang members

Contemporary studies on gangs in England focus on street level gang activity (Pitts 2008; Densley 2012; Aldridge et al. 2012), although there is a growing acknowledgment that academic attention ought to be directed towards gangs in English prisons (Pitts 2016). The existing body of criminological scholarship is beginning to look at the racial and religious dynamics of prisoner groupings. However, the geographical regions which journalistic accounts have highlighted as being most affected by these tensions – such as the North-West – have not been the sites of academic study. Rather, this attention has been directed more towards the religious dimensions of gangs in London (Pitts 2008) and the cultural schisms in London

³² For a more general discussion regarding the role of locality in the ‘late modern’ prison, see Crewe (2009: 324-327).

prisons and those of the surrounding area (Phillips 2012a; Earle and Phillips 2013). Additionally, whilst numerous criminologists have problematized the concept of street gangs in England (see, e.g., Hallsworth 2011; Hallsworth and Young 2008; Hallsworth and Silverstone 2009; Alexandre 2001) there has been limited critical research in relation to prison gangs in England. One of the few studies into this area is Phillips' (2012) research in prisons within London and its surrounding regions. The study concludes that prison gangs in England are markedly different from their American counterparts: less established, less structured and attracting less loyalty.

Indeed, there has been extensive research conducted on prison gangs in the United States. For example, the links between street and prison gangs in something that has been noted in much of the existing American literature. Spergel et al. (1994:5) contend that "prison gangs and street gangs are interdependent. In most States, prison gangs are outgrowths of street gangs, but evidence indicates that gangs formed in prison may emigrate to the streets. Incarceration...has led to increased gang cohesion and membership recruitment in many institutions and may indirectly worsen the problem on the streets." However, just as is the case for street gangs, there is also little in the way of a comprehensive definition of a 'prison gang'. Lyman (1989) delivers one of the few operational definitions of prison gangs, stating that a prison gang is a "self-perpetuating and criminally-oriented organization which controls the prison environment through intimidation and violence against non-members, operating within a chain of command and code of conduct" (cited in Lyman 1989 cited in Phillips 2012b: 53). The existing body of American scholarship has long acknowledged the link between prison gang members and violence (see, e.g. Kahn 1977; Levan 2012; Trammell 2014). A comprehensive report by Human Rights Watch (2001: 266) states that in no place is a subculture of violence "more evident, and dominant, than in prison. The inmate population of American prisons is made up of men from the social strata that includes this subculture of violence; they carry into prison with them [this] value system, and in the rarefied prison environment the need to demonstrate masculinity by displays of violence becomes intensified". The report goes on to document the "extreme emphasis on masculinity and aggression" in a carceral setting, and shows how gangs harness such sentiments, perpetrating acts of physical and sexual violence, and victimizing non-gang members (ibid). Crucially, this last observation cannot be said to apply widely in the English prison system, where there are very low levels of reported rape and sexual assault (Howard League 2011), as well as lower levels of violence more generally than the American prison system (Skarbeck 2014).

Some of the existing literature also differentiates between the different ‘types’ of gangs in prison. For example, Howell (2011) differentiates between ‘prison gangs’ (gangs that form in prison for the first time, and exclusively draw new members from incoming prisoners) and ‘prison street gangs’ – gangs that are imported into prisons from the streets. Other studies do not make this distinction, with Jacobs’ (1977) study being the clearest example, where African-American prison gangs operating in Stateville Penitentiary are identified as direct continuations of their street counterparts. Indeed, for such individuals, who directly join their respective street gangs upon entering custody, prison is seen as an integral component of street gang life, Jacobs, therefore, does not make Howell’s distinction between prison gang members, and street gang members in prison.

These disparities notwithstanding, gangs in the American penal system have been subjected to a great level of scrutiny from both academics and policy makers. Studies across the past three decades show the prolonged presence of gangs in America’s prisons: Camp and Camp (1985) concluded that 3% of the total prisoner population in state and federal prisons were gang members (cited in Wells et al. 2002: 5); a comprehensive national study in 1992 found that over 1,000 gangs were operating in America’s prison, comprising of approximately 46,000 members (Human Rights Watch 2001: 31-32) and studies conducted in 1999 identified the levels of gang membership in state prison at approximately 25% of the total population (Knox 2000 cited in Wells et al. 2002: 5). In a 2002 study of prison gangs in America, the National Major Gang Taskforce found that an average of 13.4% of prisoners were involved in prison gangs (Wells et al. 2002: 8). In addition to these quantitative data, research emanating from the United States has also shown that “the large majority of prison gangs have counterpart groups on the street [and] gang members are much more likely than other prisoners to be involved in violent and extortionate activities...much prisoner-on-prisoner violence, particularly gang-related violence, centers around efforts to seize or maintain control of [the prison] economy [based on contraband goods]” (Human Rights Watch 2001: 32). These characteristics are shared by prison gangs in countries such as South Africa, where “non [gang] members are targets of robbery and rape, so the pressure to join is intense among inmates. Once prisoners are affiliated, failure to adhere to the strict rules and military hierarchy of the gang results in swift and certain punishment (Leggett 2002: 52). Such militaristic, hierarchical prison gangs can consolidate their power due to the symbiotic relationship between their members in custody and those on the streets, a trait which has been demonstrated most consistency amongst American gangs (Kahn 1978). Indeed, Leggett (2002: 51) suggests that many of the organised, violent prison

gangs of South Africa have directly replicated the American ‘model’ of gang formation, beginning in deprived communities where “American-style gangsterism, with its delineated turf, dress codes, slang, graffiti, tattoos, hand signs and symbolism, is especially endemic”. Upon entry into custody these gang members ‘reform’ and ‘regroup’, as well as exerting influence upon their street gang members who are not in custody (ibid: 53).

There has similarly been a growing move by governmental bodies in England to acknowledge that relationships exist between street and prison gangs, and that policy should be formulated with this being borne in mind. One of the clearest examples of this acknowledgement is illustrated by statutory guidance published in 2015, which states, “gangs and gang-related violence is an issue within the secure estate [prisons]. Just as violent incidents in custody can impact on local community tensions, violence happening within the community can also have an impact inside the secure estate...restrictions placed on [street] gang-activity...may prevent or lead to gang-related violence occurring within the secure estate” (HM Government, Statutory Guidance Injunctions to Prevent Gang-Related Violence and Gang-Related Drug Dealing, June 2015: 13). However, the lack of research has meant that clear conclusions have yet to be reached on the prevalence or activities of gangs or organized crime groups (‘OCGs’) in English prisons.

4.3 Organised Crime

Although there is often an overlap between the activities of street gangs and OCGs, criminologists acknowledge that there are a set of distinct characteristics which apply to each of these two ‘categories’. On the one hand, street gangs – a younger membership base, involvement in general ‘low-level’ delinquency, spontaneous violence, and street-presence (see, e.g. Venkatesh 2008). OCGs, however, are recognised as distinct criminal entities, usually involving older offenders, more systematic and planned offending, a greater focus on pecuniary gain and a level of governance being imposed upon the territories where their members operate (Lyman and Potter 1997). OCGs have been documented as being particularly prevalent in certain societies, especially in post-conflict zones in the Balkans (Arsovska 2015), post-Soviet Russia (Varese 2001), Italy (Gambetta 1999; Varese and Campana 2010; Allum 2010), and countries in the Far East (Chin 2003; Chin 2009). However, despite extensive evidence indicating the powerful operational capabilities of many OCGs, there still exists a body of opinion sceptical of the very notion of organised crime. For example, Hobbs (2012:267) suggests that “organised crime is an unhelpful construct that perpetrates the myth of the

pantomime villain threatening the morally pristine assets of ‘normal’ society. Such diversions shift attention away from the insistent predatory culture that permeates every niche and alcove of class society”. However, this scepticism towards the existence of organised crime is not shared by most theorists. Rather than refute the existence of such groups, most of the existing research attempts to operationalize the term ‘organized crime’, doing so with varying degrees of success. For example, the NCA (2016) identifies an organised crime in the following terms:

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.

On the other hand, in Lyman and Potter’s (1997) extensive research on organised crime, rather than providing a single generalizable definition, it is suggested that there are certain key characteristics that all OCGs share. This includes being “loosely structured, flexible and highly adaptable to environmental impacts” (p.82) and sharing many characteristics with legitimate businesses: that “the pattern of association in organized crime resembles what has variously been called a network, partnership or a patron-client relationship” (p.83). Willis (2015) offers a similar definition of organised crime, defining an OCG as being “a security-oriented collective, often membership and identity based, and usually with subdivisions of labour that are engaged in the provision of goods and/or services deemed illegal by empirically existing states” (p.8). In what is a definition particularly relevant to developing countries, and states with weak national frameworks and structures, Willis goes on to contend that whilst “for the most part, organized crime groups ... have been understood as profoundly violent and destabilizing...in recent times and in certain spaces these groups have occasionally made cities *less* deadly [through] truces, pacts, and other implied or formal agreements between multiple groups” (emphasis in original). This notion of OCGs acting as stabilizing forces in ungovernable regions is an analysis that has also been applied to street gangs, whose members can provide similar services in the severely deprived regions of developed nations (Venkatesh 2006: Ch. 1; Venkatesh 2008), from where governmental forces have ‘retreated’ (Wacquant 2002) leaving a gap for criminal groupings to fill.³³

³³ This notion of the ‘failed state’ allowing for criminality to flourish has also been applied to the ‘failed state prison’ (see Liebling 2015). However, a distinction ought to be made between these analysis, in which the lack of structures and ‘failed’ nature of a country or institution is seen as giving rise to groups whose effects are

However, the activities of OCGs primarily revolve around acts that result in financial gain. These can range from operating drug cartels (Paoli et al. 2009; Hernandez 2010), people smuggling and human trafficking (Chin 1999; Campana and Varese 2016) and the smuggling of arms (Bruneau and Dammert 2011: 215), to extorting specific populations (Bruneau and Dammert 2011: 213; Hobbs et al. 2003: 212-218). All such aspects of organised crime are dependent upon the existence of networks (von Lampe 2015), which are central to engendering co-operation in criminal organisations (Campana and Varese 2013). Indeed, the operation of ‘dark networks’ (Everton 2012) has been subjected to increased scrutiny, especially regarding the development of transnational crime commission (Glenny 2009). It is acknowledged that an increasingly globalized world has dramatically affected organised crime. It is also acknowledged that much of this criminality can be divided into three categories. Campana (2010) identifies these as: production (of drugs and counterfeit goods), trade (people trafficking, the distribution of drugs and counterfeit goods) and governance (dispute settlement, debt recovery, and protection against competition). Other studies share a similar perspective in dividing up these different aspects of OCG operations (see, e.g. Nordstrom 2007; Venkatesh 2013).

Despite criminologists compartmentalizing the different activities of OCGs, almost all the above activities are predicated on amassing monetary gain. Whereas street gang members place a great degree of focus on the commission of anti-social activities and violence (Bradshaw 2005), OCGs are concerned with pecuniary advantage, which may be pursued by violent means (Arsovska 2015). Indeed, the younger ages of street gang members has been identified as one reason why their members might be more prone to impulsive acts, fighting out of boredom or to secure gang turf for reasons of reputation (Bradshaw 2005). However, members of OCGs do not engage in violence simply for these reasons. Rather, their violence is directed towards securing geographical spaces in pursuance of activities such as extortion and racketeering (Gambetta 1993; Varese 2001; Arsovska 2015). There has been prolonged academic focus on these economic aspects of OCGs’ activities, particularly in relation to the drug-trade (see, e.g., Reuter 2004, 2009; Chin 2009). Such studies show that those involved in organised crime are not so much motivated by Katz’s (1988) ‘seductions of crime’ – the pursuit of psychological

wholly deleterious, and the arguments of Willis (2015) and Venkatesh (2006, 2008) – above – which posit that pre-existing ungovernable areas have been *re-stabilized* through the activities of OCGs and street gangs, respectively.

excitement through committing criminal acts. Rather, their activities are can be said to mirror legitimate businesses, and, indeed, there are examples of links existing between such businesses and OCGs.

Organised crime is predominantly predicated on the operations of international networks (Chin 2009), including both informal social connections *between* OCG members, as well as the structured hierarchies that exist within such groups. Indeed, transnational crime, taking place on a ‘global’ level is an increasingly powerful phenomenon (Castells 2000 cited in Arsovska 2015: 88), whereby “criminal groups take advantage of globalization by creating colonies around the world...[and] subcontracting/international allegiances are common features of international crime cooperation, [whereby] criminal organizations are expanding into new territories (Arsovska 2015: 88). To describe this phenomenon, Hobbs (2013) coined the term ‘glocal’ crime, to denote the convergence between global and local criminal entities – how both groups often conduct criminal activities from similar areas, agreeing alliances and reaching mutually beneficial agreements to further their profits. Indeed, Hobbs goes on to assert that an increasingly globalized world has led to the emergence of criminal groups which have formed to encompass individuals from a variety of racial and cultural backgrounds. We shall return to the role of organised crime later. However, the increasing levels of racial diversity which are apparent for street gangs, prison gangs and OCGs is indicative of the growing plurality of race and religion within the Criminal Justice System (Phillips 2012a). The following section of this chapter focuses on these topics of race and faith, and their manifestations within custody.

4.4 The Functions of Gangs in the Community and in Prison

Gangs have long been divided into numerous categories according to their functions, both in prisons and in the wider community. One of the principal functions of many gangs is drug-dealing, and different gangs have different levels of involvement within the drug market. In the U.K., existing studies have presented a hierarchical model of the drug-market (Pearson and Hobbs 2001), ranging from “middle-to-apex market level” to “low-to-mid levels” (McClean et al. 2017). Within Scotland, for example, youth criminal gangs have been identified as primarily engaging in the latter category of drug-dealing, whilst serious organised crime gangs have been identified as engaging in the former category. Youth street gangs are a further, distinct category: they are looser, less organised entities than either youth criminal gangs or organised crime gangs) and engage predominantly in the social supply of drugs (ibid).

Within prisons, too, gangs have been identified as serving multifarious purposes. American prison gangs, for example, have been noted as providing informal governance, including serving as a means of dispute resolution, the managing of contraband and policing social relations (Skarbeck 2014). Indeed, two of the most important texts in the field, Jacobs' (1977) *Stateville* and Skarbeck's (2014) *The Social Order of the Underworld*, illuminate the functions of American prison gangs at two different periods of time. Jacobs' study shows how prison gangs became established in the United States during the mid-to-late twentieth century: predominantly imported from the streets, these gangs operated along ethnic lines, their main functions being to provide social support, physical protection and a bulwark against misconduct by prison officers. Gang members participated in illegal activities and violence, but also provided a political consciousness for groups of, for example, African-American prisoners (see also Kahn 1974). Skarbeck's work, written almost four decades later, shows the enduring racial fault lines along which prison gangs form and operate. By the time of Skarbeck's writing, prison gangs had become an established presence across the American prison system. The punitive penal practices across the United States has led to many men serving long sentences, and Skarbeck illustrates how gangs provide a means for these men to regulate disputes, control the illicit prison economy, and offer a parallel system of social governance. The contemporary prison gang, then, serves practical functions alongside their violent activities.

Although prison gangs within England are neither as structured nor as historically well-established as their American counterparts (Maitra 2016), gangs being used as a means of 'policing' the actions of both members and non-members in prison is an area that has received some academic attention. For example, Phillips (2012a) notes how the social norms and mores of contemporary English prisons mean that racist prisoners are the subject of physical violence, social ostracization and eventual segregation (see also Maitra et al. 2017), often at the hands of black prisoners. This heightened role of race, and its intersection with gang identities, has received attention from Liebling et al. (2011), whose two studies of HMP Whitemoor charted the shifting compositions of gangs and their changing functions. In 2011, prison gangs were found to predominantly be composed of Black British prisoners, many of whom had converted to Islam within prison, and for whom the gang served as both a means of socialization, but also provided a collective identity and protection, allowing these prisoners to gain hegemony within the carceral environment. Thirteen years earlier, Liebling et al. (1998) found, within the same prison, that hegemony was secured by older, white prisoners, who had links to organised crime, and who associated along lines which reflected their pre-prison social interactions. Such

offenders, often referred to as the ‘faces’, gained extensive attention throughout the twentieth-century (Taylor 1984; Hobbs 1998; Foreman 1994) and their close in-group unity was transplanted into prison (Cohen and Taylor 1972; Parker 1995). The extent to which such groups could be classified as ‘gangs’ can be debated, however, these prisoner collectives offered camaraderie, psychological support, physical protection, status and a greater access to resources within prison (Parker 1995). The changes in HMP Whitemoor are, in many ways, indicative of the changing compositions and gangs within the high-security prison system.

More recent criminological studies have outlined the changing compositions of prison gangs, something which reflected the changes to street gang membership within England. Studies have identified that many black prisoners have sought to embrace Islam as a means of defiance towards authorities (Earle 2013). Although the extent to which such groups can readily be classed as gangs remains contested, their compositions reflect the fact that English prison gangs have traditionally been characterised being more malleable and less durable compared to the United States (Phillips 2012b). Definitional issues, then, continue to have a bearing on discussions around the functions and purpose of gangs.

4.5 The Relationship Between Prison and the Wider Community

Much of the criminological literature delivers extensive attention towards the linkages which exist between street and prison gangs, illuminating the symbiotic relationship that often exists between prisons and their wider, surrounding community. For example, Hagedorn (1998: 365) writes how “more violence-prone prison gangs may be claiming a new role in the outside community, complicating an already dangerous situation”. The activities of prison gangs, then, permeate prison walls, and as well as the norms of its surrounding community being imported into prison, gangs within prison may exert an influence upon community members. Although Hagedorn was writing in 1998, this symbiotic relationship between prison gangs and the wider community was referred to by earlier, American criminologists: two decades before, Kahn (1978) described the influences prison gang members may exert upon the surrounding community, controlling drug-distribution, orchestrating violence and ordering assassinations upon gang or community members found to have transgressed gang norms and codes. Some of these were codified norms, presented in written documents which prison gang leaders compelled their junior members to follow, both in prison and on the streets. Similarly, Blatchford (2008) identifies the control certain American prison gangs exert upon their street gang members in the surrounding community. Specifically, Blatchford describes the power

wielded by members of the Mexican Mafia prison gang upon not only their own gang members, but other street gang members in the prison's surrounding area. These gangs are forced to pay taxes to the Mexican Mafia, most of whose senior members are imprisoned. The Mexican Mafia has been able to develop this modus operandi through their established presence in the prison system, codified gang rules, and a rigid hierarchy (Kahn 1974; Blatchford 2008).

Although much attention has been directed towards the relationships between prison gangs and their surrounding communities, this is not the only relationship to exist between prison and the streets. Indeed, it can be argued the interactions between prison and street gang members is just one manifestation of the multifarious relationships between a prison and its wider community. Wacquant (2001), for example, describes how prisons in the United States have become more like the ghetto, and vice versa. For Wacquant, the 'ghetto' he refers to is the pervasive yet segregated African-American public housing districts across the United States, typified by high rates of deprivation, a lack of opportunities and very limited funding from national or state government (see also Anderson 2011, 2012). Wacquant further argues that the same marginalized population occupies both the prison and the ghetto, with both spaces now characterized by similar values: "the predatory culture of the street, centred on hyper-masculinist notions of honour, toughness, and coolness has entered into and transfigured the social structure of jails and prisons...Ethnically-based street gangs and super gangs...have taken over the illicit economy of the prison and destabilized the entire social system of inmates, forcing the latter to shift from 'doing your own time' to 'doing gang time'³⁴. The exact time scale of this transformation is debated by penologists, with some contending that it is a relatively recent occurrence (Hunt et al. 1993; Wacquant 2001) and others positing that the displacement of old values with a 'convict culture' began longer ago (Jacobs 1974, 1977). Nevertheless, despite debate around *when* this change began, it is clear across the American prison system there has been a displacement of previous norms and structures with a new, 'gang-centric' experience of imprisonment. Much of this has been facilitated by the close ties which exist between prison gangs and their counterparts in the wider community: through 'straddling' both sides of the prison wall and permeating even high-security institutions. Indeed, in Jacobs' seminal *Stateville* (1977: 399) it is argued that for Chicagoan gang members

³⁴ Further, the range of post-imprisonment measures inflicted upon offenders, such as strict parole conditions, make it increasingly difficult for offenders to 'escape' the penal complex ever after completion of their sentence and release from prison.

imprisonment was “almost a homecoming...the gang member from the street has no trouble whatsoever in adjusting to the new environment.” Jacobs found, from his study, that street gang members were familiar with the mores of their prison counterparts and experienced a ‘homecoming’ by the fact they are surrounded by their fellow gang members upon imprisonment. The proximity between a prison such as Stateville and its surrounding area, combined with the almost daily transmission of populations, physical items and social values between the prison and outside, led to a confluence of the two worlds. Stateville is not an exception in this regard, and more recently, the entrenched linkages between American prisons and the streets has been noted by criminologists. For example, Wacquant (2001:111) describes how “together with the compositional changes of the prison’s clientele, the rising tide of drugs circulating *sub rosa*, and the consolidation of racially-based gangs, the eclipse of the old inmate structure of power has resulted in increased levels of interpersonal and group brutality” (Wacquant 2001:111). However, whilst there has also been a steep increase in levels of violence within British prisons, much of the British scholarship does not focus on whether, and to what extent, changes within prison gangs and penal institutions have affected levels of violence and disorder.

4.6 The Debate Around ‘Gang Talk’ and ‘Gang Talkers’

On the one hand, certain criminologists contend that group violence and law-breaking actions have been part of the fabric of British society, and that it is each generation’s exaggerated reaction to these crimes that, in part, contribute to fear and ontological insecurity (Pearson 1983). In a similar vein, Cohen (1972) refers to the ‘moral panics’ which involved fearful, irrational reactions to new waves of subcultures and counter-cultural movements. In fact, both Pearson’s (1983) and Cohen’s (1972) theorizations refer extensively to group-led violence: in Pearson’s case hooliganism, as well as more historical examples of group violence, and in Cohen’s case, references to the Mods and Rockers. An underlying theme in much of these debates is around the labels ascribed to ‘criminal’ groups, and how justified such attributions are, especially considering the emergence of new subcultures in post-war Britain (Hedbigge 1979). Although I deal more extensively with labelling theory in s.5.2 of this chapter, it is nevertheless important to illustrate how these longstanding debates around moral panics and labelling have re-emerged in relation to gangs of twenty-first century Britain.

Central to these contemporary discussions is the tension which exists between those who contend that gang status is too readily ascribed to individuals, and those who do not. In the

former category are British criminologists who posit that gang labels have been too readily applied to youth violence (Hallsworth 2011), promulgated by a populist political and social reaction to youth offending, and myopic solutions which do not consider the complex, multifarious reasons behind urban violence (Hallsworth and Young 2008). Such concerns are particularly heightened in relation to BME offenders, who are often constructed as the dangerous ‘other’, something that is reflected in many of the contemporary practices of English prisons. Particularly, it is argued that this disproportionate labelling of black offenders as gang members fails to capture the nuances of black culture and the experiences of Britain’s black citizens, having the further deleterious effect of criminalization innocent black youths (Gunter 2017). A further problem stemming from this is consequently disproportionate judicial sanctions applied to black ‘gang members’ (Williams 2014). Some criminologists go further in their critique of the racialized gang discourse, arguing that it is indicative of the institutionalized structural racism and racist practices to which black people are subjected to in Britain (Glynn 2014). This interpretation of gang labelling reflects the established body of American scholarship, which contends that the vast over-representation of African-Americans in the high-security institutions of the United States is a result of centuries of systematized oppression, brutalization and racism, beginning with slavery and continuing with the penal practices of the twenty-first century (Wacquant 2001; Alexander 2010; Childs 2015; Cureton 2011).

4.7 ‘The Gang’ Re-Defined

In the preceding part of this chapter, I have sought to present how the existing criminological scholarship qualifies and defines what constitutes a ‘gang’, as well as discussing some background issues which help contextualize and situate the wider debate. However, in this section, I further argue that for there to be a comprehensive definition of ‘the gang’, this review of the literature must be supplemented with gang members’ own conceptualizations, and perceptions of their own status. There are risks working with self-definitions, including the biases which inevitably arise from this subjective perspective³⁵. However, criminological studies have increasingly argued the need for the opinions and perspectives of those being studied to be at the forefront of discussions (see, e.g. Rios 2011; Scott 2011; Glynn 2014) to better reflect the lived experiences of such individuals. I, therefore, use these primary data in conjunction with Lewis Yablonsky’s (1962) typology as the overarching theoretical framework

³⁵See further, p.81.

for this chapter. Through critically analysing the perspectives of contemporary gang members, I aim to move the debate forward from the dichotomy which exists in much of the current criminological scholarship. The foundations of this chapter are based on data gathered from interviewing active street and prison gang members in Greater Manchester. I draw on this primary qualitative data to demonstrate how gang members engaged in the process of self-definition, and how they defined 'the gang'. Furthermore, unlike most of this thesis, in which I use an inductive, 'bottom up' approach to analysing the data, in this chapter I draw strongly on an established theoretical framework, which thus better allows me to foreground many of the key themes and concepts around defining what constitutes a gang.

The results presented in the chapter stem from a range of questions I asked active and former gang members. Some of these questions focused on asking gang members how they defined 'gangs' and gang membership. I felt it important to base my analysis around the 'lived' experiences of such individuals to move the debate forward from the overly politicized discourse around whether gangs do or do not exist. Many criminological studies acknowledge that close intersections exist between criminology and politics (Feldman 2012), and this is particularly reflected in much of the criminological discourse around gangs (see, e.g., Lea and Hallsworth 2012; Thomas 2012; Harding 2014). Densley (2012) states that the two sides of the debate around gangs often 'talk over one another', with one side consistently arguing that the popular press exaggerate the presence and power of gangs (see, e.g. Hallsworth and Silverton 2011; Hallsworth and Young 2008), and the other side arguing that gangs are a real and visible problem (see, e.g. Pitts 2008). In my research, I aim to move the debate on from this politicized dichotomy, and in this chapter, I utilize Yablonsky's theoretical framework to illuminate the activities of Greater Manchester's gangs. I integrate this theoretical perspective with gang members' personal accounts around gang composition, membership, and activity. Throughout this chapter, I incorporate the voices from a wide range of perspectives: ranging from individuals who unequivocally self-defined as gang members, to participants who felt that gang membership was ascribed to them too readily and did not accurately reflect their lived experiences. However, whilst I critically analyse the terminology used to classify individuals as gang members, I do not deny the existence of gangs.

4.8 'Set up to Fail' – Labelled as Gang Members

When critically analysing the terminology surrounding gang membership, the subject of labelling underlies many such discussions. The importance of labelling as a sociological

perspective should not be understated (Schur 1971:115), as deviance does not solely arise through the act, but also through society's reaction to the act (Becker 1963:9 cited in *ibid*). Accordingly, social reaction plays a substantial role in shaping the meaning of illegal acts (Schur 1969: 115). References to how labelling affects an individual's self-concept and activities (Schur 1969:117) can clearly be applied to discussions surrounding gang memberships: gangs are perhaps one of the clearest instances of pathologized labels engendering moral panic (see, e.g. Cohen 1989) and becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy (Densely and Stevens 2015). In criminology more broadly, it has been observed that the negative labelling of individuals may produce unintended consequences (McNeill et al. 2012); for example, labelling individuals as 'deviant', 'persistent' or 'active' offenders may lead to the internalization of such values, which acts as a further barrier to desistance and attempts at creating a new understanding of self. Indeed, "when society's reaction to deviants is to stigmatise, segregate and exclude, such persons are left with limited opportunity for achieving self-respect and affiliation in the mainstream – but are welcomed among subcultural groups of similarly stigmatised outcasts. Hence, the vicious circle of persistent offending" (Maruna and LeBel 2010: 75). Specifically, in relation to gangs, "intervention by the juvenile justice system predicted involvement with deviant gangs, which then led to increased offending" (*ibid*).

Indeed, there exists an established body of criminological scholarship on labelling theory, which developed throughout the twentieth-century. Much of this was based on a societal reaction approach, which showed the paradox of "how deviance was shaped and stabilized by efforts to eliminate or ameliorate it" (Lemert 1974: 458). Lemert argued that secondary deviance was produced through society's reaction to the deviant act (Lemert 1951). Central to this argument was the assertion that an individual's internalization of norms and values was facilitated through society's reactions to these acts. More recently, Grattet (2011) has argued that despite the less frequent references to labelling theory in contemporary criminological scholarship, it remains an important concept. This ranges from the deleterious effects of labels, such as the stigma felt by individuals labelled as 'gang members' (Smithson et al. 2012), to the *beneficial* effects of labelling in the process of desistance: that labelling an individual as 'rehabilitated' can reduce the chances of future offending (Maruna et al. 2004). Contemporary gang scholars have identified how law enforcement attaching the labels of 'gang'/'gang

member' to youths/youth groups can be one factor driving such individuals towards gang membership, amplifying the effects of gang activity (Densley and Stevens 2014)³⁶.

In my research, although there were no participants who specifically mentioned the term labelling, it was a concept which influenced many of the responses delivered by individuals, including the underlying belief that groups of youths had been unfairly labelled as gangs. Former gang members were especially vociferous in denying that they had been members of gangs, viewing the term as being stigmatizing and bearing negative connotations³⁷:

I've got friends now who are the guys who started Gooch Gang. Like in the early fifties, late forties. And you mention the word Gooch in front of them they don't like it, they go mad. Because back then they were the men credited for starting it, and yeh they did start it. But now you grow up and grow away from it...so they hate being referred to as Gooch or gang members or anything like that. **Sean, Non-Gang Member, HMP Manchester**

Well, I see gangs as people with their friends, mates that you've grown up with. But the police would see it as gangs. These are just people who are working together and looking after each other. But we don't see them as gangs. The police see it as a crime gang, we just see it as a group of friends who are making money together. **Tony, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

The fact that some former and active gang members disavowed the label of gang member is significant for three reasons. First, it shows one of the methodological barriers encountered in this research: namely, how does one go about defining gangs if some of their members will not admit to their existence? This was a hurdle I overcame by engaging participants in a wide range of questions, so that even if an individual would not self-identify as a gang member, I would go on to ask him how he would classify a gang in more general terms. Second, it shows that once gang members had begun the process of desistance, they wanted to place distance between themselves and their former identities as gang members. As Sean recounted, some of the

³⁶ The research by Densley and Stevens (2014) reflects earlier research on labelling, which posits that "the act of labelling, as carried out by moral entrepreneurs, while important, cannot possibly be conceived as the sole explanation of what alleged deviants actually do Nevertheless, one of the most important contributions of this approach has been to focus attention on the way labelling places the actor in circumstances which make it harder for him to continue the normal routines of everyday life" (Becker 1974: 42).

³⁷ See also Goffman (1963) for a wider discussion on 'courtesy stigma': the stigma that arises through one's associations with stigmatized groups or individuals.

founding members of Doddington Gang “hate ... being referred to as gang members” because “you grow up and grow away from it” (see also Laub and Sampson 2001). This reflects the existing literature, which shows that the process of desistance can be fraught with difficulties and challenges (Fader 2013; Halsey et al. 2016). Some participants spoke of being referred to by their former status of gang affiliation as being one of these challenges – the difficulty of ‘moving on’ from that past identity and past life. Third, as Tony’s statement shows, a gulf existed between how some participants saw themselves and the how the police and prosecuting authorities perceived them.

Although many participants in my research had been referred to as ‘gang members’ by the CPS, and had been classified as gang members by the police, their own interpretations of ‘gang status’ had a fairly limited effect on how prisons eventually classified them: both prisons which acted as my research sites classified a prisoner as gang affiliated either if he self-identified as a gang member or if police records classified him as a gang member; if he contested or disagreed with this police classification, it did not affect how he was classified in the prison’s internal system. Therefore, according to the prisons’ models of gang classification, police intelligence trumped prisoners’ own contentions as to gang status. All these factors complicated the exercise of asking participants their opinions on gangs. Indeed, during fieldwork, it became apparent that most participants had rarely discussed issues around labelling with their peers. Nevertheless, the label ‘gang member’ had been applied to them. Through engaging with participants and documenting their own opinions, I sought to widen the discourse from one which often solely focuses on labels ascribed to gang members by the courts or law enforcement to one which incorporated gang members’ personal opinions and reflections on self-identity. A further criticism of the process of labelling is that often criminalizes the victims of gang violence, who are labelled as gang members merely because they may live in an area populated by gangs, or associate with peers who are gang members (Rios 2011:76-77):

Where I grew up, a gang is a group of people, a few people together...mates going to the park together, to the shops together. Or it could be someone [involved] in criminal activities, different sides; gangs have been like that for years. Where I grew up, you were set up to fail: you’re a part of the estate, getting shot at, and I got dragged into it. When they talk about gangs, if I’m with a group of six or seven in a place, it’s a ‘gang’ to them...**I:** You mean to the police? The authorities? **P:** Yeh. But it could be that we’re just coming to get food...they talk about a ‘gang of lads’ but it’s different in different cases.

Chris, Non-Gang Member, HMP Manchester

As Chris' response shows, the 'dividing line' between what was a peer group and what was a gang was neither firmly drawn nor was it immutable. Like many other participants, Chris spoke of the police labelling any peer groups who congregated in particular areas as gangs (see also Garot 2010; Rios 2011). Several participants stated that there was greater police presence in areas on the periphery of where serious gang activity took place; this led to youths congregated in these peripheral areas being disproportionately labelled as gang members. Moreover, when interviewing police officers, I was informed that there were no formalized definitions used by the police to classify what constituted a gang, or, consequently, who gang members were. Many prisoners whom I interviewed had been in several prisons, and noted the absence of a formalized, prison-wide definition of what constituted a gang. In some prisoners' opinions, this led to contesting their status as gang members, and caused significant frustrations:

I get pissed off with the prison always saying I'm a gang member: if you're with your mates, they [the prison] class you as a gang. Bouncers are more of a gang than we are. In prison, if they see six or seven brothas by the landing, they immediately think gang. Some prisons see blackness and think gang. And then this prison and the Courts are using my gang stuff against me. **Tony, Non-Gang Member, HMP Manchester**

Again, Tony showed how the prison's conceptualization of gangs did not match his own. He indicated his perception that there was a racialized dimension to individuals being described as gang members, something I go on to discuss in more detail later in this thesis (see also Glynn 2014). He also felt that the gang 'label' was being used against him by the prison and the Courts: in his case, in relation to a custody hearing with his ex-partner. The label of gang, then, had instrumental as well as symbolic dimensions. Indeed, Tony's frustration and being "pissed off with the prison saying I'm a gang member" was similar to Chris' sentiment of being wrongly labelled as a gang member; in Chris' opinion, the attribution of this label was part of the wider set of disadvantages he had faced in life, feeling that he had been "set up to fail". The label of 'gang' was attributed to individuals such as Chris by 'moral entrepreneurs' (see Becker 1974), that is, by individuals who take a lead role in labelling acts as deviant. This relates to one of the usual criticisms labelling theory makes, namely, that it places "the actor in circumstances which make it hard for him to continue the normal routines of everyday life and thus provoke him to 'abnormal' actions" (Becker 1964:42). For many individuals whom I

interviewed, being labelled as gang members was often seen as a self-fulfilling prophecy, as well as being stigmatizing (see also Garot 2010:96), something they were keen to highlight during interviews. This reflected the wider concern of many prisoners, who viewed the penal system as denying them agency and autonomy, or the chance to articulate perceptions around status and self. Such feelings were often heightened for gang members, who were subjected to more marginalized positions within the penal system due to their higher levels of rule infractions and engagement in violence (Wood and Adler 2001; Wood 2006).

Having presented a critique of the label of ‘gang member’ as applied to many of the participants in my research, I will now go on to present a detailed discussion of participants’ opinions as to what a gang was: how they described the attributes, activities and compositions of gangs, and how they differentiated gangs from other groups. From beginning of my research, it was clear that a consistent definition of ‘the gang’ was lacking across the English Prison Service, as well as within the wider Criminal Justice System. One of the few such definitions I found to exist was contained in the Policing and Crime Act 2009, which identifies a gang as “a group that a.) consists of at least 3 people; and, b) has one or more characteristics that enable its members to be identified by others as a group” (s.34(5)). This is a vague definition and does not go on to identify these “characteristics”. Moreover, the fact that the English legal system is based upon common-law and judicial precedent renders it difficult for there to be a codified, generalizable definition of ‘the gang’, applicable to all trials and prosecutions. This absence of a clear definition has led to many individuals being prosecuted for gang-related offences to contest their status as gang members. Indeed, the use of disproportionately lengthy custodial sentences for those suspected of being part of a gang has received extensive criticism from criminologists and penologists (see, e.g. Crewe et al 2015; Williams and Clarke 2015).

4.9 Arriving at an Operationalizable Definition of Gangs

Despite the risks of working with self-definitions of gangs³⁸, during fieldwork, self-definition was critical part of my method to identify gangs and gang members: only individuals who were

³⁸ Matsuda et al. (2012:18) outline the most comprehensive account of these risks, stating that although “the self-nomination approach to identify gang members...is...straightforward ... [i]t does, however, hinge on each respondent’s unique perception of what constitutes a ‘gang member’...Respondents may be reluctant to admit to being or considering themselves like those depictions. Alternatively, some researchers have asked respondents if their friends are gang members ... This approach removes the individual’s own personal investment (either stigma or posturing) ...However still relies on a respondent’s own gang definition”.

noted as gang members according to prison intelligence records and who described themselves as being gang members were documented as gang members in the results³⁹ (see also Winfree et al. 1992; Esbensen et al. 2005; Batchelor 2009; Bjerregaard 2002). This, in turn, fundamentally affected the analysis of my data and the way in which the results were presented. The current body of research also acknowledges this central role played by self-definition when deciding on who is a gang member (see, e.g. Harris 1998; Densley and Stevens 2014). Further, Bjerregaard and Lizotte (1995:17) argue that “self-definition is a central aspect of gang membership”. Other studies go as far as concluding that individuals who self-identify as gang members engage in more illegal activities than those who do not see themselves as gang members (Hennigan and Spanovic 2012). This latter argument, then, not only asserts the methodological value in self-definition, but shows that there is often a correlation between viewing oneself as a gang member and the level of involvement in gang activity (ibid). This use of the social identity perspective “focuses on the way people think about themselves and others in an intergroup context. By identifying oneself as a member of a particular group, one is accepting or taking a social identity that has powerful implications...for how an individual acts within his group and towards members of other groups” (Hennigan and Spanovic 2012: 94). According to this theory, then, self-identification has a direct bearing on an individual’s actions and levels of delinquency. As I have outlined, there are inevitably risks and limitations arising from working with self-definitions: subjective biases that may arise from these perspectives; individuals being too ready to ascribe ‘gang status’ to themselves; or individuals reluctant to do so due to fears around the stigma engendered through being seen as a gang member. Nevertheless, the established body of scholarship illustrates that, despite these limitations, self-definitions provide a valuable lens through which to view gang affiliation, specifically because through a participant-centred approach, one can better comprehend and apprehend gang members’ lived experiences (Glynn 2014)⁴⁰.

In line with this phenomenon, throughout this thesis I have given primacy to participants’ perspectives. Through principally basing my study on the testimonies of active and former gang members, the body of this thesis also reflects the highly-contested nature of the term ‘gang’,

³⁹ It was borne in mind that some prisoners who were not identified as gang members on the prisons’ internal records may have self-identified as gang members. However, in practice, this did not arise.

⁴⁰ This can be contrasted to exercises where gang membership is measured against objective ‘stand-alone’ criteria. Whilst this latter methodology removes the risks of working with self-definitions it also removes the thick, rich descriptions that can be gathered when drawing definitions directly from gang members.

something which was highlighted by many of those who were interviewed for this research. The following responses are indicative of the wider sentiments held by several participants, and illustrate the contested-terrain encountered when attempting to define gangs:

I don't class myself as a gang member. **Any more or you never did?** Never did. I mean, prisons or the police might see me as a gang member. I'm born and bred in the area, but for me, a gang member is someone that actively sold drugs or made money for the gang. Or is violent on behalf of the gang. Or whenever they see another gang member from a rival gang would hurt them for the gang. I wasn't like that. You see, there's many who might be gang members on paper, according to the police, but I wouldn't class them that way, myself included. **James, Non-Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

I was never affiliated to a gang. But if you was to observe it from a certain perspective then you would say, well I had a gang, because people worked for me dealing drugs and things. So, it depends on which way you see that. And if you talk to a lot of gang members, they will probably tell you something very similar. They will probably tell you that, you know, they're not it a gang, they just have mates, and things like that. So, you know, it's an awkward one to pinpoint – it depends on your perspective and where your observation comes from.

Milo, Non-Gang Member, Manchester

When you talk to a lot of gang members, they'll probably tell you they're not in a gang. Yes, there are some who love it and their life in the gang, but they are few and far between. Any research I've done in Manchester, you'll get gang members contesting their status. And why do they deny it? I think the gangs are a lot looser than we think, and, in many cases, they really don't see themselves as gang members. **Stefan, Gang Researcher, Manchester**

The above three opinions, delivered by an unaffiliated prisoner (James), an unaffiliated street offender (Milo) and a gang researcher (Stefan), highlight some of the main contested topics which arose during this research: why did many individuals contest their 'gang status'? Why was this area so difficult to accurately conceptualize? And, as James stated, why were there often contradictions between the perspectives of offenders and law enforcement? I attempt to resolve some of these questions in this chapter, as well as throughout this thesis. What became apparent through conducting the fieldwork was that there was no uniform definition of 'the gang' used by the different branches of law enforcement in Greater Manchester. Indeed, neither of the prisons which acted as sample sites for this research had an operationalized definition of

what constituted a gang, nor did they have quantifiable criteria according to which prisoners were classified as gang members. The process of labelling prisoners as gang members was conducted based on intelligence held on each individual, such as if police surveillance had identified them as partaking in ‘gang activities’ (e.g. spray-painting gang-graffiti, posing online videos demonstrating gang-affiliation) or if the CPS had prosecuted them as gang members. This piecemeal exercise led to frequent contestations of ‘gang status’ by offenders, with individuals expressing frustration around being labelled as gang members. To remedy this, I synthesize the various definitions participants offered as to what constitutes a gang, and through doing this, arrive at an operationalizable term, which I have included below. My own definition of what constituted a ‘gang’ integrated the perspectives of several participants to create a generalizable term. For the purposes of this research, then, I came to define a street gang as being:

a collective of individuals who come from the same area, whose collective identity involves: committing illegal activities; identifying with their ‘home’ area and defending it from rivals; exclusivity of membership; and engaging in violent conflicts with other gangs/groups. Membership of the gang is signified through one or more external indicators, including (but not limited to) tattoos, hand signs, wearing of colours, the display of gang graffiti, verbal expression of the gang name. Further, members must self-identify as being gang-affiliated.

The above definition has been drawn from both interrogating the existing literature and drawing on the data gathered from my participants. It deliberately focuses on the collective commission of illegal acts, reflecting the importance which my participants placed on such activities (cf. Cohen 1955). Although it can be argued that an over-reliance on convicted gang members led to this bias, it is my contention that the commission of violence underpins much of the activities of contemporary gangs. In the following section of this chapter, I go on to state how my definitions of ‘the gang’ can be distinguished from Yablonsky’s theorization around deviance. Although I re-affirm much of Yablonsky’s typology of gangs, I will highlight three substantial differences.

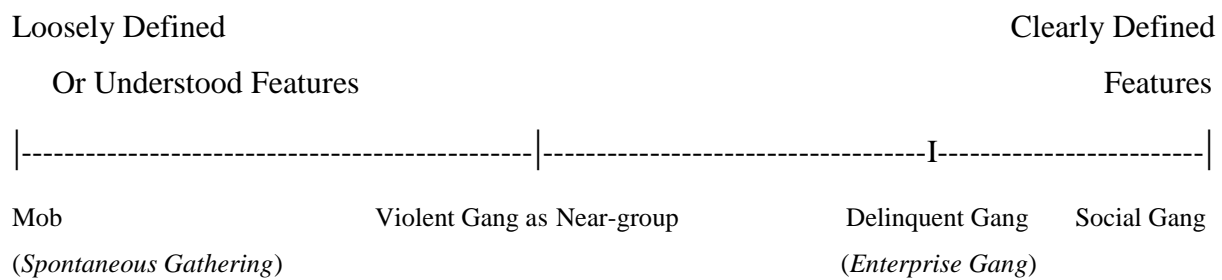
4.10 A Reconceptualization of Yablonsky’s (1962) framework

In his 1962 book *The Violent Gang*, Lewis Yablonsky presents a comprehensive typology of the different ‘types’ of gangs uncovered by his research. The book is an extension of the central

thesis he presents in a paper titled, *The Delinquent Gang as a Near-Group* (1959), which presents a similar gang typology. Yablonsky drew his evidence from interviewing street gangs in New York in the mid-twentieth century; he worked as director of an American crime prevention programme, and gathered empirical data through “field study methods, participant observation...group-interaction analysis... [and] close daily interaction with gang boys”. The principal findings of his research were that different ‘types’ of gangs existed in mid-twentieth century New York, and that specific incidents could transform a gang from being one ‘type’ to another. During my fieldwork, I noticed that some similarities began to emerge between Yablonsky’s work and the characteristics of gang members whom I interviewed. However, upon further analysis of the data, it was clear that differences had developed in certain areas. Yablonsky places gangs into a set of distinct categories, moving from the ‘loosely defined’ at one extreme to the ‘clearly defined’ at the other extreme (Figure 4). The most loosely defined collective is termed a ‘mob’ and describes a group of individuals with few, if any, formal ties, spontaneously forming to engage in violence. At the other end of the spectrum is the ‘social gang’, which is a formalized group of youths engaged in law-abiding activities; for the purposes of my study, the social gang is excluded from this chapter as I focus on law-breaking acts. The delinquent gang is also highly organised, and “has leadership, focus and organization with often skills, practice and training whether the activity be shoplifting, car-theft, burglary or robbery...these gangs have tight membership, if only to maintain secrecy and confidentiality, specialise in activities which require skills-learning and training and organized levels of competence and participation” (Kelly 2011: 4)⁴¹. Finally, Yablonsky refers to the ‘near-group’, which is a category somewhere between the two extremes. The ‘near-group’ is characterized by an excessive focus on ‘rep’ (reputation), exaggerations of the group’s size and capability by its members, and excessively gratuitous violence deployed in the commission of offences (Yablonsky 1962). More crucially, as Kelly (2011: 5) again summarizes, “it is the incident that creates the gang out of the Near-Group by the arrest and charging patterns of local police and courts and not the Gang which coalesces out of the Near-group”.

⁴¹ Kelly (2011), an American criminologist, provides a comprehensive summary of Yablonsky’s typology, and thus, is also referred to in this chapter.

Figure 4 (drawing on Yablonsky 1962 and Kelly 2011)



Much of the data collected from my research corroborated Yablonsky's findings, largely fitting in with the typology set out *The Violent Gang*. For example, my research found that groupings which occupied the two 'extremes' of Figure 4 ('the mob' as the most loosely defined and 'the social gang' as the most clearly defined) were distinct and separate from the remainder of the 'continuum'. Those participating in a 'mob' would form into what I have termed a 'spontaneous gathering', engaging in disorganised violence over a short period of time. Many of the individuals engaging in this violence would not know one another, and there would often be no common purpose in their actions. Conversely, I found the 'social gang' was characterised as a pro-social group, whose members did not engage in law breaking acts. Due to the scope of my research, I did not directly encounter any 'social gangs'. However, reflecting Yablonsky's categorization, 'social gangs' included formalized youth organisations such as sports teams or clubs. Accordingly, 'the mob' (or 'spontaneous gathering') and the 'social gang' are distinct, self-contained entities from the wider continuum of gang membership.

This continuum encompassed the 'near group, the 'violent gang' and the 'enterprise gang'. I found that these groupings would often contain many of the same members: the 'near group' would *become* the 'violent gang', which would then *become* the 'enterprise gang'. Indeed, in my research I found that gang members would begin their criminal 'careers' as part of the 'near group'. In this role, they would participate in relatively minor acts of delinquency, such as vandalism, joy-riding, and what was referred to as 'thieving' and 'grafting' (for example committing burglaries). Those who were most proficient at 'grafting' would then go on to form the 'violent gang', where activities would range from stabbing and shooting rival gang members, to torturing rival drug dealers and street-level drug dealing. Some of these activities resulted in pecuniary gain; indeed, I interviewed several 'violent gang' members who engaged in dealing crack, cocaine and heroin to "bring in a wage" alongside their more retaliatory, symbolic acts of violence; indeed, gang members focused on the commission of these violent

acts. Once gang members had acquired the required ‘skill sets’ (namely, becoming proficient at engaging in serious violence) they would form the ‘enterprise gang’. The focus of this gang would be to accumulate substantial financial wealth, through activities such as the importation of heroin, and distribution/importation of powdered cocaine and amphetamines⁴², the kidnap and targeting of the homes of wealthy individuals, extorting legitimate businesses and operating protecting rackets. The ‘enterprise gang’, then, could be said to occupy the closest ground to organised crime; indeed, many members of ‘enterprise gangs’ whom I interviewed as part of my research spoke of their extensive social and business links with OCGs.

In addition to my findings uncovering this ‘continuum’, there were five principal differences which emerged between my research and Yablonsky’s body of work. The first is simply a difference in terminology: what Yablonsky referred to as ‘the mob’, I have referred to as ‘the spontaneous gathering’; this was to reflect a change in contemporary language. However, the ‘spontaneous gathering’ was still typified by many of the same characteristics which Yablonsky attributed to ‘the mob’: spontaneous formation, collective engagement in law-breaking acts, and a lack of pre-existing social ties between its members. The second, more significant, difference is my argument that that it was a series of violent incidents rather than a single event which transformed the ‘near-group’ into ‘the violent gang’. Yablonsky argued that a singular violent event is often responsible for this transformation. Although I found this to be true on a limited number of occasions, the transformation from ‘near-group’ to ‘violent gang’ was usually a more gradual process, involving a series of violent events which precipitated the group’s transformation. Third, I argue that the contemporary violent gang is not characterised by the same levels of impermanence and shifting membership which Yablonsky found to be true in his research. I argue that this has occurred due to a solidification of gang identities in the intervening half-a-century since Yablonsky’s work, leading to greater permanence in gang-membership and more cohesive identities amongst gang members. These differences can also be attributed to the fact that Yablonsky was an American sociologist, whose study focused on a specific area of New York. My study – which was conducted in England over fifty years after Yablonsky’s research – showed greater levels of permanence and hierarchy in the violent gangs which I studied. Fourth, I argue that violent gangs are no longer characterised solely by the

⁴² The fact that Yablonsky’s typology was devised in the 1950s and 60s – before the proliferation of Class A drugs – meant that Yablonsky largely omitted drug-distribution from his description of gangs.

commission of violence. Rather, I suggest that the emergence of street-drugs throughout the latter half of the twentieth-century has led to drug-dealing becoming a central feature of these gangs. I also argue Yablonsky's conceptualization of the delinquent gang does not place an adequate emphasis on identity: my research found that such gangs, whilst primarily focused on financial gain, also identified with a home area and had external identifiers of memberships. Finally, I draw a sharp distinction in the terminology used to refer to the 'delinquent gang'. Yablonsky used this term to refer to gangs whose members were primarily focused on accumulating financial wealth; he argued that these gangs were more clearly defined in their structures, more hierarchical and that there was a greater delineation of gang members' roles. It can only be speculated as to whether Yablonsky misinterpreted the term delinquency (defined as "minor crime, especially that committed by young people" Webster Dictionary), or whether the criminological literature in the intervening decades has led to the term being more readily associated with juvenile law-breaking acts (Hirschi 1969; Bowker et al. 1990; Goldstein 1991). However, Yablonsky uses the term 'delinquent gang' to describe gangs which are engaged in organised, financially-oriented activities. Accordingly, a more appropriate term to use would be 'enterprise gang' (Densley 2013), which describes an organised, hierarchical gang whose members are primarily concerned with securing pecuniary gain from their activities (ibid). Densley's 'enterprise gang' is also the 'end point' in the development of youth street gangs, where membership begins through street-based friendships, developing to violent street gangs and finally emerging as financially-oriented enterprise gangs. Accordingly, in the remainder of this chapter I use this term to refer to what Yablonsky termed the 'delinquent gang'.

Further, as my gang-definition shows, I found that the dichotomy between violent and enterprise gangs was not as explicit as suggested by Yablonsky's research. Rather, the distinction could be drawn due to the different degrees of importance the two groups' members placed on certain activities: Greater Manchester's violent gangs may sometimes have placed some of their focus on financial gain through drug-dealing, but their overwhelming focus was on reputation, defending territory, engaging in conflict, and committing 'tit for tat' violence (see Yablonsky 1962). Conversely, the region's enterprise gangs may have engaged in some (primarily instrumental) violence, but their overwhelming focus was on gaining financially from their crimes. The remainder of this chapter integrates the testimonies of my participants, and, primarily guided by Yablonsky's framework, sets out the different gang 'types' in Greater Manchester.

4.11 The Spontaneous Gathering

Just as I have replaced the term ‘delinquent gang’ with ‘enterprise gang’, I refer to Yablonsky’s ‘mob’ with a different term: the ‘spontaneous gathering’. This is to reflect the fact that the word ‘mob’ is language of Yablonsky’s era and is no longer regularly used in daily parlance: indeed, participants in my research did not use the term. However, several participants did refer to their involvement in spontaneous gatherings, taking part in collective, illegal acts. These gatherings were characterised by their near-instantaneous formations, and their activities rarely resulted in the accrual of financial gain. Participants had normally taken part in spontaneous gatherings during their adolescence, identifying these formative experiences as precursors to their involvement in gangs: participating in disorganized, spontaneous violence allowed these young people to show resistance to authority, and a willingness to engage in public, law-breaking acts. However, the *compositions* of spontaneous gatherings were the opposite to those of a gang. For example, reflecting the language of Yablonsky’s original study, Kelly (2011: 1) refers to a ‘mob’ as an “amorphous [group that] ... has little central focus, little organization or structure ... [and] no clear roles as leader or mediator or representative. These groups are commonly found in urban and race riots or in post catastrophe looting. It is a free-for-all” (Kelley 2011: 1). Likewise, participants in my research described the compositions of their spontaneous gatherings in terms which were the opposite of how they described gangs. Whereas many gangs were characterised by leadership, hierarchy and pre-existing social ties, a spontaneous gathering was composed of individuals who mostly did not know each other prior to the event:

During the Salford riots, it was just, basically, a whole lot of us got together. Just people from Salford. **And were these people you knew?** No, not really. Some of us were mates, but not all of us. We took part in what we saw as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It was our way of saying “these are our streets”; having pitched battles with the police, putting up barricades.

Ben, Non-Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

Years ago, when I used to be at school, it always used to be Asians against Whites. Like in Glodwick, where the riots was, there was never no whites allowed in there. And my part of Oldham, there was never no Asians allowed there. So, we’d cross into those areas to deliberately provoke fights. Just loads of fights, between schools and ... just madness, all over nothing really. Happened many times. **And who’d usually win those fights?** To be honest, we never really classed it who won or who lost. It just got stopped and that were it.

Either it got stopped by the Police or it just got out of hand and both of us just like separated.

Bill, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

There were many such accounts delivered by participants, who described the spontaneous nature of their collective violence, including the use of weapons and resulting serious injuries. Older participants also spoke of the role football hooliganism played in inculcating them with a propensity for violence prior to their involvement in gangs (see also Williams et al. 1984; Garland and Treadwell 2010). Analysing these accounts was also useful when attempting to define ‘the gang’, principally because, in many ways, spontaneous gatherings were the opposite of gangs: whereas several participants described gangs as characterized by a degree of planning and preparation, the spontaneous gatherings which pervaded the Greater Manchester riots of 2011 were “people just jumping on the bandwagon. Obviously, they heard about something and just wanted to join in. It’s not planned” (**Noah, Gang Member, HMP Manchester**). Such gatherings did not contain hierarchy, a division of roles, structure, or planned violence - things which could be attributed to many gangs. Numerous participants spoke of their experiences in such gatherings, which would often be characterised by extreme violence:

And it would just, like, happen. Groups from rival schools would batter each other. We’d use fists, weapons, tyre-wrenches, whatever. **Amir, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

I remember one time, I was only young, like, about 17. But I was outside a club, and I’d see a liberty being taken: a group of lads all attacking this one lad by himself. So, I had to act – to get involved. And before you knew it there was about thirty or forty lads. Some of me mates from inside the club come out to help me. And then, bottles are being broken over heads, me shoe came off, one of me mates got a chair and knocked another lad out. And I was kind of enjoying it, it’s a bit like an extreme sport. You don’t think of the injury side – you get over that, over the years. Cos, you couldn’t do it otherwise.

Tim, Former Offender, Manchester

The responses delivered by Amir and Tim illustrated the significant role held by violence in ‘spontaneous gatherings’. Incidents such as the ones above show how these gatherings often marked the beginning of one’s involvement in more serious delinquency. There was the germination of allegiances and conflict based along certain lines, such as “rival schools” (Amir). Another older, serving prisoner (**Tony, Non-Gang Member, HMP Manchester**) referred to “a lot of the scraps back in the day being about leathering someone for wearing a

rival football shirt, or even having a different accent, which showed you were from a different part of town”. Similarly, spontaneous gatherings could also show the beginnings of ideas around self-concept, purpose, and ‘a mission’: for example, getting involved in violence if one saw “a liberty being taken”. This notion of purpose was axiomatic to the violent gang, as I go on to illustrate in the next section of this chapter. Moreover, engagement in ‘spontaneous gatherings’ assisted individuals in becoming proficient at being able to ‘do’ violence, something which was necessary if one was to join a ‘near group’ or a ‘violent gang’. In the following section of this chapter, I describe the characteristics and delineations between these two gang ‘types’, and particularly focus on illustrating how the ‘near group’ transformed into the ‘violent gang’. I continue to draw on primary data gathered from gang members and use their testimonies to illustrate how progression occurred between these gang ‘types’ which were on a ‘gang continuum’.

4.12 The Contemporary Violent Gang

The central feature of the violent gang is that the gang is formed around a violent incident, having previously been a ‘near group’. (Yablonsky 1959⁴³; Kelley 2011). This group consists of peers who already know one another and may often congregate in public spaces with one another. However, one violent incident acts as the catalyst for transforming the ‘near group’ into a violent gang – Yablonsky argues that the response of the Courts, the police and other branches of law enforcement facilitates this transformation. In many ways, then, this theory is a precursor to labelling theory: that after a violent incident has taken place, law enforcement labels the ‘near-group’ as a ‘gang’. Once this process of labelling has been undertaken, the violent gang may subsequently engage in violent acts over a prolonged or concentrated period, usually until the point its members are arrested (Yablonsky 1997). As I have already stated, in my research, the process of transformation was usually more gradual. However, there were a limited number of instances where the violent gang formed from one ‘critical incident’ (see also Hagerdorn 1996), and this, in turn, affected how participants conceptualized the gang:

At that time, I used to hang around with a group of lads, use drink and drugs. And I used to have a huge Bowie knife - 12 ½ inch Bowie knife - strapped to my leg. And it was all part of trying to give an image. And one day, nothing I’m proud of – but I took advantage. We’d had a row with a group of lads, and so I ran out and pulled this knife and stabbed two guys. Never

⁴³ Although the principal framework of this chapter is drawn from Yablonsky’s 1962 theorization around ‘the violent gang’, I also draw on other works of Yablonsky (1959, 1997) which are relevant to the work of this thesis.

done anything like that in my life. The first real adult violence, I suppose. At first, I was surprised how easy it was – and that you could do it. And I hurt them very much. And I guess the gang formed from there, really. **Ron, Former Gang Member, Manchester**

How would you define a gang? They was me mates, innit? We all hung about together. One day I got attacked by Gooch members and that was it really. From that day it was straight riding. **Was there a process of recruitment?** No, like I say, they was just me mates, it's basically how it worked out. How it kinda happened. There was never no initiation or nothing. It's just the way things panned out. And in our case, it involved a lot of crime and violence, from the point I got attacked. There's a deep hatred from that point on.

Tony, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

Tony's response illustrated an example where gang activities were pursued in furtherance of a 'mission', with a "deep hatred" due to the first attack by members of Doddington Gang. This 'purpose' to the gang's violence is a development from the 'tribal' loyalties which many members of 'spontaneous groupings' displayed: based on area, football team, or school. However, for gang members such as Tony, these loyalties were to their street gang, solidified and perpetuated by the cycle of retaliatory violence in which rival gang members engaged. Moreover, both Ron and Tony could be described as part of 'near-groups' before they finally considered themselves as gang members. Yablonsky (1959:109) writes that, "near-groups are characterized by some of the following factors: (1) diffuse role definition, (2) limited cohesion, (3) impermanence, (4) minimum consensus of norms, (5) shifting membership, (6) diffuse membership and (7) limited definition of membership expectations". Several other participants in my research also described being affiliated to what could be described as 'near-groups'. Although Yablonsky does not go on to further describe each of these factors, he does outline several case studies of mid-twentieth century New York street gangs. Although the courts prosecuted these individuals as gang members, Yablonsky describes them as 'near group' members, attributing their excessive use of violence to factors such as a minimum consensus of norms and limited definition of membership expectations. 'Near groups' are also characterised as being composed of a shifting, impermanent group of 'gang boys', who often congregate for a specific instance of gratuitous violence or for retaliatory attacks.

The 'near groups' I studied also showed relatively low levels of permanence (i.e. exclusivity of membership). Further, there was also a limited definition of roles, norms and membership expectations (cf. delinquent gangs, below). Moreover, in many cases, there was a gradual

transformation of the ‘near-group’ into a gang, something which again affected how the gang was defined:

A gang’s a group of lads who are all from the same estate, like we were. We had all grown up on one estate from when we was all babies. So, like in our case, a gang’s a group made up of loads of lads, who eventually go on to commit crime together, committing violence and disorder together, that sort of thing. **David, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

A gang’s normally a group of kids: young people who like hanging about together, like we used to do when I was a kid. In my area, my street, we were seen as a gang cos there was about 40 of us who used to hang-around every night. No one could fuck with us. We used to go all over fighting and shit like that. So that’s what a gang is, you know?

Liam, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

Many other participants also raised themes that were similar to those discussed by David and Liam: that the gang was centred in one geographical area; that the members had grown up together; and that violence was utilized as a means of personal or territorial protection, or in relation to rivalries with other groups of youths. One theme which continually emerged was the fact that gangs predominantly originated from, and occupied, external areas such as housing estates and street environments. Indeed, many participants referred to ‘hanging about’ on the streets as being part of their definition of gangs (but see also Aldridge et al. 2001). As discussed earlier in this chapter, many existing studies consider street-presence as being axiomatic to a gang (Inciardi et al.1993). This need for inhabiting external spaces is something which has been referred to ever since Thrasher (1927) articulated ‘ganging’ as a process which involves socialization in external presence, which were termed “interstitial spaces”. Reflecting much of this scholarship, participants also included external environment (most commonly termed “the estate”) in their definitions of gangs:

I’d say a gang’s a group of guys that have grown up on the same estate, and back each other all the way: who trust each other with their lives because they’ve grown up together and are loyal. If that’s the case, then I’ve got a gang of three or four friends. Cos, we all grew up in the same area and we’re loyal to each other to the end.

James, Gang Member, HMP Manchester

A gang's a group of associates, really. That's what people normally see a gang as, don't they? A group of individuals who stick together and are on the streets. They're from the same estate, hang about on that estate. So, a gang's basically that: a team of likeminded people.

Steve, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

For me, a gang's a group of lads – of mates – from an area or an estate, who hang about together, fight, cause trouble. Like I'm from one of the roughest estates in Oldham. So, it's a bit deprived where I'm from. And gangs are tied to that environment.

Chris, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

Other participants highlighted how gang members would utilize their status to exert control over non-gang members who lived in their local area, victimizing and intimidating such individuals. For example, **Craig (Former Gang Member, HMP Manchester)** stated: "Our gang had a reputation for seriously hurting people, so we'd be respected in pubs. You'd sense a change in atmosphere, people would offer to buy us drinks. They was intimidated by us". Similarly, **Mark (Former Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank)** stated: "People feared us. Some of them would cross the road so they wouldn't go past. Or you'd hear people whispering behind your back, but they'd say nowt to your face, cos they knew what would happen. We weren't very nice". From their wider accounts, both Craig's and Mark's gang could be classified as a violent gang according to Yablonsky's typology. More broadly, some non-gang members who were interviewed integrated these characteristics into their accounts of what the term gang meant to them:

A gang, in my way of thinking, means that basically if you live somewhere, you can be part of a group to help with your fearful reputation; you're gonna put fear into other people, be recognized, intimidate people, to do what gangs normally do. Like, basically, they can sell drugs, they can go 'round hurting people, and start on people, that's part of being in a gang. Cause fear, cause violence, undermine people. Being a gang member can make it a bit easier for you to do that cos you know a lot of people, so people are fearful of you as well. But there's also competition, settling scores. So, it works both ways.

Martin, Non-Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

Although Martin referred to some of the instrumental activities of gangs (such as selling drugs and "settling scores"), the above definition focused more on how gangs "put fear into other people, intimidate people...cause fear, cause violence". Martin described the term 'gang' as a

group which sought to victimize others and enhance members' reputations through tactics of intimidation and violence. These 'group led' actions have often been identified as a core characteristic of gang membership (Hennigan and Spanovic 2012), where gang members attribute positive value to intimidating weaker opponents in front of their peers to accrue respect (de Jong 2012). Individuals may behave differently when acting *en masse*, whether the group in question is a gang or a looser group of individuals acting collectively to fulfil a common, violent goal (Densely 2013)⁴⁴. Moreover, participants' responses corroborated accounts in the existing literature, which illustrate the central role held by violence in such gangs (Yablonsky 1962; Bjorgo 2016).

In Yablonsky's (1959) definition of the violent gang, great focus is placed upon gang members' desires to defend their 'home turf': often, the violent incidents which transform a 'near-group' into a gang involves attacking members of rival groups for impeding on their territory. In my research, this importance given to place and space was also noticeable. For example, some prison gang members would announce their area at the start of interviews. Individuals became gang members through living in the same housing estate or road, and, consequently, the gang was framed in terms which placed great importance on area as part of this definition. Moreover, the Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang were both named after the roads on which they originally formed. Almost all participants agreed that there was rarely a formalized process of recruitment, but there was still an underlying requirement to be from the same area. Indeed, geographical regions and locales played a central role in the formation of gangs. Existing criminological studies have scrutinized the role played by 'the street' in gang formation, and the effect life 'on road' has on the gang (Gunter 2015; Earle 2012; Earle and Phillips 2012). Through referring to their lives 'on road', gang members indicate the vicissitudes and tribulations faced through spending much of their lives in the literal open spaces of urban conurbations (Earle 2012). However, 'the streets' and life 'on road' are also symbolic of a life which is centred around external locales, which are often protected at great cost. In my research, when asking participants about their life histories, factors such as homelessness, estrangement from family and experiences with care homes led to individuals orienteering much of their early lives on 'the streets'. Reflecting Nozick's (1979) conceptualization of a 'night watchman state' – symbolized by an absence of all but essential state actors – many participants spoke of

⁴⁴ Also connected to this is the finding that gang members tend to show lower levels of empathy in relation to violence and violent offences (Salas-Wright 2013), which is dealt with further in Chapter Six of this thesis.

absconding from care homes where limited supervision was provided (see also Shaw 2015), growing up in regions where there was limited state involvement in ensuring their well-being (see also Wacquant 1998), and therefore socializing and fraternizing on the streets. Several prison officers referred to prisoners as ‘street lads’, which was not a pejorative term. Instead, it reflected the view that “it’s the streets that make you” (**Ray, Gang Member, HMP Manchester**). Gang membership was predicated on pre-existing friendships and social ties, meaning that most gang members could leave and join the gang with little difficulty. For some, gang membership was characterised by liminality, and this was reflected in the processes of joining and leaving the gang:

And in terms of numbers, did Gooch and Doddington have very wide membership bases? I don’t know if it was membership, as is when you go and join an organization, and become a member. **That’s what another guy was saying. That it’s the wrong word to use.** Yes, it is - it is the wrong word to use. **So, what would you say instead of membership?** Well, I wouldn’t say membership, cos it started off as just friends. And later, they could leave the gang, if you wanna call it that. **Leanne, Youth Worker, Manchester**

There’s no such thing as even, I’d say, recruiting. A gang’s basically the lads you chill with and mix with. If you’ve got a lad you’re friends with, and he’s part of a group and got beef with another guy, just out of friendship you’ll be willing to hurt that guy for your friend or join the group. And the minute you join in, suddenly, in the eyes of the guys you’re attacking, you’ve made yourself a gang. **James, Former Gang Member, HMP Manchester**

Yablonsky’s central argument states that after a violent incident, gang status becomes ascribed to the ‘near-group’: the police or the courts label the group as being a gang, a label which members later identify with. James’ description bears some parallels to this, as he argues that after a violent incident, rival groups may apply the label of ‘gang’ to individuals who seek revenge or retribution for their peers. James was affiliated with Doddington Gang, and Leanne had worked with many Doddington Gang and Gooch Gang members. Both gangs could accurately be described as having started as ‘near-groups’ and formed into violent gangs. Moreover, whilst both gangs focused much of their attention on protecting their home turf and engaging in violence with rivals, drug dealing also formed one component of their activities. Many other participants also identified the twin roles of violence and drug dealing which typified many violent gangs in Greater Manchester:

A gang's a group of lads, a group of friends who go to school together and help one another to commit crime: all sorts of stuff. Selling drugs. **And how many levels were there would you say?** You got your soldiers, and then you got your lieutenants and commanders⁴⁵. They're not called that, but you know what they mean in the pecking order. In the gang I'd say I was at the bottom. I never got out of being...I was basically a joey. **And how do leaders get chosen?** Experience. How long he's been in it. How ruthless he is, shootings, violence.

Mark, Former Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

Although Yablonsky, writing in the mid-twentieth century, does not refer to drug dealing, he does identify that once the 'near-group' has become the violent gang, membership becomes less diffuse: there is a greater level of delineation between the different ranks of members. Yablonsky identifies six levels of membership which are apparent in violent gangs: veterans, who have the highest 'rep' and are at the core of the gang; soldiers, who are 'rank and file' gang members and number between 10 and 20; 'wannabes' who are active in committing crimes and aspiring to become bona fide gang members; 'groupies', who are on the periphery of gangs and imitate gang members; local residents, who may be peers or relations of gang members and may be forced to join the gang; and former gang members, who have left the gang but may still visit active gang members" (Yablonsky 1997 cited in Kelley 2011:2). Surprisingly, some participants used precisely these terms to define membership of their violent gangs: some gang members referred to themselves as 'soldiers', one gang member talked about "putting in work to build your rep", almost the same phrase used by Yablonsky (wannabees...are "putting in work" [and] "building rep" (Yablonsky 1997; Kelley 2011:2). Another gang member specifically mentioned "what I call gangster groupies...the lads who stand around wanting to part of it be it...those are the ones I have least respect for" (**James, Former Gang Member, HMP Manchester**). Using the term 'groupies', James' account directly reflected that of Yablonsky's classification of "groupies". Moreover, several participants spoke extensively on the topic of hierarchy:

⁴⁵ Mark's response offered the starkest application of militaristic terminology to gang structures. Other participants also used the term "soldiers" and words such as "war" when describing gangs and gang activity. Further, there were some participants who drew direct parallels between street gangs and paramilitary organisations (see, e.g. p.109) as well as describing the fact some gang members had been born in warzones before their families had migrated to the U.K., something I describe in greater detail in the chapter "Evolution of Manchester's Street Gangs".

And how organised were these gangs? It's not organised. See, I know about armed robberies and I know about armed robbery teams. That's organised. That's very organised. But a lot of the violence and murders that happened with our gangs wasn't an organised thing. A lot of the murders I know, it wasn't planned. Say it was just like a group of guys go out together to a pub, bump into a rival and started shooting them. It's nothing organised.

James, Former Gang Member, HMP Manchester

A gang's where you've got a few of youse who hang together. Obviously, you've got a leader and people who do whatever you want them to do, so that's what gangs are to me. I was in gangs; but I was only young then, and got told what to do: hurt people, shoot people, stab people, various things. **Nick, Former Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

Both Nick and James' gangs could be classified as being members of violent gangs: except for some drug-dealing which their members engaged in, their activities were overwhelmingly centred on violence. Moreover, the nature of their activities had a direct bearing on how their members conceptualized 'the gang'. Yablonsky's focus on violence as being the lynchpin of the 'near group' (and later of the violent gang) reflects other research which contends that "violence in gangs is universal and has been identified consistently across various methodologies...[the] five different motives for violence that may operate in gangs at any one time [are]: first, territoriality; second, revenge; third, intra-gang violence; fourth, status; and fifth, instrumental violence" (Beresford and Wood 2016:149). According to Yablonsky's typology, the first four motives are all characteristics of the violent gang, whereas instrumental violence is a characteristic of the more structured, more organised delinquent gang. However, Nick's response also shows that not all violent gangs were equally loosely structured: Nick's gang had "a leader...a pecking order...people at the bottom", and, whilst not as well-defined as delinquent gangs (see further, below), his gang was one of the region's more structured violent gangs. As Nick stated, such gangs were characterised as "a few of youse...who hang together...hurt people, shoot people, stab people, various things". Further, although there were different levels of membership, it was not as organised as gangs which focused more on financially-oriented offending (see further, below). As James stated, "a lot of the violence and murders that happened with our gangs wasn't organised...wasn't planned". Indeed, the structure and activities of a gang were often directly related to how they were defined. However, what became clear was that certain gangs could clearly be placed under the rubric of violent gang. The following account delivered by John encompassed how he conceptualized a

gang with reference to territoriality, revenge, status and instrumental violence (four of the five motives outlined by Beresford and Wood 2016):

For me, a gang is a group made up of members who actively sells drugs for the gang...or are violent on behalf of the gang. Or whenever they see another gang member from a rival gang, hurt them for the gang. Like me nephew died a few years ago, he was a hard-core Gooch Gang member. Therefore, he wouldn't even need to know if that person was Doddington Gang. It was on all the time. Same with him. So, he is what I could call a gang member. And the guys he rolled with, I'd call them a gang. **John, Non-Gang Member, HMP Manchester**

In the above excerpt, John's definition gives a central role to violence. Moreover, the two gangs he refers to were based in specific areas, and much of the inter-gang violence described was to do with territoriality, as well issues around revenge, status, 'tit-for-tat' shootings and the drug 'war' which had occurred between the two gangs in the 1990s and 2000s. Moreover, the nature of this inter-gang conflict meant that even individuals who were not "hardcore" gang members would often become the victims of violence, simply for associating or being friends with gang members (see also Garot 2010; Squires 2011:154). Reflecting much of the existing research, such gangs normally germinated during adolescence, often arising from a peer-group; this is reflected in the youthful composition of many gangs (Matsuda et al. 2011). Consequently, violence and camaraderie developed amongst such groups from an early age (Harland and McCready 2015; Fraser 2015; Densely 2013), and were then transferred to the activities of the gang:

How would you define a gang? I don't know. I mean, when I were at school, we had our little gang, know what I mean? It was just you and your mates, innit? I never really thought about it to be honest. I always classed it as a gang of mates, a little group of us and that. A little set group who'd just be involved in fighting and stuff. Loads of fights and violence.

Eddie, Former Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

A gang's basically a group of four, five maybe ten lads that grow up, are born and bred on the same estate, going to each other's schools, parties. And then they become start selling drugs and it progresses from there. **Gordon, Non-Gang Member, HMP Manchester**

Such gangs were loosely structured, often thought of as "a gang of mates" or "a group of four, five lads". Such characterisations of the violent gang have been attributed from the earliest

works on this subject (see, e.g. Thrasher 1924). For example, Alexander (2008:8) states that, “Thrasher understood ‘the gang’ primarily as a ‘play group’ which provided an important source of social support in the transitional period between childhood and adulthood, particularly in environments characterized by socio-economic marginalization and social disorganization”. In the final part of this chapter, I aim to illustrate how enterprise gangs were different to ‘mobs’ and violent gangs: that their greater levels of structure and organisation were acknowledged by many participants. Further, and finally, I seek to show how, in a rare number of instances, different types of gangs existed on a continuum: members of the ‘violent gang’ sometimes transitioned to become members of the ‘enterprise gang’. Through having spent much of their adolescence affiliated to a ‘violent gang’, members had become proficient at ‘doing’ violence. These same individuals were then able to progress to form an ‘enterprise gang’, where violence was not utilized to merely defend street-territory, enhance reputation and exact revenge. Although these themes still all played a role in the lives of ‘enterprise gang’ members, violence could now be used to make “serious money”: extorting businesses, committing armed robberies, kidnapping and robbing wealthy home owners, and overseeing the importation of large quantities of Class A drugs. All these activities were enhanced if one was able to ‘do’ serious violence and had a reputation for being able to ‘carry out’ such violence when necessary. In the final section of this chapter, I outline how such gang members formed ‘enterprise gangs’, where pecuniary interest was the ‘end goal’ and was often secured through violent means.

4.13 The Enterprise Gang

Throughout my research, several participants made a distinction between what I have termed ‘enterprise gangs’ and youth street gangs. Enterprise gangs were typically more organised and structured. According to Yablonsky’s typology, a more restrictive membership-base and greater levels of organization characterize such gangs, as compared to violent gangs. Although Yablonsky’s research referred to these structured, organized gangs as ‘delinquent gangs’, I found that these gang members engaged in more than ‘delinquency’, and thus I have used Densley’s (2012) term ‘the enterprise gang’ throughout the remainder of this chapter. In Yablonsky’s earlier research, such enterprise gangs were closely associated to the ‘near group’ (see, e.g., Yablonsky 1959). However, in his later work Yablonsky predominantly describes the enterprise gang with reference to its tight organization, focus on pecuniary interests and restricted membership base (see, e.g. Haskell and Yablonsky 1982). Accordingly, although

Yablonsky continued to contend that both the violent and enterprise gang stemmed from the near-group, a clearer distinction was made between the two categories.

Through the following section of this chapter, I use the term enterprise gang to refer to gangs which Yablonsky described as more structured, more organised, and more focused on securing financial benefits than violent gangs⁴⁶. Although only a few of my research participants spoke of being familiar with these typologies, their responses often reflected a similar means of conceptualizing the two types of gangs. As James' response (above) showed, "armed robbery teams" were depicted as organised gangs, whereas street gangs such the Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang would engage in spontaneous disputes, often over perceived slights, insults or rivalries (see also Anderson 1999). This was a sentiment shared by other participants:

And as your organisation works to reduce gang violence, my first question would be, how do you define a gang? You see, I call it youth violence rather than gangs. It's not gangs, because if you look the structure of a gang, it has hierarchy. The groups in this area haven't got that; the structure's not there to call it gangs – it's sporadic. So, I would call it more youth violence. A mafia-like structure would be more of a gang, but the youth we work with don't have that, yeh? Salford has more of a criminal fraternity at the top, and then like the little foot-soldiers at the bottom, structured groups: that's gangs. And them guys are a network, engaging in supply and demand - all these different factions; that's gangs.

Paul, Youth Worker, Manchester

Like most participants in my research, Paul identified disorganised, group-based "youth violence" as being a distinct entity from structured "mafia-like" gangs with a "criminal fraternity at the top, and...little foot-soldiers at the bottom". A few other participants made references to the mafia, often seen as the 'ultimate gang' (see, e.g. Lewis 1963; Gambetta 1999). Moreover, such discussions often strayed into the territory of organised crime. Indeed, any gangs which were described in these terms were very clearly at the far end of Yablonsky's typology: highly-organised, cohesive entities with clear criteria for becoming a member. A further point to bear in mind is that much of the criminological scholarship creates a distinct division between the two main gang types (see, e.g., Haskell and Yablonsky 1982; Thornberry et al. 1993), describing these two gang types as existing in parallel spheres. This was true to a

⁴⁶ Enterprise gangs were close in their compositions and activities to organised crime gangs; indeed, many of their members had working relationships with the region's OCGs.

certain extent in my research: most gang members could neatly be placed as belonging to one or other gang 'type'. However, as I indicated earlier in the chapter, this was not always the case: there were gang members who started off engaging in mob-based violence and actions, only later transitioning to becoming gang members. There was also a minority of participants who began their offending histories as part of a violent gang, later moving on to become part of an enterprise gang.

Densley (2013: Ch. 2) traces a similar pattern of evolution for some gangs: from 'recreational' gangs/peer groups "borne out of familial connections and friendships" to 'crime' gangs, which focus on violence and delinquency, and which go on to become 'enterprise' gangs interested in more pecuniary crimes. Densley outlines the final stage as the formation of 'governance' gangs, whose members are "not only...suppliers of illegal goods and services ... but aspire to be the sole suppliers of them in a given domain". This developmental pattern encompasses groups involved in various forms of offending practices, some more spontaneous and others more centred on organised crime. Densley's 'crime gang' can be most closely linked to Yablonsky's violent gang, and Densley's 'enterprise gang' is similar in its characteristics to Yablonsky's delinquent gang. Such demarcations could be seen to exist within some of the gangs which operated in the sample region, with there being a few instances of gangs whose members transformed from their 'recreational' origins to becoming more focused on accumulating pecuniary benefits:

For me, a gang would be classed as a group of affiliated people. It's...people who've been brought up on an estate together, you're round certain people, so they affiliate themselves to certain people's names. It starts off from car-crime, thieving, the estate where you come from. We all grew up on the one estate. But soon it moves on to get the wages- to get the money. Car-jackings, shootings, whatever the price, you do it for the money. And then it becomes organised, along a drug-line: and supplying drugs was my gang's bread and butter.

George, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

It started off by twocking and joyriding. Everyone was at it when we were younger. You just get a buzz from doing it. Then you move on to earning money – robberies and burglaries. And then you use some of the money you've copped to buy drugs and then planning to sell them on. We bought crack, we bought smack, we bought some guns, just for the heck of it ... just to hold on to. And so yeh, it started from hanging around in the estate, and now I'm in here down as a crime gang. **David, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

George's and David's accounts show a rapid progression from involvement in street-based gangs to involvement in more serious, organised crimes. More usually, and in line with Yablonsky's typology, gang members whom I interviewed for this study 'transitioned' from one gang 'type' to another more gradually. David's account (above) shows how he "started off by twocking" eventually moving on "to earning money"; this aim of accumulating financial reward was central to the enterprise gang. Indeed, David's life-trajectory was somewhat atypical, and he almost progressed straight from the 'near group' to the 'enterprise gang'. More usually, these two stages would occur either side of one's affiliation to a violent gang. Through being affiliated to such a gang, individuals were able to learn the 'skill' of violence. In fact, for some participants, their gang's activities – and these 'skill sets' of gang members – formed part of their operationalization of the term 'gang':

If you think about your mates in college, you've probably got one electrician, one plumber, one carpenter. Street life's no different. You've got one mate in the gang who does the stealing, one who does the shooting, one who can sell you the firearms.

Zain, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

I'd say, with a group of lads, each person knows a little bit of something. And then, once you get together, you all add the bits together and before you know it, you're at a point where you feel you can do this, all do it together. You all work together...like a gang or a team.

Karl, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

Historically, there have often been descriptions of this 'division of labour' within gangs - as well as in crime more generally (see, e.g., Parr 1964). Moreover, certain participants in my research not only articulated these divisions, but also conceptualized gangs by referring to wider society: Zain drew parallels between legitimate occupations and criminal enterprise. Members of delinquent gangs also more frequently spoke of concepts such as family, brotherhood and loyalty, illustrating the deeper bonds which existed between those who were involved in such gangs:

To me a gang means family. It's people that are there for you to rely on, and you're there for them to rely on as well. Doesn't always have to mean violence and crime. It could just mean, you know, you could be down in the dumps and need someone to talk to. But cause you're with them all the time, you're close, you can talk to them about it. And, they're just there to

help each other whenever they need it, and when you need it yourself. Obviously, we are criminals gang members, but I'm sayin', it doesn't always revolve around that.

James, Gang Member, HMP Manchester

Many of these gangs, then, were characterized by tight social networks, with definite and restricted membership criteria; members engaged in social as well as law-breaking acts (see also Yablonsky 1997). Mark's response encapsulates the filial nature of the bonds which existed between gang members, who both helped each other and engaged in collective crimes. Much of the existing literature places great importance on viewing gangs as social networks composed of a range of interconnected social actors (see, e.g. Everton 2013; Campana 2013), Although participants in my research did not use the term 'network', there were many descriptions of the interconnected nature of 'the gang': that, at its most basic level, a gang is "a group of peers" (**Lionel, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**) characterized by multifarious relationships. This was more nuanced for delinquent gangs, whose membership bases would be more restrictive due to the greater levels of planning and organization behind their activities, and the greater consequences if details about crimes were revealed to those outside of the gang:

And as an active gang member, what does your gang mean to you? They're me friends, innit? I trust them, man. Some of my friends could have got me lifed-off for some of the things I used to do, and did on a daily basis, know what I mean? We got up to some crazy shit. **Alf, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

"Trust", then, was a key component of the delinquent gang. These gang members spoke of cohesive group identity in far stronger terms than did members of violent gangs, whose members were younger and involved in less serious forms of illegal practices, consequently leading to trust being a less valued commodity. Some participants also identified the notion of common purpose:

If there's just a group that's thieving - just a random group you meet up and that, old friends or whatever - I wouldn't call that a gang. A gang and that like, there's rules, ain't there? You get initiated into a gang. A gang is when you've all got a collective purpose, innit? I suppose to use an analogy it's like bees or ants. You've got a head – the General or Queen. Then it goes down, then you got your soldiers and all that. There's structure to it, whereas in a group there isn't. In America, the gangs are young kids. And in war-torn countries now and stuff,

I'd class them as gangs. ISIS I'd class as a gang; the Tutsis and Hutus I'd class as gangs⁴⁷.

Sam, Non-Gang Member, HMP Manchester (own emphasis)

Several participants made this distinction between structured-gangs (termed 'enterprise gangs' in this chapter) and more general group-offending. The hallmark of a structured-gang was that its members' actions were centred around a "common purpose" (see above) as well involving higher levels of planning and organisation. There was a hierarchy of members, which Sam illustrated by drawing comparisons to "bees or ants" headed by a "General or Queen" with "soldiers" at the lower levels. Sam's definition could also be viewed as being more 'operational' than the purely descriptive definitions which were offered by some other participants, who mainly spoke of the activities undertaken. Sam also spoke of initiations sometimes being a feature of these gangs. Therefore, unlike Yablonsky's 'near group', where violence was spontaneous and often deployed without a rationale, the organised activities was what typified delinquent gangs:

I was involved in conspiracy to commit burglary and robbery; the police said I was part of a gang. But I don't see it as that. **And why did they say that?** Cos there was eight of us. And they said we was a gang of thieves going out conspiring to commit burglaries and things like that. **And why don't see it that way?** Cos I'm not part of no gang. **What do you think a gang is?** It's when you organise the crime you're gonna do; when you plan it and shit like that. Obviously, you plan to do shit. My shit weren't planned. And the eight of us was just mates. It wasn't like there was a leader or owt. **Bill, Non-Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

Bill was emphatic in stating that he wasn't a gang member because, in his opinion, a gang was characterized by its organization ("it's when you organise the crime you're gonna do; when you plan it and shit like that"). Because his crime "weren't planned" he was clear in stating "I'm not part of no gang". Further, Bill's reference to the fact that his 'gang' did not have a leader again goes back to hierarchy as being axiomatic to the delinquent gang. Many participants referred to this gradation of members, something which was often contingent upon age. **Alex, (Gang Member, HMP Manchester)**, was most explicit in stating this, describing his gang as being "made of me, one or two elders above me, and then all the youngers below

⁴⁷ Sam response showed the parallels which existed between street gangs and some terrorist organizations; these are linkages which contemporary criminological studies have begun to interrogate (e.g. Decker and Pyrooz 2011, 2015).

me. So, the young lads in here [prison] are basically the junior gang members who do what I tell them to do; and then, like I said, I've got a couple of rungs above me who I answer to". Another participant, affiliated to a different gang, delivered a slightly different account of the role age played in shaping his gang's hierarchy:

I could have, like, control over the younger ones; I could make orders to the younger ones. But I couldn't have no control over the older ones. They've got control over me, if anything. **And what's that based on?** Pretty much on age. Or maybe if someone's been out there, consistently putting the work in. They've earned that respect. They could be the same age as me, but they could have put a thousand times more work than what I've put in. So, you know, they've got that respect. Same respect as what you'd give to your elders.

Kristopher, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

Kristopher's response shows how the themes of power and status underpinned the gang's hierarchy, shaping many of its members' daily interactions with one another. His response also shows how age was a strong predictor of one's position in the gang, but that this was also influenced by "putting the work in" for the gang. Kristopher and Bill were not the only participants who spoke of "elders" and "youngers". Although such terms are more often associated with London gangs (Pitts 2008; Densely 2013), the central role played by age within a gang is something which the wider literature reflects. For example, Bjorgo (2016: 71) states, "group must satisfy at least three criteria in order to be considered a gang in a criminological sense: a gang is an age-graded peer group that exhibits some permanence, engages in criminal activity as a core activity and has some symbolic representation of group membership" (my emphasis). Unlike the violent gangs which were referred to earlier in this chapter, delinquent gangs – which were concerned with committing more sophisticated, planned offences – contained a wider cross-section of ages, hence, allowing for there to be an 'age-graded' dimension to the gang's hierarchy. Jason delivered a similar account, tying his age with the role he occupied within the gang:

The people higher up have links to drug lines and stuff. I was more or less a solidier. So, if summat had to be done, I'd be picked to do it. If I had to carry drugs, carry firearms etcetera. **And how many levels were there would you say?** You got your soldiers, and then you got your lieutenants and commanders. It's like a little army...you'll have your lieutenants and your sergeants...obviously they're not called that, but you know what they mean in the pecking order. In the gang I'd say I was at the bottom. I never got out of being...I was

basically a joey. Cos I was only young...only in the gang between 19 and 25. **And how do leaders get chosen?** Age and experience, really.

Jason, Former Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

For participants such as Bill, Kristopher and Jason, gangs occupied a central role in their adult lives. The existing literature has also identified the integral role gangs play in their members' conceptualizations of self-identity: that is to say, a gang may be integral to a person's definition of who they are, especially if they view the gang's 'groupness', such as cohesion, in strong terms (Hennigan and Spanovic 2012:135). Returning to Yablonsky's typology, this cohesion was, again, more apparent for those affiliated to delinquent gangs, rather than violent gangs. The latter was often viewed as a passing 'phase' associated with adolescence and one's school years. Violent gang members whom I interviewed had often left the gang by their earlier twenties, illustrating how such gangs were characterised by an "impermanence and fluidity of gang formation and membership" (Yablonsky cited in Alexander 2008:9). Conversely, members of delinquent gangs ranged in age from late-teens to early thirties. For delinquent gang members who participated in my research, this cohesive group identity was borne out of the fact that many spent extensive periods of time with their gang. Consequently, the gang was characterised by some participants in familial terms:

A gang's a group of lads who do everything together. We're like brothers to tell you the truth.

Wayne, Gang Member, HMP Manchester

To me, a gang's classed as a family: ten of you who are all willing to fight for each other or to sell drugs together. That's what's class as a gang, you know what I mean? In some ways, it's like a family: "We'll do anything for you, no matter what". If it's not like that, then it's not a gang. Then I don't think it's really right to call a group a gang

Max, Gang Member, HMP Manchester

How would you define a gang? It's our firm, innit? A group of people. We work together, live together, chill together, that's what it means. Like you're second family. That's what it's like. That's what it means. It's not necessary always you're violent or you're against someone. For me it's just a group of strong people, strong individuals, strong leaders that represent. Obviously, you get mixed up with crime, drugs, cos you got that power. But it's also about protection. **Zulfikar, Gang Member, Manchester**

Viewing the gang as “effectively a second family” (Zulfikar) and “like brothers” (Wayne) were two examples highlighting the familial nature of the gang. Alexander (2008:9) notes how “Yablonsky’s influential study of *The Violent Gang* ... thus saw ‘gangs’ as an alternative family where delinquent and criminal careers are nurtured, and where ‘gang’ membership becomes conflictual with family and community norm”. Whilst this should be distinguished from members of the same family belonging to the one gang (Ianni 1976), gang members were keen to acknowledge that viewing the gang as a family could offer protection and other pro-social benefits in addition to assistance when committing offences. Jason, for example, stated that he “got into the gang cos I was homeless, so it was like a family. I was estranged from me actual family, and so the gang was like a family. I had people there that were like me mates, but they were also like family to me”. Viewing the gang as “effectively...a family” meant that delinquent gang members would often spend considerable periods of time with one another, allowing for there to be detailed preparation and planning behind offences. As I have illustrated earlier in this chapter, the offences carried out by violent gangs were characterised by distinctly different properties: random fights and acts of violence carried out with limited preparation and usually not to accrue financial gain. The following participant summarized the differences between what this thesis terms the delinquent gang and the violent gang:

Our gang was about socializing cos we were all mates, and for us it was about burglaries and making money. Whereas with other gangs, you’ve got a name, you’re defending your area, causing chaos wherever you do, doing shootings, fighting, intimidating other gangs, selling drugs and other bits and bobs for the gang. **Dom, Gang Member, HMP Manchester**

According to Yablonsky’s (1962) typology, Dom would be described as being affiliated to a delinquent gang: focused more on financial gain, socialization and less on unplanned violence. Dom’s gang was further away from the ‘near group’ than were the less structured violent gangs. Moreover, delinquent gangs were often described in familial terms, and there were occasions when such gangs were also described using phrases which could be applied to legitimate businesses. For example, Zulfikar referred to his gang as “our firm”. There were other participants who used the same phrase, reflecting the organised, financially-oriented ‘goal focused’ nature of such gangs:

A gang could be a few people working together, innit? Like a team...a gang associated to a certain thing. Like, with my gang, there’s a firm of us who are associated, my mates and that.

That's my gang: my mates out there now who still deal drug lines – deal Class A's. Certain people associated to that line. **Rob, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

As I have indicated earlier in this chapter, whilst my research showed drug-dealing to be a component of most gangs' activities, the types of drugs dealt, scale of activities and levels of organisation varied considerably. Violent gangs were predominantly engaged in crack cocaine distribution (see also Klein et al. 1991) whereas enterprise gangs often focused their activities on powdered cocaine and heroin. Again, these were not distinct demarcations, and there were considerable degrees of overlap. However, what became crystallized through the process of interviewing several prisoners was that almost all enterprise gang members framed their activities in terms of *making money*: this was why enterprise gang members focused more on importing large scales of Class A drugs, rather than engaging in the less profitable activity of street dealing. However, whereas some of these gang members used terms such as 'family', 'brotherhood' and 'loyalty' there were a minority who framed the enterprise gang in purely instrumental terms:

Before I dealt drugs, I used to rob. Rob everything really – shops, lorries, mostly in the night, like. With a few other people. **And what about the drug dealing gang you were a part of more recently?** We'd just get the drugs and then start up by ourselves...go somewhere, like a destination. After importing, we'd set up shop there and sell it on to the street dealers; just Class A's really. I was importing it and I'd make my money off it. And, I suppose, in a way we were a gang, but I think a gang's more when you're doing everything together. Like standing on the street corners. But after making money, we'd go for a drink and then we'd go home to our girlfriends. We wouldn't be out on the streets and stuff like that. For us it was about making money, to buy nice houses, cars, take the kids on holiday. But it gets called a drugs gang. **Richard, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

Richard was one of a few participants who had begun in a violent gang – as opposed to a 'near group' – later moving onto a 'drugs gangs', which was characterised by the organisation and structure which is typical for the enterprise gang. Richard's life-trajectory had seen limited street-based interactions, something that he was keen to highlight during his interview. There were also other prisoners who also operationalized the term 'gang' in very specific terms, with one participant stating: "And you've got fraud gangs, drug gangs, sex gangs, all sorts of gangs" (**Joe, Non-Gang Member, HMP Manchester**). These perspectives illustrated a very operational definition of the gang, far removed from the concepts of family and togetherness

other participants spoke of. Richard pro-actively drew a distinction between his gang and gangs which would be “out on the street and stuff like that. We’d just do things with the money”. Richard’s response specifically highlighted that his gang did not participate in any social activities and became more like a business. In so doing, his description of the enterprise gang characterized it in slightly different terms to those of Zulfikar’s and Rob’s descriptions: Richard described a group of individuals “putting in work” by conducting illegal activities to gain financial rewards, but not spending all their time with one another. This was something also highlighted by a few other participants:

To me it means a group of people who’s working together, they may not always be together, but they’re working together, and they’re thinking of doing negative rather than positive things. So, a gang is a group of people who you may see together, who have the same mind-set, and all have the same aim. And that’s what I consider, from what’s been going on, to be a gang. **Leanne, Youth Worker, Manchester** (original emphasis)

Ours weren’t gangs that just sit on the street and look for other people; we were people who were working together and looking after each other. If anything happened to one of them, you’d go them to help him, sort the problem out. You’re working together, selling drugs together, doing whatever together. You’re committing crime but youse are all benefiting from it; money from the crime. **Daniel, Former Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

Sharon and Daniel both described the gang with specific reference to the fact that it is a “group of people...working together... [but] they may not always be together” (Sharon), and not “gangs that just sit on the street” (Daniel). These references to ‘the street’, and not always being together are indicative of the fact that some participants drew distinctions between primarily street-based gangs (see, e.g. Thrasher 1927; Yablonsky 1962) and financially-oriented gangs. There were, then, a range of similarities and differences between the two primary ‘types’ of gangs which operated at the sample region. What became clear from my research is that gangs existed on a continuum, and gang members were aware of this. Participants acknowledged that there were different gangs, which is why presenting a unifying operational definition of ‘the gang’ is a difficult exercise to complete, although I argue that my definition adequately captures most gangs with whom I came into contact. Even violent gangs, characterised by youthful, impermanent membership, would still include individuals “with their own sets of beliefs. Ours was a gang that would set people straight if they crossed us, but we still had our own beliefs.

So that's a gang to me: a set of individuals with their own beliefs" (**Ali, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**). More broadly, gangs could be described as "something that has an appeal to high loyalties, there's a coherence to their activities, there's an us and them mentality, there's icons, imagery, wearing of clothes, or use of tattoos or use of certain images for gang members. So that's a kind of tapestry of gangs" (**Pete, Gang Researcher, Salford**). Accordingly, even gangs which were predominantly characterised through street-based violence would have this "appeal to higher loyalties", something illustrated by Yablonsky's (1962, 1997) research into the violent gang. Although it was difficult to operationalize the gang, one of the underlying themes to gang membership was the sense of belonging and acceptance gained through becoming affiliated; whether this was achieved through participating in violence within the gang, or accumulating wealth on behalf of the gang. Towards the end of my fieldwork, a Salford-based gang researcher provided a vividly descriptive definition of the gang. Whilst this was not an operational definition, it aptly captured the rationale underlying much of the gang activity he had witnessed both in England and in Pakistan. His response illustrated why the gang was often a highly-durable entity that engendered great levels of loyalty:

Gang members ask: what will they gain? What will the gang provide for them? And it's also about protection. So, it's sort of like saying the gang gives you sustenance; it'll give you your income, it'll give you your father and mother; it'll give you your brothers, your sisters. It will give you a family. And you will also have a form of sustenance: in some countries this would be food, clothes, shelter. And in Britain you have a more diffuse situation, at times, where you have people who are affiliated along different fault lines and different stress points.

Bilal, Gang Researcher, Salford

Bilal acknowledged the different parameters of the gang in different countries: that in some, the gang provided "sustenance" in the basic sense (see, e.g. Symkovych 2014; Naterer 2016), whereas in modern Britain, gangs could be defined in terms that are more diffuse. Historically, too, gangs have been more centred on the provision of necessities (see, e.g. Thrasher 1927; Ianni et al 1977), and 'the street' features with varying prominence in the gang depending on the time in history, country and geographical location. Throughout my research, it became clear that the gang was often defined in deeply personal terms.

CHAPTER FIVE:

GREATER MANCHESTER'S STREET GANGS – THE PRESENT

5.1 The Legacy of Gooch and Doddington

At the time of writing, Greater Manchester's gang situation remains complex and changing. Clearly, the situation is different to how it was at the height of the internecine 'gang war', which gripped south Manchester up until the mid-2000s: a 'war' that was characterized through the centrality of violence (Bullock and Tilley 2002; Pitts 2011; Goldson 2011). In the following years, after 2007/2008, there was a noticeable decline in the number of shootings; in many ways, a change that occurred "slowly, then all at once" (Hemmingway 1926 cited in Densely 2013)⁴⁸. Participants whom I interviewed presented many reasons as to why this change occurred: some identified the imprisonment, death and incapacitation of the 'core' Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang members as one reason behind the significant drop in shootings; others, such as former members of the two gangs, noted that they had reached the 'turning points' in their lives, something which Sampson and Laub (1993) refer to in wider criminology: factors such as growing older, forming attachments to spouses and children, getting jobs (see also Glueck and Glueck). This has led to a yearly decrease in gun crime and gang violence from 2007/08 onwards.

At present, however, South Manchester has witnessed yet another resurgence in gang activity, after the steady decline over the past decade. The streets of south Manchester demonstrate a more noticeable degree of investment as compared to the other deprived locales of the county. There are several newly built terraced houses, shops, youth clubs and centres. However, as early as 2015 there were signs of a return to the previous, heightened levels of violence: first there was a drive-by shooting in early 2015, followed by more firearms incidents throughout the year. By 2016, there was a spate of shootings in the region, including one incident where a youth was murdered after deliberately being run-over (Abbit et al. 2016). By 2017, there were further shootings, with reports indicating a resurgence of a feud between off-shoots of the Gooch Gang and the Doddington Gang, primarily comprising of Libyan and Somali youths (Scheerhout 2017). The ethnic compositions of these new gangs – and the involvement of gang

⁴⁸ For example, compared to the 146 shootings in Greater Manchester in 2007/08 (of which 34 were gang-related), there were only 61 shootings in the county between 2009 and 2010, of which 8 were gang-related; by 2013/14 this had dropped to a total of 34 shootings, only one of which was gang related (GMP Crime Statistics).

‘off shoots’ are not insignificant details. For, whilst some have attributed an influx of Somali families into south Manchester as adding organization to a disorganized space – through family, religion and community – others have increasingly noted the chaotic, new incarnations of the Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang. The fact that their new members are from war-torn regions is also not an insignificant detail:

Amy: A lot of kids from the African counties are picking up stuff to fit in, feel part of a culture that’s not even theirs. And they’re very vulnerable, aren’t they? **Owen:** They’re picking up the gang names, but their parents are from a different, Muslim background, refugees who came here to flee the violence. But being in the environment, going in the schools, everyone wants to listen to hip-hop, be the bad man, and it’s like a culture clash. That’s exactly what’s happening. Cos back home they probably couldn’t do that, but they’ve come to Britain now and seeing how it is in the estates, it changes their mentality. **DM: And where are these young people from? Owen:** Various places: Africa, Somalia, Libya [sic].
Amy, Owen, Youth Workers, Manchester

The changes precipitated through migration have had a profound effect on the compositions of the region’s contemporary gang and is something I further discuss later in this chapter. Indeed, gang practices are rapidly developing across England. Recent migratory patterns from countries such as Somalia are having a profound effect on the activities and compositions of gangs such as Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang. This is for two main reasons. First, a “culture clash” often occurs between first-generation immigrants from rural regions of orthodox, Muslim countries and their second-generation immigrant children, socialized in the urban, hyper-masculine environments of contemporary England. Culture clashes between parents and their adolescent children is nothing new, but it is accentuated by the gulf between the British “hip hop” culture, and traditional African or Middle-East culture. Once such adolescents feel alienated from their parent culture, gangs may seek to fill the void. This is something which is increasingly being witnessed in Manchester. Second, individuals from war-torn countries may have been cultured around armed conflicts, with serious levels of violence being a daily occurrence in their homelands (Densley 2013; Dias 2017). Subsequently, these values can be transmitted when these individuals arrive to the UK:

There’s been an influx of Eastern Europeans involved in crime – often from conflict zones. Now are they gangs? We don’t know yet. And the Somalis have latched onto the established gangs. Soon, you’re gonna see the Afro-Caribbean lads being pushed out of their areas.

Because the Somalis are waiting in Moss Side, and they'll be at the park with baseball bats, ready to batter you if you've got chains or a good watch. A lot of these Somali kids have seen war, and recently the Salford Lads gave them ammunition cartridges, and the Somalis were just throwing them...hitting them against a wall, not knowing what to do with 'em...they still exploded 'tho. Introduce them to a Mac-10 and then you'll have carnage.

Prison Officer 2, HMP Manchester

This 'influx' has begun to leave a deep-imprint on the region's gang violence: communities which can be traced back to conflict zones in regions such as the Balkans and Somalia, and whose members are affected by the traumas and harms which are engendered through wars and failed states. Connections are also emerging between youths from these communities and the region's established, which have populated Greater Manchester for so many decades: links between the exclusively white Salford Lads and newer gangs of Somali adolescents; and the phenomenon of second-generation immigrants attaching themselves to established gangs such as the Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang. As Parveen et al. (2017:1) note: "In south Manchester, community leaders have become increasingly worried that young men of Libyan heritage are being drawn into gang warfare". Considering the breakdown of the Libyan state since the fall of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, the situation becomes even more complex: "very vulnerable" youths with links to an unstable country in a state of civil war, relatively close to mainland Europe. These problems are compounded by the fact that the descendants of deceased gang 'elders' are now wanting to continue the fight, affiliated to less structured gangs which makes the resulting violence more unpredictable:

I can guarantee there's Gooch guys now that don't know another Gooch guy. Never met him in his life, never heard his name before. But they all proclaim the same gang. Now, I bet if the police now tried to put every gang member on a board they'd struggle.

James, Former Gang Member, HMP Manchester

The region's gangs are now more diffuse, with membership bases which are now so expansive that it would be difficult to trace the gangs' compositions. In many ways, the story of the Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang, and of South Manchester, mirror James' life. He had begun his involvement in crime through affiliating to an 'off shoot' of Gooch Gang and has spent much of the past twenty years in prison. Yet the latest developments even left him confused: of people "fighting a war that's nothing to do with them", of youths re-engaging in gang feuds which had lain dormant for almost a decade. As James went on to state in another part of his interview,

“today’s youth don’t even know what they’re fighting for”. James was one of many participants to be affiliated to ‘offshoots’ of the Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang. These are smaller, semi-independent gangs, which have their own gang names, but still proclaim a superficial allegiance to one of the region’s two, main gangs. For many participants, the proliferation of these ‘offshoots’ was indicative of the waning power and decline of the Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang; with many of their founding, ‘core’ members now dead, serving life sentences or otherwise incapacitated through serious physical injuries or mental health problems, members of these Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang offshoots are attempting to fill the gap.

The decline in shootings after 2007/08 was also identified by some participants as having occurred due to concerted community-action: meetings, outreach work and community interventions. Several participants spoke of meetings taking place in Moss Side, between former Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang members, and the mothers of deceased gang members. Such mediation, it was argued, was one reason for an informal ‘truce’ being reached. Indeed, such meetings could take place because, although there was a significant level of violence between the two gangs, their members had grown up in the same schools, frequented the same youth clubs, and often socialized in the same clubs when they were older. Some participants even spoke of members of the same family being affiliated to the two, rival gangs. The tight social networks within which the gangs operated facilitated the informal mediation process which some participants referred to. However, by 2017/18, the gangs of South Manchester have become more difficult to track, to trace, to control. As one interviewee stated, “there’s just so many more gangs now in the Manchester area. You hear one and you think, “Where’s that come from?” It’s like people sort of making things up as they go along. And how many consist of a gang? Are me and you, if we say we’re the Forest Bank posse, are we a gang? Are we just bringing people [sic] online? I sort of lose track with it all. Two that stick in my mind from my days on the beat are the Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang. But it’s just incomprehensible now” (**Member of Prison Management 1, HMP Forest Bank**).

It is interesting to note that even a senior member of prison management spoke of starting to “lose track of it all.” Although specifically referring to the ‘importation’ of street gangs into his prison, there were similar sentiments expressed by gang members about how gang structures had changed over the past twenty-years, culminating to the highly dispersed gangs of the present day:

Back in the day, in the 90s, everybody knew each other...they hung around together, moved together. You've got kids affiliated to Gooch who are shooting at Doddington cos their uncles had beef back in the day. You've got Somali factions of Gooch fighting a war that's nothing to do with them. **James, Former Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank.**

James was one of several participants to refer specifically to new groupings of Somali youths “fighting a war that’s nothing to do with them”. The presence of Gooch and Doddington ‘off shoots’ was nothing new. However, the presence of “Somali factions” was a relatively new occurrence, considering the lengthy history of the region’s gangs. Indeed, migration from African warzones throughout the 1990s and 2000s – and more recent migration from the Middle-East – was something referred to by many participants in my research. Individuals were aware that there were different cultural norms and values within many of these countries. They were also aware that refugees would occupy a particularly marginalized socio-economic position. Further, there were language and cultural barriers that would develop between these families’ children – who would go to school in Britain and be culturized within Manchester’s often violent, inner-city locales. As referred to earlier in the chapter, youth workers Amy and Owen discussed this “culture clash” as “exactly what’s happening”. As these migrant communities arrived into the U.K. relatively recently, there is limited criminological literature on their community members experiences. Nevertheless, there are some studies which make directly reference to the interactions between youths who have experienced war, and gang activity. For example, in Densely’s (2013:309) study into London gangs it is mentioned as to how “gang members ... correlated violence propensity with prior experience in war-afflicted areas. Interviewees observed, for instance, how African refugees appeared on the whole to be better acclimated to violence and less fearful of death than native-born gang members, which was considered advantageous for them within what Fagan and Wilkinson (1998:138) describe as the gang “war zone”: the regions of a country where there are the highest levels of gang violence. These were not mere stereotypes, as having experienced war condition meant that such individuals would be more used to witnessing, and potentially engaging in, violence. As Densely (ibid: 315) goes later goes on to state, within London’s gangs, “African heritage ... may signal violence proficiency ... but also the potential for indiscriminate violence”⁴⁹. In Greater Manchester, similar assessments were made of gang members who had experience of living in the war zones of Somali, Central Africa, the Middle East and the Balkans. Place and

⁴⁹ Research also shows the increased levels of resilience found in refugees who have fled violence (Lusk and Chavez-Baray 2017).

experience mattered, and gang members were aware of this: the uncertainty of having new gang off-shoots comprised of youths culturized in the experiences of warfare in their homelands was of concern to many, not least because the city's authorities had yet to devise strategies to address these new, complex and developing problems.

All of this shows how the contemporary gang terrain in Greater Manchester is now less comprehensible. Arguably we need to know more about why the gangs have started to re-emerge; why links are beginning to emerge between migrant communities and these new incarnations of the city's gangs; and why the shootings and killings have restarted. Nevertheless, there have been a range of operational responses which have been deployed in recent years against the gangs of Greater Manchester: ASBOs issued against gang members, aggressive surveillance against gang leaders, and the efforts of SOCA to target the more organised, 'upper echelons' of street gangs, using specific pieces of legislation to seize the assets of gang members. However, then we come to the near present: a situation which requires a deeper assessment.

5.2 The Salford Lads

In many ways, the Salford Lads existed long before the QS Gang, the Gooch Gang, or the Doddington Gang, but in another sense, they have never existed at all: they are not classified a gang by GMP or the Probation Service, and many of their members are hesitant in self-identifying as 'gang members'. Unlike the various official records which document the members of Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang in Greater Manchester, no such records exist in relation to the Salford Lads: informal estimates put the gang's membership base at several hundred, although even its members are unsure as to exactly how many Salford Lads are currently active in the region. The gang is predominantly based in the county of Salford, Greater Manchester, covering a geographical area of over eight square miles. It is an area which has not seen much economic development for many years, and although a specific portion of the county has seen increased regeneration and investment, this 'gentrification' has been heavily localized, and in many ways, has underscored the deprived conditions pervading the rest of county. As one resident stated, "Investment in that one part of Salford just led to more resentment. You can't have an area where one part looks like Hong Kong and the rest of it looks like the Bronx". And it has been in 'the Bronx' that the Salford Lads have gradually emerged, culminating in spate of shootings between 2014 and 2015.

Like many urban conurbations in the North of England, Salford has seen a gradual decline in living standards, coupled with high rates of unemployment, poor government provisions and an increase in crime (Walsh 2003). Unlike the multicultural population which resides in Manchester, Salford is overwhelmingly white, something which is reflected in the membership of its gang. The gang is characterised by a strong in-group unity which is partially borne out of racial solidarity, as well as through loyalty to the local area, and the fact that many gang members are from the same families. This is what has led many to refer to the ‘code of silence’ which pervades the gang and the area where it operates (see also Walklate and Evans 1999). ‘Grassing’, or acting as an informant to the police, is a social taboo in Salford, where “very bad things will happen to you if you grass” (**Tony, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**). This heightened social stigma around ‘grassing’ is something which has deeply hampered law-enforcement activities in the area, in turn strengthening the power of the Salford Lads are able to exert on the area and its residents:

For so many years, Salford has been silence, you know what I mean? It’s called the silence network – cos nobody ever speaks out of Salford gang side. It’s a code of silence, isn’t it? I mean, you’ve still got no one arrested for the shooting of [name], and you’ve had so many shootings in the past where you had whole pubs that had witnessed what had gone on, but no-one would talk to the police. **Fran, Probation Worker, HMP Forest Bank**

It is difficult to present a chronological account of how the Salford Lads developed: unlike the QS, the Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang, there are no specific points in time which mark the gang’s formation, or other key events in its history. Rather, the Salford Lads have been a continuous presence in their local area for many years, which was described by one participant as “the armed robbery capital of Europe” (**Chris, non-gang member, HMP Manchester**). Chris went on to state how, for several years, an understanding has existed amongst Greater Manchester’s criminal fraternity that “if you hit one Salford Lad you hit them all” (see also Maitra 2013). For members of the gang, local area and gang affiliation are the two most durable features of their identity, with members proclaiming, “Before anything else, I’m a Salford Lad” (**Mark, Gang Member, HMP Manchester**). Indeed, this deep attachment to gang identity is borne out of the fact that for many Salford Lads, their gang is their family, with their early experiences of gang activity being “all to do with their family. They see their parents do it, they see their brothers do it, then they do it as they get older. It’s intergenerational. So, that’s how it’s been from the beginning” (**Fran, Probation Worker, HMP Forest Bank**).

In the beginning, there were groups of youths (or “lads”) who would congregate in Salford: this predominantly began in the 1970s, although Salford had witnessed urban decay for much of the twentieth-century. In many ways, these “lads” were a modern-day incarnation of the Scuttlers who populated parts of the same area a century before. They congregated in the forecourts of Salford’s council estates, hung around near the area’s clubs, its bridges and its streets. Like much of Greater Manchester, Salford was largely populated by red-brick housing, a skyline dominated by the county’s great industrial past. As time went on, the region’s economic fortunes continued to worsen, and these lads grew older: “hanging out” soon turned into engaging in anti-social practices, which soon progressed to petty-crime, vandalism, and theft. Such was the area that “even if you were from a sort-of good, two-parent family, you’d get dragged into it. So, it’s just the nature of Salford basically. It starts with low-level stuff: joy-riding, thieving, then you’re burning cars, you’re dealing a bit on the side and then you start robbing. And you’re building your name, your reputation” (**Marshall, Gang Member, HMP Manchester**). An intrinsic part of this ‘reputation’ also involves not only the commission of criminal activities, but a defiance towards authority, and a hatred of the police.

Salford has “always been an anti-authoritarian area. It’s always been about rebellion and a sort of ‘don’t give a shit, fuck the police’ type attitude” (**Tim, Former Offender, Manchester**). These characteristics of resistance, rebellion and defiance have been identified as key contributors to crime causation in the area, as well as colouring the area’s wider culture. Sherman (1993:459) describes defiance as “the net increase in the prevalence, incidence, or seriousness of future offending...caused by a proud, shameless reaction to the administration of a criminal sanction”. This idea, then, centres on the idea that individuals and communities may react in a defiant manner to criminal sanctions, and therefore, that sanctions can, in part, lead to future offending. This defiance, and a ‘fuck the police’ attitude, has been the dominant sentiment in Salford for much of the recent past and has manifested itself in a variety of ways: a lack of engagement with the police, which led to the area being characterised as the ‘silence network’; a continuous, culture of crime which has pervaded much of the area for most of its recent history; and specific outbursts of violence and disorder. The riots which took place throughout much of England in 2011 were one of the starkest violent ‘outbursts’ of recent times, and, unsurprisingly for an area which has been the crucible of crime and disorder, some of the most serious incidents of rioting were in Salford:

My take on the 2011 riots and this is just my feeling, was that it was different in different parts of the city. In most of Manchester it was about looting – a bit of fun.... the rioters wanted to go down and take part in what they saw as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity – a free shopping spree. But in Salford it was the rioters saying: “these are our streets”. In fact, they were having pitched battles with the police, putting up barricades.

Alex, Youth Worker, Manchester

Can you tell me a bit about the 2011 Salford riots? That was the only time we had power over the police. There were so many of us that we were making *them* run off. We were charging at them. With the riots, we thought, fuck it, we’ll treat ’em like shit this time. It was our chance. The difference was that in Manchester people just went for the entertainment. In Salford it...was about chasing the police out. There was about 20 of us, all ballied up, tooled up, walking along, police vans riding next to us, and they could do fuck all.

Paul, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank (original emphasis)

Like most riots throughout history, the disturbances which took place throughout England in 2011 were localized in deprived, urban areas; they were acts of resistance and a response to perceived injustices (see also Voogd 2008). Throughout England, the riots were a vignette of frustration towards the police, and, by extension, towards forces of authority: the violence in which the rioters engaged were evocative of the frustration they wanted to demonstrate against state actors and institutions; the destruction allowed for stores to be looted, goods to be taken in a “once-in-a-lifetime...free shopping spree”. However, in Salford there was an additional component to the riots: rather than the mass-scale looting of stores and businesses which characterized much of the rioting in England, the riots in which the Salford Lads – and others from the area – engaged were almost purely a statement: a statement of rebellion against authority. It was the rioters “saying: ‘these are our streets’”. As Paul stated, “It was our chance”. As Paul’s response further showed, the riots in Salford were not about material gain: rather, they were an opportunity for some of the city’s youths to express defiance and resistance against the police, towards whom they long held antagonistic feelings. Defiance has long been identified as a strong emotion which can be attributed to the emergence of criminal activities (Sherman 1993). The 2011 riots were a key instance where such emotions were articulated by the groups of individuals.

In many ways, the riots in Salford underscored past realities: GMP further retreated from the area, much of the destruction caused by the riots took many years to rectify, and an already

marginalized area and its population were further stigmatized. As one resident stated, “The only improvements the council saw fit to make after the riots were installing these bars you see before you⁵⁰. So that, when it kicks off again in the future – and it will, make no mistakes about that – the rioters won’t have as much space in which to cause carnage” (**Joan, Community Member, Greater Manchester**). And it is this resigned, fatalistic assessment which is the overriding sentiment in the region. Over seven years after the summer riots which beset the area, the same council houses stand, the same (closed) working men’s clubs can be seen on the corners of many streets, and graffiti marks many of the area’s bridges and walls. Walking through Salford, the underinvestment and ‘retreat’ of state institutions is clear, but expansive council housing and narrow roads are an unremarkable setting for the latest, bloody chapter in the area’s gang wars: since 2015, numerous shootings, machete attacks, a machine-gun assassination and grenade attacks have occurred within Salford. Although firearms have always been a problem in the area, the evolution of violence, whereby guns are now used to settle minor disputes, is a significant issue. The “aggression just seems to get worse every year. And now women and children are getting shot – something that was unheard of before” (**Fran, Probation Worker, HMP Forest Bank**). Gang members are reticent to explain the full-story, although a major conflict has undoubtedly unfolded across the region, with reports that it has spread to gang members continuing their feuds overseas. There is talk, too, of a truce beginning at the time of writing, although like much of the events which occur in Salford, there are few people who want to talk: the ‘silence network’ endures. Undoubtedly, however, the causes of the area’s crime problems are complex and longstanding. As one member of the Salford Lads stated, “it all changes quickly. It can change at the drop of a hat, you know what I mean? But it is what it is. What happens, happens. And I guess what you’re trying to do is work hard to make some sense of it” (**Marshall, Gang Member, HMP Manchester**).

5.3 Conclusion

As this chapter has sought to illustrate, ‘making sense’ of the contemporary ‘gang scene’ in Greater Manchester is a difficult task, something that was conceded by a wide range of participants, ranging from gang members through to members of prison management. Several distinct gangs have developed across the county of Greater Manchester, some with complex rivalries, some with substantial membership bases. Historically high-levels of deprivation have

⁵⁰ The ‘bars’ referred to metal railings which had been installed by the council in many of the area’s council estate forecourts. These were places where rioters had congregated in the summer of 2011, hemming in the police cars and vans which had been dispatched to the area.

led to many regions of the country becoming crucibles for gangs, violence and crime. More recently, some of these gangs have interacted with contemporary waves of migration, as well as participating in – and being affected by – a range of ‘critical incidents’ (see also Hagedorn 1998); examples include the 2011 riots and the assassination of a major gangland figure in Salford in 2015. These significant events have had long-lasting effects on the activities and compositions of Greater Manchester’s gangs, including of the played by BME residents within these gangs. The next chapter focuses on the topic of race, racism and BME experiences.

CHAPTER SIX: GANGS AND RACE

6.1 Race on the Streets

The complex racial history of Greater Manchester meant that race and racial characteristics interacted with wider notions around gang identity in multifarious ways. Participants from a range of ethnic backgrounds constructed ‘race’ in distinctly different terms, dependent on their personal life experiences. Moreover, individuals’ daily experiences in prison were affected by their interpretations of the topics of race relations and racial identity: prisoners’ racial characteristics often affected their daily social interactions, associations, and other activities, and the region’s histories around migration, cultural assimilation and conflict affected the region’s gangs – how these processes had profound effects on the way gang members of different races viewed themselves and their roles in the community. Racial marginalization led to the germination of gangs and the overrepresentation of BME prisoners in prisons. Finally, the chapter has outlined some of changes which were emerging at the time of fieldwork: a slow movement towards reconciliation between communities which had regularly characterized through hostile race relations. The following chapter continues this critical analysis of the region’s gangs, moving its attention towards a penal context, specifically regarding the prison gangs which populate HMPs Manchester and Forest Bank.

Although most participants in this research were born in England, many were the children of migrants from the Commonwealth: most often from the Indian sub-continent or the Caribbean. Participants at the sample sites hailing from these regions included, in their responses, detailed recollections on their own or their families’ experiences of migration and marginalization and how these experiences related to their involvement in gang activity and wider criminal practices. This, in turn, directly affected the reasons as to why some gangs formed in the region, as well as affecting participants’ perception of self, and their interactions with rival gangs and wider society. Although much of this chapter focuses on explaining the racial characteristics of street gangs, it became clear through my research that many overlaps existed between street and prison gangs in the region. Therefore, although prison gangs are primarily discussed in Chapter Five, there are also some references made to them in this chapter, illustrating the intersections existing between the topics. My discussions also concern the role of race in a carceral setting more generally, and how racial identities and racial politics affected daily

interactions between prisoners, as well as between prisoners and staff. I begin the chapter by charting the region's recent history regarding race relations and inter-community conflicts.

Although I interviewed some street participants, most accounts were drawn from prisoners. This meant that responses on 'street' issues were primarily retrospective. However, as both prisons held many remand prisoners, as well as individuals on short-term sentences, several participants had recent experiences of life on the streets. As participants were of varying ages, it meant that I could gather information both on recent developments, as well as more historical accounts of race-relations in the sample region. Individuals were from diverse racial backgrounds, including White British, Irish Traveller, British Pakistani, Mixed Race, British Caribbean, and Bangladeshi. From the outset of fieldwork, it became clear that individuals' home areas often corresponded with their racial backgrounds: British Pakistani prisoners were disproportionately from regions such as Rochdale, Bury, Oldham and West Yorkshire; black prisoners were predominantly from South Manchester; and all the participants in my research who originated from Salford and Liverpool were white. Although I did not formally note every participant's ethnicity (cf. Phillips 2012a) or their home areas, these topics often arose during interviews and conversations. During analysis of the data, prisoners' responses made clear the racial cleavages which existed across much of Greater Manchester. Moreover, several individuals whom I interviewed had been participants in the region's racial disturbances and riots; therefore, they could deliver 'lived' accounts of their experiences.

Regardless of racial background, participants were overwhelmingly from either post-industrial regions or urban conurbations: areas which had experienced high rates of unemployment, material deprivation and urban decay. During fieldwork, participants who were from the region's 'border towns' were most vocal in speaking on issues regarding race, self-segregated communities and how the area's racial characteristics intersected with, and led to the formation of, its gangs. Themes around colonial experiences, migration to England and racial victimization also featured prominently in discussions around why these gangs formed, and the lines along which they operated. The areas from which participants originated were spaces with distinct racial properties, something which affected their perceptions on the topic. Indeed, a clear chasm was found to exist between the cosmopolitan inner-city regions of Greater Manchester and the more racially segregated 'border towns'. This affected both perceptions on topics around race as well as gang compositions.

Many of the field sites for this research had long been characterised through the uneasy relations which existed between its different ethnic communities (Din 2006; Trilling 2012; Quraishi and Philburn 2015). Reflecting much of this existing research, participants spoke of the sense of victimization felt by many migrant communities up until the 1990s (see also Quraishi 2005). The violence experienced by migrants to this region was reflective of the 'migrant experience' in England more widely, where first-generation immigrants were often subjected to gratuitous violence, social hostility, and police inaction regarding these crimes (Hamm 2007; Alexander 2000). This soon led to the creation of groups whose members primarily acted to provide one another with protection, as well as social support. Participants in my research reflected this opinion, outlining how gangs which eventually became anti-social, criminal entities often began as a means of protecting community members who were at risk of victimization in the mid-late parts of the twentieth century. There was no singular point in time at which these groups transformed from pro-social to anti-social collectives; their transformations were gradual as opposed to linear: incremental changes precipitated by a series of key events. Nonetheless, participants were clear about the reasons why such groups initially formed, as well as being clear about the way in which they developed and ultimately changed into gangs:

So, with Doddington, they started when a group of guys from Moss Side got together. Left school together. Went to sign on together. And then, in those days – they're in their 40s, 50s now – you had a lot of prejudice, so sticking together meant it was good – you didn't get beat up when you walk on the street together. I think that's what formed, if you wanna call it gangs, groups of young black men binding together to help each other, not to be beaten and ill-treated. Cos someone could think they're black and shouldn't be in this area, and they get beat up if they on they own. So, I think that's one of the reasons...it was about protection, the oneness of it, and then they become friends.

Hailey, Gang Outreach Worker, Manchester

Our parents got victimized by the police, by their neighbours, they just accepted it as a way of life. But as we've got older, we've made that change what our parents, what maybe our grandparents, didn't do. **And what time do you think that happened?** Probably since the 90s the Asian gangs have grown. And...it's cos of protection. The way the police and other people treat you. You gotta have that thing where if two, three skinheads, two, three white people come knocking at your door, try and fight with you, there's gonna be twenty cars there in five minutes with your people in it. That's what's formed the Asian gangs.

Rizwan, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

To start off with, our gangs were more about safety: if we're all together, no-one's gonna say anything to us, you know? We'll walk in a pub, ten of us, sit there and have a drink. We're not scared. **Riaz, Gang Member, HMP Manchester**

The above responses were powerful accounts showing how BME individuals created groups to help and protect one another, thereby engendering a sense of friendship and “oneness” (Hailey, above). Riaz delivered a similarly emotive response, outlining how solidarity was one of the principal characteristics of British Pakistani gangs: “if we're all together, non-one's gonna say anything to us...we're not scared”⁵¹. For BME individuals, then, gangs initially served the central function of protecting their members. Although some studies underscore the problematic terminology around gangs and Asian youths, contending that these youths have become the new ‘folk devils’ towards whom gang status is too readily ascribed as a means of ‘othering’ (Alexander 2000; Tufail 2015), participants in my research spoke in more favourable terms about the groups within which they associated. Indeed, cohesive, group solidarity was seen as an effective antidote to the victimization which was felt by many participants, their families and their peers; victimizing acts which emanated from a range of state and non-state actors. Many BME gangs arose out of these groups, which had formed to counteract the marginalized position occupied by their members in English society. Predominantly hailing from rural, impoverished regions of modern-day Pakistani Kashmir, such individuals migrated to the North of England from the 1960s onwards. Most migrated to work in the mills and were often paid subsistent wages, living in poor conditions, with little chance for economic success. These migrant citizens had to navigate daily life with all its concomitant barriers, which meant that they accept the multiple forms of victimization which they were subjected to. Their compliance and passivity could be contrasted to their children and grandchildren, who “made that change what our parents, what maybe our grandparents, didn't do” (Rizwan, above). This “change” included the formation of defensive groupings as well as gangs. Indeed, BME participants were keen to emphasize these factors which led to the region's gangs forming, particularly noting the high levels of racial segregation which existed between the White and British Pakistani populations of the region:

⁵¹ This sense of solidarity was transplanted into the prison, something which I discuss later in this chapter.

Cos what you gonna do if you put 200 people in one area, and it's an Asian area ... they're all in one area, they all go to one school, they all go to one community centre, yeh? Then you've got another area, another 200 people in it, which is just white people. They go their own school. They go to their community centre. There's no interaction. There's no mixing. And the fights started from school to school. **Rizwan, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

At school, at college, you're taught that you're living in a multicultural society. But in Oldham, it's wasn't multicultural. It was bi-cultural: us whites on one side, and the Pakistanis on the other. And there wasn't no social crossover between the two sides. And it led to disputes. You never saw their women, they never came to your areas, and you never went to theirs. **So, no interaction at all?** The only place that would happen was at work. So, you develop work friendships, but it doesn't extend beyond that.

Ed, Street Participant, Non-Gang Member, Oldham

Years ago, when I used to be at school, it always used to be Asians against Whites...the Asian schools fighting the White schools. But it's got better now. Especially in Oldham it's got better. You know, in the past, us and the Pakistanis were shooting at each other. But now it's different...you accept people. We chill out together.

Phil, Gang Member, HMP Manchester

From the above responses, several findings emerged: first, that schools acted as arenas where race-based group identities formed; in many cases, these gradually became groups which could accurately be described as 'gangs'. As Phil response shows, one of the primary manifestation of youth gangs in his area was through "Asian schools fighting...white schools". Rizwan delivered a similar account, blaming "no interaction...no mixing" as the reason "fights started from school to school". In a similar vein, Garot (2010: Ch. 2) articulates that schools are a key platform for the performance of gang identity, something which develops within the classroom and intersects with displays of gang identities on the streets. Rizwan (British Pakistani) and Phil (White English) were from the same area and had been affiliated to rival gangs during their adolescence. Rizwan further elaborated on how gangs in his area germinated within the school environment, stating, "It [gangs] starts from school, really, you know? You go play football match, you go play cricket match, yeh? Or one of your guys got onto the wrong school bus and he's got battered. That's what the gangs formed for, in my opinion anyway. That's how we've started off". Rivalries were based around sports, territory, or schools, but were always predicated on racial difference. As Ed stated, "in Oldham it wasn't multicultural. It was

bi-cultural”. This de facto segregation between the two communities permeated most aspects of life: from living quarters, to schools, social interactions and relationships. The result was suspicion and hostility between the two “sides”, which gradual translated into violence.

Schools were one of the principal means through which these race-based conflicts would be expressed. Participants attributed these disputes, which occurred *between* rival schools, as more of a reason behind gang-formation than the disputes which occurred *within* schools. Regarding the latter phenomenon, since schools in participants’ home areas were heavily segregated, intra-school conflicts predominantly occurred between peers of the same racial group. Garot (2010: 24) describes this latter phenomenon as classroom-based “resistance, often confused with ‘gangs’ and ‘criminality’ in the popular imagination [as]...one of the few ways that students can have an impact on schools that do not address their needs and concerns”. During fieldwork, many participants classified such experiences as being separate to gang-activity, which involved organised fights, conflicts, and retaliation between rival schools rather than with one’s peers in the classroom. The de facto racial segregation between schools in many parts of Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire meant that conflicts between rival schools would, by extension, be conflicts between opposing racial groups.

Not only did the region’s two main ethnic groups socialize and inhabit separate geographical spaces, but, historically, they also demonstrated vastly different cultural practices. On the one hand, ‘clan’-based, Pakistani communities in areas such as Oldham, Rochdale and Rotherham were primarily composed of individuals from the Mirpur region of Pakistani Kashmir (Din 2006), an area which was described as “more laid back than other parts of Pakistan. There, wars are over three things: women, land, and religion” (Rizwan). These ideas around honour and religion were transplanted into Northern English towns, for whose White populations these were unknown ideas. Moreover, the idea of ‘clan’ based societies are characterized through tight networks based on kinship, shared culture, and high levels of in-group homogeneity (ibid); these societal features were replicated in the regions where these communities settled. Throughout the 1970s and 80s, de facto segregation was also precipitated through the racism experienced by the Pakistani communities, who were kept apart from the area’s white populations through discriminatory housing practices, hostility, and racist violence (Trilling 2012). What emerged, then, was a process of self-segregation (Ritchie 2001), which was combined with second and third-generation British Pakistanis becoming unwilling to accept the discrimination faced by their parents and grandparents:

Our parents and grandparents always thought, “we’re gonna work, make our money, go back to our country. But, obviously, as things have progressed, as we’ve got older, we’ve gone, “Hang on, we can’t go back there. We’re not used to it. We’re staying here”. So, they’ve been forced to stay. And we behave different to what our parents, grandparents did.

Riaz, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

Burdsey (2006:23) describes a similar course of events occurring throughout the North of England, where, “unlike the aspirations of their parents and grandparents, most British Asians have no desire to permanently ‘return’ to the Indian subcontinent”. As Rizwan’s response shows, second and third generation British Pakistanis would not be used to the living conditions of rural Pakistan and feeling embedded to the mill towns in which they were born, their activities were not characterized by the passivity and acceptance of victimization which had been demonstrated by their parents. Several participants identified the 1990s as the time when these sentiments developed and were crystalized, typified by a growing sense of assertiveness and defiance from the British Pakistani community⁵². Moreover, tensions were exacerbated due to the growing cultural schisms between the White and Pakistani communities. White communities of the region were typically not as family oriented, less religious and did not subscribe to the cultural notions of their Pakistani counterparts – for example, the Pakistani traditions of deference towards community elders, the implementation of collective decisions by such individuals, and the importance given to family ‘name’ and honour (Din 2006; Quraishi 2005). For second and third-generation British Pakistanis, an additional factor to be borne in mind was the duality that existed between a ‘home life’ characterized by family, religiosity, and Pakistani culture, and an ‘external’ life, which revolved more around Western values; for participants in my research, this ‘external life’ also included involvement in crime:

The lads born in this country, they wanna live the high life: popping bottles, nice cars. It’s not like our parents, saving money for a stable future. So, compare that to the modern culture we’re in, it’s all about spending fast money and fast life, isn’t it? And compare this to our parents – our mothers. My mum said that all she needed to be happy was clothes, shelter and food. So, we was tied to these traditional values, while chasing the fast money.

⁵² Similar to Noble’s (2006) description of ‘black rage’ percolating through the American prison system, one participant (**Rizwan, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**) stated his opinion that “in this country the Asian gangs are gonna get worse. *They’re gonna have a chip on their shoulders*. Cos they’re always gonna be a minority. They’ve become a force to be reckoned with. I hope it doesn’t go that way, but it looks that way”. (Original emphasis)

Ali, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

Conspicuous consumerism, disposable income, “the high life” and “nice cars” were identified as the dominant cultural traits in modern British society. Yet for British Pakistanis, they were still anchored in home lives which “tied” them to “traditional values”. This was compounded by the fact that many British Pakistani participants lived at home well into adulthood, primarily due to cultural norms around the extended family. This sense of a dual identity is not unique to British Pakistanis and has been noted in second and third generations South Asians from across the Indian sub-continent (Ghuman 2003; Burdsey 2006). These ‘double loyalties’, as Ghuman (2003) terms it, may lead to strain, and this was something noted by many participants of this research who were from a Pakistani background. This cultural strain, in addition to the economic strain more widely noted in criminological theory (Merton 1968), was a theme throughout the research⁵³ - gangs were a primary manifestation of this ‘strain’. For example, Usman was a British Pakistani gang member who stated that the cultural gulf between himself and his mother was one of the reasons which led to his involvement in gangs:

There’s a lack of connection between any two generations, but especially with Asians. Like, my mum used to say, if you’ve got clean clothes and food, then you’re alright. That’s her way of looking at the world: how she was taught back home – a very simple life. But all my mates were doin’ their own stuff. If you’re struggling, everyone’s there to help. I wanted the fast money, I wanted to have a house, the car; I wanted to have nice things.

Usman, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

Usman’s aspirations to acquire material advantage was a sentiment shared by many participants in my research. Indeed, such ideas were by no means limited to a specific racial group. They have been identified as one of the primary reasons behind much of the recent gang-related disturbances in England (Treadwell et al. 2012), as well as being a driving-force behind gang affiliation more generally (see Chapter Four). Indeed, strain theory argues that criminal activity occurs in societies where financial success is valorised, but where many individuals do not

⁵³ Ghuman (1999) not only identifies this notion of ‘hyphenated identity’ in relation to British Pakistanis, but British South Asians more widely: he goes on to describe this bi-cultural socialization as leading to the emergence of ‘marginal men’. Ghuman (1980) further argues that tight familial and kinship organisation was an overriding characteristic of first-generation South Asian immigrants. This was most apparent in child-rearing practices, which were denoted by close supervision and prolonged familial involvement in the lives and activities of their children. These traits of fostering interdependence within the family rather than individualism have also been displayed by second-generation South Asians (Dosangh and Ghuman 1998).

have the means to achieve financial success (Merton 1938)⁵⁴. Nevertheless, for youths emanating from South Asian communities, there is the added complexity of deeply traditional cultures combined with involvement with anti-social gangs whose conflicts are often centred on local, neighbourhood conflicts (Alexander 2000). Alexander's *The Asian Gang*, written in 2000, illuminates many of the specific challenges faced by second generation South Asian youths. Specifically, there is a distance from one's parent culture, which leads to the creation of displaced youth groups, whose delinquent activities are hidden from their parents, who may be oblivious to these challenges due to a lack of cultural understanding and non-fluency of the English language. Although Alexander's study focused on British Bangladeshi youths, in East London, at the turn of the new millennium, much of the cultural landscape Alexander describes is similar to those faced by British Pakistani participants in my research: a clear separation between home and 'gang' life; parents often unaware of their children's activities until the point of arrest; and an internal 'clash of cultures' and ontological insecurity that arises from the offspring of conservative, Muslim immigrants in a liberal, Western society. However, the situation in the North of England is further complicated by the extreme levels of social deprivation faced by communities of various racial backgrounds in the region. This creates economically marginalized societies with low job prospects, high-welfare dependency, and high crime rates. Indeed, the boroughs of Rochdale (in the county of Greater Manchester) and Burnley (in the county of East Lancashire) continue to be included in the UK's twelve poorest areas (Guyoncourt 2016), with the North of England more generally being classified as containing higher levels of unemployment, poverty, poor housing and underperforming schools (ibid). Although this thesis primarily focuses on the county of Greater Manchester, these social, economic and historical characteristics of the wider geographical region should also be borne in mind.

6.2 Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Whilst no single theoretical perspective can be used to analyse the transformations of gang activities in the sample region, CRT can go some way in helping to illuminate the actions of BME gang members. CRT as an analytical framework proposes that several key factors: that

⁵⁴ Merton (1938, 1968) goes on to argue that the importance placed on financial success and materialism makes these sought-after commodities, and individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds may resort to crime to achieve, in the case of the United States, 'the American Dream'. However, the theory can equally be applied to other, Western cultures which place a similar value on material success. Agnew (1992) further developed this theory by finding that males will disproportionately respond to this 'strain' by engaging in violent or acquisitive offences to achieve these goals, and that this is often combined with anger and moral outrage.

racism is ordinary, not exceptional, thus making it hard to recognise or address; that race is a social construct, the product of social thought; that racial categories are created by society for specific purposes; and that the dominant society racializes minority groups (Delgado and Stefancic 2005 cited in Glynn 2014: 6). Moreover, CRT posits that institutionalized racism and economic disenfranchisement may lead to BME individuals expressing their frustrations through engagement in deviant acts (Quraishi 2006; Glynn 2014). Using this theory as a framework for interpreting the activities of Greater Manchester offenders shows that many of the region's BME participants attributed their involvement in crime to structural inequalities, racism and limited life opportunities. From fieldwork, it became clear that these feelings of marginalization were often the driving force behind the formation of gangs, particularly those comprised of BME adolescents. Extending the analysis of CRT would lead to the conclusion that such individuals engage in crime as an alternative means of providing the resources of which they are deprived through unemployment or under-employment. These were sentiments expressed by several BME participants on the streets:

The system doesn't have minority representatives who can speak to the young. I don't see them. So, what is really going on? Within the system, it seems they're just putting layers and layers of hierarchy. So, it's not reachable. So, we need to create realistic jobs for these people. The more we start to build our own economies, the more we can employ those young black boys who are just hanging around, and who see no other option but to deal drugs, join gangs.

Geoff, Community Resident, Manchester

Geoff's response shows his perception that "layers and layers of hierarchy" made economic progress unreachable for "young black boys" who were then driven towards gang membership. In this way, Eddie's analysis shares many parallels with CRT, which argues that "the limited access to power in society ... may result in criminal activity becoming a choice for some black men ... the ability to desist from criminal activity for some black men could be increased, if they gained more of a foothold in the social structure in a way that would enable them to transcend their unfair treatment and ultimate subordination" (Glynn 2014: 6). In this regard, gang activity acts as an "alternative means of survival" (Noble 2006: 73), whereby individuals who are "denied legitimate employment opportunities...rely on 'hustling' for financial support...doing whatever is necessary to make money" (Hicks-Barlett 1991, cited in *ibid*). Additionally, Geoff specified the problems faced by "young black boys", which was reflective of the elevated levels of offending amongst black adolescents in his local area. Themes around

race, then, underlay many discussions around gangs and crime. Naturally, these opinions were usually dependent on the racial background of the participant being interviewed, with white participants referring less to race when explaining their involvement in gangs. Nevertheless, the theme of BME disenfranchisement was something referred to by numerous participants. In many ways, this could be seen as a replication of the power-structures of colonial societies, where those ‘natives’ outside of the social ‘elite’ were kept out of privileged societal positions through the systems of administration which were enforced by the British Empire (Spivak-Chakraborty 1985). The resulting situation then, as today, was one where many BME citizens were marginalized:

It starts with ... “I’m gonna plant and start selling weed”, and from weed you start moving forward into harder drugs, and because you’re making more money you’re taking more risks...beef, jealousy, envy, somebody wants to get your tail then, isn’t it?. Things are so much against you. And the whole education system needs to recognise that. **Owen, Youth Outreach Worker, Greater Manchester.**

During the lengthy interview from which the above excerpt was taken, Owen identified both structural inequality and a search for identity as being driving forces behind gang affiliation. The lack of jobs, opportunities and role models for black youths led to a strain that manifested in gang activity. Owen further identified the progression from minor law-offending acts to the commission of more serious crimes. Existing literature identifies these failings in the neo-liberal economy as acting as a catalyst for collective law-breaking acts: individuals who aspire to material benefits but have no means to obtain them see crime as one of the sole means to achieve success (Lammy 2011; Newburn et al. 2011; Treadwell et al. 2012; Lammy 2017). What was referred to in earlier studies as the ‘strain’ of conventional society pushing its most marginalized citizens towards leading a life of crime (Merton 1968) was a concept that participants referred to in relation to contemporary British society. The vicissitudes faced by this demographic of society has seen them more recently referred to as the ‘precariat’ (Standing 2014); that is, those with limited opportunities in the job market, limited education and very few means in accumulating financial or social capital:

When it comes to our boys on the street corners, or in the estates, we need to give them something. We can’t say, “Don’t be doing this”, but then give them nothing. It doesn’t make

sense. So as a society, we need to make sure we have things in place that they belong to, that they can generate income for themselves and that will take away bit of the burden.

Victor, Gang Outreach Worker, Manchester

As Victor's response shows, in addition to the wider points on economic marginalization, participants who were from BME backgrounds were often keen to stress the effects race had on limiting the life chances of individuals. Victor not only underscored the need for having "things in place" youths could "belong to", but specifically referred to "our boys". Although Victor's youth work led to contact with adolescents from various racial backgrounds, the disproportionate levels of contact he had with young black males led to his specifying the 'problem' in racialized terms. For Victor, like many other participants, discrimination and limited life changes were inextricably tied to the theme of race.

Although most BME participants in my research were born in the England, their parents or grandparents had been first-generation immigrants, having migrated from former Commonwealth countries such as Pakistan and Jamaica. Moreover, despite being British, many participants in my research felt marginalized by the dominant power-structure within the country. As most participants in my research were in prison, and originating from economically marginalized areas, it is unsurprising that such individuals felt an acute sense of disenfranchisement. However, even those BME participants who were not in prison, or had not been directly affected by the Criminal Justice System, created an explicit link between ethnicity and lack of opportunity:

The media doesn't help it. Fuels it. There's a lot of racist media right now. It's controlled media. It's hatred. Eton millionaires who get taught to rule. And we get taught to serve. They made their money through slavery. But nobody wants to look at the truth. They don't wanna talk about. They don't give a fuck about black people, but that's how it is. And we gotta look after ourselves and mind our own jewels. And be more free thinking for what we need. They don't class us as human-beings. They don't class us as ... I don't know. People of colour are just ... tarred with this image of what their history is. And the time's come where they've had enough. It's time to stand. You can't just abuse us like that, we've helped build the country. **Owen, Youth Outreach Worker, Manchester**

Owen was one of several participants who expressed such opinions, expressing his frustration at the "racist media" and rulers who "don't class us as human beings". Accordingly, my

research found the existence of a class of citizens with England which Spivak-Chakraborty (1985) terms the ‘subaltern’ in relation to her study on colonial India: that is, individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds who feel that they are outside of their country’s power structures, have little influence over the trajectories of their own lives and feel an acute sense of disenfranchisement with the social structures which are in place. Such sentiments are also heavily affected by an individual’s economic position in society. Owen presented a scathing critique of the entire social system which exists in England, linking the “racist ... controlled media” to ruling “Eton millionaires” and the ‘serving’ BME working-classes. CRT presents a similar analysis of dominant versus marginalized populations: of the majoritarian, privileged class versus subordinated black populations (Glynn 2014). As a theory, it argues that BME citizens have been placed at a perpetual disadvantage, both as subjects of colonial rule and as immigrants who have settled in former colonial powers. As I have already illustrated in this chapter, in the context of England, many BME residents initially came to the country as migrant workers, especially in regions such as the areas which acted as the field sites for this research. Limited economic prospects led to disproportionate numbers of BME youths becoming gang affiliated, and this is reflected through the disproportionately high levels of BME prisoners in England (see, e.g. Cheliotis and Liebling 2005; Phillips 2012a; Lammy 2017). In the following section of this chapter, I present a detailed analysis of how the theme of race affected the carceral experiences of prisoners at the sample sites.

6.3 Race Behind Bars

When one views the existing race-centred perspectives on explaining inequalities in society, it becomes clear that most of these works do not specifically focus on the English prison complex. Only a limited number of studies attempt to illustrate how racial inequalities in wider society lead to disproportionate numbers of BME prisoners (Glynn 2013). As my research illustrates, the theme of race was a pertinent one in the minds of many participants, readily discussed within the broader topic of gangs. Much of the wider literature highlights the central role race plays within the prisons of many countries (see, e.g. Carroll 1974; Jacobs 1977; Phillips 2012a). Penological studies have shown that the inter-racial power structure within prisons may be significantly different to that outside: namely, racial groups which are marginalized in wider society may occupy dominant roles within prison (Carroll 1974; Noble 2006).

In many ways, the racial terrain in the prisons where I conducted my research was varied and complex. For example, the membership-bases of many of Manchester’s most well-known

gangs were composed of prisoners from a variety of racial backgrounds, including black, white and mixed-race prisoners. Although this was more an example of racial – rather than cultural – heterogeneity, it was still illustrative of the fact that many gang members, having been socialized in multicultural environments, transposed these values into the penal system (see also Phillips 2012a). The fact that HMP Manchester had a greater number of BME prisoners than HMP Forest Bank meant that ‘multicultural conviviality’ (ibid) was more apparent in the former prison than in the latter – that is to say, prisoners at HMP Manchester were more at ease in inhabiting a multicultural environment than those at HMP Forest Bank, forming social relations across cultural and racial divides. Unsurprisingly, degrees of cross-cultural interactions not only varied across the two prisons, but also across individual sections of each prison, as well as across different parts of the County of Greater Manchester. For example, prisoners who were or had been in the high-security prison, more often spoke of tensions between individuals of different faith identities; prisoners who were from more urban, metropolitan areas of Greater Manchester were used to more integrated environments as compared to certain regions in and bordering Greater Manchester (such as Rochdale, Oldham and parts of West Yorkshire) which were described by participants of all racial backgrounds as being segregated communities. This ‘distance’ (both literal and metaphorical) was later borne out in the penal environment, with one participant talking of prisoners being “divided into three sets in this prison: there’s the white lads, the black lads, and the [Pakistani] lads” (**Zain, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**). Although an overly simplistic description, fieldwork showed that these ‘divisions’ along racial lines in HMP Forest Bank clearly existed: friendships and relationships of trust were most often cultivated between prisoners of a similar, or the same, racial background. This was even more apparent for gang members, whose importations of gang allegiances meant that the homogenous racial groupings which operated on the streets of some Northern towns were then transposed into prison⁵⁵.

During fieldwork, this topic of race was raised most frequently by BME prisoners and there were many strong sentiments around racial identities. For example, Rizwan (**Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**) was a British Pakistani prisoner who was keen to emphasize the protective

⁵⁵ Whilst conducting observations of prison life at HMP Forest Bank, it was clear that prisoners routinely associated with peers from their racial group. Whilst observing activities on the exercise yard, during periods of free association, and meal times, the racial cleavages of social interaction were clear to see, something not as apparent at HMP Manchester.

nature of the group which he headed in prison, and which was composed of Pakistani and British Pakistani prisoners:

If you come on sosh, my pad, most of the Asians will be sat there. There [about] 13 of us on the wing, and they'll all be sat in that room with me. It's not a gang. Now, to the prison it might look like, these guys have got a gang. But me and my friend, we're older than a lot of these, so we just try and keep 'em together and out of trouble. It's not a gang, you know what I mean? Alright, if someone in prison did hit...like there's one guy in here from Pakistan, doesn't know anything, can't speak English properly, we look after him. Obviously if someone said something to him there'd be retaliation. **And have you had any problems?** We haven't. Cos there's 10, 12, 15 of us sat together all the time anyway.

Rizwan, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

Pakistani and British Pakistani prisoners regularly congregated together, something which was observed during fieldwork at both sample sites. For this group of prisoners, racial solidarity was a hallmark of their daily prison life, characterised by a set of collective practices. As Rizwan outlined, the group which he headed in prison included numerous prisoners whose senior members tried to keep younger members “out of trouble” and who would exact “retaliation” if necessary. Cultural solidarity, then, encompassed everything from associating together, to a collective protection of reputation, engaging in retaliatory violence if an individual from the group was mocked or ridiculed (see also Keiser 1969). Rizwan was a senior gang member in his late-thirties, and during fieldwork was observed talking with prison officers and members of prison management. Prison officers spoke of how “having some older, level-headed but influential prisoners like [Rizwan] can help keep a lid on things” (**Member of Prison Management, HMP Forest Bank**). Although senior British Pakistani gang member described the presence of racial solidarity, there were limits as to how far this extended:

All the Asians, we sit together. All the good lads, call it a gang, call it a group friends⁵⁶, are sat together ... we just stick together and make sure we're protected and looked after. But we

⁵⁶ Ahmed directly drew my attention to the labels that could be attached to his group: “call it a gang, call it a group of friends.” This was, in part, to illustrate the contested classification of his prison ‘gang’, bearing parallels to the discussions around labels applied to street gangs more generally. Indeed, Ahmed’s description of his gang as “all the good lads” reflects Sageman’s (2008:69) classification of a gang as a “bunch of guys”, with both labels illustrating the nuances to ‘the gang’, and how some individuals may view ‘gangs’ as being pro-social entities (“good lads”) or relatively unremarkable collectives (“bunch of guys”), sharply contrasting to the more readily ascribed pejorative connotations around ‘gangs’.

tell them, if you smoke Mamba we're not getting involved in your problems. If you got into debt because of that, and there's any violence, you're not getting back up from us.

Ahmed, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

These community-based norms were clear to all British Pakistani prisoners, who were explicitly informed about the limits of how far gang 'back up' would extend: the gang would not be involved in problems arising from the accumulation of drug-debts, or debts more generally. This had the unintended consequence of making many British Pakistani prisoners wary about being involved in these aspects of prison life. More generally, however, Ahmed's gang would "stick together" and make sure its members were protected. Sadiq, another British Pakistani prisoner who was in his late-30s, also described how race was the dominant status for many British Pakistani prisoners, who would normally halt their street-based rivalries in prison. This was described in the following terms:

But you'll see when they [British Pakistanis] come into prison, there won't be that much Pakistani-on-Pakistani violence. There'll be incidents that happen individually. But it's not really gang-related. So, in general, the Pakistani lads will stick together; back each other up

Sadiq, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

Several British Pakistani prisoners spoke of their strong in-group cohesion at the sample sites, and their tendency to "back each other up". These groupings could not necessarily be classed as gangs, but they showed that many British Pakistani prisoners felt obligations towards others of a Pakistani background, and expressed a common purpose characterised through racial solidarity. Such groupings were indicative of the racial solidarity British Pakistani prisoners often demonstrated towards one another: both in terms of who they physically associated with on prison wings and the practical benefits they conferred to one another.

I also observed that most prisoners predominantly interacted with those from a similar racial background: these associations were clearly visible when viewing prisoners during periods of association. Race was a complex theme, and that a nuanced understanding had to develop as to its relevance within prison: for example, the presence of groups of prisoners from particular racial backgrounds was not always indicative of violence or hostility and could sometimes have been incidental, reflecting the racial make-up of the areas from which these individuals originated. Prisoners sharing the same racial background were often seen to socialize with one

another at the sample sites. However, the prison's 'racial politics' were more complex, as illustrated by the response below:

See in a jail like this, there's racism. Cos you've got a lot of outskirt areas like Bolton and that, and in them areas it's like you got the black area, the white area, the Asian area. And the white area's pretty big compared to theirs so when they come into here, the superiority's still there...it's born and bred into them to be racist. They don't openly say it, but the hostility's there, know what I mean? In Strangeways, the catchment area's different so it's more urban, more multicultural. Cos that jail's in an urban area, which is different to here.

Barnard, Former Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

Just as crime can be viewed as being learnt through communication within intimate personal groups (Sutherland 1939; Scarpitti et al. 2009) so too was racism 'born and bred' into individuals: the result of a process of being 'cultured' within families and homes where racist attitudes were accepted. In many instances these attitudes were later transplanted into the prison environment. Reflecting Elijah Anderson's (2011) theory of homogenous ethnic enclaves engendering distrust and hostility, Barnard's account showed how racially segregated "big white areas" meant that "the superiority's still there...they don't openly say it but the hostility's there". A link was drawn, then, between prisoners' areas of geographical origin and the attitudes displayed regarding race. As Anderson (2011) describes in relation to Philadelphia in the United States, racially divided regions lead to there being 'pockets' of areas where there are predominantly groups of one racial group background – as compared to a city centre which is more racially mixed, with greater levels of civility and a 'cosmopolitan canopy' existing. Movement through Manchester – from the centre to its outskirts – demonstrates a similar phenomenon.

Finally, I noted that it was not only racial cleavages which were on display at the sample sites, but that nationality also played a significant role in the daily lives of prisoners. Participants also made the distinction between racial hostility and the presence of racially homogenous groups, the latter of which did not necessarily equate to hostility, but rather, close 'in group' unity. Existing studies have indicated that foreign national prisoners may often feel isolated due to factors such as a lack of familiarity with the English language and English prison culture (Richards et al. 1995). Accordingly, where foreign national prisoners find others from their country within a prison, they may congregate with one another due to shared language, cultural

practices and familiarity (see, e.g. Bhui 2009; Phillips 2012a). At the sample sites, it was evident that several such groups existed, including Irish Travellers, Chinese, Nigerian and Pakistani prisoners. Further, as the following responses show, close or exclusive associations between individuals of particular racial groups did not necessarily equate to expressions of racial antagonism:

The only gangs in this prison is you got like the Asian lads who hang around together, then you get the black lads who all hang about together. There's some Albanians, who'll stick together. But they're not violent gangs. That's all you get, there's no violence or anything like that. **Stu, Former Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

Stu's assessment referred to racial groups such as "Asian lads" and "black lads", and groups of specific nationalities such as Albanians who "stick together". However, these groups did not translate to violent gangs. Prisoners at HMP Manchester delivered similar responses, which illustrated how foreign prisoners how often socialize in separate spaces. This was often borne out of shared language and cultural practices. For example, **Kwame (Non-Gang Member, HMP Manchester)** stated how his experience in prison had been "quite isolating for me. I'm Zimbabwean, but I'm the only Zimbabwean here. So, I can't really mix with the other groups of Africans. It's more groups than gangs – you've probably seen yourself: one group from Nigeria ... one from Cameron. But I don't mix with them". **Brian (Non-Gang Member, HMP Manchester)** delivered a similar account in relation to groups of Chinese prisoners "who come in waves: get convicted for the same crime, hang around together, speak to one another, and the other lads leave them alone. They're model prisoners, but they're also serious gangsters. Businessmen, almost. Prisoners leave them well alone cos they know they could get them killed⁵⁷". Race, then, continued to be an important social force at the sample sites, often intertwining with wider societal forces and themes around identity, violence and social control. This importance of race within Manchester's carceral spaces should not be surprising, considering the region's wider history around race relations. However, alongside this, there had been developments in Greater Manchester's racial politics. The final section of this chapter focuses these more recent developments in Greater Manchester, which has seen a 'reconciliation' of sorts between groups who were previously hostile to one another.

⁵⁷ In the above example, Brain was specifically mentioning Triad gangs, referring to the Wo Shing Wo, and the aftermath of the 21 Chinese cockle-pickers who die in Morecambe Bay in 2004, for which their gang master was later sentenced.

6.4 Race, Reconciliation, and the Contemporary Situation

Much of the existing criminological and sociological research focusing on the North of England is now dated, and race-relations move at a fast pace, affected by a multiplicity of wider political and economic factors (Phillips and Webster 2014). Accordingly, in the following section of this chapter I seek to deliver an account of the situation as it exists in the prisons and streets at the time of writing. The data presented offer insights into the contemporary racial dynamics of a region which has been studied in past pieces of research, (see, e.g., Ritchie 2001; Quraishi 2005; Din 2006; Cantle et al. 2006). My research uncovered that there had been some marked changes in race relations within the region. Fundamentally, this resulted in the emergence of social ties across the racial divide, although some previous ‘loyalties’ still remained. Although these changes did not fragment the racially distinct gangs which have dominated Greater Manchester’s ‘underworld’ for the past several decades, a change could be observed by the fact that rather than the previous relationships of racial hostility, greater levels of cross-cultural and multi-racial interactions characterized contemporary gangs. **Phil (Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank)**, who I have quoted previously in this chapter as saying that “years ago, it [fights] used to be Asians against whites”, summarized how the situation has changed and developed in the intervening years:

Now, we’re friends. I go out drinking with Asians. I’ve got Asian friends, Asian people that send me money and stuff, know what I mean? It’s all changed now. As you grow up you realize, don’t you? It’s just evolved over time. Them riots were just a stupid, childish thing. It’s sweet now. I have Asian mates that come into my pub, my local pub. We go on nights out together. **Paul, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

Phillips (2012a) terms this development ‘multicultural conviviality’, used to denote societies and regions where, despite histories of racial tensions and divisions, younger generations have learnt how to ‘do’ multiculturalism – that is, to inhabit racially mixed spaces and environments; this is something that further develops in a carceral setting:

And you talked about the racial fights in the past in Oldham. So, is there anyone else from Oldham in this prison? Yeh. And are they white or Asian? Both. And do you get on now? Yeh. I mean, there’s a couple of Asian lads in my next cell, and they’re both from Oldham. I were having a chat with one of them yesterday, telling him the same thing I were telling you, about when we had that fight and all. And he was just laughing saying, “I can remember that”. We was probably shooting each other before. Now it’s different.

Brandon, Former Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

Many other participants at the sample sites reflected Brandon's experience: even though prisoners "might still chill with their own", it was nonetheless different from before, when prisoners from different racial groups "were probably shooting each other". A rapprochement, of sorts, had occurred between the region's white and British Pakistani gangs, although the exact reasons for this were unclear. More generally, participants from inner-city locales gave a positive account when assessing race relations over the past several decades. For example, participants from the City of Manchester and South Manchester were almost unanimous in agreeing that race was of minimal importance in the regions where they grew-up:

And what about race? It's multicultural in Manchester. It's not about no racism; doesn't matter what colour your skin is or nothing like that. And with religion, everyone to their own.

Dylan, Non-Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

Dylan's response underscored how normative multiculturalism was the overriding ethos in many urban regions of Manchester. Indeed, the brevity of Dylan's response on this issue suggested racial diversity was an unremarkable, accepted part of his life. These opinions were later reflected specifically with regard to street gangs, where race was not described as affecting affiliation:

And what about your gang's racial make-up? It's not like a white thing or a black thing, it's mixed. All different races in the gang. **Don, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

My gang – Doddington – is predominantly black. But, in all the time I've known 'em ... they've never once mentioned the colour of my skin. Never once. It doesn't matter to them. And I'm always appreciative of that, and that they've accepted me as one of their own.

James, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

Both the Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang hailed from urban areas of Manchester which were characterised by economic decline and high crime rates. However, despite these factors, they demonstrated how gangs from these regions were composed of members from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Even in a "predominantly black" gang such as Doddington Gang, there was an acceptance of white gang members such as James, illustrating the multiracial nature of many of the region's gangs. Participants also focused on the fact that there were often instances

where practical considerations superseded values around culture: an overwhelming majority of participants conceded the need for some degree of cross-cultural interaction when conducting criminal transactions. This was especially true for certain crimes – most notably drug importation and the export of high value stolen goods – where the transnational nature of the criminal market place ensured contact with different racial groups to one’s own. It is also these interactions were not always done reluctantly. At times this would lead to the formation of new, “multicultural” gangs. Indeed, this gradual growth of racially diverse gang membership contrasts to the high degrees of racial homogeneity displayed by gangs in the United States (Brotherton and Barrios 2004; Anderson 1999; Venkatesh 2006; Cureton 2011), and the history of more racially homogenous gangs in Greater Manchester and its surrounding regions. For many contemporary gang members from the city of Manchester, however, race was viewed as an incidental factor, reflective of the changing compositions of urban English street gangs more nationally (Lammy 2011). This was a fundamental historical difference between many of Manchester’s inner-city gangs, and those gangs which originated from the county’s former mill towns. Nevertheless, it was clear that even in these racially segregated ‘border towns’, changes were slowly occurring:

Now it’s all different, because of the drugs everyone interlinks and mix. **You mean between the different racial groups?** Yeh. In Oldham it’s a lot better now ... you accept people. **And why would you say that’s changed?** Now, gang culture that’s coming up is about drugs and money, and white people probably know the Asian people in the heroin trade... So, if they give it to a white person to sell, they’re not bothered. They don’t see him as a racist, they see it as business. **Rizwan, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

Rizwan’s account is reflected by Keiser’s (1969) analysis of ‘minority gangs’, which states that such gangs may begin with a focus on ideology and collective resistance, but such values may gradually become eroded and replaced with concerns around territorialism (see also Hagedorn 1988), involvement in the general drug-trade (see also Venkatesh 2008), and most notably the distribution of crack-cocaine (see also Anderson 1990; Klein et al. 1991). Rizwan described how the “drugs and money” meant that gang members of various ethnicities “see it as business” (see also Allum 2016). Rizwan later described how “gang banging isn’t as much of a racial thing as before”. Indeed, several participants noted a gradual growth in ‘drug gangs’ whose membership bases included individuals from various ethnic backgrounds; this is corroborated when one observes the racial composition of many recent drug gangs who have been convicted

and sentenced in Greater Manchester's courts. As Leggett (2002:15) observes, "drugs are a social phenomenon; and when socialisation across ethnic lines [is]...prohibited, each ethnic group [develops]...its drug culture independently...As integration has proceeded...many of these divisions are fading ... Getting to know one another has meant getting to know each other's drugs and opening up the drug markets has allowed competition to erode longstanding trade relations based on trust and accountability." Whilst Leggett writes specifically in relation to 1990s South Africa, the wider points around racial integration breeding trust, and this translating into a less racially divided drugs market was something which was true in much of my research, leading to higher levels of interactions between offenders of different racial backgrounds.

Even amongst gang members who associated in racially homogenous groups, there was an acknowledgement that race relations had improved as compared to previous decades. Although this did not always lead to racially heterogeneous gangs, the permanence of minority populations, the fact that many such individuals were born in England, and the changing culture of 'second' and 'third' generation British Pakistanis all influenced race relations. Indeed, all these factors were most apparent in the interactions between white and British Pakistani participants, whose past histories had been by far the most racially segregated, as I have outlined in Chapter One. Burdsey (2006:23) charts this change in notions around identity, and how sports have been harnessed by many 'British Asians' to assert this new sense of self: "in contrast to cricket, football is equated with their own residence in England and, in this regard, supporting the national team acts as an arena where the permanency of settlement...can be emphasized" (ibid). Closely reflecting these facets of identity, Rizwan delivered the following account which combined several pertinent themes around crime, race and personal identity:

We're different from our parents; they couldn't even go in a pub without getting comments. And me, personally, I'll walk in anywhere. I've just got this attitude, you know? I'll walk around with an England football shirt on, I'll go into pubs. And I can relate to people. I went to a Roman Catholic School, I had white friends. So, I tell my people to integrate. I go out. Drink. I can talk, watch the football. You've got things to talk about. Back in the day our community were different. **Rizwan, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

Throughout the above excerpt, and the interview more generally, Rizwan was keen to illustrate that although his gang had initially formed as a reaction to experiences around racism, he had

moulded his personal identity to counteract many of the prejudices experienced by his parents' generation⁵⁸. He had developed assertiveness, as well as the ability to "talk" and integrate. This set of 'hard' and 'soft' skills were not only relevant to his ability to interact with individuals from a range of racial backgrounds, but also reflected how his gang operated in the wider community and in prison. Rizwan later went on to say that "with me, I speak with everyone, regardless of background. I've got a relationship with all the main men on the wing, so it's alright". This was evidenced during fieldwork, where Rizwan was observed talking with senior gang members of various races and from different areas. These personal interactions in which he engaged reflected his view of how things had changed from "back in the day". Although these contours of race relations and social intercourse were complex, there was clearly an amelioration as compared to the past. Much of life in Greater Manchester continued to be 'racialized' and racial fault lines were still apparent. Although the situation had improved as compared to the race riots of 2001, race continued to be a factor in shaping social relations, associations, and gang compositions. Indeed, these racial characteristics were present both on the street, as well as permeating through prison walls, continuing to affect the development of prison gangs, and adding to the complex range of factors which contributed to the germination of such gangs.

⁵⁸ If interpreting Rizwan's actions through a Goffmanian perspective, Rizwan had shaped his presentation of self to integrate within the 'white' community of Greater Manchester, whereas simultaneously retaining many other characteristics which would ease his interactions with the region's Pakistani and British Pakistani communities. Indeed, the fact that presentation of self was so central to Rizwan's responses illustrates the importance of Goffman's theoretical perspective when studying gang members (see further Chapter Eight for a detailed discussion on this topic).

CHAPTER SEVEN: GANGS BEHIND BARS

7.1 Introduction

Any study of prison gangs should attempt to situate them within the wider context of the penal environment. Prison is inherently characterised by power dynamics, and the imbalance of power between prisoners and the prison as an institution (Foucault 1977). Prisons contain within them ‘captive audiences’ (Skyes 1958) who are unable to escape the prison’s panoptic gaze, as well as the debasements, humiliations and rituals which are intrinsic to captivity (Childs 2015). Sykes (1958) terms these the ‘pains of imprisonment’, with such emotions affecting and texturing the daily interactions and activities of prisoners. Prison gangs can be viewed as being both a reaction to these pains – offering support, protection and camaraderie – as well as being a manifestation of such pains. Individuals who comprised my research sample were affected by these deep, powerful emotions arising from the specific conditions of confinement: many prisoners whom I interviewed identified violence, hyper-masculinity and conflict as being amplified by imprisonment, as well as occupying a central role within ‘the gang’. Violence was learnt on the streets and within the street gang, developing with one’s progression within the gang. Such values were then often ‘imported’ into the penal complex.

From the outset of this chapter, it should be made clear that most gang members who were interviewed in both Manchester and Forest Bank had ‘re-joined’ or reformed their street gang upon entering custody. Accordingly, there was a high level of gangs being ‘imported’ into the sample sites from the streets. This illustrated the interconnectedness between the internal carceral space and its surrounding regions (see also Jacobs 1977), heightened by the fact that both prisons predominantly served as ‘local’ jails. Although there were a limited number of gangs which had been formed within custody for the first time, the preponderance of what Howell (2011) terms ‘prison street gangs’ meant that the values learnt by gang members on ‘the street’ were often transplanted into prison, and that there were parallels between the compositions of many of the region’s street and prison gangs. These linkages which exist between street gangs and their prison counterparts are attributed to the ease with which prison gang members can adjust, socialize and operate upon entering custody (Jacobs 1974, 1977).

The primary focus of this chapter is to scrutinize the practices of the prison gangs which operated within the prisons of Greater Manchester. Rather than providing a narrative account

of their compositions and activities, much of this chapter focuses on how gang members constructed and transplanted their identities in prison. Through drawing on sociological accounts of self and identity (e.g., Goffman 1961), one of the principal themes I wish to foreground in this chapter is the way in which gang members negotiated the penal landscape. I describe the practices in which prison gang members engaged to navigate prison life: how members emitted signals to demonstrate violence potential, how the symbolism of gang affiliation was utilised in varying ways during imprisonment, and how actions depended on whether an individual was gang-affiliated, as well as on gang 'rank' and personal history. Through combining testimonies of both current and former gang members, I aim to show that the performance of gang identity was not only a display of deviance but a wider cultural identity. I have chosen to focus on the 'signalling' acts of prison gang members for two reasons. First, there is a distinct lack of criminological literature on this topic. Second, throughout my research I have found that many gang members discussed topics around the presentation of self, reputation and image: these themes are all interconnected to the broader theme of signalling.

7.2 Institutional Cultures and Practices

From the beginning of this study, it was apparent that the two prisons acting as the primary sample sites for my research had very different histories and institutional cultures. Although the two prisons are only approximately 3 ½ miles apart, HMP Manchester is a public prison built 150 years ago, whereas HMP Forest Bank is a much newer private prison, built 18 years ago. HMP Manchester, more commonly known as Strangeways, is probably most synonymous in the public consciousness with the riots which occurred within the jail in 1990. The Strangeways Riots were part of a series of disturbances which occurred across English prisons due to prisoner grievances about their treatment in custody, and led to the widespread destruction of prison interiors, and violence towards both staff and prisoners (Carrabine 2004). HMP Forest Bank, however, is not as well known by the public. Nevertheless, the prison has recently faced several problems in the form of high levels of violence (between prisoners and between prisoners and staff), staff corruption and allegations of staff brutality towards prisoners (Abbit 2018).

Some of these differences were apparent both from my observations as well as through my interviews with prisoners and staff. For example, HMP Forest Bank operated a more 'light-absent' regime (see Crewe et al. 2014): prisoners were granted more autonomy, there was less

use of authority by staff and a lower presence of staff on prison wings. In contrast, HMP Manchester was ‘heavy-present’: there was a greater staff presence on wings, more instances of punitive actions by staff, but there was also a greater sense of order and control than in the ‘lighter’ regime of HMP Forest Bank⁵⁹. There were also differences in the staff compositions: staff at HMP Manchester were overwhelmingly white, male, older and often from a military background. This could be contrasted to HMP Forest Bank, where prison officers were younger, with the presence of more female and BME staff.

Accordingly, when attempting to comprehend the phenomenon of gangs at the two establishments, and analysing the interview data, I sought to investigate whether differences in, for example, institutional culture and staff composition had led to differences in the activities of their prison gangs. This chapter presents data collected from gang members imprisoned at both sample sites, and, as the results illustrate, there were remarkably few differences reported by gang members at the two prisons. There are several potential reasons for this, some of which were offered by prisoners and prison officers. First, due to their relatively close physical proximity, many of the same gangs operated at the two prisons. For example, HMP Forest Bank is located within Salford, and the Salford Lads gang operated within both prisons⁶⁰. Second, and linked to this, both prisons contained a largely similar prisoner population composition: although HMP Manchester is one of only three ‘core local’ prisons within England and Wales, all the prisoners interviewed at HMP Manchester for this research were contained within the ‘main jail’, a Category B facility. HMP Forest Bank is also a Category B prison. This may be one explanation why relationships between gang members and non-gang members were similar at both sample sites, and why gang members’ accounts of both prisons were similar.

7.3 Signalling in Prison: “Who Do You Chill With?”

⁵⁹ The higher levels of prisoner autonomy in HMP Forest Bank led to more ‘backstage violence’ (reminiscent of HMP Long Lartin, as described in Sparks et al. 1996). HMP Manchester’s atmosphere was more controlled and oppressive (similar to the description of HMP Albany in Sparks et al. 1996). In this regard, HMP Manchester’s austere regime with much ‘situational control’ to reduce violence was preferred by older prisoners to the ‘risky autonomy’ of HMP Forest Bank (see *ibid*; Liebling and Crewe 2017). The difference in the numbers of officers present at each prison could also have been affected by the periods of time in which fieldwork took place as by the time I carried out my fieldwork in HMP Forest Bank, government cuts to staffing levels had become more noticeable and severe.

⁶⁰ Members of the Gooch Gang and Doddington Gang were also interviewed at both prisons.

As I have identified in the previous chapter, street gangs in Greater Manchester range from highly structured, organised entities to relatively fluid groups of offenders, whose criminal activities were semi-normalized in the marginalized communities from which they originated. In light of the numerous gangs which existed in the region, it was not surprising to discover significant numbers of gang members within both prisons: the prison authorities were conscious of the impact these gangs had on the dynamics within their prisons, and on contemporary prison life. However, alongside the formal mechanisms in place to manage gang members were informal systems of governance, which were deployed by gang members (see also Skarbeck 2014). Gang members needed to devise systems and schemes to verify whether individuals really were gang members and affiliated to the gangs to which they claimed allegiance. It was in this regard that signalling was an important means of verifying one's claims to gang membership. 'Signals', which primarily refer to external displays of emotions and specific acts, are integral to offenders maintaining their identities, and have a particularly heightened role within prison (Gambetta 2009); in a carceral setting, projections of 'toughness' and hyper-masculinity serve a protective role, as displays of such acts make an individual less likely to be the target of victimization (Gambetta 2009; Levan 2012; Trammell 2014). Being the victim of assault is one of the many 'pains of imprisonment' (Sykes 1958), a term which refers to the various vicissitudes which befall individuals held in conditions of confinement. Individuals react to these 'pains' in different ways: some prisoners become victims of bullying, aggression or extortion, some side with prison authorities, and others take on the role of the aggressor (ibid). Finally, there are prisoners who are 'real men' (Sykes 1958): these individuals demonstrate endurance, abide by 'inmate decorum', are widely respected, and stifle conflict with the guards, building cohesion among inmates (Western 2007: xii). During my fieldwork, it became apparent that there were several 'real men' on each prison wing, and signalling proved to be one of the primary means through which their status was conveyed to others. These individuals were typically senior gang members: 'high ranking' prisoners who rarely needed to commit acts of violence in prison due to their pre-existing reputations. However, when such individuals did engage in violence, it was of a serious nature:

My first real understanding of gangs was when we had quite a big player from Liverpool on our house block. I didn't really see him as someone who people looked up to, until one day, a young chap from the Liverpool area came up to me and removed a jumper from his face, showing a large laceration, probably about six/seven inches. Now, I'd seen prisoners who'd been assaulted, punched, had a broken nose, the odd fracture here and there, but nothing to

that extent. But we later found out the guy who cut him was right at the top of the food chain of a large gang in the Liverpool area. So, he was sort of like the Godfather figure on that wing. And that was my first real wake-up call to gang violence in prisons: this is serious stuff we're dealing with, really serious criminals here that are capable of a lot. And that cut was a warning shot. **Member of Prison Management, HMP Forest Bank**

Less influential prisoners – both gang-affiliated and unaffiliated - also deployed signals, delivering their own “warning shots” to fellow prisoners. However, unlike the above account (where it was eventually revealed that the serious violence was in relation to a gang/family dispute) the actions of lower ‘ranking’ prisoners were normally to minimize the chances of being victimized, with almost all prisoners being familiar with the role signalling played in the carceral environment. However, they all shared the primary aim of presenting a specific image of oneself to other prisoners and prison officers; at times, signals would bolster reputation, whereas in other instances, they would be employed solely to enable an individual to survive his time in prison. In cases such as the one above, a violent incident could be seen as a critical incident, the reverberations of which could be substantial. From the moment a prisoner began his sentence, his ‘status’ was verified by other prisoners: who he was, what crime he had been convicted of, who he knew, and who he associated with on the streets. For gang members, the last of these was of crucial importance, Signals often provided a means of explicitly demonstrating one’s gang affiliation, and, at times, verified all the other information available to prisoners.

‘Hard to fake’ signals were something participants in my research spoke of several times. Bona fide gang members knew some individuals would pretend to be gang-affiliated and therefore there were systems in place to verify new prisoners’ gang affiliations. If a new prisoner was not known to others, one of the primary questions he might be asked was, ‘who do you chill with?’ to discern with whom he associated. If an individual was known to other prisoners, such questions were not normally asked as he would immediately gravitate towards friends, associates, or fellow gang members at the prison. After a prisoner was asked who he ‘chilled’ with, there were instances where individuals would falsely claim gang affiliation, or to know certain powerful gang members. However, the consequences of such acts could be severe:

And is it difficult in a jail like this not being gang-affiliated? Well, people just like, what I tend to have seen is that they check them out, where they’re from. What it is now is, because

they have access to mobile phones, if I come in and I go, “Yeah, I know Joe Bloggs from such an area” because this Joe Bloggs is a big hitter, and you make out you know him to try and be one of boys - one of the gang. But then this person really knows Joe Bloggs, and this person gets on the phone in the night and goes, “Do you know such and such?” And he says, “Never heard of him”. So, next day they go batter him, fucking giving him irons.

Stuart, Non-Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

In 2002, I ended up in prison and within ten minutes, three big black and half-caste kids come to me door and said, “Right, where you from?” and I said, “Moss Side”. And they asked, “Who’d you chill with? What gang you with out there?” I said, “I don’t class myself as a gang member.” They said, “You’re from Moss Side, you’re mixed race, you *must* be affiliated with someone”. I said, “If anyone, I lean Gooch”. So, one of them got off, made a phone call, come back, I’d given him me name. And they were related to Gooch: one of them was a Gooch member’s cousin. He says, “Yeah, I spoke to such and such, he told me who you are. So, we’re good. If you was Doddington or lying, there’d be beef.”

Peter, Former Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

Stuart and Peter both spoke of the violent ramifications which could arise from falsely claiming gang affiliation, with mobile phones being one of several means to verify one’s social connections and gang-affiliation on the streets. Many participants spoke of there being an increased need to verify the status of new prisoners, mainly because of the growing numbers of individuals who would profess gang membership. Writing specifically about English gangs, Wood (2006:1) states that due to the glamorisation of gangs in much of the media, “it is not surprising when (the) youth admire gang members, *mimic them* and aspire to join gangs” (own emphasis). Several gang members spoke of this issue, highlighting that they had encountered individuals who mimicked being gang-affiliated. Such issues were less pertinent in one’s local prison, where tight kinship networks meant that gang membership was far easier to discern.

Indeed, in both above cases, Stuart and Peter referred to individuals having their identities “checked out” when they were imprisoned away from their local area. Stuart’s reference to “one of the boys – one of the gang” and Peter’s descriptions of familial gang ties are reflected in the existing literature: much of this identifies gangs, as well as ‘deviant groups’ more generally, being characterized through closed, ‘tight’ networks (see, e.g. Everton 2011; Borgatti et al. 2014; Campana 2010). Gang-affiliation could reliably be ‘checked out’, primarily through telephoning gang members in other prisons. Although both sample sites had

‘gang questionnaires’ which asked for information on prisoners’ links to gangs upon entry into the prison (see Appendix D), many prison officers conceded that informal networks were often more reliable in establishing and verifying gang status. Accordingly, it was clear that emitting false ‘signals’, whether regarding one’s gang status or offence-committed, was an important subject of discussion for many prisoners. Other prisoners interviewed also spoke of how gang members would, upon seeing a new prisoner, “check them out, see where they’re from. And now, because they have access to mobile phones, if I come in and I’m bullshitting, saying I’m part of some gang when I’m not, they can phone people on the outside, find out, and batter you” (**Liam, Non-gang member, HMP Forest Bank**). The means of verifying gang membership, then, were evolving, and false declarations of affiliation would result in physical punishment. However, what complicated matters was the fact that some prisoners, such as Peter (above), were only loosely associated with a gang, ‘leaning’ towards a certain gang: this presented a problem as being peripherally associated with a gang made one’s status less certain, and therefore made verification a more complex process. Indeed, the existing body of literature has begun to acknowledge this distinction between gang members, gang affiliates and non-gang members (see, e.g., Wood et al. 2017). In the following section of this chapter, I use Goffman’s theory on ‘presentation of self’ to outline the risks which were inherent when falsely claiming that one was affiliated to a gang, or when one attempted to lie about the offence for which one had been convicted. Prisoners operated their own systems to verify such information, and punished prisoners who were discovered to have engaged in dishonest acts. Moreover, most prisoners were cognisant of the, at times elaborate, ‘performances’ which they had to undertake to bolster reputation and accrue respect.

The existing literature argues that signalling practices originate on the streets, where their utility stems from the fact that those engaged in criminal activities do not have recourse to formal, government-sanctioned regulatory mechanisms (Jacobs 2001; Walklate 2009)⁶¹. This is especially the case for gang members, who are not only outside the ambit of these formal compliance mechanisms but must also co-operate with one another to succeed in their criminal enterprises (Venkatesh 2006; Jacobs 2001; Contreras 2013). Therefore, the signals gang

⁶¹ Indeed, projections of hyper-masculinity are not confined to gang members within economically deprived areas; more widely, working class western communities value such expressions of masculinity (Anderson 1990, 1999) where there is a prioritization of “physical strength, competitiveness...[and] assertiveness...combined with the rejection of femininity and weakness” (Deuchar et al. 2016: 133).

members emit to one another are crucial in allowing them to determine who can be trusted. Gang members must ‘recruit’ on this basis, judging who is trustworthy based primarily on external displays (Densley and Stevens 2015), combined with recommendations from third-parties and associates (Densley 2013).⁶² On the topic of gauging trustworthiness more generally, Hamill and Gambetta (2006:33) state, “we look for or try to display signs of trustworthiness that are hard to fake. Before we trust people, we need to trust their signs”. For gang members, it is especially crucial that new members are verified to be trustworthy: untrustworthy individuals may potentially disseminate information to hostile third-parties, either deliberately or through reckless actions. Moreover, on rarer occasions, rival gang members or law enforcement may attempt to infiltrate the gang. These are risks of which gang members are aware and, therefore, they often question unknown individuals who are seen within their ‘territory’ (Venkatesh 2006).

Once within a gang, signalling continues to be an important facet of an individual’s identity. For example, senior gang members must ensure that their ‘presentation of self’ projects an image showing that they are able and willing to carry out acts of violence against rivals, as well as junior gang members who carry out transgressions (Venkatesh 2008). All of this underlines the fact that gangs – at least in most developed countries - are not regulated by state actors and are ultimately viewed as illegitimate institutions by much of the population⁶³. The lack of formalized state regulation of gangs precludes their members from seeking remedies when they are adversely affected; for example, if a gang is robbed of its (illegal) drugs or (ill-gotten) money, its members cannot inform the police. This makes gang members susceptible to attack from within and without the gang (Jacobs 2001; Contreras 2013), and external presentations of the gang’s potential for violence are one of the principal ways of preventing such attacks. Street gang members, then, have the greatest need to cultivate ‘hard to fake’ signals; if they are

⁶² Arguably, it is not just gang-related criminality which operates on this process of recruitment; for example, prostitution is also connected to a system of ‘hiring’ through referrals, personal contacts and networks (Venkatesh 2013). Therefore, this process of referrals pervades many criminal activities, as well as law-abiding occupations such as taxi-driving (Hamill and Gambetta 2006)

⁶³ This can be compared to other countries such as Burma (Chin 2009), Russia (Varese 2001), Pakistan (Qureshi 2005) and many African countries (Nordstrom 2001) where the situation is vastly different, and there is regular collusion between actors of the state, such as the police, and organised crime groups.

deceived by individuals who falsely display signs of gang-affiliation (such as rival gang members or the police) they have the most to lose.

Many of my research participants verified the existing findings on gang members' signalling activities. For example, junior gang members learnt signalling techniques from their older counterparts, becoming aware of times where signals had to be more discreetly displayed (such as instances where there were police crackdowns against gang members), and instances where signals had to be explicitly conveyed (such as instances where gangs were 'proving a point' by attacking rivals). Several gang members spoke of tattoos illustrating one's gang affiliation and signalling to others that they were 'down' (affiliated) with a gang; and some specifically mentioned that committing crimes prior to gang affiliation signalled that one was serious about joining a gang. Many gang members also spoke at length about the role played by nicknames within the gang. Nicknames have also long been associated with gangs. As such names are usually only known by members of the criminal underworld, nicknames can often hamper the efforts of law enforcement; for example, referring to individuals only by their nicknames leads to lower chances of police deciphering identities when wire-tapping phones (Gambetta 2009: Ch. 9). Reflecting existing studies, many of my research participants had nicknames. Non-gang members' nicknames were usually derived from their forenames or surnames, similar to wider society. However, gang members' nicknames were normally 'opaquer', referring to an individual's physical characteristics, emotional traits or the crimes in which they specialized (see also Gambetta 2009). The following shows one former gang member's account of the role played by nicknames:

You see, you and me are probably talking about some of the same gangsters, but as I've mixed in the same circles, or knew them personally, I only know their nicknames, not their real names. **And can you tell me a bit more about whether nicknames are important?** Well, even meself, when I started off in prison, because of the way I learnt to speak with people, learnt the patter, had a stance of not giving a fuck, they used to call me the thug. So, it gives an idea of how they saw me. It was all part of that image: I was thuggish; I'd cuss the screws. **Derek, Former Gang Member, Manchester**

In the case of Derek, his nickname was one component of his wider presentation of self, and "part of that image"; like most nicknames, his has been conferred upon him by others, in part due to his thuggish mannerisms, actions and familiarity with the prison argot. Most crucially,

being called ‘the thug’ illustrated his propensity for violence. During our interview, Derek further stated that he went by that name throughout his time in the prison system. The nickname, then, signalled to others his violence potential, and his “stance of not giving a fuck”, something which is often seen as a key component of gang membership (see, e.g. Densely 2013). He went on to state that his nickname helped him “to be on that rise, you know, rise through the ranks, be known for not giving a shit, that sort of thing. It helped embed me in the prison culture”.

Nicknames, then, were of great significance for gang members: they demonstrated that an individual was known in the criminal world, familiar with its culture, and acted as another verifier for an individual’s transition from the streets to prison. Most gang members who were interviewed stated that their nicknames had been developed on the streets and were later imported into prison. In this regard, Derek’s case was unusual, as his nickname had been given in prison. However, he was far from unusual in having a nickname whilst in a gang; for example, when conducting fieldwork at HMP Manchester, approximately 21% of the prison’s gang members had nicknames according to prison intelligence records. Prison officers stated that several more gang members probably went by nicknames which the prison had yet to detect. Such names were one of the more explicit signals to illustrate one’s character.

Yet, nicknames were not the only way of signalling one’s identity at the sample sites. Indeed, even acts seemingly as inconsequential as how one stood, walked, and talked denoted important characteristics amongst other gang members (see also Garot 2010), as well as in a street-context more generally (Anderson 1999). ‘Signalling’, then, often encompassed a range of characteristics such as physical attributes, but also included more subtle features. As **Sean (Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank)** stated, “If you’ve put in the work for a gang, you can represent for them. You’re more respected in jail, so you can behave differently”. Sean later went on to elaborate that such practices included ordering younger gang members to carry-out particular tasks: if a senior gang member had “put in the work”, he had risked injury, death and imprisonment, thus earning the ‘right’ to behave in a particular way. Densely (2013) writes extensively about this notion of sacrifice for the gang, using the example of gang tattoos. These show a commitment to the gang’s cause, as they are something which cannot easily be removed, are usually explicitly displayed, and act as a barrier preventing the individual from entering legitimate job markets. Other “permanent and hard to fake” signs such as physical fractures or scars (Densley 2013:121) are also beneficial for gang members as they signal

‘violence potential’ (ibid). To put it in economic terms, there are opportunity costs through committing to some of these external signs of gang-membership, which was why some participants in my research covered up or removed their gang tattoos once they had begun the journey towards desisting from crime. However, when in the gang, such signifiers served the purpose of showing fellow gang members and gang leaders that an individual had invested into the gang, precisely because they were willing to make the sacrifices in relation to wider society and personal appearance. Due to these reasons, they were a sought-after commodity. During my research, I found gang tattoos integral to the corporeal presentations of gang members’ identities. For some, gang tattoos were solely a means of identity formation (see Nasir 2016), occupying discreet parts of the body. For others, however, tattoos were deliberately placed on prominent, uncovered parts of the body, which were constantly displayed for the viewing of other prisoners and prison officers. The concept of gang tattoos as a demonstrable form of self-sacrifice was evident through the fact that prison officers could, and did, collect intelligence based on the display of such tattoos: having one’s tattoos on show could lead to detriment, either through the excessive scrutiny from prison authorities or through attacks from rival gang members. The overt displays of gang tattoos bore a risk, and those who did display showed further commitment and loyalty to the gang and its collective identity, often at the risk of personal safety.

7.4 Presentation of Self and the Perils of False Signalling

The existing body of criminological research shows that prisoners pay close attention to how emotions are displayed in a penal environment (Laws and Crewe 2015; Warr 2015). Although some of this relates to how individuals project their character to others, ‘signals’ are also often emitted to display one’s gang status, offence type, or wider connections within the social network of the prison. Individuals who participated in my research were also acutely aware of their role and status within the wider prison, reflecting Goffman’s argument that ‘presentation of self’ in daily life is a theatrical performance, and face-to-face interactions are used to control the impressions one receives of others (Smith 2006). In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1956:51) writes that “as members of an audience it is natural for us to feel that the impression the performer seeks to give may be true or false, genuine or spurious, valid or ‘phony’. So common is this doubt that, as suggested, we often give special attention to features of the performance that cannot be readily manipulated”. In this chapter, I have already referred to these ‘hard to fake signals’ (Densely 2013), which were used to demonstrate that an individual was a bona fide gang member. Indeed, at their most basic level, signals could simply

be an individual verbally stating his gang affiliation or the offence for which he was convicted. However, there was the continuous risk that individuals would falsely portray their identity to others. Most common were individuals who would hide their offence types or falsely claim to be gang-affiliated. Sex offenders were particularly at risk of victimization, whether they proactively revealed their offence, or if they were ‘found out’ by other prisoners. Some sex-offenders took the risk of masking their crimes, reflecting the high degree of stigma faced by such offenders more generally in prison (Ievans and Crewe 2016). However, other prisoners had strategies in place to verify individuals’ identities:

Our gang were rioting in a prison and took over the wing, officers ran off the wing, we found a guy who we suspected of being a sex offender, read through his file and we threw him off the landing. I don’t like ’em [sex offenders] I can’t stand ’em. They have to be padded up with other sex offenders. Cos if one were padded up with me I’d kill him. I don’t care, I’d leather him. I’d punch him everywhere. **And how would you find out?** Like I said, you could look through their file, a screw might tell you, a screw might keep their office door open, so you can look through their file. The screws don’t like them either.

Dan, Former Gang Member, HMP Manchester

Even on here [VPU], a lot of sex-offenders get terrorized and bullied. You see ten or twenty prisoners steam into them and leather them. And it’s worse in the main jail. Normally, in the main jail, when you come in, you show your pad mate your deps, so they can see what you’re convicted of, or if you’re dirty. **So, someone’s offences can be verified?** Exactly. Cos a lot of the time you’ll have sex-offenders lie about what they’re in for. But with seeing the deps they can’t lie. **Luke, Non-Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

Reading a prisoner’s files, viewing his charge sheets, or being informed of his offence by officers were all means through which one could verify whether an individual was telling the truth about the offence for which he had been convicted. Indeed, there was a presumption that sex-offenders would emit false signals, attempting to deceive other prisoners as to the offence for which they had been convicted. However, Goffman’s theories around false impressions and misrepresentations were also present in relation to gang members. The tight, dense networks which characterize many gangs meant that there was often an established process to discern whether an individual was who he said he was: gang affiliation could easily be verified, and depending on one’s true identity, the repercussions could be severe:

You get people who're claiming and repping falsely, and I tell them that's dumb, cos you then you go to jail and get seriously hurt. I mean, even me, I ended up in a jail years ago, in 2002. I landed there, got told, "Go in there". I'm the only Mancunian in here. And guys immediately started making phone calls to check out that I was Gooch. And one of them said, "You're lucky you're not Doddington or Cheetam Hill cos then there'd be 400 men in here wanting to kill you, simply because". And that's why I tell people, be very careful what you say. **James, Former Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

First, James' response showed that social networks were not restricted to one region of the country. Indeed, gang rivalries and allegiances spread across England's prisons, something which was described by several participants. Again, the high levels of gang 'importation' into prisons meant that gang associations which had developed on the streets would permeate prison walls. Second, James alluded to the fact that gang identities were sometimes disingenuous, with prisoners falsely 'repping' a gang dependent upon the situation they were in. This led to James' warning of advising people to "be very careful what you say". Moreover, alliances and conflicts existed between gangs in various parts of England. Accordingly, James' account of being in a prison outside of Greater Manchester showed that his 'gang status' still affected his interactions with other prisoners. Like James' account, many participants agreed that one of the most dangerous courses of action to take in prison was pretending to be something one was not: systems were in place to allow individuals' identities to be verified, and the large numbers of street gang members in prison allowed for violent retaliation to be exacted for misrepresentations. However, this statement required substantial clarification. To present oneself as being tougher, more violent, and more resilient than in reality was not viewed unfavourably; indeed, 'fronting' in this manner was often to be expected in prison (see also Laws 2016). However, to hide the nature of one's offence, or to pretend to be affiliated to a gang were transgressions viewed in a wholly different light. It was accepted that "when an individual appears before others, he will have many motives for trying to control the impression they receive of the situation" (Goffman, 1956:13), but this performance had to be a nuanced one. Indeed, as Goffman further identifies, there is a difference between the 'frontstage' and 'backstage' identities of individuals. Central to this argument is the premise that people behave differently in their public interactions – such as at work or at school – compared to their private interactions, at home or with close members of their family.

Although Goffman does not specifically write about the presentation of one's identity in relation to prisons, carceral environments are one of the principal arenas within which individuals are prone to change the way they present themselves. In my research, this importance of 'front' – maintaining 'face' through the display of aggression and bravado – was something which was often referred to by participants and could also be observed when fieldwork was conducted. It was especially pertinent for gang members, for who maintaining reputation was central to their identities and helped to sustain the criminal enterprise. However, such concerns were by no means restricted to gang members and could be said to apply to prisoners more generally. Applying Goffman's analysis to the sample sites, 'front stage' could be said to involve most areas of the prison which excluded individual cells; spaces such as the exercise yard, prison gym and other public spaces. This could be contrasted to the 'backstage' areas of the prison, such as cells, as well as other arenas which were private spaces, most notably areas of the Chaplaincy, where private interactions occurred with the Prison Chaplain. There was an acknowledgement by several participants that interactions which occurred in these spaces allowed for prisoners to show their emotions and true characters, something that they were unable to do in the wider space of the prison:

When they come to see us, they're prepared to cry, and the armour comes off. They feel safe. With a Listener, he'd only go so far. I've seen a lot of prisoners cry and they say they're ashamed. I say, "You're not the only one". When they come to main street – back to the prison – the armour comes back on. I have so many who say to me, "Are my eyes alright now? Do they look dry?" **Prison Chaplain, HMP Forest Bank**

Private interactions with prison chaplains, then, were one example of where the exterior 'armour' which prisoners metaphorically 'wore' could be taken off: under the carapace of self-confidence existed vulnerabilities, and the Chaplaincy was one forum where such emotions could be revealed. Indeed, for gang members, these external presentations of self were most apparent. Goffman (1956) describes gangs as being one group situation where individuals' presentations of self are particularly well modulated because such *group* interactions place a heavy emphasis on how individuals are viewed by one another.

In relation to this difference between 'front' and 'back' stage identities, Goffman (ibid:51) goes on to argue that "when we think of those who present a false front...we think of a discrepancy between fostered appearances and reality. We also think of the precarious position in which

these performers place themselves, for at any moment in their performance an event may occur to catch them out and badly contradict what they openly avowed”. This was as true at the sample sites, as it was when Goffman was writing over fifty years ago:

And then you get the lads who stand around with the gang *wanting* to be in it. A lot of them aren't even really gang members. And then they come to prison, and the only way they'll know the dangers of falsely claiming is going onto a wing, and they've been claiming Gooch and it's a room full of Doddington. They have to be in a cell with ten Doddington, their face mangled crying, "I wish I'd never pretended to be Gooch. And that's when it clicks.

Owen, Gang Outreach Worker, Manchester

False presentations of identity – or as Goffman terms them, ‘misrepresentations’ – were costly both in terms of one’s personal safety and in terms of the fall-out from being discovered to have deceived. As Goffman goes on to articulate, “when an individual appears before others, he will have many motives for trying to control the impression they receive of the situation (ibid:13). In relation to prison, it was difficult to successfully deceive other prisoners: both sample sites for my research were local prisons, with high turnovers of prisoners, and close degrees of interaction between the carceral environment and street culture. This combined with the proliferation of mobile phones in prison, as well as the cohesive social networks which characterise many gangs (see, e.g. Whyte 1958; Venkatesh 2008), meant that verifying an individual’s true status was usually not a difficult task. As Owen stated, “falsely claiming” gang affiliation could lead to an individual getting his “face mangled. Yet there were instances where individuals genuinely believed themselves to be gang members but were seen as ‘faking it’ by other, longer-standing gang members. The proliferation of gang ‘off-shoots’, as well as the presence of more gangs generally, meant that in the search for authenticity, individuals had to be more willing to ‘prove’ themselves: a key component of this was the use of violence. In the following section of this chapter, I present how violence was utilized and deployed by gang members to secure status, bolster reputation, and protect oneself in the often-unpredictable world of the prison.

7.5 Violence Capital in Prison and Violence Capital on the Streets

Throughout fieldwork, it was clear that the ability to ‘do’ violence was very important to most participants, whether gang members or not. Similar to Bourdieu’s concept of ‘cultural capital’, Gambetta (2009:98) refers to these forms of violence-related activities as ‘violence capital’.

From interviews and observations, it became clear that ‘violence capital’ at the sample sites encompassed a range of acts. This included: one’s ability to fight; whether one was known to be a ‘hard man’ (similar to Sykes’ category of ‘toughs’); one’s track-record of violence; and whether an individual was known to use disproportionate levels of violence. These characteristics were not necessarily imputed from one’s offence history. Indeed, many participants spoke of several incidents of street-level violence for which they had not been apprehended by law enforcement. Later in this chapter, I describe how firearms were found to be eclipsing these ‘old school’ forms of violence, which normally involved physical fighting and the use of weapons. In prison, guns were not present, yet violence still had to be used. This meant that ‘violence capital’ was a required and necessary facet of prison identity, and solely relying upon firearms or group violence could not guarantee one’s safety. Gambetta refers to violence capital in the context of “violence [which] often erupts regardless of an immediate conflict over resources. These other fights may break out because new entrants who fear seeming weak – those who have no violence capital to show – may choose to attack unprovoked or respond violently at the mildest provocation rather than waiting to be challenged. They want to create a reputation and gain respect, and to do that they need to resort to violence rather than just challenge or threaten” (Gambetta 2009:98). In prison, ‘violence capital’ is demonstrated both through the performance of aggression and the concealment of emotions. This reflects values learnt on the streets, where “displays of fear or pain, especially tears, may brand a young man as weak, inviting victimization” (Fader 2013:63).

In many ways, my research showed that ‘violence capital’ was illustrated through the performance of particular activities. For example, during fieldwork I witnessed several fights, some of which were launched into suddenly, others which were preceded with protracted displays of aggression. ‘Violence capital’ indicated the ability to use violence successfully and was of great importance in the carceral environment. Parallels can be drawn between this concept of ‘violence capital’ and Bourdieu’s conceptualization of cultural capital, which includes the concept of *habitus* to refer to “people like us”, who share a collective sense of identity and purpose, something which is engendered from shared cultural interests (Bourdieu 1990). Likewise, ‘violence capital’ can be said to refer to the various skills and attributes around fighting which were crucial in a carceral setting. In this context, “people like us” referred to people who were willing to use extreme violence to secure respect. Indeed, respect was a central commodity for gang members, as well as for prisoners more generally.

Building a known reputation for violence led to an increased chance of being accepted by one's fellow gang members, peers, and, if imprisoned, by other prisoners. The collective acceptance required by the gang means that unlike lone offenders, individuals who operate in groups or gangs must depend upon others for resources and recommendations (Venkatesh 2013), something which was apparent at both of my sample sites. Indeed, in both prisons, gang members were particularly eager to talk about the necessity of combining actual incidents of violence with maintaining 'front'. Violence allowed for one's gang identity to be bolstered, allowing for progression within the gang hierarchy and increased chances for enterprise within the gang. For those street gangs which were active in prison, there was the additional benefit of being able to progress through the ranks of the gang during periods of imprisonment. Although these traits were not specific to members of gangs, analysing interviews with gang members showed that there were heightened levels of violence usage and the development of 'violence capital' in gangs; for example, gang members frequently mentioned themes around respect and reputation, characteristics which were intrinsically linked with violence. This was a mindset which had been developed on the streets, where being 'disrespected' is the ultimate transgression of the 'code of the street' (Anderson 1999) and could only be remedied through violent acts. Such values were then transplanted into prison:

Outside, when we were in the gang, people feared us, were intimidated by us, and respected us. And it should be the same in here. I don't want people taking the piss out of me. If I let one person take the piss out of me 'cos I do the servery, they'll all think, "Oh right, he's a dickhead. So, we'll just take what we want off the servery". Not a chance of that happening. I won't let anyone do that. I won't let 'em talk to me like shit, and everyone knows.

Kevin, Former Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

It's the environment. A lot of people in here [prison] put on a front. In jail, even I front it, not front it...but it's natural. And if someone fucks about with me, the gloves come off. It's born and bred into me. Often, people start with you, but they're not prepared to go where you're willing to go. And you realize that. But I have to retaliate. I have to. Having been in a gang, I've created a reputation and a respect for meself where I have to be seen to back me shit up. And I could never look myself in the mirror if I didn't. It's the gang mindset.

Geoff, Gang Member, HMP Manchester

Reputation was something which was to be guarded at all costs, especially if one had, like Geoff, created an image central to which was the ability to defend one's self. This was built

and encouraged through “the gang mindset”, where gang membership helped “with your fearful reputation...[to] put fear into other people, be recognised, intimidate other people” (**Carlton, Non-Gang Member, HMP Manchester**). Gang members sought to develop these fearful reputations on the streets, and these were later cultivated in prison, often through violent means, but also through other acts. For example, **Harry (Former Gang Member, HMP Manchester)** spoke of his time in protective custody in the following terms: “being in here’s a relief. This is the only place in the prison where you can be yourself. Everywhere else, you gotta be a gangster 24/7, from the moment you step out your cell; it’s exhausting”. There was, then, a convergence between actual acts of violence and the projection of a hyper-masculine ‘front’. Violence capital was developed through the projection of this image, as well as actual instances of violence. All of this contributed to the development of hegemonic masculine identities.

Sociologists have identified this importance of hegemonic masculinity within various demographics of men, for whom heterosexuality, as well as the normative values of power and superiority are valued as being highly desired cultural commodities (Connell 1997; Messerschmidt 1993)⁶⁴. Hegemonic masculinity in relation to violence is particularly tied to economically marginalized men (Harland and McCready 2015:103), for whom material deprivations can lead to a greater use of violence in response to disagreements, perceived slights and insults (Anderson 1990; Deuchar 2009). Further, existing studies show gang members more likely to use violence than non-gang members living in the same area (see, e.g., Pyrooz et al. 2011; Comack 2008). During fieldwork, I interviewed many gang members who spoke of having participated in violence within prison, against rival gang members, nongang-affiliated prisoners and prison officers:

I’ve had many a fight in here; arguments, people giving me attitude, giving me shit. If one person thinks he can speak to me like that everyone will think they can. So, if someone’s got a problem with me, I won’t have it: I’ll ask the other guy to go in a pad; I’ll fight with me

⁶⁴ However, the arenas in which gang members learnt violence varied according to age. Several older participants (aged over 30) spoke of growing up in violent, white working-class neighbourhood (see also Winlow 2001) and learning violence through working as formal or informal security, either for nightclubs (see also Winlow 2001; Hobbs et al. 2005) or for gangs. Younger participants (under 30) more regularly spoke of ‘learning’ violence in schools (see also Garot 2010). However, regardless of age, repeated exposure to violence and fighting rendered gang members to gradually become acclimatized to violence (see also Thompson 1966: 105).

fists but if they pull something out, I'll pull something out. At the end of the day, it's between me and them, and I don't care about them as long as I'm OK, which anybody would. If it's between me and them I'm gonna try and make sure. If I've got to use violence, I'll use it.

Ron, Former Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

I'm shanked-up anyway, so if you step up to me in a cell, I'm ready to go – it's on, you gets me? I'm a big lad, so if you wanna take me on, you take me on. My philosophy is: "I'll treat you how you treat me. If you're good to me, I'll be good to you...and vice versa". So, this one screw came into my cell, and said he was taking my TV away...I was like, "Hang on, you ain't taking that." So, he puts his hands on me, and...you know, I'm a big lad, so I put him in a choke-hold...and next thing you know, I'm fighting five screws. They're kicking my shins, shouting, "You black bastard!"

Will, Gang Member, HMP Manchester

These accounts share many similarities: a heightened focus on being shown respect, on violent retribution being exacted for 'slights' and instances of incivility (see also Anderson 1999), and a focus on self-preservation in the volatile environment of the prison. Moreover, although Ron was a former gang member, he still spoke in the same language as active gang members: being intolerant of disrespect and placing heightened importance upon the need to fight. Most of Ron's account was retrospective, and he admitted that he was most violent when affiliated to a prison gang, having "calmed down" after becoming disaffiliated. Although much of the existing literature highlights the greater propensities of prison gang members to engage in violence (see, e.g. Wood and Adler 2001; Wood 2006), Ron's case was made more complicated by the fact that he continued to express sentiments he had learned whilst in his gang, although he was no longer a member. Such opinions focused on conceptualizations of 'right and wrong' (see also Maitra et al. 2017). Likewise, Will also presented his own schemas of morality: "If you're good to me, I'll be good to you". Although the violence gang members deployed was often extreme, during interviews many gang members were also keen to emphasize that there was a purpose behind the use of such violence. For example, during fieldwork I witnessed several instances of violence being perpetrated by gang members, including a prison gang member who was escorted to the segregation unit for making threats to shoot an officer and his family members, and two other gang members who fought with prison officers. In all three cases, the prisoners in question had felt that the officers' actions had transgressed their personal moral codes, although threatening to shoot an individual's family members was not something all gang members viewed as a morally defensible action. Gang members carried out a

disproportionate level of violent offences, and were more willing to deliver detailed accounts of such acts:

Me personally, I done a kid not long ago on another wing. But even when the staff come running, I didn't stop: cos I can back me shit with me hands I mean, my hands will tell you... *[places clenched fists on table to demonstrate bruises]*. So, I wasted him all over the wing. You can come into my cell later and see the cosh; it's still got blood all over it.

James, Former Gang Member, HMP Manchester

Gang members, then, were particularly vocal in recollecting their experiences around violence, both in prison and on the streets. Lauger (2016) refers to this as the 'violence script', where gang members and former gang members may be prone to exaggerating their experiences around violence and involvement in violent acts: that their descriptions of violence are heightened when recounting events, with the aim of enhancing their violence potential to the audience who are listening to their recollections. Reflective of this, such accounts often formed significant portions of my interviews with gang members, both in prison and on the street:

So, they moved me to Strangeways, and that give me more experience: at this age, I'm getting quite good at interacting with people, having a stance that spoke of you know, not giving a fuck. So there came a point when I realised, I don't care who they are, I must fight them – win or lose. And, therefore, that violence must be total and utter. And so, I became a very violent person – so I would pluck eyeballs, rip noses, bite ears, you know, I didn't really care. It would be like death struggle. And so, I had several fights in prison, and when I got out, too. Once a big doorman wanted to challenge me, and it became a big fight, and I ripped up his nose, and people think "Fuckin hell he's dangerous". Cos you just have to do some of these things. **Lionel, Former Gang Member, Manchester**

Being a former gang member, Lionel's account fits particularly well with Lauger's postulation around ex-gang members being particularly prone to almost romanticize and 'reminisce' their days of being in a gang, delivering brutally vivid accounts of visceral, "total and utter" violence which would be a "death struggle". Moreover, Lionel spoke repeatedly in his interview on the need to maintain 'front' and manage one's image to ensure progression within the gang: of "not giving a fuck" (see also Densley 2013). Such interviews were indicative of the wider, symbolic role violence played for gang members. Writing specifically about gang members, Comack (2008:46) details how violence and fighting help carve a 'tough guy' persona, allowing the

realisation of a degree of power, conferring ‘respect’ (of a certain sort) amongst peers, fellow gang members and persons of the opposite sex (see also Harland and McCready 2015). During interviews, participants delivered extensive recollections of such violence, including graphic descriptions of fights and injuries. Gang members were more likely to provide these descriptions than their non-gang-affiliated counterparts, who often spoke of the “lawlessness that’s now caused by these young gangbangers, who have no respect and will take your life at the drop of a hat” (**Iain, Non-Gang Member, HMP Manchester**), and expressed shock at contemporary prisons compared to the past:

Years ago, in my last sentences in 2003, I’ve never once seen someone get slashed in jail. I used to watch these American documentaries years ago, seeing they’ve all got shanks in jail thinking, “Blimey it’s crazy in there”. That’s what it’s like in here now. I would say more than 50% of the population in here are carrying something. And with some of them, it’s just a show off. With others, they’re wary of what’s going on, ‘cos they know there’s something going ’round the corner. It’s ruthless. These gang members will slash you over anything.
Simon, Non-Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

And I think what you’re now seeing is all part of the L.A.-style Americanization of gangs. Like nowadays you’ve got all these young up and comers, thinking it’s the lifestyle, this and that. And they’ll see Dr Dre and all them with their rap songs and people on YouTube promoting violence, and that’s what they want to do. And they view it as a badge of honour. If they’ve done this or done that, then everyone knows they’re not to be messed with. It’s about reputation. **Tommy, Former Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

Simon’s and Tommy’s opinions were shared by other participants, many of whom described serious violence as having arisen in recent times, often citing an ‘Americanization’ of gang members’ sensibilities – including the proliferation of firearms – as the main reasons behind this augmentation in gang violence. Simon spoke of his direct experiences in seeing more weapons in prison as compared to his last sentence in 2003, attributing this to the “ruthless” attitude of gang “soldiers” who were engaged in “gang war” and “turf war” within penal institutions. Tommy offered similar insights, using the phrase “the L.A.-style Americanization of gangs” to describe the rise of rap-inspired violence, underscored by videos online (see also Storrod and Densley 2017) and a need to secure one’s reputation as someone “not to be messed with.” Indeed, when interviewing older participants, a largely shared consensus arose around

the displacement of previous norms, leading to the development of a new, more violent ‘gang world’⁶⁵.

Although one many dismiss these views as romanticized accounts of how things were, there is an established body of criminological research which highlights the dissolution of older gang structures, particularly in the United States, and the emergence of new, more violent gangs on the streets and in prison. For example, Wacquant (2001:110-111) describes how “the convict code, rooted in solidarity among inmates and antagonism towards guards ... has in effect been swamped by the ‘code of the streets’”. Much of this account was reflected during my interviews with prisoners of different ages, with several young gang members each feeling the need to demonstrate that he was a ‘contemporary warrior’ (Comack 2008:49), developing the ‘tough guy’ persona (*ibid*: 44) so valued in the environments where my fieldwork was undertaken:

That’s why everyone listens to me, cos they know if they don’t, I don’t care who they are I’ll go in a pad with ’em. I don’t care if they’re six foot and twelve stone bigger than me. I can fight if I need to fight...to protect meself, and not let them make a dick of me in front of people, and so other people think, “Look how other people have treated him, we’ll do the same”. Everyone knows in here, I’ve been in pads with people a lot lot bigger than me and I don’t think half of them have expected me to walk back out of the pad. But I have. With not a mark on me. **Dom, Prisoner, Former Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

My brother-in-law turned ’round and said to my wife – his sister – “To be honest with you I’d never want to fight [name] because one of us would have to die”. And that’s how he saw it. Also, I’d do crazy things. I’d jump in and fight multiple geezers on my own, knocking guys out. One occasion I was having bottles broke over me head, and I kind of enjoyed it - it’s a bit like an extreme sport. You don’t think of the injury side – you get over that, over the years. Cos you couldn’t do it otherwise. And you know, so that’s me.

Pete, Former Gang Member, Manchester

⁶⁵ Several participants made references to the United States, referring to specific American gangs by name, as well as using the term ‘Americanization’ as a byword for the firearm-centred, street-based gangs populating contemporary, British urban cities. This illustrated how American gang discourse had not only permeated popular culture, but also affected the discourses – and possibly the activities – of gang-affiliated individuals. Indeed, there were off-shoots Gooch and Doddington Gang which used the terms ‘bloods’ and ‘crips’ in their gang names, in homage to the L.A. Bloods and Crips. As participant stated, the sort of terminology you’d hear or see in an American film, it’s like we’ve adapted that in the UK. Crazy stuff. **(Member of Prison Management, HMP Forest Bank).**

‘Violence capital’ was developed through participants’ verbal accounts of the violent incidents in which they had engaged, as well as the ways in which they presented themselves and behaved during interviews. Participants were keen to deliver brutally vivid accounts of the violence in which they had taken part. Dom underscored his violence potential through stating that he did not care if a rival was “six foot and twelve stone bigger than me...I have [walked out after a fight] with not a mark on me”. Similarly, Pete emphasized his violence capital by recounting how he fought “multiple geezers on my own, knocking guys out...like an extreme sport”. It is also worth noting that although Dom and Pete were both former gang members, they spoke in the language of current gang members. This illustrated how street culture was often all pervasive, merging the dividing lines between gang and non-gang members; concepts such as honour, reputation and respect were key commodities for all prisoners (see also Laursen and Laws 2017). Although I argue that these attributes were heightened for gang members, my research showed that these attributes still applied to the prison more generally. Laursen and Laws (2017) refer to these values as ‘sub-cultural capital’, something which “is valued by street and prison cultures but fails to live up to the neo-liberal expectations of efficient self-government”.

My research showed that these continuations existed between street and prison cultures. Despite such linkages existing, Trammel (2016:6) highlights how “the sociological study of prison culture often focuses on prisons as isolated facilities”. Indeed, although much of the earlier literature around prisons refers to penal establishments as ‘total institutions’ (Goffman 1961; Foucault 1977), the presence of ‘core local’ prisons and short-term imprisonment in England has led to less defined boundaries between the cultures of certain areas and their local prisons. This was an important theme throughout my research, as street cultures were readily imported into the sample sites: gang allegiances, social networks and value systems were regularly replicated in prisons, brought in from their surrounding communities. Similar to Wacquant’s (2001) description of the “meshing and merging” of urban ghetto and modern prison, and Jacob’s (1977) observation of the ‘importation’ of street cultures, there were key links existing between Greater Manchester’s prisons and its surrounding areas. Ideas around being a ‘gangster’, as well as notions around masculinity, strength and violence all applied to prison as they did to the streets. This aspect of ‘importation’ was an important theme throughout my research and affected how violence was developed and displayed in a carceral setting. When I traced how prisoners developed their propensities for violence, it became clear

that violence was not merely instrumental, but that violent identities were a fundamental facet of prison life.

Moreover, through interviewing current and former gang members, both in prison and on the streets, I was able to gain a comprehensive view of how the use of violence has changed over time, including types of violence, offenders' propensities to engage in violent acts and the symbolic roles of such actions. It should not be surprising that violence played a central role in the lives of many gang members. Indeed, to denote this intrinsic link between violence and gangs, Yablonsky (2000) specifically makes detailed references to 'the violent gang', whose members focus on committing both "senseless violence" as well as violence to maintain criminal enterprise (ibid:181). My research supported this finding, uncovering the heightened levels of violence deployed by gang members, for both practical and "senseless" reasons. Moreover, prisoners are predominantly drawn from a demographic where the 'performance' of tough masculine identities, whether through violence or demeanour, is a character trait inculcated from a young age, often starting within school-based peer groups (Harland and McCready 2005). Therefore, although violence plays a heightened role for gang members, the existing research suggests that violent acts are by no means restricted or confined to gangs: offenders who are not gang members may also deploy violence during their criminal activities, only with less regularity than their gang-affiliated counterparts. Just as street gangs are 'imported' into prison, so too are gang practices. It is unsurprising, then, that the elevated levels of weapon usage in prison reflected gang members' activities on the streets:

When I went on a night out, I had a knife down me pants at all points, or a set of knuckle dusters on me waistline, know what I mean? There'd be a tool in the car if necessary. I'd come back from nights out with blood on my hands. So, when I attacked someone here last week, the reason I used a weapon was 'cos, in my head, I wanted him in intensive care. My philosophy on that is, if I attack someone on the wing, I want him in hospital. I'll take it the full way. **To death?** By any means necessary. **Nathan, Gang Member, HMP Manchester**

I've had eight or nine fights in here. I can inflict very horrible violence if necessary. And I ended up doing 13 years for stabbing someone. But I never told the police it was related to gangs, even though it was. I told them it was a robbery. You live by the sword you die by the sword. Everyone seems to have a blade in here, even just down to a plastic fork or knife. I'd say it's a high percentage. I mean, in jail, obviously you need to stand up for yourself, you

need to speak up for yourself. If you can't fight then, poor you. You're gonna get your head kicked in if it comes to it. **Bradley, Former Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

The above accounts starkly illustrate the dominant attitude held by many prisoners on the role of violence. Laursen and Laws (2017) use the term 'respect plus' to indicate the heightened roles held by the concepts of honour, respect, and dignity within prison: the "need to stand up for yourself...to speak up for yourself" (Bradley, above); and to "inflict very horrible violence if necessary (ibid). These values help form 'street capital' and 'violence capital', which are transplanted from the streets to prison, and are often perpetuated through an intergenerational framework. Nathan (above), for example, went on to state that his "history" included "being brought up in it [violence] from young". Having been a child within a household where violence and achieving 'respect' held such importance meant that Nathan developed a mindset of using extreme violence, retaliating "by any means necessary". Indeed, both Bradley and Nathan had lengthy histories of using violence on the streets, and these values continued to guide their actions within prison. Both Nathan and Bradley were in their late-thirties, and specifically mentioned how their personal use of weapons changed over time. Nathan, for example, used to have a "knife down me pants or a set of knuckle dusters on me waistline" when he was an adolescent. However, he went on to state how firearms later became his weapon of choice. Bradley also started off using knives, having served his first prison sentence for a stabbing, but also later moved on to shootings. In the following section of this chapter, I describe how, despite the central role played by violence within gangs, there were limits to the solidarity gang members would show one another.

7.6 The Limit Points of Gang Loyalties

As I have described in this chapter thus far, gangs bore an influence upon prison and prison life: their members tended to have a greater propensity for violence, and gangs could sometimes operate as informal mechanisms of governance. However, this did not mean that gang loyalties were absolute. In *'It ain't nothing like America with the Bloods and the Crips'*, Phillips (2012) writes of the malleable, and sometimes transient, nature of prison gang membership within English prisons. During my research, the impermanence of prison gangs – as well as the ubiquity of American imagery in popular discourse – was illustrated by a participant using almost the exact same phrase as in Phillip's 2012 paper:

What can you tell me about prison gangs? It's not like America, where you get them gangs like Bloods and Crips. Obviously, it's people in their own comfort zones, innit? It's when people are in their own comfort zones, they're making their money and putting their turf on lockdown basically, whether it's on (the) road or in jail. But, like, in some ways, in the criminal world, in prison, being a gang member can make it a bit easy for you if you know a lot of people, but in that way, people are scared of you as well.

Martin, Non-Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

Martin's contention that "it's not like America ... [with the] Bloods and Crips" indicated the less entrenched nature of gangs within English prisons. This, in turn, had a strong effect on gang loyalties. Similar to the benefits attributed to street gangs, Martin described prison gangs as making life "a bit easy for you" and providing a "comfort zone" whether in prison or on the streets. However, there were very few individuals for whom the gang was so important that they would submit to the gang's every demand. **Joel (Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank)** was one of the few individuals for whom attacking someone was precipitated through, "Just being rivals. Just 'cos there're there. If you're from the other team and I see you, it's on. There's no if, ands or buts or other ways about it". As a self-described "hardcore" gang member, simply seeing someone of a rival gang in prison would lead to violence. Furthermore, the closed, limited nature of (especially local) prisons heightened the probabilities of such meetings occurring, followed by violence. For most other participants, however, loyalty to their gang was something viewed in more nuanced terms, even for those who were self-identified gang members. Often, imprisonment meant gang loyalties had to be balanced with pragmatism, whereby, "you're all stuck in this small space, so rival gang members will often talk, and get on. They have to. So, it does mix together sometimes; the beef gets squashed" (**Martin, Non-Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**). Some participants also spoke of family ties engendering more loyalty than gang ties:

I was locked up with the kid that had shot me nephew. Now, me nephew was only injured. But, see, if me nephew had died from his bullet, it's forever. All time, for ever. Doesn't matter what wing, doesn't matter what staff, doesn't matter what camera. If I'd have come across the kid, he would have got hurt. Something like that it's gone too deep. The wound's too deep. Wings won't stop it. Jail won't stop it. I wouldn't say it happens much, not that I've heard of over the years. And something like that is deeper than a gang thing.

Nathan, Gang Member, HMP Manchester

Accordingly, even though Nathan was a gang member, for him, loyalty to family superseded loyalty to the gang. To complicate matters, Nathan was a Gooch Gang member, whereas his nephew had been a Doddington Gang member. Therefore, Nathan would have risked attacking a member of his own gang for having attacked a family member. This was a stark example of the limits of gang loyalties as compared to loyalty to one's biological family. This can be contrasted to Joel (above), for whom there were no limits to gang loyalties: he would fight, kill and, if necessary, die for the gang. These values were, unsurprisingly, imported into the prison, where such members would have to be continually managed and kept apart from their rivals. But as most participants acknowledged, such scenarios were not the norm. Rather, loyalty to one's gang was usually more nuanced. This extended to the gang's norms, and how much protection the gang was willing to provide its members:

All the Asians, we sit together: call it a gang, call it whatever you want. But we tell them right from the get-go, if you smoke Mamba⁶⁶ we're not getting involved in your problems. If you got into debt because of that, and there's any violence, we're not getting involved in that. But, like there's one guy in here from Pakistan, doesn't know anything, can't speak English properly, we look after him. Obviously if someone said something to him there'd be retaliation. And there's 10, 12, 15 of us sat together all the time anyway. **Rizwan, Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

Rizwan, a British Pakistani gang leader, delivered an account where pragmatism shaped the limits of gang loyalties: newly arrived prisoners, before joining the collective, had these norms set out, including how far the gang would help them. Rizwan specified that his gang would not be involved in settling the drug-debts of members, something that would be an arduous, potentially dangerous process. I also encountered prisoners who had acted as witnesses for the Prosecution during their gang's trials, in order to secure a more lenient sentence. Turning 'Queen's Evidence' or Q.E' as it was normally termed, was a perilous course to take, as being labelled an informant would put one's life at risk. However, this was a risk some gang members were willing to take in order to spend less time in prison. Such actions not only demonstrated the limit to gang loyalty but would also lead to being instantly ostracised from one's gang. This process of being ostracized from, or leaving, one's gang also illustrated the different values individuals placed upon gang loyalties. Some prison gang members spoke of the physical harm they came to when leaving the gang, and the role violence played in joining the gang:

⁶⁶ One brand of the psychoactive substance more commonly known as 'Spice'.

I took a beating to get in the gang and took a beating to get out: they broke me arm and that, knocked a few teeth out and stuff. But it was worth [it] to get out of the gang. I'm glad I'm not in a gang considering I seen me mates shot and that. I've seen some of me mates try to get out of the gang but never got out of it, and when they did they get out they got shot or they went too far. I got out considerably light compared to some of them.

Bradley, Former Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

There's rules to a gang, ain't there? You get initiated into a gang. Case in point: there's a lad here doing 18 years 'cos his initiation to get into this gang was to blow someone's fucking head off. And unfortunately, he got caught and that, like. So, how much are you willing to give up for the gang? **Sam, Non-Gang Member, HMP Manchester**

Bradley had to be subjected to violence both to join and leave his gang; Sam talked of a case where a potential gang member had to murder a man as part of his gang initiation. As Sam also stated, it was a question of "how much are you willing to give up for the gang?" Like gang loyalties, initiations⁶⁷ and rituals to enter and exit the gang were about sacrifice: how much was one willing to forgo for their gang? For gang members, their gang was viewed in serious terms, and members had to illustrate their sincerity by engaging in, or being subjected to, serious violence. The gang, then, was unforgiving in the violence meted out, yet its members would not always reciprocate with unconditional protection. The gang was a complex organization, and therefore, its effects on daily prison life were also multifaceted and varying.

7.7 The Dynamics of Contemporary Prison Life

Throughout this chapter, I have sought to illustrate the varying ways in which prison gang members and non-gang members negotiated penal institutions, including specific discussions on violence, the presentation of self and the limits of gang loyalties. In general, prisoners were from locales where physicality and violence were valuable commodities. These forms of 'street capital' were then transferred into the prison. Through including testimonies from a range of different participants, I have aimed to illustrate how prison gangs were situated within the wider arena of the penal complex. From engaging active and former gang members, what became clear was that the motivation behind employing violence was not an easy terrain to chart: violence could sometimes be impulsive, or other times be premeditated; it could be tied to

⁶⁷ See Yablonsky (1962), as well as Hansen and Freitag (2016) for further details on the 'choreographed violence' of gang initiation rites.

deep-running gang feuds and have complex chains of causation or could occur for little rational reason at all. This contested nature of violence reflected the uncertain positions that many of these violent actors held within the wider criminal world: whereas prison gang members had clearly defined roles as to who was the enemy and who was the ally, individuals who were former gang members or non-gang-affiliated all had fewer clear boundaries within which to act. Due to their extensive support networks and the presence of ‘backup’, prison gang members were often able to deploy violence “to prove a point what doesn’t need to be proved” (**Jean, Non-Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**). However, for other, non-gang members, serious violence was inflicted more out of a sense of self-preservation and protection. For those individuals who fell outside of the purview of the prison gang, it clearly was a case of “every man for himself in here” (**John, Non-Gang Member, HMP Manchester**) – their experience of prison was atomistic and individualised (see also Crewe 2009; McClean et al. 2017). Certain participants had particularly extensive experiences of defending themselves against violence. Adrian was one such individual: a former gang member, much of his responses were coloured by the fact that he had been ostracized from, and was on acrimonious terms with, his former gang. As a former gang member, his response vividly illustrated the limit points to gang loyalties:

There’s no book on surviving jail. I don’t care if it’s wrote by an ex-con or whatever; there is none. You survive jail by your instincts and by your personality: your mannerisms, how you put yourself on the wing, and how far you’re willing to go. Everyone in this jail, I don’t care what they say, is out for their selves. At the end of the day, when it gets hot, they’ll put you in the fire and fucking shut the door behind you and leave you there to take it. So, that’s what I say to them on here, “I’m not your friend, not your mate, I’m your associate”. Jail’s dog eat dog. **Adrian, Former Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

Adrian, like many participants, had been imprisoned in numerous jails, of varying security categories, at various points in time. Both sample sites could, to a degree, be characterised as a “dog eat dog” world, where non-gang members were left with limited ‘back-up’. On the one hand, those with no gang or pre-existing peer group to align themselves within prison were in a precarious position. On the other, ex-gang members such as Adrian ran the added risk of being involved in conflict with their former fellow gang members. However, even gang members could also find themselves in situations where they and their fellow gang members were in the minority on a wing. Accordingly, almost all prisoners had to devise strategies – or

contingency plans – to deflect, vitiate, and counter violence. Violence, then, was a daily risk of gang activity, and a character trait some gang members actively encouraged amongst others in the gang. A member of prison management summarized the theme by stating the following:

And prisoners say to me, “it’s all we know about. It’s how it is out there. And it’s every man for himself in prison”. They just like violence and have a propensity for violence. You’re round violence all the time. **Member of Prison Management, HMP Forest Bank**

Performing violent acts showed that one was not ‘soft’ and could ‘back up’ verbal threats with physical action. Through engaging in violence, gang members could illustrate they were the ‘real deal’, and thus show that their identities were authentic. ‘Striving for authenticity’ was something which prisoners, and gang members, sought to achieve. ‘Realness’, which could best be described as being true to your word and living the life you claim to have lived was a particularly sought-after commodity for gang members, who were in a constant struggle to demonstrate their authenticity. In turn, gang affiliation played a central role in this pursuit and in the establishment of such ‘real’ identities. The values played upon signals, symbols and violence were all heightened within the carceral setting. Indeed, in many ways, prison fortified and underscored the motivations underpinning gang membership. Cressey (1955) details how groups fortify attitudes, beliefs and values: this statement can apply to both criminal gangs and non-criminal groups. However, within the confines of prison, there is an even greater strengthening of gang members’ attitudes and beliefs. All of this shaped the dynamics of contemporary prison life.

However, something else that was noted by participants was that violence was disproportionately perpetrated by prison gang members. This is supported by much of the existing literature (Wood 2001; Camp and Camp 1985). Indeed, from retrospective accounts it was clear that many participants shared a similar opinion on the increasingly violent dynamics of the contemporary prison “so that what was once a repressive but comparatively safe ‘Big House’ is now often an unstable and violent social jungle” (Wacquant 2001: 111).⁶⁸ As I outlined at the beginning of this chapter, changing dynamics and prison cultures have a profound impact on prisoners’ experiences of confinement. The following participant’s

⁶⁸ Wacquant’s (2001) description was of the changing nature of the American Penitentiary System. However, as the data within this chapter shows, such an assessment could equally be applied to the English Prison System.

account reflected these sentiments, focusing on the changes that have occurred within British penal institutions:

Prison's a more violent place now. It's not racial tensions, it's drug turf war. What it is, you've got your main man out there, and all the little soldiers getting nicked. So, all them soldiers from one area are on a wing, and all the little soldiers from another area are on another wing. Now, both sets of soldiers wanna sell drugs on the wing, so there's murder in the jail. What I don't like about prisons now, it's all local, not like years ago when it was us against them. There's violence, intimidation. They're fetching the gang war into custody now 'cos they're coming in; they're getting called back to custody on these GANGBOS. They don't give a fuck.

Simon, Non-Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank

I have had the shock of my life coming to prison this time. To be honest with you, this is the whole thing of the way life's evolved. I never knew of any gangs growing up. Never even heard of a gang. Don't get me wrong, you used to have different areas. But even in 2003 it wasn't like this in jail. **Del, Non-Gang Member, HMP Forest Bank**

Both Simon and Del were older, non-gang-affiliated prisoners. They compared the contemporary prison dynamics with their previous experiences in jail, “when it was us against them” (Simon) and “the way life's evolved” so that prison gangs now populate the carceral space. Later in his interview, Simon went on to outline how the ‘us’ and ‘them’ culture of an earlier era referred to prisoners versus prison officers, as compared to the fragmented, gang-based system of loyalties currently in place. This transformation of convict culture and prisoner solidarity bears direct parallels to Wacquant's (2001) and Weinrath's (2016) descriptions of how prison gangs have changed the dynamics of contemporary American prisons. The presence of more street gangs in prison created a more uncertain, volatile atmosphere, with gang-based rivalries permeating prison walls and engendering a tense atmosphere. Moreover, the custodial “gang war” which Simon described was attributed both to prisoners' breaching gang injunctions as well as the increasingly powerful drug-market which operated within prison. These were two channels through which gang-structures were imported into prison, with “two sets of soldiers” vying for control of the drug-market on the same wing, and the subsequent rising levels of inter-gang assaults and violence to secure hegemony within the prison. In this regard, the “drug turf war” Simon referred to, was the furtherance of street gang activities within prison in order to continue the activities of, and secure profits for, the “main man” outside. Indeed, several gang members described how the drugs-market was key to shaping the

activities of prison gangs. Older, street gang allegiances merged with a ruthless desire to accumulate financial profit within prison. New psychoactive substances such as ‘spice’ were leading to increasingly heightened levels of inter-gang violence:

It’s all about spice. What amazes me is that these kids are willing to slice someone, getting lock up five six years just to get high once. And obviously, if you’re in jail smoking drugs, smoking spice, the gangs want their money, so they’ll put a hit on you. Spice is all over the jail; there’s not very much they can do about it. And I’d say it the gangs are organised about bringing it in. Obviously, yeah, there’s certain people on the wing you go to who’ve got people out there called throwers, you know, who stand outside the jail and throw parcels over for a decent wage. Like, I know a gang member on another wing...he was getting it in smuggled in through slippers, getting it sown into slippers. It’s big money. It’s big business for the gangs.

Phil, Gang Member, HMP Manchester

The emergence of ‘spice’ within English prisons is a relatively new development, and there is a growing literature on this emerging, prison-based drug market (see, e.g., Ralphs and Gray 2017; Ralphs et al. 2017). However, what Phil’s response demonstrated was how prison gangs were able to adapt to this new ‘marketplace’ through being “organised about bringing it [spice] in”, smuggling the substance in through a variety of means. Later in his interview, Phil referred to the ‘main men’ in the prison being responsible for much of this drug-trade, euphemistically referred to in the above excerpt as “certain people...who’ve got people out there ...who...throw parcels over”⁶⁹. This response, along with Phil’s references to prisoners having hits put on them, illustrates the numerous linkages and interconnectedness between street and prison gangs. This was something apparent in both sample sites, with several prisoners talking about mobile phones facilitating the connections which existed between the region’s street gangs and their prison counterparts. **Ron (Former Gang Member, HMP Manchester)** described how, “people get done in on a daily basis. It could be due to street issues following them in here. It could be reputation. Drugs. All sorts of stuff. And the gangs are more

⁶⁹ Just as most street gangs operated along a ‘model’ of drug-distribution whereby wholesalers would supply to ‘middlemen’ who would then supply to street-dealers, so too did the distribution of spice operate along a similar model: ‘throwers’ who would throw parcels to ‘collectors’, who would then go on to distribute the drug; both the throwers and collectors would be working for the same gang leader. In this regard, modes of operation and gang structures had been imported into the prison from the streets (see also Decker and Pyrooz 2001). Moreover, the fact that, at the time of writing, spice cannot be detected by prison authorities in prisoners’ urine means that prisons cannot discern who has taken spice, and thus cannot sanction them (cf. Heroin, marijuana, cocaine). This is the main reason the drug is so popular.

sophisticated now”. This sophistication was coupled with what Phil termed as gang members being motivated through getting “a decent wage”. Indeed, many participants referred to this financial focus on the activities of contemporary prison gangs:

And how about gangs in this jail? It’s all organised. It’s easy to move drugs about, and it costs a lot more in here than outside. **And how could you go about getting it?** Mobile phones. If you’ve got a mobile in here, internet banking, bank transfer. Or you could just call up your missus and tell her to drop however much into the dealer’s account...If I’m the dealer, I’d give my missus’ bank account [to the drug user] and they’d transfer the money into her account. Tell you the truth, it can be as simple as, I call up my missus, the dealer calls up his missus, they meet on the out and do the deal there. **So, the money’s paid outside and you get the drugs here?** Exactly. Yeah. **Ralph, Gang Member, HMP Manchester**

Similar to Phil’s description of gang members working for a “wage”, Ralph’s response illuminated fairly sophisticated, economic systems through which drugs could be sold and purchased. All of this depended upon an embedded social network, links from prison to the outside world and vice versa, and trust combined with the threat of violence if actions were not followed up. These sophisticated gang activities, then, shaped contemporary prison life both through facilitating the presence of drugs, allowing prison gangs to make a profit and solidifying their structures through “organised” operations. Ralph’s detailed description of gang members and drug-users conducting transactions through their partners outside of prison show the evolving nature of the drug market but also show how financial profit was central to prison gang activities. This reflected other participants’ responses, who used terms such as ‘grafting’, ‘getting bread’, and ‘making a wage’ to refer to their gang’s activities. Like the corporatization of street gangs, prison gangs were able to develop and engage in economic activities. Within the penal environment, street gang members were able to re-organize and replicate street structures: violence, street norms and codes were fortified within prison walls, and signalling was the primary means of demonstrating one’s affiliation to, and involvement with, gangs which were able to control the social and commercial activities of prisoners.

7.8 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to present how prison gangs operated at the two, primary sample sites for this research. As the data show, gang activities and practices did not substantially vary at the two prisons, despite the differences that existed between them in their histories. Gang

members from both prisons delivered similar accounts on issues ranging from the limit points of gang loyalties to the contemporary economic dynamics of prison gangs. Through including testimonies from gang members at both HMP Manchester and HMP Forest Bank, I have sought to illustrate how the gang cultures of Greater Manchester permeated the walls of both prisons, with a high degree of gang ‘importation’ into both sample sites: gang practices, which were learnt on the streets, were further fortified and honed within custody, where numerous gang members were imprisoned. The central roles of violence in dispute resolution, the victimization of non-gang members and former gang members, and the symbolic significance of gang affiliation all loomed large in daily prison interactions. Entrenched gang practices were perpetuated in custody, activities learnt on the ‘street’ imported into prison, and these fundamentally affected the carceral experiences of both gang and non-gang members. Further, an increasing prison population has meant that gangs have been able to thrive, reforming within custody and exerting a profound influence in shaping prison life for both their members and other prisoners, as well as on the wider custodial environment.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

8.1 Conclusions

In this thesis, I have sought to contribute to the existing criminological scholarship by presenting an in-depth, qualitative account of gangs in Greater Manchester, primarily from the perspectives of prisoners. Through gathering data from a range of participants in this region, I have sought to present historical accounts of how the area's gangs were formed, describing their main activities, and the role played by gang members both on the streets and in prison. The results illustrate that prison is not the 'end point' for gang development, and that through the linkages which exist between prison and the streets, gangs continue to germinate and develop in a carceral environment. It further shows how some gang members 'import' their street-based loyalties and organizational structures into prison (Decker and Pyrooz 2001), some form within prison for the first time, and other are reshaped through the process of imprisonment. The thesis includes data on active street and prison gangs, explaining the origins of such gangs, the role gang-membership plays in the lives of individuals, and how race interacts with gang identity. As there is a limited body of criminological literature about prison gangs in England, this thesis has sought to enhance knowledge and understanding on the topic: extending and providing some resolution to the definitional debates around gangs; exploring the relationships between gang membership, masculinity and street violence; describing how gangs facilitate a transition from youth to adulthood, and how the prison acts as further arena for these developments.

The analysis of the data in this thesis has been influenced by sociological theory and wider criminological concepts. Principally, I argue that the activities of prison gang members should not be viewed as distinct from the activities of street gang members, and the environments in which these individuals are culturized. Further, I argue that the activities of gang members continue to develop within prison because of the greater exposure to criminal values and attitudes within a custodial setting. Indeed, this distinction between 'criminal' and 'anti criminal' settings (Sutherland 1956: 21) draws an explicit link between environment and how law-breaking practices are learnt. Gang members are particularly sheltered from 'anti-criminal' acts, and overly exposed to criminogenic environments. This is a process which increasingly begins on the streets and continues in prison, where it is often be accelerated due to the criminogenic nature of the carceral space. This thesis contributes to the existing body of scholarship on prison sociology, adding understanding to the topic of 'the gang' through

reconceptualizing the gang, re-enforcing certain previous studies, whilst adding something new through the contributions of active, contemporary Mancunian gang members.

In my research, several individuals spoke of gang-related activities continuing in prison, characterised through their collective nature, and often resistant to the process of desistance. Deeply embedded gang practices, combined with extensive gang networks occupying the carceral space, meant that it was often neither feasible nor desirable to leave ‘the gang’ within custody. Gang members wishing to leave their gang would often face violence and intimidation; these difficulties in exiting ‘the gang’ were well-known, and, combined with the protection gangs offered in custody, remaining affiliated to one’s gang was often the most practicable course of action. My research also found little evidence to suggest that gangs alter their compositions or practices in prison. Rather, the data illustrate how for many gang members, imprisonment is characterized through the phenomenon of street gang structures and identities being transposed into the penal setting (Jacobs 1977). Furthermore, only a limited number of prison gang members at the sample sites were found to focus on maintaining social order in prison, something which can be contrasted to the situation as exists in the United States (Skarbeck 2014). Rather, gang members who participated in my research were often active in the prison’s informal economy, which involved the dealing of drugs and other forms of contraband, and the collection of debts. They also engaged in extreme violence, which became the main hallmark of the prison gangs studied: ‘gang fights’, violence using weapons, and the continuation of street-based rivalries. Thus, a highly criminogenic landscape formed behind bars, an environment which was able to influence newer and younger gang members entering prison, often for the first time.

Throughout this thesis, I have placed these findings within the wider body of criminological scholarship on gangs, showing how there are different dimensions to gangs, and that the same gang can be interpreted through a variety of different lenses and frameworks. In so doing, I have sought to document the experiences of gang members in Greater Manchester, presenting a body of enquiry that delivers an account of the contemporary sociological phenomenon of gangs. This thesis engages with the literature and attempts to discern which conditions lead to or mitigate the development of gangs. I have sought to apply existing concepts to the gathered data, utilizing Yablonsky’s (1962) conceptualizations of the gang, as well as developing Densley’s (2013) theories around the ‘enterprise gang’. I have also drawn in wider penological issues around gangs in contemporary English society. This thesis has, then, sought to place the

analyse the qualitative data within the wider theoretical frameworks on gangs, and how gangs act as social constructions of reality. The data contained in this thesis aims to show the factors which make individuals more susceptible to become gang affiliated: participants identified family, schooling, peer groups and locality as all contributing to involvement with gangs. The thesis also traces the development of gangs in Greater Manchester, illustrating how gang members have emerged in communities where there is a limited presence of formal state institutions. My results also show that state institutions increasingly criminalize gang members beyond other offenders: this process of criminalization leads to an entrenchment of criminal practices, and the *retrenchment* of ‘anti-crime’ values and actors. Thereafter, gangs play an axiomatic role in the lives of individuals such as those who were interviewed as part of this research: this ranges from adolescents who join street gangs, through to prison gang members involved in serious violence in custody. Accordingly, gangs play a crucial role in shaping the ‘underworld’ of Greater Manchester, where they often act as fulcrums in criminal transactions, disputes, and negotiations – whether in prison or on the streets. The historically entrenched nature of gang-related practices in the region means that its gangs are in a unique position to deploy a variety of tactics to negotiate their involvement in illegal activities. As established entities, many gang members can utilise their reputations and ‘name’ (whether stemming from family or the gang) to settle disputes, intimidate witnesses or engage in the extortion of businesses and individuals.

The central argument of this thesis is that gang activities are learnt both on the streets and in prison, which act as arenas where instrumental violence, rituals and gang identity can be honed, developed, and later solidified. As much of the research for this study was conducted within two prisons characterized by a high turn-over of prisoners, my research found there to be a high degree of interaction between prison and ‘the street’. Although each prison had a different history and institutional culture, the gangs ‘imported’ into these prisons had an established presence within the communities from which they originated. These street gangs were often deeply rooted in specific locales, and at times were intergenerational. This meant that the institutional practices of HMP Manchester and Forest Bank did not significantly affect the development and performance of gang identities behind bars – such was the strength and embeddedness of the region’s gang practices and activities.

Throughout this research, it has also been crucial to draw distinctions between gang-affiliated and non-gang-affiliated offenders. I have sought to demonstrate how being a ‘non-gang-

affiliated' offender does not mean that one is disconnected from the 'underworld' more broadly. Indeed, such individuals most commonly act as the middlemen between drug wholesalers and street gang distributors and can be described as involved in activities ranging from physical violence to money laundering. Crucially, although they maintain cordial relations with certain street gang members and organised criminals, they do not consider themselves to be gang members, nor are they seen by others as being gang-affiliated. This sharply contrasted with the identification procedures of gang members, many of whom self-identified as such, and others of whom were identified as being part of a 'gang' by their rivals, police, and prison authorities.

The data gathered from my fieldwork show that gangs in Greater Manchester are characterised by: a.) youthful membership; b.) conducting much of their activities on the streets; c.) operating under a name; d.) discriminating as to who can join them and claim this collective identity. Street gangs, then, can be differentiated from other street-based groups, whose members vary in age, and where engagement in crime is not the sole identifier of the group. It is, then, unsurprising that such amorphous groups hold less weight in prison than gangs. Although their members may often successfully negotiate the carceral environment, this is more due to social ties, friendships, and their familiarity with the Criminal Justice System, rather than relying upon a group identity. Contrast this to the prison experiences of gang members, where strong in-group loyalty, a near-formalized notion of collective identity and the benefits of affiliation mean that street gangs transform into prison gangs upon their members' entry into the custodial environment. This may also be assisted by the fact that gang members, by their very nature, offend collectively and thus often enter the prison in unison, on charges related to the same incident.

Although the literature contests how far street gang members operating in prison should be viewed as bona fide prison gangs (Howell 2011), the data collected for this thesis supports the view that the term 'prison gang' need not exclusively refer to gangs created in prison. However, this thesis shows that there are also limited examples of prison gangs which form for the first time in custody. For a group of prisoners to be classified as a prison gang, similar definitional criteria are used in this thesis to identify prison gangs as when identifying street gangs – that is to say, whether the group has a name, a restrictive membership base and engages in collective illegal activities. According to these criteria, there are some examples of prison gangs forming for the first time in custody. The secretive nature of such gangs meant during my fieldwork it

was difficult to collate extensive data on their compositions and activities, but from the information collected, it was widely suggested that these ‘in prison’ gangs had not exported their group identity onto the streets (cf. Decker and Pyrooz 2001).

For most gang members, however, imprisonment was viewed as being but one component of their members’ lives. Prison gangs often mediated as well as implemented codes of violence, aggression, and intimidation. As stated by Human Rights Watch (2001:266), “the inmate population ... is made up of men from the social strata that includes [a] subculture of violence. They carry into prison with them the value system ... and in the rarefied prison environment the need to demonstrate masculinity by displays of violence becomes intensified”. Although neither sample site kept records on how many assaults were carried out by prison gang members as compared to non-gang members, from interviews it emerged that gang members in prison perpetrate a higher number of assaults as compared to unaffiliated prisoners; this was both through self-reported results, and prisoners’ recollections on violence which more widely occurred in the sample prisons. Future studies should focus on collecting and collating more systematic, quantitative data on this issue. This should be undertaken to allow for English prisons to gather nationwide data on gangs, something which could better allow for the management of gangs within custody. At the time of writing, no such system of national, prison gang classification exists.

8.2 Final Thoughts

In the conclusion of his study on gangs, Garot (2010: 175) writes that “the foremost question for the would-be criminologist is that posed by Howard Becker more than forty years ago: “Whose side are we on?” In studying any type of ‘criminal’ activity, one sides with either moral entrepreneurs (those making the rules, building the prisons, and paying the police) or those who are criminalized”. Although this may seem a provocative statement, it speaks to a certain truth about research and investigative pursuits more generally. At several points throughout the course of my study, many participants could be said as either falling on one ‘side’ or the other: the gang member versus the police officer; the prisoner versus the prison officer; the offender versus the community leader. Some participants wanted to discern whose ‘side’ I was on. However, there were many more instances where the lines of differentiation and moral terrain were far more complex: police officers who were seen as the enemy; senior gang members who protected their more vulnerable, junior counterparts behind prison walls; prison officers who were viewed as hostile forces; community leaders who blamed ‘the system’ more than the gang

member for the deaths which had blighted their communities. The moral terrain of Greater Manchester's 'underworld' was complex, nuanced and multifaceted; this was reflected in many participants' responses. The research was conducted with the intention of presenting a faithful recollection of this range of personal experiences, distilling information on the 'gang scene' in Greater Manchester from those who were intrinsically a part of it, and whose lives were intertwined with the region's gangs. At one level, this research has sought to trace the activities, compositions and histories of the region's gangs, integrating participants' own perspectives with the academic definition of 'the gang'. At another level, this thesis has sought to humanize the topic, presenting the personal narratives of a multitude of actors. Although no singular study can capture all the relevant experiences, this study attempts to provide a comprehensive account of gang practices in the sample region.

The study uncovered the deep-seated foundations of gangs within Greater Manchester: inter-generational poverty, hostilities towards the police and the development of folklore around gangs meant that the reputations and power of gang members extended from the streets into prison. In many ways, the situation in Greater Manchester in the early part of the twenty-first century bore parallels to Jacob's (1977) account of the Chicagoan prison gangs: in both instances, there was a steady penetration of gangs through porous prison walls, underscoring the symbiotic relationship between prison and the streets. Gang leaders exerted a powerful influence, both in Jacob's study and in my research, instigating violence but also maintaining collective norms. However, where my findings – and the situation surrounding English gangs more generally – differed from their preceding American studies is the ease with which most gang members could join and leave the gang. Just as the prison walls of HMPs Manchester and Forest Bank were porous to street cultures and gangs, so too were most gangs porous entities, which individuals could leave and join with few formal rituals.

At the time of writing, eleven young men have recently been convicted of the murder of 18 year old Abdul Hafidah in South Manchester (Pidd and Perraudin 2017). During the two trials concerning this gang-related murder, the familiar series of tropes emerged: of rivals straying into each other's territories; of retaliation, revenge and 'tit for tat' killings; of group violence involving disproportionate numbers of young, BME males. However, in summing up the first trial, the judge also stated that "street gangs do not have membership cards, nor do they publish lists of their members" (cited in *ibid*). Similarly, when opening the case for the prosecution, Nicholas Johnson QC stated that "the defendants are all members of, affiliated to, or

sympathisers with, that rival gang”. The problem lies, then, with the fact that many contemporary English gangs are violent yet amorphous: their members are often prepared to kill rivals, yet their membership bases are often fluid, and even being “sympathisers with” rival gangs can lead to death. Who are these gangs? Who are their members? How can they be stopped? These are some of the questions this thesis has sought to answer, and as gangs in England rapidly develop and evolve, these questions must continue to be answered. Only then can we, as a society, prevent more of our most marginalized citizens from losing their freedoms, futures and lives to gangs.

Appendices

APPENDIX A

PRISONER QUESTIONNAIRE

Opening Questions

What does the term 'gang' mean to you?

What were your experiences of/around gangs before your imprisonment?

How openly did gangs operate in the area you grew up/lived in?

Links between Street and Prison Gangs

What are the similarities between gangs on the street and gangs in prison?

What are the differences between gangs on the street and gangs in prison?

What are the main features that link gangs on the street with gangs in prison?

How do 'in-prison' gang identities interact with 'street' gang identities?

Do gang members who were rivals on the street ever associate in prison?

If so, under what circumstances? Do you know why?

Can you give any examples where street level issues have affected the daily lives of gang members in prison?

For gang members, how important are street identities/activities carried out on the street once they are in prison?

What can you tell me about the links between gangs on the streets of Greater Manchester and in HMP Forest Bank?

Prison gang/street gang interaction

How do 'in-prison' gang identities interact with 'street' gang identities?

Do rival gang members ever associated in prison?

If so, under what circumstances? Do you know why?

Prison Gangs

Are you aware of gangs existing in this prison?

If so, how many such gangs do you know of?

How openly do these gangs function in this prison?

Along what 'lines' are these gangs formed?

What are their main activities?

How are gang members selected/recruited?

What can you tell me about the numbers of prisoners involved in such gangs?

Have *you* been affected by gangs during your time in prison?

If so, how?

Does the prison acknowledge the existence of these gangs?

If so: what, if anything, is the prison's response?

What impact, if any, do gangs have on daily prison life?

Personal Involvement

Would you say you have ever been part of a gang? (*If no, end of interview – see closing*)

If so, was this outside, in prison or both?

(If both, how closely does your prison gang reflect your street gang?)

If only outside, why are you not in a prison gang?

If only in prison, why were you not in a gang outside?

Why did you join the gang(s) you are/were a part of?

How did you join this/these gangs?

Are you still gang affiliated?

If so, do you intend to remain a part of this gang after your release?

Along what 'lines' was/is your gang formed?

What were/are your gang's main activities?

What does/did your gang mean to you?

What can you tell me about how gang members can leave their gang, if at all?

Further Questions on Personal Involvement (if relevant) *

What was/is the name of your gang/OCG? And the name of any sub-set/clique?

How were you brought into the gang/OCG? Was there a process of recruitment?

How many people were in the gang/OCG then? How many were your age?

How was a gang leader chosen? Were there other 'ranks'?

Were there any opposing gangs/OCGs to yours? If so describe some of the rivalries

Have these rivalries continued in prison? If so, can you provide some details?

How did most of the people in the local area act towards your gang/OCG? Can you give an example?

How did the police treat you gang/OCG? Again, can you give an example?

How did your parent(s) and/or other family members react to the gang/OCG?

What did you do most of with the gang/OCG?

When did you begin to call your gang by its name (if at all)?

Do you remember a 'turning point', any event that marked when things got more serious or the gang/OCG got a lot larger or smaller? (Or 'critical incidents' as termed by Deuchar)

How has your time in prison been affected by this gang/OCG affiliation?

What are the biggest similarities/differences between being gang-affiliated on the street and being gang affiliated in prison (if relevant)

Additional Questions

What is the difference, in your opinion, between a group of prisoners and a prison gang?

Does being gang-affiliated in prison protect a prisoner or make them more likely to be harmed? What makes you say this?

Are there any street gangs that don't 'transfer' into prison? If yes, why?

How have gangs varied across the different prisons you have been in?

How have street and prison gangs changed over the past X years?

How do gangs vary across the different areas of Manchester and across different prisons?

Do any groups form in prison to oppose established gangs? If yes, explain.

What are the effects of race and religion on the 'gang scene'/gang formation?

Closing Questions

Are there any other details about yourself/the subject of this interview that you would like to add?

Are there any issues that this interview has raised that you would like to talk about further?

Dev R Maitra

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* Further Questions and Personal Involvement Section adopted from Hagerdon, J. (1988)

People and Folks; Gangs, Crime and the Underclass in a Rustbelt City, Lakeview Press

APPENDIX B

PRISON OFFICER QUESTIONNAIRE

Opening Questions

How long have you been an officer at this prison? Can you briefly outline your role in the prison?

How significant an issue would you say gangs are in this prison? What are the reasons for your answer?

How would you define the term ‘gang’?

How aware are you of gangs operating at this prison?

What are the main activities of these gangs?

Does the prison acknowledge the existence of these gangs? Please give further details.

Do prisoner inductions at this prison specifically deal with the topic of gang affiliation? If so, please give details.

How ‘open’/transparent are gang members with staff, regarding gang issues and more generally?

What are the main similarities and differences between gang affiliated prisoners and non-gang affiliated prisoners? For example, comparisons of activities/interactions with staff etc.

Along what ‘lines’ are the gangs at this prison formed (e.g. area/race/religion/other)? Please give further details to your answer.

Street/Prison Gangs

How would you define a ‘prison gang’?

What would you say are the similarities/differences between street gangs in the region and gangs in this prison? What are the reasons for your answer?

Do you have any knowledge about the links between street and prison gangs? For example, do gang members who were rivals on the street ever associate in prison?

If so, under what circumstances? Do you know why?

Can you give any examples where street level issues have affected the daily lives of gang members in prison?

For gang members, how important are street identities/activities once they are in prison?

Gang Information

What role do prison officers play in gathering data on gangs in this prison?

How much information are you privy to about gangs operating in this prison? For example, are you aware of the exact numbers of prisoners who are gang-affiliated/the number of gangs operating at this prison?

If information is available, how helpful have you found this in dealing with the prison's gangs?

Can you give me a brief overview of the management structures in place, within this prison, to collect information on gangs? For example, does the prison have a specialist 'gang intelligence unit'?

Do uniformed staff receive special training with regard to 'gang issues'? If yes, what does this include?

How much interaction is there between prison officers and the prison management regarding the issue of gangs? Please give further details to your answer

How much interaction is there between prison officers and the police regarding the issue of gangs? Please give further details to your answer

Management, Order and Control

During your time spent as an officer at this prison, what have been the biggest changes in the prison's 'gang scene'?

How, if at all, have the prison's management strategies to deal with prison gangs changed over this time?

How successful would you say the prison has been in dealing with/controlling gang members?

What are the most/least successful aspects of the prison's attempts to deal with/control gang members? Please give examples.

Does the prison have specific policies in place to control the activities of gang members? Again, please give examples (e.g. distribution/separation of gang members across wings, other administrative policies)?

Are there any officers who are particularly specialized in dealing with gang members? If so, please give further details (e.g. are these specializations formally acknowledged?)

In your experience, how do gang members compare to non-gang members in relation to issues order and control? For example, are there difference in the rates of assault perpetrated by the two groups, do control and restraint procedures have to be used more on one group than the other?

Closing Questions

Are there any other details about the subject of this interview that you would like to add?

Are there any issues that this interview has raised that you would like to talk about further?

Dev R Maitra

University of Cambridge,

APPENDIX C



PRISONER INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research project. Please be aware of the following information before you sign to indicate that you have consented to be a participant of this project.

- Taking part in this research is entirely voluntary. Choosing not to participate will have no adverse effects on your trial, sentence or your time spent in this prison; it will not be reported to any other prisoners, staff, or any other third parties.
- Your participation will involve answering a series of short questions, and the interview should last for approximately one hour. You can stop the interview at any time, choose not to answer particular questions, and you will not need to give reasons as to why you choose to do this.
- All the information you reveal will remain confidential - the study will be published on a completely anonymous basis. Your name, the names of any individuals you mention, and the names of any areas you mention will not be included in any part of the study. The only cases in which information cannot be kept confidential is if it involves causing harm to yourself, harm to others, or disrupting order and control within the prison.

Written consent:

Participant's Agreement: I have read the above information, the study's aims have been explained to me, and any questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to be a participant in this study.

NAME: _____

SIGNATURE:

_____ **DATE:** / /

APPENDIX D

COPY OF HMP MANCHESTER'S GANG QUESTIONNAIRE

What town are you from?

.....

What area in that town?

.....

Are you affiliated to any gang? YES ☐

NO ☐

If yes, which gang?

.....

Do you have any concerns about gangs? YES ☐

NO ☐

If yes, which gang?

.....

Do you have any outstanding matters with gangs? YES ☐

NO ☐

If yes, which gang?

.....

Do you have any nicknames or 'also known as'?

.....

Prisoner's Signature

Officer's Signature

Print Name

Print Name

Staff. If yes to any of the above, you must put in an SIR.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Ballied Up	-	Wearing a Balaclava
Beef	-	Dispute
Buy Weight	-	Buy Large Quantities of Drugs
Brass House	-	Brothel
Brotha/Brothas	-	Black man/men
Cat A	-	Category A Prison
Cat B	-	Category B Prison
Chelsea Brick	-	Makeshift Weapon Created from Newspaper
Class A's	-	Class A Drugs (Normally Cocaine, Heroin, Ecstasy)
Cons	-	Prisoners
Copped	-	Stolen
Crack	-	Crack Cocaine
Crack House	-	Dwelling Primarily Used to Sell/Consume Crack Cocaine
Deps	-	Police Charge Sheet(s)
Dispersal	-	Category A Prison
Do In	-	Attack
Do Out	-	Deal Drugs
Dirty	-	Sex-Offender
Down the Block	-	Being held in a Prison's Segregation Unit
Fill in	-	Physically Assault
Fours	-	Third Floor Prison Wings
Gangbo	-	Civil Injunction Applied Against Gang Members
Gheed	-	Assaulted with Heated Cooking Oil/Butter
Give Irons	-	Beat Up/Attack
Graft/Grafting	-	Commit Crimes
Joey	-	(Derogatory) Someone Willing to do Anything
Keys	-	Kilos (of Drugs)
Kosh	-	Makeshift Weapon
Lay On	-	Supply Drugs on Credit
Leather	-	Physically Assault
Listener	-	Prisoner Trained to Offer Emotional Support
Mac-10	-	Automatic Firing Handgun

Missus	-	Wife/Girlfriend
Nonce	-	Sex-Offender
Numbers	-	Vulnerable Prisoners' Wing
Ones	-	Ground Floor Prison Wings
Our Kid	-	(Younger) Brother
P's	-	Money
Pad	-	Prison Cell
Patter	-	Prison Argot
Put in Work	-	Commit Crime/Sell Drugs for a Gang
Rep (noun)	-	Reputation
Rep (verb)/repping	-	Representing a Gang
Screw	-	Prison Officer
Seg	-	Segregation Unit
Scouser	-	Liverpudlian
Shank	-	Knife
Smack	-	Heroin
Smack Head	-	Heroin Addict
Sosh	-	Association Period in Prison
Straight Riding	-	Committing Crimes (on Behalf of a Gang)
Spice	-	Psychotropic Substance
Strangeways	-	HMP Manchester
Summat	-	Something
Threes	-	Second-Floor Prison Wing
Tool	-	Weapon
Trident	-	London Metropolitan Police's Anti-Gang Unit
Twocking	-	Taking [a Vehicle] Without the Owner's Consent [joyriding]
Twos	-	First-Floor Prison Wings
Xcalibre	-	GMP's Anti-Gang Unit
Youse	-	You (2 nd Person Plural)

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