

A critical exploration of why some individuals with similar backgrounds do or do not become involved in deviant street groups and the potential implications for their future life choices.

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of Chester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Dedication

This thesis is the intellectual result of over three years of research. It has been a long personal journey and with this in mind I would like to make the following dedications.

This thesis is first and foremost dedicated to the memory of my father Bob who passed away in March 2004 and to my mother Cathy, who passed away in March 2015. Both supported me financially and emotionally in pursuit of all my academic studies and it is due to them that I have reached the level that I have today.

I would also like to dedicate this thesis to all of those young people past, present and future who, because of lack of suitable intervention on the part of politicians and state institutions who fail to recognise real inner-city issues such as inequality and lack of social mobility, will sadly end up as victims of social exclusion.

Abstract

This thesis will primarily address the issue of street gang involvement and non-involvement in gang prevalent areas of Merseyside. Specifically, it will address why some individuals with similar backgrounds do or do not become involved in deviant street groups and the potential implications for their future life choices. Reporting for the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) Cordis Bright Consulting (2015) have observed that when assessing young people about whom there is concern because of violence and street gang involvement, practitioners should consider both risk and protective factors in five key domains: individual, peers, community, school and family. In determining the vulnerability and resilience of young people to gang membership on Merseyside, the study attempted to identify prominent variables within each of these domains and the research was undertaken with participants from a variety of marginalised locations of Merseyside.

The study applied a hybrid approach consisting of Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM, Wengraf, 2001) as the means of data collection with Grounded Theory (GT) as the form of analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Two samples of participants were drawn from marginalised areas of Merseyside consisting of a total of 44 males age range 18-25 (one consisting of 26 gang involved participants (termed Deviant Street Group Members (DSGs)), and the second containing 11 non-gang participants (termed '*Non-group Participants*' (NGPs) and 7 individuals identified as ex-gang participants (termed '*Ex-Deviant Street Group participants*' (EDSGMs)). The findings draw attention to the considerable amount of social commentary and government policy that has intensified, pathologised and problemised the issue of gangs, gang membership and gang non-membership in the United Kingdom (UK). Moreover, they identify the effects of marginalisation and limited opportunity as the over-riding protagonists and highlight how young disenfranchised people, some more resilient than others cope with growing up in marginalised areas of Merseyside. In particular, contrary to the EIF's observations that "family and peer group risk factors are not found to be strongly associated with gang membership as individual risk factors" (2015, p. 7), the study finds evidence that quality of parenting by fathers/father figures (family domain) and friendship networks (peer domain) together with the development of social capital can be key variables in the decision to become involved in or abstain from gang membership on Merseyside. Other factors identified, include the application of demonising government policies, the existence of edgework risk taking including criminal eroticism (individual domain) in young men and the impact of social migration (neighbourhood domain) on the decision to become involved, disengage or completely abstain from gangs was also noted to be significant.

Declaration by the Candidate

This thesis is entirely my own work and has not been submitted in any other form of award of a higher degree at any other educational institution.

No section of the thesis has been published elsewhere.

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Glossary of Terms

ADHD:	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
BME:	Black and other Minority Ethnic
CCA:	Conventional Content Analysis
CDRP:	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CSP:	Community Safety Partnership
DCLG:	Department of Communities and Local Government
DSG/s:	Deviant Street Group/s
DSGM:	Deviant Street Group Member
EDSGM:	Ex-Deviant Street Group Member
EYGV:	Ending Youth and Gang Violence Programme
IMD:	Index of Multiple Deprivation
KMBC:	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
NEET:	Not in Education or Employment Training
NGP:	Non-Group Participant
OCG:	Organised Crime Group
ODD:	Oppositional Defiant Disorder
ONS:	Office for National Statistics
PIN:	Particular Incident Narrative
PPO:	Prolific and other Priority Offender
TFP:	Troubled Families Programme
TGAP:	Tackling Gangs Action Programme
TQUIN:	Topical Question Inducing Narrative
TWOC:	Taking Without Owners Consent
SHEIOT:	Situation-Happening-Incident-Occurrence-Time
SQUIN:	Single Question Inducing Narrative

Chapter One: Introduction

1 Background

Over the last twenty years, mainly as an initial response to the media coverage of a number of teenage murders in the United Kingdom (UK), attention has been drawn to the emergence of the gang. It is a global social phenomenon that despite the production of a multitude of research papers and publications from around the world still remains something of an ambiguous enigma. Of the many questions that have been debated around the gang phenomenon, the one that provokes the most intrigue is the question of why do some individuals join gangs and others do not? The question of gangs becomes even more intriguing when a comparison is made between individuals living in the same area, facing the same social and personal issues who either engage in, or disengage from, or who completely refrain from gangs. The following thesis will attempt to examine the underlying reasons behind the choices of gang membership, disengagement or complete non-membership, with a specific focus on identifying variables in one particular gang area in the UK, that of Merseyside. The thesis will draw on sample sets consisting of gang members, ex-gang members and, non-gang members derived from various locations in Merseyside.

This introduction will provide a discussion of the on-going debate within gang research on what constitutes a gang, the evolution of gang research and the subsequent definitions that have largely emerged as a result of these studies British gangs are examined within the context of the political climate of the study period between 2008 and 2016 including a section covering the area of Merseyside. The introduction will also cover other important background characteristics such as mapping and extent of membership in the UK, gang types, structures and the forms of gang activities identified by research. The chapter concludes by providing the following: the aims of the research, a statement regarding the use of term Deviant Street Groups (DSGs), the variables

identified by this thesis within the risk and protective domains as they pertain to membership and non-membership./disengagement the rationale and methodological foundation for the research including the methods used.

1.1 Gang Definition

One of the major problems in examining the topic of gangs has been the long-standing debate over what most of the research literature refers to as 'gang/s'. (Ball and Curry, 1995; Esbensen, Winfree, Jr. Ni He and Taylor, 2001; Weerman, Maxson, Esbensen, Aldridge, Medina, Van Germert, 2009). Since the very beginning of academic interest in gangs (Thrasher, 1927) there have been numerous attempts to generate an overall academically acceptable definition but with limited success.

The re-emergence of the media spotlight on youth crime in the UK and in particular after the Rhys Jones, killing in Merseyside in 2007, groups of young people labelled 'gangs' have again ignited this debate. At the time of this research, it has become quite clear that there still exists no real generic clarity over a truly universal definition of a gang. In attempting to identify at least variables of compromise, of primary consideration have been factors such as gender, size, acceptance, and lifespan (Hakkert, van Wijk, Ferweda and Eijken, 2001). Moreover, Esbensen, et al. (2001) have noted the possible consequences of the inability to arrive at a governing consensus. They comment:

Failure to employ universal definitions of gangs and gang membership has numerous implications for gang research and gang-related public policy. For example, research on the extent and nature of the gang problem faces three possible outcomes: (1) accurately stating the gang problem with the best definition for the research question, (2) underestimating it with a far too narrow definition, or (3) overestimating it if the definition is too broad, capturing individuals, groups, and behaviour that are of little interest to the intended audience" (p. 106).

While taking a similar perspective, White (2013) added an important observation of the ‘gang talk’ critique, namely “the idea that talking about gangs in imprecise and generalising ways has a tendency to make everything a gang problem, thereby diminishing attention on fundamental issues, such as racism, poverty and social inequality” (p. 14). Moreover, White asserts:

The gang as a frame of analysis tends to be about group status and relationships to a group. This means that most gangs research is about collective behaviour and group engagements. Part of the limitation here is that very often the personal experience of life in a community is ignored or downplayed because of the overriding emphasis on ‘the gang’ as the central feature and organiser of a young person’s life (p. 14).

Clearly, just glancing at some of the contributions to gang-related research literature, even at this point, it is possible to see how the issue of definition becomes a controversial one. Because of this, Ball and Curry (1995) have even advocated abandoning the term gang altogether commenting “it is not a term used by youth themselves to reflect the actual empirical reality of their involvements but rather a relatively meaningless label thrown about by the adult community” (p. 225). Putting this into the perspective of what is actively being studied, in effect a constantly evolving youth culture, where symbols and dialect not only change but are used as a means to identify, accept or reject affiliation and such considerations may indeed go some way to supporting Ball and Curry’s contention.

1.2 A Question of Criminality

Further to the definition debate is the added and highly controversial question of whether the issue of delinquency and criminality should be included as a defining criterion. In attempting to

trace the criminality element and its introduction into gang definition, the 1950s and 1960s appear to be the starting point from the context of contemporary ‘gang’ research. Cohen’s 1955 book ‘*Delinquent Boys*’ appears to have been a major catalyst. This was one of the first examples to link criminality/deviance into gang definition.¹

Moreover, Cloward and Ohlin’s (1960) research can also be seen as a central contribution to the reshaping of the role criminologists played in constructing a gang definition incorporating deviancy and crime. It would seem for Cloward and Ohlin, that the reason behind this was mainly down to the increasing rise in criminal and violent activity within gangs particularly in the United States (US). The emphasis on this activity, it was claimed, was one of status frustration and strain. Building on this further, it was suggested that a distinction could also be made about the actual shape and motive of gangs because of economic and environmental variables. Cloward and Ohlin’s (1960) study asserted that the shape and structure of an area determined the shape and structure of gangs themselves. They cite three gang forms (1960, pp. 50-52). The *criminal group* that emerged in quite stable working-class environments, the *conflict group* that grew from within unstable communities and the *retreatist group* found to be present in areas in which drug use was found to be prevalent.

In more recent times, theorists such as Klein and Maxson, (1989), and Howell, (1998) have followed the same academic path by completely refuting any definition that does not include anti-social or criminal acts, on the basis that such a definition would be far too broad, adding even greater confusion to an already complex problem. In recent contributions, the inclusion of criminality has become even more

¹ In an effort to advance Merton’s individualised account of strain theory into gang research, Cohen brings the idea of deviance and crime to the fore by asserting that such acts perpetrated by the gang are a means by which youth sub-culture can rebel against a dominant middle-class ideology. This is achieved through the inclusion of violence, vandalism and other forms of criminality. However, such acts are seen as more expressive of protest rather than as a means to achieve any form of material benefit.

focused. In a meta-analysis Pyrooz, Turanovic, Decker, and Wu, (2015) examined the relationship between gang membership and offending. Drawing on 179 empirical studies they found that a strong relationship exists between gang membership and offending. They add to this by observing:

Several generations of scholarship have identified the importance of one specific peer group – the street gang – in the etiology of criminal behavior, making the explanation of gangs and the behaviour of gang members an essential part of criminological theory and research. There is good reason for this attention: Studies have found that gang members account for a disproportionately large share of offending, and their rates of involvement in crime are at their highest during periods of active gang membership [Battin, Hill, Abbott, Catalano & Hawkins, 1998; Esbensen, Peterson, Taylor & Feng, 2010; Pyrooz, 2013; Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith & Tobin, 2003] (2015, p. 366).

Wood and Alleyne (2010) have also reinforced the criminality argument in a novel but quite valid way. They assert that the key to the argument for including criminality also lies in the degree of interest in it. They contend that since it is mainly those who have a vested interest in the practice or study of law enforcement (for example, police, and probation services, criminologists, forensic psychologists) who are interested in the criminal activity element of gangs, it makes sense to include such a facet in a gang definition.

While Wood and Alleyne's (2010) observation does provide some clarity on the issue of criminality and why it should be included, it is also problematic. Wood and Alleyne (2010) do not take into account what could be termed by a researcher "*Hybrid street corner groups*" (Starbuck, Howell and Lindquist, 2001). This is when group participation is split between what could be called criminal (anti-social/extrovert) activists and criminal (introvert) pacifists who will 'hang out' with the

group for status and a need to fit in with the majority. Thus, the question should be asked as to whether, if this is the case, the group should be regarded as a gang, if only some of its members are criminally active? Although, as Sheldon, Tracy and Brown (1996) point out, the issues surrounding definitional characteristics of what is a ‘gang’, ‘gang members’ and ‘gang crime’ is that they have become associated with alpha [male] stereotypes² and that such stereotypes are a direct result of “biased information of law enforcement agencies and the media” (p. 22). This stereotypical labelling has, in turn, gone on to create policy to combat groups of young people that are seen to be collectively involved in deviancy and criminality. Such prevailing stereotypes reinforced by media reporting, can therefore mentally override any sense of objective assessment. As Moore, (1993) has observed in many instances the media, police, and public can quite easily label what is an individual act of criminal behaviour as ‘gang-related’. However, within a climate of fear in a community, such an individual act can take on other, more negative, characteristics.

Perhaps the most interesting and above all important observation in this debate is that of Smithson, Armitage, Monchuk, Whitehead, and Rodgeron (2009) that the great paradox of some gang research literature is that they emphasise the importance of self-identification as a major factor in defining what a ‘gang’ is. In actual fact, very few of the young people today (particularly as Smithson et al. noted in Liverpool) who are labelled gang members by law enforcement agencies (police and Youth Offending Teams YOTS) have identified themselves as being members of a gang. To this extent, Smithson et al. (2009) assert that the “use of the term by practitioners may be serving to add coherence and identity to what are in reality better described as transitional groups. This labelling

² By alpha stereotypes, Sheldon et al. (1996) are referring to an idealised form of dominant manhood desired by those who choose to become involved in gangs. A form by which control and dominance over other men can be derived through gang status, violence and physical presence which is often perceived by others (not just men) as intimidating.

exercise may have created the very circumstances it sought to challenge” (p.7).

Smithson et al.’s (2009) observations have been further reinforced by Harris, Turner, Garrett and Atkinson’s (2011) phenomenological qualitative study of 44 male gang-affiliated prisoners. Harris et al.’s study (2011) like that of Smithson et al. (2009) found that “some of the participants in their field research also actively resisted the label ‘gang member’. Several of these participants refused to proceed until the interviewer acknowledged their rejection of this label” (2011, p. 8). Moreover, with some irony, the remit of Smithson et al.’s (2009) work includes ‘gangs and guns’, terms that have, over the years, have become commonly associated in mainly media coverage. However, Hallsworth and Silverstone (2009) accept the ‘guns and gangs’ link, arguing that guns have become a component within the criminality element of gangs but they nevertheless question some of the labels applied:

While we accept that in common parlance ‘gangs’ might use guns, and while we recognize that, to understand the motives of gun users, we need to examine the culture of those that use them, we nevertheless find terms such as ‘gang culture’ or ‘gun culture’ theoretically weak. Nor do we accept that explaining gun use via the concept of the gang is helpful (p. 360).

Hallsworth and Silverstone (2009) also make a very strong point by commenting “Similar problems accrue when evoking the term ‘gang culture’ to explain the aetiology of gun-related violence. What precisely a ‘gang culture’ is, defies easy description” (p. 360). The same is true of ‘gang crime’, ‘gang violence’ and indeed, ‘gang member/s’. The foundation these terms are based on, that is, “gang”, is still one of ambiguity. When all of these observations are taken into consideration, perhaps the most valid and constructive assertion is that which comes from researchers such as White (2013). White has stressed that if

anything, researchers should not so much focus, on debating defining criteria such as criminality, in an attempt to create a universal definition, but instead start with a founding idea that there is no single definition of a ‘gang’ since “the great variability in youth-group formations [particularly today] precludes a reliance upon either stereotype of youth gangs or narrow definitions of what constitutes a gang” (p. 15).

This argument is perhaps best illustrated by an examination of the historical development of gang definition over the last ninety years with particular emphasis on the assumptions and broader debates about what researchers, the mass media, politicians and social commentators call a ‘gang’.

1.3 Evolution of Gang Research and Definitional Patterns

When charting the evolution of gang research and definitional patterns within such studies, this can be positioned and indeed will be highlighted from four major periodic standpoints. Firstly, the rather general observations of Thrasher (1927) and the Urban School of Sociology, secondly, the contribution of the sub-cultural/strain theorists of the 1950s and 1960s, thirdly, the search for a globally constructed definition of the gang rooted in the work of the Euro-Gang Research Network (EGRN) in the late 1990s and fourthly, gang research studies that began to stand alone, breaking from sociological thought to that with more criminological foundation. In addition, consideration is also given to tracing the development of British gang research which has been noted by Fraser (2017) to be still on-going and largely fragmented into two branches, of research, those in academia who study gangs from the context of new types of emerging street based youth groups where the label of ‘gang’ has become a suitable term. Such gangs they assert are have become highly organised with an entrepreneurial focus, they are a product of mainly a changing and volatile economy in the US and UK. In contrast, this is countered by scholars following sociological traditions

who assert that such conflict, group formation and identity are part of working class conventionality and as such have always been present.

1.4 Urban Sociology (1927-1955)

The first observations of gangs can be traced back to Puffer (1912), Thrasher (1927/1963) and Asbury (1927). While the latter's endeavours resulted in a purely journalistic account of gangs, it is Thrasher who is noted for being the catalyst of the first criminological theory of gangs through his classic work "*The Gang: a study of 1,313 gangs in Chicago*". For Thrasher, the gang represented a psychological adolescent entity that was very much rooted in marginalised communities and grew as a group as a result of conflict. In what is probably the first attempt to empirically define a gang, Thrasher (1927) identifies it as a group of young people who have a set way of behaving, which he describes as face to face meeting and movement through place and space as one; a unit both in conflict and in planning. The aim of this behaviour is to show power in numbers, to develop tradition and build solidarity and morale. This Thrasher claims evolves tightly around attachment to local territory. Interestingly, Esbensen et al. (2001) comment that "nowhere in his definition [of gangs], however, does Thrasher mention delinquent or law-violating behaviour as a criterion for a gang" (p.108). The Thrasher study was a pioneering forerunner that broke away from basic descriptive accounts of gang culture and led the way for a series of studies that focused on explanations based on social disorganisation, a structural theoretical paradigm that can be traced back to the University of Chicago in the early 1900s. Of particular importance was research by Shaw and McKay (1942) and the famous *Chicago School Zone of Transition* studies.

Alexander (2008) points out that originally these early studies observed and defined gangs as organisations that, rather than being seen as deviant, formed an integral component of the community itself. Thrasher like Puffer (1912) saw the gang as a 'playgroup' providing

bridging support between childhood and adulthood. She also notes, they were largely defined as “a social organisation associated with the processes of urban migration” (p. 8). Alexander further asserts that, like their modern-day successors, in defining such groups themes of social exclusion, territorial control and structural hierarchy were prominent and were aimed at establishing a group identity that was distinct from the rest of the community. Moreover, Alexander (2008) contends that such gangs were regarded as a series of transitional processes that mapped the evolution from “‘immigrant’ to ‘native’, from youth to adulthood, from outsider to the mainstream social order” (p. 8). However, although the groups were often ethnically rooted, the concept of the gang at this time was not associated with any specific racial groups. Sutherland (1939), while taking a similar stance to the Chicago school on some key aspects of the gang, changed the focus from social disorganisation to that of adherence to a distinctive (but coherent) set of learned values, alternative to those of mainstream society.

This was dissimilar to earlier versions of social disorganisation theory that stressed a lack of coherent values (Hawkins, 1996). From the viewpoint of academics that have worked on the theorisation of gangs, Sutherland’s (1939) supposition of differential association suggests that criminal behaviour is a learned response derived from the membership of a personal group. Furthermore, exposure to the positive or negative norms and beliefs of that group will inevitably influence the attitudes of the newly inducted individual, in effect developing a deviant/criminal social identity. However, Sunderland’s attempt to create a unified theory of street gang deviancy/criminality does not go without criticism. For example, Akers (2000) has commented:

Sutherland asserted in the eighth statement of his theory that all the mechanisms of learning are involved in criminal behaviour. However, beyond a brief comment that more is involved than direct imitation (Tarde, 1912), he did not explain what the

mechanisms of learning are (p. 74).

1.5 Sociology of Deviance (1955- 1995)

The 1950s and 1960s saw the emergence of the second gang research era (Cohen, 1955; Miller, 1958 and Cloward and Ohlin, 1960) which as Fraser (2017) claims was “concentrated on the development of theoretical understandings of street-based groups, rooted in the developing sociology of deviance, which drew on concepts of ‘anomie’, ‘delinquent sub-cultures’ and ‘status frustration’” (p. 7). From these humanist contributions, as the previous section has noted (p. 4), the incorporation of deviance and criminality within definitions of gangs can be seen (Cohen, 1955; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960). In 1967, the first US national academic conference focusing on the issue of gangs was held. The conference, coupled with the growing inclusion of deviance and criminality within many definitions, have been seen as facilitators for further gang research. Gradually, the discipline expanded becoming a virtually separate distinct academic subject from sociology. This shift as Fraser (2017) notes “focused less on theorising gangs and more on understanding the causal variables associated with gang membership, and in turn on ways in which police and criminal justice agencies could lessen their impact on communities” (p. 8). At this point, one of the first main aims was attempting to develop a clear and accurate measurement through a universally accepted gang definition. Within this new stand-alone research paradigm, the early work of Klein (1971) and Miller (1975) in particular, sought to develop a one-shoe-fits-all definition. However, Klein’s (1971) definition includes the importance of self-definition as well as outside recognition and delinquency:

Any denotable adolescent group of youngsters who:
(a) are generally perceived as a distinct aggregation by others in their neighbourhood; (b) recognize themselves as a denotable group (almost invariably with a group name) and (c) have been involved in a sufficient number of delinquent incidents to call forth

a consistent negative response from neighbourhood residents and/or law enforcement agencies (1971, 13).

Miller's (1975) work adopted a novel approach, involving a full spectrum of field workers. These ranged from probation officers, community outreach workers, police officers, school teachers even judges and ex-offenders. All were asked to define a gang which resulted in 1.400 characteristics being included with 85% of the sample agreeing on six key dominant features. This produced the following definition:

A self-formed association of peers, bound together by mutual interests, with identifiable leadership, well-developed line of authority, and other organizational features, who act in concert to achieve a specific purpose or purposes which generally include the conduct of illegal activity and control over a particular territory, facility, or type of enterprise (Miller, 1975, p. 121).

Both Klein (1971) and Miller's (1975) definitions drew heavily on identity as a discernible group. That is, viewed and recognised by outsiders as a gang in the community (for Klein, this also involved having a gang name). Both definitions also involved the issue of control of a territory as well as being directly involved in deviance and/or crime. As Fraser (2017) comments:

These new definitions sought to delineate a specific social formation involving street-based youth, with group identity, and some organisational traits. As opposed to Thrasher's definition, which stressed that gangs were not fundamentally criminal, these new definitions sought to define gangs as having crime as part of their *raison d'être* (p. 9).

1.6 From Euro-gang to Universal Gang and Criminological Dominance (1995- present)

In recent times, the emphasis has been placed on exploring the rise of a universal gang phenomenon, in effect, the existence of groups that could share identical defining characteristics across international and cultural boundaries. The idea can be traced to the middle part of the 1990s with the emergence of a small collaborative group of American, Canadian and British social science academics (Weerman, Maxson, Esbensen, Aldridge, Medina, and van Gemert, 1995) whose aim was to discuss how the study of gangs in Europe could progress.

Out of this group grew what has become known as the Euro Gang Research Network (EGRN). Recognising the need for a clear definition, the group came to a consensus about what should academically be defined as a gang. They made the distinction between what they call gang descriptors and gang definers. While the former, they argue, consists of factors including ethnicity, gender, special clothing, location, group names and crime patterns; the latter is composed of four elements that they regard as crucial to group characterisation. They include: durability of at least three months; street orientation rather than home, work or school; youthfulness with the average age ranging between adolescence and early twenties and identity forged through illegal activity that can involve anti-social and/or criminal behaviour. From this, in 2009, Weerman, et al. produced a definition of a gang as a “Street gang (or troublesome youth group corresponding to a street gang elsewhere) is any durable, street orientated youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity” (p.20).

However, despite the EGRN definition gaining considerable attention and use since its conception, questions have been raised about its application, specifically the EGRN’s indicators that determine gang membership. In particular, Aldridge, Medina-Ariz and Ralphs (2012) have highlighted several issues. Firstly, drawing on previous research findings from an ESRC-funded ethnographic project, Youth Gangs in an

English City (YOGEC), Aldridge et al. (2012) note that the EGRN definition includes groups spending time in public places (e.g., away from school/work). However, YOGEC found that some of the gangs they came across “did not typically spend time gathered in public places, so according to the EGRN definition, they would not be considered to be gangs” (p 36).

Building on this contention further and noting Aldridge et al.’s. (2012) observations, Rodriguez, Santiago, Birkbeck Crespo and Morillo (2017) have also challenged the EGRN definition. From their research involving focus groups which drew on samples from Latin America (Venezuela) using the International Self-Report Survey of Juvenile Delinquency (ISRD), Rodriguez et al. (2017) found several issues again surrounding the EGRN’s indicators in terms of both content and construct validity. In the first instance, they observed that participants defined ‘groups of friends’ to include both short-term acquaintances and long-term friendships. Secondly, regarding the issue of incorporating criminality, Rodriguez et al. (2017) found that with testimony derived from the perspective of Venezuelan participants there was a much wider range of activities perceived as illegal behaviours than “typically thought by researchers as characterising gangs” (p. 1172). Moreover, there was also the issue of the very word ‘gang’. This was found to be highly problematic semantically when used internationally. In particular, the authors found that in Latin America a number of terms exist to describe deviant/crime groups which include “*Maras Salvatrucha*” (MS-13), in El Salvador, “*bandas*” and “*parches*” in Colombia, and *pandillas* in Venezuela all of which pose difficulty in establishing semantic similarity with “gang”. Finally, like Aldridge et al. (2012), Rodriguez et al. (2017) noted a flaw in the ‘street orientated’ indicator. Specifically, in Venezuela the hot climate forces people of all ages out into public spaces regardless of age or gang membership.

Today, the mainstream gang research landscape has progressed even further towards criminological scholarship, the media having

continued to reinforce the notion of a gang as a unit fuelled by criminality and deviance³. Conventional gang research has now become a veritable industry of constant empirical scrutiny as methodological approaches veer between both qualitative and quantitative enquiries while still debating universal defining characteristics that have become heavily focused on criminality. One area, however, which has gained considerable interest is critical gang literature. This fairly new approach reconnects gang research with sociology while also encompassing fresh innovative areas such as social anthropology. This latter discipline allowing themes such as structural/environmental triggers and cultural meanings to be examined in terms of their relationship to the shaping of behaviour and given more attention. Such work finally challenges attempts to universalise definitions, instead preferring to focus on more applicable factors such as local histories and group/community biographies (Fraser, 2017). Further as Fraser (2017) points out:

This research seeks to move beyond a narrow focus on gangs and crime towards recognition of the multiple forms that gangs can take, their change over time, and can incorporate both harmful and supportive roles that gang identification can play in both individual lives and community contexts (p. 17).

By focusing on the idea of multiple and diverse youth group forms, critical gang literature has acknowledged the one fundamental basic problem that many academics have simply ignored, the impossibility of attempting to provide one overriding definition of a social phenomenon that is seen to be cast by constantly changing social structure.

An example of this can be seen in Brotherton's (2015) observations of gangs as social reactionary youth movements as opposed

³ In an online article for the Daily Mail entitled "*The guns go quiet over the Mersey: how 321 police officers in Liverpool slashed firearm crime*" Rose's (2010) observations highlight the power of media shaping of gangs. He comments that the Chief Constable of Merseyside, Sir Jon Murphy claimed, "that individuals didn't realise they were a gang in Norris Green [Liverpool] until the media said they were".

to groups of potential young offenders. This includes: seeing the origin of gangs as a product linked to race, social class and gender history of a specific community. Such groups emerge as a result of a community's long-term struggle against marginality as well as reflecting community transition in relation to powerful structural forces such as neo-liberalism. In sum, for Brotherton (2015), the gang encompasses working class youth solidarity and resistance in the face of social, political and economic marginalisation of both place and space. As such, the phenomenon is not something that can be seen as a fixed definable entity. It must be viewed as something that is constantly mutating as different environmental forces take effect.

1.7 Tracing the Evolution of British Gang Scholarship

The beginning of a British academic shift towards a gang renaissance began with Downe's Delinquent Solution Study (1966) of London youth. In the UK, academic interest in young people and groups was embedded primarily in the study of youth sub-cultures. These existed and thrived around sub-sets of activities and diverse identities that gave young people in the UK a choice to visually (through dress) rebel against the ruling class ideology but this did not entail violence. Commenting on this British subcultural study tradition Muncie (2015) notes "the orthodoxy is that America owns the gang, while Britain has traditionally been the home of sub-cultures" (p. 33). Some thirty years after the Downes study, Muncie further observes that an American academic called Bill Sanders moved to Brixton, London specifically to explore this idea. His final conclusion was that US-style street gangs were not and never have been in London.

The UK has a long history of young people dressing openly in particular sets of dress codes. The Rockers of the 1950s (leather jackets and jeans), the Mods of the 1960s and 1970s (Fishtail parkas and drainpipe trousers) and the Punks of the 1980s (coloured hair and ripped T-shirts with DMs) all had come under intense scrutiny (Cohen, 1972;

Clarke, Hall and Jefferson 1975; Willis, 1977; Hebdidge, 1979). This includes the *La Coste* T shirt/shell suit which was adored by some Liverpool males in the same period.⁴ It is a pattern of dressing, talking and even walking that Ferrell and Sanders (1995) assert has become a link between cultural practice and deviant/criminal identity since they have become symbols of resistance and signs of difference as well as targets for criminalisation.

Today, around the UK, there are youth groups whose members like their early predecessors adopt a form of specific dress that over time becomes symbolic of group resistance to law abiding ideology (e.g., the red and blue bandanas of the Bloods and Crips). This has become particularly evident in excluded areas of North West England, particularly on Merseyside. Here young people have adopted an all-black dress code using the brand North Face all terrain clothing (black hoodie anoraks and matching tracksuit bottoms coupled with a military-style cap). Such individuals have come to perceive themselves as '*street soldiers*' involved in some kind of urban warfare. However, whether such groups represent something completely new that has emerged in the UK is still open to debate. Scholarly attention to the gang phenomenon in the UK was slow and wary until media coverage of a series of shootings in London (Marfleet, 2008) coupled with the 2011 riots which allowed the gang to re-surface in British working-class society. From 2009, the British government had already embraced the gang label, adopting a definition taken from a report entitled "*Dying to Belong*" (2009) by the predominantly right-wing think tank the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ):

⁴ In 1984 Liverpool supporters returned from Rome after the European Cup Final having taken an instant liking for Italian fashion, specifically the fashion brand La Coste. This resulted in the emergence of a new clothing trend by Liverpool fans for all things La Coste most notably the T-shirt and shell suit range. This was later satirised in the Harry Enfield show as the house robbing "calm down" scouser.

A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who: (1) see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group, (2) engage in a range of criminal activity and violence, (3) identify with or lay claim over territory, (4) have some form of identifying structural feature, and (5) are in conflict with other similar gangs (p. 48).

In true moral panic fashion, with a 'Broken Britain' label, came a multitude of social commentaries, political policies, and academic interest. This latter and most important aspect has however, remained in disarray. As Fraser (2017) comments "the knowledge relating to gangs in the UK is notably dis-unified and fragmented, marked by divisive epistemological, disciplinary and methodological conflicts" (p. 11). Interestingly, Fraser identifies two conflicting schools of thought. The first group (Pitts, 2008; Densley, 2013; Harding, 2014) claims that the rise of new forms of street-based groups are mainly as a result of a shifting economy and fits many of the cited definitional components of a 'gang', that is, durable identifiable youth groups whose identity includes entrepreneurial pursuits involving deviance and crime. In contrast, the second group could rightfully be called constructionist (Alexander, 2000; Hallsworth and Young; 2008 and Hallsworth, 2013).

They assert that such "gang-like groups" (Fraser, 2017, p. 12) have always been embedded within the social fabric of traditional working-class environments. They claim that in recent times, attention by the media, politicians, and academics have constructed the phenomenon of the 'British gang' as the new folk devils of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Earlier work by Ralphs, Medina, and Aldridge (2009) sought to explore the impact of the constructionist perspective through gang language. Specifically, they studied how areas labelled by the media, and local and central government, as gang and firearm-related areas, have impacted on the lives of young people who were not members of gangs and further, how such individuals negotiated the space where they lived. They found that in most cases the result was that their use of

space was restricted because of the intense policing of such inner-city areas and that subsequently, this leads to increased levels of social exclusion, marginalisation and victimisation.

1.8 America and the Euro-paradox?

In examining the true extent of US influence on British gangs, Ralphs et al. (2009) claim that:

In the absence of much recent research with a direct focus on British gangs, government, local authorities and the public are left to rely on these media accounts that ‘gang culture’ is endemic in our cities and that these gangs resemble popular portrayals of gangs in the USA (p. 484).

Thus, if official sources in the UK have now been persuaded by the British media that there is a gang problem (despite definitional frailty), comparable to that in the US, attention must now turn to the question of what evidence there is to support this? Regardless of the conjecture in Britain as to the validity of the gang label, any piece of research focusing on gangs in the UK cannot ignore the substantial academic contribution of the US. In terms of comparative analysis, Esbensen and Weerman (2005) noted that “Relatively few researchers, however, have endeavoured to explore such youth gangs from a comparative perspective” (p. 5).

While research in this area has been scarce, this has not prevented Klein, Kerner, Maxson, and Weitekampf (2001, p.356) fuelling a debate, which they have called the ‘*Euro paradox*’. This suggests that European policymakers are in a state of denial. Klein (2001) have argued that European observers have refused to believe that there was indeed a gang problem and that the problem was, in fact, bordering on the situation evident in the US. Further to this, Hagedorn (2001), while not as critical, suggests that globalisation and in particular Europe’s obsessive need to identify with the US, may create growing underground economies

creating the climates in which American style gangs will emerge and flourish.

In comparison to the UK, US gangs are known to place heavy emphasis on initiation and ritualistic behaviour, loyalty and lifetime dedication (Klein, 1995). Bullock and Tilley (2008) also point to another important factor, the considerable differences in the availability of firearms. Clearly when considering all of these factors it can be argued that the likelihood of such British gangs being conceived, structured and intellectually driven to this level of complexity is still highly improbable. It is an observation that even the British right-wing think tank, the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ, 2009) admit by commenting that “some gangs in the UK have adopted the names of the infamous Los Angeles Bloods and Crips, but the scale and nature of their organisation, activity, and violence is not (yet) comparable” (p. 41).

Some critics may argue that in the UK, gang research is also still too early in its infancy to make such a bold prediction. In sum, what appears to have emerged in the UK, is a phenomenon, that includes some of the features of American gangs, but rejects others. For instance, in the UK there are groups that operate largely in socially excluded areas and they encompass criminality and violence as their prominent features. However, it is evident that unlike the US gangs, British groups have no proven thriving long-term durability (10/20 years plus), they do not have a major demographic footprint (with specific groups having a very small limited reach) and lack the ability to sustain long-term individual life commitment (Sharpe, Aldridge, and Medina, 2006). From this small comparison alone, there is a strong argument to support a conclusion that what is occurring in the UK is still at a sub-cultural level, rather than any neo-contemporary group that warrants the label of what mainstream researchers call a gang. It could be suggested that the major defining factor is that of transience, that is, gangs are still short-lived and predominantly youth driven when compared to US-style gangs, lacking

both the intellectual and organisational powers to reach any form of influence that will segregate entire communities.

1.9 The British Gang: Political Climate and Contemporary Emergence 2008-2016

Squires (2009) like Marfleet (2008) observes that in 2008, the media were drawn to a series of isolated knife crimes involving young people that focused in and around the London area. It was from these incidents, that the government began prioritising the issue of youth crime, with the specific emphasis on gangs. The initial political response was a major increase in the number of stop and searches by the Metropolitan Police in the London boroughs called 'Operation Blunt' and the start of a Home Office established project called 'Tackling Gangs Action Programme' (TGAP) in April 2008. Primarily, TGAP was an attempt to tackle gun crime and serious violence in four designated gang hotspot areas. They included Birmingham, Liverpool, London, and Manchester. Later, in July the same year, the government launched a further offshoot programme, called 'Tackling Knives Action Programme' (TKAP) concentrated on teenagers aged between 13-19 in ten police areas between July 2008 to March 2009. The programme, a follow-up to Operation Blunt involved a similar strategy that included 1150 search arches, weapon detection wands and after-school patrolling in violence-prevalent hotspots with known groups identified as 'gangs'.

The riots of 2011, in several London boroughs and cities across the UK, provided the newly elected coalition government headed by David Cameron, with its first major challenge. The main target of right-wing condemnation continued to be the gang problem. It is an observation supported by Densley (2013) who notes:

Prime Minister David Cameron (2011) made tackling gangs his 'new national priority' and launched a 'concerted, all-out war on gangs and gang culture'. It was the kind of rhetoric that the public has come to

expect from ‘tough on crime’ law and order politicians who favor individualized explanations for aberrant behaviour over critiques of social structure (Blair, 1993, p. 28). Had the government blamed the riots on social exclusion and social deprivation, it would have implicated itself. By blaming gangs, the coalition instead implicated others. And it worked because the media thrives on simplicity and sweeping generalizations and most Britons have little or no direct experience of gangs but remain frightened and fascinated by them in equal measure (pp. 1-2).

Moreover, as early as 1998, Crawford observed, a certain higher priority was being placed on crime prevention and community safety as opposed to the prevention of poverty and creating greater equality. Clearly, there has been a failure to recognise these greater structural issues that were the underlying factors of the last riots in 2011. The emergence of the official gang discourse led former Home Secretary and hard right Conservative Theresa May to launch a hastily put together, post-riot publication. This catalogued the coalition’s bold strategy which was not only to stop gang violence but to turn the lives of many of its players around. This would be done by investing up to ten million pounds of Home Office funding into a multi-agency support model that would focus on up to 33 local areas in the UK.⁵ Called “*Ending Gang and Youth Violence (EGYV): cross-government report*”, the review reinforced the contentions of both Jones (2011) and Densley (2013), by focusing the blame on the individualised causes. Moreover, in a more challenging and condemning assessment of the EGYV programme itself, Cottrell-Boyce (2013) asserts that gangs have been “constructed as a ‘suitable enemy’ in the [EGYV] report, obscuring the wider, structural roots of youth violence” (p. 193).

Cottrell-Boyce, who like Ball and Curry (1995), appears to be an advocate for the abolition of the gang label argues that consistently

⁵ Disley and Liddle (2016, p. 3) note that “in October 2014 the EGYV programme was extended to ten additional areas”.

focusing on youth crime as something that is rooted in the 'gang', will result in violence reduction strategies being targeted predominantly on gangs. Ironically, in a 2013 annual report assessing the EGYV programme, Teresa May noted the fall in the number of young people wounded with knives and attempted murders in the previous year, but admitted this could not be directly attributed to the programme.⁶ Further, in a BBC news online report, it was observed that:

Across the 29 areas originally covered by the programme, the number of homicides rose by one to 15 in 2012-13, while the number of attempted murders fell by 5 to 18 ... Shaun Bailey, a former adviser to the Conservatives on youth and race issues, told BBC News: "if you are close to the gang situation, then violence hasn't subsided it's probably worse"
(<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-25360687>).

Not surprisingly, the narrative of EGYV programme also stretched to include a focus on the idea of gang members being the product of the bad family. The government's response to this came mainly through a component of EGYV called the "*Troubled Families Programme*" (TFP). Launched by the then Prime Minister David Cameron in December 2011, the programme aimed to turn around 120,000 troublesome families which the government identified in the TFP's financial framework's payment-by-results document as those "involved in anti-social behaviour, have children not in school, have an adult on out of work benefits, [and/or] cause high costs to the public purse" (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011, p.3).

Each family identified would get £4000 of government money invested into it over a three-year period, the overall aim being to end alleged repeated patterns of generational deviance and abuse. Writing in

⁶ Home Office statistics for 2016 note that between July and September 2016, 4,937 knife possession offences were formally processed by the criminal justice system of which 19% were juvenile offenders.

a 2012 government report for the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) that included interviews with examples of troubled families, Director General of the TFP, and former head of the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit and Respect Task Force, Louise Casey (2012) cited a myriad of internalised problems all embedded within the family. Casey claimed that such problems (drugs, drink, unemployable) became triggers for future abuse, anti-social behaviour, and violent crime. Something that Casey and the DCLG avoided was consideration of marginalised conditions that could have also been identified in the participant interviews.

Since its launch, the programme has been heavily criticised most notably for its outlandish claims of a 99% success rate. Crossley (2015) highlighted a list of growing concerns with the programme, in addition to this very questionable rate of success. These included how the research data was being used. Rather than aid clarification, it confused it, since data included families experiencing multiple issues. These were being falsely identified as troublesome, feeding a belief that those that the TFP deemed as troubled families were the product of a generational pattern. Crossley (2015) notes, that there is little evidence to suggest that troubled families trickled down from one generation to the other, nor that the programme would save British taxpayers money. Finally, it was also noted that central government was also pressurising local authorities to talk positively about the TFP in return for increased funding.

In 2009, the CSJ which had already seized on the notion of the 'bad family' idea, but from the angle of fatherless households, argued that even if the young person grows up in a nuclear family, that family is often dysfunctional in that it provides poor parenting and lack of parental supervision. Jones (2011) however, claims that "contrary to this view, successive reports by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation have found that in reality, parents often play a hugely positive role in tough working-class areas" (p. 213). In January 2016, the government introduced the newest variant of gang policy or what has now been branded a "refreshed

approach” entitled “*Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation*” (EGVE) programme. This has identified six priorities:

1. Tackling ‘county lines’
2. Increased protection of vulnerable locations (i.e., care homes and pupil referral units)
3. Reducing violence and knife crime mainly by increasing sentencing powers
4. Safeguarding both girls and older women associated with gangs
5. Promoting early year involvement
6. Endorsing legitimate alternative to joining a gang through education, training and employment.

1.10 Gangs on Merseyside

Although gangs on Merseyside can be traced back to mid-19th century, Liverpool’s contemporary gang history began in the early 1980s, a time when high levels of poverty and unemployment predictably saw the rise of organised crime and with it the growth of an underground economy based on the supply of drugs particularly heroin or ‘smack’ as it was termed by the city’s locals at that time. This, in turn, prompted the emergence of several high-profile crime figures in the city where violent disputes over territory made weekly headline stories in the local press and on television. Such media attention and exposure increased the involvement of young people around the streets of the more deprived areas of Liverpool, quickly transcending into a gang problem with the spotlight focusing heavily on two areas, Croxteth and Norris Green. The increased involvement of young people in gangs and the rivalry that followed culminated in August 2007 with the shooting of an innocent eleven-year-old boy, Rhys Jones. Other areas on Merseyside where ‘gangs’ have been identified include Toxteth (‘Somali Warriors’, ‘Park

Road Edz'), Stockbridge Village ('Stocky Edz' also known as 'boyz'), Huyton ('Dovy Edz', 'Baki-Edz', 'Hillside Edz', 'Moss Edz' and 'Longi Boyz'), Bootle ('Fernhill Crew', 'Linacre Crew') and Anfield ('Townsend Ten').

In the last in-depth study to be conducted on Merseyside into gangs and guns by Smithson et al. (2009) the authors highlighted a variety of reasons for why young people in areas of Merseyside become gang members. This included territorial rivalry (seen as an escalator to more serious gang offences that included firearms), drugs and paths towards further progression into adult Organised Crime Groups (OCGs). The study however, was limited primarily to interviews with practitioners and with participants drawn from referrals through official outlets that included North Liverpool Youth Offending Service (YOS), North Liverpool Probation Service and Hindley Prison (NOMs), and Positive Futures. Smithson et al. (2009) note that attempts to engage with young people outside of these agencies (directly from the street via detached youth work) proved "futile" (p. 8).

1.11 Gangs in the UK: Important Characteristics

In introducing the subject of gangs in the UK, some of the chief characteristics of gangs will now be explored. These will be examined in relation to mapping and extent of membership, gang types and structures, and gang activity.

1.12 Gangs: Mapping and Extent of Membership on the UK

Questions over what constitutes a gang still remain high on the research agenda for many academics (Hakkert et al., 2001; Weerman et al., 2009; Smithson et al., 2009). In the UK, there is also the added obstacle of actually mapping the problem itself. Although there exists no single official figure as to the actual prevalence of gang membership in the UK, there have been several attempts both by the media and academia. Muncie (2015) draws attention to the headline 'GANG

MEMBERSHIP SPIRALS AMONG UNDER 16s' (*Observer*, 8th September 2002). He comments that during this period "it was claimed that there were as many as 30,000 gang members in England and Wales clustered within London, Birmingham, and Manchester" (p. 34). Muncie (2015) goes on to query whether such sensationalised headlines reflect the reality or whether they are a myth. Moreover, Pitts (2008) observed:

In 2002/2003 the police in England and Wales recorded 36 percent increase in gun crime, with a further 2 percent rise recorded in 2003/2004 (Home Office/RDS 2004). In 2007, a survey by the Metropolitan Police (MPS) identified 172 youth gangs in London alone, many using firearms in furtherance of their crimes, and estimated to be responsible for 20 percent of the youth crime in the capital and 28 knife and gun murders (2008, p. 4).

In Scotland, Strathclyde Police in 2004 identified 171 and 170 gangs respectively, while Pitts (2008) utilising his own research estimated that between 600 and 700 young people are directly involved in the London Borough of Waltham Forest alone, with an additional 8000 people affected by gangs through incidents resulting from anti-social behaviour. Further, The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) in 2012 reported identifying 259 violent gangs with 4,800 'gang nominals' in 19 London boroughs (United Kingdom Parliament, 2015). In Manchester in 2012, Greater Manchester Police had catalogued the estimated number of gang members as 886 (United Kingdom Parliament, 2015).

The failure to agree on what actually constitutes a gang has greatly contributed to not only tracking the roots and the prevalence of the phenomenon in the UK itself, but also the production of legislation based on a diverse array of definitions. In attempting to shed some initial light on the question of mapping, Sharpe et al. (2006) examined young people's involvement in what they termed "delinquent youth groups" in the UK as early as 2006. Writing up findings from the 2004 Home Office

survey covering offending, crime and justice, the authors found that about 90% of respondents said that their group consisted of between six and fifty members. Up to 6% of 10-19-year-olds self-report belonging to a delinquent youth group. A third (32%) had between six and ten members, and 27% between eleven and nineteen members, 30% between twenty and fifty members, and 9% fewer than five members (the mean size was 16). From a gender perspective about four in ten (42%) respondents described their groups as being of mixed gender (half boys, half girls), with almost a half (48%) saying their group consisted of all or mostly boys and only one in ten (10%) describing an all or mostly female structure.

Groups were mostly of similar age with 25% of respondents saying that their group included 12-15-year-olds, and 27% saying their group only included individuals aged 16-18. Although the majority of respondents said their group was ethnically homogeneous (60% of the groups were white only, 3% black only with 5% Asian only), about a third (31%) said their group included a diverse mix of different ethnic groups. The majority of respondents (88%) reported that the group had its own special area or place; a third (33%) said their group had a name. Almost four in ten (38%) stated that the group had a leader and 15% that their group had established a set of rules and/or codes for its members.

In terms of territory, the possession of an '*area*' was by far the most common feature. Of the respondents whose group had an area or place of their own, this mostly took the form of an open public space such as a park or recreational ground (mentioned by 43%) or a street corner or square (mentioned by 39%). However, a quarter mentioned "someone's home". Interestingly, the authors of the report are perhaps one of the first groups of academics to recognise the naivety of applying the gang label universally and indeed the influence of the media in this very process. Throughout the report, the authors justified their use of "Delinquent Youth Groups" (DYGs) by asserting that the term gang should be used with extreme caution mainly because of its ability to

quickly bring stigma to both individuals and the very place and space they occupy. Moreover, the authors argue that cultural and media influences have become intertwined in the terminology of what a gang is. Other estimates include the '*Dying to Belong*' report which projected young people involved as gang members at about 50,000 (CSJ, 2009), the Metropolitan Police in 2010 listed 3,600 gang associated individuals. In one of the most recent attempts at studying gang mapping and membership, Disley and Liddle (2016) examined perceptions of gangs and whether these had changed in the 33 areas that made up the EGYV programme (2011). Using the UK government's definition of a gang,⁷ the authors made several observations including the existence of between three and eight gangs in every EYGV area and more than 100 members, but the reliability of these estimates is unclear.

The number of gangs existing in the EYGV areas was perceived to be either stagnant or had decreased in the two years prior to 2016. Disley and Liddle (2016) when exploring gang membership found this to be highly fluid, with those directly involved with gangs as members shifting loyalty to other gangs and having links to more than one gang at a time. The age of gang members was also noted to be widening (although this was seen as tentative) but not substantially in the two years prior to 2016. Disley and Liddle (2016) conclude by asserting that all of these observations pose challenges for academic and public-sector agencies in calculating the numbers of gangs and gang members.

With regard to the location covered by this study, Thomas (2017) reported that Merseyside Police have identified "as many as 193 'organised crime groups' and gangs manned by 2,989 gang members of

⁷ A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who (1) see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group, and (2) engage in a range of criminal activity and violence. They may also have any or all of the following features: (3) identify with or lay claim over territory, (4) have some form of identifying structural feature, (5) are in conflict with other similar gangs (HM Government, 2011b, p 17).

these, 189 members have been designated as leading protagonists in the perpetuation of gang activity with a further 384 as ‘significant figures’. Broken down into the local boroughs, half of the 193 are known to be based around the city centre area in the borough of Liverpool itself with 32 connected to Knowsley, 29 in Sefton, 16 in St Helens and 17 across the River Mersey on the Wirral.

1. 13 Gang Types and Structures

In examining the structural features of gangs, specifically, types of leadership, hierarchy, rules, and regulations, initiations, punishments etc., many contributions have emerged over the years. The early work of Klein and Maxson (2006) devised what amounts to a gang typology having identified five gang structures based on different factors including size, durability, territoriality, age, composition, and identity. They include ‘*The classical (or traditional) group*’. Klein and Maxson have identified this group mainly by its longevity of twenty years or more as a large, enduring and territorial group (up to 100 members) comprising of sub-groups. The group will have a wide age range of members who are of mixed age from age 30 to 10. The group will mark its territory by colour or area /postcode. An example of such a group would be the American ‘*Crips*’ or ‘*Bloods*’ gangs. Neither of these groups has what could be called a centralised leadership structure, opting for a fragmented approach with individual sub-groups called ‘*sets*’, which are affiliated with the other groups in a specified geographical area. The second group Klein and Maxson (1995) identify is the ‘*neo-traditional group*’ which the author’s assert, is similar to the classical group, but with a history of ten years or less. The neo-traditional group may be medium sized consisting of 50 plus members, but unlike the classical group have a narrower age range. This type of group is still heavily rooted in the US.

The third group, Klein and Maxson (1995) have called the ‘*compressed group*’, the compressed group consists of a membership of less than fifty with members aged from 12 to 20- year-olds. Unlike the

previous two, compressed groups are not known to form sub-groups and have a history of fewer than ten years. Klein and Maxson (1995) have noted that they may or may not be territorial. The fourth group, is the '*collective group*'. Klein and Maxson (1995) identify this group as "a shapeless mass" (p. 177) with both adolescent and adult members which may or may not be over 100 in number. The collective group has no clear characteristics of the other three groups (1995). They consist of individuals with a wider age range and may or may not be territorial and have a history of between ten to fifteen years. The fifth group, is termed the '*speciality group*', this group Klein and Maxson (1995) note is, as the name suggests, a speciality group, specialising in specific criminal offences. It is smaller in size than any of the other groups with an operating area for offending rather than defending. Klein and Maxson (1995) use the Skinhead groups as an example, but this could also apply to specialised drug gangs with links to organised crime. Unpublished research by Hesketh and Lyons (2014) has observed the existence of groups of this description in the areas of Merseyside, that is individuals acknowledging themselves to be involved in what they identify as '*firms*' or 'boys' whose main objective is to make money through drug dealing ('*grafting*').

In an attempt to enhance the Klein and Maxson's typology, while applying it to the British gang problem, Pitts (2009) combines these existing American rooted gang types with the newer versions he found in his study of the London Borough of Waltham Forest. Unlike Klein and Maxson (1995) however, Pitts highlights not five, but six gang types. They include the '*articulated super gang*' whose origins can be traced to organised crime and with direct involvement in drug dealing. This group has a wide age range and may have a link with a territorial boundary. The '*street gang*', which Pitts notes, consists of a relatively durable group of people who regularly go out together and whose involvement in crime and violence forms part of their identity. This group perceives themselves as a gang and is identified by others as a gang. The group consists of age-

based sub-groups and is territorial. Examples of this type of group would be gangs that exist in areas surrounding the centre of London. These groups can be Black and other Minority Ethnic groups (BME) rooted and divided along the lines of what some members call '*youngers*' and '*elders*'.

The third group Pitts (2009) identifies is the relatively new '*compressed gang*'. Pitts asserts that this group has a narrow age range with no sub-groups and like the street-based gang their engagement in violence and crime has become a part of their identity. They perceive themselves as a gang and are also identified by others as a gang. The fourth group is the '*criminal youth group*' whose focus is on criminal activity, but unlike the super gang, its membership is small with a narrow age range and is territorial. The fifth group is what Pitts has termed the '*wannabe group*' which consists of an unorganised group of young people who will dress in what they consider to be gangster style dress (whatever such dress is) and will claim a territory but will have a very loose membership of individuals. The final group Pitts (2009) identifies is the middle level '*international criminal business organisation*', which involves adults. Pitts notes that this group may be on the London end of an international crime network and, while not sounding like a gang uses young people involved in gangs as runners as part of its drug operation. Importantly however, Pitts admits that the typology is only specific to gangs residing in the London Borough of Waltham Forest and cannot be used as a universal criterion across the UK.

By far one of the most cited and some may argue controversial of the British typologies, is the earlier contribution of Hallsworth and Young (2005). Writing in a report to the Metropolitan Police on urban collectives, gangs and other groups Hallsworth and Young highlight their '*three-tier gang typology classification system*'. The authors comment, "the focus of analysis is upon different types of delinquent collectives rather than 'gang' and upon forms of delinquency (individual and collective) in which they engage" (2005, p.62). In describing Hallsworth

and Young's (2005) system, also known as the '*collective delinquency model*', Gunter and Joseph (2011) note, "the model employs the concept of distinguishable types of collectives to propose a three-tier approach of scale interventions" (p. 10).

This three-tier approach consists of three categories, the first of which is the '*peer group*' that Hallsworth and Young (2005) see as the least at-risk group. These are small transient groups of disorganised children or young people that hang out together and can be seen on street corners or in public places. Crime for the peer group is not an integral part of their identity or definition. The second category, according to Hallsworth and Young is the '*gang*', formed by groups of young people that are relatively durable and for most of the time street based. The group members see themselves and are seen by others as a discernible group whose identity includes extensive involvement in violence and crime. The last category is the '*Organised Crime Group*' referred more commonly by many of the police constabularies in the UK simply as the '*OCG*', which comprises mainly of adults who have become professionally involved in crime and violence for personal benefit/gain. Such groups as the authors note operate in grey or illegal marketplaces.

In their evaluation of Hallsworth and Young's (2005) classification system, Gunter and Joseph (2011) focus on the concept of a pyramid of risk. The pyramid of risk is based on Hallsworth and Young's assertion that the more a young person is at risk the more a young person will progress from the peer group upwards towards involvement in a gang and subsequent OCG. However, rather than positively contribute to the debate, Gunter and Joseph (2011) have argued that the logic behind Hallsworth and Young's model is flawed since, rather than provide any constructive aid to the present debate on British gang definitions, they hinder it because they create the potential to label every group of young people hanging about on a street corner as naturally deviant or anti-social.

Gunter and Joseph (2011) conclude their evaluation by observing that Hallsworth and Young's (2005) three-tier model has become fundamental criteria for the Metropolitan Police Service's (MPS) operational strategy in terms of countering violent gangs, specifically in its publication "*Gangs, group offending and weapons: Serious youth violence toolkit*". In this 2008 guidance document, Gunter and Joseph comment, "MPS concedes that simply using the gang label itself is now no longer enough to either describe or understand serious youth and group offending behaviour" (2011, p. 10).

1.14 Gang Activities

In regard to gang activity and the form that such activity takes, the emphasis in most gangs is placed on acts of anti-social behaviour and/or criminality with such acts increasing as a young person becomes more embroiled in the gang as a member. Pyrooz, Fox, Katz, and Decker (2012) noted: "the past two decades of empirical research (Krohn and Thornberry, 2008) has demonstrated that gang joining corresponds with an escalation of delinquent behaviour" (p. 85). However, not all gangs participate in the same form of activity. Whitehead and Lab, (2015) have conceded that while some gangs focus in on criminal behaviour, actually identifying specific forms of gang offending has so far proved to be tenuous. In the UK since 2010, local authorities in some of the major inner city areas such as London, Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham have reported gang delinquency/offending that has ranged from anti-social behaviour relating to minor drunken/drug induced offences, vandalism, TWOC (Taking Without Consent including personal and household as well as vehicle theft) and abusive verbal behaviour to violent physical assaults that in most of the more serious cases have also involved knives and firearms. The latter of these has been as a result of territorial disputes between gangs involved with the possession and supply of drugs (Pitts, 2008; Smithson et al., 2009). These particular gangs appear to have

become more structured and entrepreneurial through links with the cities adult organised crime cartels (Densley, 2013). Obviously, where the latter groups are concerned, financial gain ranks high in terms of motive. However, despite the many criminological theories used to explain the traditional motives for gang offending (financial, marginalisation, drugs and alcohol, peer influence), most tend to ignore psychological processes that result in the academically intriguing label ‘*edgework*’ (see p. 61)⁸. This is despite such processes being cited as part of the attraction of gang membership in some literature (White, 2013).

Moreover, as the UK governments EGVE policy document (July, 2016) has highlighted there has been increasing concern over gangs linked to criminal and sexual child exploitation. In the first instance, Criminal Child Exploitation (CCE) has taken the form of gangs recruiting/grooming very young people as carriers to transport drugs to other parts of the country, something that has now been referred to by police as ‘county lines’. On Merseyside for example, Thomas and Coen (2016) reported the arrest of 19 people after police raids that targeted a violent Anfield gang suspected of supply class A drugs across the country.

Secondly, the Office of the Children’s Commissioner’s 2013 inquiry into CCE and gangs (*‘If someone had listened’*) cited that 2,409 children and young people were victims of sexual exploitation within gangs with a further 16,500 children who were seen as being at risk. From the police perspective, twenty-one police forces in England each recognised they had gangs that were criminally active in their respective areas. In total, individual forces reported 323 gangs as being criminally active with 16 being associated with child sexual exploitation. These new

⁸ Edgework is a term first coined by journalist Hunter S. Thompson in his book debut, *“Fear and loathing in Las Vegas”* (1972) to describe the lengths people will go to in order to find intrinsic pleasure and fulfilment.

activities have added further criminal entrepreneurial dimensions to the British gang.

1.15 Aims of the Research

This thesis will address the issue of membership and non-membership of gangs (including disengagement) on Merseyside; more specifically, it will examine why individuals with similar backgrounds do or do not become involved in gangs and the potential implications for their future life choices. Cordis Bright (2015) have observed that only a few studies have specifically examined gang membership and non-membership from within the context of risk and protective factor domains. Thus, this study attempts to classify prominent key themed variables within each of these domains in order to identify the type of susceptibility and resilience of young people to gang involvement on Merseyside. The thesis will draw on the testimony of 44 male participants located in marginalised areas of Merseyside.

1.16 The Deviant Street Group (DSG)

Due to the continuing debate over the definitional frailty of the term 'gang/s' the term '*Deviant Street Group/s*' (DSG/s) will be used in place of 'gang/s'. DSG/s is also employed by the researcher in order to take ownership of this specific research study and thus reference and clarify more accurately the types of groups of which the research participants were members. However, exceptions will be made in relation to cited in-text verbatim quotations involving other researchers work most of whom use '*gang*' and/or '*gangs*'. Moreover, '*gang*' and '*gangs*' were also used as key internet search terms in order to find articles by other researchers for the review of the literature. In this study, the definition of a DSG will follow the criteria conceived by the Weerman et al. (2009) EGRN. The rationale for this choice being that at the time of writing, firstly, it is still the closest scholars have come to an agreed generic definition, secondly, it is a viable and problem-

relevant definition and thirdly it encapsulates the most frequently observed researcher cited characteristics that make up this phenomenon known as a ‘gang’. That is street orientation, youthfulness, durability (more than three months) and involvement in deviance and criminality which has become part of their identity. Thus, those selected to take part in the study self-reported being in groups (who have existed for three months or more) who assemble away from the home and the workplace. Such participants who were aged 18-25 (youthfulness) also cited involvement with such groups in deviance/criminality which became part of the overall identity of the group. Terminology delineating the participant groups will be outlined in Chapter Three covering Methodology and method (p. 89).

1.17 Risk and Protective Factor Domains

In determining the probability of young people becoming embroiled in gang membership, research focusing on risk and protective factors in five domains: individual, peer group, family, neighbourhood, and school can be of great value (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Shute, 2008; Burfeind and Jeglum-Bartusch, 2016). Within such domains, a multitude of variables can exist. For instance, considering the domain of school, it can be observed that a young person’s commitment, aspirations, and labelling by staff as an achiever or potential dropout could determine resilience or vulnerability towards gang membership. The thesis identifies key themed variables (highlighted in table 1. and table 2., pp. 38-39) within each of the domains that are directly related to gang membership and non-membership, disengagement on Merseyside.

Table 1. Risk Factors

Table 1.	
Risk domains	Key themed variables identified
Family	Negative influences of the father figure as opposed to absent father/father figures (biological and step)
Individual	Emotional feelings and pressure to identify, edgework, anti-social behaviour, crime/drugs as a means of both gaining masculine identity and employment (grafting, deviant entrepreneurship, and delinquent apprenticeship)
School	Negative perception of education. School perceived as a means of peer interaction and acquaintanceship only. School-level risk factors (bullying, negative labelling by teachers)
Peer	Friendship networks/peer interaction restricted to the school and the street (bounded values)/ absence of social mixing, directed career objectives (no proactive action to realise such aims)
Neighbourhood	Marginalisation/limited opportunity, crime and gang presence, shaping young people's mentality, boredom, empathy erosion

Table 2. Protective Factors

Table 2.	
Protective domains	Key themed variables identified
Family	Stronger family ties and awareness
Individual	Evidence of morality as a result of influence from parent/s, better self-esteem and confidence
School	Perception of school/education as a career aspirational asset

Peer	Structure of friendship networks/peer interaction extended beyond the school, street and residential area, social mixing. Both directed and proactive career objectives (planning a career both mentally and actively)
Neighbourhood	Social migration through parental diversion tactics and self-initiation

1.18 Research Rationale and Methodological Foundation

Cooper and Ward (2008) have observed that “despite the fact that gang research has a long history, there is limited evidence that attempts to intervene or prevent young people from joining gangs have been successful” (p. 3). Thus, the following research has been conducted to further criminological knowledge on gangs and the surrounding issues of risk and protection. Specifically, in attempting to identify differences in gang membership and non-membership in highly marginalised locations on Merseyside, the research provides a foundation from which to develop interventions based on what can be learned from these differences. The methodological basis for this thesis is phenomenological. David and Sutton (2004) assert that “the way that humans think about themselves is fundamental to what they are. Humans are conscious beings and their consciousness shapes their reality” (p. 38).

Further, phenomenology is the study of what Ibeka (2017) has described as “the science of that which appears, that which can be perceived and that which can be experienced” (2017, p. 2). Thus, the approach becomes very applicable to the study of membership/non-membership of a social phenomenon that encompasses all three of these elements. To illustrate this further, Giorgi (1991) has suggested that phenomenology allows researchers to go much further in attempting to understand human experience and interaction. Like grounded theory, this study’s choice of analysis enables the researcher to become immersed within the exploration of the personal experience of the participants, in

particular, the perceptions of what street gang membership is and what it signifies.

In relation to criminality, which does become relevant in this thesis, again, from a phenomenological perspective, there is an interplay of variables that exist. These revolve around the behaviour of the actors (group members), the perceived meanings of that behaviour and the reaction from those outside group membership (bystanders, victims, and non-members). Taken together, this represents the potential for a criminological theory to be developed in relation to gang membership and non-membership and disengagement.

1.19 Research Methods

This thesis will contribute to original knowledge not just in the main research question, but also in relation to the research method adopted by the study. This takes a hybrid approach combining Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM, Wengraf, 2001) as a means of data collection with a version of Grounded Theory (GT) devised by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as the form of analysis. In terms of the former, BNIM has a long enduring history of research embedded in health and nursing studies (Breckner and Rupp, 2002). One of the interesting factors of the BNIM approach is its flexibility. Thus, this study provides the opportunity for an adapted version of the method to be tested within a criminological field. As previously noted, the focus of this study will involve samples drawn from field locations around Merseyside.

1.20 Structure of Thesis

The next chapter, Chapter Two starts with describing the systematic approach taken to review academic literature focusing on gang membership, gang non-membership and gang disengagement, risk, and protective factors. Although the emphasis is placed on research in

the UK, research applicable to this study from the US and elsewhere could not be ignored and as such is also included and critically examined.

Chapter Three provides an in-depth account of the methodology that underpinned the research together with the research methods used to conduct the research itself. This includes an overview of the data sources, description of research participants, sources of recruitment, selection criteria, sample measures, ethical considerations and epistemological and ontological contextualisation. The second part of the chapter is devoted to the data collection and analysis. It starts with a brief discussion of the piloting of the BNIM in its original format and subsequent adaptation of the method. This is then followed by a description of data analysis using the Strauss and Corbin (1990) version of grounded theory including a rationale for its use. The chapter concludes with a summary of the storyline that was developed from the analysis.

Chapters Four and Five, form the presentation of results. Chapter Four covers the testimony of DSG members while Chapter Five addresses narrative provided by Non-Group Participants (NGPs) and Ex-Deviant Street Group Members (EDSGMs). Within both chapters, a thematic format is adopted, with findings relating to membership/non-membership/disengagement grouped under the title of each of the risk/protective factor domains. Chapter Six focuses on a discussion of the results.

Chapter Seven, concludes the thesis by providing a summative evaluation of the primary research, together with an outline of the future challenges and recommendations that emerged as a result of the study. The chapter ends with a personal reflective account by the researcher of the PhD journey, advantages and limitations and finally suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In order to identify specific existing and up-to-date literature surrounding gang membership, non-membership and disengagement, this review has adopted the main principles found in a systematic literature search strategy.⁹ In addition, literature covering issues involving subsequent observations that were associated with membership/non-membership and disengagement that arose as a consequence of the interview data has also been included under the domains of risk and protection:

- Inappropriate male father/father figures (family domain)
- Edgework risk and thrill seeking behaviour (individual domain)
- Perception of crime and the role of drugs as a source of alternative employability (individual domain)
- Perception of school (school domain)
- Social mixing/bridging (peer domain)

2.2 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this review is to use principles derived from a systematic search to identify what has already been empirically established in regard to differences between those who join gangs and those who do not. The review has two objectives:

⁹ In order to develop an effective search strategy, the review has sought guidance from the governments Magenta book: guidance for evaluation (H.M. Treasury, 2011, p. 62). In addition to face to face consultation and guidance from research staff at the Institute for Public Health and Aldham Roberts Library, Liverpool John Moores University.

1. To identify literature covering differences in gang membership, non-membership and disengagement.
2. To identify the type of young person and the variables that make a young person vulnerable/resilient to gang membership from literature covering risk and protective factors.

2.3 Scoping

The first stage of the search strategy was to identify any pre-existing literature review/s covering differences between individuals who choose to become gang members and those who do not. For this, a scoping search was conducted through four databases identified through consultation with the Academic Liaison Librarian at Liverpool John Moores University's Aldham Robarts Library. They included: Academic Search Complete, Criminal Justice Abstracts with Full Texts, Ingenta Connect, and Psych-Info.¹⁰ For the scoping exercise, search terms were used that included "gang membership and non-membership differences*", "gang affiliation and non-affiliation differences*" AND review* no results were found specifically relating to a literature review using systematic principles examining why some young people from similar areas and backgrounds choose to be gang members while others choose not to be.

2.4 Method

Search protocol. The main research question formed the central point from which the search strategy was developed having been broken down for the scoping exercise to differences in gang membership/gang non-membership/disengagement. Moreover, in order for a more focused search to be carried out a time range of January 1990 to January 2018

¹⁰ While this research is first and foremost a criminological PhD thesis, the Psych-Info database was included to provide an awareness of any significant psychological contributions.

was implemented. This time frame also fitted in with the period in which the gang re-emerged in its contemporary form in the UK.

Sources of literature. The four databases that were chosen during the scoping exercise were utilised for the search itself. These were accessed via the “*Discover*” interface at Liverpool John Moores University Aldham Robarts library website on September 2017. In addition, Government websites (UK, and US and Canada) were also earmarked for grey literature searches. This was also coupled with a previous hand search earlier in 2017 that involved specific journals, papers, books (scanning bibliography and reference lists). Secondly, in line with a systematic approach, inclusion and exclusion criteria were created. In developing such criteria, Meline (2006) has observed that “inclusion and exclusion criteria typically belong to ONE or more of the following categories: (a) study population, (b) nature of the intervention, (c) outcome variables, (d) time period, (e) cultural and linguistic range, and (f) methodological quality” (p. 22). Thus, the following exclusion and inclusion criteria was developed:

2.5 Inclusion Criteria

- Publications involving issues relating to pathways towards gang membership consisting of mainly male members (population)
- Publications covering risk factors that facilitate male gang membership (outcome)
- Publications covering protective factors that prevent male gang-membership (outcome)
- Publications covering male disengagement factors from gang involvement (outcome)
- Western Publications in English language (cultural linguistic range)

2.6 Exclusion Criteria

- Publications written in any other language but English
(cultural linguistic range)
- Publication/sites relating to gangs that were deemed not appropriate for inclusion in an academic text
(methodological quality)

2.7 Search Strategy

The search strategy began with keywords being identified both from the main research question and the key findings with the use of Boolean Operators ('AND', 'OR', and 'NOT') to search more effectively. They included: '*gang membership*'*, '*gang affiliation*'*, '*gang disengagement*'*, '*gang non-membership*'*, '*social mixing AND gangs*'*, '*risk and gang membership*'*, '*protection from gang membership*'*, '*gangs and masculinity*'*, '*street gang membership*'*, '*gang participation*'*, '*gang involved youth*'*, '*deviant youth group membership*'*, '*gang interventions*'* in addition, to the asterisk symbol being used for truncation, that is, '*wildcard*' searching. The question mark '?' was also used to cover any cultural differences in spelling (i.e., '*desist?*' (desistance/desistence)). Table 3. catalogues the number of hits from each database BEFORE eligibility criteria is applied.

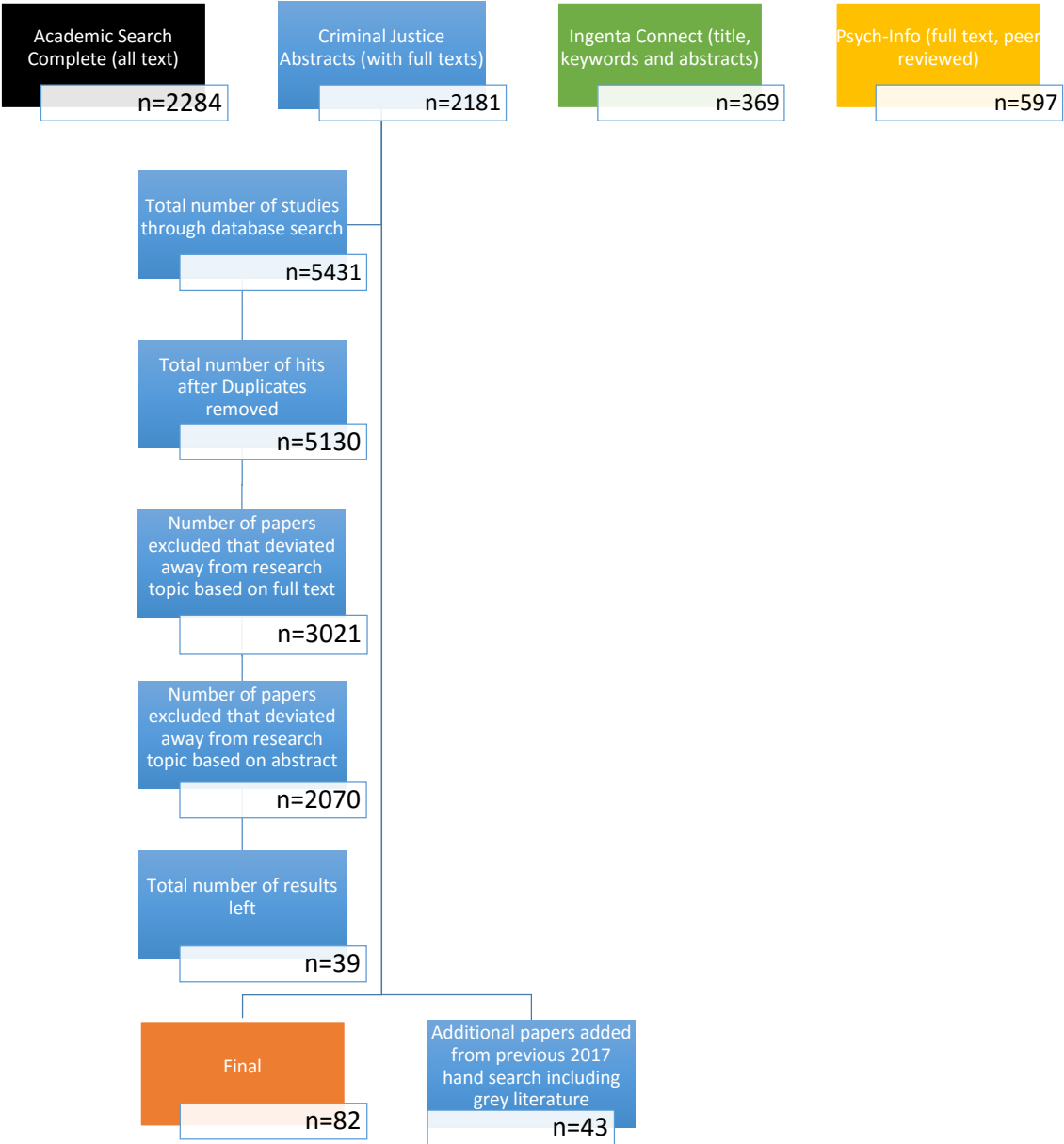
Table 3. Total Number of Identified Sources

Databases	Academic Search Complete (all text)	Criminal Justice Abstracts (with full texts)	Ingenta Connect (title, keywords and abstracts ¹¹)	Psych-info (full text, peer reviewed)
Gang membership	N=254	N=578	N=111	N=39
Gang affiliation	N=548	N=243	N=0	N=13
Gang disengagement	N= 27	N=13	N=9	N=4
Gang non-membership	N= 7	N=11	N=0	N=1
Social mixing AND gangs	N=9	N=0	N=0	N=8
Risk and gang membership	N=166	N=447	N=33	N=20
Protection from gang membership	N=3	N=20	N=2	N=15
Gangs and masculinity	N=740	N=455	N=31	N=12
Street gang membership	N=18	N=38	N=11	N=20
Gang participation	N=80	N=136	N=11	N=71
Gang involved youth	N=35	N=114	N=58	N=63
Deviant youth group membership	N=0	N=2	N=2	N=29
Gang interventions	N=397	N=124	N=83	N=302
Total number of sources from each of the four databases combined	N=5413			

Of the total number of 5413 articles combined from all four databases after duplicates removed 5130 fitted the inclusion criteria. The following prism flowchart (figure 1. p. 47) shows the extraction process of the articles included in the review. In addition, the quality and eligibility of the sources were also judged using quality assessment and data extraction sheets (appendix 2. and 3.) Further, an annotated bibliographic overview of the reviewed literature has also been completed and is included in the appendices (1).

¹¹ Full articles were checked if abstracts were unclear in terms of meeting inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Figure 1. Prism Flowchart of Data Extraction Process



2.8 Review of the Literature

Over the last fifteen years, the media's relentless pursuit of a new modern day moral panic has inevitably seen the application of the "gang" label in the UK. This has been primarily in response to incidents that have escalated largely in parallel with the increasing number of reports of '*anti-social behaviour*', '*hoodies*', and of course '*gangs*'. In fact, such has been the acceptance and the rapidity of the application of this label by policymakers and law enforcement agencies, it could be suggested that such sources have indeed inadvertently stepped onto the path towards moral panic. Like the general mainstream public, they have themselves become victims of media constructed hysteria. This has resulted in reinforcement of the label and contribution to the problem as a whole which intensified further after the 2011 riots. Such naivety subsequently opened the door to a mind-set that has forced youth culture in some areas in the UK to embrace the gang label and using a limited and mainly online social media derived perception, shape the gang around what are essentially Americanised definitions.

In recent times, determining the probability of young people becoming embroiled in gang membership as well as anti-social behaviour and crime, research has focused on identifying risk and protective factors in five key domains: individual, school, peer group, neighbourhood and family. In order to provide a theoretical foundation for this particular study, the following literature review is an attempt to examine some of the main body of research focusing on the question of gang membership and non-membership from the context of academic explanations. Although the emphasis is given to research in the UK, other international studies that are applicable both theoretically and practically are also included. In addition, literature covering observations that emerged from the interview data (the grounded approach) has also been incorporated having fitted within the five risk domains.

2.9 Gang Membership and Non-membership

While there has been a constant flow of research into gang membership since the work of Thrasher (1927), a span of over eighty-years (Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, and Chard-Wierschem, 1993; Klein, 1995; Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith and Torbin, 2003; Densley, 2013), studies examining individuals who live in similar marginalised and gang prevalent areas who do not get involved as members is at the time of writing quite arid. One of the main reasons that has greatly contributed to this is the ongoing debate over definitional frailty and its complexity (see Chapter One, p.2). In their tracking of a multi-agency Manchester-based project addressing the issue of gang related shootings, Bullock and Tilly (2008) have commented: “the term ‘gang’ itself is highly ambiguous. Equally, there are difficulties in defining and operationalising the concept of ‘gang membership’ for preventative and enforcement purposes (p. 1). Further, the authors observed that this ambiguity had resulted in a series of disagreements with the projects practitioners, specifically in their estimates of the risk of gang involvement and the consequences that might arise from negative stereotyping of certain young people as gang members. Bullock and Tilley (2008) noted that the project managers “concluded that it may be more effective and efficient to target specific patterns of violent behaviour rather than gang membership for preventative and enforcement attention” (p. 1). Interestingly, however, a study by Decker, Pyrooz, Sweeten, and Moule Jr. (2014) found strong evidence that the use of self-nomination can be an effective way to differentiate between gang members and non-gang members.

In reviewing the research that has been completed, Esbensen, Huizinga and Weiher (1993) have contended that there is very little empirical research to support the assumption that gang members are substantially different from non-gang members. Using survey data derived from an American longitudinal study of families, Esbensen, et al. (1993) examined characteristics of gang members with the aim of

identifying differences with non-gang members on specific key variables. While the authors found that there were indeed a number of social psychological variables that distinguished members and non-members (family structure, religious participation and labelling by teachers as bad) there was no difference between gang members and other young people involved in other forms of street offences. From a British perspective, young people who become involved in gangs as members have been noted to be older than those who avoid involvement, they are predominantly male, subject to individual delinquency, and have the presence of gangs in their neighbourhoods. These have become significant factors in predicting involvement in gangs (Alleyne and Wood, 2014).

2.10 Gang Membership: Delinquency and Criminality

In looking at the difference between membership and non-membership, there has naturally been a major focus on the former in regard to delinquency and offending. That is, the assumption that young people who become gang members will be those who have a higher propensity towards delinquency than those who do not. Huff (1998) has commented that “criminal behaviour committed by gang members is extensive and significantly exceeds that committed by comparatively at-risk but non-gang youth” (p. 2). Such comments have been reinforced in much later research by Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith, and Tobin, (2003) who contended that there is indeed a difference in the rate of offending between gang members and young people who are not involved in gangs but who do offend. Thornberry, et al. (2003) noted higher rates of gang member offending with gang members than individuals who offend but who are not gang members suggesting a credence for the well cited earlier research by Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte and Chard- Wierschem, (1993) selection, facilitation and enhancement framework, in particular, the facilitation effect. That is, gang joining will fuel increased levels of delinquency/offending as a result of the social

dynamic group processes of the gang and its normative structure. Although in examining ten years of longitudinal data from 858 participants of the Pittsburgh Youth Study, Gordon, Kawai, Loeber, Stouthammer-Loeber, and Farrington (2004) found that “boys who join gangs are more delinquent before entering the gang than those who do not join” (p. 56). This would suggest support for the selection as opposed to the facilitation effect, that young people with a high propensity towards delinquency and offending regardless of being a gang member are propelled together into this thing called a ‘gang’ which merely acts as a conduit. In either case there is an increase in the levels of delinquency/offending once membership has been established. Thornberry et al. (1993) do cite the possible existence of the third mixed (enhancement) model accounting for both the other two frameworks combined bringing about increased levels of delinquency and offending.

Further, regardless of facilitation, selection or mixed effects, if there is a difference in levels of delinquency/offending between gang members and non-members, the question then becomes what is it about being a gang member that results in this difference? Matsuda, Melde, Taylor, Freng, and Esbensen (2013) have attempted to answer this by drawing on Anderson’s (1994) ethnography “*Code of the Street*”. This has been defined as a set of informal rules that controls violence in public interactions. In a theory that draws on poor structural characteristics of chronic unemployment, marginalisation, poverty and mistrust of the legal system, Matsuda et al. (2013) note the code of the street emerges as an obtainable substitute for unobtainable middle-class notions of the trappings of success. Thus, for young people who join a gang violence becomes the dominant (and possibly the only) way of achieving respect and gaining status. Matsuda, et al. (2013) assert:

The central issue at stake is respect (i.e., being treated with respect and giving it when its deserved). The code provides rules for negotiating respect. One’s own respect must be effectively defended, for it is

both a prized commodity and allows one to navigate public life safely (p. 442).

From a more social psychological perspective, Wood (2014) like Thornberry, et al. (1993) accounts for increased delinquency/offending levels by suggesting a kind of facilitation effect, with group processes and adherence to group norms “cultivating gang member’s social cognitions such as moral disengagement, offence supportive cognitions, and rumination” (p. 1). With reference to general differences between gang members and non-members, Wood (2014) also notes that during adolescence, young people go through an identity formation process developing a peer group based on selecting other young people who share similar interests, that unlike gang members, non-gang members can gain positive feelings from academic achievement which in turn provide all the motivation to go on to future successful careers. They are thus likely to develop a peer group involving fellow pro-social and academically motivated young people. In contrast, Wood (2014) asserts, gang members are less confident in their academic ability, becoming completely disengaged with the institution of school and as a result, feelings of future uncertainty about the future and identity issues develop. This process she argues forces the young person to side with a peer group of like-minded individuals. Wood (2014) comments that with education disillusionment “youth may find joining a gang, provides the positive reinforcement that they need of their views, their self and, as a result, reduce their identity uncertainty” (p. 3).

2.11 Gang Membership Disengagement

While this review has so far focused, naturally, on literature involving the main topic of this study, street gang membership and non-membership, research contributions that concentrate on individual disengagement from gang membership must also be considered, that is, young people who because of experiences within or outside the gang become dissatisfied with the lifestyle and leave. In terms of gang

disengagement, the research climate has been dominated by life course studies from the US. Further, where life course theory is concerned, Pyrooz, Decker and Webb (2010) have cited three stages initially these are associated with crime involvement but for Decker, et al. they can also mirror young people's involvement in gangs. They include: *Onset* (gang joining), *continuity* (participation in joint activities) and *disengagement* (leaving the gang).

Overall, recent research has concentrated on the binding ties gang members have with their gang, in particular, how such ties can be cut or what Maruna and Roy (2007, p. 104) call '*knifing off*' that is, "individuals are thought to change their lives by severing themselves from harmful environments, undesirable companions, or even the past itself" (p. 104). Before providing an overview of the core disengagement studies, however, it is important at this stage to consider the type of individuals who decide to disengage from gangs, since this is seldom clarified. Firstly, Decker, et al. (2014) have identified what could be termed a '*disengaged desister*', that is, someone who will not only disengage from gang membership, but will also start to desist from criminal activity. Long-term involvement with a gang, however, may have more profound implications. The former gang member may have been socialised in a criminal way of life that they may wish to individually perpetuate. For example, drug possession with intent to supply and/or personally use. This latter factor itself, having been facilitated by gang involvement may be enough to transform the former gang member into a long-term '*conventional individual offender*'. Moreover, this research study has noted the existence of a form of '*peripheral gang disengager*' who can become involved with a gang at a marginal level. However, upon exposure to extreme forms of crime (especially violence) such individuals will rapidly exit the gang. An observation noted by Decker and Lauritsen (2002) is that the most cited reason for individuals disengaging from gangs is violence.

Adding further evidence to this, Pyrooz, et al. (2010) comment that “desistance patterns such as abrupt versus gradual departures may also be dependent on additional factors, such as the level of engagement within the gang” (p. 494). In terms of actual disengagement theory, Pyrooz and Decker (2011) have suggested a form of rational thought process or when negative experiences outweigh positive attributes of being in a gang, a gang member will start to consider disengaging, Pyrooz and Decker’s (2011) research examined the motives for gang disengagement amongst 84 juvenile arrestees. The authors identified several factors that can ‘*pull* or ‘*push*’ young people away from a gang and the type of offending that may be associated with gang membership. Pull motives were identified as ‘*turning points*’ in a gang member’s life such as serious relationships that that can bring stable domesticity through the birth of a child or simply steady employment. Push motives Pyrooz and Decker (2011) assert are “characterized by cognitive shifts or transformations about gang life” (p.420). That is, the gang member becomes bored and tired of the lifestyle or tries to avoid violence and the criminality that in most cases becomes part and parcel of the gang. With regard to criminality, Sweeten, Pyrooz, and Piquero (2012) in a study examining the relationship between disengagement from gangs and crime, found that disengaging from gangs is “indirectly related to offending through less exposure to antisocial peers, less structured routine activities, less victimisation and more temperance” (p. 469).

While these studies are a product of the US, where gang membership and gang crime is more visibly present and distinctive within communities, it can be argued that observations such as Pyrooz and Decker’s (2011) pull and push factors are equally evident in the UK. From the viewpoint of British research, Gormally (2015) has supported Pyrooz and Decker’s (2011) findings, as well as highlighting maturation as a primary push factor. Gormally observes “a report on troublesome youth groups (Bannister, et al. 2010) found that disengaging from gang membership, gang fighting, and knife crime was often attributed to

maturity and lifestyle changes” (p. 153). Further, Gormally identifies three highlighted areas as reasons for gang disengagement; age, street-based fighting and investment. Of this last factor, Gormally comments that “the motivation to identify with the youth gang being based on what one gets out of it” (p. 148). Harding (2014) also picks up on the aging theme, commenting “as members grow older, their individual strategy tends to become more important than their gang strategy and they are more likely to focus on other aspects of adult life” (p. 105).

Moreover, the more commonly cited British gang researcher, Densley (2013) has also examined disengagement with the same premise of increasing responsibility and maturation, but this time by associating the disengagement process in similar light to formal retirement. Densley (2013) asserts “gang members still announce their ‘retirement’ in much the same way that disgraced politicians, out-of-favor *aides-de-camp*, and fired CEOs broadcast that they want to ‘spend more time with the family’” (p. 137). Further, in terms of the reaction of gangs to a member leaving, Densley suggests this is not something that is akin to leaving adult organised crime firms, with violent retribution being ordered from the top echelons. He comments, “assuming one has a ‘legitimate’ reason for leaving, for health reasons, family, or employment, then there is no need for gangs to react violently ... most gang members are totally dispensable and other youths are queuing up to replace them” (Densley, 2013; p. 136).

2.12 Gang Membership/Non-membership: Risk and Protective Domains

In recent times, a substantial amount of research sources writing on gang membership, non-membership and disengagement have turned the focus on risk and protection (e.g., Hawkins, Herrenkohl, Farrington, Brewer, Catalano, Harachi and Cothorn, 2000) in particular, highlighting what have become five-key risk/protective domains. While such domains have frequently been used to measure vulnerability towards

delinquency, they have also become valid benchmarks by which to predict gang membership/non-membership. They include *individual context, school context, peer context, neighbourhood* and *family* contexts. Where gangs are concerned in the UK, Cordis Bright (2015) observed that the Home Office through its EGYV, 2011 (and later its EGVE, 2016) programme has emphasised the importance for local authorities to identify young people's vulnerability to gang membership and youth violence at the earliest possible age. As result, gang prevalent areas have focused on designing assessment tools based on identifying potential factors of risk and protection. Cordis Bright (2015) note that such "risk factors associated with gang membership and serious youth violence often span all five of these risk domains" (p. 37).

All of these domains are rooted in the traditions of theories surrounding social learning, social control, and social disorganisation, each having both direct and indirect effects on risk and protection. With regard to risk, Shute (2008) has noted that a shift can be made from describing gang membership in terms of social status, as a "dependent variable", that is, a variable as an outcome, to gang membership as an "independent variable ... a variable exerting effect on a further set of dependent/outcome variables" (p. 11). Shute comments "accepting that gang members are at higher than normal risk of behavioural and social outcomes due to multiple social exclusion, does gang involvement place them at an *even greater risk*?" (p. 11).

On the whole, research specifically looking at risk and protective factors in relation to who is or is not vulnerable to gang membership has over the years been limited with the majority of studies originating from the US. Research focusing solely on the area of protective factors and gang membership has been even more scant in comparison to risk (McDaniel, 2012; Cordis Bright, 2015). In the main, it is still widely assumed that such factors will simply be the complete opposite of factors deemed as a risk. Although Krohn, Lizotte, Bushway, Schimdt, and Philips (2010) have asserted what is probably the more reasonable

conclusion, that protective factors largely differ depending on the individual and their situation. Moreover, it is also possible for risk and protective factors to coexist. That is, a young person may have low self-control and an erratic nature indicating individual risk factor variables but could attend school regularly and have stable and moral parents, variables associated with school and family protective factors.

Furthermore, Klein and Maxson (2006) have observed that of twenty studies they identified covering risk and protection in regard to gang vulnerability most have used bivariate analysis which has failed to include controls for gang associated aspects. Merrin, Hong, Sung, and Espelage (2015) have explored whether such risk and protective domains are similar for gang involvement among subgroups (i.e., current or former gang members, youth who resisted gang membership, and non-gang involved young people). Using a social-ecological framework that involved a large sample of 17, 336 participants from US middle and high school districts, the researchers found that from the viewpoint of the individual domain, racial and ethnic minors, young people with a history of depression/suicide were most likely to be at risk of gang involvement.

Where the family domain was concerned, the researchers found that having family members or experiencing a dysfunctional family setting were linked to gang involvement. The peer domain, highlighted young people involved with drugs and alcohol were susceptible to gang involvement, while with the school domain, the researchers identified young people who were having a positive experience of school life, that is, who were being treated fairly by school staff were most likely to avoid any form of gang association. Finally, when Merrin, et al. (2015) examined the impact of the neighbourhood/community, they found that appropriate adult support and community activities as well the perceived sense of being in a safe environment also indicated aversion away from gangs. Taken in sum, this would suggest that in terms of risk and protective factors, there are similar variables within each domain which would apply to gang involved members, young people who are under

pressure to join gangs, non-gang involved young people and those who disengage from gangs. These will now be examined firstly from the perspective of risk and secondly protection.

2.13 Risk Factors

Burfeind and Jeglum-Bartusch (2016) define a risk factor as “any individual trait, social influence, or environmental condition that leads to greater likelihood of problem behaviours and ultimately negative developmental outcomes during the adolescent years” (p. 419). They have observed that two types of risk factors exist: *Static risk factors* are identified as those aspects that cannot be changed by any form of intervention strategy. They include early disruptive behaviour problems that include aggression and violent outbursts. In contrast, *Dynamic risk factors* consist of environmental aspects that are changeable by forms of intervention. These can include involvement with deviant peer networks, risk-taking behaviour (edgework) and low self-control. The greater the number of risk factors a young person possesses, the greater the possibility of not only gang membership but also violence and crime. For instance, Hill, Lui, and Hawkins (1999) examining data from the Seattle Social Development Project (SSDP) found that a young person possessing seven or more risk factors was 13 times more likely to join a gang (peak age for joining was 15) than a young person possessing none or one.

2.14 Protective Factors

Burfeind and Jeglum-Bartusch (2016) define a protective factor as “those individual traits and social circumstance that allow youth to adapt positively to adverse environments” (p. 421). A further detailed description by Hall, Simon, Mercy, Loeber, Farrington, and Lee (2012) highlights protective factors as “processes of overcoming the negative effects of risk exposure, coping successfully with traumatic experiences,

and avoiding the negative trajectories associated with risks” (p. 2). Hall, et al. note that this process is called ‘resilience’.

2.15 Individual Risk Context

In reviewing literature regarding individual risk, Shute (2008) has observed the myriad of psychologically rooted variables that exist within this category. These have ranged from cognitive deficits in verbal reasoning, problem-solving and thinking skills to low intelligence, aggression, and risk-taking. In attempting to impose some order to this list, Shute identifies three clusters of variables the first of which “relates to early childhood problem behaviour” (p. 23). They include aggression, conduct disorders (i.e., Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)), anti-social behaviour including drug and alcohol use and early offending against persons. The second cluster Shute identifies as relating to “temperament and personality” (p. 23) and includes low empathy, hyperactivity, and negative emotions. Like that of the first cluster such predictors, Shute asserts, may be identified and labelled as psychologically attention-deficit related. The third and final cluster relates to low intelligence and poor social cognitive skills.

Where individual factors and gang membership is concerned, there is strong evidence for psychological factors being quite mixed (Lenzi, Sharkey, Vieno, Mayworm, Docherty, and Nylund-Gibson, 2014), although past research (Ebsensen, Huizinga, and Weiher, 1993; Gottfredson and Gottfredson, 2001) has noted that the presence of one or all of three variables (these would possibly fit in Shute’s second cluster) that include low perception of guilt for potential deviance, a higher tolerance for deviance and use of moral disengagement strategies and neutralisation to justify anti-social behaviour will increase the risk of gang membership.

In regard to the latter two factors, Wood and Alleyne’s earlier research (2010) noted that within gang membership an individual will

indeed “set aside their moral standards if by doing so they will be accepted by a chosen group” (p. 24). Moreover, they assert “as such, social, cognitive processes such as moral disengagement may help explain the process of how youth disengage from informal controls they have learned in favour of the rewards gang membership offers” (p. 24). Neutralisation can also contribute to this allure since to the individual, it can present a potential way of transferring moral responsibility for adverse actions to the group. Further, Ribeaud and Eisner (2010) in examining the potential similarity between both moral disengagement and neutralisation, also highlight a third facet of resemblance, that of self-serving cognitive distortion¹² which could also be added to this menu of traits displayed by young people who become gang members.

Taking all of these themes even further, combined with the observations of cultural criminologists Ferrell and Sanders (1995) on style and identity and another individual risk component emerges. Writing in 2007 Zimbardo highlights what he has termed “*de-individualization*” (p 10, 2007). by commenting:

[The] “Mardi Gras” effect involves individuals temporarily giving up the traditional cognitive and moral constraints on personal behaviour when part of a group of like-minded revellers bent on having fun without thoughts of subsequent consequences and liabilities. It is de-individualization in-group action (pp. 306-307).

A similar theme that has also been linked to individual factors and in particular gang membership has been the excitement derived from risk-taking/thrill seeking behaviour (Burfeind and Jeglum Bartusch, 2016). In attempting to confront this theme, Ferrell and Sanders, (1995)

¹² Wallinius, Johansson, Larden, and Dernik (2011) define self-serving cognitive distortions as “attitudes where the individual focuses on his/her own opinions, expectations, needs, and rights to such an extent that the opinions or needs of others hardly ever or never are considered or respected (p. 4).

have called for the inclusion of both ‘*criminal pleasures*’ and ‘criminal erotic’s (p.311) into the study of gang membership. However, in giving this area some historical perspective, O’Malley (2010) has commented that such observations can be traced back to the positivist school, which, he asserts, has always seen risk-taking as pathological.

The idea of a criminology of the skin has, in the early stages, received some condemnation from Frank (1995) for attempting to regress towards the realms of the old, and now discredited, Lombrosian type biological theories (possibly the main reason for its wider academic neglect). Ferrell and Sanders (1995) did open up an interesting avenue warranting further investigation, particularly with regard to the study of gangs that goes some way to incorporate contemporary psychological frameworks that focuses initially on the individual and specifically, their attraction and motivation for being a gang member.

Other work related to this area has seen another cultural criminologist Presdee (2000, p. 31) write about what he calls “the carnival of crime” of some young people (and indeed adults) to pursue more extreme forms of defiant and risky pleasure seeking (joyriding, anti-social behaviour and street crime). Set around the backdrop of an increasingly economically organised, conservative and austere world, crime and badness for some young people can be transformed into an addictive and self-destructive form of erotic hedonism. Moreover, Lyng (2005) has developed a model of edgework, which has perhaps provided additional support for such themes to be investigated with greater scrutiny. Edgework theory explores why individuals influenced by risk, for no real reason or material gain, indulge in possible self-destructive behaviour.

Lyng’s work focuses predominantly on what Hayward (2002) calls “prototypically masculine middle-class pursuits” (p. 88), that is, mountain rock climbing and car racing. However, put into the context of gang membership, and there is evidence to argue that increasingly deteriorating social conditions as a result of austere policy making, as

well as marginalisation do indeed provide triggering mechanisms for a form of edgework to be exhibited through membership of a gang. The criminality can emerge from within. Bengtsson's (2012) study of young offenders set in a Danish secure institution which draws on Lyng's (2005) theory of high risk criminological edgework and Wacquant's (2008) theory of advanced marginality highlight the need for more research focusing on edgework particularly with young socially excluded people who choose to become gang members. Bengtsson comments:

The young men's presentations of their crimes reflected many of the elements found in edgework theory focusing on excitement seeking and exploring personal limitations. When 'hanging out' in the unit, the young men talked eagerly about the excitement and action involved in committing crimes. They discussed the dangers involved and the skills needed. Their descriptions of their crimes fitted edgework theory by repeatedly stressing their drive to seek the limits of their own capabilities in an ongoing quest for illicit excitement (p. 100).

Risk through gang membership can become an outlet for escapism and self-empowerment. It is an observation that Lyng (1990) himself highlights commenting "The predominant sensation for the individual is one of being pushed through daily life by an unidentifiable force that robs one of individual choice" (p. 870). Since young marginalised people now occupy a world where control is being increasingly 'wrestled' away from them under the moral crusading banner of law and order precedence, rather than create any form of stability and contentment such constraint only serves to create what Hayward (2002) calls a "hyper-banalization of society" (p. 85). In effect, it creates a veritable breeding ground for risk-taking with all of its deviant and criminally erotic sub-properties through the unity of gang membership. This, Hayward suggests, makes transgressive behaviour more seductive not only in terms of individual

(*a'la katz*) experience, but also on a symbolic sub-conscious level since “it offers a way of seizing control over one’s destiny” (2002, p. 82).

The 2011 riots provide a prime example of the consequence of not only such increased constraint but also the allure of risk. Constraint as a result of government surveillance and growing criminalisation of activities and certain individual populations that already felt marginalised, the allure of risk made acceptable and seductively beneficial through the complete freedom of violence, running with a mob of like-minded peers. Taking a Katzian view and focusing on the pleasure that some young people can get from deviant networks that would include gang membership Winlow (2004) comments:

‘Doing wrong’ can be thrilling and intrinsically enjoyable and it can also be linked to forms of status and identity. The communication of this enjoyment of crime and appreciation of violence usually occurs within the masculine social networks of the lower classes (p. 18).

2.16 Individual Protective Context

In attempting to identify individual protective factors Hall, et al. (2012) comment that “much of the original literature on positive factors that predict desirable outcomes is dominated by attempts to define protective factors that explain prosocial outcomes” (p. 2). An example of this can be seen in the work of Buckle and Walsh (2013) who have presented a strategy for educating gang members by getting them involved in pro-social activities under a ‘*Positive Youth Development*’ (PYD) framework. The authors note that the core issues addressed in PYD approaches tend to focus on individual protective factors promoting bonding with law-abiding peers (pro-social networks/social mixing/bridging), building resilience together with social, emotional, and most importantly cognitive behavioural elements in addition to moral stability. Buckle and Walsh (2013) suggest that learning environments should be specifically designed for gang members so that they can

comprise of all the key ingredients of active citizenship. This can include self-reliance, respect and care for others within the community. For this to happen, Buckle and Walsh (2013) assert, that trust between gang members and members of the community must be built. They say one way this can be achieved is for gang members to identify, and be allowed to use, their key strengths (cultural pride and identity, physical strength and leadership and entrepreneurial qualities, the latter derived from drug dealing) in a prosocial way.

2.17 School Risk Context

In examining school risk factors, Shute (2008) identifies two levels of risk within the context of school. Firstly, *school individual-level risk factors* represent the main focus for researchers and include lack of positive motivation towards the school work ethic, attendance and commitment to academically achieve. This may be linked to overall family attitudes towards education. A further link can also be marginalised neighbourhoods and peer friendship networks formed in such communities where deviance, criminality and gang membership is prevalent and normalised to an almost broken windows (Kelling and Coles, 1982) level. As Estrada, Jr., Gilreath, Astor and Benbenishty (2014) comment “it is logical to assume that gangs could become a normal part of a school culture if the school is nested in a gang area or in a catchment area of regions that have many teen gang members” (p. 230). Surprisingly however, Alleyne and Wood (2014) examining social and environmental aspects of gang membership from a UK perspective found that there was no difference in commitment to education between gang members and non-gang members, although on this issue, they highlight two possible observations. Firstly, if truancy is a major factor in gang membership, they concede that their sample may be skewed because of the school context of the data collection. In the second instance, they suggest that schools have become a primary enlisting ground for active gang members to recruit while at the same time attending school.

The Second level Shute identifies is *school level risk factors* for which Shute (2008) observes “are properties of the institution that affect all attending pupils regardless of their commitment, for example, average class size, the extent of extracurricular activity, bullying prevalence” (p. 24). They also include negative labelling by teachers (Ebsensen et al., 1993). From this perspective, Buckle and Walsh (2013) observe that “once labelled a gang affiliate, they are often targeted for immediate school suspension, expulsion, and removal, and arrest for any misbehaviour, real or perceived” (p. 54). Wang (2008) has also noted that a school’s inability to provide a supply of good teachers that can be seen as role models (in effect creating a form of bridging within a community) can similarly inadvertently put young people at risk. Taken together, all of these factors will only serve to demotivate and weaken the bonds a young student will have with the school and education as a whole (Hill, Howell, Hawkins and Battin-Patterson, 1999).

2.18 School Protective Context

The importance of school context as a protective turning point has been highlighted by Hayden, Williamson and Webber (2006). Writing at the time of New Labour’s ‘*Citizenship programme*’, the authors have observed the role and potential of the school as a site for intervention programmes aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour and gang membership, which bordered into criminality. In particular, Hayden, et al. (2006) note that school is the only main community source in which young people spend a great majority of their time. Yet despite this, their potential as a basis of prevention by which risk of anti-social behaviour, gang membership as well as criminality could be reduced, has been relatively neglected. They comment “the management of difficult behaviour is crucial to the ways schools are organised, but a crime prevention role for schools is rarely mentioned in UK educational research” (2006, p. 295). However, Densley, Adler, Zhu and Lambine (2016) have assessed the program efficiency of a

London schools project called “Growing Against Gangs and Violence” (GAGV). The project first set up in 2008 to reduce not only gang membership but also serious violence amongst young people is partially based around an American project called “Gangs Resistance Education and Training” (GREAT). So far it has been delivered to 110,000 young people across 500 schools. Densley, et al.’s (2017) processing outcome evaluation of GAGV found that the Randomised Control Trial (RCT) of 391 student participants did not highlight a particular significant effect. However, Densley, et al. (2016) comment “effect sizes indicate the program was effective in reducing gang membership and frequency and variety of delinquency and violence in the short- and longer term” (p. 242). Moreover, the authors noted that the program was also effective in reducing student’s negative attitudes to police officers and disdain towards violence and young people with street counterculture.

2.19 Peer Group Risk Context

In this category, such predictors evolve around the whole spectrum of peer interaction and socialisation. They include norming and bonding with peers and the quality of that peer socialisation. Interaction with delinquent peers at an early stage of a young person’s life can further increase the risk of pulling away from mainstream society and alignment with violent and dangerous countercultures and activities (Curry and Spengel, 1992). Further Thornberry, et al. (2003) highlighted that gang members in Rochester, New York have a significantly higher rate of delinquency than non- gang members. As noted in the previous category of school risk, for young people living in marginalised locations where there is a high level of gang membership whose presence is normalised, the probability of following this path becomes almost inevitable since there is very little choice. The unfolding logic of this particular risk factor would appear to be heavily derived from a social learning perspective, a supposition that would point to

deviant/criminal (offending) behaviour being a learned response derived from the membership of a personal group, that is, exposure to the norms and beliefs of that group will inevitably influence the attitudes of the newly inducted individual, in effect developing a social identity that conforms to the groups governing beliefs and values.

Odgers, Moffitt, Broadbent, Dickson, Hancox, Harrington, Poulton, Seers, Thomson, and Caspi (2008) exemplify this with the simple observation that exposure to drug using peers will encourage individuals to engage in drug use. However, as Akers (1994) observes “it is not a simple theory of association with “bad companions”, nor does it speak of association with particular kinds of people” (p. 93). The focus is learning a pattern of negative behaviour from others whether non-criminal or criminal/gang member or non-gang member. In simple rational choice reasoning, it is the balance between learning of deviant/criminal behaviour in relation to the non-deviant/criminal alternatives. As Akers (1994) further comments:

The theory makes it clear that the process is not a simple matter of either criminal or non-criminal association, but one that varies to what are called “modalities” of association. That is, if persons are exposed first (priority), more frequently, for a longer time (duration), and with greater intensity (importance) to law violating definitions than law-abiding definitions, then they are more likely to deviate from the law” (p 93).

Such a process would appear to echo Thornberry, et al’s (1993) facilitation /kind of group model discussed earlier (p. 50) that is, gang members being intrinsically no different to the non-gang counterparts (delinquency and drug abuse) but upon joining a gang the dynamics and peer group processes can facilitate an escalation in deviancy through social learning with, exposure, frequency and intensity all being present. This would also indicate the accuracy of Shute’s (2008) contention of the shift in terms of gang membership from a dependent/outcome variable to

an important independent variable having an effect on other dependent outcome variables on the question of does gang membership place young people at an even greater risk of deviant/criminal behaviour?

Thus, if gang membership is a facilitator or component of deviant/criminal behaviour, a second theory that can be applied in relation to peer risk is Moffitt's (1993) developmental taxonomy. Although this is a biologically driven theory about offending behaviour, it could also be linked to an explanation of why some young people in gang prevalent areas do and do not become gang members. Moffitt's work follows a set theme of life trajectories, identifying three groups of young people. Two of these groups she identifies as offenders. The first of these groups Moffitt (1993) classifies, is the so-called '*life-course persistent*' (p. 676) who represent approximately 5% of the male population. Such individuals, she claims display some form of personality disorder that emerges from childhood to mid-life. Characteristics include physical aggression and high levels of delinquent/ criminal behaviour (a description that would appear to fit Thornberry et al.'s (1993) gang selection model criteria of individuals who possess a high propensity towards deviancy). Here Moffitt (1993) observes that such young people are "engaging in anti-social behaviour of one sort or another at every stage of life" (p. 676). In effect, by Moffitt's description, such individuals would naturally have a very high risk in the individual and peer domains and thus an almost inevitability of entering the gang world as a member.

The second group of offenders termed '*adolescent-limited*' (p. 676) begins to develop anti-social behaviour as an adaption response only during adolescence and is the result of two factors. Firstly, through copying life course persistent peers and secondly, as a result of the frustration arising from a maturity gap (both of which would indicate a high-risk level in the peer domain) that is, the need during adolescence to identify and be accepted as an adult with all the privileges that accompany adult status (i.e., freedom and complete unsupervised independence this 'need' could also equate to masculinity crisis male gang

members striving to be accepted as adult hyper-masculine “men”). Moffitt (1993) notes that while the former of these two groups is quite rare, the latter she claims is a transient phase, which is natural for most young people. The third group Moffitt identifies represent those who she claims abstain from deviance and crime which in most marginalised areas would also include refraining from gang membership. While this group, she asserts is something that is in need of further research, Moffitt (1993) makes her own observations that such a population (who she classifies as non-normative) have become excluded from being socially integrated into popular deviant in-groups (i.e., gangs) as a result of some physical, personality and /or social characteristic that appears unappealing to prevalent and popular deviant groups and as a consequence they have very little option but to remain on the legitimate side of society.

Naturally, Moffitt’s work has come under scrutiny not just because of its biological assertion. In testing Moffitt’s thesis, Chen and Adams (2010) used friendship network data derived from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health in the US. Their findings failed to provide any strong empirical support for Moffitt’s thesis. In contrast, they suggested a need for certain modifications. They also noted that no firm conclusions can be reached overall. Moreover, Moffitt, herself does admit that additional socio-metric studies are indeed required to assess if this third group of individuals is correlated with being either socially isolated or unpopular.

2.20 Peer Protective Context

A number of research studies that have been done on peer risk has suggested that an emphasis on peer protection factors should link to social capital (networking) and social settings (the peer domain can be linked with issues from within the neighbourhood/community domain). Putnam (2000) identifies three types of social capital. Bonding in which individuals from within the same community forge friendships based largely around cognitive empathy. Bridging in which individuals migrate

from residential location to develop social capital with peers outside their community and linking in which individuals align themselves with figures of authority and/or powerful organisations. Where young people are concerned, Deucher (2009) has argued that there is a need to move from bonding to bridging (or social mixing) if existing locational and cultural barriers that stifle progression are to be overcome. Similarly, Bassani (2007) has pointed to the health and wellbeing impact of social capital suggesting that healthy social friendship networks can be important both physically and psychologically. Further, in describing social capital as it applies to young people, Bassani asserts that as they progress from the family (primary) group to the street and the school (secondary) group, one of three consequences can occur.

The *booster effect* which occurs when a young person has high social capital in both groups, the *double jeopardy effect* happens when the young person has low social capital in both groups or finally there is the *compensating effect* which occurs when a young person has high levels of social capital only in one group. In this latter situation, they will attempt to compensate this imbalance through engagement with other groups. Deuchar (2009) asserts that it will be in this situation that a young person will be drawn further towards peers out on the streets which, given the extent of marginality and bridging isolation within many UK estates and low-income communities will be gang membership. Both Deuchar (2009) and Bassani (2007) warn that too much bonding and not enough bridging particularly in socially excluded communities can result in strong in-group ties being developed which can often end in factionalism and fear of the outside world not just by young people but also by long-term residents of a community. Of the interventions that have focused on peer protective factors through social capital, Hampshire and Matthijsse (2010) have observed that community arts projects such as the government-funded “SingUp” children’s programme have had a positive impact on health and wellbeing as well as countering social exclusion. However, Hampshire and Matthijsse (2010) stress that social capital

cannot be understood as a single phenomenon, equal consideration must also be given to economic and cultural forms of capital as coupling factors.

2.21 Neighbourhood/Community Risk Context

This particular category of risk has been one of the most important areas of study in criminology, ecological criminology representing one of the founding theories of gang research (Thrasher, 1927). It is an area which has been largely (some critical criminologists would assert conveniently) neglected by many of the UK's moral crusading, right-wing policy makers. In describing neighbourhoods and community risk, Shute (2008) asserts "area crime rates are predicted by indices of poverty and marginality, and by factors that reduce opportunities for neighbourly interaction (such as residential mobility) and impair the realisation of common goals and values" (p. 25). Areas with high levels of crime, poor housing, visible deterioration through vandalism and graffiti provide the veritable ingredients for this type of risk since in most instances deviance, criminality including gang membership has become normalised (Kelling and Coles, 1996). However, as Shute (2008) also notes "the relationship between crime and social process is likely to be bidirectional" (p. 25) with such criminogenic/gang prevalence impacting on innocent members of communities and their use of place and space as a result of labelling by officials and outsiders whose liberal use of "gang" terminology creates a "tar with the same brush" effect as Ralphs et al.'s, 2009 research would suggest. Moreover, research by Wikstrom and Loeber (2000) and Wikstrom (2007) highlighted an important observation, that young people deemed at low risk of gang membership are more likely to develop problems living in a neighbourhood/community that is high risk.

Writing about his own gang research, Deuchar (2009) comments "issues related to territoriality were at the front of the interviewees' minds. Many talked about the sense of confinement they felt since they

couldn't walk into certain housing schemes because they feared violence from gangs" (p. 42). Deucher's observation on the issue of territory is a significant one since it highlights how neighbourhood risk has increased in importance and is becoming more meaningful in the lives of young people at risk of gang membership. Writing on about his own participants Deuchar notes that "in some cases, where young people had experienced dysfunctional daily lives combined with educational failure at school followed by unemployment, the only thing they felt they had left was to go out on a Friday night and defend a housing scheme" (p. 43).

2.22 Neighbourhood/Community Protective Context

Lehman, Hawkins, and Catalano (1994) have commented that "Risk-focused prevention is based on the simple premise that to prevent a problem (behaviour) from occurring, we need to identify the factors that increase the risk of that problem developing and then find ways to reduce the risk" (p. 94). From the perspective of the neighbourhood and community protective domain in regard to gang membership, three factors have been identified by Cordis Bright (2015). They include low economic deprivation, this would include an end to austere policy, greater opportunities that lead to better inclusion, neighbourhood interaction and neighbourhood support involving developing better social capital through bonding and bridging, the latter of which could be both external and internal (as previously noted above, issues within this domain can be derived from research identifying issues in the peer protective domain), in sum, creating better positive perceptions of, and attitudes about communities. Moreover, trust must also be restored to young people, a good majority of whom do innocently meet on the street as part of a 'group'. As Deucher (2009) comments:

The redefining of many of their [young people] natural and arguably harmless social networking activities as criminal, thanks to negative portrayal by the press, leaves young people feeling oppressed by

heavy surveillance, stigmatised by authority figures and by the wider public and in turn damages the reciprocity and trust between youths and adults (p. 101).

Literature covering specific interventions that have been attempted in the UK (largely migrating from the US) that can be applied to the category of the neighbourhood protective domain include what Spergel and Curry (1993) in their comprehensive gang model have called *social intervention, community mobilisation and organisational change*. The first involves using tried and tested social work techniques to divert young people away from gangs to a legitimated lifestyle and mind-set by creating a better active environment. In the UK, this has centred on “*Positive Activities for Young People*” (PAYP), a government-funded programme aimed at children and young people from the age of 8 to 19 at risk of gang membership, offending and or social exclusion. The second places emphasis on individual service providers and organisations based within the community itself coming together to develop ways to create environments that again would deter young people from gangs. Factor, Pitts and Bateman (2015) have described community mobilisation as similar to a joint collaboration between both local citizens and local organisations.

At the time of this review, this type of intervention has become evident in many Northern parts of the UK. Local authorities and housing associations are starting to realise the need to work together in partnership, utilising both service providers and the involvement of young people via community engagement. An example of this model can be seen in one of the areas covered by this research, the Stockbridge Village estate in Knowsley, Merseyside, where the *Safer Communities Initiative* (SCI) was in 2011 recognised by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) as a leading example of multi-agency collaboration to tackle youth crime of which gangs had been a contributing factor. In the

first 12 months from January 2010 to January 2011, overall crime (including gang activity) in the area was reduced by 20%.

The third form of intervention, organisational change like that of community mobilisation focuses primarily on multi-agency intervention. Again, it attempts to bring together a wide range of local community agencies in a collaborative effort to produce a set of policies and procedures that encompass the best effective use of funded resources in a marginalised community. For example, Venkatesh (1999) writing about American gangs has noted a similar strand of intervention in the US called *Community-based intervention*". He comments:

In some urban communities, residents and organizations have devised creative locally based strategies to resolve gang-related conflicts and restore safe spaces for interaction and gathering ... These approaches are unique in their attempt to bring in their attempt to bring together a range of community actors including social service agencies, churches, and schools" (p. 552).

In the UK, this would be exemplified by a broader approach involving emergency services in what local authorities are presently calling '*safer communities*'. Despite the merits of this holistic approach and the impact on neighbourhoods, the continuing climate of austerity has meant that local authorities in attempts to deal with budget cuts have become dependent on adopting top-down central government policy approaches as opposed to tailoring initiatives to specific communities. However, given the momentum now emerging for greater powers to be given to local authorities through devolution, this may be subject to change.

2.23 Family Risk Context

In reviewing literature covering all five domains, specifically their connection with the risk of individuals becoming gang members

there has been a general and logical consensus that young people showing problems in all five domains are at a very high risk of not only developing behavioural problems but will also be at risk of joining gangs. The focal point for this has been during the initial years, when children spend almost all of their time within the family. As Shute (2008) comments:

While stronger and more consistently supported risk-factors exist in other domains at particular ages (for example, delinquent peer effects in adolescence), parents as the major early-life influences on children, seem to be a reasonable focus for support with the aim of reducing delinquency and gang involvement (p. 4).

Shute organises family risk factor research around three clusters of variables he terms “*structural, structuring* and *relational*” (2008, p. 19). In the first instance, structural variables refer to the “location of the family in the wider social structure (i.e., their material circumstances) and in terms of the characteristics of the people the child is habitually exposed to” (p. 19). Secondly, structuring family variables are seen as “aspects of parenting practice that regulate rule-based interactions and that lend structure to the child’s day, whether in and out of the parent’s company” (2008, p. 20). Finally, the third, relational variables are described as “the quality of attachment with the child [parental appropriateness]” (p. 20). In terms of family level gang risk factor literature, Shute (2008) rightfully asserts “there is arguably a strong need for more systematic reviews of the consistency of findings and relative strength of associations across well conducted studies” (p. 21).

Lipsey and Derzon (1998) have drawn on a meta-analysis of 34 prospective longitudinal studies of anti-social behaviour in an attempt to

examine predictors of violent or serious delinquency¹³ in adolescence and early adulthood. The study highlights two age groups 6-11 and 12-14. The authors found that the best predictors differed between the two groups and that from a structural perspective, broken homes were the poorest predictors of future violence and delinquency amongst both groups. In contrast, Winfree, Mays, and Backstrom (1994) research into structuring family variables examined selected elements of the social learning perspective to attitudes toward gang membership and gang activity. They found harmful discipline practices to be a significant predictor of pro-gang attitudes. In examining relational variables, in particular low attachment, Cox (1996) investigated the demographic and social characteristics of a sample of 201 adolescent males age 15-18 in a youth detention centre. Her findings suggest that adolescents who were involved in gangs reported more family conflict than their non-gang involved counterparts. In attempting to explain this, Cox comments “It may be that the existence of some family characteristics (e.g., less family cohesion, low family satisfaction, and increased family conflict) encouraged adolescent males to seek peer support from an extra-familial resource, the gang” (p. 24).

The “surrogate family” theory is an observation that has been highlighted by a number of studies both before and after Cox’s research. In one of the more recent examples, Young Fitzgibbon and Silverstone. (2013) have commented “This connection between the troubled family, serious youth violence and the gang is made more explicit by those commentators who argue that youngsters are attracted to gangs because they seek a surrogate family to fulfil their emotional needs” (p. 172). It

¹³ While this review is including studies that focus on delinquency, Hill, et al. (1999) has noted that although delinquency, violence, as well as substance misuse are not synonymous with gang membership, predictors of these behaviours do provide a starting point for examining the differences between individuals drawn to gang membership and those who are not involved.

is a theory that has been closely linked to the question of manhood. Campbell (1993) was one of the earliest modern writers to identify a masculinity crisis amongst the youngest fatherless males on British estates. Ironically, however, in examining this whole structural facet of family risk and in particular parental absence and ‘broken homes’ Shute (2008) concludes that in these two factors, estrangement can actually be a good thing for the vulnerable child. Shute also cites family criminality in what he observes as a “structural factor frequently identified in ‘classic’ American and UK longitudinal studies” (p. 20). In summarising this particular aspect, Sampson and Laub (1995) have asserted that when it comes to parental criminality and its link with offspring delinquency and gang membership, this can appear to some to represent evidence of biological linkage. However, they suggest it is more a case of deviancy in parents or involvement with gangs by older siblings being a catalyst in disrupting forms of social control for the child than any form of direct biological association. Moreover, Young et al. (2013) observed that over the years, studies focusing on family risk of delinquency have a history of being focused on three main areas of research: familial structure, composition and quality of parenting.

In examining the question of family structure, Wells and Rankin (1991) carried out a meta-analysis of fifty studies examining delinquency and broken homes. Wells and Rankin (1991) found only a 10-15% difference in the officially recorded delinquency rate of children from non-traditional homes¹⁴ compared to children from traditional homes. However, this rate reflected minor and not serious offences carried out in gangs. Kierkus and Hewitt (2009) examined the association between non-traditional family structure and delinquency and the variation across gender, race, age, Socio-Economic Status (SES) and place of residence.

They found what they termed ‘*significant interactions*’ (p. 123) with respect to age and family size in that living in a non-traditional

¹⁴ Non-traditional homes: any type of home other than male and female caregivers with biological offspring.

family is more criminogenic for older adolescents and for those with larger families. With regards to family composition, specifically, whether large families were predictors of a greater propensity for delinquency than small families, Young et al. (2013) have noted that “that the link between family structure (including family size) and delinquent behaviour is inconclusive and point to other influential factors” (p. 175). For instance, Hoffmann (2006) failed to find any form of direct evidence that family structure resulted in delinquent/anti-social behaviour, rather, his findings suggested factors such as neighbourhood were more influential.

From the viewpoint of quality of parenting, the one study that appears to stand out is that of McCord (1991) who found that children/adolescents with strong, encouraging and morally stable mothers were more likely to abstain from delinquent/anti-social acts. Interestingly, McCord discovered that fathers also played an important part, specifically in how they related to the maternal caregiver (the mother). She found that children of men who had respect for their partner produced similar behaviour in their offspring.

In recent times, where father/father figures are concerned, there has been a renewed impetus to link masculinity issues directly to the family risk to gang membership by suggesting the presence of a masculinity crisis. From the review of the literature, there appears to be two schools of thought as to the actual root causes of this. In the first instance, there is the argument (much favoured by right-wing traditionalists and neo-liberals) that sees the rise of fatherless families as the problem. The theory suggests young males in search of a male role model substitute an older peer/s in a group for the absent father. Secondly, there are those who suggest that the situation is more linked to the deterioration of traditional male blue-collar industries.

Taking the former of these arguments of fatherlessness first, this is an observation that has gained both impetus and notoriety because of the extent of media coverage. In the last decade, the Centre for Social

Justice (CSJ, 2009) have attempted to seize on and shape this further, by suggesting that fatherlessness has become a major link with the risk of gang membership (under the family risk domain) as young males search for a surrogate family, in particular, a father figure who in most cases is the alpha hyper-masculine male of the group. To support their contention, the CSJ (2009, p. 98) cites the observations of Melvyn Davis, a charity organiser whose role is to provide support to young males in the transition to manhood. Davis noted two key factors with young working-class males who are growing up in households with physically abusive/inappropriate or absent fathers. Firstly, emotions such as feelings of inadequacy as a result of growing up in a fatherless house become internalised. Secondly, Davis claims the absence of appropriate masculine values has caused young males to seek out hyper-masculine males in gangs in order to learn a form of media constructed masculinity that has become one of the dominant discourses in such groups.

However, Winlow (2004) suggests that the key to understanding working-class masculinity, gang membership and the possible resulting crime and violence lies more in examining the basis for the second argument than the first. Winlow's contention is that working-class masculinity and the financial state of the UK over the last fifteen years have become intertwined. He contends:

As traditional forms of male work, for example, factories, shipyards, steel mills and mines, radically change, and as social identities are increasingly based upon consumption and leisure rather than production and work, social cohesion and social capital become increasingly challenged by the end of mutuality and traditional forms of community belonging ... it is time to ask serious and perhaps disturbing questions about what becomes of those that the capitalist economy leaves behind (pp. 18-19).

Winlow (2004), like Jones (2011) and Densley (2013) argues that there is a need to move away from dominant neo-liberal paradigms. That is,

blaming individual life failure and marginality as a result of intrinsic character traits. Rather, the focus should be on an economic climate preaching chronic austerity that has led to the further demise of traditional forms of working-class labour, labour that once allowed young males to live up to appropriate masculine aspirations and gaining a beneficial weekly payoff legally.

In exploring this idea further, the review notes the earlier work of Benyon (2002) who discusses the concept of '*hegemonic masculinity*' (2002, p.16), that is, successful ways of becoming, identifying and being accepted as a man. Assuming power is the determining factor in establishing hegemonic masculinity, Benyon draws on a simple social class analogy of middle-class professionals using the intellectual tools of emails and memos to exert power, compared to their working-class contemporaries in manual labour jobs using physical prowess. With regard to the latter, Benyon inadvertently highlights two factors of interest.

Firstly, fatherless working-class youth have been traditionally ascribed to a contracted definition of what masculinity is (e.g., aggressive, tough, heterosexual, provider). It is a social construction that has been largely shaped by the mass media and the political institutions, two agencies that have done very little to influence structural change or to alter a dated perception of manhood. Secondly, Benyon interestingly suggests that masculinity can alter as an individual enters new environments with new lifestyle changes (in the last two decades, there has been a shift towards understanding masculinities in its many forms as opposed to a single masculinity).

This latter observation, it can be argued, is a more valid explanation than just when did you last see your father' theories. Past and present government failure to curb economic recession has seen a dramatic upsurge in areas around the UK becoming increasingly more marginalised. Faced with no real choice to experience alternative lifestyles, and the cultural/social diversity within such lifestyles

(particularly in manhood); young working-class males have become permanently locked in a hyper-masculine mode. It has therefore, become a constant quest to achieve what such young men perceive as true masculinity. Thus, what is actually having a triggering effect is indeed a masculinity crisis with structural factors overshadowing fatherlessness. This is powerfully reinforced by Young et al. (2013) who have asserted that, in contrast, other research has highlighted a myriad of other risk variables such as negative school experience and low academic attainment, deindustrialisation, and lack of legitimate employment opportunities, peer association and racism are connected to gang membership.

In examining such a list of structural factors, what has become evident is the increasing lack of semi-skilled jobs in excluded communities (de-industrialisation). The effect on young males generates a form of substitute behaviour adopted in order to appear as the working class archetypical alpha male. Thus, a dominant theoretical narrative should not be one where the catalyst is mainly seen as fatherlessness, but one which sees a substantial number of young working-class males adopting a deviant/violent form of masculine behaviour mainly because of the absence of legitimate economically incentivised opportunity. This has seen young males drawn into gang membership and violent crime including what is the main economic incentive, drug dealing, that in most cases accompanies it. Interestingly, criminal activity and criminal activity within gangs is now referred to in many disenfranchised communities of Merseyside as '*doing a graft*' or '*grafting*', a phrase that was once commonly associated with traditional blue-collar work. Seals (2009) suggested that the impact of the UK's labour market has had an effect on gang membership, with gangs becoming a substitute for legitimate employment. Using data from the 1997 cohort of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY97) to model the probability of gang participation, Seals found statistically significant and positive results for the effect of the local unemployment rate on sixteen-

seventeen-year-olds, suggesting that gang participation can depend on economic incentives.

Similarly, Levitt and Venkatesh (2000) using a data set involving the financial activities of drug selling gangs in the US found that on average, the earnings a gang member can make was above the legitimate labour market alternative. The authors point out, that “the enormous risks of drug selling, however is highly skewed, and the prospect of future riches, not current wages, is the primary economic motivation” (p. 755).

2.24 Family Protective Context

In reviewing the literature covering protective factors, these have been identified as strong family bonding with both parents and sibling/s, good parental supervision with consistent non-physical disciplinary approaches as well as appropriate and morally stable behaviour from parents and child/parent connection. In attempting to apply such protective aspects in the form of interventions to multi-issue families whose children are gang members, Barlow, Kirkpatrick, and Wood (2007) highlight the effectiveness of evidence-based intervention at the earliest possible stage of a child’s life. However, in evaluating Sure Start Local Programmes (SSLPs) Barlow et al. (2007) found several issues regarding the effectiveness of SLPPs (including few programmes aimed at fathers), few SSLPs were delivering evidenced-based parenting support, but some SLLPs were doing well and additional training was needed to provide intensive support to families with complex needs.

Building on this further Shute (2008) noted five forms of family intervention that has become effective in reinforcing and creating protective family variables. They include Nurse Family Partnerships, which in the UK offers to provide up to 16000 low income disadvantaged new parents with early years intervention. Nurse Family partnerships cover a variety of areas from advice to young mothers at the pre-pregnancy stage on health issues to countering self-esteem problems.

The Incredible Years was a parenting programme aimed at child/parent interaction with the goal of creating appropriate parenting, Functional Family Therapy (FFT) was aimed at disadvantaged high risk young people aged 11-18 and their families, with a variety of issues that range from conduct disorders to alcohol and substance misuse. In the UK, Family Focused Therapy usually involves between 8 to 12 one-hour sessions over a short period of between 3 to 4 months. Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC), a community programme that can last between 9 to 12 months adopted a behavioural treatment approach aimed again at young people between the ages of 3-17, who possess chronic anti-social behaviour issues. Finally, Multi-systemic Therapy (MST) is an intensive family and community-based programme that covers young people with an age range of 11-17, who have shown a high degree of violent behaviour and who are at risk of being put in care or custody. While Shute (2008) observes the effectiveness of these intervention programmes to parents of young people who are/have been involved as gang members, he also notes what is undoubtedly one of the major problems with all family orientated intervention, that of engagement. He comments:

Candidate families may be difficult to engage, both initially and during the intervention as they frequently experience a sense of guilt and stigmatisation at being labelled a 'bad parent'. Extensive work is needed both before and during the intervention in order to overcome these barriers (p. 5).

Further, McDaniel (2012) reports that traditionally, interventions that have been designed to reduce gang recruitment have not been directed at primary prevention or preventing recruitment before it starts. McDaniel (2012) notes that "programmes that offer parent training that are focused on skills relevant to effectively monitoring children, in addition to

helping youth develop strategies to cope with conflict, may be most beneficial for preventing gang affiliation” (p. 257).

2.25 Conclusion

This chapter has used the principles of a systematic approach to reviewing a selected array of main academic contributions surrounding gang membership, non-membership and disengagement. This was done mainly through the lens of vulnerability and resilience, specifically, through the five domains of risk and protection: individual, school, peer context, neighbourhood, and family. Each domain was examined by reviewing literature firstly from a risk and then a protective context. Also included was research covering issues that emerged as a result of the interview data which was placed within the context of the related risk/protective domain. This included inappropriate male father/father figures (family domain), edgework risk and thrill seeking behaviour (individual domain), perception of crime and the role of drugs as a source of alterative employability (individual domain), perception of school (school domain), social mixing/bridging (peer domain), social migration and political policies that have demonised working class young people (neighbourhood domain). Moreover, where risk and protective factors are concerned, it was observed that while research relating to the former is considerable, studies covering the latter is quite limited (McDaniel, 2012).

This, it was noted was firstly, as a result of a general assumption that protective factors were simply the mirror opposites of risk factors and secondly to achieve protection it was simply a matter of identifying high-risk domains and attempting to reduce them with tailored intervention. In terms of examining risk and protective factors that apply to vulnerability to joining gangs, the review has noted that literature was also limited in comparison to those that explored risk and protection as applied to delinquency and youth crime. Nevertheless, studies pertaining to risk, protection, and delinquency were included since, as many

researchers including Hill et al. (1999) have asserted, that while delinquency and violence are not synonymous with gang membership, predictors of these behaviours do provide a starting point for examining gang membership as well as non-membership. The next chapter will now describe the methodology and methods of the study.

Chapter Three: Methods and Methodology

3. Introduction

Building on the previous literature review, the following chapter will describe both the study's methodology and method. The study has used a variety of research techniques. They include:

- Literature review using a systematic search strategy
- Researcher logs/diaries cataloguing experiences and observations
- Biographic narrative interviews with gang members, non-gang members and former gang members.

The following provides an overview of the data sources selected:

3.1 Literature Review

A literature review of gang membership/non-membership/disengagement research was undertaken. The review examined various academic contributions focusing predominantly on literature pertaining to five risk and protective domains and the variables within each of these domains. From this, a critical and cultural criminological theoretical framework was formulated.

3.2 Gang Definition

As Sharpe et al. (2006) note such is the considerable sensitive and subjective nature of the term 'gang' that its use can be problematic and, given its highly sensitive and subjective nature, "it is advisable to use it with caution" (p. 1). After reviewing the literature, this study has used a following definition of a 'gang' adopted by the Euro-gang network group, Weerman et al. (2009):

A street gang (or troublesome youth group corresponding to a street gang elsewhere) is any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity (p. 20).

The reason for this choice was that the definition is probably the closest both the academic community and the public sector have come to agreeing on what exactly constitutes a gang. Moreover, as already noted in Chapter One, the definitional problems over what exactly is a gang is a continuing debate. Taking such a dispute into consideration, the term '*Deviant Street Group/s*' (DSG/s) will be used throughout the study from this point onwards covering individuals who were involved in groups that were both deviant and criminal. This is because firstly, because of the stigmatising potential of the gang label (Sullivan, 2005), and secondly, the difficulty in defining what constitutes a young person. Although some participants were aged 25, the maximum age permitted for this study, it should be noted that when reflecting back to incidents, such respondents were talking about when they were young people. This was noted to be in line with how young people have come to be defined and discussed in DSG literature.

3.3 Method Procedure and Design

The collection of data for this study was carried out over a twelve-month period and consisted of two sample populations taken from a variety of marginalised areas on Merseyside that included the Stockbridge Village estate, Huyton, Anfield, Kensington and Everton.

3.4 Data Collection and Recruitment Sources

Data collected in relation to both samples derived from a combination of sources. These were divided into five potential outlets:

1 The third sector and training organisations: MALS (Mentoring, Achievement and Learning Service), Vee's Place, Prescot; Rocket Training, Kensington; Huyton Churches Training Services, Princess Drive

2 Youth organisations: community neighbourhood centres and groups: St Alberts Youth Club, Stockbridge Village; Hillside Avenue community centre, Hillside Avenue; Pine Hirst, Breck Road; Home Ground, Scotland Road; Merseyside; the Catalyst Group, Stockbridge Village; Young advisors (Liverpool and Knowsley)

3 The local authority and housing associations: Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (KMBC), Huyton Village; Liverpool City Council (Safer Community's Partnerships), Dale Street. The Villages Housing Association, Stockbridge Village; Anchor and LMH housing Trusts, Anfield

4 The criminal justice system: Merseyside probation service/youth justice reparation panels: these were located in both Knowsley and Liverpool

5 The researchers own network of personal professional contacts: working in the third sector acting as a point of contact

Out of all five potential sources, only two, third sector organisations (charities) and the researchers own network of personal professional contacts proved fruitful. In relation to the latter, the network of personal, professional contacts took the form of practitioners known to the researcher. This was through professional involvement (paid and unpaid work) within the third sector and they were approached with a view to helping recruit participants. The former relates to the third sector, charity service providers of reparation training, working with first time young offenders (gang related). All participants who took part in this study were anonymised.

3.5 Measures: Selection Criteria for Participant Involvement and Terminology

Deviant Street Group Member/s (DSGM/s). Since the study's definition of a DSG as previously stated (Chapter One, pp.36-37) will be based on the Weerman et al. (2009) definition, selection of Deviant Street Group Members (26) was based on the individuals age 18-25 (youthfulness) who self-reported as being in groups for more than three months (durability), away from the home and the workplace and whose group identity included deviance/criminality.

Non-Group Participant/s (NGP/s). Selection of Non-Group Participants (NGPs, 11) was based around individuals self-reporting to a pre-interview, question regarding abstaining from gang membership. Definition of gang being described to each NGP according to Weerman et al.'s (2009) definition.

Ex-Deviant Street Group Member/s (EDSGM). During interview sessions, it became apparent that in self-reporting their abstention from DSG membership some participants (7) were not so much NGPs, who had completely abstained from membership; rather they described a situation that was one of DSG engagement and later disengagement after a short duration. They were thus distinguished within the NGP sample as '*Ex-Deviant Street Group Members*' (EDSGMs).

3.6 Backgrounds of Participants

All participants originating from the Merseyside areas had very similar backgrounds. That is, they had similar day to day issues involving family turmoil, long term unemployment (mainly as a result of marginalisation) and financial hardship (welfare dependent) see (tables 8 and 10 of the schematics of the demographics for participants, pp 114-115, p. 145). This was seen to change very little over time. All of the

areas utilised for participant recruitment were deemed by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD, 2015) to be some of the most deprived residential locations in the UK.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The study's focus was on participants with an age range of 18-25. Each participant was believed to have sufficient understanding and maturity to comprehend the aims and nature of the proposed research. They were thus regarded as being able to give their full consent in their own right. Each individual was made fully aware of the aims of the research. This was done through the provision of information sheets (see appendix 4.) Verbal clarification when needed, was in the form of questions and answers and was also given before any interview took place. Each individual was told that they had the right to withdraw consent at any time during the interview. Further, they were completely free to withdraw from the study if they felt unsure or uncomfortable about any issues raised; this ensured that any questions relating to vulnerability were countered.

In addition, individuals deemed to be outside the ethical considerations were omitted from the study. Further, whenever possible participants possessing any form of vulnerability were avoided. However, such was the social background of the individuals involved in the sample, that literacy proved a problem in some cases. Where this was the case all effort was made to accommodate needs as and when required. In circumstances where the individual was deemed to have a special need/s relating to literacy, the information sheet was read out verbally to the participant making sure that he/she was aware and fully understood all of the details.

The same approach was employed with the informed consent form (see appendix 5.). With regards to this, it was ascertained beforehand that all individuals possessed a standard of education that provided the ability to write their name clearly. The participant was also

told to keep hold of the information sheet, which allowed them the opportunity to seek out an independent individual of their own choosing who could help them re-read the details should they feel the need to. It should be noted that with regards to illegal behaviour, participants were informed that during the interview they should refrain from talking about any specific planned illegal activity as this could result in such information being reported to Merseyside Police. This information was included on the consent form in order to ensure that the participant was aware of this from the outset.

In terms of personal safety, all interview sessions took place in a location that was safe for both the researcher and the participant. A location, a room in a local community/church hall (*Vee's Place*, Prescott, Knowsley) had already been earmarked for this purpose. However, in order to save the participant any further inconvenience, similar mutually safe locations as close as possible to the participant areas were investigated and used (Pinehurst Offender Sheltering, Anfield; Rocket Training Centre, Kensington; St Albert's Youth Club, Stockbridge Village). Participants were made aware of the confidentiality of the information recorded and of their anonymity. An explanation was given as to who would have access to the results and what would happen to the data (e.g. data will be held in accordance with the 1998 Data Protection Act for a period of no more than five years and then securely destroyed). The University of Chester, specifically the assigned research supervisory team, monitored the conduct of the research. Participants were informed of the complaints procedure as indicated in the *University of Chester Research Governance Handbook*.

Research supervisors would be informed regarding participants wishing to make a formal complaint. In terms of access to data, the sole researcher of the study, members of the supervisory team who needed to check the validity of the data collected as and when required were given access, with transcription being solely carried out by the researcher. All participants were offered the chance of a hard copy of their own

transcripts in order for them to make any comments the felt relevant.

Respondents were informed that the researcher would be the sole custodian of each participant's information/correspondence during this period with such details being stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's private study for the entire duration of the project. All saved electronic data is protected by the researcher's computer password, back-up electronic computer data is saved using an electronic memory pen and external hard drive and again is locked away with written transcripts. An exception to this rule would have been had a participant wished to leave the study, in which case his/her personal data would have been destroyed, unless the participant had given permission for it to be used in the analysis stage. This was all in accordance with the 1998 Data Protection Act.

3.8 Epistemological and Ontological Context

In a chapter entitled "*The nature of qualitative research: development and perspectives*" the unknown author comments that social reality is a phenomenon that can be approached in a variety of different ways by a researcher who will more often than not have to make a choice. That choice must not only be founded on practical grounds, but also on the philosophical ideas from which it is rooted. Thompson, (1995) notes that from the 14th century onwards the traditional approach to social and behavioural research was quantitative, the idea centring on objectivity through measurement. Today there is still a strong divide between quantitative and qualitative enquiry, with the former still being promoted as the most objective mainly because of its ability to keep the researcher detached from the study phenomena/phenomenon.

This research adopts a qualitative methodology of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Critics of qualitative approaches could argue that researcher objectivity is compromised, since the investigator can become too entwined with the research locations.

However, Breuer and Roth (2003) observe “Any bit of knowledge, however purified in the process of reporting it to a wider audience, bears the marks of its epistemic subject. Knowledge is therefore inherently *subjective*, inherently structured by the subjectivity of the researcher” (p. 2). Furthermore, Smith (1983) has noted that complete objectivity and neutrality is something that is impossible to achieve and that the values of the researcher, who cannot completely be divorced themselves from the field of study, can become a fundamental part of the research process itself. Thus, the role of the researcher using qualitative methodology/analysis can be viewed as primarily reflecting, taking into account the environmental settings, situations and relationships of the actors they are presented with. In describing this type of process David and Sutton (2004) have commented:

Qualitative research tends to be associated with the idea that social life is the product of social interaction and beliefs of the actors, that the social world is not populated by things, but by relationships and actions. The focus on meaning reflects this emphasis on the subjective and constructed nature of events (p. 36).

Of the many methodological problems facing the researcher studying membership and non-membership/disengagement of DSGs, by far the most important is the method of actual data collection. Attempting to persuade young people who are either members/former members of DSGs or who live under the shadow of DSG presence to sit down and talk at length about their experiences can be a challenge in itself. A simple survey of ‘gang’ literature highlights the much-favoured approach in DSG research to be semi-structured interview. While there are many benefits to using this type of methodological tool, Bernard, 1988, for instance, has asserted that it “is best used when you won’t get more than one chance to interview someone” (p. 23). There are many drawbacks. These can include how the interviewer is perceived, for example, sex,

age and ethnicity can shape the responses from the participants (Denscombe, 2007), as well as the use of leading questions, which can threaten the overall validity of the data. Attempting to overcome such obstacles is a question that has provided the epistemological basis for the original component of this research. For these reasons, this study has drawn up a new adaptation of a form of biographical narrative, '*Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method*' (BNIM, Wengraf, 2001) aimed at the interviewing of young people involved and not involved in DSGs.

3.9 Method: Collection and Analysis of Data

In this study, the line of enquiry centred on the training method of biographical-narrative interviewing as developed by Chamberlayne, Bornat and Wengraf (2000), Wengraf, (2001). In recent times the biographical narrative interview has become a fundamental and valuable resource in the pursuit of real world research and thus, as Apitzsch and Siouti (2007) assert become particularly attractive to “the analysis of social phenomena as identifiable processes” (p. 7). In terms of face-to-face interviewing, Wengraf’s (2001) work has perhaps gone a considerable way to revitalise the method for use in the 21st century. Wengraf starts his analysis by distinguishing between what he calls “a common sense hypothetico-inductivist model” and an anti-common sense “hypothetico-deductivist model” (2001, p. 2). He comments:

There is no such thing as ‘all the relevant facts’ there are only ‘hypothesis-relevant facts’, and that research must always start with a body of prior theory, if only to decide which set of “collectable facts” should be collected or generated. It is this prior body of theory from which the researcher generates a particular hypothesis whose truth or falsity could be ‘tested’ by a particular selection of ‘hypothesis-relevant facts’” (p. 2).

Although a self-confessed inductivist, Wengraf admits to attempting to use both these theoretical mind-sets at different points of the research cycle. His strategic thinking around the interview itself is one which allows a unique flexibility of the element of control, between both researcher and interviewee. Thus, it is partly for this reason that this study began to consider a ‘Wengrafian’ BNIM approach for interviewing both samples of DSGMs and NGPs/EDSGMs. Unlike structured and semi-structured interviews, the biographical approach aims to generate spontaneous autobiographical narration that has not been structured by the researcher’s questions, but by the narrator’s structure of relevance (Apitzsch and Siouti, 2007).

During the interview session, the interviewee (the so-called biographer) is asked by the researcher a *Single Question Inducing Narrative* (SQUIN) to relay his/her life story in their own words. Throughout this time the interviewer remains silent acting out the role as described by Apitzsch and Siouti (2007) as “the interested and empathic listener” (p. 9). The emphasis of the approach is the creation and maintenance of the Gestalt principle. Reber (1985) has defined Gestalt as making reference to “psychological phenomena [that] could only be understood if they were viewed as unified wholes” (p. 301). For Wengraf (2001) this represents an important factor in developing interviewee narrative autonomy and openness without constraint. He observes:

In interviewing terms, this means, for those who wish to allow the gestalt of the interviewee to become observable, adopting an interview strategy that minimises (for as long as possible) the interviewer’s concerns (system of values and significance) to allow fullest possible expression of the concerns, the system of value and significance, the life-world, of the interviewee (p. 69).

In the second period of the interview session which commences after the narrator breaks from their story at a point of their own choosing, the interviewer will then attempt to add further data by asking questions. These questions involve themes that have been already covered by the narrator (the interviewee) during the first session. The interviewer having used the time during a fifteen-minute break to prepare what Wengraf (2001, p. 137) terms '*TQUINS*' or "Topic Questions Aimed at Inducing Narrative" (p. 37). Further, in the latter part of the interview or in an optional second interview (third sub-session), the interviewer will then ask questions regarding themes that have not been covered in the biographical stage by the narrator. Thus, in terms of the Wengraf format this is described in the following way:

Sub-session one. In this session, the researcher asks one question known as a *Single Question Inducing Narrative* (SQUIN) and is akin to "tell me about your life". At this stage the researcher remains silent and allows the participant to take control of the interview, while making notes that will form the basis of what Wengraf (2001) terms '*SHEIOT*' a "Situation-Happening-Event-Incident- Occurrence-Time" (p. 133).

Sub-session two. The researcher then asks questions (base around the prepared TQUINS) with the direct aim of inducing discourse through *Particular Incident Narratives* (PINs) that is, a narrative based around SHEIOT.

Sub-session three. In a third optional session, the researcher can utilise a semi-structured interview schedule to obtain data on related issues that have not been covered by the participant in the previous two sub sessions.

3.10 Piloting

The initial piloting of the method in this original Wengraf (2001)

form involved a taped interview consisting of a first sub-session using a SQUIN for each group. For the sample of DSGMs, the SQUIN read:

“Tell me about your life, including your family and mates and how you come to be involved with the Criminal Justice System, for example, the police and the court. I won’t interrupt; I will just be taking some notes for some themes that I will ask you about afterwards, if that’s OK?”

For the NGPs, the SQUIN read:

“I want you to tell me about your life, in particular, how you became involved with your mates, and how you have not become involved in gang crime. I won’t interrupt, I will just take some notes for some themes that I will ask you about afterwards, if that’s OK?”

As a result of the pilot interviews, problems were identified which supported the observations made in the work of Froggett, Poursanidou and Farrier (2007). The latter of these researchers provided confirmation (personal communication, 28th June, 2013), that in their study, during some interview sessions, participants (under the age of 16) began to show difficulty with producing coherent narratives. This was also coupled with the participants’ inability to manage and chronologically organise their responses. The problem appeared to arise because this was a situation that allowed individuals considerable autonomy, without guidance from the interviewer. It is a situation/condition that for most disaffected young people is quite rare if not unheard of. This observation was later reinforced by one of the participants who commented that he would feel better if he could “have an interview that was one of questions and answers” (Tony; 25, DSGM).

It was clear that there was a lack of work involving the application of Wengraf’s (2001) framework within a criminological research context. With this in mind the researcher devised an adaption of the format that has since been subsequently published by Sage online

methodologies collection (Hesketh, 2014a). In this adaption consideration was given to participants' social construction of an interview situation in addition to their comfort. If biographical narrative were to work with disaffected people, it would need to be modified in such a way that it would yield enough uninterrupted participant narrative for a second sub-session. From observations made in the pilot sessions, the key to this appeared to lie in the first session, and specifically the interpretation and delivery of the single question inducing narrative. While retaining the principle of a single question, it must at the same time appear comfortable enough for participants to easily understand and also be in line with their age and stage of cognitive development.

The adoption involved using a SQUIN in a fragmented format that to the participant appeared to be as though they were responding to a set of short questions but was in fact a single question broken into four parts (themes). The new SQUIN question would incorporate four passages representing particularly significant biographical events in a young participant's life history (anchor points) that could be mentally visualised and easily recalled. The passages covered included:

1. Family
2. Friends
3. Criminal justice system /
DSG membership
4. Ambition

Thus, the revised SQUIN read:

“In this interview, which will be divided into two small parts, (sub-session 1 and 2) I am interested in hearing about your life and where you are now.

Firstly, I would like you to tell me about:

Your upbringing: how you grew up, your family, that is, your mum, dad, sisters and brothers if you have any? Then I would like you to tell me about your mates and the people you hang around with during

your spare time. Where did you meet them, and what do you do when you're with them?

Then, I would like you to say something about how you became involved in the Criminal Justice System. That is, with the police and courts. Finally, I would like you to tell me about your ambitions, and what you would like to do in the future, and how you think you are going to get there?

I won't interrupt, however, if you wish me to repeat any parts of the question when you're ready to move on, I will do. I will just make some notes for some themes I will ask you about in the next bit of the interview when you come back, is that OK?"

The difference with the NGP/NDSGM SQUIN¹⁵, was that rather than ask about DSG involvement and the CJS, the question simply inquired about why they thought they had not become involved with the CJS (namely the police and the courts) as part of DSGs. In sub-session 2: the return to narrative (SS-2), the interview session was set out in a similar order of:

1. Family
2. Friends
3. School (this was added since in SS-1 it appeared to be a significant life experience in terms of meeting friends)
4. Criminal justice system/DSG membership
5. Ambition

It is worth noting that the topic of ambition, was included to reassure the

¹⁵ EDSGM participants were given the same SQUIN as NGPs but were asked why they had disengaged when it became clear to the researcher during the SS-1 SQUIN stage that although such participants had self-reported as NGPs had in fact been involved for a short period of time as a member but had not become firmly embedded within the group due to the short duration.

respondent that the interviewer was actually taking a genuine interest in their whole life story so far and that the researcher, did not have any hidden agenda to extract data, about their involvement/non-involvement/disengagement with DSGs. It also allowed the second sub-session to end in a relaxed, positive and informal way. After a fifteen-minute break, the return to narrative began using drawn up TQUINs, each one of the categories beginning with a piece of the participant's SS-1 narrative, with further TQUINs being asked about that narrative taken from the interviewer notes. This formed the basis of Wengraf's (2001, p. 134) SHEIOT stage. Again, keeping within Wengraf's initial biographically themed framework of attempting to induce narrative (unpacking) of specific Situation, Happening, Event Incident, Occasions/Occurrences and Times, each question placed emphasis on asking not "can you explain?" but:

"Can you recall?"

"How did that happen?"

"Can you remember a time?"

"Reflecting back to"

The focus was to try to induce something that is akin to Wengraf's (2001) PINs. That is, enough narrative of a particular life event or experience that will enable an understanding of the participant's subjectivity of that event. In this form, the biographical method was seen as potentially a new way of introducing a high level of interviewee autonomy, not as yet seen in semi-structured interview driven studies of deviant street groups. In essence, it represented a way in which perceived authority in the interview situation was in effect balanced out and the possibility of interviewer subjectivity further reduced, with respondents being given an equal amount of control over each interview session. This new approach however, still echoed the principles as encouraged by Wengraf (2004):

The principle of conceptual openness, [that] there were no prior hypotheses to be tested, the principle of communication: some of the rules of everyday communication was followed, but moderated by the concept of active listening and the researcher facilitated the free development and closure of a Gestalt by the interviewee (p.5)

3.11 Analysis Rationale

In choosing the type of methodology and analysis for this specific area of study, of particular interest was the varied ways in which an investigator could engage with the data analysis stage. For example, in phenomenography's theory of variation (Pang, 2003), *phenomenography* allows the researcher to immerse themselves in the data with the emphasis on looking at variation, firstly from the perceptions of the phenomenon as experienced by the actor, and secondly in the ways of seeing something as experienced and described by the researcher (Pang, 2003). Phenomenography aims for a collective analysis of individual experiences (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Thus, as Bowden (2005, p. 5) asserts, "the object of study is not the phenomenon per se, but the relationships between the actors and the phenomenon". With this theme in mind, and since it was the aim of the study to examine a form of social phenomenon where existing theory and research literature is limited, the type of design that was deemed most appropriate was a form of *Conventional Content Analysis* (CCA). Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) note:

The use of content analysis goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts to examine meanings, themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text. It allows researchers to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific manner (p. 1).

The idea is that the categories and their names should emerge on their own without any effort by the researcher to construct them. This would make conventional content analysis (in the form of grounded theory) a very effective means of inquiry when paired with biographic narrative in a *hybrid* format. An illustration of this contention of the researcher utilising his own personal experience in the content analysis tradition, and specifically grounded theory, can be taken from Strauss and Corbin's concept of "*theoretical sensitivity*" (1990, p. 41). This refers to a phenomenon that they describe as "the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and the capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't" (p. 42). Further, Strauss and Corbin assert that theoretical sensitivity can emerge when the researcher initially stands back to consider his/her relationship to the data. Such sensitivity can then come from principally one of or all three sources that include firstly, literature, specifically, readings around theory, research and documentation. What is for any researcher a mandatory requirement, this as Strauss and Corbin note, "sensitizes you to what is going on with the phenomenon under study" (1990, p. 42). Secondly, professional experience: derived from a period of time within the field that is being studied. Here Strauss and Corbin argue that "one acquires an understanding of how things work in that field, and why, and what will happen there under certain conditions" (1990, p. 42). An example of this given by Strauss and Corbin is that of a nurse in a hospital studying nurses' work in hospitals. They argue that with such prior insight and skill an individual can obviously "move into the situation and gain insight more quickly than someone who has never studied in hospitals" (1990, p. 42). Thirdly, personal experience specifically an individual's reaction to their environment and the experiences that they can derive from it. To illustrate this, they draw on the example of divorce, which "can make one sensitive to what it means to experience loss" (1990, p. 43). Through these three stages of researcher self-evaluation, it could be argued that it is possible for a researcher to harness a level of

analysis that provides significant insight into phenomenon. The researcher at the same time however, must be aware that individuals all view their social reality differently.

3.12 Analysis of the Interview Data

In terms of the analysis of the interview transcripts themselves, CCA in the form of *grounded theory* (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) was used to analyse each sample. Birks and Mills (2011) observe:

Grounded theory is one of the most popular research designs in the world. Not only are thousands of publications that report on studies using grounded theory methods, but there is also a collection of seminar texts that researchers can use to guide their study and ensure the rigour of their work” (p. 1).

All of these texts, including Glaser and Strauss (1967), Glaser (1978), Strauss and Corbin (1990), have attempted to provide their own individualised account of grounded theory which for the student and first-time user can result in confusion. Charmaz (2006) has, however, presented a list of useful criteria for when grounded theory can be considered a viable methodological option.

- **Credibility:** Are there strong links between gathered data and argument? Are data sufficient to merit claims? Do categories offer a wide range of empirical observations? Has the research provided enough evidence for the researcher's claims to allow the reader to form an independent assessment?
- **Originality:** Do the categories offer new insights? What is the social and theoretical significance of this work? How does grounded theory challenge, extend, and refine current

ideas, concepts and practices?

- Resonance: Do categories portray fullness of the studied experience? Does the grounded theory make sense to the participants? Does analysis offer them deeper insights about their lives and worlds?
- Usefulness: Can the analysis spark further research in other substantive areas? How does the work contribute to knowledge? Does the analysis offer interpretations that people can use in their everyday lives/worlds? (Charmaz, 2006, p. 182).

Having passed the scrutiny of all of these benchmarks, it was decided that for this study Strauss and Corbin's 1990's approach to grounded theory would be a suitable choice. Moreover, given the researcher's familiarity and experience with this particular version, it also provided the most in-depth form of analysis from which a formal grounded theory could be developed. In the Strauss and Corbin (1990) approach, the data is broken down into three stages of open, axial and selective coding with the aim of inductively building theory from the data itself (Birks and Mills, 2011).

Open coding. This involves reading through each transcript and developing concepts that are coded, in this case line by line sections of speech as accurately and precisely as possible. Each section was coded in as many ways as possible, with all possible meanings taken into account until "*theoretical saturation*" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 188) was achieved resulting in a coding list. Moreover, during the open coding process, memos were written both prior and during the open coding stage. Taking the form of a brief theoretical note concerning a general

idea about the data, memos form a fundamental part of the grounded analysis process and they are encouraged both by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and by Birks and Mills (2011) in what is one of the very latest interpretation of ground theory. It should be noted that during this process some concepts possessed conceptual properties to be included in two or more categories. This can be exemplified by a concept taken directly from one participant (in effect an in-vivo code¹⁶) “*black sheep*”. This was used to describe the participants’ perception of how he was seen by family members and his subsequent reflections about his personal identity, that is, how he saw himself both in a domestic family and community setting. This appeared to denote firstly, ‘*negative family experience*’ and later, subsequently ‘*past identity factors*’. At stage one, all transcripts had been fully coded as a result of the constant comparison method. Table 4. (see p. 108) shows the number of concepts and categories generated for both DSGMs and NGPs/EDSGMs.

Axial coding. Having completed the initial open coding stage, more intensive work began with putting the fractured data back together in its revised form as advocated by Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 96). The actual process used in this Axial Stage Two, was to make connections between categories mapping how each category relates to others in order to establish if there was a relationship or simply a co-existence. The aim of this stage is the development of the main categories. This is achieved through analysis of what have become sub-categories beyond just dimension and properties. To do this Strauss and Corbin recommend that the researcher begins to relate sub-categories to a main category by using what they have called the ‘*paradigm model*’ (1990, p. 99).

While filtering several similar sub-categories emerged, for example, ‘*negative family reflections*’ and ‘*positive family reflection*’, (both related subcategories). These were later merged to form a main

¹⁶ In-vivo codes: words or phrases used directly by the interviewee that can be used as names for codes and categories in the coding process.

category of *'family experience'*. This was because some general properties within both, for example, the extent of exposure to the family and duration of time spent with family members were similar. Others, such as *'crime action'* and *'directed'* and *'proactive objectives'* were carried through since both of these proved to be very strong *strategy* sub-categories that became categories in themselves. Again, as with the open coding stage, some observations and thoughts were included in this stage. Table 5 (see p. 108) shows the total number of main categories identified for each sample at Axial Stage Two of the analysis after merging.

Selective coding. In the third and final stage, the analysis placed emphasis on identifying a *'core category'* or categories that would represent the central phenomenon within a main coding paradigm. For this, as Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest, the researcher now moves from description to conceptualisation. This is achieved via a five-step process that firstly, involves the formulation of a *storyline*, and secondly, attempts to relate categories around the core category. For this process, the paradigm model is used again. Such category relationships should be done on the dimensional level, at which point the researcher should then *'validate'* those relationships against the data. The final stage involves filling in categories that may need further refinement. Strauss and Corbin (1990) stress, however, that this five-stage process need not be taken in a linear sequence, "in reality one moves back and forth between them" (p. 118).

Strauss and Corbin (1990) report that such integration of categories even for some seasoned researchers can be very difficult. However, such was the richness and density of the data that the main issue became quite obvious and a core category emerged relatively quickly. This was identified as *'coping with marginalisation and limited opportunity'*. When attempting to identify or create a core category as Strauss and Corbin note, "just like categories, the core category must become developed in terms of its properties. If you tell the story properly,

in addition to revealing the core category the story should also indicate its properties” (1990, p. 123). In this study the core category produced

two major properties, resilience and risk together with their dimensional range throughout the data within each sample. Table 6. (see p.108).

**Table 4. Open coding: Number of Concepts
Generated (Stage One)**

Sample	Concepts	Sub- categories
DSGMs	932	105
NGPs/EDSGMs	949	106

**Table 5. Axial Coding: The Merging of Sub-categories
into Main Categories (Stage Two)**

Sample	Sub-category	Main category
DSGMs	105	68
NGPs/EDSGMs	106	66

**Table 6. Properties and Dimensions of the Core
Category (Stage Three)**

Sample	Location	Property	Dimensional range
DSGMs		Resilience	Low
		Risk	High
NGPs/EDSGM		Resilience	High
		Risk	Low

3.13 The Storyline: Overview

As a result of this analysis, including the data developed in the open coding stage and integrated into the axial stage, the storyline was developed. This involved groups of individuals (DSGMs/NGPs/EDSGMs), who had found themselves in a situation excluded from opportunities to achieve goals through legitimate means. Thus, the central phenomenon was related to how such individuals dealt

with marginalisation and limited opportunity. Both perceived risk and resilience were identified as the two key properties, as each participant decided to either become involved in, walk away or completely abstain from DSG's. Risk was judged with a dimensional range of high to low and resilience with a dimensional range of low to high (see table 6., p.108). This was judged using what has become a common criterion to measure resilience and wellbeing:

- Participant's ability/inability to make realistic and achievable plans despite their situation and having the patience and motivational strength to follow through. This was mainly evident when comparing codes focusing on the future aspirations of DSGM, NGPs and EDSGM specifically directed objectives (verbal planning) and proactive objectives (putting words into action)
- Participant's ability to project a confident and autonomous self-image
- Participant's ability to communicate and to solve problems independently of aid from others
- Participant's ability to manage strong emotional urges and impulses

In terms of perceived risk, specifically, its dimensional range of low to high, this was judged against a rational choice logic decision-making, that is:

- Participant's awareness of the consequences of risk, specifically their perception of losing something of value or benefit balanced against

their perception of gaining something of
added value

From the risk perspective, individuals who appeared to be of highest risk were those in the DSGM sample. Such individuals believed that they possessed very little if anything to lose to begin with. This was especially evident with DSGM participants who had suffered the most brutal of family upbringing (family risk). Having established that ‘coping with marginalisation and limited opportunity’ was the central phenomenon, and thus, the core category, the next step was to relate all the other categories around this. Again, for this task, Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) paradigm criterion were applied to each sample data, with subsequent diagrams being created. This was done in order to simply provide a visualisation of the relationship between categories. Diagrams are presented in each of the two results chapters (see figure 2., p. 119 and figure 3., p. 149).

3.14 Theoretical Sampling

During the coding process, it became apparent that some concepts were repeatedly present in the DSGM sample. Specifically, many spoke of the excitement and the *buzz* gained from risk taking (Lyng, 2005, see Chapter two, p. 61). Further, data on ambition and networking was also yielding repeated patterns of concepts that suggested a clear difference. This was noted in how NGP and EDSGM respondents were actively seeking to change their lives, expanding their activity both in a geographical and a social networking sense. This suggested what Strauss and Corbin assert as “proven theoretical relevance” (1990, p. 177). Thus, from this perspective, and again as Strauss and Corbin suggest, it became necessary to switch from purposeful sampling to a form of theoretical

sampling (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Birks and Mills, 2011).

With regard to theoretical sampling, Birks and Mills (2011) observe “theoretical sampling is interpreted differently by different researchers ... We define theoretical sampling as the process of identifying and pursuing clues that arise during analysis in a grounded theory study” (p. 69). In terms of this study, this simply involved returning to the field using the BNIM adaption. In the return to narrative, this meant “homing in” on any statements made covering reflections involving risk-taking as a psychological driver for excitement, as well as participant’s discourse covering ambition and networking. Table. 7 (p. 112) sets out the content of the five main themes in both sub-session 1 and sub-session 2 (return to narrative), and the sub-themes identified from with the five risk and protective domains that were covered to elicit PINs in the return to narrative.

Table 7. The Content of the Five Main Themes in both Sub-session 1. and Sub-session 2. (Return to Narrative).

<p>Main Themes</p> <p>Family</p> <p>Friends</p> <p>School (SS-2)</p> <p>Crime</p> <p>Ambition</p>	<p>Follow on discourse SS-2</p> <p>Violence in/time spent with/sibling bond, similarities/differences (family risk/protection)</p> <p>School friendships /street friendships (peer and neighbourhood risk/protection) and protection/deviant/illegal or lawful activities/peer pressure (peer risk/protection)</p> <p>Attendance/teachers/teacher pupil bond/behaviour/qualifications/achievement (school risk/protection)</p> <p>Mind-set at the time/ extent of friendship influence/perception, triggers for DSG membership, edgework risk taking disengagement, complete DSG membership abstention (individual risk/protection)</p> <p>Reasons for choice of career/steps have taken to reach Objectives (individual risk/protection)</p>
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3.15 Conclusion

This chapter's aim was to describe the use of BNIM methodology and grounded theory analysis used in this study. Further, it discusses the rationale for these choices, in addition to the theoretical framework and the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the study. While an adaptation of biographic narrative put together by the researcher (Hesketh, 2014a) presented a unique novel way of collecting data (derived mainly from the participants themselves), Strauss and Corbin's 1990s version of grounded theory takes the researcher immersion into the data into account through the element of theoretical sensitivity. The chapter explained how the core category (central phenomenon), coping with marginalisation and limited opportunity, was identified through levels of coding. Thus, a storyline grounded in the data has been developed presenting a critical explanation of why some young people do become

involved with DSGs while others from similar backgrounds and locations do not. The following two chapters, will now discuss the results of the data collection and analysis.

Chapter Four: Results: Deviant Street Group Members (DSGMs) Merseyside

4. The Research Participants

Participants consisted of twenty-six individuals all self-reporting as DSG members and fitting the definition devised by Weerman et al. (2009). Table 8. below provides schematics of the demographics of participants:

**Table 8. Schematics of the Demographic
Participants (DSGMs)**

DSG Members	Gender	Age	Status at interview	Single Parent/Other Family	Two Parent Family	Siblings	Education	Criminal Involvement
Tony	Male	25	Unemployed	Father		1 Male 2 Female	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Group anti-social behaviour, drinking/drug personal possession
Mike	Male	25	Unemployed	Mother		2 Male	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Group drug personal possession
John	Male	23	Unemployed	Mother		Only Child	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Group theft
Paul	Male	19	Unemployed	Mother		2 Male 1 Female	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Group theft/drug personal possession
Rob	Male	25	Unemployed	Mother		1 Male 2 Female	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Group anti-social behaviour, drinking/ violence
Ian	Male	22	Unemployed		Yes	3 Male	1 GCSE	Deviant Street Group petty crimes/car theft
Phil	Male	19	Unemployed		Yes	3 Female	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Group anti-social behaviour/ violence drug possession
Steve	Male	20	Unemployed	Mother		Only Child	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Group violence

Zak	Male	25	Unemployed	Mother		3 Male 6 Females	3 GCSE's	Deviant Street Drug possession Group violence
Fran	Male	25	Unemployed	Mother		Only Child	GCSE's	Deviant Street Group drug dealing
John P.	Male	25	Unemployed	Mother		1 Male 1 Female	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Group drug dealing
Buddy	Male	23	Unemployed		Yes	2 Male	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Group quad bike theft/ burglary
Frankie	Male	19	Unemployed		Yes	2 Males 2 Females	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Group anti-social

								behaviour/drug dealing
Terry	Male	25	Unemployed		Yes	Only Child	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Group firearms/drugs
Jimmy	Male	23	Unemployed	Mother		1 Male	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Group car theft
Paul	Male	25	Unemployed	Grandmother		Only Child	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Group dealing/drug use
Tony	Male	25	Unemployed	Grandmother		1 Male	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Group drug dealing/ violence
Joe	Male	19	Unemployed		Yes	Only Child	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Group car theft/drug use
Charlie	Male	23	Unemployed	Mother		1 Male	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Group violence
Gary	Male	25	Unemployed	Mother		1 Male	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Group violence/drug dealing
Geoff	Male	25	Unemployed	In care/shelter		2 Males 2 Females	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Group violence/drug dealing
Tukrit	Male	22	Unemployed		Yes	3 Males	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Group drug dealing
Frank	Male	24	Unemployed		Yes	1 Female	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Group drug dealing
Den	Male	25	Unemployed	Father		Only child	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Group drug dealing
Gavin	Male	25	Unemployed		Yes	1 Male	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Group drug dealing
Sean	Male	25	Unemployed		Yes	Only child	No Qualifications	Deviant Street Groups drug dealing
Mean age		23.3						

4.1 Results

Data from the DSGM sample were analysed on three levels using the process of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). In order to provide a diagrammatical illustration of the results, Strauss and Corbin's paradigm model was used. The model (figure. 2, p. 119) features the emerging causal conditions, strategies (action/interaction) and the consequences, together with the context and intervening conditions that manage the central phenomenon (the core categories)¹⁷.

Central phenomenon. In the case of the data derived from the Deviant Street Group Member (DSGM) sample, the central phenomenon was identified as dealing with marginalisation and limited opportunity in

¹⁷ Strauss and Corbin (1990) define the central phenomenon as the central idea, event, happening, about which a set of actions/interactions evolve around.

that participants were faced with social exclusion and limited opportunity.

Causal conditions. The causal conditions highlight events, incidences, and happenings that make individuals vulnerable to and influences the continuation of the central phenomenon. In this case, the causal conditions identified (family experience, inappropriate father/father figures (biological and step), emotional feelings and pressure to identify (masculinity crisis), school experience, school and street peer friendships, boredom and empathy erosion (partially brought about by government policies of austerity and youth demonisation) not only sustained the central phenomenon but also fitted the risk domains of ‘family’, ‘individual’, ‘school’, ‘peer’ and ‘neighbourhood’ in that they increased the likelihood of young people being drawn towards DSG forming and DSG membership on Merseyside.

Strategies. In attempting to manage, counter and change the central phenomenon, strategies were developed by participants in this sample. In the main, this involved forming DSGs or becoming members of existing DSGs with like-minded other young people (factor seen in peer, school and neighbourhood risk domains). From this point, interactional (group sub-strategies emerged as a result of DSG formation/membership).

- These included family surrogacy (using the DSG as a substitute family, a factor noted within the family risk domain)
- Alternative employment (grafting) through drug dealing (termed ‘*deviant entrepreneurship*’ and ‘*delinquent apprenticeships*’ by this study as an attempt to counter both limited opportunities to earn a legitimate wage and masculinity crisis, factors that

can be observed within neighbourhood and individual risk),

- The allure of risk-taking behaviour through group anti-social behaviour and offending (as a form of escapism to avoid the banality and reality of daily boredom, a factor noted within the individual risk domain).

All of these were noted to be choices and subsequent risk factors that not only facilitated DSG membership but perpetuated a continuation of that membership.

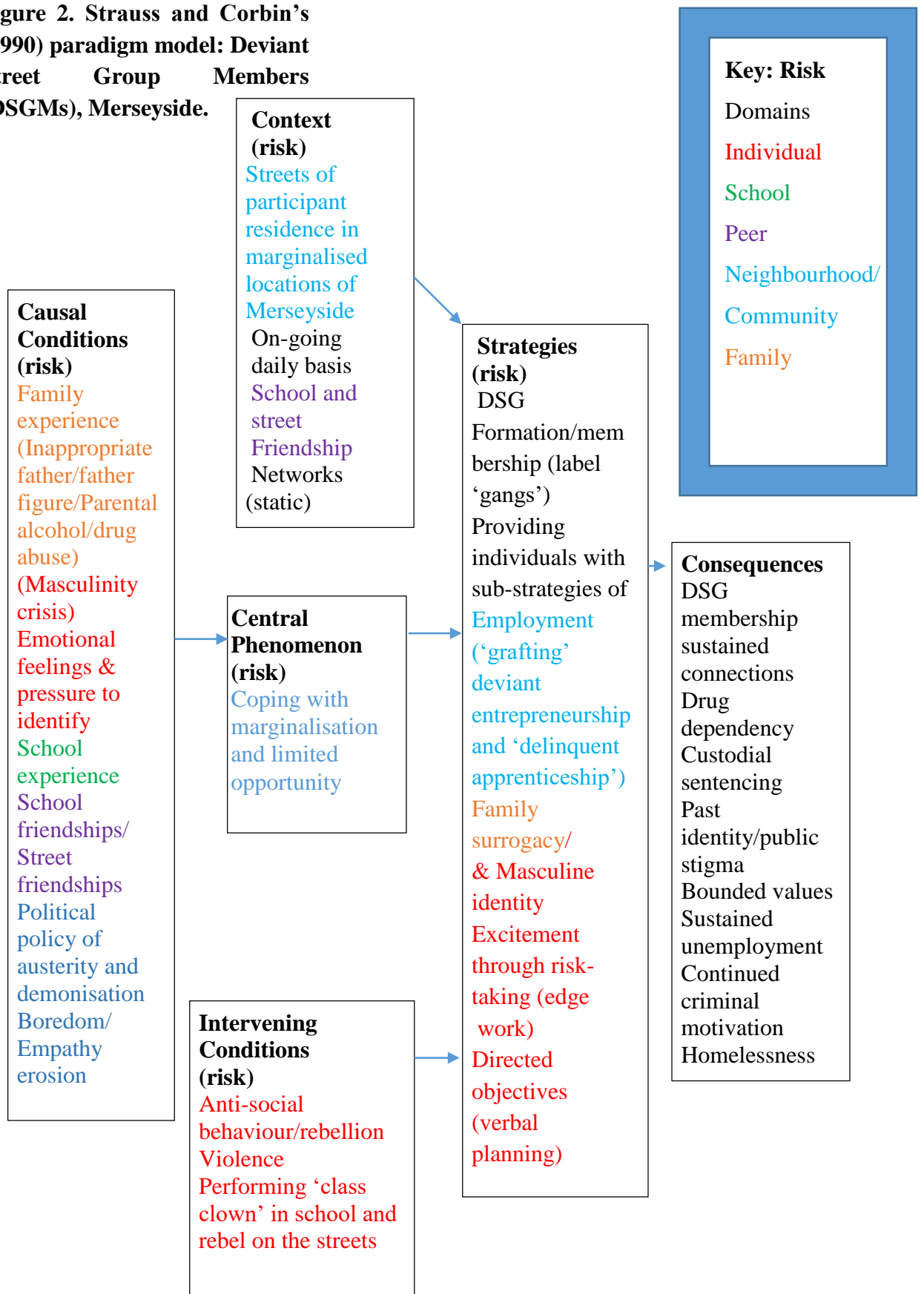
Context. Strauss and Corbin (1990) define context as the location of the situation. In this case, the context involved the streets. That is, the participants residence in marginalised locations of Merseyside. Gibbs (2010) has observed that within Strauss and Corbin's (1990) version of grounded theory, context can be temporal, i.e., related to when the situation occurs, at what time and with whom. In this study, from the perspective of DSGM narrative, it involved forming connections with deviant/offending school and street acquaintances (peer risk) on a daily basis. This was noted to be on a long-term basis, with no attempt to create alternative friendship networks beyond the residential locality. Both these aspects were identified as risk factors fitting the 'neighbourhood' and 'peer' domains.

Intervening conditions. Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe intervening conditions as those elements that either shape, facilitate or constrain the strategies. In the case of the DSGM participants, the study identified intervening conditions that had facilitated membership acceptance of individuals into existing DSGs by existing members. These included anti-social behaviour ('performing' in a particular rebellious way in front of potential peers in the school (as class clown)

and on the street at night (as a fellow DSGM) with violence becoming part of that performance over time. Since this behaviour was seen as individually selected choices made by each participant, it is categorised in the risk domain of individual.

Consequences. Inevitably all actions have consequences. Within the paradigm model, Strauss and Corbin (1990) observe that such consequences stem from the resulting action/interaction (individual/group) with the strategies employed. In the case of the DSGM participants, the research identified these as ranging from sustained DSG membership, custodial sentencing, drug dependency, stigma of past identity, homelessness and failure to proactively turn their life around through ambition and job aspiration.

Figure 2. Strauss and Corbin's (1990) paradigm model: Deviant Street Group Members (DSGMs), Merseyside.



The following chapter will present the overall findings from the DSGM sample. It will do this by adopting a thematic format using the risk/protective domain categories ‘Family’, ‘Individual’ ‘School’ ‘Peer’ and ‘Neighbourhood’.

4.2 Family Context

In terms of family experiences and reflections that emerged during coding stages, participants of the DSGM sample showed a fair degree of honesty and openness when reflecting on family life. The example below provided by Steve is indicative of participant comments in this respect:

“On the estate with my mum, she tried to keep me away from all my mates and that because they were in out of jail doing something stupid and she thought I would end up doing that” (Steve; 20, DSGM).

Where family organisation was concerned, this appeared to support previously submitted work on the experiences of young people, recidivism and the effects of the deterrence hypothesis (Portfolio, July 16, 1999) which catalogued ‘*family unit re-organisation, attention avoidance*’ and ‘*parental absence*’ as problematic and it is these areas that will now be discussed:

Family unit re-organisation involved married parents or partner relationships splitting up and remarrying or finding new partners. This appeared to result in a rift between the offspring of the original family unit and the new partner who in most cases was the male father figure as Paul and Frankie highlight.

“It was quite hard trying to cope in the family because my mum was getting with a new fella and she was

getting married, and because I was like a daddy's boy, I found it hard to bond with him and I was being a little bastard ... I was just being out of order, giving bad respect to him and my mum and I was just going off the rails" (Paul; 19, DSGM).

"I live with my mum and stepdad, my real dad has left but I call her new fella my dad because he has brought me up since I was two, so I just call him my dad" (Frankie; DSGM, 19).

Attention avoidance refers to failure by parent/parents to provide adequate balanced attention to individual offspring either because of alcohol addiction or because of a family unit consisting of more than one child. This is particularly evident in the testimony offered by Terry:

"My mother ruled my father when they first got together, my dad was a proper horrible person ... but they both never really cared about me. I have a heart problem; I went missing for a week once, my mum never batted an eyelid, she just never really cared to be honest" (Terry; DSGM, 25).

Parental absence involves participants of both samples having been deprived of one or both primary caregivers through bereavement, partner separation or marriage breakdown as in the examples provided by Fran, Ian, and Paul:

"I got to the age of 13 or 14 and my dad was carrying on behind my mum's back. They split up and I think everything went downhill from then" (Fran; DSGM, 25).

"It was a rough upbringing, a bad estate in Liverpool all kids running around like three and four in the morning on the streets ... you were just left to do your own thing and that. I got three older brothers. My mum and dad split up when I was about six. Both

went their separate ways, was living with my dad until I was about sixteen” (Ian; 22, DSGM).

“My mum and dad split up so I was living with my mum then. I have two brothers and one stepsister. We all lived in the house together. There was me, my little brother and my stepbrother and stepsister, in a four-bedroom house. So, I was like going out with my mates and I was meeting them around the corner from theirs and going to theirs and then we would look for weed and that’s what got me into real trouble with the police” (Paul; 19, DSGM).

Moreover, the study found that it is not always the case of fatherly absence that triggered masculine insecurity and negative emotional experience amongst DSGMs, as other literature would suggest (Campbell, 1984; Centre for Social Justice, 2009), but also what was coded as ‘*inappropriate male socialisation*’. That is, in many instances, a situation of the father/father figure lacking appropriate parenting skills to adequately socialise offspring. This was exemplified by the participants’ personal experiences of parental violence that is, incurring wrath, characterised not so much by a ‘*clip around the ear*’ or old school physical discipline but one of brutal viciousness as Ian, Terry and Zak exemplify:

“My dad was a bastard [referring to his father’s previous offending], but my mum was always on the right side of the law... When I was younger, my dad used to have a belt. He used to belt us. He was just a rough man ... If you done something wrong, instead of getting the cane you would get a belt (Ian; 22, DSGM).

“I lived around a violent alcoholic father who was constantly beating my mother and me ... it was a fear-based environment” (Terry; 25, DSGM).

“There were nine of us, six sisters, and three brothers, including me ... my dad used to batter us. I tried to commit suicide at the age of 12. My dad was a

horrible man if I did anything wrong my mum would tell me off, my dad would batter me physically” (Zak; DSGM, 25).

Further, such male parental socialisation also involved DSGM participants being exposed to criminality and open regular use of drugs and alcohol by the father/father figure in the home usually when offspring were present as the testimonies of Paul, Gary and Den illustrate:

“I wake up and think ... I just start thinking of stuff about being lazy like my dad ... my dad is just a big fat, lazy cunt who just sits on the couch smoking weed, but when I lived with my dad that’s all he done and I was just getting proper lazy and that” (Paul; 19, DSGM).

“My dad was a bastard, sorry for the language, but that’s all I can think of to describe him. He never had any real time for my brother or me. Wasn’t a great dad that’s for sure. Was never around and when he was it would usually end in him battering my mum or us. When he did stay with us, he would just sit around with lager. Then he got into weed and then the beak [cocaine]. Sometimes he would bring his mates over and they would be drinking and doing drugs through the night, we could never get any sleep when that happened” (Gary; 25, DSGM).

“Lived with my dad until I was seven, then he went to jail for murder. Don’t even remember the guy now except for the drink and the smell of his weed when he used to smoke it. That’s how much of an impact he had on my life as a kid. Although a few years ago from jail he managed to sort all the equipment I needed to start my own cannabis farm for my birthday” (Den; 25, DSGM).

4.3 Individual Context

Those DSGM participants who had experienced severe family dysfunction and turmoil, including lack of parental attention and fear of parental brutality, suffered emotional effects as a result of isolation, bitterness and frustration. Added to this was the pressure many young people experience trying to develop an identity of their own in locations that greatly lacked legitimate opportunities for most. As a result, participant empathy towards others in the residential neighbourhood became increasingly eroded. When reflecting on personal situations, some of the participants spoke of experiencing feelings of hopelessness which impacted on self-esteem. Together, all of these issues increased the risk of spending more time out on the street involved with DSGs, attempting to achieve things that they failed to achieve as individuals. This included the much sought-after alternative family, masculine status through violence and the derogatory treatment of young women, income through crime (grafting), protection through camaraderie, as well as mental escapism from the mundane through drugs and alcohol consumption. Statements by Ian, Paul John Den and Tony provide some examples:

“Just smoking weed, hanging about chilling. Just doing our little thing together to get by” (Ian; 22, DSGM).

“We used to hang around the street and that and make a joint and if we didn’t have money, we would go and find money. Like we sometimes, we used to go on the rob ... sit on benches. Get on this! We used to sit on benches, get a sack of weed dropped off and we didn’t move off that bench, we would just sit off smoking weed, that’s all we did because that’s the way it is” (Paul; 19, DSGM).

“Used to go out smoke weed and then at one point, ‘cos’ I couldn’t get weed ... in order to get money to fund my habit, I robbed the master key for the school.

I used to go and rob the PE changing rooms when everyone was out” (John; 25, DSGM).

“I just spent virtually all of my time out. I lived with my grandparents but they started arguing over me, it really drained me emotionally. My gran didn’t really want me there, so spent most days with the lads on the street. We got into drugs, mainly cannabis, then I started selling. There is nothing else to do around Crocky [Croxteth]- it’s a shithole. My dad was inside for murder so me and the lads took over his cannabis farm for him and that’s how I got caught, but shit happens” (Den; 25, DSGM).

“I would describe myself as a prick! That’s the only way I can put it because of the upbringing, I had no choice, it was on my street, it was the lads I hung around with I was in trackies, I was blacked out so I end up going off doing mad things ... I had a fight with these lads, and then I saw them a week later, but then I was with my boys and they thought, ‘this will be funny.’ So, I got this lad and he was crying to me, asking me to stop hitting him and I was laughing ... I used to be in a firm of boys. Lads and that, that chilled on a step where people would just congregate. We would have people from all over the area, mad people. Like its drugs and family more than anything else that brings these people together” (Tony; 25, DSGM).

With regard to criminality, which formed a fairly large part of DSG life for all of the participants, the study observed evidence of a process of blame neutralisation (Sykes and Matza, 1957). DSGMs were keen to detach responsibility from themselves by attributing their conduct to the influence of other group members (a form of moral disengagement). In most of the DSGM narratives, the expression “I got in with the wrong crowd/people” became the dominant phrase as Gary’s testimony exemplifies:

“We would do what boys do of a night, get pissed, get stoned and do a graft to get money. I wasn’t always like that you know. I started off a good little lad. I could show you a school photo of me and you would

not think that was me now but I went down the wrong path with the wrong people but it was the only one I had” (Gary; 25, DSGM).

For participants in the DSGM sample, the study observed that most appeared to experience a masculinity crisis. Two reasons appeared to be behind such insecurity. Firstly, the lack of employment opportunities needed for male participants to be seen as a ‘provider’. Secondly, as observed earlier, the absence of a father or rather, the presence of an inappropriate fatherly male who possessed very little ability to be a parent and a male role model, affected participants’ perception of their group and of young women. In terms of employment and personal ambition, this was noted to be quite stunted and lost with all of the DSGMs interviewed revealing strong themes that were coded as ‘*directed objectives*’. This refers to the individual’s willingness to foresee, but not proactively plan a future life constructed on true law-abiding principles with little chance of success. This included evidence of domestic planning as well as job targeting (which was always in a basic blue-collar manly sense, i.e., “something manual” and “the army”) as can be evidenced in the aspirations of DSGMs Ian, Tony, Frankie, and John:

“I want to be working. I would like my own house and my own mortgage. Stuff like that. I want to have my kid living with me. Haven’t got a plan for that really, am still working that out at the minute ... am fucked at the minute, cos am in a hostel, fucked cos I got no money, fucked cos am not seeing my kid ... It’s just fucked ‘init’? My whole life is fucked at the minute” (Ian; 22, DSGM).

“I want to go the doctor’s and see if they can get me on an anger management course, something like that” (Tony; 25, DSGM).

“Need to sort my head out, ‘dunno’ what I really want to do. Few things have come to mind, was thinking of

the council jobs like the bins or working in a kitchen, something that will give me money and where you don't need any qualifications ... something manual. I haven't done anything to find work yet, cos I am in this rut, but I will" (Frankie; 19, DSGM).

"Want to join the army, but I have to postpone for five years now I have all my convictions and fines sorted. So, I have to spend a couple of hundred quid, once that's done, I will be able to join the army" (John; 25, DSGM).

From the standpoint of fellow group members, participants spoke about fellow male peers using phrases that have become symbolic of hyper-masculinity within DSGs in Merseyside. For instance, '*Lad*', at the end of virtually every sentence to fellow males (including the researcher) and when talking about their DSG referring to it as '*the boys*'¹⁸ or '*the lads*' and not 'gang'. Moreover, the way young women were viewed also appeared to add to this traditionally manly verbal repertoire. Again, the language used was always very hyper-masculine and suggestive, derogatory and extremely chauvinistic, a possible inherited attribute from exposure to family domestic abuse, in which the mother was verbally and physically attacked.

Interestingly, the shared narrative concerning the role of the opposite sex in most instances fell in line with other research findings regarding male DSGMs and the perception and treatment of young women (Young, 2011). That is, participants described what they deemed to be the most aesthetically pleasing girls as peripheral, having no active membership in DSG participation in activities involving deviancy and/or criminality. Their prime role was either to increase the status of the male group member and/or to provide sexual gratification; in effect, they were perceived mainly in a derogatory sense merely as objects to address

¹⁸ The researcher also observed that the terms "the lads" and "the boys" were also used in considerable preference to the use of gang by participants of the DSGM sample, which was only ever cited by two of the participants.

masculine insecurity by which young males involved in DSGs could prove themselves as true heterosexual men in front of their in-group peers. Such performances could range from physical sexual enactment towards females (bodily contact during street horseplay) and verbal gesturing (sexual bravado) to the full intimate intercourse experience itself, the objective being to sexually capture as many different consenting females as possible, something that was viewed as the ultimate masculine accreditation. This is illustrated by the testimony of Steve, Tony, John, and Tukrit's reflections and observations on young women:

“Girls easy... sluts, like they would think if we got with them, it was forever and ever” (Steve; 20, DSGM).

“Girls was always viewed as ‘mad heads’, ‘slags’, nothing more” (Tony; 25, DSGM).

“This sounds horrible, but girls were viewed like a piece of meat. Some of my mates used to batter their girls. I have seen them go to hospital with broken noses and jaws. They were just something to have on their arm when they wanted to show off. When they don't want them on their arm they get a beating and get a crack to get them out the way” (John; 25, DSGM).

“Girls were just easy meat that's all. I think some saw it as a duty to be with a lad even if they didn't want to be. It was the thing that they had to be seen to do to be accepted by their girl mates” (Tukrit; 22, DSGM).

The same observations again are evidenced in Paul and Charlie's narratives when they comment:

“Girls! We were terrible us!! It would be like if we saw a girl, a bunch of girls, we would go over to them and start talking and get them out with us. We would

sit on the bench and if they were fit, we would terrorize them ... you know what I mean, there is slags everywhere and there were girls everywhere, plenty of fish in the sea” (Paul; 19, DSGM).

“We had no girls in our group, but we sat off ¹⁹ with some. They were there because they wanted to be and we would smoke weed with them and get them pissed and just bang them. They never got involved in any criminal activity just there for sex ... just slut bags, you could shag for a bit then see what else there was” (Charlie; 23, DSGM)

It was while on the subject of young women, that the study noted some participant narrative focusing on the image of being bad and the alleged attraction to it. Firstly, there was the sexual desirability effect of being bad (a ‘*bad boy*’/criminal erotic’s), that participants said allegedly appealed to young women, which were fully exploited for the purpose of sexual gratification. Secondly, linked to this, was narrative that overlapped on to the theory of criminological edgework and the intrinsic value of criminal risk taking activity. This ranged from the adrenalin rush gained before (in the run-up to) and during the acts themselves to thoughts associated with the acts post-event, coupled with the actual status of being part of a known rogue element something that was particularly evident in the narratives of Ian, John, Tony, Fran, and Frank:

“Started off doing petty little crimes, just smash and grabs, including cars with some little satnavs and that, then it just spiralled. Obviously, you get deeper and deeper into the underworld of crime in Liverpool and the next thing you know you’re wrapped up in all the deep stuff. You do bigger things, you want more money ... then you get greedy ... Fire and passion to succeed and then when you get chased and that ... I think its boss, exciting, money; it’s everything, the

¹⁹ Sat off: a term used by young disenfranchised people to describe sitting in a specific place either an open area such as a shopping area, park and street corner or in someone’s house.

ultimate 'buzz'. But when you get caught though, obviously, it's a different story, you always think to yourself, there's another day" (Ian; 22, DSGM).

"It feels like an adrenalin rush ... you just buzz and you fly when you are doing it and if it goes good, you want to do it again. You think of the money, easy money" (John; 25, DSGM).

"I would hang around on street corners with other groups, which were usually older and I looked up to them, I thought 'you know these are the type of people I want to be.' It was the image and the excitement" (Tony; 25, DSGM).

"I got a bit of a reputation ... loads of people around Liverpool know me ... members of my family, one of them got stabbed in his leg on a bike, he was only 22, that was over a pedal bike in Canny Farm [Cantril Farm now called Stockbridge Village]" (Fran; 25, DSGM).

"Loved going out with the lads at night. All I used to think about even when I went into school. It was just a buzz just going out doing stuff ... when you're doing something everything is pumping it's dead hard to describe" (Frank; 24, DSGM).

Moreover, the study was able to possibly identify a new form of edgework which could be termed '*vicarious edgework*'. From this perspective, DSGM participants appeared to describe a psychological process in which females derive their excitement indirectly through association (platonic in some cases but mainly emotional) with known male DSG members, while at the same time avoiding the consequences of active DSG membership. This is highlighted here by DSGMs Charlie and Gary:

"I have shagged loads of girls. I think most of them like the challenge; it's the bad boy thing init. They get off on it" (Charlie; 23, DSGM).

“Birds love it lad, they love the whole bad boy thing and any bird who says she don’t is a liar. Even posh birds. It’s their thing, they all get off on it, something about it to them” (Gary; 25, DSGM).

Importantly, it must be noted that this observation was derived from the narrative of male participants, but it is nevertheless an important observation which could have potential ramifications linked to potential exploitation and domestic abuse. However, it does demand further empirical investigation involving a combination of both young men and women in order to assess the validity of such a proposition.

4.4 School Context

For every child, regardless of the situation, the period of education and schooling forms a significant part of growing up. For the DSGM participants, this was no exception. However, experiences that included episodes of bullying, levels of in-class anti-social behaviour, truancy and labelling by teachers as under-achievers, were noted to have further increased the risk of DSG membership. In reflecting back on school years, virtually all DSGM participants cited episodes of victimisation through bullying (both as a perpetrator and a victim) as the reason for complete disengagement with all things academic and the need to gain peer acceptance through displays of clowning parody. This together with spectacles of physical aggression took priority over actual learning. Others like Ian, Tony and Frank simply refused to engage altogether:

“When I was younger, I was bullied at school, then obviously I made a stand for myself. I turned from then on, from being bullied to being a bully. My attendance was shite ... never in. It started early as well, so I got nothing ... actually, yes, I got a GCSE in art, but that’s the only thing I have got from school. The teachers tried to help me ... I think they tried, but

I just didn't want it ... I just didn't want it" (Ian; 22, DSGM).

"I was a bad lad in school if you know what I mean ... I used to do things to kids. I used to pick on a few kids quite a bit, but I was a little dwarf thing with an odd ear and a tiny body. I was a little tramp; I had dirt behind my neck and everything. So, I thought if I go to school, I am going to get victimised here, so I made as many people as possible fear me. It was like getting them to do this and that just intimidating them ... make them not skit me which I was quite successful at actually! ... I do regret what I did in school; I should have spent more attention in school. I made a lot of people in school suffer so that probably affected them" (Tony; 25, DSGM).

Like Ian, Paul recalled being subjected to bullying which in turn had, by his own reflection impacted on his attendance and in some way his academic performance:

"I was bullied at school ... that's why I get angry... I have been hit ... I was small, and that ... and one day it built up in my head that bullying like from year 5 until say year 9 all the way through, it just built up and I just wanted to calm down ... My attendance was about 75% sometimes 80 to 95%. Qualification wise, I wasn't good at that ... I turned into the class clown ... At year ten, I tried to knuckle down. I could not do my GCSEs because I got kicked out because I wrote "fuck off" all over the exam papers (Paul; 19, DSGM).

For Steve, the school experience became a stage used to gain popularity and attention through in-class anti-social behaviour including being a class clown:

"Hated school, really, I was always kicked out or never went. I was a popular person at school everyone still knows me, was always OK with everyone, and never had any problems with people at school. I got

into trouble all the time like messing about, being class clown and being aggressive towards the teachers. With the messing, it would be attention, but the other stuff was about the fact that I don't like getting told what to do. So, I use to 'flip' on the teachers when the teachers picked me out in front of people like, trying to make a show of me" (Steve; 20, DSGM).

In talking about attendance or lack of it, DSGM participants appeared sincere about regretting truancy and not making a greater effort. In reflecting back, "*the best days of your life*" became a very prominent cliché. This can be seen in particular from Frank, Gavin and John:

"Was never really in school and when I was, I just pissed around, class clown that was me, a fuck up. Now, when I look back I think it was an attention thing, self-esteem issues going on. I was a small, not the stocky lad I am now ... I do regret not doing better at school; it's like they all say, school is the best days of your life, you just don't realise it at the time. It still was for me like cos I met my first mates in school. Work-wise I should have done better. I had no encouragement from my mum and dad and I just pissed around, anyway qualifications get you nowhere in Norris Green - just laughed at" (Frank; 24, DSGM).

"Didn't have much time for school because of family commitments. I already had a job with my boys and I was kind of destined to go into the family business. School was something that taught me how to read and write. Once that was out of the way it became a noose around my neck that's all. I didn't want to be there, the lads I hung around with didn't want to be there and the teachers didn't want us to be there. When we were there it was just for a laugh. Most in my class were all black lads and girls and the teacher was some middle-class, white guy. In a way now I feel sorry for him. He must have hated getting up every morning facing all the shit we gave him" (Gavin; 25; DSGM).

“Would go back to school tomorrow just to get my qualifications, my GCSEs, because I messed everything up smoking weed, wanting to be a boy, one of the lads thinking if I did this I would go far in life and the only thing I ended up in was jail. So, I would love to go back I wish I was a completely different lad when I was at school because I would not be in the situation I am in now” (John; 25, DSGM).

Predictably, as a result of one or all three (bullying, truancy, and anti-social behaviour) of the above issues, any form of academic achievement was limited to four DSGMs Fran and Zak:

“They were all surprised when I showed them my record of achievement. They thought I was going to get all E’s F’s and U’s. I said, ‘well look what I would have done if you had let me in your class, but they thought I would be just messing about all the time’ (Fran; 25, DSGM).

“At school, I use to skive [sic] a lot, every day could not stand the teachers I would just mess about or go home ... my mum and dad took me out of school at the end of year 10 and then at the end well near the end of year eleven I started doing GCSEs. I got just three GCSEs, got English, Maths, and PE all D’s” (Zak; 25, DSGM).

Paradoxically, while DSGMs freely recalled academic failure, of significant interest was pupil teacher affiliation. Specifically, they were able to identify and affiliate themselves with a specific teacher and those they recalled in a positive light were male. This was especially evident from participants who had recalled earlier either an absent father figure or a particularly physically brutal one as can be exemplified in the testimony provided by Steve, John, Jimmy, Joe, and Tony:

“My head of year, everyone remembers him ... he was dead strict, but he liked me for some reason and

he was probably my favourite teacher” (Steve; 20, DSGM).

“He was OK. He is still there now; I didn’t really have a problem with him and I met up with him when I was older” (John; 25, DSGM).

“There was my Maths teacher ... Mr. McLachlan. He understood me and taught my brothers as well” (Jimmy; 23, DSGM).

“There was one. Mr. Davis and he was a History teacher and he did history where you had to do history. He had done it as a subject and he was hilarious. He would give you sweets and everything. He was dead funny and that. You would see him outside and he would say ‘how’s it going?’ and he would give you a lift and that, he was one of the lads” (Joe; 19, DSGM).

“Mr. Blakelock, my sports teacher, he was the hardest. He was that hard he would sleep with the lights on because the dark was afraid of him. He caught me having a fight once and he clipped me around the ear, dragged me by the collar and proper ragged me. He was the only teacher who was ever true to me” (Tony; 25, DSGM).

4.5 Peer Context

Where narrative focusing on peers was concerned, initially, all of the participants appeared to derive this from two main sources, that is, friendships forged at school and those developed in the street. For participants making up the DSGM sample, school friendships tended to act as conduits for further acquaintances made on the street. Such acquaintanceships appeared to be more fixed and durable, resulting in values, beliefs and mores becoming bounded. The testimonies of Jimmy, Mike, and Sean are characteristic of the social and restricted friendship network pattern that emerged:

“Well, I met them first in school, then at parties where people got into trouble and everything” (Jimmy; 23, DSGM).

“Used to hang around and chill with the lads from school. As I got older, I began to hang around with those where I lived. They were older than me” (Mike; 25, DSGM).

“Met some of the lads in school and then when I went out at night I sort of met more mates through them. Those lads were much older than me and they smoked the weed. That was it really wrong crowd. So, you could say it was school that started me on a downward slide. Plus, I never really liked the authority side of it” (Sean; 25, DSGM).

As a result of school and street friendship networks, in response to the central phenomenon (dealing with marginalisation and limited opportunity), the DSGM sample had a tendency to look towards these peer friendship networks for support. From this context, there was a line of thought where the emphasis appeared to be on unity and power in numbers. They were not individuals but a mass of young people with the same multiple issues. They could bond together as one peer unit in what some saw as a traditional ‘*them versus us*’ running narrative, beginning in early adolescence.

Moreover, from the perspective of the DSGM sample, here was the opportunity to develop a counter-culture that would not only act as a surrogate family for those experiencing parental deprivation but also for the males, as a way of identifying and acting out masculine ideals. In summary, in joining together most DSGM participants described overriding themes of escapism, belonging, and identity, which were both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated. This can be seen in the testimonies of Paul, Frankie, Steve, and Mike:

“I just thought I was like cool, you know what I mean, I thought I am liked. My mates were my family...”

when I was younger and that, I was thinking about everyone else. If I got ‘biffers’ [cigarettes], I would be giving them out to everyone and at the end of about an hour, I would have about three left. All stupid things like that ... I was just lost in a mad world that’s where I was” (Paul; 19, DSGM).

“I have never seen my real father, I never really had a balanced family life, and I wanted to become one of the boys because that’s the big thing around where I live, and it’s the only thing. There is nothing else” (Frankie; 19, DSGM).

“No, it wasn’t easy to move in and make friends; young people would give older people a hard time and that. It would take time, so if you were new, they would know you were a new person on the estate, everyone knew each other ... My mates lived on the estate at the same time, they would move in and I would end up hanging around with them. It was the same time and we were all the same age” (Steve; 20, DSGM).

“I got involved with my mates at 16 because they lived where I lived ... I hung around with those lads because of social inclusion. Stereotyped? Yes ... they [the police] stereotyped me” (Mike; 25, DSGM).

With interaction solely limited to the predominantly pro-criminogenic friendship network and environment, there was likely to be only one result for each participant of the DSGM sample, as evidenced here by Paul, John, and Frank:

‘Just thought get in that crowd, but they were the wrong crowd, I didn’t know that until it was too late” (Paul; 19, DSGM).

“Hung around with the wrong people and got into fights. Looking back, it was the wrong set of people” (John; 23, DSGM).

“What can I say? I got in with the wrong sort of lads they were all bad. Thinking back, I was influenced by

them. But they were the only people that were around the area. If I had been brought up in a better place with better people I probably would have turned out differently so it's not all my fault" (Frank; 24, DSGM).

4.6 Neighbourhood Context

With criminality and in particular youth offending (that was also in most cases DSG related) being a prevalent aspect in all of the participants' neighbourhoods, for those who had become involved in a DSG, the nature of deviant/criminal activity began to increase. Such activity included property theft (house and school burglary), vehicle crime, violent offending (rival group fighting/smashing in of doors) and drug possession. With regard to the latter, the study identified a significant difference concerning the role of drugs which in turn had an impact on DSG structure. This appeared to be shaped by the neighbourhood location. While the participants from the greener belt area of the Stockbridge Village estate spoke mainly of possession of drugs such as cannabis and cocaine for personal recreational use and committed crimes in order to fund drugs for personal use, none of these participants recalled actual involvement in a supply chain with intent to deal as the testimony of Paul and John exemplify:

"We used to hang around the street and that and make a joint and if we didn't have no money, we would try and find the money like sometimes we would go on the rob ... What was going through my head when I was committing crime? Get that! Everything, excitement ... money! That's a bag of weed that's what it was them days [two years earlier]" (Paul; 19, DSGM).

"How did I become involved with the police? Through smoking weed basically, hung around with the wrong people, got into fights all the time. Ended up going out robbing stuff like that and it led to heavier drug use like cocaine" (John; 25, DSGM).

In contrast, DSGM participants from the Anfield and surrounding Merseyside areas, located closer to the city-centre, decided to utilise their drug resources to develop what was categorised under the strategies category in the paradigm model as, '*deviant entrepreneurship*'. That is, since Anfield and other areas of Merseyside were located close to the city centre, a city centre with a vibrant night-time economy, together with a high demand for drugs as part of that economy. This made it possible for those DSGM participants to develop an illegitimate business dimension to their group via the help of more experienced and criminally entrenched adult figures of Organised Crime Groups (OCGs).

Thus, what started as DSGs, involved in anti-social behaviour and crimes of theft, became a more structured criminally focused and territorial group (something akin to Klein's (1995) speciality group), where the main emphasis was now on making money through the crime of drug-dealing. This business dimension was emphasised in the narrative by the use of the term '*firm*' as can be seen in the narrative of Tony below to describe his group of "*boys*", Tony also highlights the link with adult organised crime and its exploitation of young people. This is also reflected in narrative by Fran, Gary and Frank who were involved in DSGs in Anfield and surrounding locations of Merseyside near the city centre:

"I used to be in a firm of boys ... and yes organised crime is connected. You see them in the paper like. Boys, because they're trying to make money trying to look like gangsters, but it's the big fellas you don't see getting all the money. I have turned in a grand a day for some fella just sitting in a park, then out of that, I will get a hundred and fifty. I mean I had a grand before, now I have got one fifty. I have no prospects...who is going to take me on? I walk around thinking I am hard! It is the little lads that are making the money, but it's the big fellas out there who are really making the money" (Tony; 25, DSGM).

“A few years ago, I got involved with a group of lads who started getting me to take drugs all over the country. I was in Blackpool once, selling, and while I was there I made quite a bit of money. The next minute I was getting raided by police who caught me with two thousand pounds in cash, one wrap of heroin and a tiny bit of weed and I got a twelve-month custodial sentence, suspended for two years and I got a two-year supervision order with the maximum community service and a five hundred pound fine” (Fran; 25, DSGM).

“First started with stealing for weed to use, then dealing drugs, proper grafting. That’s how it goes around where I live. You start off getting involved with the boys because there is nothing else to do. You are drawn into it, trying to escape through the weed. Then as you get older and there is no work, you take the only job there is, proper graft for the big boys. I got caught serving some beak [cocaine] to a couple of lads outside a pub, been caught a few times now but it doesn’t stop me because the money drives you” (Gary; 25, DSGM).

“The gang thing where I live, there are reasons why it’s that big around Norris Green. It’s not just about terrorising people for a laugh anymore. It’s going bigger; there are older people involved in the background. It’s all about the graft now, making money to get by. Getting dough in so you can have the nicer things in life. There are no jobs around by me, so we have to make our own jobs. It’s easy for a group of scally lads to go into business, if you know the right people” (Frank; 24; DSGM).

The study also identified a second difference which appeared to be determined by the location of the neighbourhood and the extent of BME population within that neighbourhood. During the coding process, an

emerging category that was termed ‘*delinquent apprenticeship*’²⁰ was identified, this involved BME participants actually perceiving involvement in a DSG as a form of apprenticeship. This was characterised by the use of the terms *youngers* and *elders* in narrative depicting a form of structured deviant peer-based mentoring, as can be particularly highlighted in the narrative of Tukrit:

“Criminal life started off growing up with the elders, hanging around with the elders getting up to no good. I was growing up in the area (Toxteth) surrounded by drugs, criminal activity, and groups. You may call it groups, we call it boys or youngers; we call it that for a reason like if something happened, they are there for you. We all grew up with the elders, the ‘*Mandra*’ we call it. I was a younger I wanted to learn from the elders. Started doing messages for them, dropping things off on my bike. Elders are the older lads; well adults say early to late twenties to forties. They don’t hang around the street obviously because they are running shall we say businesses but us youngers help them make their money and they share their experiences with us. Then when we become elders when we reach their age and have kids, we get a share or know what to do ourselves. We are introduced to people and the trust grows” (Tukrit; 22, DSGM).

For DSGM like Tony, Fran, Gary, Frank, and Tukrit, with such deviant entrepreneurship and delinquent apprenticeship also came increased risk and with it, an escalation in physical violence within the respective communities as greed desperation and territoriality between adjacent neighbourhoods, over the illicit drug market, started to emerge. This ranged from the use of fists to knives and firearms. This can be illustrated in the narrative of Frank, John, and Tony:

“When I started grafting for other people I was protected well because it was their own gear and they

²⁰ It should be noted that such was the limited number of BME participants in the study this observation/theme can only be regarded as tangential and more research is required to provide greater empirical insight and reliability.

were older and part of a big firm. When I started out on my own it was scary because you got no one to back you up. Even the lads I hung around with, if they knew you were grafting and they weren't getting a share, they could easily turn. I have been threatened loads of times, been smacked around, bottled, had my bird's doors go in by lads looking for money. One had a gun and had my bird by the neck. I was out, when I came back she kicked off on me, so I had to get a gun, but that's the world you're in" (Frank; 24, DSGM).

"To be honest, there were a lot of my mates grafting (drug dealing) ... we were doing the same thing. I have moved up here (Anfield) where I don't know anyone to keep me away from having those little guilty pleasures of going out to do things with them. It's a case of, if I've got no money; I can make money in a way, if you know what I mean? I don't rob, but I can sell drugs for people - the big fish. I think it was selfish in a way, knocking on people's doors, threatening people, fighting the families over money because their son owed me money for drugs. My girlfriend's family, her brother got me into it. I wasn't working I got a little parcel off him. It kind of elevated, then. From the selling with the lads, I started shipping it all over the world and smuggling it in from the Isle of Man. I can't go back to a life of crime anymore ... it's scary, I have had guns pointed at me" (John; 25, DSGM).

"Yes, it's all about drugs, but drugs also bring bad beef to you. I have seen a lot of people do bad things because of the money that can be made from drugs. If you are a scally lad²¹ and you're in a firm like that, you have not got a mate. You may think he is your mate, but you have not got a mate, they're all dirty horrible scum, we are all horrible people ... I could not go selling by the pub and that, I could not go to another area unless I was with someone from there, in case someone recognised me. I have been recognised a few times by the pub over the bridge and had my

²¹ *Scally/scally lad*: term denoting a type of working-class young person usually seen dressed in all terrain/sportswear (predominantly North Face). Over the last decade, the term in Liverpool has become particularly associated with young people who are involved with DSG culture, anti-social behaviour and crime.

head stamped on! There were certain points I could not go because you piss a lot of people off because they come over to our side and we do the same to them. Obviously, if you go to their side they will do the same to you” (Tony; 25, DSGM).

4.7 Conclusion

From the analysis of thirty interviews of DSGM participants on Merseyside, the study recognised that all of the factors present in causal and intervening conditions, context, strategies strands including the central phenomenon itself within the DSGM paradigm model could be positioned in one or more of the five risk domains as highlighted below in table 9.

Table 9. Risk Factors

Table 9.	
Risk domains	Key themed variables identified
Family	Family experience negative influences of the father figure as opposed to absent father/father figures (biological and step)
Individual	Emotional feelings and pressure to identify, masculinity issues, edgework, anti-social behaviour, crime/drugs as a means of both use and employment (grafting, deviant entrepreneurship, and delinquent apprenticeship)
School	Negative perception of education. School seen just as a means of peer interaction and acquaintanceship. Anti-social/anti-authoritarian behaviour, bullying, labelling by teachers
Peer	Friendship networks/peer interaction restricted to the school and the street (bounded values)/ absence of social mixing, directed career objectives (no proactive action to realise such aims)
Neighbourhood	Marginalisation/limited opportunity except crime and gang presence, shaping young people’s mentality, boredom, empathy erosion

Taken together all of the strands contributed to an increased risk of membership of DSGs with the resulting consequences indicating not only the likelihood of sustained DSG membership but further troublesome costs as a result of that membership. These included custodial sentences, negative stigma, and sustained unemployment. However, of particular interest were the friendship networks set within the school and the street (peer domain). These appeared to remain static for each of the participants. With DSGMs lacking any form of social mixing (bridging)²² and exposure to value and belief diversity over time, values became bounded. As a result, participants, while showing an ability to verbally plan a way of life beyond their existing situation seemed incapable of taking the practical steps necessary to put these plans into operation. This, sadly, further increased the probability of continued DSG membership and offending that in each respective participant's community had become associated with such membership

²² Social mixing/bridging: two terms that refer to individuals attempting to form friendship networks outside of their residential location. While bridging has been noted by the researcher to be the more academically used term, social mixing has become the term of preference in the third sector and with local authorities around Merseyside.

**Chapter Five : Results Non-Group Participants/Ex-
Deviant Street Group Members (NGPs/EDSGMs)
Merseyside**

5. Research Participants

Participants consisted of eighteen individuals all self-reporting as Non-Group participants (NGPs) or Ex-Deviant Street Group Members (EDSGMs). Table 10. provides schematics of the demographics of participants:

**Table 10. Schematics of the demographics of
participants (NGPs/EDSGMs)**

Non-Group Participants (NGPs)and Ex-Deviant Street Group Members (EDSGMs)	Gender	Age	Status at interview	Single/Other Family	Two-Parent Family	Siblings	Education
Patrick (EDSGM)	Male	22	Bricklayer Apprentice		yes		NVQs
Ben (EDSGM)	Male	24	Volunteer		Yes	3 Males	Graduate
Jed (EDSGM)	Male	23	Apprentice		Yes	7 Male	NVQs
Marvin (EDSGM)	Male	24	Unemployed		Yes	2 Female	No Qualifications
Iain (EDSGM)	Male	24	Unemployed		Yes	2 Males	No Qualifications
Tommy (EDSGM)	Male	23	Unemployed		Yes	1 Male 1 Female	No Qualifications
Les (EDSGM)	Male	23	Mobile Phone Salesman	Mother		2 Male 1 Female	GCSE's
Steve (NGP)	Male	18	Further Education Student		Step-father/Natural mother	1 Male 2 Females	No Qualifications at interview
Andy (NGP)	Male	19	Volunteer		Yes	2 Males	Undergraduate
Brian (NGP)	Male	24	Volunteer		Yes	1 Male	Undergraduate
Simon (NGP)	Male	25	Window Cleaner	Mother/Hostel		1 Male 2 Females	Basic Certificates
Karl (NGP)	Male	24	Plasterer		Yes	1 Female	7 GCSE's
Barry (NGP)	Male	23	Volunteer	Mother		Only Child	Graduate
Louie (NGP)	Male	22	Volunteer	Mother/Grandfather			Graduate
Liam (NGP)	Male	25	Barman		Yes	2 Females	Graduate
Pete (NGP)	Male	25	Charity Vol		Yes	1 Male	Undergrad
Neil (NGP)	Male	18	Apprentice		Yes	Only Child	NVQs
Terry (NGP)	Male	25	Office Administration		Yes	1 Male	A/levels and GCSE's
Mean age		22.5					

5.1 Results

Data from the Non-Group Participant (NGP) /Ex-Deviant Street Group Member (EDSGM) sample were analysed on three levels using the process of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). As with the

DSGM sample, Strauss and Corbin's paradigm model is used for a diagrammatical illustration of the results. Also, like the DSGM sample, the model (Figure. 3., 149) features the emerging causal conditions, strategies (action/interaction) and the consequences, together with the context and intervening conditions that manage the central phenomenon (the core categories).

Central phenomenon. In the case of the data derived from the NGP/EDSGM sample, the central phenomenon was identified as '*dealing with marginalisation and limited opportunity*'. That is, like DSGM participants, individuals in the NDSGM/EDSGM sample were confronted with social exclusion and limited opportunity.

Causal conditions. In the case of the causal conditions experienced by NGP/EDSGMs, the study noted a difference in that what casual conditions there were (family experience: stable, school experience: stable, school and street peer friendships transient, political) in that the variables linked to the central phenomenon (with exception to political policy), fitted the protective domains of 'family', 'school', 'peer', rather than their risk counterparts, since there was evidence of strategies within the each variable that acted as buffers against strategies involved in DSG membership.

Strategies. In attempting to manage, counter and change the central phenomenon, strategies were developed by participants that differed from the DSGM sample. Like participants of the former group, such strategies became triggers for subsequent others. From the perspective of the DSGMs, it was DSG group formation and membership that was a key strategy in developing further self-destructive approaches to managing the central phenomenon. In the case of NGPs/EDSGMs, it was observed that the strategy coded as '*realisation and rational choice*' appeared to be a primary buffering

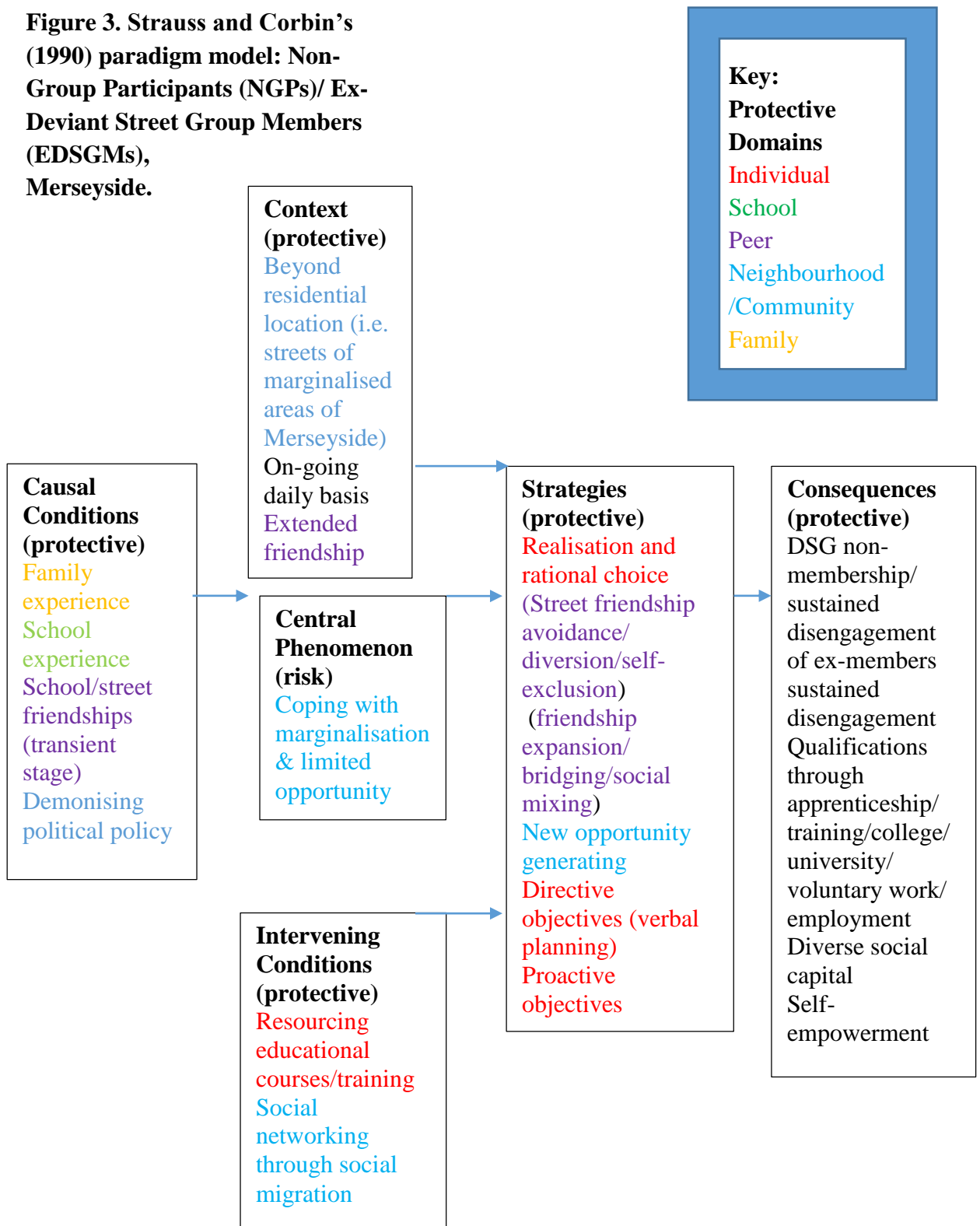
catalyst, participants stopped and thought about certain actions they noted being carried out by peers (this was particularly so with EDSGMs). This facilitated subsequent strategies (*'street friendship avoidance'*/*'street friendship diversion'*/*'peer self-exclusion'*, *'friendship expansion'* *'new opportunity generating'*, *'directive objectives'* (verbal planning) and *'proactive objectives'* (actions)). These were seen to manage and counter the central phenomenon productively through greater bonding with legitimate society. These types of strategies again, were noted to be positive buffering responses in managing the central phenomenon and as such could be positioned into the protective domains of 'individual', 'peer' and 'neighbourhood'.

Context. Strauss and Corbin (1990) define context as the “location of events or incidents pertaining to a phenomenon along a dimensional range” (p.101). In this case, the study noted that the context involved going beyond the streets of marginalised residential locations on Merseyside. Gibbs (2010) has also observed that within Strauss and Corbin’s version of grounded theory, context can also be temporal, that is linked to when at a particular time and with whom the situation occurs. With regard to this latter aspect, it was noted that this involved school and street acquaintances on a daily basis. However, unlike the DSGM sample, this was identified as being a transient stage as a result of NGPs/EDSGM participants sporadically socially migrating away from the residential localities and building friendship networks (social mixing/bridging) within those settings (buffering). As such, both features were noted to be in the protective domains of 'neighbourhood' and 'peer'.

Intervening conditions. In the case of the NGPs/EDSGM sample, intervening conditions were identified as facilitating participant strategies to manage the central phenomenon. This was seen to be through resourcing educational courses/work-based training and social networking and social migration (social mixing/bridging) which can be positioned in the ‘individual’ and ‘neighbourhood’ domains as protective factors since they involved choices made by the individual and the use of place and space beyond that of the residential neighbourhood, to create new friendship networks with more diverse values and beliefs and increased opportunities.

Consequences. As a result of the strategies employed, the consequences that resulted from the strategies were identified as being more proactive and beneficial to the participants of the NGPs/EDSGM sample. These included for the NGPs sustained absence away from the temptation of DSG membership and for the EDSGMs sustained disengagement. Both groups benefited from other consequences such as education and training and employment opportunities that brought further, more diverse, social capital from outside residential location (facilitated by the intervening condition of social migration).

Figure 3. Strauss and Corbin's (1990) paradigm model: Non-Group Participants (NGPs)/ Ex-Deviant Street Group Members (EDSGMs), Merseyside.



The following chapter will present the overall findings from the NGP/EDSGM sample. It will do this in exactly the same way as the previous chapter, by adopting a thematic format using the risk/protective domain categories “family’, ‘individual’, ‘school’, ‘peer’ and ‘neighbourhood’.

5.2 Family Context

From the perspective of the NGPs/EDSGM participants, like their DSGM counterparts, the study noted reflections that focused on a childhood filled with both positive and turbulent episodes. In the case of family organisation, NGPs/EDSGMs experiences fitted the same situational categories as DSGMs (family unit re-organisation because of parental separation or second marriage, attention avoidance as a result of participants being deprived of parental care and parental absence, participants being deprived of one or two parents). This is evidenced by NGP Les, and EDSGM Jed:

“Pretty straightforward, me, two younger brothers and one sister. We were all born on Stockbridge Village, Boode Croft. My mum and dad split up when we were pretty young and we lived with my mum. My dad left and we saw him every weekend” (Les; 23, NGP).

“My upbringing was like, you know at a certain age, like doing my own thing from the age of 17. It was a big family. I’ve got seven brothers” (Jed; 23, EDSGM).

The study noted that where initial reflections on the stability of family life were concerned, the in-vivo codes of being in a ‘*close-knit family*’ and having a “strict upbringing” were cited by some participants. For

most, however, it was a time of upheaval and insecurity with family life divided through parental separation. The narratives of Terry, Pete, Louie, Brian highlight the range of situations found:

“Was born in Liverpool moved to Stockbridge when I was a baby with my mum and dad and brother. It was a really good childhood compared to most. A really close-knit family, no real big arguments to talk about. I had a few with my brother, but that was just normal stuff. He was the oldest and I suppose he was a bit pissed when I got a bit more attention than he did” (Terry; 25, NGP).

“I grew up with one brother; mum and dad were married so that was like a pretty much typical nuclear family situation. Lived in two separate houses one was in Fazakerley [Kirkby, Knowsley]. Originally, in 2008, we moved to Stockbridge Village [Knowsley]. Pretty typical upbringing. My dad worked in the passport office, civil servant, and my mum stayed at home just to raise me and my brother” (Pete; 25, NGP).

“Wasn’t bad, usual type of upbringing really. Brought up in Dovecot near Huyton, no brothers or sisters, my mum and dad split up when I was six. From then on was brought up by my mum” (Louie; 22, NGP).

“We moved just me and my mum to one of the worst streets ever; it was a bad move in terms of being brought up, it was my mum who stopped me from being any part of a criminal. She was the contributing factor because I was all she had. She made sure I was always in from an early age” (Brian; NGP, 24).

In terms of parental supervision, the study noted a prominent difference in parenting style. This involved some of the participants in the NGP/EDSGM sample recalling similar sporadic instances of physical punishment, but describing a more flexible style of chastisement as opposed to the overbearing and physically focused style of punishment

many of the DSGMs spoke of. Unlike the previous sample, there was no indication of any level of inappropriate socialisation from biological or surrogate patriarchs. In the main, participants recalled punishment experiences taking the form of either strict, traditional physical discipline (hand smacking) or more passive punishment such as ‘*grounding*’. This, it was noted, was mainly due to natural childhood mischief that for one individual Ben, evoked images of old school, wartime morality. It also became quite apparent that there was a level of resilience against deviant peer influence, as a result of stronger parental bonds and a motivation to see potential beyond their residential neighbourhood. The narratives of NGPs Terry, Andy, and EDSGM Ben illustrate all of these observations:

“My parents were a combination of both laid back and strict ... my dad wouldn’t think twice of clipping me around the ear if he lost his temper, but I would have had to have been bad! My mum was more laid back. I would always run to her if I had a smack off my dad and she would console me and tell me what I did that was wrong” (Terry; 25, NGP).

“I have got quite a few friends from all kinds of different social groups ... my close friends who are those I have the same common interests as they do and when I am going out with them, we tend to meet up in town because it’s mostly because we don’t hang around the area, so we tend to head off to town to places that are more suited to us where we won’t be getting looked at and where the music is good and also the environment is better than anything around here. We all come from good homes and taught healthy values by parents” (Andy; 19, NGP).

“My dad was very strict because I think his parents were brought up in the old days of the world war era. To this day he has still the same mentality which I agree with” (Ben; 24, EDSGM).

Overall, where child-rearing practices were concerned, with the exception of three participants, NGPs/EDSGMs experienced a more

attentive and focused upbringing. The study noted that most participants described their mothers as being central to their upbringing in the absence of a patriarch. This can be seen in the narrative provided by NGPs Brian and Barry

“When I was about 2 or 3 my mum and dad divorced, my dad used to live in Kirkby, me and my mum moved down here (Breck Road, Anfield). Didn’t really know what was going on at that point ... Did not ever need anything and I suppose my mum, just having me on my own, allowed her to concentrate more on the parenting aspect because she was a single mother without a job” (Brian; 23, NGPs).

“I am an only child; I was brought up in Anfield by my mum. Never met my father. She has never spoken about him. I think it must have been a casual thing ... an accident a one-night stand sort of thing ... Anyway, I don’t really care. My mum brought me into this world and she has looked after me ever since, never wanted for anything. She always made sure I was fed and healthy. That’s why I want to go on and do well, get a decent job and look after her” (Barry; 23, NGPs).

5.3 Individual Context

During discussions focusing on childhood and adolescence, NDSGM/EDSGM participants recalled a wide and varied set of emotions in reaction to the numerous situations, which can be placed in the individual category. However, while each participant expressed a similar range of emotional feelings such as sadness and insecurity as DSGMs, a more proactive and resilient attitude towards social exclusion was noted as can be evidenced by NGP Karl’s observations:

“All my mates come from Everton, some live over the water so you could say never really had any, what you might call, bond with the local kids. Plus, the shit they were into fucks you up, all the smoking weed ... I

don't smoke, my sister doesn't smoke probably because both my mum and dad are non-smokers, they had a big influence on us. Plus, we did a lot of stuff as a family so I suppose I wasn't exposed to all that mad shit that has been around here for a few years now ... There is nothing around here, but you just have to soldier on and find a way of earning a crust. I sat down with my dad and thought what could I do? What was I good at? I was always good with my hands so I thought about a trade as a plasterer. It is good money and that's the thing that counts if you want to get away, which I do ... I just want to get out of this country ... It was a pretty crap school but I got all my GCSEs and I have AS levels but I want to try several paths before I say this is my career" (Karl; 24, NGP).

Morality too was also noted to be more stable than that of DSGMs. This particular difference was reflected in responses to questions on the issue of right and wrong. NGP/EDSGM participants appeared to be more positive and to possess an optimistic outlook in response to a question eliciting self-description. Here participants appeared to have a level of perception, resilience, and confidence and most importantly a form of identity that was lacking in their DSGM counterparts. The two comments made by Pete are indicative of both the NGPs and EDSGMs attitudes to moral boundaries with regard to the issue of violence and sense of social identity:

"For me a form of self-defence is completely justifiable, especially if you are in fear of your life, if you can defend yourself then that's fine. I think it becomes wrong if you get the upper hand and you start taking advantage of the person's situation, on the floor and you are starting to kick them and their life becomes in danger. Then that's the dividing line. Another act that is wrong is random violence. Violence is completely unjustified" (Pete; 25, NGP).

"How would I describe myself? I would base that on how people would perceive me on first impressions.

So, people tend to think I am rather quiet when they first meet me, but there is a bit of a character behind my personality. So, I would say I have like two kinds of personalities were one, I am very quiet because I like to see how people respond to me first just before I start going towards a friendlier way just to get an idea of how they are. I am pretty much an easy-going guy, some would say I am optimistic, cautious and think ahead about things” (Pete; 25, NGP).

In a similar vein narratives by NGP Terry and EDSGM Jed also pointed to a strict code of moral ethics when it came to the issue of violence and abuse:

“I drew the line at drugs so maybe for me, you could say there was a very strict limit of right and wrong. OK each to their own, but something like that I switch off, I don’t want to know. As for a limit, yes, violence, taking a life, verbal abuse I think there is no need for that either. Why people can’t just talk without being offensive! I know right from wrong ... I would describe myself as a normal down-to-earth person, I am ambitious ... you have to be but the community and the area does not permit for that. If you think outside the box around here everyone shuts off” (Terry; 25, NGP).

“It’s wrong to play with guns and things like that ... any form of violence against others is wrong! Well with brothers going to jail and things like that ... to be fair, I think I am OK. I mean out of seven brothers, three have been to jail ... so I think I have done alright” (Jed; 23, EDSGM).

Moreover, in comparison to DSGMs, the study noted no real issues surrounding participants and the question of masculinity and the perception of the opposite sex. From the perspective of personal ambition, the study found distinct themes compared to the DSGM sample. This was recognised as being mainly due to one of the three strategies (street friendship avoidance, street friendship diversion, and

peer self-exclusion, see pp.162-163) taken by participants. Specifically, such strategies had become triggers for participants to empower themselves. This resulted not only in continued non-membership of DSGs for those participants who had completely avoided involvement but also sustained disengagement from DSG membership by former members. Further, from such strategies, participants had developed a self-initiating motivation. In sum, participants were not only identifying specific aspirations/careers (*'directed objectives'*) but also actively following through with an effort to attain those ambitions with a greater level of confidence, for instance through making phone enquiries, filling in application forms etc. (identified in the coding as *'proactive objectives'*). This had resulted in consequences that included first or further qualifications, non-vocational training/volunteering or employment which gave individuals a more determined outlook on life as highlighted in the testimony of NGPs Pete, Neil, and EDSGMs Terry and Patrick:

“At the moment just trying to get back to admin work and I am using this charity work for Vee’s Place as a way of getting that kind of experience” (Pete; 25, NGP).

“I am doing joinery in September with Liverpool Community College was accepted” (Neil; 18, NGP).

“I have three A Levels and a few GCSE, I have been working as an admin assistant. Would like to go to University if I can ... looking to study Maths or something in Health. So, the plan is to look at the situation and whether I could afford to go and live” (Terry; 25, NGP).

“Well, at 19 I was still hanging around with the lads on the street and in the day doing fuck all. One day I just thought fuck this I need to get out there and do something, so started going the library looking on the net for courses, didn’t do that well at school so that was the first step. Found an apprenticeship in

bricklaying that led to a job with Balfour Beatty. I help put up the big school on the field by the river Alt ... pity no one uses it” (Patrick; 22, EDSGM).

The study found that through realisation and rational choice, NGP/EDSGM participants were generating new opportunities wherein bonding with legitimate agencies, which strengthened as well as the developed a stronger self-identity. In particular, the study noted that participants residing in the Stockbridge Village location made no reference to either being afraid of or having experienced, any form of social stigma from those outsiders they had met. This was in contrast to observations made by Pharaoh (2011) in his unpublished report to Knowsley Borough Council (KMBC) asserting that part of the estate’s problem was that it was too insular, with most of the residents fearing “outsider stigma when leaving the estate” (p. 2). The study found that such outsiders had in fact not only become part of an extended friendship network but, on an individual level, had also contributed to a new form of confidence and motivated outlook or the future.

5.4 School Context

For the participants in the NGPs/EDSGM sample, the study noted that, unlike DSGM participants, it was not a case of recalling a period of complete failure, rather one of either reluctantly reflecting on their disappointment at not achieving the potential they saw in themselves or recalling a period of real, actual accomplishment. This can be exemplified in the narratives of NGPs Terry and Les:

“I got six GCSEs at school, then on to Knowsley Community College to do A levels. I liked school no worries, no bills ... best days of your life. You don’t know it at the time, but they are and it goes so quickly” (Terry; 25, NGP).

“School was not good, but not bad either ... a bit of in between. I went when I needed to and the lesson

interested me. I got a few GCSEs at school, three I think all grade C, but I was working as well don't forget. That didn't affect me. I just wasn't interested in learning academic stuff ... although I am now because I want to move up the ladder and I realise I should have put more effort into that part of school. At the time, it was just a routine everyday thing I had to do, but it was the best time of my life and it is true what they say no responsibility and no worries" (Les; 23, NGP).

As observed with the DSGM sample, a portion of the narrative from some NGPS/EDSGM participants focused on the issue of bullying. For NGPs Liam and EDSGM Ben it formed part and parcel of the transition from juniors to senior school life, something that could be managed. For EDSGM Karl, the experience was something of a learning curve towards manhood:

"I enjoyed school apart from the bullying when I started in the seniors" (Liam; 24, NGP).

"Bullying did affect me, but at the time I did not realise it. As I got into the sixth form I built a solid shell around me. Now I am matured enough to know that bullies are just cowards ... I wasn't fond of school, not in terms of the lessons, but the people in school ... bullies (Ben; 24, EDSGM).

"I was also bullied for a little bit and tried to fit in but then as I got older I thought what I am doing and I learnt to stand up for myself, not so much being violent, but being more assertive if that's what you call it" (Karl; 24, EDSGM).

The NGP/EDSGM participants expressed a range of different reflections, NGP Pete reflected on his failure to achieve his potential. In contrast, EDSGMs Ben, and Karl were academic achievers. For them, school represented a time when inner resilience was tested and reinforced:

“At the time, I despised my school days, I really did, but on reflection, I wish I had put a little bit more time in. When I did the truancy... I would look back and think I wish I could adjust that whole period cos it would have played in my favour a lot towards my GCSE results ... It was just a lot of confusion about the teaching. I had one set of teachers who taught you and how she treated you, basically I thought I didn't have to put up with this, so I would just go to the classes I wanted to ... My attendance at school was good ... it was impossible to sag because if I wanted to then, I would have to make sure my brother would as well and he wasn't like that, so my attendance was about 99%. In fact, I got a good attendance certificate off the headmaster at assembly, my first ever certificate” (Pete; 25, NGP).

“As I got into sixth form there was a lot of opportunities there for me. I really enjoyed sixth form even though it was based in the same school but in a separate building, so you could sort of relate to the people you are with, in the same building as opposed to it being one big circle ... I was seen as the typical quiet geek kid. I was in the school football team that was full of those people we have been talking about ... the bullies and stuff. I didn't say a word in the changing rooms. They were all very vocal and I would say I was the quiet kid. While they did not exclude me, but they did not exactly make me feel comfortable ... I got twelve GCSEs I was a member of the school national football team who reached a cup final. I also received the Tony Burnum memorial award for business studies” (Ben; 24, EDSGM).

“As kids, we were taken to school by my mum and dad. They would take it in turns to walk us ... Wasn't that academic at school but I gave it a good go. Think the teachers were a problem if you had a Scally accent you were labelled a bit ... Although I wasn't that good at school, I still got a good few GCSE's not great, but I got seven, 4 grade Cs, 2 at grade B and a D” (Karl; 24, EDSGM).

Interestingly, like the DSGMs, some NGP/EDSGM participants spoke of their affiliation to a male teacher as exemplified by Terry and NGP Patrick:

“Mr. Atkinson, he was my favourite. Lovely man, think he is retired now” (Terry; 25, NGP).

“Mr. Hay my sports teacher, we really got on. He had a good sense of humour too. You could have a laugh with him and he played Rugby when he was young. It got out that he had a nickname when he played, ‘stabber Hay’, so I use to take the piss out of him and he would just laugh” (Patrick; 22, EDSGM).

5.5 Peer Context

With the subject of peer friendship networks, the study noted a significant difference in terms of how participants of the two samples viewed their connections. As the first source of social face-to-face networking, the NGP/EDSGM sample, like those of their DSGM counterparts saw school as the primary originating conduit that brought peers together. In the first instance, this provided an initial location for first friendships and secondly, participants used those friendships as a networking springboard to meet other older acquaintances in the streets. However, unlike DSGM participants, individuals of the NGP/EDSGM sample recalled both school and street friendship networks largely in the past tense. These were seen as transient rather than having any particular longevity or lifelong sustaining impact. This can be clearly seen in the narratives provided by Terry, and EDSGM Patrick:

“I met my mates same as my brother in school, St Brigid’s Primary, Stockbridge first, then on the street. They’re the only places you can meet friends when you’re a kid. Although as we both grew up, me and my brother got into other things and interests than other people we knew” (Terry; 25, NGP).

“Well, I have quite a few mates, but in different groups, if you know what I mean. Some like the ones I met from the estate, the ‘dickheads’, I have left behind. Some in work and when I went back to education ... to college. They’re the ones I hang about with now; we do the same things. I have a lot in common with them, a lot more than the ones I messed about with. I have outgrown them. I also have friends from school but don’t really speak to them anymore, nothing really in common. I left the estate last year and have moved on from that life now, so I just want to leave that behind draw a line in the sand” (Patrick; 22, EDSGM).

For some of the participants, upon reflection, there was a gradual realisation that such acquaintanceships were quite static and more of an obstacle to progression than any form of productive, valuable social capital. For others, in more stable family environments, a protected childhood meant that exposure to potentially deviant peers on the street was either avoided, through increased time spent in the household or diverted through time spent on family activities or interests guided by a parent. The testimonies of Pete and Terry highlight this:

“Well, my childhood friends were based on the fact that I lived on the same street so that meant that we did pretty much everything together ... But as you get older, your friends change; my current friends are based upon the jobs I have had in the past and friendship that I have built upon that ... There is a wide range of friends because basically my friends don’t know each other and I like it that way. So, it’s like I can appreciate people’s different personalities” (Pete; 25, NGP).

“My dad was into martial arts, so he introduced both of us into that and then we went from school to Roby College so we started to pick new friends outside where we lived. As for the ones in the school well, we left them behind, still see a few, but it’s strange. You both know each other, but you never let on ... strange

that, isn't it? When we both hung around with our mates from the street it was just hanging around the parks and in each other's house, playing the Xbox. Some of the lads I knew were into weed; it never really interested me or my brother probably because of the martial arts thing. They did not have the same interests and just wanted to stay in the same rut ... hanging around street corners or by the shops smoking weed. I still see them now, pass them on the bus. They are older, but doing the same thing ... sad really" (Terry; 25, NGP).

The significant outcome of these factors resulted in participants having opportunities to develop friendship networks beyond the limited scope of their neighbourhood/area. This appeared to allow each individual to cultivate a more diverse form of social capital. Such network diversity offered a wider array of legitimate values and mores, as opposed to the common bounded predominantly deviant value system of the restricted friendship network found on the street. While some did admit initial membership of a DSG as a result of friendship networks triggered at school and the street (the EDSGMs), others, in contrast, decided to completely refrain from involvement. In order to protect themselves, participants adopted one of three strategies after this period of 'realisation and rational choice'; they were street friendship avoidance, street friendship diversion or peer self-exclusion.

Street friendship avoidance involved a participant witnessing anti-social and/or offending behaviour of peers. As a result, they feared involvement in future incidents and potential negative consequences. As a result, they resorted to using avoidance tactics as a strategy in order to evade such situations. An example of this tactic can be seen in the narrative of EDSGM Patrick:

"Well, I would be lying if I said I wasn't part of a group of lads ... who did terrorise people. I was with them, yes, but never did anything. I was too scared to really get involved with some of the shit they were

doing. I was outside so to speak, if anything was going down I made sure I was busy indoors that night or had this trick. I would deliberately get grounded and that would be my excuse” (Patrick; 22, EDSGM).

Street friendship diversion took the form of participants having an awareness of DSGs in their residential location, however, because of some form of joint parental activity, such individuals were diverted from any long-term active acquaintanceship. Such diversion in turn, resulted in friendship expansion beyond that found in the school and the street. An example of this tactic can be evidenced by the testimony of NGP Terry:

“Probably because me and my brother, we had other interests which as I said took us away from that way of life ... We wanted more and if you want more you have to try and create chances for yourself and you can start by looking at your interests. My dad got us interested in the martial arts thing, and then education played a role. It wasn't the actual things themselves, it was, the chances [opportunities] because they gave us the chance to go outside of the people we knew from the area and meet new people with different interest as well as ones similar to ours so we quickly outgrew the people on the estate” (Terry; 25, NGP).

Peer self-exclusion involved participants recalling being exposed to anti-social behaviour and instances of offending, through either hearsay or in the case of EDSGMs, by witnessing such acts by peers as part of a group. However, rather than being excluded from normative peer group activities by groups, participants described a decision-making process that led to straight-forward self-exclusion, exemplified in the narrative of EDSGM Jed:

“I admit, I did hang around with a few of the lads around my area for a bit, then I saw all the stuff they

we're up to. Wrecking cars, robbing houses ... I was up for a bit of a laugh but when it starts getting heavy like that, especially the houses just wasn't for me. After a few weeks I just drifted away" (Jed; 23, EDSGM)

Just like DSGM participants who bonded together on the street, individuals of NGP/EDSGM sample did admit to feeling the need to adjust to new acquaintanceships as context dictated. However, this was seen as a transient phase. This is exemplified in the narrative contributions of NGPs Pete and Terry:

"How do my friends beyond the estate see me? That's a classic; I think it would vary from person to person. Basically, what I said before you have to adapt to different ways of talking to them. I think with my friend who has got these left-wing ideas he will probably call me pretentious on a joking level" (Pete; 25, NGP).

"My new friends don't see the original me when I use to hang around with scallies no. I think people change ... but that change must come through you by creating chances that allow you as a person to grow and change. If the chances are not there then you can't change. So far as the real me what is the real you or me? I think we change constantly as we move from one area to the next. They see the real you in that moment you are that person" (Terry; 25, NGP).

5.6 Neighbourhood Context

From the testimonies taken from the NGP/EDSGM participants, there appeared to be a significant difference in terms of how the young people of both samples were using their place and space. In relation to the NGP/EDSGM participants, the study observed that this sample had developed extended friendship networks as a result of socially migrating (bridging) beyond their residential localities to other neighbourhoods/communities. In sum, escaping the presence of both

DSG peers in the community and the political policy that had contributed to the banality, boredom and persecution of young people within that community. The process had provided each individual with new avenues for generating fresh opportunities and developing even further social networks. This in turn, had become a major influence on motivation about the future as can be seen in the narratives of NGPs Brian, Karl Neil and EDSGM Brian:

“I knew a lot of wrongins, but I was always busy with other stuff in the house. It was my mum who kept me occupied and it was that stuff I would say made me stay away from the madness on the street. In the end, I made friends outside of the area, sensible people who thought about what they wanted to do in the future as opposed to smashing things up. Thankfully, that has rubbed off on me” (Brian; 24, NGP).

“I saw the crap that was going on around our street with people I knew. I wanted no part of it. So, I decided that I wasn’t going to get involved, it was no big deal. You could see the mess some of these lads were getting into and that alone put me off any involvement with them. Today I have friends from all over other areas, I don’t see or want to know any of the people on my street anymore, I have nothing in common with them except living in that street” (Karl; 24, NGP).

“I was with my mates when they were burning cars and attacking houses, but to be honest it scared me. I didn’t want to end up with a bad name that would affect my career choices. In the end, I got out of that part quite a bit. I always had a good excuse not to go out on certain days that I knew would involve doing mad stuff. In the end, I found other friends outside of the area. It’s not that far to travel and I have a lot more in common with them they have taught me new things and in a way, I have seen what’s possible if you put your mind to stuff and get out the area” (Neil; 18, NGP).

“Just finding new friends who shared the same interests, I think that was key in my decision to go get a lace at university” (Brian; 24, EDSGM)

Thus, as new opportunities were generated and social networks extended, the ties to legitimate society became further strengthened and the bonds within old restricted friendship networks loosened. Eventually they were relinquished through the development of fresh friendships, beliefs, and moral values.

5.7 Conclusion

From the analysis of twenty-four interviews of NGP/EDSGM participants on Merseyside, the study recognised that all of the variables presented in the causal and intervening conditions, context, strategies and the central phenomenon as illustrated in the NGP/EDSGM paradigm model (figure 3., p. 149) could be positioned in one or more of the five protective domains (table 11.).

Table 11. Protective Factors

Table 11.	
Protective domains	Key themed variables identified
Family	Stronger family bonds/ties
Individual	Evidence of morality as a result of influence from parent/s (stronger bonds), better self-esteem and confidence
School	Perception of education as a career aspirational asset
Peer	Structure of friendship networks/peer interaction extended beyond the school, street and residential area. Social mixing
Neighbourhood	Social migration through parental diversion tactics and self-initiation

Taken together, all of the strands contributed to levels of protection that as a major consequence not only deterred NGPs from membership of DSGs, but also EDSGM participants in their detachment from further involvement. Moreover, other resulting consequences indicated positive outcomes for each individual. These included the development of extended friendship networks through social migration, the self-empowerment and motivation to gain qualifications both at college and university and training via voluntary work and paid employment. The most significant factor the research identified in the NGP/EDSGM sample was the rational thinking approach brought about as a result of stronger parental and social bonds. Further, through self-initiating a series of opportunities beyond the residential neighbourhood, participants were presented with the opportunity to mix socially (bridge) with individuals from other areas and, as a result, develop positive social capital that resulted in the creation of different value systems with a law abiding frame of reference.

The following chapter will now provide a discussion of the findings.

Chapter Six: Discussion

6. Introduction

The use of biographic narrative as a methodological approach together with grounded theory has proved to be a successful combination. The method provided a way of identifying variables within the five risk domains that make young people on Merseyside vulnerable to DSG membership and the factors that continue to drive such membership. It also enabled the identification of protective aspects within the same locations that impacted on young people who choose to abstain or disengage from DSG involvement. From the grounded analysis of all 44 BNIM (Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method) interviews, the study noted a stark similarity between the two samples.

The core category identified, was how young people on Merseyside coped with marginalisation and limited opportunity under the growing presence and influence of DSGs. The results have supported the earlier work of Smithson et al. (2009) whose research findings on young people and DSGs on Merseyside highlighted the mounting impact of multiple risk factors across all five domains ('family', 'individual', 'school', 'individual' 'peer' and 'neighbourhood') with increasing DSG involvement²³. This chapter will discuss the study's findings, as well as its contribution to the existing academic knowledge base. As with the previous chapters this will be conducted through the lens of the same risk and protective factors domains ('family', 'individual', 'school', 'individual' 'peer' and 'neighbourhood').

²³ Smithson et al. (2009) also note that "the most comprehensive method of establishing risk factors for gang membership is longitudinal study" (p. 32). Examples of such research would be the Seattle Social Developmental Project which commenced in 1981 and the Rochester Youth Development Study which began in 1988. However, in examining these in the context of DSGs in any part of the UK caution and consideration should be noted before attempting to transfer findings.

6.1 Family Context

Numerous studies have explored the impact of the family on young people in many social aspects (Velleman, Templeton and Copello, 2004; Gillies, 2010), DSG membership/non-membership has been no exception. From the perspective of this study's exploration of membership/non-membership of DSGs on Merseyside, the research found evidence of dysfunctional upbringing being a risk variable in the family domain. This included poor and violent parenting, inappropriate father/father figure socialisation as well as evidence of previous criminality in the family. Interestingly for both DSGMs and NGPs/EDSGMs, the structure of the family appeared to take on one of three forms. Firstly, parental absence, that is the absence through domestic breakdown or bereavement of one of parent. Secondly, family unit re-organisation, involving married or partnerships splitting up. In this situation participants placed heavy emphasis on the resulting turmoil that emerged when the biological parent who entered a new relationship with a new partner. Thirdly, attention deficit, that is, parents failing to adequately provide an equal balance of positive attention to their offspring either because of prioritising an alcohol/drug habits or because of the number of offspring in the family.

The ramifications of these situations were observed to be especially traumatic to the participants of the DSGM sample. In particular, in the case of family unit re-organisation, the research noted that it was not always a case of an absent father that DSGM participants blamed for their upbringing. In particular, observations focused on father/father figure inappropriateness or failure of the father/father figure to adequately fulfil the role of a male parent. Writing on the subject of family structure and parental appropriateness, Young, Fitzgibbon and Silverstone (2013) have commented that "the conflicting picture regarding family structure and delinquency has led some scholars to suggest that family structure is less influential than the

quality of the relationship between parent and child” (p. 21). In particular, the authors support this contention by highlighting both McCord’s (1991) and Hirschi’s (1969) research. While McCord’s study involved 232 boys that showed how family structure is less influential than the quality of the relationship between parent and child, the focus of Hirschi’s study, placed emphasis on the strength of bonding and attachment between parents and offspring. Hirschi argues that when such bonds are strong young people will develop morally stable values and remain abstinent from delinquency. The McCord study showed how good parenting from either a joint or single parent household can make a difference in terms of protecting a child from deviant involvement including DSGs.

Moreover, Clarke (2008) highlights an Ofsted inspectors report on under-achievement by white boys from low- income homes. Clarke (2008) observes, that the report recommended that teachers should take on the mantle of father figure role models with the aim of correctly socialising young boys. Interestingly, this study noted that many of the DSGM participants had described having a good, close and personal rapport with a favourite teacher all of whom had been male. The study also found, that the most brutal father figures that DSGM participants described were those who had themselves experienced a violent criminogenic upbringing.

Young et al. (2013) in considering a link between familial risk, criminality and DSG membership noted that:

Studies on delinquency have consistently found a link between delinquent parent behaviour and youthful criminality. Burr (1987), for example, in her ethnographic study of young heroin users in South London, found that the majority of young people in her sample grew up in households where family members shared a positive attitude towards drug taking or similar forms of law breaking behaviour (p. 23).

In contrast, however, the study observed that NGPs/EDSGMs, possessed fairly good levels of bonding with both joint and single parents/surrogates as a result of the quality of the actual parenting skills. While NGPs had a rather high level of parental bonding, in particular, psychological attachment, there was evidence that EDSGMs had experienced some form of positive parental connection. This was noted to be enough to feel valued as a member of the family unit. This, in turn, facilitated a protective buffering factor during a rational choice decision making process, when confronted with the option to become involved in DSGs and/or further DSG deviancy/criminal activity. Moreover, it was noted that moral values together with emotions such as shame, guilt, embarrassment and fear, were also being integrated into this decision making process. In addressing the issue of familial influence and DSGs, the study found evidence across all offender samples that DSGs can indeed act as a form of proxy familial support.

6.2 Individual Context

For those participants who had experienced such family dysfunction, the turmoil involved came with ramifications of emotional harm and pressure to form a recognised identity. Both of these variables represented a decrease in the level of empathy towards others in the community and as such represented a risk within the individual domain of DSG involvement. In the first instance, the study noted such consequences taking the form of a masculinity crisis either as a result of a lack of or suitable father/father figure able to provide legitimate, appropriate and acceptable male conduct. This was also coupled with the absence of blue-collar legitimate employment once seen as an outlet by young males to identify as the main provider. For DSGMs, the DSG was seen to fill these voids providing a psychological channel to counter such feelings of masculine inadequacy on two levels. Firstly, through acting

as a family surrogate with older members replacing the father/father figure as a mentor and secondly, as a means of filling the gap created by the lack of ‘macho’ employment through the opportunity to ‘graft’ (work) in the predominately male and masculine criminal underworld. As a result of such ‘grafting’ at the bottom level of a DSG, members could generate the potential to go higher up echelons of the DSG (from new member to established member) having served a form of delinquent apprenticeship or develop enough power and money via violence and ‘deviant entrepreneurship’ to identify as a major local crime figure within the community having transitioned from a DSGM to adult Organised Crime Group member. A further issue that the study recognised as fitting the individual risk domain was actually the boredom of marginalisation itself and the need for young people to find a way of countering the mental anguish that the chronic banality of a climate of austerity brings. In 1995, as part of the cultural criminology perspective, Ferrell and Sanders called for:

A criminology of the skin, a criminology that understands and analyzes everyday criminality on the level of pleasure and desire and explores the complex process by which criminal pleasures reproduce, redefine, and resist larger patterns of power, authority, and domination. For pornographers and graffiti writers, drug users and joy riders, the politics of criminality skip across the surface of the skin, and across the many moments of illicit pleasure and sensual excitement that their criminality exudes” (1995a, p. 316).

As noted in Chapter Two (p. 61), sociologist Stephen Lyng (1990, 2005, 2008) explored the theory of edgework, which involves the idea of voluntary risk-taking and the examination of its seductive nature, the chasing of danger that borders the boundaries of legal and illegal behaviour. Interviews with the DSGM sample, found support for

the existence of forms of criminal edgework and criminal eroticism. This was mainly derived from the notion of being 'bad'. The study noted, that the most intrinsically rewarding factors that appear to come from being part of a DSG for young males is the image, the excitement (adrenaline rush) and the sheer escapism. From this context, there was considerable narrative that centred on getting a 'buzz' (in many ways sexual as well). Particularly concerning, was the narrative that centred on what could be termed 'vicarious edgework' which emerged during interviews with some of the DSGMs. This was a form of risk taking which allegedly sees young women attracted to the 'bad boy' type of male in order to derive a form of excitement by proxy while at the same time, maintaining their own law abiding status. However as already noted (see pp. 131), further research is required to make any real empirical assertions and it must also be stressed here that such narrative was derived from solely male participants. Nevertheless, taken in sum, such complex and underlying motives for involvement in DSGs and in youth crime has implications for the effectiveness of current policies.

Further, today, it would appear that the desire to commit risk taking behaviour through the commission of crime via DSG membership can become even more appealing when individuals undergo de-individuation (see Chapter Two, p. 60), that is, anonymisation as a result of joining groups. The notion is best illustrated by Clarke (2003), who comments:

The theory is that in a large crowd each person is nameless and personal responsibility is diffused, as each is faceless and anonymous. There is diminished fear of retribution and a diluted sense of guilt. The larger the group the greater the anonymity and the more difficult the identification of a single individual (p. 93).

This can be exemplified, in the narrative of two participants, who each used the term '*blacked out*'. Both participants described how the all-weather brand of black North Face all-terrain clothing has become a primary identifier of DSGs around Merseyside. In addition, it was noted that it has also become a major factor in the de-individuation process, as the two participants further reflected that it became harder for police to identify specific individuals. Such an assertion, is reinforced in the media for example in news images showing the CCTV footage of Sean Mercer firing shots that killed a young innocent, 11-year-old Rhys Jones in 2011, have literally turned the North Face brand into a symbol not only of DSGs but also of badness on Merseyside. Today, such edgework driven DSGMs would indeed appear to be drawing on parallels with Hebdige's (1979) observations, that those individuals who mirror this militaristic all black attire, are projecting a symbolic violation of the social order in true '*semiotic guerrilla*' style warfare. Moreover, the study observed that such management of representation, was not just evident in attire, but also overlapped in the graffiti which talked of '*street soldiers*' while their state oppressors were awarded the branded tag of simply *FTM* ('*Fuck the Matrix*'). As Clarke (2003) notes, with de-individuation comes much greater freedom and a reduction of personal accountability, leading to moral disengagement (Bandura, 1990, 2002). Taken from a cultural criminological perspective, such uniformity, coupled with ways of talking²⁴ also add a hegemonically masculine and emblematic appeal for individuals to both identify with, and be identified as, DSG members. In sum, The last fifteen years have seen such dress/style and language emerge, its sub-cultural pattern much in line with Ferrell and Sanders (1995b) observations that:

²⁴ The study has noted that males on Merseyside and particularly DSGMs use the word '*lad*' and/or '*lid*' (as in '*kid*' virtually after every sentence to convey a form of masculine synergy.

To speak of a criminal subculture is to recognize not only an association of people, but a network of symbols, meaning, and knowledge. Members of a criminal subculture learn and negotiate “motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes;” develop elaborate conventions of language, appearance, and presentation of self; and in so doing participate, to greater or lesser degrees, in a subculture, a collective way of life (p. 4).

6.3 School Context

In addressing the domain of school, and its potential risk/protective effects on DSG membership/non-membership, the study notes observations made by Young, Fitzgibbon and Silverstone (2014) who have commented on how schooling has received far less attention than factors such as the family, individual, peer and neighbourhood. For the participants in this study across both samples of DSGMs and NGPs/EDSGMs, it was observed that school was seen as predominantly the initial source of first friendships. For the DSGMs, such early friendships were seen to be more fixed and durable. They had become the initial source for building deviant social capital. Put into the context of existing research literature, in an unpublished PhD thesis Ozarow (2012) observes that:

One important effect of delinquent behaviour is the impact of social influences and educational settings are key places for adolescent peer relationships to develop ... however, there has been a need for rich information to be obtained in this area to ascertain the reasons and provide further information with regard to the relationship; what comes first, association with delinquent peers or delinquent behaviour? (p. 2).

In this study, many of the DSGMs whose family had been involved with delinquent acts, had spoken of early pre-DSG/pre-secondary school delinquent behaviour (one participant recalled delinquent acts commencing at the age of nine). For both DSGMs and NGP/EDSGM samples in this study many of the risk factors that have become associated with the school factor domain were present, a need to fit in with popular school peers through displays of in-class anti-social/anti-authoritarian behaviour the latter of which also included truancy. The study also recognised narrative from DSGMs focusing on what Shute (2008) had observed as “school level risk factors ... properties of the institution” (p. 24) especially issues of bullying and labelling by teachers. On Merseyside, based on the testimony of DSGMs in this study, these would appear to represent the most powerful risk variables in the school domain. In comparison, for the NGPs/EDSGMs, school was seen in terms of more of an opportunity of what could have been. Interestingly, participants who were identified as EDSGMs, were seen to conform to behaviours embedded within social control theory (Hirschi, 1969) in particular, the second component in Hirschi’s (1969) theory (involvement). The study observed, that in four cases, EDSGMs were seen to have not only gained some form of qualifications but also to have re-attached themselves to education/training through involvement with employment/voluntary work. Such re-attachment to education also re-built their legitimate standing in the community, as well as responsibility, which resulted in these particular EDSGMs becoming even more reluctant to gamble away this new found active citizenship status. These outlets, have proved not only to be good examples for the effectiveness of Hirschi’s involvement component, but also, rich sources to develop further legitimate social capital with the potential to

become important buffering variables in the protective domain of individual, building both confidence and resilience against any future return to DSGs.

6.4 Peer Context

In writing about the crucial role that friendship networks play in the development of children Burk, Kerr and Stattin (2008) have observed that friendship networks do make an important contribution in the socialisation of children and adolescents mainly as a result of the considerable time spent with peers. Importantly, Burk et al. (2008) also note that while such peer interaction may go on to reinforce positive behaviours, it may also result in the creation of deviant anti-social actions too. Nowhere has Burke et al.'s observation been more evident than in the research focusing on risk and protection in the peer domain. Importantly, from this perspective, Burk et al. also observe that peer relationships can and often do lead to behavioural and attitudinal similarity between youth and their friends, a phenomenon academically referred to as *homophily*. Burk et al. (2008) further note that most empirical studies have concentrated on homophily related behaviours and deviancy including aggression" (p. 500).

Based on the premise that risk/protective variables existing within one domain can also be linked to other domains, it can be suggested that in the case of the peer domain, school and neighbourhood domains would also play a major part in a young person's friendship network. As DSGM participant, Tony, talking about his choice of friends and the influence of the local DSG, summed up, having been brought up in a neighbourhood possessing a chronic history of both adult and youth criminality including a heavy DSG presence, "it was on my doorstep, I had no choice". Writing on the subject of social capital, Putnam, 2000 highlights the distinction

between what he has noted as the two most important types of social capital, bonding and bridging.

Of all the dimensions along which forms of social capital vary, perhaps the most important is the distinction between bridging (or inclusive) and bonding (or exclusive). Some forms of social capital are, by choice a necessity, inward looking and tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups. Examples of bonding social capital include ethnic fraternal organisations, church based women's reading groups and fashionable country clubs ... Examples of bridging social capital include the civil rights movement, many youth service groups, and ecumenical religious organizations (p. 22).

In relating the two concepts more specifically to DSGs, Deuchar (2009) asserts "the usual argument is that young people need to move from bonding to bridging networks, where they transcend their immediate social circumstance so as to equip themselves for broader social inclusion" (p. 99). Clearly, high levels of bonding, with limited attempts to bridge in socially excluded communities, have become a fundamental issue that can be included within the peer domain. Over the years, it has become highly evident that many of the UK's socially excluded areas suffer from too much bonding as a result of marginalisation. From the analysis of the two samples, it became increasingly apparent that differences in friendship networks and subsequent social capital did indeed become a significant variable in the decision to completely abstain or become involved in DSG membership. The study identified two patterns of friendship network:

Restricted friendship network. This type of network was identified mainly from the narrative of the DSGMs. Here, most participants described having developed friendships and acquaintanceships, initially at school and street levels. As a

consequence, values and beliefs that each young person possessed appeared to be one-dimensional and had become bound over time, with constant reinforcement coming from peers who shared the same views. Put simply, the study finds support for the consequences of too much bonding and no bridging as a risk variable within the peer domain. That young disenfranchised people who have friendship networks restricted to locality, have very restricted or no opportunity to develop any form of diverse social capital with the potential to create value and belief variety.

Importantly, despite some narrative from participants focusing on bullying, the study found no real evidence to support observations made by Moffitt, 1993 (see Chapter Two, pp. 68-69) that suggests that the individuals who do abstain from DSG membership do so because they are blocked from entering potential deviant friendship networks and committing risk taking behaviour because they lack the social (i.e., smoking, drinking, sex, drugs) or physical credibility required. However, what became apparent in this study was that such individuals were actually allowed into DSGs. This was seen mainly to be as a result of a gullibility factor that made such young people easy targets to influence. It was those participants who often described themselves as being or playing ‘class clown’ at school to gain acceptance, who in most circumstances, they succeeded in being accepted into DSGs.

Extended friendship network. This type of network was identified mainly from the narrative of the NGPs/EDSGMs. In this instance the study noted a process that first involved one of three situations taking place:

- A) Having initially established a friendship network similar to that of DSGMs, that is, from the school and the street, a decision was later made by the participant (notably an EDSGMs) to avoid this network by providing excuses (i.e., homework

commitment or being grounded by parent/s). This, it appeared, was after being exposed to extreme acts of anti-social behaviour or violence. The researcher termed this behaviour '*street friendship avoidance*' (see Chapter Five, p. 162).

B) For participants who fell into the NGP category it was a case of being protected by parents from street corner acquaintanceship. This was mainly achieved through parent/s acting as buffering zones. That is, actively involving themselves with their offspring. This was noted to be through parents offering alternative opportunities to get away from the area (i.e., on day trips or engaging in joint after school activities such as martial arts) allowing their children to meet new peers and access alternative opportunities. This was a process the study termed '*street friendship diversion*' (see Chapter Five, p. 163).

C) Again as in situation (A) participants (EDSGMs) recalling being exposed to group anti-social behaviour and offending directly in one incident or indirectly, as a result of school and street peer hearsay decided to completely abstain from involvement in deviant street groups altogether before becoming embedded. The study termed this process as '*peer self-exclusion*' (see Chapter Five, pp. 163-164).

In situation (A), it was a case of rational choice (Siegal and McCormick, 2006) that is, anticipated negative outcomes combined with moral conscience/moral values (e.g., showing empathy for potential victims). This process, appeared to have been derived from the building up of stronger attachment bonds with parents and their support and passive supervision through involvement in pro-social activity (Hirschi, 1969). It was also noted, that the process also incorporated emotional feelings such as fear, as a result of exposure to a level of DSG related anti-social behaviour (ASB) or violence, guilt and embarrassment and the subsequent shame of being caught. Thus, since these latter factors are recognisable emotions, it is a decision making process that is exceeding the boundaries of rational choice theory. Such observations are supported by the work of De Haan and Vos (2003), Lyng (2005) and Yar (2009).

Each of these situations had positive consequences for the NGP/EDSGM participants future choice of friends. In the case of situation (A) and (C), because of fear and feeling of disillusionment felt, participants cultivated new acquaintanceships through some form of training and employment, away from their locality. In situation (B) the input of the parent/s as a buffering zone had been instrumental in diverting negative street peer risk away from offspring, but with education also having been a primary driver. In all three cases, the result was the development of opportunities to foster extended friendship networks outside of the residential locality. This in turn, allowed NGPs/EDSGMs to gain some form of diverse social capital through social mixing¹⁷ (bridging). Further evidence for the impact of social mixing/bridging beyond locality on NGPs/EDSGMs was also identified in the in narrative surrounding in the aspirational goals of both samples.

In the case of the DSGMs, a pattern that is categorised as verbal planning, or directed objectives were recognised. That is, participants spoke about ambition, yet had no proactive strategies to realise such goals. In contrast, in describing their career aspirations, there was a more

action orientated response from NGPs/EDGM participants that involved going beyond just verbal planning. Here individuals showed evidence of what was categorised as proactive objectives. That is, by following up personal ambitions with active attempts to realise career goals (for example, wanting to become a youth worker and actually approaching youth clubs for work experience). In many of the NGP/EDSGM narratives, the influences new acquaintances had, in terms of positive value transfer, ambition and goal setting, became highly prominent.

6.5 Neighbourhood Context

In examining this final domain and its links with the findings of this study, it is worth noting Shute's (2008) comment, that DSGs emerge as a product of the conditions of a neighbourhood. Communities, which typify 'multiple marginality' will create the conditions for groups of young people who want to identify and be identified by whatever opportunities they can find. Merton's (1968) ideas surrounding 'innovation' within strain theory would perhaps best encapsulate this observation. The social processes that shape risk and protection in the neighbourhood domain can be traced back to the very first theories embedded in the roots of social disorganisation. From a contemporary context, the study notes the impact of government policy brought about as a result of austere and neo-liberalist philosophy. Over the last decade, such policy (it could to be argued a valid risk factor in itself) has continued to limited opportunity through prudent approaches but also from a youth justice perspective, divert the cause of anti-social behaviour, DSGs and youth crime away from its tangible roots of social inequality and marginalisation to one of individual and familial blame.

While this study is not an attempt to compare the specifics of different field locations in describing findings that would fit into the neighbourhood domain, what the research did recognise was a marked difference in terms of how DSGs are evolving. While observations

largely support the two forms of Merseyside DSG as identified by Smithson et al. (2009), structured and loose the determining factor behind the actual shaping of DSG's in this way (something that Smithson et al. failed to fully explore) appears to be the proximity of DSG prevalent areas to the city centre. That is, the closer to the city centre of Liverpool and the night-time economy (demand for drugs) DSG locations are, the more structured, prominent and territorially conscious DSGs appear to become. This would appear to increase the neighbourhood level of risk of DSG membership within each of the Merseyside communities, becoming higher the closer the to the city centre the community is. DSGs in areas near to the city centre have recognised the financial potential of recreational drugs as a form of lucrative employment/business ('grafting'/'grafts') that also provides a masculine identity. This was a theme the study identified that was derived directly from testimony of DSGMs in these close-to-city centre locations and was categorised as 'deviant entrepreneurship'. The study observed, again through narrative from the same DSGMs that such DSGs became more business orientated as a result of the direct influence of adult organised crime in this area. Such deviant entrepreneurship/entrepreneurism has also been reinforced by the work of Densley (2013) who claims that young people have identified a financial niche for their DSGs, as community contraband carriers for bigger and less visible figures in organised crime. Moreover, in an earlier paper Densley (2012) contends:

Gangs evolve from adolescent peer groups and the normal features of street life in their respective neighbourhoods. In response to external threats and financial commitments, they grow into drug-distribution enterprises. In some cases, gangs then acquire the necessary special resources of violence, territory, secrecy, and intelligence that enable them to successfully regulate and control the production and distribution of one or more given commodities or services unlawfully (p. 517).

Further, Densley noted, “The gang now often represents both ‘*crime that is organized*’ and ‘*organized crime*’” (p. 518). These two elements Densley asserts, are quite distinct, with the first representing crime that involves cooperation, the adoption of roles, a degree of planning and specialist skill with the second, referring to what Densley calls “monopolistic control” (p. 518) over the production and distribution of a commodity and/or service. However, what Densley fails to consider, is that this dichotomy of structure can be dictated by the type of location and the influences from within those locations, in essence, the space and place in which DSGs operate.

Such observations are also supported by the earlier work of Hagedorn (1998). Hagedorn suggests, “the work of drug dealing in [a] central city is, in many ways an innovative, entrepreneurial, small-business venture” (p. 21). Further, Hagedorn’s research revealed significant differences between the ways drugs are distributed in poor inner-city neighbourhoods. After surveying 28 drugs-selling businesses that employed a total of 191 people, Hagedorn observed that in inner-city areas, drugs are a major employer of young, excluded and minority males. In concluding, Hagedorn asserts that in the city centre environment drug sales are no longer based around the street corner, but “have in fact transformed into a more mobile, less risky, innovative entrepreneurial venture” (p. 21). Such contentions were further typified in this study in the narratives of two DSGMs, who referred to their DSG with the more business orientated label of ‘*firm*’ and the term ‘*service*’²⁵ when speaking of drug dealing with a buyer.

In addition the study supported through the narrative of some DSGMs, observations made by Pitts (2008) that DSGMs in inner city areas, assess their environment for the level of territoriality and violence

²⁵ This ‘service’ is now also complemented with text marketing messages to regular consumers with discounts of buying three bags of ‘*lemo*’ (cocaine) for £50, and get one free offers.

involving firearms and knives. If a young person/s concludes that the area is one that involves the prevalence DSGs who possess firearms and knives, they will seek to possess them or, at the very least, have them within accessible reach for symbolic, defensive, and offensive purposes. During interviews with one DSGM, there was an acknowledgment that weapons, particularly firearms, had become a major factor, as DSGMs who ‘grafted’ in the area ‘*tooled up*’ for the purpose of self- protection. Further support for this can be seen in the work of Smithson et al. (2009) who have reported that:

Very few young people report carrying a weapon with the proactive intent of using it against others, protection is the key motivation ... the notions of ‘gang’ or ‘gun culture’ are too simplistic to adequately explain why young people carry and use guns as it fails to explain both the symbolic and instrumental motivations for the user (p. 7)

In examining the neighbourhood domain from the perspective of NGPs/EDSGMs, the placing of social mixing (bridging) in this domain as well as that of peer highlights the potential impact as a protective variable both outside and inside marginalised communities. The unknown authors of ‘*Social Mixing; the solution for social and ethnic segregation?*’ from the European Urban Knowledge Network [EUKN] (2012) commented that:

... bridging is argued to produce a number of benefits for individuals, communities and governments. Through interaction with residents of other socio-economic characteristics, mixed urban areas will provide their residents with more varied social networks, enhanced social capital, and in particular access to new networks for employment. Based on social capital theory, through the new wider range of connections, job opportunities are more likely to emerge (p. 4).

The EUKN paper focuses firstly on what has been called *neighbourhood effects* or “The impact of the place where people live” (p. 6). The paper reports a general framework of six social neighbourhood factors that can also highlight how variables existing within each of the five risk and protective domains can interact. They include: “Quality of local services”, “Socialisation by adults”, “Social networks”, “Exposure to crime and violence”, “Physical distance and isolation” (p. 6) . Further, the paper “written by the EUKN on behalf of the Danish Presidency of the Council of the European Union (Ministry of Housing, Urban and Rural Affairs)”, comments that “The central idea is however that social mixing can lead to social cohesion, which in its turn increases the social capital of local residents” (p. 4). While this study does not attempt to argue the case for social mixing being a major trigger for directly creating opportunities in poorer areas, what it has observed is that social mixing can certainly be a positive contributing factor. In the past, social mixing has been something that has been firmly scrutinised by academics within urban studies. From this perspective social mixing has been largely associated with gentrification, the idea that by encouraging more affluent individuals into run down communities this will create better social inclusivity. However, as Lees (2008) has pointed out new policies surrounding this type of social mixing require further critical attention. Past examples of gentrification have shown that more often than not, social mixing in this context has resulted in friction between the new refurbished property owning residents and the old welfare dependent post war dwelling renters. What the findings of this research suggest is that social mixing does have the potential to be a protective variable in both peer and neighbourhood domains where young people and DSG membership is concerned, providing the balance is right. Moreover, there must also be consideration of the form social mixing takes which in the case of young people in DSG prevalent and high youth crime areas

should be in the form of short term activities involving outsiders coming in (bridging inwards) as well as encouraging those young people to migrate out.

6.6 Conclusion

This study has sought to address the issue of DSG membership and non-membership on Merseyside by identifying variables existing within the five domains of risk and protection. In doing so, the study has managed to identify several factors that fit with these domains. The family domain included negative parental socialisation and parental appropriateness. The Individual domain involved destructive emotional feelings as a result of family dysfunction contributing to their involvement in DSGs and subsequent edgework risk-taking behaviour, including criminality involving drug dealing both as a means of gaining masculine identity and employment (grafting/deviant entrepreneurship/delinquent apprenticeship). The school domain involved negative perceptions of school, not as a place to acquire an education but as a place where initial friendships are forged and where anti-social and anti-authoritarian behaviour starts. This was coupled with what Shute (2008) has called “school-level factors” (p. 24) or failures of the institution itself including bullying by peers and labelling by teachers. The peer domain included restricted friendship networks, peer interaction restricted to the school and street acquaintances, resulting in values being bounded, evidence of directed aspirational objectives, that is, planning a career, but failing to follow the step necessary to achieve it. The neighbourhood domain involved young people in highly marginalised areas with limited opportunity and demonised by government policies, resorting to high levels of youth crime and DSG involvement which shaped mental attitude and identity.

From the viewpoint of NGPS/EDSGMs the study noted the following differences that emerged as protective variables within the five domains. In the family domain there was evidence of stronger ties to the family, more stability despite some similar dysfunctional issues to DSGMs. In the individual domain there was evidence of morality as a result of parental influence, bonding with parent/s and legitimate figures (teachers (internal bridging)) and institutions. In the peer domain friendship networks extended beyond the school and the street as a consequence of social migration resulting in social mixing (outward bridging), values and beliefs becoming more diverse and open resulting in both directed and proactive career focus (action as well as planning). The school domain involved more motivation for education, evidenced through qualifications obtained and further post-school study/training. The neighbourhood domain included social migration initially as a result of more protective parenting, through diversion tactics (days out/or parental/offspring joint activity) as well as self-initiated migration.

The study will now present a conclusive summary of the research including recommendations, self-reflection of the research journey, study advantages and disadvantages and the potential area for future research.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7. Concluding Observations

The aim of this thesis was to examine why some individuals with similar backgrounds do or do not become involved in deviant street groups. The study has drawn on samples of participants located in various areas of Merseyside. In reviewing the literature, it became increasingly clear that such is the depth and amount of research that has been carried out on the topic of gangs that a systematic search strategy needed to be adopted. This was undertaken with the focus being concentrated on: gang membership and non-membership (including disengagement), and differences in risk/protective variables from within the five domains: 'family', 'individual', 'school', 'peer' and 'neighbourhood'.

In terms of data collection, based on the number of studies that have focused on semi-structured interviews, it was decided to adopt a more novel approach utilising a form of Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) adapted for young people (Hesketh, 2014a). In total forty-four participants were interviewed using the BNIM approach consisting of two sub-sessions. Analysis involved the use of grounded theory, which together with BNIM formed a hybrid method. Like all research projects focusing on this topic, of primary consideration was the question of definition. To address this the study adopted the Euro-gang Weerman et al. (2009) definition not only because it is at the time of writing it is still the closest academia has come to developing a 'universal' definition but most importantly, it matched the defining characteristics of the 26 Deviant Street Group Member (DSGM) participants who self-reported as being members of a deviant street group. The 11 Non-Group Participants (NGPs) were recruited on the basis of self-reporting as abstaining from membership of DSGs, characteristics of which again, met Weerman et al.'s (2009) defining criteria. During initial first sub-session interviews, it became apparent that some 7 participants who had self-reported as not being members of

DSGs had in fact been involved, but upon exposure to some form of anti-social behaviour/violence/criminality had immediately disengaged before becoming embedded within the group as an established and recognised member. For this reason such participants were designated Ex-Deviant Street Group Members (EDSGMs). The findings have highlighted several differences between young people on Merseyside who are drawn to DSG membership and those who are not. In particular, differences in quality of parenting (family), emotional feelings as a result of parenting and environment, the latter of which includes risk taking behaviour (edgework), (individual/neighbourhood), perception of school and education (school), friendship networks (peer) and perception of environment (neighbourhood). Figure 4 and 5 (pp. 191-192) provide a visual summary of the main findings placed in the five domains.

Figure 4. Summary of DSGM Main Findings Placed into the Five Domains (Risk)

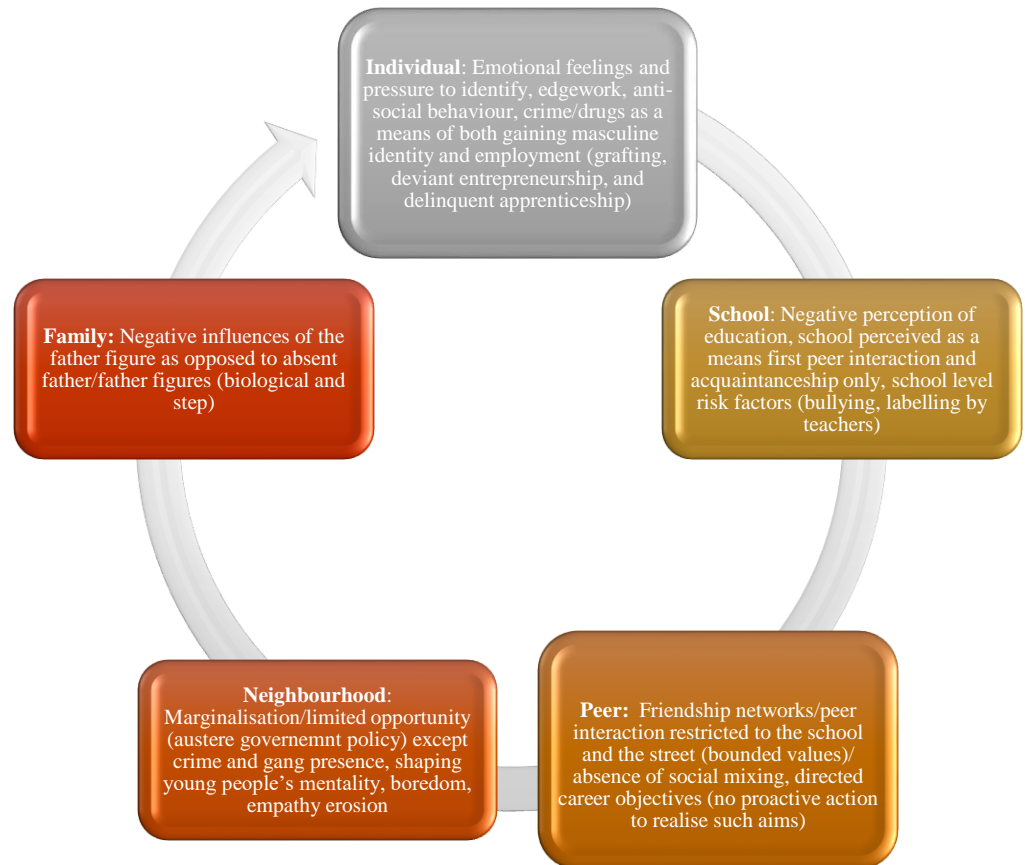
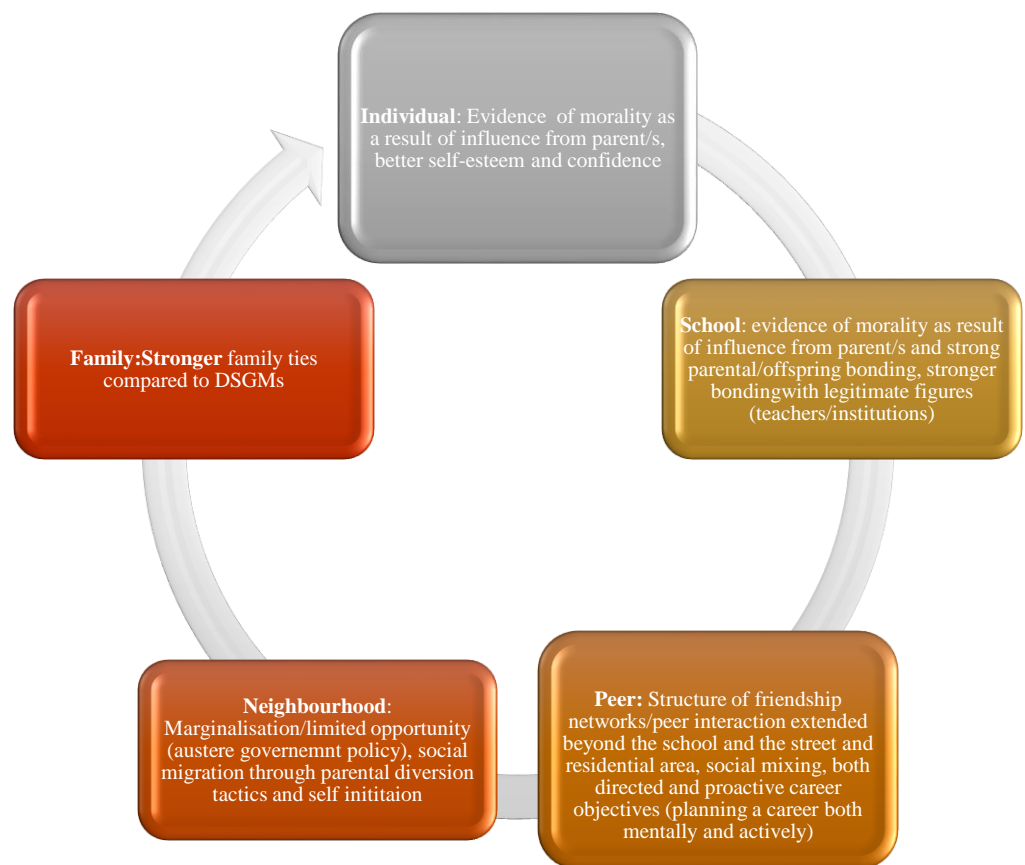


Figure 5. Summary of NGP/EDSGM Main Findings Placed into the Five Domains (Protective)



Highly significant were findings in the two domains of neighbourhood and peer. The study noted in regard to the two samples that the ability to form friendships beyond just school and street acquaintances was instrumental in providing protective buffering against introduction into DSG membership or continued sustainment of membership. In some cases, parental involvement was influential in diverting participants of the NGPs/EDSGMs away from the streets, in other situations there was a form of rational choice thinking by the participant themselves, which lead to either self-exclusion or avoidance away from street peers. Of the two samples, participants of the NGP/EDSGM sample showed a greater perception about the consequences of their environment and the limited opportunity caused by austere government policy within that environment. This resulted in a form of social migration, with participants deciding to become involved in activities that took them away from residential place and space to socially mix in with outsider pro-social peers. In contrast, what became apparent was that participants in the DSGM sample bonded exclusively with surrounding peers. As a result, in each case a restricted friendship network emerged, and with such networks deviant values. Such values over time, and in the face of marginalisation became bound to the extent that participants either joined existing DSGs or their peer group simply transitioned into a DSG as a result of a culturally deprived environment.

Evidence for this social migration/mixing process, can be seen in the work of Bassani (2007) who examines both social migration and social mixing (she terms bridging) in relation to young people's wellbeing. In doing so, she highlights one of the consequences of bonding without attempts, or opportunities of bridging. She comments:

... youths who belong to ethnic groups that isolate their members from the wider society can be hindered by excessively closed, strong ties (for example, Ream 2003). In extreme situations, the ties that youths have

with their ethnic group or family may become so strong that the social capital may in fact restrict or completely disassociate the youth from ‘outside’ group ties, thereby limiting or forgoing the positive effect that social capital in formal groups (e.g., schools, peer groups, etc.) would have otherwise had on these youths (p. 21).

In further stressing the need for social mixing/bridging Bassani asserts, “The more bridging that occurs between two groups, the more social capital develops” (p. 29). Such claims would suggest that the key factor in any individual attaining true social capital is diversity. This study also found that that social mixing/bridging could be created and nurtured from within a community itself. The study observed all participants at some point, bonded with teachers and other outsiders working within the two communities. To further illustrate the potential of social mixing/bridging two short term projects run by two local Merseyside Third Sector charities, a music and sports project at Centre 63, and a project called ‘*springboard*’ at Vee’s Place has been piloted with both projects the results proved to be successful but like many productive community schemes the two ended as a result of funding (V. Rhodes, personal communication, September 28th 2016). In sum, what the findings of this study suggest is that from the perspective of risk and protection in the context of DSG membership/non-membership, bridging/social mixing (in short term projects) may have a significant impact as a buffering intervention along with present strategies in diverting young people on Merseyside away from DSGs.

As a result of the findings the study recognises some of the challenges faced by policy makers and attempts to set out a number of recommendations. These include: disengaging completely from the gang label, identifying central government and local authority failures and the need to address the issue of gender perception, roles and expectations in marginalised communities.

7.1 Disengaging from the ‘Gang’ Label

Since the re-emergence of the ‘gang’ label by the British media over a decade ago, the study has found very little evidence of central government, local authority or law enforcement attempting to stand back and disengage from the term. This is despite both its definitional frailties and the dangers of using labels in marginalised communities. Further, such willingness to embrace the label has contributed to fuel the media’s moral panic campaign, of a country plagued by urban street gangs. With this in mind and from the perspective of Merseyside, the study noted a similar local media trend, in particular by the Liverpool Echo. In focusing in on this particular aspect, the study recommends a dialogue between the law enforcement community and local media about the language used to report incidents involving young people. In particular, those that are deemed to be ‘gang’ related. The study recommends that in reporting DSG related incidents, a considerable reining in of the provocative ‘gang’/ ‘gang member’ terms. The study found that in areas of London a reduction of the use of the gang/gang member label has already begun with the use of ‘disengaged young person’ and ‘disengaged young people’ (Lambert Council, personal communication, June, 2015). However, While these terms are effective in reducing the appeal of anti-social behaviour or violent youth crime to young people, they still imply that the blame for such incidents rests solely on the young people themselves without considering the effects of marginalisation on them. Instead this study suggests the use of ‘disenfranchised young people’ or ‘disenfranchised young person’. Such terms are proportionately less emotively challenging and most importantly unappealing to youth culture. The terms also represent more accurate accounts to what is being reported. In addition, as this study as observed as well as Smithson et al. (2009) the majority of young people on Merseyside involved in ‘gangs’ do not use and will not accept the terms gang/gang member. Thus, by using such terms law enforcement in particular may indeed be inadvertently creating the very problem they are trying to stop.

7.2 Identifying Central Government and Local Authority Failures

In considering the issues/difficulties that could have impacted on the development and implementation of the project, one of the main problems in the early stages was a lack of cooperation and support from the relevant local authorities as well as the main housing associations in the field locations. Despite numerous attempts via email and phone asking for initial help with samples and information about youth crime policies, all of the aforementioned failed to respond. This raises the serious issue of agencies involved in Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) failing to embrace objective and empirically based research from outside their own organisations. While this could have had severe consequences for the project, this was overcome as a result of the researcher's own professional contacts within the third sector, involved with providing services to both young people with DSG membership and those who are not who acted as third party liaisons.

The failure of local authorities and housing associations to support independent studies in this high profile area will potentially impede progress towards effective policy development. Arguably, it is no longer sufficient to solely utilise internal basic quantitative survey methodology, which can often ignore phenomena (positive or negative) that cannot be measured exclusively by statistical approaches. Moreover, during the preliminary stage of the research several other failures became increasingly apparent which need to be addressed in terms of future preventative strategies, these include:

7.3 Lack of Cross-Borough Collaboration Between all Merseyside's Local Authorities

Given the nature of this issue and its importance to Safer Communities' Partnerships this would appear to be poor practice. As part of the partnership with local authorities it would be in the best interest

for Merseyside Police and partners to host/chair a meeting at regular intervals involving representatives from ASB units from all borough councils to discuss evidence of best practice and to share intelligence borough wide. It is no longer a valid reason that different authorities have different problems; it is now a case of what can or cannot be transferred to other areas, an exercise that can only be achieved through cross borough dialogue. Already as a result of this project, specifically its separate report to Merseyside Police (Hesketh, 2014b) this problem has begun to be addressed with Merseyside Police chairing regular meetings that bring together representatives of the five councils. Additional representatives from the other multi-agency organisations that make up the safer community partnership could further enhance this. Ideally a good objective would be to develop this into some form of city thematic group with the added input of social science academics from the universities on Merseyside.

7.4 A Failure to Evaluate the Effectiveness of US Influenced Approaches

Presently there is very little evidence to suggest that the UK is evolving towards a US DSG problem yet the majority of interventions appear to have been benchmarked from the US. The study recommends more holistic, home grown local approaches that address the intrinsic needs of disenfranchised young people. Such methods should place an emphasis on exploring the potential for social mixing/bridging via activities outside of residential locality as a protective actor covering both peer and neighbourhood domains. Also of concern is the issue of risk taking behaviour as a form of escapism, as a risk factor in the individual domain, this has been somewhat neglected in comparison to other individual risk factors such as conduct disorder. In the long term, this issue may potentially have more profound social-psycho implications that go beyond the remit of this study. Thus, this study calls for further in- depth research into this area, since only from further inquiry can

effective intervention be integrated into multi-agency policy. The question of how an individual, who experiences criminal risk-taking behaviour as pleasurable and intrinsically rewarding, can be brought back to the normality and banality of life in a marginalised community must be addressed. This is even more so if the criminal lifestyle also brings with it extrinsic rewards of high income through deviant entrepreneurship, identity and status in that community. Also linked to this was the observation of what was termed by this study as ‘vicarious edgework’. This involves the attraction of young women to young males because of their involvement in DSGs and/or youth crime. It is noted by this study that while this observation is taken from the narrative of male DSGM participants, the study recommends that further research be carried out primarily with young women as well as young men to establish both the validity and if proven, the extent of such phenomenon since this may have serious implications within issues of exploitation and domestic abuse.

7.5 The Need to Address the Issue of Gender Perception, Roles and Expectations in Marginalised Communities

Based on the narrative reflections of DSGM participants on the subject of females, the study has noted, that virtually all of the young men who took part in the study, described young single females using phrases that were both derogatory and disrespectful. Based on these observations, the study recommends some form of gender education (both early years onwards) aimed at addressing the issues of sexual identity, gender empowerment and roles and relations. Particular emphasis should be placed on the issues of equality and mutual respect, especially in relation to how females are seen and treated within the community, since this may have underlying implications for the perpetuation of violence in a domestic setting in later adult life.

7.6 Self Reflection

On the 7th July 1971, as a 4-year-old I moved to the Cantril Farm estate from a multi-story flat in Southdene Kirkby, my parents having been included in the deal to relocate 200,000 people to one of six new residential areas on the outskirts of the city centre.²⁶ In the 47 years I have lived in the area, I have witnessed first-hand the estates highs and lows, mainly lows, such as growing up during its rapid decline during 1980s Thatcherism, the riots that took place there in 1981 and in the subsequent year the high levels of unemployment that saw 49% of males and 80% of young people desperately searching for a trade, general labouring jobs or for that matter any other blue collar paid work. This, coupled with burglaries; car crime and vandalism transformed the estate from a council vision of new prosperity and hope to a social abyss.

Today, as a result of a major regeneration program in 2010 the estate has moved on with the times. Gone are the design for crime dimly lit sub-ways and three of the nine tower blocks that those who had quite literally had enough used as a springboard to an early grave. Sadly, the architectural changes have failed to divert attention from the real problem that the local councillors and the representative Westminster politician conveniently avoid. The environment has progressed very little in terms of its ability to escape the grip of social exclusion and the cultural deprivation that accompanies it. With 42% of working class adults currently dependent on state benefits and the local centre for learning, Christ the King school having been closed down because of poor exam results, the estate seems destined to remain an island of alienation cut off from diversity in all its cultural, social and intellectual forms. For many young people in Stockbridge Village, there seems very little option but to follow fathers, mothers and brothers before them in the escapism of

²⁶ The six areas included Cantril Farm, Huyton, Kirkby, Halewood, and Skelmersdale with Runcorn being added and billed as the Runcorn New Town.

delinquent acts or drug and alcohol induced stupor and most likely then into the illegitimate and underground economy of crime.

However, for those few who abstain from the influence of the estates DSGs, there may be an answer. As the NGPs/EDSGM participants of this study have found through sporadic activities that allow young people to go beyond residential areas, and the subsequent social mixing that results. Such open communities have provided those individuals with greater stimulus and networking ability. This is in stark contrast to those who became embroiled in DSGs whose predominantly deviant bounded values mustered solely from the school and the street, have left them in a continuing cycle of deprivation. I have learned considerably from all of the individuals who participated. Each in his own way has added new insight to my very own personal experience of what it is to be a victim of marginalisation. Moreover, having been given the opportunity for direct face to face access to what was a vulnerable group of individuals, some of whom had been on both sides of the law has allowed me to gain considerable awareness, not only into why some individuals join DSGs while others completely abstain or disengage from membership, but also the wide array of influencing societal factors. Above all, it has provided me with yet more critical observation of a so-called democratic state and media apparatus that prefer to demonise and pathologise rather than confront the cold hard product of inequality itself, the much bigger social problem of exclusion.

7.7 Evaluation: Advantages and Limitations

In terms of assessing the project for strengths and limitations, the study notes several advantages, in particular the use of a self-adapted version of biographic narrative (Hesketh, 2014a), which could be considered one of the main strengths of the project. The adoption enabled both the researcher and participant to benefit from the interview experience. From the perspective of the researcher, the data gathered was as rich as it could be, since all of the narrative and most importantly the

route it took came from the interviewees themselves. From the viewpoint of the participants it allowed, in the majority of instances the interviewee the autonomy to open up and control the direction and balance of discourse with very limited governing intervention by the researcher. This in turn allowed the individuals to make sense of their own personal experiences in reflection. The experience left them in the knowledge that they themselves were contributing their voice to a an important and potentially influential piece of research, something that all of the participants who took part have never been able to do in any previous interview situation. Another advantage is the fact that thanks to the willingness of participants to take part in the study, this research stretches across all boroughs of Merseyside.

In terms of disadvantages, the length of time it took for the researcher to arrange interviews did prove to be a frustrating one. This was particularly evident in situations where the researcher needed to travel to the participant, since finding a location at a suitable agreed time did prove to be a problem. In considering the interviews, themselves in some cases as a result of the need to quickly obtain the interview, the rooms allocated while satisfying the need for confidentiality and one to one approach required, did lack some basic comforts like central heating and comfortable chairs, factors which could have put some participants in the mood to stay longer providing even more detailed narrative.

7.8 Future Research

In the course of this study's life span, several ideas for future research have emerged. In the first instance the study has found that despite the many types of interventions being implemented in the UK, there has been very little research into the actual evaluation of what works. Local authorities are notoriously cautious of evaluation and monitoring of local policy interventions, as this project quickly discovered. However, only when such interventions are accessed, and allowed to be empirically studied can policy makers determine what

really does work, where and how. Moreover, the study noted, that drugs could have an impact on the structure and role of deviant street groups. Any future research could also focus on mapping present interventions in terms of what works.

Remaining with the theme of intervention, any further research could attempt to continue where this study has ended especially in two areas. Firstly, the idea of social mixing or bridging has figured predominately in the findings of this research. Presently, most academic studies into social mixing/bridging has been focused around its long-term effects as a result of urban regeneration and neighbourhood effects (Manley, Van Ham and Docherty, 2011). This study has opened the door for its criminological research potential as a protective factor, specifically in its use to divert young people away from the lure of DSGs and youth crime. Such further study could concentrate on measuring its effectiveness in terms of creating diversity in networking opportunities and the subsequent values.

A second important area that this study has identified that needs further empirical inquiry is the impact of edgework and vicarious edgework has on the individual and how this can be countered. This study has set the foundations for future research by observing the considerable stranglehold edgework has on young people living in marginalised areas. At the time of writing; this area of research has been overlooked. Future projects could include looking at developmental psych/social interventions designed to counter the phenomenon of risk taking and criminological eroticism through being bad or, as in the female case (identified indirectly) being drawn towards badness by association, the latter of which however, as has been repeatedly emphasised does require further empirical enquiry with young people of both sexes.

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²⁷ References marked with an asterisk (*) denote literature incorporated in the literature review.

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Appendix 1:

Annotated bibliographic overview of sources selected and presented within the literature review

Sources Author/ year/title	Type of paper/article /study	Source	Gang Definition	Description of participants/data	Study/discipline Type	Hypothesis/purpo se	Analysis used Quantitative/q ualitative	Results/findings/c onclusion	Relevancy to the research question and reason/s for inclusion
Akers (1994). Criminological theories	Book	Previous hand search 2017	N/A	N/A	Criminology	N/A	N/A	N/A	Learning of negative behaviours no necessarily from bad companions /Sutherland (1939) differential association/peer domain of risk
Alleyne and Wood (2014). Gang involvement: Social and environmental factors	Research paper	Database	Weerman et al., 2009 Euro-gang network: A street gang (or troublesome youth group correspondi ng to a street gang elsewhere) is any durable, street- orientated youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity	566 boys, 231 girls recruited through five London Schools (mean age 14.3)	Psychology	Expected that gang-involved youth would be older than non- gang involved youth (supported) gang involved youth predominantly male (not supported)	Quantitative	Found that parental management, deviant peer pressure and commitment to school had a direct relationship with gang involvement	Covers environmental factors of gang and non- gang involvement interestingly from psychology researchers

Barlow, Kirk-Patrick and Wood, Stewart-Brown (2007). Family and parenting support in Sure Start Local Programmes	Research paper	Database	N/A	59 Sure Start Local Programmes (SSLPs)	Children, families and social issues	Evaluation of local sure start programmes	Quantitative (for one part of the study)	Findings included parenting support widely provided from Sure Start Local Programmes (SSLPs) few SSLPs were delivering the intensive evidenced based home visiting intervention that was improving parenting	Covers research included in the family protective factor domain
Bassani (2007). Five dimensions of social capital as they pertain to youth studies	Article	Database	N/A	N/A	Youth studies	Examines the five dimensions of social capital theory	N/A	Points to several limitations in Social Capital Theory most of which are tied to limited theory testing	Focus on the importance of social capital and its influence on youth health and well-being, linked to one of the research findings
Bengtsson (2012). Boredom and action from youth confinement	Research paper	Database	N/A	21 Formal interviews with young people (boys) in a Danish secure care unit	Criminology	Examines the question of boredom and boredom aversion in everyday life	Qualitative	Conclusion: young people with the experience of boredom resort to risk taking behaviour	Focuses on criminological aspects of edgework, specifically how boredom generates risk-taking behaviour. Links to one of the research findings
Benyon (2002). Masculinities and culture	Book	Previous hand search 2017	N/A	N/A	Masculinities	Examines masculinity from various aspects	N/A	Conclusion: More research needed of men's actual lived experiences of masculinities before questions relating to aspects of masculinity can be explored deeper	Focus on masculinity, class and work. Links in with discussion on masculinity

Buckle and Walsh (2013). Teaching responsibility to gang-affiliated youths	Article	Database	N/A	N/A	Physical education and recreational dance	Article covers ideas for forming a curriculum of content and evaluating progress for gang affiliated youth	N/A	Presenting a strategy for educating gang members	Includes cited research addressing risk and protective factors associated with vulnerability to gang membership and violence
Bullock and Tilley (2008). Understanding and tackling gang violence	Article	Database	Specific definition not given	N/A	Sociology	Article covers an evaluation of a Manchester based project focusing on gangs and guns drawing on the Boston gun project	N/A	Authors tracked a Manchester-based project addressing gang-involved shootings based on the Boston Gun Project	Provides insight into the criminal activities of gang members in the North West of England and highlights problems that can arise within an intervention itself
Burfeind and Jeglum Bartusch (2016). Juvenile Delinquency: an integrated approach	Book	Previous Hand search 2017	N/A	N/A	Criminology	Book covers analysis of risk and protection factors	N/A	Risk and protective factors are multi-faceted	Includes coverage of risk and protective factors relating to gang membership
Campbell (1993). Goliath: Britain's dangerous places	Book	Previous hand search 2017	N/A	N/A	N/A	Book covers a review of the British landscape through the lens of the 1991 riots	N/A	Uncovers a crisis of gender and policing	While written in the 1990s, the book provides an excellent insight into the cause of masculinity crisis which can be applied today especially Campbell's observations of decline in blue collar jobs which can be linked today with young males substituting such decline with 'grafting' using criminality as an alternative to masculine employment
Centre for Social Justice (2009). Dying to Belong: an in-depth review of gangs in Britain	Report	Previous hand search 2017	Various definitions discussed including: Thrasher (1927), Metropolitan Police Service definition (2004), Home	N/A	Grey literature	N/A	N/A	The CSJ working group make several recommendations including long term preventative elements as well as identify key drivers that include family dysfunction/lack of positive	The UK first in-depth report into gangs in Britain. Provides insight into how government think-tank and figures with influence in government understand the gang problem in the UK and their proposals to dealing with the situation

			Office (2004)					role models/educational failure/absence of aspirations, poverty	
Chen and Adams (2010). Are teen delinquency abstainers social introverts? A test of Moffitt's theory	Research paper	Previous hand search 2017	N/A	Uses data from the three waves of National Longitudinal Study of Adolescence. A data set comprising of a national representative sample of adolescents in grades 7 to 12 in the US 1994 to 1995	Crime and Delinquency	To test of Moffitt's account of delinquency abstention is associated with social exclusion due to abstainer's personal characteristics and to investigate whether peer network characteristics have unique effects on delinquency abstention	Quantitative	Results do not suggest strong empirical support for the hypothesis that delinquency abstention is correlated with unpopularity and social isolation. Chen and Adam's findings challenge Moffitt's theory	Provides further clarification on Moffitt's theory of delinquent group abstention which could be applied to reasons why there are young people who have not become involved in gangs. Weakness: No real weakness as such, paper sets out to do what it states and that is to test Moffitt's theory
Cordis and Bright (2015). Preventing gang and youth violence: spotting signals of risk and supporting children and young people	Report	Database	Definition taken from the Ending Gang and Youth Violence report, adapted from the centre of Justice's report 'Dying to Belong' (2009)	N/A	Gang and youth violence	Report aimed at informing and helping local areas about how to identify young people at risk of gang membership and youth violence	N/A	Identifies signals of risk for gang involvement around the five domains	Risk/protection/gang membership and non-membership
Cox (1996). An exploration of the demographic	Research paper	Previous hand search 2017	N/A	201 male adolescent boys 15-18 in a youth	Adolescent health	Determine which characteristics were corelated	Quantitative	Findings covering gang membership suggested that	Makes interesting observations on gang membership that cover risk and protection

and social correlates of criminal behaviour among adolescents				detention centre		with a high severity of criminal behaviours (including gang membership)		effects of gang membership on adolescent behaviours is noteworthy. Adolescent gang members were less satisfied with the family and reported more family conflict. When individual was a gang members he had multiple characteristics that influenced his life in a dysfunctional direction	
Curry and Spergel (1992). Gang involvement and delinquency among Hispanic and African-American adolescent males	Research paper	Database	Self-report survey with items that could directly indicated gang membership (attitudes, perceptions, associations, symbolic behaviours, and activities). Previously Curry and Spergel (1988) defined gangs as "law-violating behaviour committed by juveniles in relatively small peer	Application of the Rasch modelling survey and official records of Hispanic (n=139) and African-American males (n=300) in sixth through to eight grades at four Chicago inner city schools	Crime and delinquency	Whether the precursors to the gang socialisation process are different for African-American youth and for Hispanic you in the same locality	Quantitative	Findings suggest that in both sets of cross-sectional data, the fitting of linear structural models shows gang involvement to be an effective post hoc estimator of delinquency for these youth, whereas delinquency is not an effective estimator of gang involvement	Gang membership/delinquency/peer risk domain

			groups that tend to be ephemeral, i.e., loosely organised with shifting leadership. The delinquent group is engaged in various forms of minor or serious crime: (p.382)						
Decker, Pyrooz, Sweeten and Moule Jr. (2014). Disengagement from gangs as role transitions	Research paper	Database	No specific definition used	former gang members (n=260) conducted in four US cities	Adolescence	Examines gang disengagement from gangs among a sample of individuals, most of whom left the gang during the transition to adulthood	Quantitative /Qualitative	View disengagement from gangs as consistent with Ebaugh's theory (1988) and (Mansson and Hedin, 1999)	Study examines factors pertaining to gang membership disengagement
Decker and Lauritsen (2002) Breaking the bonds of membership: leaving the gang	Book chapter	Previous hand search 2017	No specific definition used	N/A	Gang research	N/A	N/A	Chapter focuses on gang disengagement. Specifically, variables that can pull or push an individual away from gang membership	Study examines factors pertaining to gang membership disengagement
Densley (2013). How gangs work	Book	Previous hand search 2017	Klein and Maxson, (2006) definition	52 self-nominated members and 17 associates of 12 London gangs	Gang research/ Criminology	Draws on one month's in-depth fieldwork to describe gangs and gang members in London.	Qualitative ethnography	Examines gang avenues of evolution, recruitment, organisation within gangs and gang members.	Provides insight into British gang membership
Densley, Adler and Lambine and Mackenzie (2016).	Research paper	Database	No specific definition used	Sixteen year 8 cohorts (age 12-14) from four schools in	Psychology of Violence	Process/outcome evaluation of the Growing Against Gangs	Quantitative	Finding indicated that GAGV personnel were	Provides insight into gang membership and links with violence and delinquency

Growing Against Gangs and Violence (GAGV): Findings from a process and outcome evaluation				four of London's 32 boroughs were recruited		Violence (GAGV) programme		keen to enhance the programme. Evidence suggests that the program was effective in reducing levels of gang membership and the frequency and variety of delinquency and violence in the short- and longer term	
Deuchar (2009). Gangs and marginalised youth and social capital	Book	Previous hand search 2017	Various definitions discussed	16-18 year olds interviewed in Glasgow, Scotland	Criminology/ Sociology	Discusses the demonisation of youth by politicians and the media, gangs marginalisation and social capital	N/A	16-18 years olds in Glasgow have become disenfranchised by educational failure, unemployment and poverty	Discussed marginalisation and social capital with reference to gang membership
Esbensen, Huizinga and Weiher (1993). Gang and non-gang youth: differences in exploratory factors	Research paper	Database	No specific definition used	Data taken from the Denver Youth Survey, a longitudinal study of 1527 youth (age 7 and 15 and one of their parents)	Contemporary criminal justice	Examine characteristics of gang members and how they differ from non-gang members	Quantitative	While gang members differ from non-offending youth on a number of social-psychological variables, they do not differ from other youth involved in serious "street" level offending	Gang membership and gang non-membership/high risk neighbourhoods
Estra Jr., Gilreath, Aster and Benbensity (2014). A state-wide study of gang membership and violent behaviours in California	Research paper	Database	No specific definition just self-report membership	606,815 students from 57 of the 58 counties in California (7 th , 9 th , and 11 th graders)	Youth and society	Examines gang members and its existence of in schools	Quantitative	Of the 606,815 students, 51,000 indicated "yes" and self-identified as gang members. (60% were male), a majority of	School risk and gang membership based on location of the school

secondary schools								gang members were from BME groups	
Factor, Pitts and Bateman (2015). Gang-involved young people: custody and beyond	Report	Previous hand search 2017	Use the term 'gang involved' not being a member of a gang or group necessarily subscribing to its norms and values but intermittently co-opted to participate in some of its illegal activities, sometimes known as 'Tinies' or 'Golfers'	Based on a review of English language literature on rehabilitation of gang-involved people aged 10-25/interviews and focus groups were also conducted with resettlement professionals and young people at six sites. N=19 young people were interviewed. In addition, eight interviews conducted with professionals responsible for resettlement programmes in custody and community	Sociology/criminology	Examines rehabilitation and resettlement of gang-involved young people	Qualitative	Research team discovered some excellent resettlement practice surrounding the five bands of intervention	Gang membership desistance/protective factors
Frank (1995). For a sociology of the body: an analytical review	Book chapter	Previous hand search 2017	N/A	N/A	Cultural studies	Critiques the idea of a criminology of the skin	N/A	A critique of edgework research	Risk taking/edgework
Ferrell and Sanders (1995) Cultural criminology	Book	Previous hand search 2017	N/A	N/A	Cultural criminology	Explores the complex relationship between cultural and criminal practices	N/A	Argues for the development of a new cultural criminology	Topics discussed include youth gang membership

Gordon, Lahey, Kawai, Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber and Farrington (2004). Anti-social behaviour and youth gang membership: selection and socialisation	Research paper	Database	No specific definition just self-report membership	10 years of longitudinal data from 858 participants of the Pittsburgh Youth Study	Criminology	Examines whether gang membership is associated with higher levels of delinquency	Quantitative	Evidence found that boys who join gangs are even more delinquent before entering the gang than those who do not join	Evidence supporting selection model of gang joining
Gormally (2014). I've been there, done that ...': A study of youth gang desistance	Research paper	Database	"Youth gang"; members who self-identified with a name derived from a territory the group was associated with. They were willing to defend their territory through physical violence. Also known as 'youth team' a Scottish construction to describe a youth gang	15 young people age range 15-26 in Glasgow formally interviewed	Youth justice	Examines the process of desistance from youth gangs	Qualitative	Explores what is meant by a youth gang, why some people stop identifying with the youth gang. Paper argues that local community and society in general have a role to play in providing opportunities for young people to identify	Disengagement supports Pyrooz and Decker (2011) findings. Identifies three reasons for disengagement from gang membership age, street based fighting and investment
Gottfredson and Gottfredson (2001). Gang problems and gang programs in a national sample of schools	Report	Database	Gang that has a name and engages in fighting, stealing and selling drugs within one year	Sample of 1279 schools	Behavioural science research	Examines approaches used by school (US) to prevent or reduce gang involvement in schools	Quantitative	Gangs involved secondary school pupils are less likely to be involved in or exposed to most kinds of either prevention or intervention	Provides evidence of psychological variables for individual risk of gang membership. These include low perception of guilt for deviance, a higher tolerance for deviance and use of moral disengagement strategies (including neutralisation)

Hall, Simon, Mercy, Loeber, Farrington and Lee (2012). Centers for disease control and prevention's expert panel on protective factors for youth violence perpetration	Research paper	Database	N/A	Analytical studies conducted by panel members (the authors)	Youth violence	Examines the idea of creating experiences and environments that promote nonviolence among youth and protect youth from engaging in violence and highlights why an understanding of risk and protective factors are important for the understanding of youth violence and prevention	Quantitative	Youth violence is an addressable, preventable challenge	Young people/protective factors/buffering effects/resilience
Hampshire and Matthijsse (2010). Can arts projects improve young people's wellbeing? A social capital approach	Research paper	Database	N/A	Questionnaire to children (n=41) and control group (n=51) in addition to Anthropological methods underpinned by participant observation	Social science and medicine	Examines the idea that community arts projects can have a positive effect on young people's health and wellbeing and social inclusion	Quantitative and qualitative	Social capital operates in relation to both cultural and economic capital and cannot be understood in isolation from wider constraints	Young people/social capital/social mixing/protective factors
Harding (2014). Street Casino: survival and violent street gangs	Book	Previous hand search 2017	No specific definition focuses on existing gangs in London SW9	Interviews with non-gang affiliated people (residents n=7), police officers (n=10), Community Safety Officers, and London Probation Service and Youth	Criminology	Examines the impact of gangs on community and mechanisms within gangs	Qualitative	Uses findings from Ethnographic work (social field analysis) around London SW9. Highlights gang membership as one of constant competition and rivalry for status	Gang membership/community impact/gang disengagement

				Offending Service workers (n=15), Gang-affiliated young people (n=20) and new arrivals (immigrant) young people 16-20 (n=4)					
Hawkins, Herrenkohl, Farrington, Brewer, Catalano, Harachi and Cothorn (2000). Predictors of youth violence	Research paper	Database	N/A	66 studies drawn from Lipsey and Derzon's (1998) bibliography supplemented by research reports provided by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP's)	Juvenile justice	Identifies and addresses the predictors of youth violence at appropriate points	Quantitative	More research required around youth violence that contrast offenders with non-offenders. Research also needed to understand protective factors that mitigate the effects of risk exposure	Makes observations on risk and protective domains to a variety of aspects including link with delinquency and gang membership/ focus on the five risk and protective domains
Hayden, Williamson and webber (2006). Schools, pupil behaviour and young offenders: using postcode classification to target behaviour support and crime prevention programmes	Research paper	Database	N/A	Youth crime data from Nottinghamshire (1999-2003) as a case study to demonstrate relationship between patterns of youth offending and type of neighbourhood	Criminology	Examines the idea of school being the focus of prevention strategies with the aim of reducing anti-social and criminal behaviour	Quantitative	Majority of offenders come from small neighbourhoods, prior to coming to the attention of police these young offenders were already presenting behaviour problems while attending school. Schools with the highest level of recidivism consisted of attending pupils from areas with the greatest	Links in with school domain protective factors

								relative deprivation in Nottinghamshire	
Hayward (2002).	Book chapter	Previous hand search 2017	N/A	N/A	Youth justice	Focus on excitement and pleasure of risk (edgework)	N/A	Many young people indulge in risk taking behaviour to construct an identity through controlled loss of control	Young people/criminological edgework/ risk-taking behaviour
Hill, Lui and Hawkins (1999). Early precursors of gang membership: a study of Seattle youth	Research paper	Database	No specific definition just self-report membership	Data from the Seattle Social Development (n=808, ages 10-12, 10-18, 13-18)	Juvenile justice	Examines why some youth join gangs while other do not (US perspective)	Quantitative	Participants who became gang members did so for a short period (1yr or less). Of the five domains examined, finding suggests no single overriding factor explains gang membership. Findings suggest that young people who join gangs as a result of anti-social influences in neighbourhoods, anti-social tendencies in families and peers and failure to perform well in school	Gang membership/non-membership/ risk/protective factors
Hill, Howell, Hawkins and Battin-Patterson (1999). Childhood risk factors for	Research paper	Database	Youth who reported to be a member of a gang who could provide a gang name	Data from the Seattle Social Development (n=808, ages 10-12, 10-18, 13-18)	Crime and delinquency	Examines adolescents involved in gang membership are regularly involved in	Quantitative	Youth exposed to multiple risk factors more likely to become gang members	Gang membership/ gang non-membership/ risk factors

adolescent gang membership: results from the Seattle social development project			were recorded as being a member of a gang			serious delinquency compared to those who are not gang members			
Hoffman (2006). Family structure, community context, and adolescent problem behaviours	Research paper	Database	N/A	Data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS; n=10,286)	Youth adolescence	Examines the relationship between family structure and adolescent problem behaviours	Quantitative	Adolescents from homes with recent experiences of a divorced mother, a mother and stepfather, a single mother, or a single father indicated more problem behaviour. Adolescents living in communities with a high rate of impoverished residents, female headed households, or jobless males reported more problem behaviours regardless of the structure of the family	Family structure/parenting appropriateness/family risk domain
Huff (1998). Gangs in America	Book	Previous hand search 2017	N/A	N/A	Criminology/ social anthropology	Examines modern day US gangs	N/A	Essays from a broad array of researchers into gangs in the US on various aspects	Criminal behaviour linked to gang members compared to non-gang members
Jones (2011). Chavs: the demonisation of the working class.	Book	Previous hand search 2017	N/A	N/A	Sociology	Examines the demonisation of the working class by media and political establishment	N/A	Focus on political policy during and post 2011 riots	Iatrogenic political policy aimed at the working class

Kelling and Coles (1996). Fixing broken windows: restoring order and reducing crime in our communities	Book	Previous 2017 hand search	N/A	N/A	Criminology	Examine crime in marginalised communities (US)	N/A	How community agencies need to work together to ensure safety in communities	School risk/location of schools/normalisation of gang behaviour/membership
Kierkus and Hewitt (2009). Cohabiting, family and community stressors, selection, and juvenile delinquency	Research paper	Database	N/A	Data taken from 1995 National Survey of Adolescents (NSA) survey of guardians and youth aged 12 - 17 (n=4,023)	Criminal justice	Cohabiting is associated with four types of delinquent behaviour	Quantitative	Cohabiting is associated with increased risk misbehaviour	Family risk domain/delinquency
Klein and Maxson (2006). Street gang pattern and policies	Book	Previous hand search 2017	A street gang is any durable, street orientated youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity	Data take from Los Angeles, Long Beach, San Diego, Denver, Rochester, Seattle etc.	Crime and public policy	Examines various aspects of gangs in the US	N/A	Updates understanding of US gang culture	Gangs membership/ risk and protection
Klein (1995). The American street gang: its nature, prevalence and control	Book	Previous hand search 2017	Commitment to criminal orientation with less emphasis on violent crime, the members and the community identify the group as a gang, a certain amount of group cohesion is present and the group	N/A	Current affairs/criminology	Examines various aspects of street gangs in the US	N/A	Offered and early account of what street gangs are, how they changed and their involvement in rugs and crime	Gang membership/historical perspective

			maintains a strong sense of territoriality over its defined geographical area						
Krohn, Lizotte, Bushway, Schimdt and Philips (2010). Shelter during the storm: a search for factors that protect at-risk adolescents from violence	Research paper	Database	N/A	Data taken from the Rochester Youth Development Study. First eight waves of data collection with respondents aged 14 -17.5	Crime and delinquency	Examines trajectories of past violence and future violence	Quantitative	Findings conclude that several factors protect young people from violent behaviour but not from gun or weapon carrying	Provides support for the argument that protective factors are not always as predictable as assuming they are the complete opposite of risk factors
Lenzy, Sharkey, Vieno, Mayworm, Docherty and Nyland-Gibson (2015).	Research paper	Database	Youths who self-reported yes to the question "do you consider yourself a members of a gang?"	N=26,232 students. Mean age 14.62 who took part in the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS)	Psychology	To examine risk and protective factors (interactional theory and related empirical research) to predict the likelihood of being a gang member	Quantitative	Findings conclude that higher levels of empathy and parental support were associated with lower probability of gang membership. Associating with peers that were deviant and perceiving school as unsafe were correlated to gang membership	Psychological traits and gang membership/school and peer risk
Levitt and Venkatesh (2000). Economic analysis of a drug selling gang's finances	Research paper	Database	Use the term 'set' which they define as a small, geographical concentrated unit around which the drug dealing is organised	Data consisted of details of the financial activity of a gang supplied to researchers by a former gang member	Economics	Examines the financial activities of a gang (US) through data obtained from a former gang member	Quantitative	Conclude that economics alone are not enough to explain individual motivation towards gang membership	Gang membership/deviant entrepreneurship

Lipsey and Derzon (1998). Predictors of serious delinquency in adolescence and early adulthood. A synthesis of longitudinal research	Synthesis of longitudinal research	Database	N/A	Data consisted of a meta-analysis of longitudinal studies (n=34) of anti-social behaviour	Criminology	A synthesis of longitudinal research covering violent or serious delinquency and early adulthood	Quantitative	A range of conclusions based around age groupings that include: strongest predictor variables for juveniles age 12-14 were lack of social ties, anti-social peers, and committing a general offence	
Lyng (2005). Edgework: the sociology of risk-taking	Book	Previous hand search 2017	N/A	N/A	Sociology	Examination of voluntary risk taking behaviour	N/A	Essays from a broad array of researchers on various types of edgework	Criminological edgework/ risk taking behaviour
Maruna and Roy (2007). Amputation or reconstruction? Notes on the concept of "Knifing Off" and desistance from crime	Research paper	Previous hand search 2017	N/A	N/A	Criminal justice	Examines the questions of 'knifing off' what it is, what gets knifed off? and who does the knifing?	N/A	Recommends proposals for developing the concept of knifing off for theories	Gang membership/gang Membership/ desistance
Martinez, Tost, Hilgert and Woodward-Meyers (2013). Gang membership risk factors for eight-grade students	Research paper	Database	Terms 'clique' are used with the word 'gangs' referring to neighbourhood or street based groups	407 eighth-grade student participants	Criminal justice	To identify the major risk factor domains for gang membership and the relationship of these factors to eight grade students	Quantitative	Finding suggest that an increase in community/neighbourhood risk was found to be a significant predictor for gang membership	Gang membership/risk domains/ neighbourhood
Matsuda, Melde, Taylor, Freng and Esbensen (2013). Gang membership and adherence to the "Code of the Street"	Research paper	Database	Youths who self-reported yes to the question "Are you currently a gang member?"	Data collected from the second National Evaluation of The Gang Resistance and Training (GREAT) program 2216	Criminal justice	Examined the adequacy of an ethnography by Anderson (1994, 1999) "Code of the Street". Specifically group processes associated with	Quantitative	Becoming a gang member facilitates greater acknowledgement of the code of the street which mediates partially the relationship	Gang membership/gang non-membership/links with delinquent behaviours

				young people from schools		increased delinquent behaviours compared to non-gang members		between gang joining and increased frequency of violent offending	
McCord (1991). Family relationships, juvenile delinquency, and adult criminality	Research paper	Previous hand search 2017	N/A	(n=232) boys randomly selected for a delinquency treatment program as well as well-behaved males	Criminology	Examines the impact among features of child-rearing influencing male criminal outcomes	Quantitative	Findings suggested tow mechanisms: Maternal behaviour appears to influence juvenile delinquency and paternal interaction with the family, appears to have a more direct influence on the probability of adult criminal behaviour	Family risk/parental inappropriateness/ quality of parenting
McDaniel (2012). Risk and protective factors associated with gang affiliation among high-risk youth: a public health approach	Research paper	Database	No clarification given to participants regarding a definition of a gang	Data from cross sectional survey (n=4131) youths grades 7, 9, 11 and 12	Public health	To identify risk and protective factors in order to provide more direction for preventing gang violence	Quantitative	Findings suggested that 7% of youths were gang affiliated. Gang affiliation was positively associated with engaging in delinquent behaviours. Finds little information available on protective factors	Gang membership/risk/protective factors
Merrin, Sung, Hong and Espelage (2015). Are the risk and protective factors similar for gang-involved,	Research paper	Database	Self-informed group united by mutual interests that controls a particular territory, facility or	Students (n=17,366) from school districts in large Midwestern county	Orthopsychiatry	Examines risk and protective factors for gang membership (current or former gang members, youth who resisted gang	Quantitative	Findings indicate that males were more likely than females to be involved in gangs. For the individual context, BME	Gang membership/risk/protective factors

<p>pressured-to-join, and non-gang-involved youth? A social ecological analysis</p>			<p>enterprise that uses symbols in communication, and is collectively involved in crime</p>			<p>membership and non-gang-involved youth</p>		<p>individuals, females, and youth with depression/suicidal tendencies are likely to be at risk, family context findings suggest that gang involved family and family dysfunction are linked to gang membership, Peer context, alcohol and drug use and bullying were significant, School context indicated those who accepted school were likely to avoid gang membership, neighbourhood context suggested that presence of adult support in the neighbourhood and perceived safety within that neighbourhood are negatively associated with gang membership</p>	
<p>Moffitt (1993). Adolescence-limited and life-course-persistent anti-social behaviour: a</p>	<p>Research paper</p>	<p>Previous hand search 2017</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Psychology</p>	<p>Examines anti-social behaviour from two groups of young people Moffitt identifies as</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Article highlights two distinct categories of adolescents. One small group engages</p>	<p>Peer risk domain/group membership and admission to group membership</p>

developmental taxonomy						'adolescent limited' and 'life course persistent'		in anti-social behaviour at every life stage, the second larger group becomes involved only during adolescence	
Ogders, Moffitt, Broadbent, Dickerson, Hancox, Harrington, Poulton, Seers, Thompson and Caspi (2008). Female and male antisocial trajectories from childhood to adult outcomes	Research paper	Database	N/A	Cohort of n=1,037 children of the Dunedin Multi-disciplinary Health and Development Study	Development and psychopathology	Examines childhood origins and adult outcomes of female versus male antisocial behaviour trajectories	Quantitative	Finding support similarities across gender in respect of developmental trajectories and their associated childhood origins and adult practices	Peer group risk/social learning
O'Malley (2010). Crime and risk	Book	Previous hand search 2017	N/A	N/A	Criminology	Examines the idea of 'risky criminology'	N/A	Moves away from the idea of reforming towards prevention and managing behaviour	Edgework/individual risk factors
Presdee (2000). Cultural criminology and the carnival of crime	Book	Previous hand search 2017	N/A	N/A	Cultural criminology	Examines extreme, oppositional forms of popular and personal pleasure often deemed criminal by those in power	N/A	Focus on the commodification of hate and hurt and living out carnival desires through gang membership, street crime and anti-social behaviour	Links into individual risk/edgework risk taking/criminal erotic's
Putnam (2000). Bowling alone: the collapse and revival of American community	Book	Previous hand search 2017	N/A	N/A	Sociology	Examines how people have become increasingly disconnected from family, friends and	N/A	Focus on the power of social capital through bonding/bridging and linking	Gang membership abstention/social capital/social mixing (bridging)

						neighbours as well as values			
Pyrooz, Decker and Webb (2010). The ties that bind: desistance from gangs	Research paper	Previous hand search 2017	Youths self-report gang membership	Data derived from The Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) program. Specifically, a sample of current juvenile arrestees gang members (n=156) and former gang members (n=83) mean age 15.5 years old	Crime and delinquency	To further develop an understanding of desistance from gangs	Quantitative	Findings suggest that the length of desistance operates indirectly through gang ties to reduce victimisation	Gang membership/desistance
Pyrooz and Decker (2011) Motives and methods for leaving the gang: understanding the process of gang desistance	Research paper	Previous hand search 2017	Youths self-report gang membership	Data gathered from juvenile arrestees who were former gang members (n=84) in Arizona (US)	Criminology and criminal justice	Examines the process of leaving a gang	Quantitative	Found that leaving a gang is not a serious and life endangering issue. That youth just 'walked away'	Gang membership/desistance/ protective factors
Ralphs, Medina, Aldridge (2009). Who needs enemies with friends like these? The importance of place for young people living in known gang areas	Research paper	Previous hand search 2017	Weerman et al. 2009 Euro-gang network definition	Data gathered from 26 months of participant observation, nine focus groups and n=107 formal interviews	Youth studies	Examines the negotiation of place and space by young people living in gang prevalent areas	Qualitative	Non-gang involved young people have become restricted in their use of place and space as a result of gang rivalries and the policing of inner city areas which has resulted in marginalisation	Gang membership/gang non-membership/ neighbourhood risk domain

								and victimisation	
Ribeud and Eisner (2010). Risk factors for aggression in pre-adolescence: risk domains, cumulative risk and gender differences- results from a prospective longitudinal study in multi-ethnic urban sample	Research paper	Database	N/A	Data drawn from the Zurich Project on the Social Development of Children (z-proso) n=2520 children who entered Grade 1 of public primary school in the city of Zurich in 2004	Criminology	Reviews a range of risk factors for aggression for children at age 11	Quantitative	Findings suggested that proximal behavioural and psychological risk factors strongly predict later aggression. In contrast distal external factors related to the family, to school and to peer relationships are less predictive	Individual risk/ self-serving cognitive distortion
Sampson and Laub (1995). Crime in the making: pathways and turning points through life	Book	Previous hand search 2017	N/A	Book based on data drawn from Glueck and Glueck (1950) study of 500 delinquents and 500 non-delinquents	Criminology	Reviews aspects of criminality/delinquency including gangs through a the lens of life course perspective	Quantitative	Acknowledges the importance of childhood behaviour but reject the argument that adult social factors have little relevance	Gang membership/parental delinquency/inappropriateness
Seals (2009). Are gangs a substitute for legitimate employment? Investigating the impact of labour market effects on gang affiliation	Research paper	Database	NLSY97 definition: a group that hangs out together, wears gang colours or Clothes, has clear boundaries of its territory or turf, protects its members and turf against other rival gangs through fighting or threats	Data from the 1997 cohort of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY97)	Criminology	Examines whether gangs and gang membership has become a substitute for legitimate employment	Quantitative	The effect of local employment	Statistically significant results for the effect of local unemployment rate on sixteen to seventeen-year-olds suggesting that gang participation can depend on economic incentives

Shute (2008). Parenting and youth gangs: risk, resilience and effective support	Research review	Previous hand search 2017	Various definitions discussed	NA	Gang research	Attempts to provide a clear understand of the UK gang problem, the extent to which gang members are involved in offending/to understand factors within the family and parenting that trigger gang involvement and identify effective interventions	Review of mainly quantitative data	Review finds five interventions to be the most effective Nurse Family Partnerships The Incredible Years Family Functional Therapy Multidimensional Treatment Foster care Multisystemic Therapy	Gang membership/ Risk and protection covering all five domains
Spergel and Curry (1993). The national youth gang survey: a research and development process	Chapter	Previous hand search 2017	Identity based on overlapping fashion, on symbols or symbolic behaviour, self-admission on the part of gang members, observed association with known gang members, involvement in specific types of criminal behaviour and location or residence in a particular place	Data gathered from criminal justice and community based agencies and organisations (n=254) in 45 cities (US)	Criminology/gang research	Aims included: to identify and assess the most effective approaches to dealing with gangs (US), to further, develop prototypes or models from the information gathered and to produce manuals of assistance for those who implement those models	Quantitative	Findings include acknowledgment that the problem is widespread and has been addressed with a degree of complexity	Gang membership/non-membership/neighbourhood/community protective domain
Sweeten, Pyrooz and Piquero (2012). Disengaging from gang	Research paper	Database	Youths self-report gang membership	Data from Pathways to Desistance, a longitudinal study (n=226)	Criminal justice	Examines the relationship between disengagement from gangs and	Quantitative	Findings suggest that gang disengagement is associated	

and desistance from crime				youth who reported gang membership		desistance from crime		decreased contemporaneous offending but does not predict future offending after controlling for desistance	
Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte and Chardwierschem (1993). The role of juvenile gangs in facilitating delinquent behaviour	Research paper	Previous hand search 2017	Self-reporting to be a members of a gang or a 'posse'	Data taken from the Rochester Youth Development Study (n=1000) adolescents	Crime and delinquency	Examines why gang members are more likely to possess higher rates of serious violent crime than non-gang members. Identifies three models of causation		Findings suggest that gang members compared to non-gang members, did not have higher rates of delinquent behaviour or drug use before entering a gang	Gang membership/non-gang membership/delinquency
Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith and Tobin (2003). Gangs and delinquency in developmental perspective	Book	Previous hand search 2017	Self-reporting to be a members of a gang or a 'posse'	Data taken from the Rochester Youth Development Study (n=1000) adolescents	Criminology	Uses data from The RYDS to examine gangs and delinquency	Quantitative	Conclusions include that the family is a major risk factor towards gangs	Gang membership/ link to delinquency and criminality
Venkatesh (1999). Community-based interventions into street gang activity	Written research article	Database	N/A	N/A	Psychology	N/A	N/A	Community members and organisations face difficult obstacles in their attempt to develop gang interventions	Gang membership/ community intervention
Wallinius, Johansson, Laden and Dernevik (2011). Self-serving cognitive distortions and anti-social behaviour among adults and adolescents	Research paper	Database	N/A	Data derived from Swedish offender and non-offender adults and adolescents (n=364)	Criminal justice	Testing the reliability and validity of the self-report questionnaire How I Think (HIT) designed to assess self-serving cognitive distortions	Quantitative	Concluded that HIT could be used as a measure of criminal thinking in adults in addition to adolescents	Linking component to gang membership and neutralisation/moral disengagement

Wacquant (2008). Urban outcasts: a cognitive sociology of advanced marginality	Book	Database	N/A	Data derived with residents on the South Side of Chicago (1987-1991)	Sociology	Examines a synthesis of research on urban marginality in	Quantitative /qualitative	Concludes by suggesting that the shrinkage of America's urban areas is a result of the withdrawal a of market and state fostered by public policies that include racial separation and urban abandonment	Social exclusion/banality/ link to edgework
Wang (2008). The marginality of migrant children in the urban Chinese education system	Research paper	Database	N/A	Data derived from children (n=61) from Beijing and (n=48) children from four schools in Xiamen	Sociology	Examines issues if educational marginality of migrant children in urban settings in two cities in China	Quantitative /qualitative	Findings included, the low quality of education in migrant schools leads to inequality and reproduction of low status of the migrant population	School risk domain/lack of quality teachers can put young marginalised people at risk/internal bridging
Wells and Rankin (1991). Families and delinquency: a meta-analysis of the impact of broken homes	Research paper	Database	N/A	Data derived from meta-analysis of studies (n=50) focusing on delinquency and broken homes	Sociology	Examines effects of family structure and effects on delinquency	Quantitative	Concludes that most of the variation of the research examined across the 50 studies is more a result of methodological rather than substantive features	Gang membership/delinquency/family dysfunction
Wikstrom (2007). In search of causes and explanations of crime	Book chapter	Database	N/A	N/A	Criminology	Examines cause and prediction of crime	N/A	There exists confusion between cause and prediction due to the research and policy being dominated by 'risk factors'	School risk domain/lack of quality teachers can put young marginalised people at risk/internal bridging
Wikstrom and Loeber (2000). Do	Research paper	Database	N/A	Data derived from the 1990 census of	Criminology	Examines the relationship between	Quantitative	Findings do not support the idea that	Individuals at low risk of gang membership living in high risk neighbourhood domains

disadvantaged neighbourhoods cause well-adjusted children to become adolescent delinquents? A study of male juvenile serious offending, individual risk and protective factors, neighbourhood context				Pittsburgh (n=90 neighbourhoods (n=4000 inhabitants))		neighbourhood socio-economic context, individual characteristics and male serious juvenile offending		neighbourhood socioeconomic context appears to have any greater impact on high early onset of serious offending	
Winfree, Mays and Backstrom (1994).	Research paper	Previous hand search 2017	Self-definition and to a gang which had to have a name and one of the following; initiation rite, a specific leader or leaders, gang nicknames for members. Secondly, had to have one of the following symbols: tattoos, hand signs or jewellery. Finally, gang illicit activity sex, drugs or vandalism or one illegal activity (fighting,	Data derived from all young people in the custody of New Mexico Youth (aged 12-19) Authority in January 1991 (n=258)	Criminal justice	Examines the ties between gang membership, youth anti-social behaviour and Aker's (1985) social learning theory	Quantitative	Findings suggest gang members had acquired more pro-gang attitudes than non-gang members and favoured gang activities. However, neither gang membership nor gang based social learning theory variables were related uniformly to all forms of self-reported delinquency	Gang membership/gang non-membership/ impact of social learning

			committing crimes or vandalism)						
Winlow (2004). Masculinities and crime	Article	Previous hand search 2017	N/A	N/A	Masculinity and crime	Considers the social, cultural and economic context of criminal masculinities	N/A	Suggest that the practical and cultural nature of working class life creates an awareness of and a need for violence	Gang membership/edgework/masculinity
Wood and Alleyne (2010). Street gang theory and research: where are we now and where do we go from here?	Research review article	Previous hand search 2017	Various definitions reviewed	N/A	Psychology	Considers some of the most influential frameworks and empirical findings	N/A	Argues there is a role for psychology in gang research	Gang membership/gang non-membership/psychology
Young, Fitzgibbon and Silverstone (2013). The role of the family in facilitating gang membership, criminality and exit	Research report	Database	Definition used is taken from Hallsworth and Young (2004). A relatively durable, predominantly street based group of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as discernible group, for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity and practice	Data derived from gang-involved individuals and family members (n=58), Practitioner interviews (n=35)	Youth justice	Examines the role of the family in gang formation, criminality and exit	Qualitative	Findings include that young people who are involved with gangs or who are members come from all types of families, gang involvement will have more severe consequences in single parent families and role of the family should not be overstated since other variables such as socio economic position is often more important	Gang membership/ family Risk/protective domains
Zimbardo (2007). The lucifer effect:	Book	Previous hand	N/A	Data derived from the Stamford	Psychology	Examine the concept of being evil and	N/A	Raises several issues about the	Gang membership/gang uniformity of dress and de-individuation

why good people become bad		search 2017		prison experiment (Zimbardo, 1973)		the underlying motives of why good people can become bad		nature of good and evil	
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Appendix 2: Quality Assessment Sheet

Type of study/paper

Has the study/paper addressed a clear focused issue

What is the study addressing

Factors within the study relevant to this research question

Selection bias

If study sample size

Were the descriptions of the study sample/s clear

How has gang and gang affiliation been clearly defined and measured

Are the result free of bias

Additional comments

Appendix 3: Data extraction sheet

Author:

Title:

Date:

Eligibility based on inclusion/ exclusion criteria:

Population of young people

Outcome gang affiliation (risk factors identified?):

Outcome: Non-gang involvement (protective factors identified?)

Appendix 4: Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Name of researcher: My Name is Robert Hesketh I am a PhD student and a visiting lecturer at the University of Chester studying Criminology as well as an associate tutor in Psychology at Edgehill University and I will be conducting this research project.

Title of project:

An exploratory study that examines the impact of street gang social identity on lifestyle choices in socially excluded areas.

Purpose of the study:

To examine why individuals from the same social and environmental background as those who join gangs abstain (don't) become involved in street corner gangs.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part in this study because it has been noted that you possess some valuable personal experiences that could be used and help identify why some people join gangs while others abstain.

What will my participation involve?

If you decide to participate you will be asked questions about your past experiences, this will take the form of what is called a Biographical narrative approach (life story interview) and will last approximately 60 minutes may be less. You are only required to have two short face to face interviews and the researcher will contact you or the organisation/training etc. to arrange a convenient time and place for this to take place. With your permission, the interview will be tape recorded

and later transcribed (written up into hard copy) by the researcher. All recordings of interviews will be deleted upon transcription. The project will be supervised by Dr. Karen Corteen, Dr. Sharon Morley and Professor Anne Boran of the Department of Social and Political Science.

Are my comments confidential?

All information provided by each participant for this study will be kept strictly confidential. Your details and collected data will be stored in a secure place for a required period of 5 years and at the end of this period will be destroyed in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

What if I change my mind and wish to stop?

Should you agree to participate in the research and then change your mind, you are entitled to withdraw from the study any time without explanation or fear of reprisal and you will no longer be contacted. If you wish to withdraw from the research, then your interview or any data/information you have freely given will be destroyed.

Potential disadvantages of taking part:

No Discomfort is anticipated with participants giving up to 1 hour of their time and any inconvenience will be minimised by conducting the interview session at a time and place that is convenient for participants.

Potential benefits of taking part:

Individuals will have the chance to reflect on their life experiences in a non-judgemental environment and share valuable information that will contribute to a knowledge base that may in the future be of benefit to others in a similar situation. Remember we can only learn from those with experience to pass on. Should a participant request a copy of the final report dissertation; the researcher will make a copy available.

What if I have any more questions?

The researcher will be pleased to discuss any further questions not covered in this sheet either directly face to face or via email at r.hesketh@chester.ac.uk or via post at the University of Chester, Parkgate Road, Chester CH1 4BJ. Questions can also be answered in conjunction with the researcher's supervisory team if required.

Thank you for your time and interest, and I hope you agree to be involved.

Robert Hesketh

Appendix 5: Consent Form

Consent Form

I understand that my participation in this project will involve the digital audio recording of my session. I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. If for any reason I experience discomfort during participation in this project, I am free to withdraw or discuss my concerns with Robert Hesketh.

I understand that the information provided by me will be held confidentially and stored securely, such that only the researcher can trace this information back to me individually. I understand that I can ask for the information I provide to be deleted/destroyed at any time and, in accordance with the 1998 Data Protection Act, I can have access to the information at any time.

I understand that information provided by me for this study, including my own words, may be used in the research report, publications, or presentations, but that all such information and/or quotes will be anonymised. However, I should refrain from talking about any planned, future criminal activity as this could result in such information being reported to Merseyside police.

I also understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with additional information and feedback.

I, (PRINT NAME) consent
to participate in the study conducted by Robert Hesketh, Department of
Social and Political Science, University of Chester, Parkgate Road,
Chester CH1 4BJ. Signed: Date