YOUNG WOMEN ON ROAD: FEMININITIES, RACE AND GANGS IN LONDON

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Abstract

This thesis is a qualitative study of young women's involvement with badness in London. It is based on semi-structured interviews with young women between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, youth practitioners and criminal justice practitioners. It takes a black feminist approach in order to explore the lives and experiences of those from deprived areas. Such a perspective allows for the inclusion of all respondents regardless of their social class or racial identity, and considers the intersection of class, gender and race. The purpose of this study is to address the considerable gap in knowledge surrounding young women and road culture. It builds on and extends Gunter's (2008; 2009; 2010) work which focuses predominantly on black young men in East London who perform badness as part of road culture's rejection of mainstream norms and values. One of the key findings of my research is that badness cuts across gender lines. Young women can adopt tough personas as a successful survival strategy to gain respect, and sustain their reputations, in similar ways to young men. Rather than 'acting like men' by displaying behaviours associated with hegemonic masculinity however, females are constructing their own bad ass femininity. Not content with existing on the periphery of the action, and in addition to carrying drugs and weapons, they can be involved in robberies and the sale and supply of drugs. Young women are not necessarily second class citizens in these spaces, they are hustlers and leaders of their peers. Another key finding was their capability for violence, with the potential to exhibit more vicious behaviours than their male peers, in order to be known as someone who is a bad and not to be tested.

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<u>Glossary</u>

ASBO: Anti-social behaviour order

'Aving their back: showing support

Badness: a perceived hyper masculine form of behaviour linked to criminal activity

Bad rap: being portrayed in a negative light

Bannies: bandanas

Bare: a lot

Beef: a dispute or argument with an individual or group

Boy ho: a young woman who is subservient to a man

Box: punch

Bruh: a male friend

Brown: heroin

Burn the green: smoke cannabis/weed

Chavs: stands for Council House Affiliated Vermin

Coz: cousin

Crack: crack cocaine

Crack house: where crack is supplied, sold and consumed

Crew: a group of people you associate with

Dirty work: committing crime and/or violence

Dons: leaders

Fast money: tax free money made via the informal job market

Food: illegal drugs

From endz: from your neighbourhood

Gassing up her head: hyping her up

Getting played: being taken advantage of

Going country: travelling outside London for the supply/sale of drugs

Hash: cannabis resin

Hood: a deprived urban neighbourhood

Honey-trap: a young woman who uses her sexuality to manipulate men

Link: a girlfriend or sexual object

Line up: when a female has sex with one male after another

Long: it takes too much time

Mandem: a group of males

Man ho: a promiscuous male

On road: social and cultural worlds young people inhabit on the streets

Paper: money

Pass round girl: someone who sleeps with multiple guys from one group

Popping: to be noticed or recognised

Posse: a group of people you associate with

Ratings: rankings based on respect

Rep: reputation

Riding with: hanging around with

Roll with: hanging around with

Roll over: inform on an individual or group to police

Ruckin: fighting

Rude girl: a young woman with a reputation for badness

Shemale: a lesbian

Shit will get cracking: things are going to happen

Shotter/shot: drug dealer/drug deal

Sket: a young woman known as the pass round girl

Squad: a group of people you associate with

Street cred: credibility on the streets based on respect

Take the heat: endure the consequences

Take the rap: take the blame

Thai: Thai weed

Wifey: a young woman regarded as a prospect for marriage

<u>Introduction</u>

Academic, media and policy interest in young women as part of the gang agenda has been, for the most part, restricted to conversations which suggest they lack agency as sexually exploited victims or are peripheral to the action. This research aims to address this lack of empirical data about the types of badness they are getting up to and the reasons for their participation. Chapter one charts the emergence of the working classes, demonstrating what lives were like for the urban poor in the Victorian era. Prescribed gender roles emerged which associated men with the public, and women with the private, domain. It also traces the role of philanthropists and their moralistic crusade to change the poor into respectable members of society. Chapter two details the creation of the juvenile delinquent, which served to position working class youth as inherently problematic. It considers how female and male deviance was constructed and viewed differently, with young men regarded as the real criminals whilst young women's criminality was linked to their sexuality, namely through prostitution. It also looks into youth subcultures and how these have focused predominantly on the resistant practices of males rather than females. Chapter three focuses on the emergence of the gang from America at the start of the twentieth century. It demonstrates how the term originally was conceived as something far less sinister than it has currently come to represent. The British racist and sexist gang agenda is also a key focus in terms of the ways in which it stigmatises young black men and ignores, or sidelines, young women. Chapter four outlines the methodology of the project, indicating why a black feminist approach was chosen, and explores the

use of interviews within a qualitative framework. It reflects on the positionality of the researcher/respondents and highlights the complex issues of power relations which arise when white researchers interview people of colour. Chapter five draws on the views of interviewees and explores how the term gang is viewed negatively, in addition to it being overused and casting suspicion on all groups of young people who are visible on road. It indicates that gangs are not a new phenomenon, instead they are more likely to be intergenerational subcultures formed organically. It also acknowledges the racialised moral panics associated with gang members who it tends to be assumed are black young men from urban areas. Given the understandable resistance to the gang label, chapter six reframes the issue as one which more broadly encompasses the idea of badness as part of road culture. It continues to focus on the views of interviewees, who discuss why young women participate. Financial gain is the most common explanation, in terms of living in a deprived area, coupled with the impact of a consumer society. Being part of a criminal family or suffering neglect from the family are also considered, in addition to the influence of boyfriends and the potential for coercion. It also looks at the thrill young women acquire from being bad and feared in their areas. Chapter seven focuses on what young women are getting up to as part of road culture. Moving away from viewing them as victims on the margins, interviewees demonstrate how they take on a number of central activities such as carrying drugs and weapons, selling drugs and committing robberies. The idea that they are second class citizens is challenged in relation to the tough identities they adopt as part of their survival mechanism. Chapter eight discusses interviewees'

opinions on young women's relationships with violence. Whilst being in the minority in relation to the young women in their neighbourhoods, it highlights that they are far more violent than is currently being acknowledged within the context of road culture. This is a means for them to gain respect and maintain their tough reputations. It is also established that when females do fight, the levels of violence which they exhibit can outweigh the severity of their male counterparts which is enacted through their performance of the bad ass.

<u>Chapter 1</u>

<u>From the urban poor to the working class</u>

<u>Introduction</u>

This chapter will detail the lives of the urban poor in Victorian London. Nineteenth century England witnessed a period of rapid change, both socially and politically, with the capital becoming the world's first urban society. It will consider the ways in which those living in poverty were disenfranchised due to being denied voting rights, in addition to the threat of being sent to the workhouse to undertake hard labour. This was underpinned by the wealthy attempting to turn those who they perceived to be unrespectable into the respectable. Respectable society emerged, underpinned by religious moral doctrine, alongside a raft of philanthropic missions to civilise the poor, both at home and abroad. These fears were governed by general anxieties about urban living as a consequence of an industrial society. Youth clubs attempted to reform the behaviour of poor young men and women. These young people were perceived as posing different sets of risks, whilst females were schooled in domesticity to become future wives and mothers, males played sport in order to build moral fibre. The working classes as a social category emerged during this period, which marked a shift from being recognised as the urban poor. Class driven ideas of gender relations were underpinned by ideological separate spheres of social order which positioned women in a domestic role and men in a public one. In practice however, the private/public dichotomy was challenged by poor women who had no choice but to work outside of the home in order to survive.

<u>The rise of respectable society</u>

The Victorian period marked a shift from rural to urban living, a result of mass expansion due to the Industrial Revolution. The majority of the population was poor, whereas the elite's wealth increased through industry and the colonial project. Britain was the foremost global power for over a century due to the processes of colonisation, whereby it invaded all but twenty two of the world's countries as part of a dominating and civilising mission. The exploitation of poor children and adults in the UK, coupled with those colonised and enslaved globally, were responsible for the labour required to make Britain 'great'. At the beginning of the nineteenth century four out of five of the population inhabited rural areas, and by the end of this period the same amount lived in towns and cities (Roberts, 2011). This shift from rural to urban living enabled London to become the largest city in Europe with over a million inhabitants by the turn of the nineteenth century, and Britain's first urban society (White, 2007). London, Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool, and Bristol contained a sixth of the British population, although unlike the capital none of these towns reached a million inhabitants (Thompson, 1988). A large concentration of the population was based in London, a place which was considered a powerful and heavy influence on both the social and economic developments of the country. The capital relied upon its major port status which cemented its position as the largest English consumer market, in addition to its centre of governance for the country (Jones, 1971).

It was the exploited poor of Britain, and the imperial subjects of the colonies, who were significantly responsible for the financial successes of the Victorian era. The

need for casual employment led to mistreatment of the workforce, and with the increase in production came a rise in urban populations. However, the increase in numbers was not matched by an expansion of housing provision (Jones, 1971). Many Londoners lived in cramped and squalid conditions. Booth (1969) documented entire families living in one room, whereas Porter (2000) found cases of twelve to seventeen unrelated people inhabiting a single room. Journalist Stead (cited in Porter, 2000, p. 334) referred to the urban poor as 'stunted squalid savages of civilisation'. Whilst Britain was focused on civilising its colonies abroad it also saw an increase in philanthropy on home soil.

In the early nineteenth century the UK was ruled by an elite who were part of a small minority who had the right to vote. The political leadership was viewed as being out of touch by the majority with such an unequal weighting of power, against the backdrop of an unreformed parliament. Exclusion from the political process created hostility, although there was little comradeship between the radical bourgeoisie and street rioters (Porter, 2000). When the 1832 Reform Act was passed, more men were allowed to vote but it was still not representative. Eligibility to vote was based on an annual housing cost threshold of ten pounds which resulted in around one in five men being given voting rights. In London however, housing costs were higher than the rest of the country, so men of a lower social class were able to take advantage of this reform, in addition to their higher status counterparts. By the third Reform Act of 1884, voting rights were shifting to becoming more representative, but women were still completely excluded from having their say politically and all men could not vote until 1918.

The rise of respectable society emerged as the Victorians took it upon themselves to create a new society, in order to be seen 'improving, reforming, institutionalizing, and more or less cleaning up a raw and savage society' (Thompson, 1988, p. 29). Reformers and philanthropists regarded their morals and values as the superior benchmark which should be adopted by all. There was an understanding that 'missionary zeal would moralize the poor and lead them into the paths of respectability' (Porter, 2000, p. 332). The Temperance Movement attempted to eliminate public houses, thus paving the way for the rise of religious respectability, whilst glossing over disagreements with the poor (Harrison, 1973). They encouraged the repression of drinking and sexual activity, and by the mid century if was acknowledged that no self respecting man would frequent a public house. Drinking for a gentleman was viewed as an activity to be enjoyed at home rather than in public. The shift to urban living meant that public drinkers became more visible to police, whilst simultaneously punishments for being drunk rose to severer levels. One in four offences were linked to drunk and disorderly cases by 1876, which was due to overzealous policing rather than an increase in drinking patterns (Thompson, 1988). Consequently the movement became underpinned by economic divisions, rather than solely religious factors, as the more affluent members of society drank at home. Little attention was given to the bleak and often cramped conditions of the urban poor's living conditions which might necessitate the need to frequent public houses.

There was a widely held belief that the very poor were corrupted from birth (Shore, 1999). London was besieged by poverty, disease, and crime, relatively

unsuccessful efforts were made to eliminate this via missionaries and charitable organisations. Thirty percent of the population of London were living below the poverty line which posed large challenges to such organisations (Booth, 1969). It was the 1934 Poor Law, underpinned by ideals of Victorian respectability, which became the foundation for future social policy as a tool of social discipline. The law for many of the poor was either to 'steal or starve' (Porter, 2000, p. 366), with the Poor Law casting an accusing shadow over the lower economic classes. This marked the introduction of workhouses, within which destitute individuals would be sent, and whereby bed and board was exchanged for hard labour. It was intended to eliminate pauperism, reduce vagrancy and encourage people to support themselves. The cost of the poor had become too great and public fears surrounded both their propensity for crime and spread of disease (White, 2007). The workhouse was regarded as a last resort and carried the stigma of shame and social disgrace. Rather than being victims of circumstance, it was increasingly viewed that the poor were essentially responsible for their own predicament. Taking poor relief came to be associated with loss of respectability, not from religious outsiders, but by those in their own communities (Porter, 2000). The terms 'deserving' and 'undeserving poor' were coined during this period to create ideological distinctions between the respectable and unrespectable classes.

Private vs. public: Gendered spaces

The development of the Industrial Revolution changed the role of men and women's positions in society, for all social classes. Men and women's roles became more clearly defined than at any time in history. The gendered history of

the nineteenth century can be viewed in two contrasting ways, as an oppressive system in which men were regarded as superior to women, and a period of growth towards gender equality and shifts in public perceptions about gender relations. Many historical accounts emphasise the importance of repressive social relations, both inside and outside the home, with the Victorian era considered synonymous with masculinity (Danahay, 2005). Whilst the women's rights movement was gaining momentum throughout the century, Queen Victoria did not ascribe to gender equality, despite the fact as sovereign she ruled over both sexes, 'it is a subject which makes the Queen so furious that she cannot contain herself. God created men and women different - then let them remain each in their own position' (1870, cited in Helsinger et al., 1983, p. 68).

Traditional gender discourses of the period have focused on the distinction between men and women via separate ideological masculine and feminine spheres. These were underpinned by the dichotomies of nature/culture, domestic/public and reproduction/production, which served to position males as the intellectual breadwinners and female as the domestic objects. Men were viewed as rational, work orientated beings, whilst women and their propensity for emotion, were considered more suited for home and family life (Jordan, 1989). With that in mind, it was not *all* men who were perceived in this hierarchical manner. Imperial subjects of colour and the white poor of Britain were also regarded as lacking rationality by virtue of their animalistic natures, and it was under such a premise that colonisers justified their civilising missions (Alsop et al., 2002). Whilst such polarised spheres may have not adequately described the lives

of all women during the period, such dichotomies were viewed as the starting point to understand their lives.

Ruskin (1865, cited in Langland, 1995, p. 79) outlines a moral element to the role of women in society, 'her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision...She must be enduringly, incorruptibly good.' Despite females being regarded as the weaker sex, and inhabiting a submissive position in society, the morals of the family rested firmly upon the shoulders of women rather than those of men. Further to this, the moral condition of the nation was seen to be closely linked to the moral standards of women, it was therefore regarded as their duty to improve the human race through their virtuous nature (Skeggs, 1997). The Victorian era was viewed as a period of sexual repression and women's morals were closely linked to the repression of their sexuality. A gendered double standard existed whereby men could be sexually active outside of marriage as their morality was not perpetually in question, whereas for women this was not deemed socially acceptable, particularly amongst the higher classes. The 1870s social purity movement was justified as a response to moral panics about sex, with the injustices around female morality highlighted (Jeffreys, 1995). The emergence of the influential 'Angel in the house' poem by Patmore (1854, cited in Twells, 2007, p. 32) was based on the ideal of female domesticity and subservience to men. Wives were expected to be devoted to their husband, and most importantly be pure. Ideas of what it meant to be a woman emerged underpinned by notions of passive femininity, domesticity and respectability. A lack

of delicacy or decency has been identified by Thomson (1998) as to what it meant to be unfeminine and unrespectable.

The process of industrialisation, coupled with the sexual division of labour, created a reduction in paid work being carried out domestically. Industries were developing which required increasing numbers of employees to work outside of the home, yet the opportunities for women had not expanded at the same rate as men (Thane, 1992). The two sexes began to inhabit separate spheres, men commuted to work, whilst women oversaw the domestic duties. Domesticity achieved a moral equilibrium between public and private dichotomies for the middle class angels in the house (D'Cruze, 1995). Working outside the home also became viewed by many as being immoral and a threat to the family unit (Fuchs, 2005). However, poorer women had little choice in doing so if their husband's wages, or their own, were not enough to sustain the family.

Forms of work were regarded as either masculine or feminine, but adhering to such ideologies was more complex in practice (Danahay, 2005). Prescribed gender roles ensured that opportunities for many women were limited, and consequently they received less wages than men, due to the influence of trade unions who regarded them as not worthy of training, due to pregnancy and child rearing. Poorer women were often forced into taking jobs regarded as masculine due to economic pressures, such as working in coal or tin mines, or labouring in farms and factories. Such work was often favoured over domestic service as they found it provided more independence than being a domestic servant and having to abide to the moral codes of the household (Bates, 2012). There was resistance

from men to women working in male dominated industries, and there were repeated calls for them to be excluded from mining. Due to the competition from men for employment women were excluded from skilled high paid labour. Single women were concerned that they would be completely marginalised from the workplace due to the fear of promiscuity related moral panics which emerged due to the perceived threat of women working alongside men. Employers assumed their 'morality was normal and the sexual culture of the poor was a deviation' (Rowbotham, 1973, p. 57). Factory work ensured that working class women were restricted to the dirtiest and toughest manual jobs. Such tasks were never carried out by the higher class 'ladies' as it required 'masculine strength and this resulted in the relegation of importance of a woman's femininity', the poorer the female the more physically demanding and lower paid it became (Chin, 1988, p. 92). In the majority of these trades women were part of the sweated labour workforce which entailed long hours and substandard working conditions.

The majority of financially solvent women never worked outside the home, and many retired from forms of public employment in the nineteenth century in order to focus on domestic roles (Hudson, 1995). However, the notion of the idle Victorian woman was a mythical one as many ran their houses by taking part in domestic chores and organising servants (Gleadle, 2001). The higher the social status of the woman the more servants the household would employ, and this had a direct correlation with the level of her engagement with domestic tasks and childcare duties. Davidoff and Hall (1987) note how it was put forward at the time that anyone who participated in paid work could no longer be considered a lady. Whilst

many respectable women formed an insignificant part of the workforce, those who were educated and not economically provided for worked as governesses, teachers and nurses (Scott & Tilley, 1975).

Wealthy women took social action through philanthropy, which became their vocation, and the women's movement emerged during this period in an attempt to gain the vote and make inroads into political, legal and employment spheres. Philanthropy became the vocation of many who were not economically required to undertake paid employment. Social purity movements in the Victorian period were a means of dealing with social ills, and whilst men were engaged in overseeing such endeavours, it was mainly women who undertook the bulk of the work. In keeping with poorer women who had no choice but to work outside of the home, the philanthropic efforts of women also challenged the domestic/public dichotomy which formed the basis of social order and separation of spheres (Williams-Elliot, 2002). It fostered engagement with a virtuous task and provided an escape from the boredom of the household, in addition to the opportunity to assert a position of importance in society (Prochaska, 1974). Furthermore, such social action was an opportunity for women to feel politically connected in the absence of voting rights.

Philanthropists also involved themselves in the emergence of the women's rights movements. Queen Victoria termed the accompanying equality debates as the 'woman question' (Helsinger et al., 1983). The purpose of the movements were to challenge the restrictive gendering of the social order, as a married woman could not own property, vote, had no rights to her children, and was not a separate entity to her husband. They fought for a range of issues such as political, legal and

employment rights but it was not until the last decade of the century that the fight for women's suffrage became the sole focus (Gleadle, 2001). The 1832 Reform Act saw the first attempts at enfranchising women, and in 1869 Mill published *The Subjection of Women* to make a claim for legal, economic and social equality. He proposed that if women were apolitical it was because they were socialised that way, rather than it being a natural state. Whilst his demands to change the word 'man' to 'person' in the 1867 Reform Act were unsuccessful, the 'woman question' was gathering momentum in the form of a feminist revolution. It was gaining the vote which was considered crucial so that women could influence man-made laws. In 1918 women over the age of thirty were granted this right, and those over twenty one a decade later.

Knowing your place: Class divisions

Britain has a particular history based on its relationship with social class. Therefore, it is not possible to review the role of women during this period without considering the impact of class, as all relationships were governed by this. Notions of what it meant to be a woman, and the life experiences this brought with it, differed enormously across social boundaries. The ideological concept of the separate gender spheres constructed the image of the fragile housebound lady. However, this was far removed from the actual lived reality of poor women, for whom it was necessary to work outside the home, often undertaking demanding physical labour. This highlighted the contradictions in gender specific roles by questioning the extent to which the domestic/public dichotomy was adhered to by *all* women.

All women and most of the poor were disenfranchised, the 1832 Reform Act excluded any man whose house was valued at less than ten pounds per year from voting. As housing was more expensive in London than elsewhere in the country this allowed some poorer men voting rights whilst creating a political economic divide. As noted earlier, thirty percent of the population of London were living below the poverty line, however women were more affected than men (Booth, 1969). In eighty five percent of cases Booth blamed poverty on unemployment, either no work or low paying work, with large families making the threat of poverty more likely until children could earn their keep. The other fifteen percent was attributed to drunkenness and idleness, challenging the myth that poverty was necessarily the fault of the individual. By the end of the century over half of families in London still lived in 'primary poverty' with wages not high enough to support a family with the basics (Bourke, 1994, p. 6). This is despite the latter part of the nineteenth century being regarded as a period of improved living conditions (Parratt, 2001).

During the nineteenth century the emergence of an industrial market economy created a class based society and the concept of social class became a tool of analysis (Davidoff, 1979). Whilst it is acknowledged that the terms working class, middle class and aristocracy were introduced into common usage during this period, the lower two categories were very diverse in their scope. Consequently, there is a lack of consensus about the exact basis of these classifications (Neale, 1972). Mayhew (2008) divided London society into four classes; those that will work, those that cannot work, those that will not work, and those that need not

work. For Booth (1969, p. 55) the poor were barely able to make ends meet after the basics such as food and shelter had been accounted for, while the very poor lived in 'chronic want'. He identified eight groups with the poor classed from a to d: (a) occasional workers and semi-criminals, (b) very poor casual earners, (c) intermittent earners and (d) small regular earners.

There is a clear focus on economics and employment driving the classifications of social groups, however terms such as the deserving and undeserving poor, in addition to artisans and gentlemen, were also used commonly during the nineteenth century to infer a moral and economic value to such classifications (Skeggs, 2004). The rough/respectable dichotomy was a 'highly charged ideological distinction', yet it was often one met with confusion due to its shifting nature, and also one which differed according to the interpretations of the middle and working classes (Ross, 1985, p. 41). Similarly, the proletariat and bourgeoisie were politically loaded terms which described conflict between those in control of the means of production and those whose only market value was their labour. This further points to the complexities in categorising diverse sets of people into distinct groups. The working classes were not able to move up the social ladder during the Victorian period, it was a time where people were supposed to know their place and class divisions exacerbated and maintained these inequalities.

<u>On the breadline: The working class family</u>

The disintegration of the family was a concern during the Industrial Revolution, brought about by the shift from rural to urban living. This was accompanied by

fears of the role of women engaging in paid labour outside the home and thus challenging the idea of males and females occupying separate spheres. It was implied that women working in factories would dissolve family ties, and regulations sought to be put in place to counter this (Thompson, 1980). They were regarded as bad mothers for leaving the family and engaging with paid work. However, there was no collapse of the family as it adapted to new ways of life throughout the century. Efforts to save the working class family reflected middle class fears about the fragile morality of their own families (Thompson, 1988).

There is class based confusion around the role of women in the home (Scott & Tilly, 1975). Middle class women were largely subordinate to their husbands due to the ways in which they had been socialised, and it was only women with lower social status who could avoid such a prescriptive model of womanhood (Vicinus, 1972). For example, it was unusual for a working class child to grow up unprepared to challenge authority when required (Roberts, 1983). The universal oppression of married women was questioned by working class women who did not necessarily reflect the middle class ideal of genteel domesticity. They were often the driving force of the family and did not necessarily allow male dominance go unchallenged. There was the expectation that the husband would 'work' for his wife', in the same way that working children handed their wages over to their mother (Ross, 1982, p. 580). Roberts (ibid) proposes that household chores would be completely avoided by men if possible as this was a means of demonstrating his masculine prowess. That said, whilst it was generally agreed that domestic work was women's work, men did help out at home. Many women had paid

employment which meant that it was often a husband's duty to assist them, despite such associations with demasculisation. For every male who said they did not contribute there were large numbers who said they did, this could take the form of cooking, cleaning or childcare (Bourke, 1994). This challenged the domestic/public dichotomy of the genders and the polarised separate spheres that men and women were encouraged to inhabit, in addition to questioning existing discourses of masculinity and femininity.

Middle class norms of Victorian femininity were underpinned by compliancy and passivity. As a result the stereotype of the delicate victim of violent and cruel marriages was also associated with working class women. Booth (1969) cites several examples of violent marriages (legal or otherwise) with cases of women who had died at the hands of their husband, or who were regularly abused, but believed they had no other option financially but to stay and suffer. There was a 'clear distinction made between legitimate and illegitimate forms of violence which characterised the extent to which the woman deserved, and accepted, her punishment', which implies an unspoken negotiation between the two parties in relation to levels of violence (Bourke, 1994, p. 72). Whilst the minority did suffer at the hands of their husbands, the majority did not (Roberts, 1983). Chin (1988) concurs, stating that whilst many men treated their wives badly the majority did not commit domestic violence, in fact a marriage underpinned by violence on both sides was more common. Aggression was viewed positively within working class culture as a means of achieving self respect, roughness was regarded as a rational response to a tough way of life (Humphries, 1981).

Propensity for violence in the home was exacerbated by dire living conditions for much of the working classes. Families either lived in one room, or most commonly one-up one-down houses. Staying clean was very difficult, crowded homes and a lack of food made housework even more challenging (Stearns, 1972). Lack of outdoor space meant that clothes would often be dried in the room they ate and slept in. Clothes were only changed once a week due to the time consuming process of washing and drying them in often damp conditions (Roberts, 1983). Mothers often went without food in order to feed her family, but they were discreet about it, the 'kettle bender' was a cup of crusts in hot water with salt and pepper eaten regularly by one housewife before her husband came home (Ross, 1982, p. 586). How successfully a woman managed with what little she received was attributed to her character and survival skills (Chin, 1988). Despite the domestic and subservient role of women presented inside the home within the nineteenth century, there was the implication that the working class family belonged to the mother. She was a powerful influence in terms of whether the family were able to remain above the poverty line.

Civilising mission: Youth work for boys

Whilst the idea of youth as a separate entity to childhood may be perceived as not emerging until more recently, Gillis (1981) has charted the ways in which the concept of youth shifted, as society moved from the pre-industrial to industrial era. Children were considered as independent from the family from the age of eight, and youth was regarded as an extended period from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries (Springhall, 1986). Despite the existence of youth during previous

centuries being acknowledged, it wasn't until the nineteenth century that the concept become fully recognised, which also coincided with an increased focus on working class young people who were perceived as troublesome. Although it should be noted that whilst commentators do use the term working class youth, those living in cities, particularly at the beginning of this period, were referred to as the urban poor. The emergence of youth as a problematic social category has been traced back to the Shakespearian period of the seventeenth century by Springhall (1986, p.13) citing from the Winter's Tale, 'I would there no age between sixteen and three and twenty, or that youth would sleep out the rest; for there is nothing in the between but getting wenches with child, wronging the ancientry, stealing, fighting'.

Negative perceptions of working class youth were prevalent, 'disgusting words are always in the air…the language of children is shocking, loose life and talk are increasing' according to Booth (1969, p. 286). Youth employment was insecure, by entering unskilled jobs in their teens, the growth of specialisation resulted in many becoming unemployed. They became perceived as risky due to unstable labour creating 'blind alley' 'aimless' and 'restless' youth (Humphries, 1981, p. 17). Respectable society was convinced that the safety of society was under continual threat, which culminated in moral panics based on respectable fears (Pearson, 1983). This was exacerbated with the development of peer youth cultures who occupied the streets (Gillis, 1981). Cramped and squalid accommodation ensured that working class youth were more visible on the streets than their middle class counterparts. Their public presence was viewed as a precursor to a life of crime

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and idleness by acquiring habits deemed morally unacceptable to middle class ideals. Young people were consistently viewed as more troublesome than those generations before them.

Booth (1969, p. 48) noted that in London there 'is struggling poverty, there is destitution, there is hunger, drunkenness, brutality and crime'. Underpinned by a perceived moral breakdown and a lack of respect for their elders, working class youth were viewed as in need of discipline and control. Those young people who challenged middle class moral norms were the ones most likely to be targeted by reformists. Concern focused on early forays into adult pleasures such as smoking, drinking and attendance at penny dreadfuls, music halls, and picture houses. 'Incorrect choices' of leisure pastimes were the perceived source of delinquent behaviour (Springhall, 1986, p. 153). The temptations of the city underpinned the rationale of the child savers and reformers, with antisocial behaviour viewed as immoral rather than a form of classed resistance. The assumption was that working class youth were the 'offspring of a degenerate and deprived class' who required intervention (Humphries, 1981, p. 211). The preoccupation of reformers with labelling them as respectable or rough was evident by the underpinning rationales of such regimes which aimed to turn the unrespectable into the respectable. There was no middle ground with such definitions, despite the complexities associated with the polarisation of such terms. Young people could either be saved and incorporated into respectable society, or be absorbed into a life of criminality (Shore, 1999).

Unstructured free time was viewed as dangerous, a problem the Victorian middle classes and reformers took upon themselves to address. Loose morals, rather than the effect of social and economic exclusion processes, were blamed for the behaviour of the working classes who were regarded as having a culture of their own based around delinquency and criminality (Pearson, 1983). Concern about how this group spent their leisure time prompted attempts to gain authority via the Rational Recreation movement. The idea of 'play discipline' was advocated by idealists to raise standards through order and rules (Holt, 1989, p. 136). Muscular Christianity promoted social order and respectability, and its relationship with sport was used as an instrument in attempts to civilise young men in particular. Churches sought out sport connections to prevent immoral behaviour and this civilising process saw activities such as football utilised to become more organised (Dunning, 1992). Exercise for young men was regarded as a process of social control to produce obedient workers, team games were said to develop moral fibre and deter individuals from drinking and gambling. Consequently, the development of manliness and ideas around masculinity and sport were developed during this time.

The ways in which sport was delivered, and theorised ideologically within youth club settings, was linked to the modern idea that it could create discipline and build character. The Boys Brigade was established to encourage boys and teenagers to engage with organised religion and get them off the streets. Sport was key to its success in attracting participants, and other religious organisations realised its usefulness as a tool of social discipline and a source of recruits (Holt, 1989). The

Boys Brigade formed a model from which a range of initiatives for young men emerged, such as paramilitary (of which it was part), semi-military, and philanthropic civilian (Blanch, 1979). Paramilitary organisations were highly structured by military discipline, semi-military organisations played down their military connection and focused on patriotism, whilst the emphasis on civilian organisations was on providing leisure activities. Controlling the leisure time of youth was understood to decrease the threat of delinquency and appease the respectable fears of the period. Moral and religious campaigns to reform the working classes were ambitious in their intent due to the impact of poverty on the lives of young people.

<u>Angel in the house: Youth work for girls</u>

'Outcast London', the combination of poverty and casual labour, threatened middle class sensibilities of stability and social order (Jones, 1971, p. 1). Young women regularly changed their jobs, and in keeping with young working class men, the fear of too much unsupervised leisure time prompted the emergence of respectable fears. The literature about their relationship with troublesome behaviour, outside of sexual promiscuity or prostitution, is extremely sparse compared to their male counterparts who have characterised the 'youth problem'. However, it was noted that their public presence exacerbated the idea that they were 'precocious in evil', there was resentment of drunk 'shrieking girls' and they became an 'object of fearful contemplation' for their recklessness (Pearson, 1983, p. 59&68). Middle class young women would not have been as visible on the streets, so it was a set of classed norms from which working class young women

were judged. Due to females being more strictly controlled than their male peers, 'larking with the lads' (Humphries, 1981, p. 137) was viewed with contempt, and they were labelled as deviant for being anti-social *and* female. Young women deviating from behaviour considered to be respectable were looked upon more unfavourably than young men as it was believed that bad habits were more natural for males (Cale, 1993a). Working class leisure pursuits were regarded as further promoting immoral practices. Penny shows were blamed for corrupting young females amid fears of their future roles of wives and mothers, the 'girl of age nine will, from constant attendance at such places, have learnt to understand the filthiest saying, and laugh at them as loudly as the grown-up lads around her. What notions can the young female form of marriage and chastity' (Mayhew, 2008, p. 49).

Many working class young women resisted idealised notions of middle class femininity. Booth (1969) presented single females as feisty, dependent and contravening the codes of ladylike behaviour. Boys and girls were socialised to be good fighters as cowardice was reviled in working class communities, there was an expectation that they would not back down from a fight if challenged (Mayhew, 2008). Like males, females fought with their fists, and they were admired for doing so by those in their neighbourhoods (Bourke, 1994). Class resentment was evident by higher class young women being pushed off the pavement by their lower class counterparts, a respectably dressed girl regarded as having her 'nose in the air' was 'unmercifully beaten' in the 'most savage manner, using fearful language' which was demonstrative of class relations between both working class

males and females in a practice called 'holding the street' as a ritual or territorialism (Pearson, 1983, p. 90-91&84). The street was their playground and perceived intruders were not well received (Gillis, 1981).

Working class young women were perceived to be a social problem, not in terms of their criminality but their sexual ability to be potentially contaminating, consequently 'sexual practices marked girls in the same way criminal practices marked boys' (Mahood & Littlewood, 1994, p. 557). Women were considered as the benchmark of morality, and working class women were regarded as jeopardising this due to possessing a precocious sexuality. That said, whilst religious doctrine resulted in moral panics around prostitution, regulating women's sexuality aimed to protect middle class men catching diseases which in turn protected their families (Fuchs, 2005). The attempted control of young women's sexuality was a disguised effort at controlling and curbing their own middle class behaviour according to Thompson (1988). Working class young women were regarded as in need of protection, whilst society was viewed as requiring protection from them.

Double standards of sexual behaviour allowed middle class men to engage in pre-marital sex without the same social sanctions that a middle class woman would be subject to (Vicinus, 1972). Respectability and morality were intertwined Victorian ideals, however what constituted respectability for the working classes was not necessarily constructed, or acknowledged, in the same way as the middle classes. The stigma and shame associated with young women getting pregnant out of wedlock was overblown by many reformers in the nineteenth century, and as a

result was not consistent with accounts of working class communities. Mayhew (2008) for example observed how illegitimate children did not attract the shame that the so-called respectable class would necessarily have society believe. Booth (1969, p. 125) concurs, noting that in very poor communities illegitimacy carried no stigma, it was not unusual for young men and women to live together as marriage was rare and couples presented themselves as man and wife with a 'clean and respectable demeanour'. Only one in five couples were married, as this was regarded as an unnecessary expense, some couples who were not married lived as man and wife in all other senses (Mayhew, ibid). Married women, unmarried women and girls socialised together, indicating that within communities such behaviour was acceptable. It was not regarded as honourable to be married or shameful to be unmarried and living with a partner.

As working class young women's sexuality was perceived as a threat which required managing, aims of reform were constructed around discourses of femininity, respectability and domesticity (Barton, 2005). Youth organisations saw the need to regulate young women's behaviour during these periods of relative independence (Dyhouse, 1981). The middle classes assumed their own values should be universal, and consequently ignored the existence of separate cultures distinct from their own, which emerged from the impact of poverty. For reformers, 'respectable fears continually fixed on young people's worsening behaviour…respectable hopes continually fixed on the possibilities for their reform' (Cox, 2003, p. 4). As a result the end of the century saw the emergence, and development of, Girls Clubs which were established to 'stem the tide of evil…vice,

disease and crime' (Stanley, 1890, p. 7). The rationale underpinning such clubs tended to correlate with those of the boys organisations in regard to living a moral life, but they differed in their approach. Young women were encouraged to adopt a caring role, one which was deemed both feminine and respectable by middle class standards. Domestic discipline underpinned models of change, with reformers casting themselves as morally and culturally superior to their working class charges. Boys and girls clubs adopted separate gendered ideologies for reform with females focusing on domesticity rather than sport and athleticism. They engaged with activities viewed as respectable such as sewing and cookery in order to discipline their mind to become good wives and mothers. The Girls Friendly Society aimed to improve young women's self respect by the influence of middle class respectability and encouraging a sense of individual responsibility. The organisation was determined to produce modest behaviour, it aimed for their members to be respectful and adopt retiring manners (Dove, 1996). During the beginning of the twentieth century a range of voluntary groups had emerged to engage with working class girls, predominantly influenced by the domesticity model of reform. Females, as future wives and mothers, were expected to improve the conditions of their class in its entirety. Those who did not conform to respectable behaviour and were considered insufficiently feminine and more undisciplined than their male counterparts.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to demonstrate what life was life for the urban poor, and gain an insight into the difficult and often challenging lives of young

women. It also established the ways in which these groups were viewed negatively by so-called respectable society, the moral legacies of which remain evident in contemporary society. These respectable fears were underpinned by general anxieties about urban living as a consequence of an industrial society and the influx of people into cities. The terms working class, middle class and aristocracy developed during the Victorian era, and labels such as the deserving and undeserving poor emerged to create intra class distinctions. Middle and upper class preoccupation with the lives of the working classes was demonstrated by the rise of overzealous philanthropists. Their drive for reform constituted imposing their own, values which were regarded as the benchmark of respectable behaviour. Middle class women were particularly active in reform movements as paid employment was not regarded as suitable for a lady. Jobs were defined by the concepts of masculinity and femininity, with poorer women associated with masculine prowess and their higher class counterparts connected to passive femininity. Such ideologies also impacted on the home, whereby middle class women had been socialised into subservience towards their husbands, working class women on the other hand were less likely to accept such dominance. Living conditions were harsh for the poor, as housing provision did not match demand, and large numbers lived below the poverty line. Consequently, working class youth were visible on the streets and viewed as dangerous and polluting, which created moral panics. Working class young men and women were considered to pose different sets of risks, males were associated with criminality while females were defined by their sexuality. The visibility of working class young women on the

streets prompted fears about their contaminating sexuality, however interpretations of respectability not only differed between social classes, but also within them. Youth reform movements were underpinned by gendered discourses, although they all had the same intention, to improve morals and perceived troublesome behaviour. Young men engaged in sport and military programmes to build character, whilst young women were trained to become good wives and mothers via domesticity. The morality of their class, and the nation, rested on their shoulders.

Chapter 2

The youth problem

Introduction

The previous chapter focused on how the Victorian era marked a shift from rural to city living, which in turn created anxieties about the visibility of the urban poor in public spaces. It looked at the role of philanthropy, undertaken by wealthy women, and the moral crusade to turn perceived unrespectable youth into respectable individuals. The construction of a particular type of middle class, passive, femininity was created during this period which placed men in the public domain and women in the private domain. However, such an interpretation also demonstrated the ways in which poor women did not fit into these ideas of what it meant to be feminine, something which resonates with the complexities of contemporary dominant femininity. Therefore in terms of the reality of everyday life in London a range of femininities were actually being performed. Youth work, driven by religious philanthropists, was also highly gendered with sport utilised for boys, and domesticity for girls in order to improve morals and civilise them. This chapter will continue to focus on the ways in which young men and women were considered as deviant in the Victorian era by focusing specifically on criminality, as the poor were viewed as a separate criminal class distinct from other groups in society. Underpinning the fears attached to young people was the idea that they were too independent and consequently immoral. Young men were viewed as deviant due to their engagement with crime, whilst young women, when they were visible, were regarded as deviant due to their sexual practices. This is evidenced

in the categorising of males as thieves and females as prostitutes, with characterisations of these identities represented by the 'Artful Dodger' and 'Fallen Woman'. Moving onto the twentieth century the chapter will then chart the emergence of subcultures from the Chicago School in the US and the development of these groups in the UK after the Second World War. Young women are practically invisible within the subcultural literature, and when they do appear the focus is on their association with young men in their role as girlfriend and/or sexual object. The streets were regarded as the playground of young men, consequently subcultures were couched as a male construct, and represented as a way in which young men could both exhibit and maintain their masculinity against a backdrop of deprivation and social exclusion. The anxieties and fears of the previous century around the urban poor and unsupervised time in public spaces were also being played out, with the emergence of the moral panic and folk devil being readily applied to groups of working class youth.

<u>The creation of juvenile delinquency</u>

Whilst juvenile delinquency may have appeared to emerge as a distinct and original problem it has been framed as 'new' at different periods of time (Shore & Cox 2002, p. 6). Hendrick (1990, p. 27) notes how the 1854 Youthful Offenders Act, with resultant further acts, was the first legislative use of the term juvenile delinquency and also marked the representation of this group as a distinct category based on the assumption that working class youth were precious 'sexually and otherwise'. The act was aimed at saving those who had too much knowledge of the pleasures of the adult world based on a particular construction of

childhood as innocent and dependent. Whilst the term juvenile delinquency was not new to the nineteenth century it gained further recognition at the end of the period due to its links with adolescence. Criminal activity was more heavily policed as the 1800s progressed due to the 1829 Metropolitan Police Act which established a full time police force. This fed into, and appeared to evidence concerns about, the rise of criminal activity. The juvenile delinquent became the 'potent element' of anxiety in relation to crime (Shore, 1999, p. 2). This was articulated by Worsley (1849 cited in Pearson, 1983, p. 157-8):

> A bane to society, which like an ulcer on the body, is continually enlarging, and distributing far and wide its noxious influence…a general and latent depravity, which a large extent of juvenile depravity seems to indicate…whose precocity in wickedness is subject of grief and alarm to every well-regulated mind…the increasing degeneracy of the juvenile population

The concept of youth became synonymous with adolescence at the end of the Victorian era, however it's important to make the distinction between the two as they are not interchangeable. Adolescence is part of the period of youth and associated with teenage years (Springhall, 1986). Adolescence was beginning to be recognised as a separate social category and Hall's (1904) American model of 'storm and stress' became hugely influential. It was based on bio-psychological ideas of conflict and risk explained due to the onset of puberty. Tenuous links were made between adolescence and crime, particularly evident with attention being paid to the juvenile delinquent which permeated deeper into the public

consciousness due to the links with adolescence (Pearson, 1994). Consequently Hall's association of American teenagers with conflict and risk gave credence to the causal relationship between juvenile delinquency and adolescence in Britain. Adolescence however, was essentially a middle class construction based on theorisations of middle class teenagers, despite it being applied to all young people regardless of their social background (Gillis, 1981). The urban poor, or working class youth as they tend to be referred to retrospectively, were deemed as delinquent and a continued point of public concern as adolescence became recognised as a 'stage of life' and 'social fact' which led to commentators to believe that they understood young people, particularly those from the lower classes (Hendrick, 1990, p. 251).

Normal adolescent development was conceived as male development by Hall (1904), whereby rebellious girls were perceived as abnormal for challenging anti-criminal feminine expectations. He highlighted times of menstruation as likely to be the point when women commit a criminal act of violence, a popular theory which gained resonance throughout the twentieth century (Dalton, 1959). For young men on the other hand, delinquency was seen as part of their normal set of behaviours. Drawing on the scientific method of Lombroso (1911) and the notion of the 'born criminal', Hall posited that inherited criminal tendencies were an explanation of group delinquency. He claimed that primitive behaviour by savages was underpinned by the notion that survival was more likely in a group and the male adolescent had savage instincts, who with the right intervention from females, could become civilised.

The problematic notion of adolescence has been noted as being directly responsible for the negative perceptions of working class youth according to Cunningham (1995). Whilst Hall's (1904) work was influential in positing links between young people conflict and risk, divisions based on social class still dominated societal attitudes. Class positioning was central to the analysis of crime, with criminality regarded as a working class problem despite other groups in society engaging in offending behaviour. High class criminals were regarded as 'rotten apples' rather than a reflection of the 'criminal class' with which the lower class were associated (Emsley, 2005, p. 57). As a result they were viewed as risky and dangerous due to their 'potentially threatening and polluting effects' on the higher classes (Davidoff, 1983, p. 18). A lack of empathy tended to be reserved for poor urban youth by respectable society, many of whom also failed to acknowledge the link between poverty and criminality, regarding such behaviour as immoral. Humphries (1981, p. 151) refers to committing crime due to economic necessity as 'social crime', with the most common offence being stealing food. Despite hunger being a major reason underpinning youth crime, causal links between poverty and crime tended not to be established, instead the family and slack morals were blamed (Emsley, 2005). According to Neale (1840, cited in Shore, 1999, p.1) the chief cause of juvenile delinquency and crime, were 'deeply implanted in the fallen nature of man', thus demonstrating the fears and anxieties of the period in terms of the perceived existence of a dangerous and immoral culture. It also suggests that they existed in the realms below respectable society, with juvenile delinquency becoming a symbol of moral degradation. Such views

were challenged by a minority of observers, who whilst not asserting that poverty was the sole cause of delinquency, deemed it a consequence (Carpenter, 1853).

Concerns about poor children roaming the streets were followed by fears of visible young people on the streets. The image of the child, and the beliefs surrounding what childhood should entail, was split according to class, the innocent middle class child versus the hardened and corrupting working class child (Shore & Cox, 2002). Working class young people's everyday lives were seen as dominated by risky behaviours according to middle class standards from which they were judged (Hendrick, 1990). This is supported by Humphries (1981) who argued that there was likely to be a rapid transitioning from childhood to adulthood for the lower classes which did not fit Hall's (1904) model of adolescence. The typical poor teenager was likely to be relatively independent from their parents, compared to more affluent teenagers, as they moved towards adulthood. It was acknowledged by reformers that helplessness needed to be reintroduced so that 'the true position of childhood' could be rediscovered and be brought to a sense of dependence 'by reawakening in him new and healthy desires' (Carpenter, 1853, p. 298). Hendrick (1994) suggests that the delinquent young person was the child who had refused protection and become a threat to society. This was based on the dominant construction of children as dependent, with those exhibiting independence being seen to be devious and possessing weak morals. This contributed to the desire for the delinquent to be turned back into a child (Cunningham, 1995). Concern directed at poor young people was not a new phenomenon, however, the links between adolescence and juvenile delinquency exacerbated these concerns. As a

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result, positioning young people as victims or villains was particularly pronounced during this period (Griffiths, 2002).

Male deviancy: Real criminals

 As has been discussed, respectability was an important currency during the nineteenth century adopted by the middle classes to differentiate between groups in society. However, many of the urban poor, if concerned with such terminology, regarded themselves as respectable despite others labelling them as otherwise. Such categorisations nevertheless served to further stigmatise the working classes resulting in them appearing more problematic than they actually were. This was compounded by their visibility on the streets, which were viewed as a place of danger and temptation, rather than a necessary space used for employment and entertainment purposes. The shift of populations to towns and large cities such as London to acquire work would have contributed to larger urban populations. The camaraderie exhibited by groups of working class youth was interpreted as deviant, despite the street being regarded as the 'school of the poor' (Gillis 1981, p. 63). The perceived bad behaviour of young people was deemed a nuisance and something to be eradicated (Shore & Cox, 2002). This is despite the fact that cramped living conditions, coupled with the need to make a living, forced young people into the public eye to a greater extent than their middle class counterparts. The young street trader for example was considered the 'antithesis of the disciplined skilled worker', being their own boss created anxiety in terms of exhibiting too much autonomy which was linked to the potential of becoming a thief (Mahood & Littlewood, 1994, p. 556). Persistent offenders were the chief

concern of reformers as it was assumed that these individuals would become persistent adult offenders and join the 'criminal class'. Evidence of young people dipping in and out of crime was identified during this period however, which challenged the idea that once an individual deviated they were destined to be a career criminal. Many did not become hardened criminals but committed offences as way to deal with poverty, with levels of criminality rising when jobs were scarce (Emsley, 2005).

The concept of juvenile delinquency was closely linked to masculinity and could be seen as being played out via representations of the male pickpocket who possessed 'assertive, precocious masculinity' (Shore, 1999, p. 59). The pickpocket was viewed as a persistent offender who was in the first stage of a criminal career and fully committed to this path. An unwavering perception was that criminals were getting younger and they were too independent. A dominant image constructed during this period was that of the 'Artful Dodger', a skilled thief personified by Dickens (1867, p. 33-34) in Oliver Twist and described as:

> A snub-nosed, flat-browed, common-faced boy enough; and as dirty a juvenile as one would wish to see; but he had about him all the airs and manners of a man. He was short of his age: with rather bowlegs, and little, sharp, ugly eyes. His hat was stuck on the top of his head so lightly, that it threatened to fall off every moment and would have done so, very often, if the wearer had not had a knack of every now and then giving his head a sudden twitch, which brought it back to its old place again. He wore a man's coat, which reached nearly to his

heels…He was, altogether, as roystering and swaggering a young gentleman as ever stood four feet six, or something less, in his bluchers

This depiction of a boy dressed as an adult, and privy to adult vices, links to Aries' (1965) notion of the medieval miniature child who was unprotected from sin and whereby children were depicted as mini adults. Poor children in the nineteenth century did not fit in with middle class agreed definitions of childhood as innocent, vulnerable, and in need of protection, and were therefore classed as deviant. It was the adult mannerisms of young people which created concern in terms of the extent to which they had also become hardened to crime (Shore, 1999). Reformer's attitudes were clearly defined by Hendrick (1994, p. 27):

The latter [the delinquent] is a little stunted man already – he knows much and a great deal too much of what is called life – he can take care of his own immediate interests. He is self-reliant…submits to no control and asks for no protection. He has consequently much to unlearn – he has to be turned again into a child

The Artful Dodger evokes an image of a pickpocket who was competent in his trade and who belonged to a wider group of thieves. Emphasis was placed on boys being led astray due to the dens and lodging houses in which they frequented, and could be found to be living off the earnings of prostitutes. This was represented by Dickens via Fagin's den whereby young people were both

seduced, and trained into, crime and engaged in debauchery (Stanton & Wenham, 2013).

During the late Victorian and Edwardian period anxiety continued to persist about working class youth and their visibility in groups in public spaces. The term 'Hooligan' came into usage at the end of the nineteenth century. The idea that poor young people were too independent was a continuing feature which was interpreted as evidencing a decrease in moral standards. The emergence of what might now be recognised as a distinct youth culture was also evident with the Hooligan's style of dress in London, neck scarves, peaked caps and bell bottomed trousers, as described by the Daily Graphic (1900, cited in Pearson, 1983, p. 93-94):

> The boys affect a kind of uniform. No hat, collar, or tie is to be seen. All of them have a peculiar muffler twisted around the neck, a cap set rakishly forward, well over the eyes, and trousers very tight at the knee and very loose at the foot. The most characteristic part of their uniform is the substantial leather belt heavily mounted with metal. It is not ornamental, but then it is not intended for ornament

Pearson (1983, p. 75) notes how the terms 'Hooligan' and 'hooliganism' were coined as a response to a bank holiday disturbance which resulted in a large amount of arrests, the disorders were described as 'something like organised terrorism in the streets' by the Times newspaper. However, there was no overall consensus that the Hooligan represented a new youth threat, or that the

disturbances were as ferocious as described, with a former Scotland Yard detective noting that the newspapers were sensationalising events. Humphries (1981) identified the existence of moral panics around working class youth in relation to violent outbursts, whilst the violence exhibited by middle class youth in fights or on the sports field, were simply regarded as a natural expression of masculinity. This highlights the double standards from which poor young people were judged. Furthermore, as Gillis (1981) points out, although there appeared to be evidence to support a claim that working class groups were becoming more violent and problematic this was not necessarily the case.

Female deviancy: Street women

The notion of a youth problem has historically been concerned with the problem of working class males (Springhall, 1986). Young women were virtually invisible in terms of their relationship with troublesome behaviour, unless it was linked to their sexual practices, and the moral and polluting threat they consequently were seen to pose. Given the masculine association with juvenile delinquency, few writers in the nineteenth century considered the role of young women in relation to crime, except for when it concerned prostitution. As a result female thieves were regarded as being on the periphery of these male cultures (Shore, 1999). Moralising categories of the offender were demonstrated by the categorisation of young men as thieves and young women as prostitutes. Prostitutes were the female parallel of the criminal class, and the term prostitute became the noun to describe poor women (Emsley, 2005). It was young women's sexuality which was regarded as being in need of control, compared to young men's criminality.

Prostitutes were often viewed as corrupting male youth, having appeared to reject the middle class stipulations of what it means to be feminine and chaste if unmarried. That said, the moral indignation aimed at poor women by those in the higher classes was not necessarily matched by their lower class counterparts.

The idea of fallenness was morally charged, associated with sexual activity outside marriage, and viewed as a precursor to prostitution. It referred to the ideological set of agreed morals women were supposed to possess, and consequently the prostitute was viewed as a direct challenge to the idealised perception of the goodliness of women. As noted in chapter one, women in society were regarded as morally superior, the benchmark of morality for the entire family, with the middle class wife viewed as 'the golden chain which binds society together' (Davidoff, 1983, p. 21). The concept of the angel in the house exacerbated this image, which was underpinned by the association of men with the public domain and women and with the private domain. However, for the majority of poor women working outside of the home it was usually a necessity and they became an anomaly in relation to the perception of the fragile female. Prostitution could be seen as one of the few routes available for women in order to survive, with such perceptions of the fallen woman revealing more about middle class mentality of the period than about the actual working women themselves (Emsley, 2005).

Shore (1999) notes how it was the transition from girl to woman which was regarded as responsible for their corrupting influence. Commentators of the time remarked, 'round the fire was a group of girls far gone in dissipation, good-looking

girls most of them, but shameless, smoking cigarettes, boasting of drinks or drinkers, using foul language, singing music hall songs, or talking vileness' (Higgs, 1976 cited in Walkovitz, 1980, p. 27). Such judgmental depictions of poor young women were common, and attention by reformers was placed upon the routes which might lead to prostitution. Street selling for example could be viewed as a precursor to prostitution due to the lack of supervision and the long hours spent on the streets. This is similar to the way in which male street sellers were considered too autonomous and at risk of becoming a thief, which could then in turn lead to a career in crime. According to a probation officer of the period, delinquent boys become thieves and girls who were 'adrift' went 'straight to the streets' (Mahood & Littlewood, 1994, p.556). For Mayhew (2008, p. 180), flower girls were divided into two categories, younger girls who sold flowers to support themselves and their families, whilst older girls sold flowers and kept 'loose' company. Mayhew suggests that they were immoral by character despite citing examples of young women being sent out by their parents to work. One young woman for example supported both of her parents through prostitution and they would send her back out on the streets without any supper if she hadn't made enough money. From the age of nine this occurred, and at nineteen she had grown weary of the streets and committed vandalism in order to be sent to an asylum and get better lodgings. That said, prostitution was not as rife as commentators may have reported, and the amount of women earning enough to live on solely through prostitution would have been a minority. Walkowitz (ibid, p. 17) has challenged the idea that young girls engaging in prostitution was a common practice and argues that sixteen was

the age when most young women 'first went wrong'. Despite this, girls who it was feared might enter into the world of prostitution could be imprisoned without actually committing a crime (Cale, 1993b).

Prostitutes could be judged harshly, yet such evaluations were not readily applied to the men who sought out, and paid for, their services. Booth (1969, p. 125-128) described the lodging houses of thieves and prostitutes as 'sinks of iniquity' and 'real hells on earth', with the individuals who frequented these places having no sense of remorse about the activities they were engaged in. He claimed that any woman who came into contact with these prostitutes would be robbed and then be forced to stoop to their level:

> Perhaps a quarrel will begin and in a minute one woman has knocked another down, while a third will seize the apparent victor by the hair and with the other hand fetch heavy blows on the face: others join in the fray and whole are swearing, foaming and fighting, while the cry of murder fills the air

Booth (ibid) points to the fact that whilst women of all classes plied this trade, distinctions were made according to class divisions. The brothel was a place where prostitutes often saw their clients and women changed their locations frequently when they were shut down by the police. In the fashionable brothels rich clients remained anonymous and some prostitutes may have been kept women. High class brothels attracted less interest from the police and those who worked in these establishments were not considered to be part of the criminal class, unlike

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the women on the street who were the most vulnerable in terms of dangers and police attention (Emsley, 1987). This demonstrates how deviance was constructed differently according to the individual and also how the higher classes appeared to be more immune from such negative labelling.

Whilst the dominant image of the young male deviant was that of the Artful Dodger, Dicken's (1867, p. 187) character Nancy in Oliver Twist was a prostitute representing female deviance:

> The girl's life had been squandered on the streets, and the most noisome of the stews and dens of London, but there was still some of the original women's nature left in her still… Miserable companion of thieves and ruffians, the fallen outcast of low haunts, the associate of the scourings of the jails and hulks

In keeping with the literature about the male criminal class, and fears surrounding young men descending into a life of crime once they had been seduced into criminality, investigators held similar stereotyped views of the prostitute, with one reporting that 'once a woman has descended from the pedestal of innocence she is prepared to perpetrate every crime' (Talbot, 2010, cited in Walkowitz, 1980, p. 39). Nancy also acknowledges the difficulties in escaping her life, 'I am chained to my old life. I loathe and hate it now, but I cannot leave it. I must have gone too far to turn back' (Dickens 1867, p. 220). This representation is indicative of the perception that once a young person was involved in crime they were unable to return to so-called respectable society. It would have been more difficult for a

young woman to acquire alternative employment if it was known that she had been a prostitute. In this way prostitution was not regarded as something which individuals dipped in and out off, despite the fact that most young women would be returning to other jobs, or working as a prostitute to supplement their meagre wages. Prostitution was often a temporary measure rather than an indication of a perceived depraved existence which would necessarily persist into the future (Walkowitz, ibid). It was also likely then to be a transition stage for the majority due to economic necessity. The shorter hours, and better wages, meant that young women may have been supplementing her low wages gained from manual labour. Although despite the extra income the money would not have been enough to enable her to escape poverty. Chesney (1970) notes how the unstable labour market, coupled with harsh conditions, also explained why some young women resorted to prostitution. Women were paid less than men and often took over men's jobs who may have been in position to support them. The majority of commentators ignored the uncertain nature of employment, in addition to the harsh aspects of living in poverty. Prostitution only tended to be used as a form of employment as a last resort for many, and furthermore many young women would not entertain this as a way of making a living according to Chin (1988).

Dicken's (1867, p. 190). Nancy, became involved in criminal behaviour due to her relationship with Sikes, a vicious and controlling older man who ultimately murdered her, with his impact on Nancy described as a 'new means of violence and suffering'. Challenging the stereotype of the passive prostitute, Walkowitz (1980) suggests that generally they were independent rather than controlled by

men, in addition to the fact that it was a form of employment which tended to be taken up voluntarily rather than through coercion. Many young women lived an independent lifestyle, having moved out of home, and were accustomed to surviving independently. However, the idea of submissiveness correlated with the ways in which working class young women were expected to behave in other professions (Dyhouse, 1981). The sentiment associated with fear of female independence paralleled that of male independence with Pike (1876, cited in Emsley, 2005, p. 93) noting that 'every step made by a woman towards her independence is a step towards that precipice at the bottom which lies a prison'. Not only was too much autonomy regarded as a fault and something to be controlled, it was also regarded as a precursor to a criminal lifestyle. So whilst the main focus during the nineteenth century was on male criminality and its associated deviance, similar ideas were also applied to females in terms of the threat linked to working class independence.

Centre stage: Young men's subcultures

In the US a sociological approach to criminology was developed from the 1920s by the Chicago School, a department in the University of Chicago. This was influenced by the work of Durkheim in terms of crime being a normal function of society. Durkheim (1894/1984) proposed that crime is both normal and useful, and a necessary part of society, rather than pathological, as it occurs across all societies. The inevitability of crime is based on the notion that not everyone is committed to a collective consciousness. The Chicago School was characterised by a shift from a micro to a macro analysis of society, whereby society rather than

the individual was regarded as a factor for the development of criminal behaviour. This was played out via a consideration of culture and urban environments underpinning criminal deviance, and denoted a move from pathological explanations of offending. The first definition of a subculture was outlined by Palmer (1928, cited in Blackman & Kempson, 2016, p. 4) from the Chicago School:

> Subcultural groups which display variations in the prevailing culture of the land are much more difficult to discover. Investigations seem to disclose, however, that there are certain basic differences in people's mode of life which leads to clear-cut variations in their customs, attitudes and behavior patterns

Underlining this framework was the emphasis on society being consensual, i.e. the sharing the sharing of similar beliefs and values to meet the needs of the group. It also points to the differences between groups which can then create smaller cultures within the dominant culture.

Whilst the Chicago School was developing, in the UK early subcultural work was influenced by biology and Eugenics. Burt (1925) was linked to the Eugenics movement and influenced by Lombroso in terms of the idea that deviant individuals were defective and subnormal. Like Durkheim, he believed that crime was a necessary part of society and therefore normal. Also in keeping with Hall (1904), Burt (ibid, p. 95) utilised bio-psychological determinism and notions of savagery to recognise and understand youth crime, regarding delinquents as animals spurred on by a force which 'closely resembles those vital springs which

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animate the humbler brutes…he leads an existence warped, onesided, incomplete'. Burt posits a causal link between neglect and delinquency identifying a range of one hundred and seventy multi-causal factors which could constitute offending behaviour. British delinquents were seen to be behaving in a childish and dangerous manner, who were educationally emotionally and morally subnormal, backward and unstable. Burt conceived that while boys may have formed cliques, few became involved in groups with the purpose of terrorising their neighbourhoods. In terms of young women they were unlikely to band together to form cliques, offences tended to be committed alone as it was regarded that they lacked the group sentiment, despite their social instinct.

In a later British study of delinquency, Bowlby's work was based on the idea that young people had psychological shortcomings 'within a deprived culture' (Blackman, 2014, p. 499). Bowlby (1944) claimed that maternal attachment was the key determining factor in relation to youth crime, whereby the depravation of emotional needs being met is one of its most likely causes. This lack of emotional development was seen to cause irreversible permanent damage which was played out by a lack of empathy, guilt and shame plus the inability to form long lasting relationships. Inadequate socialisation could result in what Bowlby (ibid, p. 52) termed 'affectionless characters' and a 'few hysterical and anti-social schizoids'. A young person was able to steal according to this viewpoint due to a lack of affection for others, and this was the key precursor of a life of crime. Similarly to Hall (1904), individual pathology, rather than societal and environmental factors were viewed as being responsible.

It wasn't until the 1950s in the UK that there was a shift from recognising, and understanding, deviance from a psychological lens to a sociological one. Subcultures were a way to enable those who felt they didn't fit into society to re-establish themselves in peer groups, and these collective groupings become extremely appealing (Brake, 1985). Throughout the period after the Second World War youth subcultures have garnered a large amount of attention from academics and the media in Britain. This is due to their public visibility in the streets, and the fears and anxieties which were inevitably attached to this. Working class youth were viewed as ascribing to their own subculture in deprived areas and were regarded as visible examples of deviance. As with marginalised young people in the nineteenth century, they continued to be viewed as a barometer of social change.

One purpose of British subcultural research during this period was to test out American ideas which had been developed via the Chicago School and focused on perceptions of collective deviance. This body of work centred on the 'unsupervised use of decaying urban (public) spaces' (Gunter, 2016, p. 48). For Mays (1954) delinquency was normalised as part of male socialisation within the area his study was based. This was the first UK study to use the term 'subculture' (Tierney, 2010). The neighbourhood was viewed as a criminal subculture in itself but not everyone was caught for the offences they committed. For Mays the environment can produce delinquency but also the relationship with the subcultural group plays its part. Certain individuals were more attached to the group than others within it, and this influenced the extent to which members felt the need to

conform to its norms and values. Mays suggests that only a small number of young men were involved in serious delinquency as essentially crime was regarded as a fun activity. For some it was a onetime experiment, whilst for others they become adept at avoiding capture. Despite the majority of young people engaging in petty crime during their teenage years due to such drift, as identified by Matza (1964), being a social tradition, patterns of criminal behaviour did not necessarily continue into adulthood as most grew out of the delinquent stage.

One of the theories from the US which was tested out by subcultural researchers during this period was the concept of strain. Merton (1938) first identified strain theory, in part, due to his rejection of individualistic explanations for crime in keeping with sociological ideas which were emerging via the Chicago School. He relied on the concept of cultural integration and how individuals adapt to this process. The strain of status frustration implied that individuals from deprived neighbourhoods conform to criminal behaviour as a result of their unsuccessful attempts to achieve the goal of the American Dream, based on the notion of a meritocratic society. The majority of the population were not able to achieve these goals and as a result sought alternative means of success. However, the idea of strain has been criticised for assuming that all individuals are in pursuit of the American Dream (and furthermore are aware of this ideology and respond to it accordingly). It also suggests that everyone has the same goals. Mays (1954, p. 147) did not find evidence of strain amongst the young men he studied, instead suggesting that social problems emerged from deprivation and 'delinquency-producing' neighbourhoods whereby the creation of groups were a rational

response to these deprived environments. This highlights one of the key criticisms of subcultural theory, that the idea that the mainstream and the 'other' can be easily identifiable, and that they are necessarily fixed in stark contrast against one another (i.e. normative and non-normative).

Downes (1966) also identified a lack of evidence of strain and status frustration amongst the young men he studied in East London. Rather than reacting to their exclusion from middle class norms, he suggests that they have also been excluded from conventional working class culture which contributes to their marginalisation. A 'delinquent solution' was a way of resolving problems collectively for those who did not already have a way to resolve their social positioning. As these young men were disassociated from the labour market subcultures were rooted in leisure activities, but if within these activities their needs could not be satisfied, this could set the conditions from which delinquency may occur. Downes disagreed that subcultures were formed by resistance to the mainstream culture as young men wanted to be working class rather than aspire to middle class values. Similarly to Wilmott's (1966) East London research most of the boys did not desire middle class status, they partook in delinquent behaviour due to the excitement. The majority of a young person's time was spent on everyday activities rather than in the pursuit of crime. In keeping with US ideas, such as those of Matza (1964), Downes notes how delinquency is not the main focus of the subculture. Matza believed that American subcultural researchers had failed to understand what causes delinquency because there is a subculture of delinquency but not a delinquent subculture. He was opposed to overly

deterministic theories and didn't support the tradition of distinguishing between criminals and non-criminals as they were not likely to be that fundamentally different. Most criminologists had not addressed the issue that many young people simply grow out of offending, whereas Matza proposed that offenders can dip in and out of delinquency as part of their transition to adulthood. Young people are no more attached to criminal activities than other activities but get drawn into these through the process of drift according to Matza (ibid, p. 29), who noted that the 'extraordinary delinquent has received greater attention in both mass media and criminological theory'. For Downes young people were conforming to the norms of a lower working class micro society rather than rejecting the norms of middle class society.

For Parker (1974) subcultures were a way in which working class males resist their material situation, whilst delinquency was a transitory stage before settling down into more respectable professions or a criminal career. In keeping with other British subcultural literature, crime was not a full time occupation and the majority of time was spent hanging around engaging with the everyday activity of doing nothing. Delinquency was a means of disassociating from the norms of mainstream society and young men's actions were a response to deprivation and lack of legitimate opportunities. The group was also a vehicle for young men to demonstrate their masculinity, they were influenced by those who grew up on the corners of their neighbourhood who were regarded as exciting, smart and tough. Being a hegemonic male was the symbol of a true delinquent, they desired to be 'hard' and to be able to 'look after yourself like a man' (ibid, p.146). They

subscribed to the 'cult of toughness' identified by Wilmott (1966, p. 150) in which physical prowess was revered, although this was not true of all the young men, many of whom did not regularly fight.

<u>Making headlines: Labelling and moral panics</u>

Alongside the development of the subcultural literature in Britain the ideas of labelling, moral panics and folk devils were being established in order to explain how certain individuals and groups were constructed and positioned as deviant. Labelling theory was identified in the US by Becker (1963) who highlighted the social construction of deviance, arguing that a deviant act is only created by being labelled as such. Social reactions to deviance and criminality are influenced by those who have the power to do the labelling, thus constructing certain groups and not others as deviant or criminal, 'deviance is not a quality of the act a person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an "offender"' (ibid, p. 9). In keeping with the literature of the period, labelling was discussed in relation to male deviancy rather than female deviancy. The labelling of working class male youth as deviant within the UK was notable by their presence in subcultures and the ways in which such groups were represented discursively. Deviant acts become named as deviant through agencies of control, thus indicating how crime and deviance are fluid rather than fixed categories. In this way labelling is a political act which has historically had negative repercussions for minority and excluded groups. That said, the extent to which individuals accept the labels assigned to them is debatable and the levels of deviancy are likely to alter according to the individual when considering the

categorising of groups. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that such labelling can create fear and mistrust amongst sections of the public, who in turn want to see more punitive measures implemented to deal with them. These constructions of deviancy then can often lead to increased cultures of punitive control with groups such as working class youth tending to be disproportionally affected, perceived as 'dangerous populations' who are 'undeserving, and deviant, dangerous and different' (Garland, 2001, p. 102).

Becker (1963) introduced the idea of the moral entrepreneur as the result of moral conflicts between groups and individuals, the moral crusader utilised the media to publicise and stir up the issue. In the UK context Cohen (1972) then developed these ideas to coin the term 'moral panic' in relation to youth subcultures as they were most likely to be represented in the media in relation to criminality due to the long standing links between the press and police. The 'media have long operated as agents of moral indignation in their own right: even if they are not self-consciously engaged in crusading or muck-raking, their very reporting of certain "facts" can be sufficient to generate concern, anxiety, indignation or panic' (Cohen, 2002, p. 7). He linked panics with the notion of the 'folk devil' through the process of deviancy application, a spiral propelled by news coverage based on the relationship between the media, police and young people. A folk devil was described as an individual group or individual defined as a threat to society's values, demonised in the public consciousness and used as scapegoats to avoid focusing on wider societal problems. More recently, Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009) have also identified the key institutions which create moral panics, namely

the media, the public, the law, and politicians. One outcome of the panic is increased fear and anxiety amongst the public who regard such deviancy as a threat to the norms of mainstream society. The call for punitive responses are then actioned via the police and the criminal justice system, backed up by governments, who want to be seen as being 'tough on crime'. The public has an emotional investment in crime fuelled by the media which can often result in higher penalties and sentencing (Garland, 2001).

Although not expressed in the same terminology at the time there have been recurrent moral panics in Britain since the nineteenth century, serving to draw attention from the causes of crime and delinquency from the effects of social deprivation (Osgerby, 1997). After the Second World War Teddy Boys, Mods and Rockers, Punks and Skinhead subcultures were linked to moral panics, thus contributing to the ways in which such groups were labelled as deviant. Cohen (1972) observed the anti-social behaviour of, and within, two subcultures, the Mods and the Rockers. He noted the way in which a disturbance at a seaside town was overblown by the media, as the outcome only resulted in a few vandalised beach huts and broken windows. The press amplified supposed differences between the two collectives of young people in order to create conflict, despite the fact that not every young person involved was either a Mod or a Rocker. This was based on the assumption that was a clear affiliation between groups when in reality this was more nuanced. By positioning young people on one side or the other creates an added layer of conflict to fuel the debates around young people resisting collectively. This polarisation fed into the idea that these groups had

caused a larger disturbance which was not the case, and the numbers involved were also distorted. The creation of conflict between groups added to the newsworthiness of subcultures. Young (1974, p. 241) describes this media process as highlighting uncommon events which present its subjects in a 'stereotypical fashion and contrast them against a backcloth of normality which is over typical' in order to encourage stricter forms of social control. This mirrors the events in the Victorian era whereby the term Hooligan was coined as a response to a bank holiday disturbance which was also overblown and sensationalised by the media.

One of the biggest challenges to the concept of the moral panic is the idea that there is only one uniform response to events and that the audience passively receive media messages. The attitudes held by individuals and groups towards certain issues, will impact on the ways in which media messages are received and understood which will, in turn, alter the reaction to these messages. The idea of what constitutes moral behaviour has also been questioned in relation to moral panics, as for those individuals who view themselves as having a high moral standing it is natural that they will respond negatively against those who appear to have chosen a deviant lifestyle and are bypassing the norms of dominant society (Young, 1974). Whilst society will respond to events, the exaggeration tactics employed by the media is one way of creating newsworthy stories, despite often being underpinned by sensationalist journalism. Thornton (1995, p. 136) suggests that moral panics tend to position those who are the subject as innocent bystanders and recipients of 'negative stigmatisation'. That said, it is

acknowledged by Jewkes (2015) that the coverage of deviance and crime is rarely based on fact and stories are exploited for the sake of entertainment. Despite not everyone being swayed by media messages of deviant youth, the negative connotations nevertheless continue to play out in the public domain and influence the ways in which young people are viewed by the public, police and policy makers.

<u>Seen and not heard: Young women's subcultures</u>

Britain has a history of framing deviance, male deviance at least, via subcultural forms. Young people who resist mainstream culture have been described as forming subcultures, 'spectacular subcultural groups' however have existed since the Victorian era (Osgerby, 1997, p. 17). Such resistance to young people's social positioning as a rejection of the dominant culture has been noted as a way white working class males in particular, have been demonstrated forms of collective resistance (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). This class based analysis used hegemony as a key concept to explore how working class young men in particular accept and negotiate their subordination. According to Osbergy (1997, p. 55) 'one of the greatest weaknesses of earlier histories and sociologies of youth culture was the limited coverage according to female experiences'.

Since the mid twentieth century delinquent subcultures have essentially referred to the perceived deviance of working class young men, characterised by machismo and violent tendencies. It is not known from the literature how young women experienced, and potentially resisted, their marginalisation via subcultures. When they do appear in Mays (1954) it is evident that young men were regarded as the

real delinquents, whilst young women were preoccupied with marriage and having children. In keeping with the legacies of the past, female deviant behaviour was linked to their sexual rather than criminal actions. A young women's sexual reputation remained crucial to how she was viewed and treated by young men, and women, in the group. They may have been present in groups but were ultimately defined simply as girlfriends and as being marginal to the action. Such views are shared by other studies of the period which present young women as being primarily concerned with achieving status through heterosexual relationships and marriage, and a means of controlling male delinquent behaviour rather than being a provocateur (Downes, 1966; Wilmott, 1966; Parker, 1974). It was assumed that young men would eventually grow out of their delinquency phase and turn their attentions to marriage, thus conflating the view of young women as steadying influences on their male counterparts, rather than posing similar risks. Going steady with a girl could result in a lack of status amongst the boys, whereas for the female such a relationship increased her status in the group. They were referred to as the boys' 'tarts' and violence was often an accepted part of the relationship according to Parker (ibid, p. 95&97), 'I give her a good fuckin' smack when she starts arguing…just keep them in their place'. Females fell into three categories, 'somebody's tart' (a girlfriend), 'dirty ticket' (the promiscuous girl) or neither of these two and regarded as a waste of time (ibid, p. 137-138).

Issues such as agency, identity and resistance in the lives of young women are difficult to locate. Only one British subcultural study seeks to challenge the passive and submissive view of the female based on a group of offending young women.

Shacklady-Smith (1978) noted the neglect in interest in the dynamics of female delinquent groups based on the perceived lack of need or inability for young women to form groups. Whilst traditionally young women have been presented as peripheral to the vision of the group, her (ibid, p. 84) study of a female only group found that rather than accept the sexist labels assigned to members such as 'prostitute', they challenged these unflattering stereotypes and conceived of their identities as 'tough, dominant and tomboyish'. This research positions members as active participants in the group who did not rely on romantic alliances with young men to carve out a role and identity for themselves. In keeping with their male peers, the importance of violence as a means of fitting in was identified by one of the members, 'you've got to be a good fighter or you're not really one of the gang' (ibid, p. 85). Until this point there had been little acknowledgement of female perpetrated violence as a means of gaining respect within British subcultures as these collectives had been framed as inherently male domains.

Cohen (1972, p. 57) made the important point that not all subcultures were delinquent and that a distinction should be made between delinquency and subcultures. He studied the development of cultural style as a way young people resist against the dominant norms of society, describing the subculture as:

> The contradiction, at an ideological level, between traditional working class Puritanism, and the new hedonism of consumption; at an economic level, between the future as part of the socially mobile elite, or as part of the new lumpen. Mods, Parkers, Skinheads, Crombies, all represent, in their different ways, an attempt to retrieve some of the

socially cohesive elements destroyed in their parent culture, and to combine these with elements selected from other class fractions

The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) from Birmingham University adopted these ideas by exploring resistance as a form of deviant behaviour focusing on style rather than delinquency. In contrast to the previous ethnographic subcultural studies this body of work has been criticised due to its semiotic focus and the lack of empirical evidence leading to a 'wilful ignorance' of how young people made sense of their lives (Williams, 2011, p. 29). The attention was placed on spectacular subcultures positioning males as heroic, and romanticising female resistance or rendering it invisible (Tebbutt, 2016). In keeping with the history of the subcultural literature the work of the CCCS was also accused of being haunted by masculism, despite young women playing a major role in the development of the teenager and its accompanying youth cultures (Savage, 2008). McRobbie and Garber (1976, p. 188) expressed their disapproval of the CCCS for marginalising the lives of females and suggested that girls had their own 'bedroom cultures'. They were viewed as taking charge of private spaces to counter their marginalisation in the public domain. On one hand they were resisting by playing out their identities in private spaces, whilst on the other being complicit through their invisibility in public spaces. The emphasis here was on consumption rather than production through engagement with magazines which encouraged romanticism. Young women tended to be identified as representing society's system of control and consequently were more likely to associate with the ritual of consumerism than the 'ritual of resistance' (McRobbie, 2000, p.19).

More recently McRobbie (2008) has rejected her own suggestion of girls' subcultural practices constituting a subversion of consumer culture by asking just how oppositional were they? It is indeed questionable whether mainstream pop culture with a focus on individual romanticism would be considered as challenging the dominant culture given that it lacks the authenticity associated with subcultural forms. Furthermore, the individual nature of romanticism could be considered to be in conflict with the concept of the subculture, and its focus of resisting collectively, if locating a boyfriend was the main priority ahead of relationships with friends in the group. The choice of focusing on the bedroom, the private domain, rather than the public domain of the streets, for a study intended to challenge the invisibility of young women in subcultural literature, was a missed opportunity to explore the lives of working class women, particularly given that the street is the 'playground for working class youth' (Brake, 1985, p. 36). This resulted in compounding existing stereotypes about the leisure choices of young men and women, in addition to cementing the idea that the public sphere was masculine and the private sphere was feminine.

Punk subcultures were populated by young men and women as it captured the 'essence of unemployed, bored youth', they were considered both authentic and a classed form of resistance (Reddington, 2004, p. 439). Their images contravened the idealised feminine sex symbol yet the 'title of punk rocker was a concept too baffling for many people to comprehend' (McGraw, 2012, p. 328). Females were absent in the literature despite the fact that young women played a major part in this subculture. Their personas challenged the dominant ideas that women were

'naturally' subservient to men. Black women have been particularly forgotten about, despite groups such as Polystyrene being influenced by Jamaican Ska music. Hebdige (2012) has described punk as a white subculture. This absence of other racial identities can be explained, in part, due to the white skinhead racist connotations whereby the concept of the punk rocker was too difficult for many to grasp, 'Black punks, especially females, suffered an incomplete sense of cultural identity' (McGraw, ibid, p. 328). This is an example of young women being present, yet their histories are not catalogued due to a lack of empirical documentation, so it is not known how they specifically used subcultures as a means of potential resistance.

Young women of colour are almost invisible in subcultural texts, whereby young people have been 'racially undifferentiated' (Fuller, 1982, p. 270). This marginalisation was reflection of their subordination in wider society. From the fifties immigration from the Caribbean and the Indian sub-continent to the UK began to challenge definitions of what it meant to be British. Despite being invited to Britain by the government in order to supplement the high labour demand, this did not protect the newly arrived migrants from a racist reception by many of the natives. Rather than ensure a smooth transition, the government were accused of exacerbating racial tensions rather than ameliorating them due to the unregulated housing market and forced slum living (Todd, 2015). This was coupled with the difficulty of securing skilled jobs due to the negative stereotypes of populations of colour, regardless of holding qualifications only menial work was available. By the 1970s second generation immigrant families were living in the UK, yet despite this

young women's experiences are difficult to locate within the academic literature of the period. As Brake (1985) pointed out, what did Britain have to offer an unemployed black teenager whose existence is framed by racism? Fuller (1982) located black teenage girls within the subcultural framework. They understood that due to institutionalised racism, working hard would not necessarily equate to success, their anger was fuelled by the lack of skilled employment opportunities and they maintained an air of nonchalance and in the classroom. Mirza (1992) also found that black young women were acutely aware of their teacher's racism, which contributed to their abilities being underestimated. Mirza (2010), reflecting on her (1992) study, suggests that they were quietly subversive, by sitting at the back of the class and refusing to listen to the teacher. Asian young women are also virtually absent in subcultural texts, despite racism being a feature of life which many sought actively to resist. Their invisibility compounded the submissive stereotype which they've been associated with. However, rather than being passive victims of static cultures, they are instead actively involved in creating and recreating their identities. This is illustrated by a respondent in Dwyer's (1998, p. 50) research who comments that its assumed females are not allowed to go out, because 'they are chained to the kitchen sink, but we're not like that'. Shain's (2003) study of educational subcultures also contradicts those discourses which position this group as inherently vulnerable. She compares the 'gang girls' to Willis' (1977) 'lads' because they adopted a them and us attitude and were labelled as troublemakers. Whilst the experiences of black and Asian young

women were rarely empirically recorded, they were motivated to challenge and resist their social positioning.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to establish how the storm and stress thesis served to position working class young people, particularly young men, as risky and in conflict. It also demonstrated the ways in which discourses of gender impacted on how the criminality of young people were viewed, with young women defined solely by their sexuality. Whilst storm and stress was a middle class construction, adolescence nevertheless came to cement the relationship between working class youth and juvenile delinquency. The idea that once a young person was seduced into crime they would become hardened criminals was particularly prevalent in the nineteenth century and underpinned the actions of reformers, whereby a lack of morals rather than the impact of poverty was blamed for delinquent behaviour. This was true in relation to the representation of both the Artful Dodger and the Fallen Woman. The suggestion that individuals can dip in and out of crime was evidenced in the subcultural literature, the majority of young people grew out of offending and did not pursue a criminal career as they transitioned to adulthood. The association of young men as problematic, particularly in groups on the street, is one which has resonated through the centuries and was evidenced via a tradition of moral panics from which sensational journalism served to position them as more troublesome than they actually were, thus creating false stereotypes and further stigmatising the lower classes. The youth problem was constructed as a male phenomenon and little is known about young women's relationship to

delinquency outside of their sexual practices, something which remains the case today. When young women do appear in the subcultural literature they are positioned as subservient and passive in keeping with the Victorian view of what constitutes an acceptable form of femininity. This is in contrast to young men, for whom masculinity was a prized asset, which involved actively resisting via the subculture as part of a collective solution to their marginalisation. Bedroom cultures weren't considered deviant in the same way as other subcultures due to the association with individual romanticism, which demonstrates how the legacies of the past continued to persist in terms of the association of females in private rather than public spaces. However, whilst young women may have been virtually invisible in the subcultural literature but this doesn't mean that they were not actively participating. Essentially what is absent, both in terms of young women and young men's diverse   identities, is a body of work which sought to challenge the status quo of what it meant to be masculine and feminine.

<u>Chapter 3</u>

<u>A century of the gang: From play groups to folk devils</u>

<u>Introduction</u>

The previous chapter considered how youth deviance was framed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Young men were regarded as deviant due to their engagement with criminality, whilst young women, when they were visible, were regarded as deviant due to their sexual practices. This was evidenced in the categorising of males as thieves and females as prostitutes. The emergence of the subculture was explored in terms of its inception from America's Chicago School and its development in the UK from the mid twentieth century. Young women were virtually absent from these discussions as subcultures were couched as a male construct, and represented as a way in which young men could both exhibit, and maintain, their masculinity against a backdrop of depravation and social exclusion. This chapter will chart the emergence of the gang, from its beginnings in the Chicago School, whereby the term was not initially linked to delinquency. As the period progressed the gang label came to be viewed more negatively as groups began to be constructed as inherently criminal rather than as play groups. In the UK the subcultures, rather than gangs, were predominately used to define groups of young people on the streets, and as a result a relatively small body of work focusing on gangs did not emerge until the twenty first century. Two main perspectives have driven these discourses. On the one hand it has been argued that such groups are highly structured and violent, and on the other it has been mooted that whilst gangs do exist the causal link between serious violence, crime

and gang activity is overstated. The concept has become racialised, serving to further position youth groups as deviant. In particular, black young men have become embroiled in a moral panic about their engagement. Young women when they do appear, in both the historic US and current UK literature, are positioned as passive individuals who gain status through relationships with the males in the group.

Born in the USA: American gangs

The Chicago School showcased the ways in which sociological ideas came to dominate the field of criminology based on the relationship between criminality and the urban environment. It explored delinquency from the social context of young people and the social factors of delinquency, rather than an individual pathological perspective. Thrasher (1963) focused on the impact of social disorganisation, the main cause being the breakdown of neighbourhoods and other institutions such as the school, churches and family which have not provided the opportunity for adequate socialisation. Social disorganisation in a city involves the churn of people moving in and out, and this can create gangs. A young person participates because they feel isolated from the mainstream culture due to cultural conflict and is searching for a substitute 'for what society fails to give' (ibid, p. 38). According to him (ibid, p. 46) a gang is defined as:

> An interstitial group originally formed spontaneously, and then integrated through conflict. It is characterized by the following types of behaviour: meeting face to face, milling, movement through space as a unit, conflict, and planning. The result of this collective behaviour is

the development of tradition, unreflective internal structure, esprit de corps, solidarity, morale, group awareness, and attachment to a local territory

There is no mention of crime in this definition, instead referring to gangs as spontaneously formed groups who connect when the collective meets disapproval from society and are united in conflict. Brotherton (2015, p. 175) suggests that Thrasher's approach was 'based on a strong humanistic concern for youth'. He consciously attempted to move away from previous Darwinist explanations of the gang which had been expressed by Puffer (1912) and moved towards a more sociological understanding.

Whyte's (1943) study of corner boys observed social activities on street corners, a combination of both delinquent and non-delinquent pastimes. As noted by Thrasher (1963) most gangs have a long history, the street corner boys relationships can be traced back to their childhoods staying in the areas in which they grew up until members reached their 20s and 30s. Liebow's (1966) study of Tally's Corner also highlighted the importance of friendship which was regarded as a source of security and self-esteem, with the corner being a sanctuary to resist the experience of failure or potential failure. Unlike Thrasher, Whyte does not subscribe to the social disorganisation theory to explain delinquency, rather gangs form micro societies as part of wider society with its own norms and punishments for deviancy. The prospect of low paid menial work creates rebelliousness according to Whyte, who concludes that Cornerville people will be able to take part in society more freely when there are increased legitimate opportunities to help

them integrate as social exclusion is one potential factor linked to criminal behaviour. In keeping with other studies which emerged from the Chicago School, the gang is an inherently masculine pastime underpinned by the 'urge to prove manhood' (Whyte, ibid, p. 207). Similarly for Cloward and Ohlin (1960) it is a male solution to a male problem.

By the mid twentieth century criminologists such as Cohen (1955) and Cloward and Ohlin (1960) had begun to move away from Thrasher's (1963) play group definition and were conceptualising gangs as inherently criminal. Cohen (ibid, p. 25) describes them as 'non-utilitarian, malicious and negativistic', the product of a disadvantaged socio-economic position and a solution to individual's problem of adjustment. The tendency to form gangs is explained as frustrated working class youth striking out against the middle class ideal of the American dream. The strain of status frustration (Merton, 1938), adopted by Cohen, implies that young people from deprived neighbourhoods will conform to criminal behaviour in order to get even with an unequal society. According to Cohen (ibid, p. 28), the subculture 'takes its norms from the larger culture but turns them upside down, the delinquent's conduct is right, by the standards of his subculture, precisely *because* it is wrong by the norms of the larger culture'. This suggests that the mainstream culture is fixed in its beliefs and behaviours in terms of its relationship with deviancy, and it also presupposes that deviance can't be associated with mainstream society. As noted in chapter two, the idea of strain has been criticised for assuming that working class youth are aware of middle class ideals, and desire middle class status. Short and Strodtbeck (1965) also ask which culture it is that

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delinquents are said to be opposing, as many young people of colour adhere to their own cultures. Liebow (1966) points out that the black corner boys in his research, rather than attempt to conform to the norms of their own subculture, were striving for mainstream values whilst pretending this was not the reality in case they failed to succeed. Cloward and Ohlin on the other hand argue that the American Dream is a myth, as even those working class young men who are successful at school still remain disadvantaged in terms of access to legitimate opportunities. The gang then can become the collective response to multi-layered structural inequalities. With that in mind, Thrasher has argued that group membership is more complex than simply a response to economic inequality, as in order to continually attract young people to the subculture it must also be attractive to them.

The US remains the home of the gang. The literature from the end of the twentieth century is focused on black and Latino young people and their perceived propensity for serious youth violence. This can be explained, in part, due to the racialised ideologies supporting the emergence of the 'super predator' and the 'super gang'. The super gang sprung up in 60s and 70s Chicago, as gangs moved from the streets to the prisons, a 'group larger and more violent than their predecessors...a divergence from the traditional street gang' according to Jacobs (1977, p. 139 cited in Brotherton, 2007, p. 373). In the 90s, Dilulio (1995) developed the theory of the super predator based on the idea that a new generation of delinquents was pervading the streets, more deadly than any other previous generation. He blamed this on criminogenic factors, namely moral

poverty, of which black youth were particularly regarded as lacking. The super predator theory was underpinned by the idea that certain young people were significantly different to others due their violent and criminal behaviour. A small number of academics, and in turn policy makers and the media, have adopted the super gang as atypical when referring to the UK context, despite the lack of empirical evidence to support this. Pitts (2007a, p. 31) for example suggests that it emerged in the 90s in Britain:

> The articulated super gang: is a local, originally familial, grouping, with a long history of involvement in organised crime that moved into the drugs business...It is 'institutionalised', having a broad age range and the ability to regenerate itself...The super gang has a name, and claims both residential and drug-dealing territories (although senior members may be widely dispersed), and exerts a high level of control over these neighbourhoods

Despite the UK government drawing on American models, it has been argued that actually most of the gangs in the US fail to conform to such organised and violent structures. Klein (2001) points out that US gangs are often far less likely to fit this description than observers suppose, and it is a misrepresentation that diverse youth groups are constructed in similar ways.

The subcultural tradition: Gangs in Britain

Whilst Britain has an established subcultural tradition, far less has been written about gangs (Campbell & Muncer, 1989). Despite the overreliance on American

gang models, such collectives did not originate in the US and have been in existence since the nineteenth century in Britain (Davies & Pearson, 1999). For example during this period the gang member became the 'symbolic folk devil of capitalist society' according to Humphries (1981, p.175). That said, the term was used indiscriminately to refer to a range of youth groups which created fear and anxiety, from the Artful Dodger's den of thieves, to the Hooligans who roamed the streets. It wasn't until the beginning of the twenty first century that it was mooted the UK had an emerging gang problem, based on media reports. However, this was not matched by academic discourses which questioned the prevalence of their existence. Contemporary understandings of the gang 'paints a mixed picture, full of contradictions and competing narratives' (Smithson & Ralphs, 2016, p. 12). Furthermore, existing research demonstrating the existence of highly structured and violent gangs is 'partial, biased and has still to be empirically proven' (Gunter, 2017, p. 234). Nevertheless, and despite knowing very little, the media and certain academics have claimed that there is an endemic problem. Pitts (2008; 2012) takes the view that gangs are the new face of youth crime, whereby the UK has witnessed an unparalleled rise in violence and criminal activity. However, these groupings don't suddenly appear, but instead are a created as a response to the community and the state. Such a premise fails to consider the history of youth deviance in Britain, and as a result the problem of youth crime 'then appears as one that is entirely unprecedented' (Pearson, 1994, p. 1163).

With the exception of Mares (2001; Saunders, 2004; Aldridge & Medina, 2008; Densley, 2013) a lack of ethnographic research around gangs in Britain has, in

part, contributed to a lack of knowledge of the field. Furthermore, that it is considered to be an 'American product' (Klein, 1995, p. 3) has resulted in misguided research even though the majority of members originate from other parts of the world. With research from the US being relied upon, despite the lack of evidence of US style gangs, stereotypes of such groups have been constructed which are 'misleading at best, and destructive at worse' (Marshall et al., 2005, p. 7). Klein (2001) points to the reluctance to accept the acceptance of gangs in the UK as they don't fit the US models of highly structured and violent groups, however, neither do all American collectives where so much of the literature has emanated from indicating a wider problem in the understanding of youth groups.

Brotherton (2015) notes how the LA gang pattern has dominated thinking about gangs in the US and the UK, despite groups varying in the American context. This is evident by the use of Boston's Operation Ceasefire in Manchester to reduce shootings and violent crime. The Gooch and Doddington gangs observed by Mares (2001) in Manchester adopted practices which he regarded as a reflection of American gangs and Jamaican posses, but group members rejected this idea. The appropriate study of these groups should provide 'a window on the nature of their own communities' according to Klein (2001, p. 9) in order to explore the wider issues associated with youth crime, rather than focus on the gang as an entity in its own right.

What constitutes a gang has been unanswered for decades, due to the problematic positivist approach of categorising young people into one model of structures and behaviours which then becomes the yardstick from which other

young people are judged. Sharp et al. (2004) used the term delinquent youth groups to frame their research, as not all gang activity is necessarily linked to criminal behaviour. Furthermore, only one in three of those young people in delinquent groups had committed a serious offence such as assault or robbery. The authors note how the term is a problematic one, advising to use it with caution due to its subjective nature. In tandem, Medina et al. (2013) came to the conclusion that labelling young people gang members, when the range of collectives is so diverse, can produce a stigmatising effect. In relation to stigma, Thrasher (1963) argued that the gang begins when someone looks upon it with antagonism, 'for now it starts to draw itself more closely together', which links to Becker's (1963) point that deviancy doesn't exist until it is named as such. With this in mind, Cloward and Ohlin (1960, p. 20) point out that violent 'warrior' groups attract disproportionate attention in the press as they are deemed more spectacular and visible than other groups of young people.

UK subcultural literature did not evidence American type gangs and neither have more contemporary studies been convincing in their attempts to presume that such groups are an epidemic or even exist. Despite this, Pitts (2008) argues that gangs are a serious threat to communities, omitting to consider that offending is part of many young people's transition to adulthood and a 'normal' rather than 'aberrant' or 'deviant' feature of this period in their lives (Pearson, 1994, p. 1163). Pitts' perspective, based on the views of the police rather than the young people themselves, has been adopted by the government with 'supergangs' being presented as 'atypical' and consequently in need of control as a national priority

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(Smithson & Ralphs, 2016, p. 11&13). Pitts (2012) also claims that denials of academics to acknowledge the new phenomenon of violent gangs are causing threats to young people and their families, but the overuse of the term, and in particular the stereotype of the super gang, has created its own sets of issues by stigmatising those who are not involved but are perceived to be by authorities. Given the confusion and misunderstandings about identifying members due to complex definitional issues young people are being labelled incorrectly.

There are two main perspectives which have continued to drive academic discourses around youth gangs. On the one hand it has been argued that gangs are highly structured, violent and responsible for the majority of serious violence. On the other it has been mooted that while gangs do exist they do so in varying forms of street collectives, thus playing down the causal link between serious violence and gang activity. From a historical perspective highly structured gangs are a major departure from the tradition of British youth cultures (Osgerby, 1997). The suggestion that they are a new addition to marginalised communities also contradicts much of the research which has been carried out in the UK which indicates that such groups are made up of people who are known to each other and often part of generational cultures of delinquency (Downes, 1966; Wilmott, 1966; Parker, 1974). For Mares (2001, p. 162) gangs were regarded as less delinquent than those found in the nineteenth century and located currently in the US. Sanders' (2004) London study also indicated that there was no evidence of American style gangs, and other posses reported in the press were just media hype.

Rather than deny the existence of gangs, it has been noted that not every group is the same, as British youth has not followed a pattern of structured gangs (Campbell & Muncer, 1989). In contrast to the image of hierarchical violent collectives, evidence of fluid groups of young people in the UK has been observed which are similar to friendship groups (Aldridge & Medina, 2008; Bennett & Holloway, 2004; Youth Justice Board, 2007). Hallsworth (2013) argues that the study of street cultures which incorporate the gang will assist with the understanding of group behaviour rather than laying the blame of gun and knife crime solely at the door of highly structured violent gangs. In tandem to this, Gunter (2010; 2017) has also suggested that the majority of young people who are on road engage in a positive and creative manner. Rather than be considered an endemic problem, it has been argued that the gang has become the latest folk devil in the UK (Ralphs et al., 2009). It has also been acknowledged that the number of young people engaging with these collectives has not increased, consequently such moral panics are misplaced (Medina et al., 2013). The gang offers 'Hollywood style images of urban chaos and random violence' (Alexander, 2008, p. 3), but they are not responsible for the majority of gun crime (Hallsworth & Silverstone, 2009). Gunter (2017) has continued to voice his scepticism about the tenuous causal links being made between gangs and gun and knife crime, whereby any events which occur in poor, urban, environments are regarded as a consequence of gangs. In fact, many crimes blamed on these groups can be explained 'in ways that do not require evoking gangs at all' (Hallsworth 2013, p. 14). This is in keeping with Thrasher (1963) who believed that the gang itself is not

responsible for crime, the way that they were controlled and redirected were part of the problem.

It was claimed that gangs were responsible for the bulk of the organisation and looting during the London riots in 2011, which stemmed from the killing of Mark Duggan and the mistreatment of his family by police. For years before the events unfolded the media had increasingly presented sensational headlines about gun and knife crime which have been assumed to be gang related, and the riots became a 'watershed moment' for the Cameron-Clegg administration' (Gunter, 2017, p. 49). Relying on a broad range of stereotypes about what constitutes a gang, Ex-Prime Minister David Cameron (2011) declared that they were an integral part of the disturbances, describing them as:

> Territorial, hierarchical and incredibly violent…They earn money through crime, particularly drugs and are bound by an imposed loyalty to an authoritarian gang leader. They have blighted life on their estates with gang-on-gang murders and unprovoked attacks on innocent bystanders

This claim was challenged by the LSE (2011) to be false, which illustrates how these groups continue to be used as scapegoats by the state to overshadow wider societal problems. This is despite the fact that less than a sixth of those arrested by the Metropolitan Police were considered to be affiliated and that gang members did not play a central role (Gunter, 2017). Brotherton (2015, p. 112&126) also acknowledges that gangs have been used as a tool to exploit the gap between

society and young people, with the gang member constructed as the 'other', underpinned by the notion that the group is a 'thing-in-itself' scarcely more than 'demonic outsiders'. In response to the riots Cameron (2011) promised a 'concerted, all-out war on gangs and gang culture' for what has become a national priority to tackle the 'major criminal disease that has infected streets and estates across our country'. The use of disproportionate sentencing was utilised as a tool to punish those who took part in the disturbances, indicating how criminal law is a social construction and can be altered significantly depending upon who is receiving the punishment. Smithson and Ralphs (2016) have noted how the government's rhetoric changed dramatically from 1999, when gangs were not considered a problem, then fast forward to 2011 when they started to be addressed as a national priority. The Daily Mail (2011a) meanwhile reported after the riots that British youth were the 'most unpleasant and violent in the world', whilst the Daily Mirror (2011) responded to the disturbances with the headline 'Inside the deadly world of gangs'. This served to further compound the historical perception of working class youth as deviant, despite it being accepted that gangs did not play a central role in the riots (Ministry of Justice, 2011). Pearson (2012, p. 45) has surmised the response to the London riots as a dead-end discourse:

> While the riots of 2011 announced a new chapter in violent youth disorder. Britain was already in the thick of a moral panic concerning its young people…Indeed, when interviewed about youth behaviour during the riots, Kenneth Clarke, the Justice Secretary, said that

Britain had cultivated a 'lost generation' of young people. But really this worry was nothing new

Such blame tactics by the government, which directly target young people, demonstrates how little is known about gangs. Nevertheless, their central importance continues to be over estimated by the media and the police which could ultimately be dangerous in terms of overstating gang violence (Densley & Mason, 2011). The use of the label to 'other' groups of young people in deprived neighbourhoods is not limited to the UK. In Los Angeles police have created a gang problem by instigating a moral panic in order to command resources and win back public support so they can be seen as the 'good guys' through the arrest of 'gangbangers' (McCorkle & Miethe,1998, p. 57).

Whitemaleness: The racist gang agenda

In the UK the gang has become a criminalising label in order to shift attention from structural problems which can both create and contribute to youth crime. Whilst this is a major point of concern, more worrying still is the disproportionate attention given to black youth, in particular young men, which has created increased levels of police surveillance and further stigmatisation of this group. Little was known about gangs at the beginning of the twenty first century, nevertheless young people of colour were highlighted in media reports (Mares, 2001). The gang then has become synonymous with race, which rather than empirical insight, has driven the agenda, with the term evocative and racially loaded (Alexander, 2008; Brotherton & Barrios, 2004). Despite this, discussions around race and gangs are limited to a small number of scholars in the UK (see for example Joseph & Gunter

2011; Williams 2015; Gunter 2017). Ex-Prime Minister, Tony Blair (Guardian, 2007), declared that increased gun and knife crime was not a result of poverty but could be attributed to a distinct black culture. However, as Gilroy (1987) has argued, no one ethnic group is more predisposed to crime than another. Such declarations by the government serve to demonstrate their misinformed and discriminatory beliefs about young people and crime, whilst also fuelling media moral panics about black youth.

The media's obsession with 'endemic' youth violence has rejuvenated moral panics about 'dangerous' black youth, 'right-wing media have continued to dominate (and racialise) the public debate on gangs and urban youth violence; through the sensationalist characterisations of violent black young people' (Joseph & Gunter, 2011, p. 12). Such diversity within the term has meant that the uncritical adoption of the term in UK policy has led to the further marginalisation of young people of colour (Smithson et al., 2012). Many of the rioters interviewed by the LSE (2011) stated that the term has racial connotations. Rather than having a greater propensity for crime and gang involvement than their white counterparts, it is the environment from which gangs emerge which determine their racial and ethnic make-up (Bullock & Tilley, 2002; Aldridge & Medina, 2008). An over representation of black gang members constitutes a reflection of their disproportionate presence in deprived urban communities (Centre for Social Justice, 2009a). This can be viewed as a consequence of overzealous stop and search tactics, culminating in higher arrest rates for BAME young people, and ensures that figures relating to membership are likely to be skewed if based on

those individuals who have been apprehended by the police. For example, in 2016/17 black people were stopped and searched at over four times the rate of white people by the London Metropolitan Police (Stopwatch, 2018). Moral panics work to secure legitimacy of public opinion in the over policing of black working class youth groups, and in turn increase punitive ways of dealing with young people. Furthermore, the police, with the assistance of the media, have created and exacerbated the black gangs crisis through the misrepresentation of statistics and as a result have procured extra resources (Gunter, 2017).

During mass immigration in the 1950s people of colour were linked to deviance and crime, with such discrimination now being felt by their grandchildren thus continuing this process of marginalisation (Gilroy, 2003). A variety of 'folk-devil roles' have been assigned to black young people over the past four decades (Gunter, 2017, p. 232). The inherently criminal stereotype emerged via the image of the black mugger in the 1970s, which can be traced back to the concerns created through immigration. As the twentieth century progressed working class youth were negatively portrayed as the 'subversive enemy within', underpinned by fears of 'moral laxity' and constructed as a symbol of everything that was wrong with Britain (Osgerby, 1997, p. 97&99). Young people had not become more violent in the decades after the Second World War, but black youth were particularly demonised, viewed as 'folk devils in their own right' (Cashmore & Troyna, 1982, p. 25). The focus was on lawlessness, rather than structural deprivation, which is how certain groups become identified as a problem to police and wider society (Muncie, 1984). Black young people became the target of

overzealous policing in the forum of surveillance and harassment, to the point that even social gatherings were raided, with guns and dogs typically utilised (Gunter, ibid). Mugging had been part of the UK criminal landscape throughout history according to Pearson (1983), however from the 1970s racist propaganda was used to subjugate black young people in order to posit a link between violence and race as they became synonymous with anti-social behaviour and crime. In 1972 the Metropolitan Police released its crime figures with a focus on the smallest category, robbery and violent theft (also known as mugging), despite this being less than one percent of London's offences it attracted the media's attention. It was the first time that race had been taken into account when analysing crime statistics yet it was not applied to any other offence. Consequently, the notion that blackness equates to criminality began to gain recognition, while mugging was regarded as a priority in terms of crime prevention (Muncie, ibid). The stereotype of black youth became the mugger, who according the press was 'unBritish' and conceived as a social problem for not confining themselves solely to an English way of life (Brake, 1985, p. 69). This shows how young people of colour were regarded as at fault for failing to integrate themselves into society. Pearson (2012, p. 61) has for example noted how judgments on 'foreignness' are central to the 'dead-end discourse against troublesome youth'. Hall (1978) notes how the mugging label was an export from America where the issue had become sensationalised, amplification of a mugging panic caused a split of the working class into two to create a false enemy. Despite the fact that mugging was not a new label it was nevertheless regarded as a new form of crime, and against a

backdrop of media attention war was declared on muggers. Confused and misrepresented statistics around the issue were interpreted as facts which served to fuel biased public perceptions, with the impact of the mugging panic influencing the perception of black youth as a 'riot mob' (Muncie, ibid, p. 83).

Gunter (2017, pp. 13) suggests that the historical context of riots should be considered alongside discussions of the 'gang crisis…as it both replays, as well as extends, these now well-worn threads of race, violent crime and urban degeneration'. As noted earlier, the blame of the London 2011 riots was placed firmly at the feet of gangs, despite this claim being empirically disproven. Given the racial connotations associated with the label, the misinformed explanations of the cause of the riots could be seen as a further example of the stigmatisation of black youth, based on the mob mentality they became associated with in the 1980s. The 1981 Brixton and 1985 Tottenham riots in London were underpinned by conflict between the black community, police and the state. During the 80s black young people were twice as likely to be unemployed than their white counterparts and attempts were made to criminalise resistance to inequalities in the form of the rioter (Osgerby, 1997). The main cause of the Brixton riot was unemployment, but also a general reaction to the system of oppression black youth call Babylon. They attacked their own areas rather than more affluent neighbourhoods because it was proof of the existence of Babylon (Cashmore & Troyna, 1982). The Broadwater Farm riot in Tottenham was regarded as the most violent disturbance the country had witnessed, sparked by the death of Cynthia Jarrett who was knocked over during a potentially unlawful search of her house

after her son had been apprehended by police. After the riot there was an unwillingness to accept structural, rather than pathological, explanations as the root cause of the protest, which served to position rioters as depraved (Osgerby, ibid). The idea that black people were responsible for racial unrest, despite the majority being 'respectable' working class people embracing British values, was gaining momentum (Cashmore & Troyna, ibid, p. 64). The result of such propaganda resulted in heavier policing of black communities, with Campbell (1993) noting how watching black men being frisked in the street by white police was reminiscent of slave owners as nobody could stop them.

The 1979 Southall riot was a response to the National Front attacking Asian shops. The police protected the right-wing party and attacked the protestors, culminating in the death of Blair Peach who became a symbol for police corruption. No one was ever charged for his murder despite decades later it being established that it was likely to have been a police officer which struck the fatal blow. The actions of young Asians attracted condemnation, despite racist skinheads starting the riot the disturbances ended in confrontations between Asians and the police (Fried, 1982). 'Extremists go to war on the police' was the Daily Mail headline following the riot demonstrating how moral panics are created and sustained in the public mind by positioning young people of colour as the irrational aggressors (Third Way, 1979, p. 3).

The Scarman (1981) report, responding to the Brixton and Southall riots, claimed prejudice was only a feature of a small minority of police officers and failed to address the accusation of state violence. After the death of Stephen Lawrence and

bungled attempts to prosecute the perpetrators and support his family, the Macpherson (1999) report identified an institutionalised racist police force who had collectively failed as an organisation to provide adequate service to people because of their colour or ethnicity. Black communities complained of police harassment, whilst Asian communities felt that police protection was not sufficient. The report made seventy recommendations, including changing the ways in which racist incidents are recorded and prosecuted, as well as drawing attention to stop and search policies. It said the police would adopt a zero tolerance policy when it came to racism and that officers would be held more accountable for their behaviour. Given the consistent over surveillance of black people evidenced annually via stop and search figures, the extent to which these improvements have been achieved is questionable. Indeed, Thomas (2012) notes how since the recommendations of the McPherson report little has changed as there were fundamental similarities between the riots in 2011 and the riots in 1981 with regard to tensions between the police and black communities. It was the perceived unlawful killing of Mark Duggan (deemed later to be legally lawful), and the lack of care police provided to his family, which led to the London riots in 2011. Those who rioted mentioned the hostility they felt towards the police because of stop and search tactics and this was a motivating factor for their participation in the disturbances (LSE, 2011). The legacies of these racialised discourses have impacted on the ways in which today, young men in particular, are negatively represented in relation to the causal link between race, violence and crime. This

has been summed up by Gunter (2017, p. iv) who refers to the gang agenda as 'gang w**k'.

No girls allowed: The sexist gang agenda

Criminality has been viewed as a rite of passage for working class young men. Consequently. the male experience dominates the gang literature and a picture of where young women fit in is currently unclear within the British context. However, rather than being absent from street cultures, they have simply attracted less interest empirically than young men (Osgerby, 1997). Evidence about female involvement is difficult to locate until the turn of the twenty first century, and even then what's available is extremely sparse due to the limited amount of literature in the UK. Young women continue to be invisible or positioned in certain ways, stereotyped as sexual victims and/or girlfriends and appendages. The idea of romantic individualism and lack of instinct in forming delinquent groups has ensured that females for the most part are constructed as peripheral to the gang rather than central. The lack of empirical research in the UK makes it problematic to satisfactorily rebuke such claims of victimhood and a lack of agency in order to move away from the idea that a female's role is necessarily one of second class citizen.

There remain key similarities between the representations of contemporary British young women and those expressed almost a century ago from the American Chicago School. Common to these bodies of work is the idea that young women are not partial to the group dynamic, and don't ascribe to collective resistance in the same ways as their male counterparts. Due to different modes of socialisation

and social control, they 'lack the gang instinct, while boys have it' (Thrasher 1963, p. 161). Whyte (1943) acknowledges the presences of both tough men and women in the neighbourhood, however females are not perceived as being part of these groups. Another key similarity between the American and British literature is the framing of young women within a discussion of sexual relations through their associations with them, whereby their identity and status is constructed via relationships with her male peers. For the most part the female is treated as a sex object in these contexts, categorised as a girlfriend or prostitute (Parker, 1974). Where the current UK literature differs from the historic American research is the overwhelming focus of young women as sexually exploited victims in need of safeguarding from violent and over-sexualised male gang members.

Policy and academic literature involving young women, although relatively sparse, has consistently revealed a narrow focus on female sexuality and exploitation: young women who have become victims of violence (ROTA, 2010; ROTA, 2011); sexual exploitation and potential exit strategies (Beckett et al. 2012, 2013); intervention including increased funding for gang related rape and abuse (HM Government, 2011); sexual exploitation and abuse (HM Government, 2013; HM Government, 2015; HM Government, 2016); the rise in young women joining gangs for the purpose of sexual exploitation (Centre for Social Justice, 2012); a focus on multiple perpetrator rape (Densley et al., 2013); the vulnerabilities of young women and the risks they are susceptible to (Khan et al., 2013); safeguarding gang associated females (Pitts, 2017). Over the past few years discussions around young women have failed to address to more complex

explanations of female involvement which denote a departure from the victim role. Females are positioned as 'at risk' rather than seen to potentially pose risks to others. They are regarded as a steadying influence and a tool to extract young men from engaging in gang life. According to Davis and Densley (2011, p. 17) they have the 'power to make the biggest difference in the lives of the boys', which suggests that young women don't have a propensity for criminality. The idea that women are a stabilising influence can be traced back to the work of Lombroso (1911) who claimed that the savage group tendencies of the male delinquent can only be tamed by females.

The deviant behaviour of young women then continues to be 'sexualised both in the literature and the popular mind…rather than explore actively forms of female identity' (Brake, 1985, p. 141&145). This feeds into the media and gang industry's sensationalist portrayal of young men (particularly black youth) as hyper violent gangsters. The overwhelming focus on sexual exploitation also implies that this is not something which is commonplace in wider society. As Beckett et al. (2013, p. 6) have pointed out, sexual exploitation 'does not occur in a vacuum' yet the way this is being portrayed might suggest otherwise. Again it could be argued that such an approach is further demonising young black men as the likelihood of them being the victim rather than the perpetrator has been ignored, despite being negatively impacted by serious violence, and in some cases sexual abuse. It would be misinformed to present these young women 'exclusively as "reluctant" participants lacking agency or as "pure" victims' in terms of their criminal activities' according to Medina et al. (2012, p. 655). The idea that women have the potential

for violent and criminal behaviour, in the same ways as men, has been glossed over by focusing on their perceived natural passive state (Pollack & Davis, 2005). This has resulted in a contradictory picture of working class women presented in UK policy, whereby they are constructed as villains in their role as teenage mothers, and as victims in their role as sexually exploited gang members.

The idea that criminal actions are individually, rather than structurally, motivated resonates from the dominant view of youth deviance in the nineteenth century whereby poverty and its impact wasn't taken into consideration in terms of engagement with crime. When debates about female offenders appear they often continue to replicate those theories considered outdated for men, such as the emphasis on the individual being maladjusted, rather than considering economic social positioning (Carlen, 1988). As with young men, females often engage with gangs out of necessity due to financial circumstances, it can become the rational choice. Davis and Densley (2011, p. 17) make it sound very simple by suggesting that if a young woman can be persuaded that life on the street is a 'fickle and dangerous world full of contradictions, and that they are second class citizens within it, the gang-involved boys will not get the plentiful supply of sex and adoration that makes the world seem so attractive in the first place'. This negates the impact of structural and economic conditions which impact on the lives of working class youth, which Cohen (1955) explained as leading to status frustration resulting in the creation of gangs. He claimed that both men and women want to excel but are frustrated by lack of opportunity, however for him females don't experience adjustment issues in the same ways as males because they've not

been socialised into being successful in the same way. One of the criticisms of strain theory is that it doesn't explain why more women don't express their frustration collectively in the same ways as men. Given that working class young women, particularly women of colour, are more constrained in what they are able to achieve Naffine (1987) questions why their crime rates are not higher.

With this in mind, Davies (2011, p. 92) suggests being cautious of associating deprivation with criminality as female offending is not simply a causal result of the impact of poverty as there has been a 'complete exclusion of greedy needs and desires, excitement and other explanations that feature more often in mainstream criminological theorising'. Thrasher (1963, p. 168), and more recently Batchelor (2005), acknowledges that young women enjoy the excitement of criminality, they 'may do it for thrills; they may do it because hard pressed to make a living'. This acknowledges both structural and individual motivations for committing crime, rather than simply explaining female delinquency solely in terms of their maladjustment or sexual practices.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to chart the emergence of the gang literature and bring it up to date. The US has a substantially longer history in terms of framing groups of young people as gangs than the UK. Due to the primary British focus on subcultures, rather than gangs per se, a limited body of work is available from the beginning of this century. The body of work on contemporary gangs in Britain can be best understood as a continuum of the racist and sexist gang agenda, of which

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it helped to create and continues to sustain. There remains a lack of empirical evidence in order to support dubious claims that these groups constitute an epidemic and should consequently be treated as a national priority. The impact of moral panics has contributed to a range of youth collectives now being stigmatised and labelled as gangs. Such stigmatisation is also racially loaded, a consequence of the legacy of the black mugger stereotype and unruly rioting mob which has served to position black youth as inherently criminal. The study of young women's involvement has been hampered by relying on male researchers and male gang member's opinions of their experiences. Densley for example, Britain's most prolific writer on gangs, has relied on the voices of young men rather than young women, and takes a rather archaic and simplistic approach to the study of their identities. As a result, the perception of young women's position in these groups has barely moved on from the early American studies from the Chicago School. The idea that females may exhibit a range of competing street femininities appears to be too difficult for many to comprehend. The dominant focus on female sexual exploitation also works to compound the stereotype of black men as sexually aggressive, given the racial connotations attached to the label. The notion that females are conformist rather than rebels, wherein they are viewed as lacking an ability to engage with similar criminal activities as their male counterparts, is also commonplace. Such ideas are reminiscent of the way female criminality was viewed in the Victorian era, with a preoccupation on sexuality rather than criminality. This paints an unrealistic picture in terms of what is happening on the

streets, and which fails to acknowledge the range of diverse femininities and masculinities both young women and men may express on road.

Chapter 4

Entering the field of research

Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the development of the gang literature stemming from the work of the Chicago School at the beginning of the twentieth century and considered the UK's contribution to this body of work at the start of this century, much of which has influenced and sustained the controversial gang agenda. Given the relatively small amount of literature about gangs in the UK we know very little about the experiences of young women on road. This could be due, in part, to the fact that 'seldom are they viewed as objects worthy of understanding and even more rarely are they allowed to be active subjects who craft their own public persona' (Miranda, 2003[1]). The majority of existing research has been carried out by men, on men, and consequently young women have tended to be ignored, sidelined or misrepresented. Furthermore, relying on young men's opinions about the role young women play has skewed the picture. They are more likely to suggest that females are second class citizens than the young women themselves. My aim therefore is to broaden the current limited conversations and explore their nuanced experiences. A black feminist approach has been adopted due to the fact it is a 'social justice project' (Collins, 2009, p. 43) which encompasses 'basic bread-and-butter issues' which impact upon women of all socio-economic backgrounds (Smith, 2000, p. 52). The perspective allows for class, gender and race to be central to the study, in addition to a consideration of the interlocking processes of intersectionality. A qualitative paradigm was chosen

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in order to best showcase the voices and experiences of interviewees. Thirty eight semi-structured interviews were carried out with young women, youth practitioners and criminal justice practitioners. Issues of positionality, power relations, accessing and interviewing participants, ethics and data analysis will also be discussed.

Existing research

Young men have been portrayed as 'rational, exciting and often politically conscious rebels' (Hudson, 1990, p. 118). Conversely, and in keeping with their treatment during the Victorian era, young women have tended to be defined in relation to their sexual relationships or levels of perceived sexual promiscuity. They are assumed to be naturally more law abiding, less of a threat to the public, and consequently less worthy of study than their male peers. As a result the youth question remains rooted in the 'boy zone' (Brown, 2005, p. 129).

Historically there has been a consistent theme of male researchers ignoring or sidelining the experiences of young women. For the most part the literature has been carried out by male researchers and primarily concerned with the experiences of young men (Portillos, 1999). The long standing 'gendered habits' of researchers has resulted in female involvement being 'neglected, sexualised, and over simplified' (Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995, p. 412). This has resulted in sexism remaining unchallenged, and consequently it could be argued that researchers are essentially colluding with their subjects. To some degree it's understandable why such discrimination may not be challenged by the researcher whilst they are working in the field as this may inhibit the behaviour of those being studied. Such

collusion may also have been a way of the researcher ingratiating themselves with those they are studying. However, discrimination could be challenged during the writing up of the research.

Most qualitative research on young women has been carried out by male researchers, based on the opinions of young men, rather than through the perspective of young women themselves, which has exacerbated the stereotyping of gender roles (Batchelor, 2009). For example, Medina et al. (2012) found that females were viewed by males as playing a secondary role in most of the gangs they studied. Alternatively, when females are asked about their involvement they are more likely to report being core members (Esbensen et al., 1999). Research which promotes the voices of young women then tends to paint a more agentic picture of their involvement (Shacklady-Smith, 1978; Harris, 1988; Kitchen, 1997; Batchelor, 2009). Young men have tended to avoid attributing autonomy to young women, because the 'hardest thing for some fellahs is taking orders from a babe' (Kitchen, ibid, p. 51). Densley (2011) remains the most prolific writers about gangs in the UK, yet he has consistently discussed the issue without acknowledging the central roles that young women can and do adopt. When females do appear in his writing they are presented as sexual objects or are siphoned off into a neat section suggesting that the rest of the discussion does not concern them (Densley et al., 2013; Densley, 2013). Chesney-Lind and Paramore (2001) point out that is it predominantly female researchers who, have in the past, acknowledged that young women do not necessarily accept the roles or positions they are often stereotyped with. With that in mind, female researchers are not immune to passing

judgement in regards to stereotyping and pigeon holing young women (for example see Hansen, 2005, p. 141).

Thirty years ago Daly & Chesney-Lind (1988 (p. 519) argued that 'the most pressing need today is…to get our hands dirty, and to plunge more deeply into the social worlds of girls and women'. As this has not been realised in the UK setting it was one motivation for embarking on a study of working class young women's lives and experiences. Whilst this lack of literature was a key motivator, also as important to the research was the specific desire to hear from young women of colour whose voices have historically been marginalised in the social sciences, particularly within the field of criminology.

<u>Framing the study</u>

Black feminism

Given the silence around young women's voices, particularly those of colour, a black feminist approach framed my research. My standpoint coming to the study is that we live in a classist, racist and sexist society so an approach was required which put class, gender and race at the heart of the analysis. A major criticism of mainstream feminism is the accusation of privileging the voice of white middle class women by claiming to speak for *all* women, thus neglecting the diversity of classed and raced identities. For a long time many feminists believed that gender oppression was the sole form of discrimination, and challenging this was a major turning point to also consider the impact of class and race (hooks, 2015). For hooks (1997, p. 26) feminism's role should be to tackle the diversity of oppression, 'its aim is not to benefit solely any specific group of women, any particular race or

class of women.' With this in mind hooks (1982, p. 188) felt that white feminists were 'unwilling to change the movement's focus so that it would better address the needs of women from all classes and races' and became frustrated by the dominant gender agenda within feminist groups at the expense of other factors such as race and class. Inserting the term 'black' in front of feminism serves to disrupt the dominant, yet false, association of feminism with whiteness according to Potter (2015).

I chose black feminism (or rather black feminism chose me) as it is a 'social justice project' which rejects an additive model, whereby types of inequalities are tagged on, rather than considered as an interlocking process (Collins, 2009, p. 43). Mainstream feminism with its history of prioritising the experiences of white middle, and upper class, women did not present itself as an appropriate framework given that my research is an attempt to highlight the opinions and experiences of working class young women, the majority of whom in my study are black. Hooks' (1982) conceptualisation of black feminism's emphasis on inclusivity of all women regardless of class or race was what made this framework the most fitting for my research. Black women and other populations can be studied within this framework, as it has 'always encompassed basic bread-and-butter issues' which impact upon women of all socio-economic backgrounds (Smith, 2000, p. 52). As Carby (1987, cited in Daly & Stephens, 1995) points out, the study of race within a black feminist approach is not limited to the study of black women, but rather race is a central tenet of the research. Whilst it has been argued that to be a feminist one should be female in order to understand what it means to be living within a

patriarchal society, hooks (2015) has said that women are not born feminist simply because of their gender, rather it is through their politics. Whilst the categories of race and gender are distinct this could also perhaps also infer that a white female researcher does not have to be black to identify with a black feminist perspective and the inequalities faced by people of colour living within a racist society.

Historically black women's experiences have been excluded and sidelined in terms of what constitutes knowledge (Collins, 2009). Black feminists are usually limited to sections which construct them as 'different' in feminist texts according to Reed (2008). This is despite the fact that they have been involved in liberation efforts since the nineteenth century. Dotson (2018) has argued that Sojourner Truth was theorising about class before Marx, yet black women's ideas have failed to be showcased, consequently black feminism doesn't need white feminism or Marxism. In spite of being erased by the media, black women have a long history of engagement in what was viewed as 'for-whites-only feminism' as black feminism challenges the ideologies of feminist whiteness (Collins, 2001). This approach focuses on all women, rather than the needs of a small minority, so as a result black women didn't become 'stars' of the movement in the same way as their white counterparts (hooks, 2015, p. 3). Black women's contributions have been silenced in the similar, but different, ways as white working class women who were also central to the development of the liberation movement but who have also been routinely ignored in historical accounts as significant contributors. Hooks (1982, p. 189) also points to the impact of being able to take on leadership roles and the inability to 'spread an authentic message of feminist revolution' due to a

lack of acknowledgement by mainstream feminism to represent fully their concerns. As a result of this exclusion from what has come to be known as mainstream or white feminism, certain black feminists prefer the term 'womanist', rather than feminist, as it does not align itself with a history of marginalisation. This was coined by Walker (1983, p. xii) who suggested that 'womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender'.

Black feminism is way of looking at the world, and intersectionality has 'enabled black feminists to interrogate the ways in which power, ideology and the state intersect with subjectivity, identity and agency to maintain social injustice and universal patterns of gendered and racialised economic inequality' (Mirza, 2015, p. 7). However, this approach has a long history amongst black feminists such as Sojourner Truth and Angela Davis who were promoting these ideas before it emerged as a discipline in the late twentieth century. Truth's 'ain't I a woman?' speech was a 'benchmark for intersectional sensibilities' (Collins, 2016, p. 67), as detailed here by hooks (1982, p. 160):

> Look at me! Look at my arm! I have plowed, and planted, and gathered into barns, no man could head me - and ain't I a woman? I could work as much as any man (when I could get it), and bear de lash as well – and ain't I a woman? I have borne five children and I seen 'em mos all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus hear – and ain't I a woman?

A key point of agreement within black feminism is that black women are

'oppressed on multiple interlocking levels' (Neville & Hamer, 2001, p. 437). Centralising inequalities and power relations are key issues within my study, as is the standpoint that a person has multiple identities which frame their lives. It should also be acknowledged here that whilst class, gender and race in the context of working class women of colour is viewed as various interlocking forms of oppression, as Dyson (1993, p. xvii) points out, 'black culture is not simply formed in the response to the forces of oppression', and the same can be said for gendered and classed identities. Structural oppression is only one part of an individual's identity even though it can serve to influence their lives in significant ways. That said, the impact of structural inequalities cannot be overlooked or put aside. Carby (1996) alludes to the triple bind of class, gender and race and how black feminism negotiated through a lens of intersectionality is a way of exploring such unresolved issues. Injustice is 'sustained by intersecting oppressions', without these interlocking systems black feminism would not be necessary (Collins, 2009, p. 26). The relevance of such an approach is also noted here by Mirza (2010, p. 653), 'intersectional analysis that looks at embodied difference is really where, for me, black feminism works'. In tandem to this, the importance of youth research is that it documents how young people encounter and respond to their 'multiple subordination' (Griffin 2011, p. 256). Adopting a black feminist perspective puts class, gender and race at the heart of the analysis underpinned by the belief that young women's coping and resistance strategies will be influenced by the impact of living in a racially stratified society. Daley & Maher (1998, p. 5) note how '"white criminology" avoids the "race issue" because of

racism both in the discipline and the wider society'. The colonisation of criminology by 'whitemaleness' has meant that historically scholars of colour have been marginalised, with women more susceptible to silencing than their male counterparts, and one way to challenge this is with intersectionality (Potter, 2015, p. 7). Crenshaw (2011, cited in Potter, ibid, p. 70) also notes how intersectionality is not limited to the study of people of colour because we all exist under the umbrella of 'the matrix of power'.

Black feminism can also be useful for revealing the flaws in those studies which have not adopted such an approach in 'ways that reflect colonial and post colonial realities' (Collins, 2016, p. 37). As people of colour continue to be 'defined in ways which deny their humanity' the researcher must be careful not to reinforce existing racist stereotypes (Mullings, 2000, p. 18). A black feminist approach should work to address rather than exacerbate discrimination and stereotypes. For example, Alder (1975) suggested that black women are innately more violent than their white counterparts due to their cultural history of slavery and based on higher crime convictions. Unlike Chilton and Datesman (1987) she failed to consider the intersection of age, class, gender and race and the ways in which this can impact on arrest rates. Also she fails to acknowledge that official statistics tell us more about the police than the criminals due to the discretion (or not) which is exercised by those working in the criminal justice system (Becker, 1970). Sexist and racist ideologies linked to black women serve to justify their oppression and such stereotypes have been 'fundamental' to their oppression (Collins, 2009, p. 7). Those who are intent on reproducing racist and sexist ideologies are 'least able to

see the social construction of race, class and gender relations' according to Andersen (1993, p. 42). The researcher must be mindful of not perpetuating stereotypes and embarking on writing which 'feed into racist structures' (Skelton, 2001, p. 95). Potter (2013, p. 310) argues that it is 'bewildering' criminologists do not take issues of gender and race into account in terms of analysing arrest records or consider the impact of the way that criminal justice procedures may differ according to the intersection of class, gender and race. An excellent example from the US, is Maher's (2003) account of female drug users in Brooklyn, however in the UK such an approach is less forthcoming given that we know so little about the experiences of women of colour. The UK has a long way to go in terms of the decolonisation of criminology, in addition to centralising race into criminological debates. Such discussions demand an intersectional approach to be adopted across the discipline in order to centralise class, gender and race when thinking about the lives of young women in order to assist in the production of meaningful debates. As Parmar (2016, p. 1) points out, 'at a time when much criminological research convenes around the intersection of race, class, religion and gender, the absence of intersectional approaches and the lack of discussion about the racializing consequences of the criminal justice system serve to stymie meaningful debate and advancement of the field'.

Qualitative feminist research

A feminist research project is so-called if it aims to produce knowledge that will be useful for challenging gendered injustice (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2008). Black feminists' research processes share a commonality with feminist practices in terms

of putting women at the heart of the analysis whilst also challenging other systems of oppression (DeSouza, 2004). That said, there is understandably, no set criteria regarding what constitutes feminist methods with researchers often utilising a range of existing methods. Some feminists would argue that in the study of subjective viewpoints qualitative research is more suitable than quantitative research (Oakley, 1998). There have been many discussions about feminist approaches to research but there is no 'right way' (Wise & Stanley, 2008, p. 222). However, qualitative research is deemed most suitable for researching sensitive topics and representing 'experience and personal stories' (Skelton, 2001, p. 95).

The impact of the positivist tradition of criminology has ensured women's continued exclusion in criminological research, compounded by a lack of understanding about how they resist their classed, gendered and raced positions. Unlike quantitative research, the qualitative approach is less concerned with objective data and is framed by the idea that reality can be constructed through the eyes of the participants. Therefore a qualitative framework was adopted, one from which the researcher is not separate from their respondents and is part of each stage of the process (Corbin-Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). The study of emotions and individual reflexive identities demands an exploratory qualitative approach, one which 'contextualises the feelings, meanings and experiences of individuals and groups' (Choak, 2011, p. 90). As Reay (1997) points out, complex understandings of working class people are rare, so through my research I intended to explore some of the many unanswered questions which surround female involvement in badness whilst also centring those experiences of young

women of colour. Qualitative research tends to be chosen by those who are interested in 'people's knowledge, values and experiences as meaningful and worthy of exploration' (Bryne, 2004, p. 182). Its focus is the unravelling of relations within a social field, with assumptions made by the researcher during data collection and analysis which is mediated and made accountable through discussions around their subjectivity and reflexivity.

Black feminist research regards qualitative methods as the most appropriate approach, although 'giving voice is not enough' such practice must also reveal the 'hidden structures of oppression' which emerge from discrimination based on class, gender and race (Mullings, 2000, p. 270). Young and Sulton (1991, cited in Daly & Stephens, 1995) have argued that such misconceptions have in the past gone unchallenged by white criminologists. Lack of voice is considered by feminists to be one form of injustice, whereby dominant voices have silenced oppositional ones (Bilsky, 1998). This is evident in the way that normative discourses of females as victims, and on the margins of crime and violence, have been disseminated and sustained in the public imaginary.

Bogdan and Biklen (1998, cited in Ashby, 2011) suggest that giving voice is about empowering those who have been silenced by others so they don't remain silent. However, the idea of giving voice is far from unproblematic. Whilst we can use the voice of others, we can 'never speak/write *from* their positions' (Griffin 1996, p. 101). Rather than speak *for* the interviewees, feminist research then should be concerned with speaking *out* for them (Reinharz, 1992). Speaking for someone else suggests that the voice of participants is 'invalid until mediated and presented

in the correct forum', it is a case of advocating, rather than speaking, in place of others (Harris, 1996, p. 153). I have used in-depth quotes in the data chapters in order to give voice, something which has been advocated by feminist researchers in order to reduce the possibilities of misinterpretation of their stories (England, 1994). McCarthy-Brown (1991, p. 14) suggests that those being studied should 'be able to speak for themselves wherever possible', which also supported the technique of using in-depth quotes from interviewees. This was also a useful approach given that a paucity academic literature exists, subsequently presenting respondents' voices in this way seemed the most appropriate in terms of revealing some of the hidden silences surrounding the lives of young women.

Crozier (2003), a white researcher, notes how aiming to 'give voice' or 'speak for' the black women in her study was, on reflection, problematic and condescending given the power imbalance which is present between the researcher and researched. As will be discussed next the issue of power relations is a very complex one in terms of the positionality of the researcher and the researched. One criticism of white researchers claiming to 'give voice' to black subjects is that the process could potentially result in furthering oppression and exacerbating negative stereotypes. Ensuring that I am not contributing further to the othering of my interviewees is paramount as 'giving voice' does not necessarily equate to creating a platform of agency. With this in mind, it is important to acknowledge that 'we cannot give voice, but we do hear voices that we record and interpret' (Riessman, 1993, p. 8).

<u>Issues of positionality</u>

Power relations

Feminist qualitative research is characterised by focusing on the subjective experience of the researcher, who is tasked with situating their own biographies within the research. Transparency of positionality is key then when it comes to qualitative interviewing. Assumptions made by the researcher during data collection and analysis are mediated, and made accountable, through discussions around their subjectivity and reflexivity. The social positioning of the researcher in terms of class, gender and race should be 'placed within the frame of the picture that she/he attempts to paint' (Harding, 1987, p. 9). With this in mind, one of the questions I asked myself in relation to positionality was the extent to which I write myself into my research. As Fine and Weiss (1996, p. 256) have debated, in relation to privileged researchers exploring the lives of those in deprived communities, 'a narcissistic look at self seems misplaced here. Writing ourselves out seems equally wrong-headed'. Whilst obviously it is the young women and practitioner's voices which are central to this study, at the same time it would be remiss to assume that a white academic could write about the lives of people of colour without acknowledging the issue of positionality and white privilege.

Recognising difference is about acknowledging and respecting what difference might entail and making this part of the research process (Skelton, 2001). Although that said, also reflecting on the similarities between myself and my interviewees is also a part of this process. The researcher must adopt a 'self-critical sympathetic introspection and the conscious scrutiny of the self' (England

1994, p. 82). As Kvale & Brinkmann (2009, p. 242) point out, it's about 'striving for sensitivity about one's prejudices, one's subjectivity'. It should be noted however that in terms of addressing the issue of hierarchical relationships, reflexivity itself cannot resolve structural power relations, but it can create a conscious awareness of the relationship by the researcher. Positionality, an acknowledgment of social identities and the ways in which they intersect, can be viewed as an aspect of reflexivity (Rourke, 2014).

Individuals experience the research process differently according to their biographies. Paying attention to reflexivity, positionality and power relations is crucial in terms of producing ethical research (Sultana, 2007). However, positionality and the resultant reflexivity on this identification process is not without its challenges, as social categories and biographies are not fixed due to multiple positionalities. It is also worth remembering in relation to an intersectional framework that multiple identities of class, gender and race also intersect in different and competing ways according to the biography of that individual. Therefore there is a limit to knowing our own positionality (Rose, 1997), which in turn suggests a further complexity in assessing our respondent's positionality, and where we stand in relation to those identities as researchers.

The conception of power and power relations often appears to be reduced to simple and binary concepts. The underlying assumption tends to be that that the researcher automatically has more power than their interviewees. Such a polarised position is problematic when it comes to our own identities and those we speak to as part of the research process. As an academic researcher I may have

more structural power than the young women in my study, so in this sense then power relations may be uneven. However structural positioning is just one form of power, there are many forms in which power exists and operates. As Ladner (1971, cited in Fine, 1994) contends, there is an assumed position of the researcher as oppressor and their subjects the oppressed. This raises the question of women interviewing men, it is assumed men have more power in society so who is the oppressor and the oppressed in this context? Other factors such as class and race would have to be considered in terms of structural power relations. With this is mind, power is not fixed, it is fluid, changing according to the context or the situation we find ourselves in. As Bhopal (2009, p. 193-194) acknowledges, 'power is not a simple have/have not aspect of a relationship...Our status, our difference and our similarity is fluid and constantly changing both within a single interview as well as during the research process itself'. For example when speaking to a young woman engaging with road culture, or those who are privy to the workings of this subculture, she is the one with the expertise and the knowledge. In this sense it could be argued that I am disempowered in this context. The notion of power, and who has it and who doesn't, links to how knowledge is viewed. Without respondents providing me with these insights new knowledge could not be created and empirically substantiated. The importance of the interviewees' contribution also indicates that they are not necessarily powerless within the interview context, 'but primary informants on Othering' (Fine, ibid, p. 77). Furthermore, many of the youth practitioners I interviewed are role models in their communities and are extremely successful at what they do in terms

of working with young people. This provides them with status and respect which could also represent a way of potentially challenging and resisting their socio-economic positioning, rather than it being a site of oppression. When I am involved in the interview process I do not necessarily feel as if I am the one who holds the most power, even if from the outside looking in this may appear to be the case. The idea that the researcher has more power is also linked to the fact that they are setting the agenda of the conversation. Whilst this may be the case in terms of taking a semi-structured interview approach, how much the interviewee chooses to will reveal, or hold back, in addition to being able to go off topic, provides an element of agency.

Whilst it is problematic to automatically remove the agency from our respondents because I am a white privileged academic researcher, this is not to say that structural power relations and their potential impact should not be adequately addressed. As Ackerly and True (2008, p. 696) contend, feminist research is a 'commitment to a research process that requires being attentive to boundaries and their power to marginalise'. It should be noted here that whilst I am the same gender as the majority of those involved in the study, it is not a homogenous identity and it shouldn't be assumed that we have shared experiences, or opinions, simply because we are female. Conducting research with women is regarded as being inside that culture (Oakley, 1981), however one must also acknowledge difference between a woman's class and race, in addition to their individual identities.

Race

Feminist debates have regularly addressed issues such as whether 'researchers can only speak on behalf of their own social group or whether there is a legitimacy in speaking on behalf of the *other*' (Agyeman, 2008, p. 78). It is the way the 'other' is conceptualised and 'sealed by social scientists' is something which demands to be acknowledged as there is no 'simple binary of Self and Other' (Fine, 1994, p. 71 & 75). There has been much debate about whether white researchers should be researching people of colour. This can be explained, in part, due to the historic negative representations of people of colour by white researchers. There is also the assumption that I could potentially stereotype, or further stigmatise, already marginalised groups. White middle class feminists have been blamed for the creation of 'partial, situated knowledge, unreflective' of the experiences of women from different classes and race whereby people of colour have been misrepresented and/or silenced (Butler, 2001, p. 266).

A white researcher studying predominantly people of colour is regarded as problematic for some. For example, Troyna and Carrington (1993, p. 107) have argued that 'white researchers cannot elicit meaningful data from black respondents because of power difference'. Arguments against this claim are underpinned by the thinking that the black/white binary is inadequate. Dyson (1993) resists essentialist discussions of skin colour because it assumes there racial unity between races. As age, class and gender are also salient, in addition to race, it should be recognised that being black for example is about more than being oppressed. This is supported by Edwards (1996) who highlights the

importance of examining the issue of white women interviewing black women, noting that excluding white researchers implies a congruence and harmony between black researchers and their subjects which may not exist. Adding to this, Song and Parker (1995, cited in Egharevba, 2001) suggest, where there may be common ground on the issue of shared racism, this does not eliminate other differences between the researcher and researched.

For Douglas (1998) there are no clear cut answers when it comes to the issue of race and interviewing. To assume that white researchers should only research white subjects is also problematic as it assumes they have shared understandings and reference points without a consideration of the impact of age, class, gender or other contributing factors. Milner (2007) contends that a researcher does not have to be part of the cultural group they are studying, instead importance should be placed on their awareness of particular tensions and knowledge of their participants. It's about acknowledging and ensuring that further subordination of marginalised groups doesn't occur by, in part, reflecting on one's own privilege as a white academic and how this may shape the research (Andersen, 1993). Hooks (1989) notes that it's not a question of whether white academics should be discussing the lives of women of colour, but that their views should not take precedence over others because of their white privilege.

Ramji (2009) suggests that in terms of researching race, it should be considered in a fluid rather than a polarised way. The researcher's identity is not fixed, and neither is that of the researched. Whilst I may be able to state with some certainty that I am white, defining my social class is far more complex. Although, it should

be taken into consideration that whilst a black/white binary may be perceived as inadequate, my research is taking place against a backdrop of a white dominated and racist society. Edwards (1996, p. 83) questions the idea that white researchers should not research black women, as race is just one part of our identities, and rather than asking whether they should be exploring the lives of black working class women, she asks 'how could I possibly be justified in leaving them out?' I identified with this as it would have felt inappropriate to reject any interviewees which were not white, based on the principal that I should only be researching the lives of white people. It was also not an option given that one of the purposes of the research was to highlight the experiences and opinions of young women of colour. As a PhD student the option to employ an alternative researcher is not a possibility in the same ways as working on a funded research project.

Bhopal (2008) highlights the concept of rapport and the ways in which feminist researchers may attempt to reduce power relations by adopting an empathetic approach. She questions the extent to which such an approach can really attempt to resolve issues of positionality. A concern throughout my study has been the avoidance of further othering an already othered group, working class women. This is particularly salient given the demonisation of working class black men and the moral panic which surrounds their perceived role as gang member. With this in mind, Shope (2006, p. 177) points out that the challenge is not serving to 'reinscribe them as the Other'. Data being misinterpreted is and sensationalised is another area to be mindful of when collecting and writing up your study,

particularly when this involves criminal and/or violent behaviour. As Lois and Fine (1996, p. 259) have reflected in relation to the harsh representations of marginalised groups, 'we continue to struggle with how best to represent treacherous data – data that may do more damage than good, depending on who consumes it/exploits them'.

Class

The assumption that the researcher is the oppressor, whilst the researched are the oppressed, is also an idea consistent with the study of class. Given that it's been suggested that white researchers should not study people of colour due to power relations, the same could be argued for middle class researchers exploring the lives of the working classes. The issue of identifying the social class of both parties in the research context is not straightforward. For example, although being white does not entail being part of a homogenous group, personally it is easier to identify my race compared to identifying my social class. Whilst the concept of class is contested, and has shifted over time, its significance can't be underestimated in relation to inequalities. In terms of positionality, to assess the relationship between myself and my interviewees entails classifying which social class we belong to. With this in mind, it has been established that traditional social class categories of working class, middle class etc. are too broad, and more nuanced classifications have since emerged to address this. In regards to my own background, both of my parents were born working class, and whilst many of my values have been influenced by this, at the same time I had a privileged upbringing in relation to economic and educational aspects. With access to these opportunities it could be

suggested that I am middle class, although I simultaneously identify with working class values. Such categorisations are complex, and at the same time I'm aware that it may not be possible to pin point without any uncertainty where I stand in terms of my social class (or how I am viewed by others). We should focus more heavily on the similarities between the interviewer and the interviewee rather than their differences.

It could be surmised that the majority of my interviewees come from a working class background, however within the social sciences working class individuals and their communities have often been attributed with a lack of agency, and consequently a lack of power. However, this is not necessarily the case according to Ilan (2015) who acknowledges that despite the impact of structural inequalities individuals respond with agency. As Blackshaw (2016, p. 14&36) has argued:

> In Bourdieu's sociology, contentment is permanently closed to 'the working class' that thumps about like a dinosaur that survived extinction, anachronistic proof of the power and privilege of the theorist and his sociology rather than proof of the usefulness of his ideas. The key to understanding the limits of this interpretation, it is argued, is that it assumes a 'working class' that has little or no agency...In other words, in order for sociology to function it has to rest on the idea that the social divisions and the inequalities emanating from these are performed by those who endure them 'as their life, as what they feel, and what they are aware of'

This then feeds into the idea that the researcher is the oppressor and the researched are the oppressed. Similarly, when considering white researchers exploring the lives of people of colour, the notion of exploitation is also present when considering power relations of class positioning. The idea that the researcher holds all the power can again be raised in relation to class, given that my interviewees hold the knowledge in relation to young women who are on road. Structurally, it may be that the researcher holds more power than their interviewees, but as mentioned previously this is only one form of power. As Blackshaw has noted, it would be inappropriate to assume that a lack of perceived structural power should necessarily dominate the existence of individuals, particularly as some may be more aware of such constrictions than others, or feel that they are constricted in terms of their opportunities. Ultimately it would be wrong to assume that all working class people are wholly defined by their social positioning.

Reflections upon issues of power are not sufficient to resolve the issues of power differentials within the research context (Undurraga, 2012). Nevertheless, qualitative research demands a reflective approach to the interviewing process. It would not be possible for the researcher and their respondents to hold equal forms of power, these various forms will differ between individuals. However, the power lies with the researcher in regards to the ways in which the study is written up and stories are presented. It is here where the researcher must be careful not to further demonise groups such as the working classes which are regularly 'othered' in the media, and more widely in society. As we have seen, the gang stereotype has

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served to position young people's neighbourhood peer groups as both dangerous and criminal. The working classes are often viewed as the scum of the earth, rather than the salt of the earth (Owen, 2012). Skeggs (2005, p. 967) has highlighted the 'moralizing, pathologizing, disgust-producing register' attached to working class women whereby they have been discussed with contempt and disgust in the media. It's argued that the experience of gender oppression is not sufficient in terms of reflecting on the research process in terms of women interviewing women as often white privileged women don't acknowledge the differences of class and race (Foster, 2014). Furthermore, according to Harding (1991) when speaking for those experiencing inequalities it is not enough to showcase their voices, the backdrop of structural disadvantage also has to be acknowledged within this process.

It is not necessary to share a 'subordinated subject position' in order to challenge oppression according to Edwards (1996, p. 84). Smith (1987, cited in England 1994, p. 86) argues that we are all part of society, 'like Jonah she is inside the whale. Only of course she is one among the multiplicity of subjects...she is of and inside the cosmos she seeks to understand'. Whilst I may not share the same classed background as the majority of my interviewees, I am committed to speaking out for marginalised groups and have worked with, researched, and taught on the subject of working class young people for fifteen years (with a consistent focus on young women). Having an understanding of the people you are studying is necessary in terms of understanding the impact of inequalities, and also acknowledging that individuals are not only defined by structural inequality.

Accessing interviewees to discuss deviancy is not easy, particularly given that 'we stigmatize and punish deviant activities, the people who engage in them usually take care not to be discovered' (Becker, 1970, p. 48). Young women in particular are a 'socially silenced group' (Burman et al., 2001, p. 455) which makes gaining access into their worlds complex, especially given that numbers of young women engaging in badness is lower than their male peers. The difficulty in accessing young women has been mooted as an argument as to why young men have tended to be the focus of youth research (Cox, 1993). This is based on the notion that young women are more likely to be located in the private rather than the public domain. Access has historically been viewed as more difficult due to less visibility on the streets and in other public leisure spaces (Sharpe, 1976; Borrill & Marshall, 1984). This is an explanation one could perhaps accept more readily in regard to twentieth century subcultural research, although it should be acknowledged that young women were certainly not invisible in the public domain even if they appear to be hidden in the literature. These days it has been recognised that young women are increasingly seeking out the streets for sanctuary as they spend more time out of the house (Pearce, 2004). As Gunter (2010, p. 107) demonstrates, being 'on road' is not a solely male preserve, it is black influenced youth culture which is played out on the streets and housing estates by young men and women.

One of the reasons why young women are rarely heard in debates around badness is because often they do not define themselves as being in a gang per

se, and the gang literature has tended to dominate the representation of young people's engagement with crime and violence. According to Batchelor (2009, p. 399) this evidence is 'considerably hampered by a set of methodological issues. The first of these stems from the difficulties associated with defining what constitutes a "gang" or being a "gang member"'. This can be explained due to the socially constructed nature of the term, given that it means different things to different people. Furthermore, as definitions are based on male, racialised, models of behaviour this ensures that there is a stigma attached to being young women being labelled. They also did not think the label was a useful one, instead referring to them as groups of friends or family who have grown up with one another. It was acknowledged that discussions around the gang had become misled by racial stereotypes, compounded by media manipulation in the form of moral panics based on American style violent groups. Whilst a minority of youth groups fit this model, it was established that framing discourses around this term were not useful. Katz & Jackson-Jacobs (2004) suggests that gang research has remained separate from sociological studies, which has compounded by the problematic definitional focus, and the ways in which young people's wider lived experiences have been sidelined.

Due to the problematic labelling of a range of diverse youth groups as gangs, and the understandable resistance to the term from young women and practitioners, alternatives ways of accessing interviewees became necessary once the data collection had begun, so consequently the term 'on road' was adopted for the recruitment process. Young et al. (2013) have also noted the challenge in

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recruiting young women who defined themselves as gang members and also broadened the scope of their sample by exploring their on road experiences. They found that this was a useful means of engaging with discussions around the gang within the broader context of street culture. Where our perspectives differ however is that for Young et al. (ibid) being on road is concerned with adopting the values of the gang, whereas I didn't want to limit road culture to participation in gangs and be bogged down with the question of what constitutes a gang and a gang member. Therefore I drew on Gunter's (2010) perspective of being on road, he argues for a broader interpretation involving a range of everyday activities which are played out on the streets (including gang involvement). Unlike the predominant stereotype of the violent and criminal super gang regarded as atypical in the UK by policy makers and certain academics, the notion of being on road provides a broader interpretation of what happens in groups on and around the streets. Being on road is not solely about delinquency but 'placing such adaptations and modes of being within the broader context of the young people's everyday lived experiences' (Gunter, ibid, p. 137). That said, my research focuses particularly on those young women who are committing crime and violence as part of road culture. This is linked specifically to badness and became the focus of the study within the broader context of being on road but not necessarily in a gang.

Accessing populations for study can 'rarely be divorced' from the process of sampling, the more sensitive the topic, the more difficult it is to negotiate access to participants (Lee & Renzetti 1990, p. 517). Snowball sampling was used which is regarded as the most appropriate for the study of deviance whereby researchers

utilise existing contacts in the field, this is an appropriate strategy when conducting sensitive research with the use of gatekeepers to identify respondents for the study (Becker, 1970). Some of the practitioners I relied on to assist as gatekeepers are people I had worked with over a number of years in my roles as Research Fellow and Senior Lecturer. They helped me access other practitioners and young women for the research, young women also put me in touch with their peers. Researching deviant and potentially sensitive topics demands that participants require a level of trust from the researcher. A snowball sampling approach assisted in brokering a certain level of rapport between myself and interviewees who knew that I had been referred by someone who was known to them. The young women I interviewed had been involved in road culture, or had a familiarity with this culture through their work, neighbourhoods, families and/or social networks. In addition to speaking to young women themselves, studying professionals who come into contact with them, or who have had shared experiences, is also a useful way of learning about their lives (Becker, ibid).

The young women I interviewed lived in a range of different boroughs in London. The sampling strategy was deliberate in terms of identifying their age as being eighteen to twenty five years old, but in regards to race and ethnicity this was non-deliberate. I spoke to seventeen young women who were no longer actively participating in road culture, or had observed the impact of what it entailed to be involved in badness. For those with children, it was becoming a mother for the first time which shifted their thinking and prompted them to change their life trajectory. For others they could no longer see the point of badness and wanted to be

engaged in more positive activities, and social networks, which could lead to them to being able to earn money in a less risky manner. They could see that older peers in their neighbourhoods were still involved in the same lifestyle and didn't want to be in that situation as they got older. Some young women who were not directly involved in road culture were put off participating as they had witnessed family members going in and out of prison and they wanted a different future for themselves. My interviewees were working with young people going through similar experiences, whilst others were at college/university or in alternative employment.

Practitioners I interviewed were working in various London boroughs. There was no age limit imposed, their race and ethnicity was also non-deliberate sampling frame. Many had personal experiences of engaging with badness, and/or were familiar with young women's experiences through the work they do. Thirteen youth practitioners were interviewed who work across a range of youth organisations working to provide alternative pathways for young people. Those working in the criminal justice system included one Senior Gang Practitioner, one Female Senior Gang Practitioner, two Probation Officers, one former Police Officer, one Detective Constable and one Police Analyst. This is in addition to an author who is a former gang member. Thirty out of thirty eight interviewees are female and eight are male. Two are Asian, twenty four are black, five are mixed heritage (Asian/white and black/white), one is Sudanese, and six are white. For those youth practitioners who had been involved in badness, this was one of the reasons they now work with young people. This was interesting to hear them reflect on their own

experiences and also the work they do. It also demonstrated that females have been actively engaging in crime and badness for decades and taking central roles, something which is also hidden in historical debates about crime and violence.

Anyika (Black, 24)	*Kate (Youth Practitioner)*
Asha (Asian, 21)	*Kim (Youth Practitioner)*
Ashleigh (Mixed-Heritage, Black/White, 20)	*Marie (Detective Constable)*
Ben (Police Analyst)	*Mellissa (Female Gang Practitioner)*
Bianca (Black, 18)	*Montell (Black, 21)*
Casey (White, 20)	*Morgan (Senior Gang Practitioner)*
Chantelle (Black, 19)	*Natalie (Youth Practitioner)*
Cindy (Senior Female Gang Practitioner)	*Nicola (Black, 19)*
Conrad (Youth Practitioner)	*Pasha (Youth Practitioner)*
Delano (Youth Practitioner)	*Perri (Black, 25)*
Desiree (Black, 19)	*Phillips (Youth Practitioner)*
Dina (Mixed-Heritage, Black/White, 19)	*Reece (Youth Practitioner)*
Dominique (Youth Practitioner)	*Ria (Black, 23)*
Heather (Youth Practitioner)	*Shara (Youth Practitioner)*
Imani (Black, 24)	*Shelayna (Black, 18)*
Jade (White, 21)	*Tom (Former Police Officer)*
Jess (Black, 19)	*Yasmin (Probation Officer)*
Joel (Author)	*Zahiya (Sudanese, 23)*
Katarina (Probation Officer)	*Zharnel (Youth Practitioner)*

One criticism of interviewing is that interviewees will tell the researcher what they think they want to hear, this is due to the impact of social acceptability bias (Rosenfeld, 2012). However, I got the sense that both young women and practitioners answered my questions honestly. I would always start the interview with a question about what they thought of the 'gang issue', and despite them being aware that this was a focus of the research, respondents would say straight away that they thought this word was problematic, that the issue was overblown, or that they didn't think we had a 'gang problem' as such. At the time of the interview the majority of my interviewees did not know that I also felt the same way, so this indicated to me that they felt able to speak freely even if they thought it might be what I didn't want to hear, or counter the aims of the study. These initial conversations about the gang agenda then formed the basis of chapter five. All youth practitioners, and the majority of criminal justice practitioners, I spoke to took issue with the gang agenda and the negative impact this has had on the lives of young people. Some mentioned that they had really enjoyed being able to talk about the problem in a critical way as it was easy to feel trapped by the encompassing nature of the term in their work:

> This is why I'm very careful about how I describe myself. My charity was set up in the height of gang funding and I got less funding because I refuse to classify myself in terms of gang intervention. There is a thing around getting money and there is a thing around stereotyping young people. The Home Office was chucking millions of pounds at people and the way forward out of this is empowerment, it's

is a social problem, you tackle the social problem and you tackle the issue. It's taken me ten to fifteen years of saying that. Gangs are a social problem like any other or you glam it up to the gang issue. People used to see me as a threat because I would constantly challenge my borough, are you forever going to be the gangs capital of London? Are you ever going to empower young, bright, articulate people and stop them dying before they're twenty? (Heather, Youth Practitioner)

It was apparent that many respondents shared my concern about the lack of information that was currently available about the lives and experiences of young women. They valued the opportunity to discuss this matter as it was also one which they felt was important to highlight given that most of the attention and funding tends to be focused on young men.

The majority of interviews were carried out face to face, a minority conducted on the phone, and one took place via email, whichever was the most convenient and workable method for the respondent. Interviews lasted between half an hour to an hour and three young women were interviewed twice as they had lot to say and were keen to tell me more about their experiences. Face to face interviews took place at a range of youth and criminal justice organisations, young women and practitioners were in environments in which they were familiar. The research was conducted over the course of several months, it took time to build on existing links, identify interviewees, and arrange a suitable time to talk. There was no pressure on the young women to take part in the interviews. For those who were referred by

youth practitioners I was in contact with, I supplied the practitioners with the information and consent sheets so that the young women could decide if they wanted to speak to me. Young women were given time to consider if this was something they wanted to get involved in or not. Similarly for those young women who referred their peers, the negotiation of their participation took place at their own pace. Often this could mean waiting weeks or occasionally months to secure an interview. As practitioners are very busy and situations can happen with their young people whom they may need to deal with immediately, it was not unusual to set up an interview and have to reschedule it more than once. Having worked with practitioners within this field this was accepted as part of the process, I made it clear that I would work around them and talk to them at a time which was most convenient.

Qualitative interviewing is a flexible way of collecting data and is one which can produce in-depth and complex research (Mason, 2002). The semi-structured interview format was adopted, this being the most frequently used method to study young people (Heath et al., 2009) and a set of questions was used during the interview as a basis for our conversations. This approach is characterised by a list of topics, one of the advantages of this is that it allows respondents to both clarify, and elaborate, on the questions posed by the researcher (May, 2001). The interviews followed a set of main themes whose order could be changed, and these were expanded upon according to what was highlighted as important and significant by the interviewee. Not following a rigid structure of questioning prevented the interviews appearing too stilted and formal, as ideally they should

be more similar to a flowing conversation. Robson (1993, p. 237) suggests that the semi-structured interview schedule is more like a 'shopping list'. It allows for interviewees to begin new lines of conversation which may not have been identified by the researcher, but which have relevance and meaning to them. I encouraged interviewees to tell me about issues which they felt were important, whilst also relying on a general framework of topics to guide the interview. For example, when I asked questions about how young women gain respect on road, the subject of violence was a common response and these discussions formed the basis of chapter eight.

In terms of the issue of potential exaggeration, interviewees may be keen to reveal the 'true story' according to Becker (1970, p. 32). The young women I spoke to who had been entrenched in badness had now distanced themselves from this lifestyle. Whilst some spoke fondly about their time, getting up to mischief and enjoying their bad ass reputations, they were committed to not returning to the roads. This suggests that they perhaps had less motivation to embellish their stories as this was a period in their lives which had passed and they were now embarking on different transitions. Some as young as eighteen had been heavily involved in badness and had come out of it, which requires a lot of reflection at an early age. All of the young women I spoke to were streetwise, articulate and extremely clued up, not just about what is happening on the streets, but also in terms of the negative way in which young people from their neighbourhoods as individuals, and as part of groups, can be viewed negatively in the public imaginary. Being unfairly stigmatised in this way understandably made

interviewees angry and resentful as they didn't feel they had the platform to rebuke these stereotypes which had been placed unfairly on their shoulders. Their resultant over criminalisation and perceptions of the problematic gang issue could also have prevented them from over glamorising participation in these subcultures. The research findings were validated by the fact there are so many points of agreement between the young women and practitioners, including those practitioners who work for the criminal justice system. This helped formulate the key themes of the research, which in turn developed my own thinking around these matters.

<u>Ethical considerations</u>

Researching deviance is considered to be a sensitive topic due to the potential of stigmatising participants, although potentially any topic could be considered sensitive depending on the questions being asked according to Lee & Renzetti (1990). Sensitive research however can work to address some of the 'most pressing social issues and policy questions' (Sieber & Stanley, 1988, p. 5). Ethical issues are always paramount when it comes to carrying out any research, although exploring the lives of young women who are engaged in badness raises considerably more eyebrows in terms of gaining ethical permission from university ethics committees. No doubt this has been influenced by the academics, policy makers and the media's demonic representations of gang members. The study of road culture is framed as sensitive research, however as discussed ethical sensitivity also refers to the way that the research is framed ensuring that cyclical

arguments are challenged and new lines of inquiry are pursued so that accurate 'theory building' takes place (Lee & Renzetti, ibid, p. 515).

Researchers should always be mindful how reliant they are on their respondents, as without their input the researcher cannot operate (England, 1994). Consent was given by practitioners and young women to participate in the study via consent forms. They were provided with a participant information sheet detailing the nature of the research, and why the study is taking place, before the interviews took place. In addition to this they were made aware that they can withdraw from the research at any time, and that the recorder can be switched off at any point even after agreeing to be recorded. The snowball sampling technique of utilising gate keepers can go some way to aid the safety and confidentiality of the project (Lambrechts, 2014). Becker (1970, p. 46) notes how it is 'repugnant and dishonourable to use information so gained to destroy people's characters and lives'. I explained to interviewees at the beginning of each interview that anonymity is a given and that they will not be named, instead a pseudonym will be used and attributed to their quotes. I explained that the data will be stored securely so that only I can access it, and that names and data will not be linked within the data storage. As the interviews were negotiated via someone that the young women trusted this facilitated variable levels of trust given that 'to gang members every researcher could be a cop' (Yablonsky, 1966, cited in Hagedorn, 1996, p. 111).

<u>Analysing data</u>

Acknowledgement of a researcher's reflexivity is paramount and can work to limit the bias which is associated with qualitative research. That said, it's more than a

question of reflecting, it is an 'element of self-study…and alert researchers to the need to question the taken for granted knowledge they take into a study' (Richards, 2005, p. 197). They are required to consider the relationship between subjectivity, and reflexivity, and how this has impacted upon the entire research process including the analysis and write up of the data. For Harper (2003) data analysis is about choices, coupled with the impact of those choices, as researchers often begin with an idea of how the study may evolve. We must be mindful of not seeing what we want to see and omitting the data which does not 'fit'. Those issues which are highlighted as most important, and significant, by the interviews should drive the research.

Coding existing data began during the literature review process, whereby I assessed the body of work about young women, grouping together key themes and reoccurring ideas. A number of common threads led the framing of the interview schedules, which in turn, framed the coding of the data. Along the way further emerging themes were included, as identified by interviewees, and original themes refined in preparation for the data analysis. The semi-structured interview approach meant that whilst I had a list of topics I wanted to cover these were extended and built upon during the interviews and new themes were able to emerge which drove the analysis. In this way whilst I had ideas about how the chapters may be constructed I was led by the data. As Holliday (2007) notes the final result will often involve a combination or original themes and new themes which are data led.

Given the emphasis of a black feminist approach in terms of recognising, and reflecting upon, interlocking systems of oppression, I was mindful to not further exacerbate stereotypes when interpreting and writing up the data. I did not want to further stigmatise, or pathologise, the identities of young women in deprived communities who have been routinely disparaged and marginalised. For example rather than present the data around violent women as a symptom of women becoming more violent, or using it to support the myth of the angry black woman, I explored the ways in which violence can be used by young women as a strategy for survival in their communities. This is in keeping with their male counterparts who use violence as a tool of survival and a means of achieving respect, given the lack of opportunities to achieve respect within the areas of the formal employment economy and educational contexts. I also aimed to ensure that it was clear that it was a minority of young women on road who are behaving in hyper violent ways, rather than something which is atypical or symptomatic of living in a deprived urban area. Furthermore, rather than accept the dominant premise that women are 'acting like men' in terms of their violent and criminal behaviour, I explored ideas of alternative forms of femininity which distanced themselves from these essentialist ideas of gender.

One of the most convincing arguments for adopting a feminist approach is the 'narrow range of behaviours attributed to females under the male-centred perspective' (Curry, 1998, p. 101). In terms of the role of women, there was a shared understanding with interviewees that young men are seen as the priority of the police. There was also resounding agreement that young women's propensity

for violence has been overlooked by the consistent reference to this group as victims. The lack of information about females engaging in badness in Britain reflects the female criminological tradition which has, it's been suggested, 'become, to a large extent, victimology' (Carrington, 2008, p. 11). This is in addition to the lack of acknowledgement that men can also be victims due the ways in which they are positioned as the natural aggressors. As well as taking non-judgemental approach to the lives of young women, I also considered the negative ways in which young men are positioned as predators and sexual aggressors, thus allowing for a reflection of gender roles.

Conclusion

The current UK literature reveals very little about the lives of young women who engage in badness, consequently their voices and experiences are hidden. As Agyeman (2008, p. 78) argues, such invisibility means that we are 'trivialising, marginalising their experiences and contributions'. This chapter has charted the research journey and demonstrated why adopting a black feminist perspective is both appropriate, and necessary, in addition to the advantages of taking a qualitative perspective. In terms of accessing interviewees, the scope of the study was broadened in order to encompass young women who are on road and engaging in badness as part of road culture, rather than limiting participation to those in gangs per se. It also reflected on the issue of positionality and the implications of a white researcher conducting a study with predominantly working class people of colour. The notion of the researcher being the oppressor and the researched being the oppressed has been critiqued in relation to the binary

perceptions of power relations, whilst also acknowledging the importance of recognising of structural inequalities. The notion of 'giving voice' was challenged, as whilst researchers can't claim to give voice, they can seek to speak out so their interviewees' voices potentially become less silenced. Where possible, the presentation of their quotes allowed participants to speak for themselves in order to assist with this process.

Chapter 5

Talking gangs: Stigmas, myths and problems

Introduction

The previous chapter traced the project's research journey and justified why taking a black feminist qualitative approach, utilising semi-structured interviews, was deemed the most appropriate. It scrutinised the role of reflexivity, positionality, power relations and ethics in relation to studying marginalised populations of colour. It also detailed how respondents were accessed and interviewed. Due to the racist and sexist gang agenda, the perception of badness in Britain has become something which is predominantly linked to young black men. This has ensured that this group have become modern day folk devils and consequently a target for the police and media outlets in order to be seen tackling youth crime. What's notably absent from such debates is the role of young women, due to the lack of empirical research in this area, coupled with stereotypes of females being invisible or peripheral to the action. This chapter seeks to challenge these myths, drawing on interviews with young women, youth practitioners and criminal justice practitioners. Firstly, it will consider why young women have been sidelined in debates, and demonstrate that they are more central than is commonly believed compared to their male counterparts. Secondly, it will problematise the labelling processes, highlighting how the term gang is resisted by both young women and practitioners due the ways in which it has become overused and also dominated by negative connotations. Thirdly, the chapter will present views on how the police and the media have created a moral panic around the issue, which has

exaggerated the perceived levels and threat of serious youth violence. Finally it will highlight how young women and practitioners do not regard the gang as a new phenomenon because these groups are more likely to be intergenerational subcultures which comprise of friends and family members from the same neighbourhoods.

Young women: Still present but invisible

There is a widely held perception by academics, policy makers and police that young women are not involved in gangs. However, this suggestion has been routinely dismissed by interviewees who regard young women as part of, and potentially central to the action:

> I get a lot of stick about this whole girl gang thing. I think it's very much underplayed, girls get very easily dismissed from the whole gang thing. It's crazy that girls are dismissed but boys are automatically are told like, it's not that they're told it's alright, but they're told that it's kind of normal for a boy to be in it (Asha, Asian, 21)

Ignoring the participation of young women does not reflect the true picture of what is actually happening on road. The association of gangs with males, rather than females, has meant that it's viewed as a rite of passage for young men to participate. This can be seen as stemming from the correlation of gang culture with young men as this has been presented as a male domain which both prizes, and rewards, hegemonic masculine behaviour. This is supported by Sharpe (2013)

who suggests that offending in groups is regarded as normative for young men but not for young women, with the differences being less significant than widely believed. With the gang constituting a particular form of hegemonic deviancy, this has served to alienate females in the accompanying discussions. Heather (Youth Practitioner) also highlights the significance of female involvement, 'We are coming to the stage where temptation for girls to join gangs is equal if not greater than for boys'. This links to the views of practitioners in Sharpe's (2013) study who consider there to be an evening out of roles between young women and men:

> I've tried to highlight the involvement of girls because sometimes gangs can't even operate without them because they are so highly involved. If you're not highlighting that you've got girls who are so highly involved in associating themselves with street crime, then you're not going to get them in the Youth Offending Team because they're not being picked up (Melissa, Female Gang Practitioner)

One of the biggest misconceptions then about gangs in the UK is that it's an environment predominantly inhabited by young men. However, as suggested by interviewees, this is not the case and the role that female's play is significantly underplayed. Whilst contrary to much of the existing literature, this was also highlighted by Disley and Liddle (2016) who found that the practitioners in their study acknowledged that young women are heavily involved. As explained by Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995, p. 409), the delinquent stereotype is so 'indisputably male' that the police and criminologists rarely even consider young women's involvement as noteworthy. This is evident in the reluctance to categorise young

women as gang members despite displaying similar behaviours to their male peers. Ignoring the issue of female involvement exacerbates the image of the violent and criminal male gangster. For many interviewees the stereotype is conceived primarily as a male phenomenon:

> I think the gangs that the police are referring to are just like boys, sometimes girls, but mainly boys that are from a certain area, maybe from an estate, that sell drugs and commit violence. That's what they mainly based around gangs (Ashleigh, Mixed Heritage, Black/White, 20)

Whilst there is some recognition here by Ashleigh that the police could identify young women as being involved in badness, they are predominantly focused on their male peers. Official recorded numbers of female gang members do not reflect the reality of what is happening according to interviewees, whereby it's been stated that only 1% of gang-involved young people are female in the London Trident matrix (MOPAC, 2016). This is supported by Medina et al. (2012) who found that there were no females listed in the matrix they reviewed, despite young women displaying similar behaviour as young men who were labelled as gang members in the database. Shelayna (18, Black), and Phillips (Youth Practitioner), responded with derision to the suggestion that only 1% of young women are involved:

> Phillips: No that's a lie
>
> Shelayna: That's a lie

Phillips: That's the biggest lie. That's so funny. A prime example is girls are doing gang signs in videos, holding knives and everything like that. That's standard and that's normal girls

Shelayna: That's normal girls and when the police come into the area

Phillips: They're looking for the boys

Shelayna: They come straight for the boys, but in the videos girls are doing the gang signs, the girls are doing this, the girls are doing that. The girls have got the bannies, the girls have got that, but yet when you come to the area it's the boys you're going for it doesn't make any sense. I know a case of a girl who was with the police and she was getting asked 'What depression have you been going through?' Why not be asking the boys that, can't boys go through depression? It's always about girls having a rough life and what they've gone through it's a stereotype that boys should be tough and girls should be weak. But now it's turning around and the boys are starting to be weak and the girls are strong, they're still going for the boys look what's happening

The different ways in which gender can impact on the treatment of young people by police is highlighted here, with females assumed to be 'troubled' rather than harbouring the potential to be 'troublesome'. The issue of authorities being disinterested in pursuing the activities of young women is attributed, in part, to the construction of essentialised gender roles, with their life histories taken into

consideration in order to help authorities conflate their behaviour with the fact that they are female. Sharpe (2013) found that youth justice professionals tend to consider young women to be more emotionally troubled than young men. Gendered stereotypes can impact on young women failing to be recognised as gang members:

> Part of the difficulty is the whole thing around as a woman you're either bad or you're mad. So if you're establishing that women could actually be perpetrators of some horrific things then you're saying that they have lost the plot because they're no longer able to stay home and cook and clean (Morgan, Senior Gang Practitioner)

The idea that women are either mad or bad when coming into contact with the criminal justice system is a notion which has a long legacy and is one 6hat works to suppress their potential for agency (Weare, 2013). It also presents female criminal behaviour as pathological, the fault of the individual, rather than considering environmental factors which could prompt engagement with badness. A key theme highlighted by respondents was that whilst stories of female participation are evident within the public domain they are not regarded as a priority by authorities:

> They know what's going on with female gangs because there's been reports about girl on girl fights and honey-traps as well, guys being honey-trapped and killed. It's a lack of understanding and sheer ignorance about what is going on. Women are deemed to be nurturers

and mothers etc. So people don't really want to acknowledge what is actually going on with the girls (Perri, Black, 25)

This indicates the difficulty in accepting that young women may use neighbourhood peer groups in similar ways as their male counterparts, as a means to resist their social positioning and find solidarity with other like-minded individuals. Another aspect of the non-identification of young women is the reluctance to position females as perpetrators due to their perceived victim status:

The difficulty is that we are always looking for women as victims, and when you're always looking for women as victims we don't see women as being involved (Morgan, Senior Gang Practitioner)

This is due to young women being less on the radar than young men:

We're focusing too heavily on those in the gang matrix. A lot of the intelligence focus has been on men and boys as opposed to girls (Katrina, Probation Officer)

Despite large recorded numbers of females being reported as being sexually exploited, authorities appear only to view young men as real gang members. This could be attributed to their assumed victim rather than perpetrator status. With this in mind, it should be recognised that young women can shift from victim, to survivor, to offender, these roles do not necessarily exist in isolation from one another. However, the gang industry's continued positivist stance is evidenced by utilising these binary labels of perpetrator/victim rather than consider a more nuanced approach to the formation of young people's identities. It can depend on

the agenda of agencies in terms of who their targets are, with young men dominating the matrices, consequently resources are directed at them rather than young women:

> If you're not looking for something you're not likely to find it. So with the boys straightaway that is one of the things in their mind whether they're part of a gang. So straightaway the Youth Offending Teams are seeking that out and it's one of the first questions that they can be asked whether they are affiliated. That's why girls can go through the system who may be affiliated but it's not really known. The girls are not really seen as a priority for authorities in terms of gang membership (Conrad, Youth Practitioner)

According to the National Crime Agency (2016, cited in Lammy, 2017) in 90% of areas in Britain women are involved in gangs. However, despite this admission of significant female participation, either authorities are focusing on young men because they genuinely believe that young women are not a threat, or they are blinkered in their thinking by targeting young men attached to databases in order to be seen to be quashing the activities of those who are already known to the police so they can be seen to be winning the 'war on gangs'.

In addition to the lack of attention paid to young women, they are unlikely to disclose that they are part of a gang:

> Very rarely do men admit it. At the end of the day the police have you on a matrix, there's a lot of intelligence and everybody knows what

you're doing because the whole community sees you. When you're talking about gangs you're looking for the young men on the side of the streets hanging out in the youth clubs. Even if they're not involved, as long as they dress a particular way and display certain other aspects of behaviour that we've aligned to gangs, we define people as gang members more than they do (Morgan, Senior Gang Practitioner)

This highlights how the intelligence used to populate tools such as matrices rely predominantly on the perceptions of authorities in terms of whether someone is a member or not. Young (2009, p. 233) notes how the girls in her study would not describe their group as a gang despite it exhibiting 'gang-like' features, although they did acknowledge this contradiction. Similarly Batchelor's (2001) research found comparable results, and whilst the young women would also not classify themselves as being in a gang even though their behaviour was also regarded as gang-like. Clearly there are risks attached to such an admission:

I would estimate that you get treated in the same way as someone who is severely addicted to crack cocaine, so why would you jump up and down and say 'Yes I am I am I am?' If you're young woman with a child and you start talking about being gang active you know you can be under a public protection order so why do you want people to take away your children? (Morgan, Senior Gang Practitioner)

Furthermore, young women may also be fearful of reprisals:

Are they gonna tell you? They might not even tell you, they might do, they might not, they might be scared. The dynamics for them is different they might be a lot more scared to tell us they're in a gang. If you're a young woman and you're carrying weapons and you're carrying drugs you're not gonna say 'I'm in a gang'. You're just not gonna do it unless you're naive and immature. I get the feeling that young women do not openly brag about being in it, I don't think it's like that (Katarina, Probation Officer)

With this in mind, given the potential danger of being recorded as a member on an official database, it would not be in the interests of young women to be categorised as such. In tandem to this, Shara (Youth Practitioner) suggests that the negative perception will prevent them from identifying themselves, 'Girls like to make out that they're not affiliated with the gang first and foremost because obviously being in a gang has a bad image'. The majority of young women may not feel as if they fit the negative and threatening stereotype so will not admit to being in any type of group for fear of being associated with such labels. This is understandable because, 'no one wants to identify with the folk devil' according to St.Cyr (2003, p. 43). Desiree (19, Black) adds that, 'The girls want to be with the boys but they don't want to take the heat themselves'. It is a sensible option not to boast about affiliation given the dangerous consequences of being part of a database and the attention this brings from authorities:

The little gangs round here they think the more visible you are the bigger you are the badder you are. But if you're really smart about it

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you will be in a gang that no one will even know (Natalie, Youth Practitioner)

This resonates with the women in Fleetwood's (2014) study who did not openly brag about their criminal activities in order to stay under the police radar. While young women may not formally want to be recognised, they still seek respect in these contexts:

> Girls won't admit they're in no gang. They admit that they chill with a certain group of boys, but when the shit does kick off and the shit hits the fan, you see the girls will be there for the simple fact that they want to be recognised for being there. I was there at that time, I did this, I did that (Delano, Youth Practitioner)

Despite there being a range of peer groups young women may engage with, such a narrow perception of the gang, coupled with the risks attached of being classified as a member, can serve to alienate young women from admitting any participation.

Stigmatising generations: The problem with labelling

If young women will not admit to being in a gang, this is an indication that they don't wish to be associated with this label, or that they don't consider themselves to be part of one. Interviewees felt strongly that the term was both problematic and overused, with definitions of the label regarded as varying considerably between young people and the police:

From my point of view the important thing I think people look for a definition and part of the thing about having a definition is a way of being able to describe something that works for the people who want to talk about it as opposed to the people who actually engaged in it. When you think about the term gang, depending on who you're talking to, it conjures up so many different meanings and because it conjures up so many meanings the whole thing about terminology and how it's used how it's translated gets confusing (Morgan, Senior Gang Practitioner)

Such labelling can be counterproductive as constructing definitions appear to be more important for those who talk about gangs rather than those who work with young people. Definitions differ according to who you speak to, which is supported by Maher (2009) who has described the gang as a social construction, whereby they are everywhere and nowhere depending upon who is doing the reading. A consequence of this is that there is an overriding tendency to label young people who hang around together in groups as gangs, regardless of the range of behaviours which these groups exhibit:

I'm not saying that people don't get killed with guns, and I'm not saying that no one gets killed by a knife. I'm not saying that some young people may associate themselves as gangs, but I don't think that every young person in the group associates themselves as a gang (Dominique, Youth Practitioner)

The gang as a growth industry continues to label groups of young people in limited and unhelpful ways, with attempts to search for a definition constituting an 'old fashioned positivist venture, trying to tack down and quantify gangs as a static, clearly delineated form' (Hagedorn, 2008, p. 30). Group identities then are not static, but in flux, and a definition can only attempt to capture a moment in time. The UK is host to a range of street collectives which display gang-like features but those young people may not consider themselves to be in one or want to be associated with this label. Therefore it is important to acknowledge that if a group exhibits gang-likeness it should not be assumed that it's a gang. Further resistance to the term is demonstrated by interviewees:

> Young people didn't like the term gang, or being called gangs. Around the same time the Metropolitan Police introduced a dispersal order across the borough in that estate, particularly where they could disperse what they called gangs of young people of two or more. The young people I was talking to were really upset about that because they said 'We are just chilling with our friends and we're being called a gang, we're being told we can't stand where we want to and have to move on'. So I could see they were quite upset about being labelled. Now I've been in this youth engagement and participation role for three and a half years and working with similar young people there is a real thing about being labelled as a gang member (Kate, Youth Practitioner),

The stigmatisation of young people can understandably create frustrations, being unable to congregate in public spaces without the risk of being regarded as a threat by police. This can be attributed to 'lazy assumptions' made about gangs which position young people as inherently troublesome (Trickett, 2016, p. 25). It can also lead to further distrust between police and the communities in which they serve. Young women are irritated by these stereotypes:

> I don't really like the word gang cos you could class your family as a gang. Most of my family are all boys, all my cousins are guys, so I could imagine walking down the road with them or going out to a club with them and boom that's a gang. They're actually blood related, we're going to a club, we're not even going out to do anything but people just assume this because of what the media portray. They've created this image and it's just stuck in everyone's head. You could be having a drink with workmates and people are assuming you're a gang and it's not really a gang, what is a gang? I've always asked, 'What is a gang?' People use the word gang in so many different ways, but it's because the police use it quite a lot like a gang of boys or girls, this gang from this estate everyone's like 'Yeah they're a gang cos they're all young, they're all wearing hoods' (Ashleigh, 20)

The media's focus is on the minority of youth groups who commit crime and violence at the expense of considering their wider participation in a range of street collectives. Ashleigh's concerns echo those respondents in Palmas' (2015) study whereby they have chosen to reject the gang language and refuse to engage with

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the term. Interviewees questioned the assumptions made about young people in groups who are simply engaging in leisure activities:

> Not everybody who's in a gang is involved in crime. If the police see a group of youths together that's a gang, we could be going to the pictures, we could be going to the park, and immediately we'll be associated. Why can't we just be a group of young people just going somewhere? I think it definitely is a lot harder because you can't really go out much now, before you used to be able to loiter around. I remember I used to go to certain areas and hang around whatever but now you get slapped with an ASBO, they think you're in a gang and loitering but the police can ASBO you for hanging around on the street so there's that (Kim, Youth Practitioner)

The majority of young people on road are not involved in badness, so this has an impact by curtailing their freedom in public spaces, despite it being the main place where they congregate with friends. On a practical level, for those who work directly with young people considered to be at risk of offending, whether someone is in a gang or not is not a priority. Trying to establish membership (or not) can be time consuming. It is the behaviour of the young women rather than the gang itself which should be the focus:

> You don't have to get caught up in this whole difficult situation whereby the police say 'She's in a gang' but she says she's 'Not in a gang', you are not having a debate for an hour. When I'm training staff

I say this is nonsensical and worthless because it doesn't matter who says what, as long as you can identify that there is some elements of group offending that give cause for concern you have a legitimate right to tackle the conversation. So don't get caught up in whether it's a gang or it's not a gang. What we are concerned about is the behaviour, whether individuals do it because they're in groups, they're associated with groups, or they might do individually, so their actions are not always in the group but they are still driven by groups (Morgan, Senior Gang Practitioner)

The issue of definition is extremely complex, with attempts to label proving a fruitless activity. However, as Morgan suggests, this is further complicated by the fact that young people may offend as part of a group, and as an individual, something which such rigid definitional discussions do not allow for. This is supported by Downes (1966) who notes that the majority of crime is conducted by small collectives of young people, sometimes in groups, sometimes in pairs and sometimes individually. Groups and their members are individuals with distinct motives and behaviours, however the fact that they are part of a group positions them as a focus of interest:

Gang is used far too often, you hear the police saying 'There's a gang of kids over there' but it's not it's a group of kids. The g-word gets changed from group to gang. I think from a young person's point of view you need to be very careful. Even if you're not in one the police will undoubtedly create gang members, and the intelligence report

says you're member even if you've never been in any gang in your life or been arrested (Tom, Former Police Officer)

Unnecessary attention from the police can culminate in incorrect police intelligence being used to define young people as gang members. According to Lammy (2017) the criminal justice system needs to avoid connecting such membership with young people who simply associate in groups. Consequently, even though young people may not claim to be a member, they may be considered to be one due to their association with peers:

> The girl's not gonna say she's in a gang and the boys not gonna say he's in a gang. Young people don't see themselves as being in it like that, a lot of them get like 'Who told you I was in a gang? Why did they say am in a gang?' But they need to understand that it's by association, that's what it looks like when you're standing across the other side of the street that you're in a gang. You're hanging around with certain people that are known to police and getting up to no good. You might be on the periphery, or you might be a little deeper in it, do you know what I mean? (Pasha, Youth Practitioner)

There is danger attached to hanging around in certain areas, or with certain people who are under the police radar according to Bianca (18, Black):

> CC: Do you think there's a stigma attached to being in a gang?

> Bianca: Yeah. It's different if you've grown up with someone who's in the gang because you know that person as a person, but there always

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the chance that they may change because of the gang. If you meet someone and they're like 'Yeah I'm in a gang' it's like okay I don't really you want to talk to you. It does make you feel a bit uneasy

CC: Would you then worry that people think that you're associated with that gang?

Bianca: Yeah it would make you feel like you're affiliated, you've some sort of ties like and it's not the case

CC: And then the police will jump to conclusions?

Bianca: Exactly

Other interviewees also voiced their apprehension about young people being at risk in these contexts:

Yeah then you're guilty by association, because they're under surveillance and they've got their database for the gang members and people that are hanging around with them become associated with them whether they're in it or not (Kim, Youth Practitioner)

Definitions are used incorrectly in order to categorise young people, which has been recognised by a Metropolitan Police Officer who asserts that gangs are, 'for the most part, a complete red herring…Fixation with the term is unhelpful at every level' (Independent, 2018a). Despite the admittance that they are hard to pin down this hasn't prevented the development of the Trident database in London (and

matrices elsewhere in the UK). There are dangers surrounding being identified as such:

> I do think that things are changing, and where is previously was quite popular to be known as being in a gang, now not so much. Probably because they know the law will be taking it much more into consideration if its gang related it's noted in courts. We do have certain people who would look at all the intelligence surrounding them, are they linked to known members, if there was anything on the internet linking them to gang rap videos. In our office we have a system, there is a matrix set up where people are known to associated or be involved in the lifestyle will be on there, and if they are on that system we will deal with it as a gang related incident (Marie, Detective Constable)

The suggestion that young people who are known to be associated with gang members will also be categorised in the database raises concerns because the official figures which have been released in relation to the Trident matrix refer to members, rather than those individuals the police believe to be associated. Furthermore, the reliance on rap videos as a form of intelligence is questionable in terms of the extent to which this actually conveys membership or association, and the fact that this could be very out of date. Reece (Youth Practitioner) suggests 'The amount of gangs is an overstatement as some are just music collectives'. With this in mind, identification relies upon multiple sources of incomplete information which often proceed in slower time than what is happening on the

streets (Youth Justice Board, 2007). The use of such databases has been strongly criticised by Amnesty International for breaching human rights for wrongly stigmatising innocent people, and using social media and grime music as evidence of links to gangs (Independent, 2018a). After an investigation, the Information Commissioner's Office (2018) has since concluded that the Metropolitan Police Service has been in serious breach of data privacy laws. Such definitional processes are flawed due to the fixation on labels:

> Gangs are very complex. They may do very different things. They may not even have a name, and may indicate totally different things, so we would need a much more flexible approach to definitions, rather than trying to label something the issue is too complex (Ben, Police Analyst)

With the matrix as a categorisation tool being called into question, Hagedorn (2008, p. 31) suggests the best definition is an 'amorphous one: they are simply alienated groups socialized by the streets as the only constant is their changing nature'. To avoid such stigmatisation, Palmas (2015) prefers to focus on the processes which lead vulnerable young people to commit badness, such as their exclusion from education and legitimate labour markets. This is something which has been overshadowed through the processes of labelling, with the gang itself being the point of study rather than the behaviours within the peer group. The reification of the gang creates a situation whereby it is treated as an object of enquiry rather than considering the behaviours themselves. The study of gangs then should not be considered as distinct from other youth groups as it has

become, 'essentially an argument over the correct description of a ghost' (Katz & Jackson-Jacobs, 2004, p.106).

Definitional processes have been based on male models of experience. The empirical data, and knowledge of young women's relationships with such groups, in the UK is too limited to attempt to create a definition even if attempts at constructing these labels were helpful rather than complex and divisive:

> If you're governed by a definition it's very much focusing on men and male orientated behaviour. Because of the way that the definition is displayed it also lends itself to discrimination focusing heavily on black men. In terms of when you're looking at women in the arena the whole issue of race goes up in the air because you'll probably find even less information (Morgan, Senior Gang Practitioner)

This is supported by Ventakesh (1998) who comments that the term has been applied inconsistently and without a consideration of young women. Morgan raises the important issue of young women, gangs and their relationship with race, which is something we know virtually nothing about in the British context. This can be attributed, in part, to the fact that race is rarely discussed in relation to young men. Given the lack of information and knowledge available about young women their experiences have not yet been differentiated by race.

Dangerous stereotypes of demonic outsiders

Another reason why young women and practitioners voiced their resistance to the gang label, in addition to it being overused and over simplified, is because it has

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come to represent something extremely negative. Interviewees expressed their concern about its derogatory image and the ways in which this has influenced the perceptions of young people. Ashleigh, 20, has indicated that the police, 'Just assume that a gang is someone who sells drugs, causes violence, destruction of peace and stuff like that'. Her comment about this misconception virtually mirrors the statement made by the ex-Prime Minister in response to the London riots when he claimed that that gangs were central to the disturbances:

> At the heart of all the violence sits the issue of the street gangs. Territorial, hierarchical and incredibly violent, they are mostly composed of young boys, mainly from dysfunctional homes. They earn money through crime, particularly drugs, and are bound together by an imposed loyalty to an authoritarian gang leader. They have blighted life on their estates with gang-on-gang murders (David Cameron, 2011)

However, such claims about these events were contradicted once the true picture of the riots emerged. The irony of placing the fears and anxieties of society at the hands of young people who are visible on road is that young people themselves regard the police as the biggest gang and are extremely suspicious of *their* motives (Newburn et al., 2016). Ilan (2018, p. 686) found in his research that street culture requires the 'maintenance of a hostile relationship to the police, who are not to be cooperated with and may be construed as the "enemy"'. Despite the lack of empirical evidence confirming the existence of an epidemic, the role the gang plays in relation to gun and knife crime has been significantly exaggerated, as it is

not at the high levels which are commonly believed. It is the negative position which has been taken up by certain criminologists, the police and the media. This is despite the fact that the Metropolitan Police have claimed that most knife crime is not gang related, indicating that just under five per cent of serious violence was attributed to gangs in 2015-16 and the four years prior to this (LAPCC, 2016, cited in Clarke, 2017). These findings question the manner in which these groups have been presented as inherently violent, and a danger to the public, and casts doubt on the suggestion that they are all violent:

> There's a lot of gangs but I don't believe they are all violent towards their enemies. There might be a small minority of gangs that have a motive to rob people day in and day out but there's not a lot of them. And those ones you would not even call them gangs. The ones that say do the violence, the drugs, and that this and that, they're the ones that they stereotype in the hoodies and this and that. They're the ones that people think are the violent ones. They're not like that. You can see them and smile at them and they will smile with you (Shelayna, 18)

So whilst a minority of these collectives may be exhibiting violent behaviour, and in some cases serious youth violence, this is not reflective of all groups which have been labelled as gangs. It is important to bear in mind that youth violence takes many forms, and amalgamating the range of group (or individual) activities serves to simplify the issue, the causes of which are far more complex. As Medina and Shute (2013) have argued it has become a scapegoat, with youth violence policy

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responses focusing increasingly on it as a metaphor for serious youth violence, rather than addressing the government's 'structural abandonment' of marginalised populations. Due to the overarching negativity associated with the label young people's group behaviour is increasingly being scrutinised as a result:

> I feel that the word gang is actually attached to all things negative. When you start attaching things which are wholly negative nobody in their right mind wants to be associated with something which is seen to be completely derogatory (Morgan, Senior Gang Practitioner)

In addition to exacerbating negative stereotypes of young people (particularly those in groups), posing an artificial threat of violence creates unnecessary fear and anxiety within society. As Gunter (2017, p. 79) has stated, 'the abuse of this term in this manner is unacceptable', and as academics we must do better than producing over simplified categorisations which can ultimately impact harmfully on the lives of young people. This is regardless of figures which indicate that gang related crime actually constitutes a small percentage of serious youth violence:

> It's used as a danger word, a gang is related to danger. See anyone in a big group who is deemed as being dangerous people just assume they are in a gang. I don't think the issue is as big as some people make out, it is blown up ten times more than it should be on the news. It's not an everyday problem. As time's gone on people have become more stereotypical, rather than just thinking it's a group of kids chilling out of the house (Casey, White, 20)

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The issue has been blown out of proportion, whereby dangerous and pessimistic connotations have come to be associated with young people who congregate on road in groups. These stigmatising representations have become increasingly more salient which correlates with the academic negative shift of the term. Thrasher (1963) who presented a humanistic approach to the study of groups paints a 'picture of healthy devilment, adventurousness, pride of leadership' (Gunter 2017, p. 83). As the twentieth century progressed, American criminologist's perceptions of the gang became increasingly conservative, focusing more heavily on violent and criminal behaviour as a key motivator. It was established by subculturalists that these features of the typical gang were not present on British soil. Despite this assertion, the gang has come to represent something far more sinister in UK contemporary society. With this in mind, interviewees questioned the usefulness of comparisons to the US due to the scale of the problem and types of groups not being comparable:

> The gangs over here are very small scale. I mean over here you got a gang for every postcode but in America you've got people like the Folks and the Crips which are a whole area of the gang and different gangs because it's bigger over there the scale of it (Natalie, Youth Practitioner)

Neighbourhood peer groups in the UK don't fit the American import stereotype of the super gang. Despite this, the government has deemed it appropriate to use the US situation as a blueprint to tackle Britain's perceived problem regardless of the differences between the two countries in relation to crime. Bill Bratton, was drafted

in by ex-Prime Minister Cameron to advise a government taskforce after the London riots, he also notes the disparity between US and UK gangs, suggesting that they are less heavily armed and 'much smaller and less sophisticated than in LA' (Daily Mail, 2011b). The ways in which young people are described has witnessed a disapproving shift over time:

> When I was younger it was just a group of girls hanging around together, but not doing anything, just a group of girls, but we were a gang. So we were a gang but we weren't doing nothing. It's overused and it's a negative word for a group of young people cos you could see a whole group of men who are going out on a Saturday night but they won't be called a gang they'll just be called a group of men. Its stereotypes again young people are just getting a bad rap all the time (Kim, Youth Practitioner)

Desiree, 19, agrees and also alludes to the ways in which the label has changed over time to represent something more sinister, 'Before gangs was like you know a positive thing'. Where once the term was used as an affirming affiliation for a group of young people this shift has had an impact on young people hanging around together:

> Yeah I've seen a lot of like people who were hard in the gangs just drop out. Like a lot of the time it's more like the older generation who are holding onto old beef and old problems are like influencing the younger generation. My generation have clicked onto the fact that it's

actually just not worth it so everybody's just getting out of it. I think

that a lot of people just aren't interested any more (Bianca, 18)

These days the gang has become something some young women would rather not associate themselves with because it is too problematic. This could be a response to the labelling process, in addition to the ways in which groups of young people are being criminalised due to the assumption that their group is a gang by authorities.

Getting a bad rap: Moral panics and racialised discourses

As a result of the gang label coming to represent a negative entity this has created a moral panic around the issue, underpinned by the exaggerated link between gangs and gun and knife crime. A common belief demonstrated by interviewees was the suggestion that the media was complicit in creating an unrealistic picture and the levels of involvement of young people. According to Kate (Youth Practitioner) 'I think the media's got a lot to do with it as well and when you say gangs to young people now they think of what the media puts forward'. A focus on youth crime has historically been a focus for the media. In addition to influencing the public's perceptions towards deviancy, it also maintains the idea that crime is a prominent political issue. Biased media coverage, particularly from right-wing newspapers, has constructed an exaggerated and simplistic representation of the gang via the production of myths. Symbolic criminalisation has been identified as a by-product of the media's portrayal of these groups, almost half of the articles analysed in the UK centred on youth crime, whilst nearly three quarters of these

focused specifically on violent crime (Wayne et al., 2008). The impact of these representations was noted by respondents:

> The media help propel the negativity, the TV purporting young people to be doing this and that. It's just really fatalistic and negative and the positives are never shown. It's all to do with what the world is teaching us and what we've been taught because before I'm sure there was enough people who used to hang around in crowds but they weren't called gangs (Ria, Black, 23):

We rarely hear positive stories about young people in the news, with the emphasis being on their law breaking. Consequently this serves to ignore the issue that they are more likely to be victims of crime rather than perpetrators of it. Ria sees the media as a key tool in terms of the ways in which young people are constructed and understood. These official discourses promote a common narrative that 'gangs cannot be allowed to terrorise communities' (Lammy, 2017, p. 18). The media is presenting gun and knife crime as an epidemic based on figures collated for March and April 2018. With this in mind, Gunter (BBC1, 2018) has pointed out that by only analysing two months of figures, overall the numbers are actually lower than last year's average. He suggests that it is too simplistic to say this is about gangs, it is a complicated issue which goes back a couple of decades. Furthermore, violence is a part of society not just an issue which should be presented as an isolated youth issue. This is supported by figures released in August 2018 which indicate that whilst violent crime is up, crime is down (BBC,

2018). Many respondents blamed the media for presenting an improbable picture of what is actually happening:

> I definitely think it's a real issue for young people but the media doesn't highlight it in a realistic way if you get what I'm trying to say. They talk about it as a panic because there's nothing else to talk about in the media (Anyika, Black, 24)

Such panics create the foundation for anxiety towards young people and is inconsistent with the actual threat being posed, creating a them and us situation:

> I'm going to be honest with you I don't see we one hundred percent have a gang problem. In this present time I think its media hype just to make normal people who just go to work and come home and watch TV have a perception of a group of people. They do that whether it's gangs, they did that to the punks. They are producing the fear. There's always been groups of people, young people, I was in a group of young people there were ten or more of us and we all used to hang around together every day so if the word gang at that particular time was being used we would have been labelled as such. So I think the media has just heightened things. So we've had his moral panic from the media causing more panic by representing their stories and they promote this idea of gangs as much as they can to the masses and after a little while the masses will believe them (Dominique, Youth Practitioner)

This perceived problem has been created by the media in the same way in which subcultural groups such as the punks were represented as problematic and a threat to the social order. The consequence of this is that due to the pervasive influence of the press these ideas permeate the public imaginary. It also demonstrates the cyclical nature of panics associated with working class youth:

> To be real they overdo it obviously because they've got a middleman on the inside actually telling them what it is. So that's the only reason that they overdo it they don't know what is it exactly is. They've got little documentaries out with people trying to go to certain areas and interview certain people and that but that's not it, you got to be involved to actually know what it is (Delano, Youth Practitioner)

> If a group of us walked out on the street now and went out and robbed, in the newspaper it would be a gang. If we walked out on the street together and a shop down the road got robbed and we were all in it, we're a gang who robbed a shop. So I think a lot of it is also stereotypes because it could be a group of people hanging out it doesn't necessarily mean they are a gang (Natalie, Youth Practitioner)

The danger of media coverage is that it can serve to further sustain these myths:

> The media glamorises it too much that's the bottom line. These gangs if you pay no attention to them then they will just die out and crumble. They'll kill off each other and they'll be gone, dead. There's no

glamour to it, there's nothing to show off, there's nothing to put in the media there's nothing to sing about. There haven't been as many deaths this year compared to last year because it's dying down. As soon as there's a death the media glamorises and it's gonna come up and rise again. I'm not saying you shouldn't know when someone has died but they glamorise it in the newspaper (Shelayna, 18)

For the minority of young people who are involved their violent lives can resemble a film script, the media is focused on documenting youth violence at the expense of other forms of violence in order to sell newspapers according to Gunter (BBC1, 2018). Such promotion Shelayna suggests can encourage other young people to engage in similar behaviours. Moral panics can serve to create divisions within communities, some of which may already be considered to be disorganised. The focus on conflict between groups has been key in regards to the presentation of gang violence in order to sensationalise the issue:

The media automatically put it into rivalries. One side might be a gang but the other person might be completely innocent and not involved at all. They always put it into gang on gang violence. I think the media have blown it out proportion. We know a lot of people who'd been involved or going country selling drugs, and we know five people who have been killed, some through gang violence. We know loads of people who've been stabbed, even shot things like that, but a lot of it is blown out of proportion (Jess, Black, 19)

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When the Mods and Rockers disturbances were reported by the media it was based on the assumption that was a distinct affiliation between groups, when in reality this was more nuanced. By positioning young people on one side or the other creates an added layer to further fuel the debates around youth violence. There is also an over simplification of the perceived link between gangs and gun and knife crime:

> Sometimes it's not even gang violence. Sometimes it can be a little fight that could have happened between two people who have no idea who they are. They've gone out clubbing, or they're a bit drunk or they're high on something, and then up having a fight. So a lot of the time the media and the police don't investigate it (Dina, Mixed Heritage, Black/White, 19)

Small altercations can result in the amplification of youth violence through associating such conflict with gangs. The stereotype of the hyper aggressive gang member has contributed, in part, to a rejection of the label:

> I think a lot of the time as a female you don't want to be seen as a gang member because it makes you seem threatening. Everyone knows what gang is about and everyone knows what they get up to. It's not like female gangs are any different it's exactly the same do you know what I mean? It's just that you're female that's it (Bianca, 18)

Moral panics are underpinned by both racialised and gendered stereotypes, with young men for the most part constructed as dangerous. However, as Bianca

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demonstrates, this is also how young women can be perceived. Young (2009) observes that reports in newspapers have suggested that young women are not on the margins and are engaged in serious crime and violence usually associated with young men. The visibility of groups of young working class women in the public domain then can also work to create fear and anxiety. Whilst dominant representations tend to be masculine, the media have a history of promoting racist analysis coupled with a concern of perceived rising levels of youth crime. Joseph and Gunter (2011) have argued that right-wing media in particular continue to present black young men as violent which has contributed to their stigmatisation. This was a view shared by interviewees:

> It's like the idea that only black people commit crime they are the troublemakers. I'm not saying black people don't commit crime, I ain't saying that black people ain't gang members, I'm not saying that they don't do these things, but just recognise that white people do it too. It doesn't go like that. You can't single out people, there is bad in every race, there is good in every race, don't try and single out one group (Dominique, Youth Practitioner)

The racialised nature of the label, positioning black youth as more criminogenic than other groups, did not failed to go unnoticed by interviewees. Casey, 20, acknowledges the undeniable role that race plays, 'It is overused in the media. It's racialised that's one of the big issues, people think mixed race and black boys are the gang members'. The development of a black folk devil provokes a response from which the public demand action to suppress this perceived new threat. A

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'criminogenic culture' has been closely linked to black American gangs and Jamaican Yardies according to Sviensson (2012, p. 3). Such ideas about black criminality have been generated to some extent by the use of databases, with MOPAC's (2016) figures revealing that 76% of gang members are black. The association with particular ethnic groups has been significantly overstated, and can alter the behaviour of the public towards young people according to Shelayna, 18, and Phillips (Youth Practitioner):

> Shelayna: They always say it's young black boys but if you do know people in gangs, and if you do take the time to actually sit there and talk to as they call it 'Gang boys', you would realise that dons are white, that don's are Asian. Because everyone's in black hoodies black black black you're like okay it's all black boys but you sit there and realise the top of the top boys might be even white, or Moroccan, or Russian

> Phillips: We live in a place that is dog eat dog. What really upsets me is that you're walking past a white woman and she's grabbing onto her handbag. You cheeky sod, that pisses me off. Some young people would say I'm gonna rob you for doing that

Getting into badness is not linked to ethnicity, however the strategies used by the police to contain black youth, both contribute to and fuel media representations which conflate gangs with ethnicity (Smithson et al., 2012):

It's not just the media, society also stereotypes, like that hug a hoody stuff why are you hugging a hoody? People thought all people in hoodies were robbers. People still cross the road from me and I'm a big responsible black man. I see people, usually white women, move their little purses walking towards me, hold their bag a little bit tighter, or cross the road from me. I have a laugh cos it's funny, cos back in the day I would have taken that bag, if you're going to do that I would have taken it just for the fun of it (Reece, Youth Practitioner)

White people can be fearful due to negative media stereotypes which can then encourage young people to engage in behaviours they wouldn't have considered if they weren't confronted with racist attitudes. The ways in which white and black youth are perceived differs:

Not to be rude, but if I saw a group of white guys or Chavs wearing Reebok trainers that's not going to be looked at like a gang because they're not as scary as five black guys all in tracksuits, do you know what I'm trying to say? So I don't use the word gang, I just say 'They're from this area, I've seen their face before they're from this area that's it'. It's always gonna be a black and white thing no matter how much we don't want it to be. How many black people have been shot by the police? It's always going to be asked because police they brought themselves up to stereotype us and think that that's the way to go (Ria, 23)

Perceptions can differ according to ethnicity, with white youth less likely to be feared. This is despite evidence to the contrary that ethnic make-up of a gang is based on the location of the group rather than attributed to the ethnicity of the individual. The mistreatment of black youth by the police based on these stereotypes, of which the media both create and contribute to, impacts on how those in the criminal justice system engage with young people.

Gangs as a symptom of historical amnesia

Moral panics operate by presenting the idea that the phenomenon in question is something new, and therefore newsworthy, even though the narrative of these stories are cyclical. The suggestion that this is a new form of youth deviance was not an opinion readily shared by interviewees:

> Everyone is acting like this gang thing is new do you know what I mean? What about the Mods and Rockers? What about the punks? There are cultures in society which had been deemed bad or out of control. There have been conflicts through the generations with those types of groups (Pasha, Youth Practitioner)

Pasha challenges the suggestion by Pitts (2008; 2012) that they are a new phenomenon. Anxieties associated with working class young people today are reminiscent of those from the previous century, whereby such discourses underpinned by conflict have proliferated unabated throughout history. The young people in Jephcott's (1967) study for example repeatedly claimed that gangs were not new. Whilst the minority may engage with serious youth violence, the majority

of groups which have come to be called gangs do not fit this model. The media serve to create a new form of social threat which amplifies deviancy, despite youth subcultural groups having a long history. As Pearson (2011, p. 20) explains, 'youth crime and disorder are better understood as persistent, if somewhat intermittent, features of the social landscape, and that in this respect we suffer from a profound historical amnesia'. It was expressed by respondents that gangs are intergenerational, based around friends and family ties formed by growing up together in the same neighbourhoods:

> When I think of like gangs there are certain families. If you go back in the day their dads and their uncles for instance, football hooligans, they're gangs but that's gone through the whole family so it's natural for them they don't see it as a gang. This is what my Dad used to do and my uncles, and this is what I'm supposed to do, so they wouldn't class themselves as a gang they use the word firm (Montell, Black, 21)

The development of neighbourhood peer groups are based on existing relationships which have developed over time. The family connection demonstrates how values are transmitted from one generation to the next. The young women in Taylor's (1993) study who got involved in badness because of their cousins, people they grew up with and lived in the same areas. Ashleigh, 20, also agrees that, 'You just grow up with them' which links to the work of Mares (2001, p. 162) who indicates that these groups present a 'clear continuum and redevelopment of already existing gang structures':

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A gang is just a small group of friends. Groups of friends are generally the same age, or from the same area, and there is no name, there is no hierarchy, everyone's got equal standing. There were people I went to school with, some of them those that were my age, and the older people were just older people from the area (Chantelle, Black, 19)

Such collectives are groups of peers which should not be referred to as a gang:

I think it depends on what you call a group of people, or what you think a gang is, cos before a group of friends used to actually have a title for themselves. Whereas now people don't do that. I don't really see people being in gangs anymore, there's just groups of friends who do whatever. I don't think they should use the word gang it's ridiculous. As I've grown older it's more around friendship groups there is no title for it, like the most thing you would say is 'squad' and that's it is just a group of friends (Montell, 21)

Whilst certain groups may demonstrate what is regarded as gang behaviour by authorities, the group itself may not consider themselves to be one. This is supported by the respondents in Gunter's (2009, p. 525) study who referred to themselves as 'crews':

I just think is a thing where everybody is taking it differently as in like some people don't actually call it gangs you know. If you asked me if I know anyone who's in a gang I would say 'No, I just know bare people

who know each other'. It's not about gangs it's about people growing up together from the same neighbourhood (Ria, 23)

Interviewees acknowledged the contrast in the ways that young people view their peer groups:

They don't see it as being in a gang or what we describe as a gang. The young people say it's the environment they grow up in. If you go to certain estates there are young people who are involved and it just becomes a natural part of life in areas that can be described as socially deprived. It's just a part of that way of life, they don't wake up one morning and say 'Yeah I'm gonna be in a gang' (Pasha, Youth Practitioner)

Young people see their groups as developing organically as part of the communities in which they reside, thus representing a way of life. This is supported by Young (2009), wherein the young women were part of groups which had matured over time, with new members tending to be friends of friends. For the most part they did not 'join' their group, or engage in forms of initiation, something which has been more closely associated with the American experience. Similarly, according to Bennett and Holloway (2004) there is history of loose knit collectives in Britain who are already known to each other, with close family and generational ties with the neighbourhood:

I wasn't recruited, it was by default because I used to live local so all my friends and all the guys who used to live around my area a long

road with lots of flats off of it. So of an evening during the six week holiday, at the end of the road where the foods shops were is where young people congregated. Some of those were anti-social and were out there making money and the other side of the youths were cool playing football and having jokes, so I had the best of both worlds. So it was like 'Yeah what's happening, are we good? 'Yeah course cos you're from endz, you're from round the corner'. So it was not recruitment, I was in by validation and by default because of where I lived, and people who joined the gang were all local and you had to be local to be in it (Reece, Youth Practitioner)

Living in the neighbourhood is important for endorsement and also indicates how becoming part of a group is organic, rather than relying on formal recruitment processes. These collectives represent a socialisation process for young people as they transition to adulthood and navigate their environment. It is the inherited nature of the local area which contributes to the existence of peer groups, coupled with the social conditions which are played out between the individual and the state. The idea that the gang is a new phenomenon, rather than something which is part of the everyday fabric of the neighbourhood, makes these collectives appear to be something unnatural and menacing rather than a cultural response to social deprivation.

Conclusion

Interviewees challenged a range of myths associated with gang culture in the UK, such as the lack of female involvement, the uselessness of definitions, the

stereotype of the American import as atypical, the danger of moral panics, and the idea that these groups are a new phenomenon. It was suggested by interviewees that female participation is both prevalent and central compared to their male counterparts in these contexts, thus challenging official figures. These statistics also do not conflate with the numbers of young women reported to be involved in gangs as sexually exploited members, yet despite this they are not regarded as real members due to their conferred victim status. This reflects the sexist attitudes which underpin the gang agenda, due in part, to its association with hegemonic masculinity. Young women and practitioners also commented that the label was overused, and applied indiscriminately, in particular to young black men. Attempts to define it are both fruitless and redundant, this is despite the fact that such definitions have been a preoccupation of criminologists for over a century. Groups of young people present themselves in a variety of forms which cannot be reduced to single definition. It was acknowledged that the stereotypical gang presented in the media has fuelled the problem out of all proportion as the majority of youth collectives do not fit this stereotype. The term is applied ad hoc to young people who congregate in visible public spaces on road, regardless of their actions and behaviours. Consequently, due to this demonic symbolism, young women are unlikely to admit to being in a gang even if they believe they are part of one. It was also acknowledged by interviewees that fears about serious youth violence have been exacerbated by the right-wing media who present the gang as a new phenomenon in order to make them appear more newsworthy. This myth has been operationalised to deflect from the potential structural exclusion experienced

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from living in deprived areas. Rather than being a new development in youth crime, intergenerational family and peer groups more likely to be formed organically by young women who have grown up together in the same neighbourhoods.

Chapter 6

Getting into badness: Young women and road culture

Introduction

The previous chapter focused on interviewees' views of the gang and the myths surrounding this phenomenon. They challenged the dominant notion that young women are not involved and exist only on the margins, rather than potentially being central to the action. Resistance to the label was also demonstrated by young women and practitioners who felt that the term has shifted and come to represent something wholly negative. Moral panics have proliferated, due in part to the exaggerated links between serious youth violence and the gang, which are yet to be proven empirically. Whilst a minority of gangs fit the violent model imported from the US, which in itself is also viewed as a questionable stereotype, this does not reflect the majority of British peer groups. Rather than being something new, it was suggested that gangs are more likely to be intergenerational subcultures, whereby groups have been formed organically with family and peers who have grown up together. This chapter will continue to consider the views of interviewees, underpinned by a discussion of why certain young women are drawn into badness. It does so by reframing the gang issue and focusing on the individual rather than the group, using road culture as a specific subculture which is associated with badness to theorise the experiences of young women. Firstly it will focus on the impact of educational and employment limitations for those living in marginalised communities and the potential need to engage in badness for financial gain. This will be followed by a focus on consumerism and the ways in which material goods have become key to the desire for fast money. Then the

impact of the family, both in terms of the influence generational subcultures, and the effect of neglect and/or abuse will be discussed. Finally there will be a consideration of coercion into offending via heterosexual relationships which tends to dominate debates and female offending, in addition to the thrill and excitement of engaging in badness.

Road culture and badness

The interviewees' clear dislike and distrust of the gang label presented in chapter five prompted a reframing of the research to focus more broadly on badness as part of road culture. It is the actions of young women which are of interest here, rather than whether they are in a gang or not, badness cuts through these definitional questions as it gets to the heart of what young women are getting up to on road. This allows us as researchers to 'obtain a more holistic picture of them and situate their actions and behaviours within a wider neighbourhood context' (Gunter, 2008, p. 363). Road culture is a specific subculture connected to badness which is adopted by both young men and women in deprived urban areas as part of being on road. My study builds on, and is an extension of, Gunter's work (2008; 2009; 2010) which focuses predominantly on the experiences of black young men, in particular the streetwise Arms House Crew for whom badness entails maintaining respect and a tough reputation, he explains road culture:

> Viewed as a continuum, where occupying the centre ground are the vast majority of non-spectacular young people, with a small minority of young males or 'rude boys' – who immerse themselves into the world of badness – taking up the extreme margins. Badness (as defined by

the informants within this study) refers to a social world characterized by 'spectacular' hyper aggressive/hyper masculine modes of behaviour, incorporating violent and petty crime, fraud/personal identity theft and low level drug dealing (2008, p. 352)

The young women in his study were not drawn to badness in the same way as the Arms House Crew, they may have been on road but were not involved in road culture, in keeping with the majority of most young men and women who hang out in these spaces. The following data chapters aim to provide a snapshot of a new generation of females who are actively defining themselves as bad. Whilst road life encompasses a wide range of non-criminal activities, for the young women in my study it is most closely associated with the masculine image of the '"dangerous" young black "urban rebel"' (Gunter, ibid, p. 357).

The notion of badness cuts across genders, it is a cloak which both young men and women can pull on and adopt as a strategy of survival. Young women achieve respect through these performances as a way of resisting their social positioning. Gunter (ibid, p. 362) suggests that badness is a 'lifestyle choice – involving the complex interplay of power and control (via physical force), language, music, dress wear and a youthful disregard for the values and institutions of mainstream adult society'. In tandem to this, road culture can also offers the 'armour of an alienating identity in a world where the State, the formal economy and family life can find no place for them, nor they in them' (Earle, 2011, p. 136). It affords the opportunity for

young women to hustle, display badness and feel like somebody and is a rejection of conventional lifestyles:

> I see being on road is like a mentality. I was just into that lifestyle and didn't give a dam about anything and that's when I would say I'm on road. I would have like a road mentality like you're down for anything, you don't care innit. If you know that someone's selling drugs, or that there's money in a certain house, to be like road you would literally in the space of half an hour you would have gathered you and your friends and be kicking down that door. Yeah you're down for a fight, you carry a knife, you're down to use the knife, that's what I'd say a road mentality is, do you know what I mean? I'd say road is to be hardcore street mentality, you're on the streets, you're making things happen, making money, you're down for violence. It's just that lifestyle (Joel, Author)

Chasing fast money

Living in deprived neighbourhoods

Young men and women participate in badness for similar reasons, with the desire to acquire money being the most popular answer given by interviewees. This pursuit of financial gain will be explored in two different ways, initially in this section as a response to living in marginalised areas with a lack of legitimate opportunities, followed by a response to living in poverty against a backdrop of an increasingly consumer society. As Kim (Youth Practitioner) suggests 'It's usually for money':

> Some young people make hundreds of pounds a day selling drugs and this is a rational choice for them because in their communities there are few economies in which they can earn good money if they have not continued with their education and been excluded from school (Asha, 21)

Marginalised communities often suffer from poor schools, higher rates of exclusion and a lack of legitimate and satisfying employment opportunities. As Asha points out, for those young people who are disenfranchised from education, badness can become the logical choice due to the amounts of money which can be earned on a daily basis from the informal economy. This is supported by Barry (2007) who notes that it was the economic advantages of offending which particularly motivated young women in her study. As Zahiya (Sudanese, 23) explains, 'They will do it because they find it hard to find a job as they might be lacking the skills or experiences and want to make quick cash instead of a monthly wage'. Young women engaging with road culture can be viewed, in part, as a product of their socio-economic position. With this in mind, it is important to avoid positing a causal link between deprived communities and crime:

> People think that everyone who lives in a certain area is in a gang and that's not true. There are people that despite facing hardship can still achieve great results and not actually go through the gang culture. There is a minority of people in a gang. There are focused young people who do positive things, but we don't hear about those young

people enough, we will hear about the negative because that sells papers (Reece, Youth Practitioner)

The majority of young people do not participate in badness, regardless of where they have grown up, but despite this they tend to be stigmatised due to living in certain areas. Whilst the links between young women and crime are not predetermined, nevertheless poverty has major implications on the infrastructure of communities with people often living in deteriorating housing and experiencing a lack of quality provision. Lack of access to conventional success can encourage offending practices due to low aspirations, coupled with not envisaging a positive future. For Bianca, 18, 'Number one, a lot of people don't have confidence in their self or their academic ability'. Respondents agreed that badness is a means of providing young women with what she needs outside of mainstream institutions:

They're not been looked upon as an achieving individual and that is a crippling factor for a lot of young people. You wanna be the same as your peers, you don't wanna be looked upon as not good enough. Failing at school would make a young person feel useless. They see authority figures and educational establishments as a no go area because it doesn't bring anything positive to their life. Because in school you wanna look tough in front of your peers (Shara, Youth Practitioner)

Participation in road culture can provide a sense of self-worth and financial gain, in addition to becoming a positive reinforcement which may not be achievable via

other means. The young women in Sharpe's (2013) study felt they had been excluded from school unfairly and were not taken seriously by teachers. This was especially true for those from criminal families who believed they were being discriminated against due to their reputation. This has the potential to an impact negatively on their self-esteem and future engagement with education. According to Casey, 20, 'Getting into university is harder, A-levels are harder. You can't just walk into a job without any qualifications, they want qualifications now'. Young women may feel excluded from university education due to high fees and the consideration of how worthwhile it will be. This ensures that jobs with prospects remain out of reach:

> Unemployment doesn't help. I feel more people are properly been encouraged not to go to college because the media is saying don't go because you won't get a job at the end of it (Jade, White, 21)

> They can see that those people in their area going to uni and they're still not getting a job. I really think that the social and political goings-on are impacting now in terms of the aspirations of young people and if they are involved in crime. It's a lot harder, it's a lot harder than when I was growing up (Katarina, Probation Officer)

Understandably the university option may not appeal to those who see young people returning from studying and still being unable to progress and meet their expectations in the formal job market. This resonates with the young women in Burris-Kitchen's (1997) study who felt that it was impossible to find a legitimate

job, especially without educational qualifications. Even with these a satisfactory job was not guaranteed:

> You need to sort out what's going on with employment and youth mobility. You go to college and have a debt, you go to uni you have a bigger debt, and then you've got to get into work. People in uni what have studied three years to do something are working in McDonalds what kind of madness is that? What are they going to do? They've then got this twenty odd grand debt on their backs, pressure, you know I might go sell some drugs because I used to do it. It's a wicked circle which we really need to think about (Reece, Youth Practitioner)

Taking on a huge debt is likely to be off putting if a positive outcome cannot be guaranteed. In terms of the lack of social mobility, life chances are now more influenced by the position you are born into compared to any other time in the past six hundred and fifty years according to Dorling (2007). In tandem to this, Gunter (2010, p. 139) describes how the young people in his study experienced the transition from school to education, training or employment challenging, with those who are not involved in education, employment or training being less likely to 'grow out of crime' and more likely to experience reduced social mobility. Consequently, young women may feel they have nothing to lose when they offend. According to Dina, 19, 'Once you've got a criminal record it's like a self-fulfilling prophecy nobody even looks at you or considers you':

There's always a requirement that they don't meet. One of the young people I work with the other day wanted to apply for a nightshift job but is seventeen and doesn't turn eighteen till October so that put him off that. Then he tried for a day job but then it was the whole have you got a criminal record? Working with people in a customer service role aren't really suited to his offence because they look at the type of offence, and if they think you're a danger to the people you're going to work with that would never work for him (Chantelle, 19)

It's not impossible to achieve your goals with a criminal record, but it can be far more complicated:

One of my friends when she was in secondary school she just pulled out scissors on someone and she got criminal record for it. She wanted to go into nursing and the amount of stuff she had to go through just to get onto the course was ridiculous like she's on it now but she went through a lot just to get on it and she was like fourteen at the time (Jess, 19)

Being in possession of a record can be particularly challenging in periods of high unemployment in terms of competition for roles. According to official government figures between January 2018 and March 2018, 808,000 young people aged 16 to 24 were recorded as not in education, employment or training which equates to over one in ten young people in the UK (ONS, 2018). The pursuit of secure employment has become more precarious due to the impact of living in a neo-

liberal society. As a result job opportunities are often short-term, low paid and lack the chance to progress into something more significant. Shildrick et al. (2012, p. 193) found that young people in their study from deprived neighbourhoods are trapped by temporary contracts and periods of unemployment, the 'low pay, no pay cycle'. Whilst potential for inclusion in the labour market has improved for young women since the Second World War, the opportunities for working class females remain for the most part short-term, low paid, feminised roles (Sharpe, 2013). Consequently, for all the advancements in society experienced by women, the labour market has not changed significantly for those growing up in deprived areas. Interviewees alluded to the difficulties of encouraging young people into mainstream forms of employment when the alternatives seem more appealing and attainable:

> The recession, unemployment, lack of resources, there is still stuff out there but it's just harder to tap into it. Sometimes the apprenticeships that these businesses can pay young people is not even worth it. It's easy to say forget the money and just do it for the experience but they need the money to survive and to feel like they're doing something worthwhile. We've got young people making eight hundred pounds a day so forget that, and on an apprenticeship for how many weeks at two pounds an hour. They're not even going to look at me, they're just going to say 'You are joking I'm not doing that' (Katarina, Probation Officer)

With young people able to earn large amounts of money on road it is easy to comprehend why they may resist working for the minimum wage in jobs which have little in the way of prospects, or apprenticeships which pay even less. This is supported by respondents in Henry and Mullings-Lawrence's (2017, p. 270) research which noted that young people saw the traditional educational route as 'long' with no guarantee of a job at the end of it, so instead could earn large amounts of money quickly via criminal activities:

> They can see young people earning six, seven hundred pounds a day, selling drugs, selling weapons, doing burglaries. It's hard to say to a young person stop doing that and start working on zero hour contracts for £6.50 an hour. That's difficult, so society makes it difficult, and that contributes to young people thinking this is easy access to money. You still have to run from the police but it's that lifestyle which they want (Reece, Youth Practitioner)

Choosing illegal, rather than legitimate, ways of earning money is a rational choice for young people according to Katarina and Reece. This links to Gunter's (2010) research whereby the informal economy was regarded as an alternative form of work:

> The young people I come across don't really see much for themselves in the future at all. A lot have no hope, even the ones that want jobs think there's nothing out there for them. Selecting what they're doing is the only way for them to get money to be where they need to be. The

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job market's so small at the moment it can be like a hundred people applying for one job and no one's going to choose that one person with a criminal record. So I think making employment for themselves is the only way people are going to get around (Chantelle, 19)

Failing to secure employment can impact negatively on a young woman's identity and force them to consider return to the roads as a means of generating funds:

It's tough out there I'm not gonna lie. I've been applying for all sorts of jobs and getting nowhere. My rent is in arrears and I'm not eating property so I can feed my kids. I did say to myself that if things got this bad I would go back on the roads as it's so hard with no help but knowing I have to look after my kids is stopping me. So if I phoned up one of my bruhs and I said 'What you saying?' and he said 'Nothing just on the roads' 'Alright cool' that's all I would say to him and I'd put down the phone cos I'm not gonna come down and stand out on the lookout. To me my voluntary work is more important do you see what I'm saying? (Asha, 21)

Campbell (1990) points out that the lure of badness is no mystery for young women given the backdrop of poverty and social exclusion faced by many in deprived areas. It must be very tempting for those who used to be able to make a lot of money on road to resort back to their previous life, especially if they are still in touch with their peers who continue to be actively engaged in a criminal lifestyle.

Factors of structural disadvantage impact on both young men and women, however whilst the feminisation of poverty affects all females, women of colour will often find engaging in the labour market more difficult due to institutionalised racism:

> For a black young person you can be somebody who has stayed at school past your exams and say to yourself 'I'm going to be a goody goody and find a job'. The first few times you go to an interview you find yourself getting turned down, a lot of young people are like their confidence has been knocked so they don't want to try again (Dominique, Youth Practitioner)

Understandably this could deter them from trying again to avoid being rejected. In 2015, there was an almost fifty percent rise of unemployment for young people of colour recorded since 2010 (Guardian, 2015), and in 2018 they were twice as likely to be unemployed (Independent, 2018b):

> We just have to look back at the case of Stephen Lawrence and the death of women in custody. The colour of our skin is always going to be an issue. There was an article I read in the Guardian about black people becoming more educated but not being employed as much, so yeah that's still going on today and I believe it is true (Perri, 25)

Representations of black young people in the media tend to be negative due, in part, to the stereotypes surrounding blackness and criminality which can negatively influence the attitudes of potential employers. Burris-Kitchen (1997)

notes how the young women in her study commanded little respect in the formal job market, but on the streets could gain respect via an alternative currency, being tough. Arnold (1990) found that the women in her research regarded crime as a more respectable way to earn money, as oppose to relying on the welfare system. To secure a job you need to play the game:

> As a black person you can't let that bring you down. You can't sit there and let the fact that somebody says that because you're black get in your way because the last four interviews I've had I've got them. And that's because of how I've carried myself, nothing to do with the colour of my skin. There's a lot of young people out there we call go-getters, they're out there go-getting. It doesn't matter if it's crime, it doesn't matter what it is, they're getting it. And you know these young ones who are out there, they're being trapped, and it's sad because they can bring themselves out of it. They need to turn round and say you know what I'm going to make it because I'm black. Go in there, speak posh. When I write things down I put my Mum's address because all it's to do with what the eye sees (Ria, 23)

Being born into a deprived area 'inevitably creates a set of circumstances' and it is not possible to explore the lives of young people without taking their socio-economic situation into consideration (MacDonald, 2015, p. 218). Shildrick et al. (2012) argue that marginalised young people want to find work rather than be workless, even though it was at odds with the uncommitted image which they are associated with. The cumulative effects of marginalisation are further compounded

by the impact of institutionalised racism, with young women experiencing further oppression due to their age and gender. At the conference of the American Society of Criminology in 1991, criminologist Hirschi was asked whether he considered the classed, gendered and raced position of an offender to be significant, he replied that 'his image of a law breaker was someone *without* those identities...the offender is everyone – they have no qualities of class, race or gender' (Potter, 2015, p. 82). In the context of education and employment, for those living in marginalised communities these social factors are particularly salient, in terms of their identities as working class young women of colour. This indicates how it is impossible to consider motivations for offending without taking into consideration an individual's position in society based on the intersections of their identity. If for example it is more difficult for a young woman of colour to secure employment, they may feel forced to seek out illegal alternatives. Young offenders in Worrall's (2012) research believed that their choices to offend were personal ones, however as she points out, it is easier not to get involved in crime if you have a wider range of legitimate choices at your disposal. This attitude of personal responsibility also demonstrates the culture of blame attached to those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Young women's problems are viewed as their own making through 'bad choices', rather than the impact of structural constraints (Sharpe, 2013, p. 73).

The allure of consumer society

In addition to living in marginalised communities with a lack of legitimate education, training and employment opportunities, the desire to be an active

participant in consumer society can encourage young women to get involved in badness. The gap between the rich and poor is increasing, the poorest being less financially secure due to the impact of the banking crisis and recession, with young people being the losers (Broughton et al., 2015). The impact of overt consumerism has served to further illuminate the socio-economic divide between social groups. Money, and the perceived respect which can accompany it, can become highly sought after in a materialistic society which encourages young people to construct their identities through what they consume:

> I used to see the other guys going out at six or seven o'clock in the evening and coming back at twelve buying food with chains on and big rings driving up in their cars. I was like 'Woo I want some of that life, I need that life'. I was one of the youngest in the gang, we were in it because we didn't have any money, and we wanted money, so if anything you could say it was greed. I used to get my knife, hit the road, and basically anything was a target, chains, bracelets, watches anything. Gang culture is fast, and if you're in a gang people will cross the road or leave you alone, cars, champagne lifestyle, it's great when you're young because that's all you need and that's all you want (Reece, Youth Practitioner)

The allure of this particular lifestyle has become synonymous with road culture which links with Ilan (2015) who suggests that conspicuous consumption on the street is governed by societal consumerism norms. More broadly speaking, the process of 'being somebody' in contemporary society entails consumer goals and

choices, as 'in the consumer race the finishing line always moves faster than the fastest of runners' (Bauman, 2000, p. 62&72). This implies that there is a never ending supply of goods which is impossible to keep up with, thus demanding a continuous supply of money. Whilst Reece suggests that greed was a factor in terms of his offending, being born into poverty is also likely to impact on the ways in which young people covet material goods. They may feel forced to seek illegitimate pathways in order to compete with their peers and boost their social identity according to respondents:

> A lot of people are chasing fast money so it's an easy way of getting money you don't have to pay tax (Bianca, 18)

> We want things now and we want it quickly. We don't wanna work for anything. Young people don't wanna work, they wanna get things quickly. The pressures on families now, hip hop videos and fast cars which young people just want and they don't wanna work for that money they want quick money (Reece, Youth Practitioner)

Many young people are being deterred from attempting legitimate means of earning money in the pursuit of immediate gratification according to interviewees. The young offenders in Sharpe's (2013, p. 74) research enjoyed the instant and endless supply of material goods which afforded them the ability to engage in 'feminine consumption'. However, aspirations can be too idealistic:

> I never say to my young people 'You can't have anything, you can't have this and you can't have that, but guess what? You have to work'.

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But they don't wanna work, they have an unrealistic sense of time when it comes to achieving things, they want it now, or they're not interested in it. This takeaway culture they want it now, ping it's ready it's cooked. It doesn't work like that, you have to work hard, you have to work towards it. A lot of them I say to them 'You're not suffering like that, when you go home there is food in the fridge, you turn on the light there is electric. Some people ain't living like that do you understand?' (Pasha, Youth Practitioner)

This instant gratification, 'takeaway' culture, has created an unrealistic picture of what is achievable for them at this stage in their lives. The allure of financial gain and glamour will involve a trade off for taking risks:

It's not just guys that are grooming girls into gangs, girls are recruiting other females and well it's 'Come on, all I had to do was do this and I get that, just come and be part of us. We're going to do this, hold this for him' and they get them to hold the drugs, hold the knives and so it's 'X just hold a bit of drugs, just take it home to your house and hold that for me' and I'm going to get this and get that so they think it's easy (Natalie, Youth Practitioner)

Rather than being on the periphery, young women are actively involving other females in badness. The majority of Burris-Kitchen's (1997, p. 43) respondents said they were involved in crime for the same reason as their male peers, for

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'paper and respect'. Things are different for young people these days according to interviewees:

> I wanted a little bit of money, I had a paper round, I wanted McDonalds it was nothing to me, it wasn't a shameful thing. I know what I'm doing I want things, but these kids now money's being put into their hand, big money from a young age. You've got the young ones who are going country and these kids are sitting down in crack houses you know. They're in these houses selling crack, some of them are carrying the crack internally, boys as well, but the money that get's put in their hands starting from four hundred or five hundred pounds from going up country. Money comes quick when you're selling drugs, before you know it you have ten shots and by the end of the night there's no food left it's just pure notes. I'm gonna say to a kid 'Now come get a little job and get a hundred pounds a week' and they're be looking at me sideways like 'A hundred pounds a week? Nah I'll make that going country' (Pasha, Youth Practitioner)

It can be challenging to encourage young people to move away from earning money illegally, given the lack of rewards legitimate jobs appear to bring in comparison. The amount of cash needed to look the part has also increased in contemporary society:

> In this day and age, with social media and all that, if you're not loud and flashy then you're not popping (Anyika, 24)

There's always new phones and new gadgets. I mean when I was younger you just needed Nike trainers, now you need Louis Vitton bags, so definitely you need a lot more money. If you don't look the part you'll fall into a different category and you're kinda underneath (Chantelle, 19)

Interviewees point to the pressures of social media and young women presenting themselves in certain ways to sustain a particular image. This is coupled with feelings of inadequacy if they are not being able to meet the culture's set parameters which they have aligned themselves to. McRobbie and Garber's (1976) research demonstrated the importance of materialism in the lives of young women, and it was this culture of consumerism which defined their resistance in the context of subcultures. For the young women in Campbell's (1990) study badness assisted with the goal of upgrading their lifestyle:

Nowadays it's more visible, people are finding out what celebrities do and don't do, and money has become more of a central figure in everyday life. Money plays a bigger role in everyday life in this day and age than it did back then because everything's got more expensive and money is a huge thing for people at the moment. Things like Twitter and Instagram you can see what celebrities do every day so people aspire to be like that. If you can join a gang and have a bit more than what you've had to be able to buy stuff it would be appealing in this day and age (Casey, 20)

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There has been a shift in the display of conspicuous consumption by celebrities via social media, a constant flow of desirable lifestyles which serves to impact on the ways in which young women create and manage their identities. This also ensures that the gap between the haves and the have nots are continually on show. As Shildrick (2018) points out, conspicuous consumption can create stigma and discrimination if individuals are excluded from taking part. Young women have been brought up in a celebrity culture which is characterised by the ability to consume, so it's easy to comprehend how this can impact on their self-esteem if being unable to afford basic and/or lavish material goods. Regan's (1996, p. 26) respondent expressed how 'It's like if you grow up with nothing you feel like nothing...You will never understand unless you grew up in the hood'. It can then become more important to a young person what they consume if living in substandard housing without the trappings of wealth. Those who live in marginalised communities are seeking dignity and respect, but have limited ways in which to express this economically compared to their more affluent counterparts (Bourgois, 1996). The importance placed on the right image is paramount:

> Everyone wants to look the part. It's all about the look, the right trainers, the Rolex watch, gangs are a way of making money to achieve this. It's all about money and being a product of the state, this is what causes criminal activity. When people don't have money they disappear so people won't see them like that and when they've got money again they will reappear (Nicola, Black, 19)

It is a lot more now to look a certain way. Some people obviously just care too much if they are in that kind of group where people are making comments about it that will affect them (Jade, 21)

Young people involved in road culture cannot be understood in isolation, but in terms of the connection between state and society. They are neither 'aberrations', when they more often than not emerge as a rational reaction to structural disadvantage (Winton 2014, p. 403). Both Nicola and Jade refer to the pressure of not having money how this can impact negatively on the ways young women feel about themselves, in addition to how they are perceived by their peers. This links to Cohen's (1955) idea of strain as a way of explaining the status frustration which occurs when a young person is not able to realise their goals through legitimate means, thus encouraging them to commit crime to satisfy these desires. Whilst strain theory has been predominantly linked to young men, it is just as relevant to the experiences of young women given that they live side by side in deprived areas. Naffine (1997) acknowledges that strain is in fact more relevant for women as they experience more inequalities than their male counterparts. With this in mind, the impact of racism can also ensure that strain is felt to a greater extent by women of colour (Hill & Crawford, 1990).

<u>Family influences</u>

Intergenerational subcultures

The family can play a dual role in why young women may participate in badness due to the processes of socialisation, whereby intergenerational subcultures become the norm, or as will be discussed in the next section they can experience

neglect and/or abuse with badness becoming a way of seeking independence from the family. The influence of the family unit is key:

> For some of the girls who join gangs is just part of the routine, it's part of their culture, it's part of what's gone on. Maybe their brother's in it and they see that he's reaping rewards and they think right how do you do that bro (Shara, Youth Practitioner)

For some young women a criminal lifestyle can become normalised by learning from siblings the lifestyle can appear attractive which encourages participation. The influence of the family, and exposure to deviance within this context, is the most common explanation given for offending behaviour due to the impact of socialisation (Mallicoat & Ireland, 2014). This can result in delinquency becoming being viewed as a normal part of everyday life. The young women in Harris' (1988) study tended to be socialised into subcultures through their family and assumed similar attitudes to those in their environment. According to Chantelle,19, 'You don't have to be asked, you've grown up in the area you just grow into it basically' and similarly for Casey, 20, 'It's like being part of a club you're just born into it'. If young women grow up around road culture, rather than being recruited, becoming part of that subculture can be by default. As noted in chapter five it was established by interviewees that young women do not tend to be recruited, rather it is a more gradual and organic process. This links to Regan with Hoeksma (2010) who suggest that a lot of young people are born into it, consequently for some it can becomes a way of life:

People see it as this is the area you've lived in, it's your family members, and we do what we've gotta do for each other. They say family more, I've seen a lot of people call them 'That's my brother, that's my sister'. I'll put it like this, the gang is not always a thing where somebody says 'Do you wanna be in my gang? No you don't wanna be in my gang? Then you're gonna get hurt'. You just roll with them every day, you do whatever you do with them every day, and then things happen and everybody gets involved. That's why people say it's a family thing (Ria, 23)

Intergenerational subcultures are groups which evolve in their locality, through association with family and peers young women have grown up with. It is this history which develops the loyalty they share for each other in order to ensure that they have each other's backs, if and when required to do so. According to Moore (1991) family members can encourage the participation of its siblings:

I lived right on the estate and all my friends up in the estate they're all in a gang kind of thing but to me they're like brothers and sisters because my Mum and Dad are friends with their Mum and Dad. So I don't see them as a gang although you could probably say they were a gang because of what they do if you're gonna use that terminology (Montell, 21)

Relationships between parents of young women can forge strong bonds as a result of family ties. Pitts (2008, p. 84) notes how the use of the terms 'family', 'coz'

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and 'the people I grew up with' indicates the familial role that these groups play. The association with deviancy can potentially result in criminal behaviours being normalised from a young age, Moore (1991) indicates that intergenerational delinquency is most prevalent in areas which have a history of crime. Maternal influence also has an impact on socialisation processes:

> The way their mum carries their household has a very big influence on their daughter. If I saw my Mum coming in the house bringing different types of men home, smoking weed I'll be thinking I'll do what she's doing because I'll think that's right. Also if girls have older brothers who are on road that have a reputation they're gonna be like 'Yeah that's my brother' a lot of girls hype big brothers or their cousin it just depends on their parents, especially the mum, because the mum is the biggest influence on her daughter. Older brothers, older siblings, especially if the girl has an older sister, that's just like learning to be angry and aggressive (Montell, 21)

A young woman's reputation may be created through a tough persona which can be picked up and played out according to who their brothers and sisters are. This is supported by Medina et al. (2013) who note that siblings can draw their other siblings into badness. As interviewees explain:

> Her brother is in a gang and I think she's seeing things at home. I think she's tagged onto her brother status as he rules those streets so she's walking up and down thinking I rule these streets too and if I do

anything to a girl they can't do anything to me because of my brother (Natalie, Youth Practitioner)

Sometimes when you are tied to one person you have a certain level of respect and you don't want to lose that (Bianca, 18)

This transferral of respect can, in turn, can create a sense of invincibility and status whereby they feel untouchable due to the family's fearful reputation. This emphasis on learnt deviant behaviour can prompt engagement with crime, brothers and cousins have been noted as particularly influential (Young et al., 2013). On the flip side of this, the young woman may be regarded as the deviant one of the family. For Pasha (Youth Practitioner), 'If everyone is gang-banging you're going to look like the odd one out for going to work'. Being perceived in this way may not be a role that some young women wish to take on, and they may follow in the footsteps of their siblings in order to fit in. Cohen (1955) has pointed to the idea of a generational conveyor belt, but this does not fully explain why every young woman isn't drawn into road culture by taking the lead from their family. With this in mind, it's important to note that agency, in addition to structural patterns of exclusion, there has to be more to being bad than a predetermined response to their environment. Brotherton (2008) has challenged the over deterministic aspect of social reproduction because there is more than one type of resistance displayed by young people, in addition to this it also sidelines any potential for free will. Young women may reject the criminal lifestyle rather than embrace it:

Those others who can turn around and say to you 'You know my family, my uncle, my father, everyone's a gangster and I live on the estate where I grew up' and that's all they know. I've been asked this question many times and it's an individual thing. I know similar young people who live on the same estate never commit any offences and are doing very well (Katarina, Probation Officer)

Being part of a family involved in crime does not mean that other family members will automatically also follow the same path. Respondents were in agreement that whilst the family can become a catalyst for young women, it can also serve as a preventative vehicle if they have seen family members getting into trouble:

If you've been brought up with an older brother or sister that's been getting into trouble you don't want to do it (Jade, 21)

For me it's a mixture of how I've been brought up with my family and being really close, not only to my immediate family, but my grandparents and extended family. When my Mum met her new partner his two sons had really gone off the rails, one has one of them has been in and out of prison, been stabbed, and things like that. I met them when I was seven so I saw him getting into trouble and people coming to the house wanting to find him and that kind of thing. So for me it was like I don't want anything to do with this (Dina, 19)

I grew up looking at adults who had been in and out of prison, hearing my parents talk about those who were in and out. I'd already seen my

Dad get arrested, I didn't see my Mum getting arrested, but a lot of family members and family friends were in that predicament and a lot of my cousins and friends. There's only one who is highly involved in a gang, a leader, and I've never put any information out there. Prison was not something that I wanted for myself. I've been known to escape things quicker than others, don't get it twisted though, I used to be on road (Perri, 25)

The search for a substitute family

Rather than learning about crime from parents and siblings via socialisation processes, an alternative way in which the family can influence the behaviour of young women is in their rejection of it. The impact of neglect and/or abuse can result in them seeking out of a substitute family. This is often mooted in relation to why young people get involved in neighbourhood peer groups, with young women particularly viewed as looking for other options to provide their support system. These networks can become an alternative way to feel a sense of belonging. They also provide a space where badness can become normalised:

I started getting involved in gangs at eight years old. I wasn't being looked after by my Mum as she was a drug addict so the boys on the estate I grew up in took me under their wing. I had an older sister who was a druggie, she didn't really care I had a little sister I had to look after. I had a little brother who was two at the time so I had to do something to make money in order to feed these children. I was walking around the estate one day and one of the boys asked me

'Have you eaten' and I told him 'No not for a few days'. But my response was normal because my priority was feeding my brothers and sisters. From there they said to me 'Right if you need money come to me, anything you need come to us for it'. I was looked after and protected by them because I'd been in care. The gang looked after me like they were like my family. I was only allowed to get in the car with two elders for my own safety as they both had guns. I have lovely memories. I didn't have to worry where I was going to sleep that night. As I got older I was mostly on the road with them. So it started off with them giving me weed to go to school with, so that's how I was getting into school. To them it was their way of making sure I got there (Asha, 21)

She was living in what Shildrick et al. (2012, p. 169) have referred to as 'deep poverty'. The support of the group provided the love she was craving and also enabled her to care for siblings financially at a very young age. Salazar-Atias (2003) suggests that those who have been neglected are more likely to seek out an alternative family. Asha was left with little choice in order to survive, in the absence of positive role models, and took it upon herself to take on the adult role. At her age the deviant route was the only pathway which was available due to a lack of education and employment skills. Consequently such choices can become the 'modus operandi', in keeping with those in Arnold's (1990, p. 158) study. As respondents point out:

A lot of the time its family as well because some people like don't have a steady family or life at home, or they don't have family at all, so they turn to their brothers on the street and their sisters on the street (Bianca, 18)

It's about environment and parents and whether your parents are educating you, and if not then people around you will educate you instead (Nicola, 19)

To think they're cool, because of matters relating to the family and not feeling right at home, so they've got a point to prove (Desiree, 19)

It's the influence (or lack of influence) of the parents which can encourage young women into badness, with neighbourhood peer groups being a substitute for the family unit. Problems at home can lead to young women acting out on the streets, with a criminal lifestyle being one way to escape neglect and also demonstrate resistance. There is a widely held belief that these young women are more likely to come from neglected family backgrounds than their male peers (Moore, 1991). However, despite a larger emphasis attached to young women's desire for relationships, evidence that the search for an alternative family is a more important factor in determining female involvement has not been proven (Campbell, 1990). Regan with Hoeksma (2010) found that both young men and women consider the peer group a means of satisfying their desire for a familial relationship:

Out on the roads, gangs, and I'm going to use the word 'gang' in inverted commas, boys and girls will be looking for their peers who are

walking the streets on a daily basis and these can become their family if they are not being nurtured at home. They feel included and understood by their peers who are on the street because they talk the same language and can identify with the same situations at school and at home. So the young person becomes engrossed and feels wanted so it starts off 'Oh can you go to the shop and get me a drink'. It starts off very calmly and normally and then it transfers into more, so 'Come and follow me to the shop' and they see that that person nicks a drink or snatches a handbag and they might question it. The person they are shadowing is saying 'Nah this is the way of life, you've got to fit in, this is how we do, how else do we get this and that?' They're thinking everybody likes me and listens to what I've got to say nobody tells me I'm no good at what I'm doing. That young person is likely to adapt to that environment and feel safe. They will join groups on the street where it's all about acceptance and feeling worthy. The street is an alternative because when you start doing the street ting everybody is your friend and wants you to be there (Shara, Youth Practitioner)

Half of young women said they felt loved and protected by their peer groups according to the National Gang Crime Research Ctr. (1999), and as identified by Shara, part of this will entail feelings of shared norms and values. In tandem to this, the young women in Harris' (1988) study also reported the need for group support and cohesiveness, if emotional support was not present in the family:

A lot of young women are growing up without two parents, predominately single parents, usually their father absent from the family home. So I suppose as a young female if you don't have a father figure, and if there's no positive role models in your life, you're going to look outside it. Especially if you get flattery, if its young guy being nice to you whose grooming you, giving you the attention you crave you'll take it. Looking for love, probably looking for a substitute father figure, and getting the attention, because mum's probably at work trying to keep the house afloat as a single parent you know they haven't got time to sit there. Sometimes its loneliness, their mum's at work and their dad's not around, they come home from school nothing is going on so they go out burn the green and hang around. Then you're out on the street, it's a dangerous place out there especially when you're lonely and you want do something with young people, it's dangerous (Kim, Youth Practitioner)

When this leads to participation in badness there is the potential for this to become dangerous without adult supervision. There is an assumption that young women involved in road culture emerge from 'broken homes' or 'non-intact' families. Aldridge and Medina (2008) for example identified single parent, mother-only families, as a potential precursor to crime:

My Mum worked nights she would leave at seven in the evening and get in at seven in the morning and then she would sleep and start again. So what I'd do was go home change my clothes and I'd be out

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till half six in the morning and Mum would not have a clue about what I was doing. All she could see was I had a new car outside the house. I remember I got nicked one time, they called my Mum to go to the station and she said she's not coming. So she wasn't contributing to my illegal behaviour and illegal assets, she said she's not coming and I had to wait four hours for the duty solicitor to arrive. What I would do though is to give my brother the money to give to my Mum because my brother was a goody, so I'd give him a hundred or two hundred pounds and say 'Here give this to Mum, say you've done some work' cos he was older than me and he could work so that's what you do so. Mum got the money that way but if she knew I was in a gang she would not approve. After a while the police stopped calling her and I would just be in the police station for hours and hours and it would be a long process waiting for the duty solicitor (Reece, Youth Practitioner)

Whilst Reece's mother did not agree with, or support, his criminal lifestyle it could be argued that her lack of presence at home enabled him to participate simply because he was left to his own devices. Lone parents are often unfairly held responsible for criminal activity of their offspring despite their absence often being due to the need to provide for their families, whereby they work long hours in low paying jobs to make ends meet. The belief that absent parents can create delinquency in their offspring has not gained universal acceptance. This has been by challenged by Sanchez-Jankowski (1991) who is sceptical about the

deterministic arguments focusing on the search for a substitute family to replace a dysfunctional one. He has argued that many young people reported close relationships with their families and were just as likely to come from intact families as broken homes. Lauderback et al.'s (1992) research identified autonomous young women who were not dependent upon the group context as a means of filling the void of an absent family.

Alongside the potential impact of neglect and absent parents, abuse within the family has also been mooted as a key motivator as to why young women participate:

> Some girls are escaping from abuse, some children may be adopted or been in care that's another situation. Now some people do it for love and the gang that's their family. Their mum might be an alcoholic, or dad taking crack and coke, and there they are like 'Oh my gosh I can't deal with this' and they've gone into it which is normal for them, and it normalises their life for them, so they can kind of move freely and do what they're doing. Although they know what they're doing is wrong in certain aspects it's better than going home and seeing mum and dad shooting up coke and crack, or beating on each other, or beating on them, so that would be reason for a lot of young girls to be involved (Shara, Youth Practitioner)

One of the differences between female and male involvement is the higher reported rates of abuse, in addition to family problems which young women

experience (Moore & Hagedorn, 1996). However, it is not only young women who encounter such abuse, young men also experience sexual and physical violence in the home, although much of this being unreported (Moestue & Lazarevic, 2010). Young women being exposed to violence within the family can act as a catalyst for badness:

> My Dad raised me as a single parent and I witnessed a lot of domestic violence between my Mum and my Dad. When I was eight years old my Mum killed herself. I wasn't there when she did it but when I got home she had done it and I didn't know what to do so my sister called an ambulance. So I watched that and in my eyes that became normal because then he married my step-Mum and that was an abusive relationship so that made it even more normal. I never saw a woman who stood up to him and said 'No you're not allowed to do that, this is wrong'. I never saw that, I never had that. So when I got involved with my son's father there was physical abuse, it was more verbal and mental and I was so young I thought it's okay as long as he's not putting his hands on me. But of course you realise later that no it's not okay domestic violence is not just physical. He said things like 'No one's going to want you, you got two kids now no one's going to ever want you, you need me, don't have anything without me, without me you're nothing'. So at seventeen I ran away from home as I had a sister in America who went there after my Mum died. So I stayed with my sister and then when I was eighteen me and her had an argument

over the boy I was seeing. I didn't realise he was in a gang, he had a nice car and always had money and then I started realising that he was a leader (Natalie, Youth Practitioner)

Violence can become normalised if witnessed within the family which can then result in young women accepting similar abuse, be it verbal or physical, in later relationships. Miller (2001) found that half the young women in her study had witnessed domestic violence in the home. Similarly, many of those Harris' (1994) study reported witnessing their fathers beating on their mothers, which impacted on how they experienced future relationships. By growing up in chaotic environments the idea that members of the family are not to be trusted can become instilled into a young woman's psyche and consequently they may seek out loyalty elsewhere:

Shelters to some young people are gangs, that's their family, that's protection. Like nothing can ever happen to me because I've got these people behind me, that's why sometimes people end up taking that route (Anyika, 24)

It's like a sense of family and the sort things you would have in your normal close family. You might have someone you can trust, someone you can talk to, someone that would do anything for you. Where like a sister or an aunt would question doing it you know that your gang member's just gonna do it (Imani, Black, 24)

The peer group can become home to young women in order to fill the gap of inadequate parenting. It can also create a form of protection, providing a sense of invincibility and acceptability they may not be able to find elsewhere. With this in mind, it is also important to highlight that not all young women get involved in badness due to neglect or abuse:

> I had a stable family, Mum and Dad were working, I didn't want for nothing. I grew up in a strict environment, our parents are bringing us up the way that they were brought up in Jamaica. The difference was the fact that you are having a life here in England seeing how other children were being brought up in different ways so there is conflict in that. It wasn't a matter of joining it just happens. I left home at thirteen so by the time I left home I ended up in care and from being in care, just from mixing with certain individuals, but it started before I actually went into care. That's why I was running away, the shoplifting and petty little robberies, so by the time I reached the care home I'm knocking heads with individuals who have really had a bad life you know. I had this I don't care attitude and it just came to the stage where you know I became a leader, not a follower, so it's like my idea come on let's go rob that shop, let's go and do this, let's go and do that, and it is built on from there (Melissa, Female Gang Practitioner)

Young women can grow up in settled environment but rebel against a strict upbringing. For Acevedo and Burkett (n.d) neighbourhood peer groups are characterised by those who resist their structural and cultural positions. This culture clash was also experienced by interviewees:

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I ran away from home when I was seventeen as my family were very strict Muslims. I was hanging around with the wrong crowd at school, but to me it weren't the wrong crowd, and none of them grew up and went to prison or were unemployed so there were obviously all right. But my Dad was telling me I have to hang around with certain people. He thought these were risky English girls. I went to an all girls' school and it was a predominantly white school so seemed like English people were allowed to do things but I wasn't. I wasn't allowed to go out to the cinema with my friends, or out at the weekend, I had to be accompanied by my brother. They didn't want to raise me like I was English even though I was in an English country. I couldn't understand why they brought me here and they said I'd have to start wearing a hijab to school and I was like 'I am not doing that'. I was confused, I was really confused (Natalie, Youth Practitioner)

This links to Walker-Barnes and Mason (2001) who suggest that young women may rebel against such environments and consequently start getting involved in crime. Whilst the idea of the peer group being a potential substitute family has been acknowledged, whereby young women may seek alternative protection, not all group contexts provide this positive emotional role. For some there can be intra-group conflict, in addition to a focus on self interest rather than the interests of the collective. Furthermore, violence can be a feature in order to gain respect from one another (Regan with Hoeksma, 2010). This idea of the substitute family was challenged:

When you're in a gang everyone says you're in a family but it's not because when your bacon is on the line for a life sentence you will roll over on your friends because then it becomes survival of the fittest. Nobody wants to be in jail for their life, if you're gonna give me a life sentence you might as well kill me now or send me somewhere that will kill me cos I'm not sitting in jail all my life surrounded by men. I ain't got time for that do you see what I'm saying? (Zharnel, Youth Practitioner)

The gang may protect her with that false sense of love in terms of someone protecting you, and guarding you, but also grooming you to do other things like carrying guns, carrying drugs etc. It's because home life is so chaotic they think they got out, but they're getting out from the frying pan into the fire and not realising the potential dangers within the people who are protecting them. The role of women seeing that they have to nurture and protect, and thinking that they are the soldier, they have to take the rap because that's what you do. That false sense of loyalty when that can be turned against them in a drop of a hat (Cindy, Senior Female Gang Practitioner)

For young women who may see the peer group as an alternative family, these contexts may also be a place of danger. She may be looking for a sense belonging but may also encounter violence and crime (Wing & Willis, 1999).

<u>The 'he made me do it' hypothesis</u>

Many reasons for involvement in road culture are shared by both young men and young women, however doing so due to the love of a partner is predominantly associated with females. This is based on the assumption that relationships with the opposite sex are their primary concern, while their male counterparts are not motivated by the same needs. The literature in the UK points towards young women being appendages to the real criminals, involved predominantly as girlfriends and sexually exploited victims. Whilst this does not reveal the whole picture, it can be representative of some young women's experiences:

> Girls use that as a way in to get into the gang as like 'Oh I fancy that one so let me be that one's girlfriend' and they don't realise that they're not actually the girl's boyfriend cos he's got a million and one different girlfriends out there. She's just the one that can hold the drugs and things like that. It's like there are girls who enjoy being the partner of someone in a gang, like my little sister, even though I think your boyfriend is so wet, he's part of a gang but he don't do nothing. He's twenty seven years old and he's not made one penny. She just likes that fact that she's with someone everyone knows, whereas for me my partner is very low key, I could say his name to people and they would say 'Who's that?' But that's how I prefer it, I've been out with people who say 'I know him' and I don't like that (Asha, 21)

Even if the young man does not command respect from his peers, his girlfriend may nevertheless feel as if she can gain a sense of self-worth or attract ratings by

being associated with him. This is supported by Campbell (1990, p. 42) who notes that young women have been portrayed as 'isolated and inept pitiful figures trying to assuage their loneliness through brief, promiscuous, liaisons with boys'. How much this perception has changed over the years is debatable, more recently 'wifey/girlfriends' and 'links', who have casual sex with one or more of the group, have been mooted as the main female roles (Centre for Social Justice & XLP, 2013, p. 5). Media and gendered socialisation processes direct young girls towards heterosexual relationships:

> When you think about it like, little girls always grow up thinking and wanting a big white wedding, guys aren't thinking like that do you know what I'm saying? That's where it goes wrong because you're both in different mind frames and guys grow up always hearing about having different girls and all these different types of things. It depends on who they idolise as well do you know what I'm saying? It depends on their role models. Little girls, no matter what they're going through, no matter what type of backgrounds, wants a husband and family. Every girl wants that, so when they grow up and they're not taught about guys and how relationships are (Montell, 21)

Some young women are brought up coveting heterosexual relationships as a consequence of wider society and gendered socialisation. However, not all young women will ascribe to this ideal and be actively seeking out a husband and marriage. Many are standing on their own two feet without a man to boost their status. Nicola (Black, 19) has observed that 'There are a lot of young women

turning gay so they can be just like men', they are known as 'shemales' on road. This implies that they are well aware of the differences in how traditional femininity and masculinity is viewed, with hegemonic masculinity being highly prized. This is also a way to shake off the image of the passive girlfriend role which they have been subjected to.

According to Pasha (Youth Practitioner) 'Some girls they want a bad boy in their life, they don't want the boy that's a bit of a geek, you know that little extra bit of excitement'. The research carried out by ROTA (2011, p. 37) acknowledges that whilst certain females sought out the 'bad boy', not all are actively looking for this type of boyfriend, but were instead responding to the environment in which they live where they predominantly have access to 'bad boys'. This links to the amount of choices a young women may believe she has (or hasn't) got if social mobility opportunities are limited, she may feel that her only way to garner respect is via association with a known bad boy. It is worth noting that whilst the bad boy persona can be seen as drawing young women into criminal activity, Sharpe (2013, p. 109) found little support for the 'bad boyfriend' hypothesis. Like young men, young women want to be part of the action:

> When you're in a gang you have a lot of girls which hang that wanna be part of the gang so they already feel like they're part of it because they are linked to a boy. What they don't realise is that they're really not part of it because when we are getting phone calls to say you have to go here, those girls are not. So you would look at which one is playing the best part, say there was three girls, I would see who is the

first person to say yes to taking something down the road and that will determine how much you want to be in the gang. Playing with people's mind, because she's asked me to do it I must be better than them two (Asha, 21)

Regardless of this, some young women continue to be attracted to the notion of increased status via this association, Desiree, 19, explains, 'Basically it's to support their boyfriends, to show that they are like certified girlfriends they would be riding with their boyfriends'. Davis and Densley (2011, p. 2) note how females can acquire status from males in the group, but also claim that they are 'completely dependent on the boys' and can't gain respect in their own right. Such generalisations are not helpful as it is not possible to speak for all young women, just as all young men can't be reduced to a single stereotype. The majority of the females in Moore's (1991) research for example did not agree that males treated them as possessions. If they are all treated as second class citizens there would be little motivation for young women to be drawn into road culture. Young women may engage in badness because of a relationship with a male partner, although this was less of an explanation than wanting to make money in Barry's (2007) study:

Girls are very materialistic, they want that rep, as well they want to be seen as being the girlfriend of the coolest guy. They want to be seen as the girlfriend of the guy who's got the nice clothes and got all the respect you know what I mean? Like being the girlfriend of the captain

of the football team, they want that notoriety, it's the popularity thing (Pasha, Youth Practitioner)

Being a girlfriend of someone who is known on road can boost their status and provide a stream of material goods. This is supported by Pitts (2007b) who found that young women can be attracted to the glamour and celebrity of this association:

These days you've got to have the latest bag and now you got to have a latest man as well. If you're not seem to have that status when you don't have a man at all. A lot of it is that you have females which feel insecure in themselves and if they're living in an area where the majority of guys are associated or affiliated with gangs, doing drugs, what have you. Some of it is not by choice you know, it's the fact that I've met this guy, but you know he deals a little drugs on the side and so forth, that's the type of environment that you're living in so that's the type of man you're going to end up picking up (Ria, 23)

Some young women lack choices and if they want to satisfy their desire for a boyfriend and material possessions, it is likely to be limited to those in their communities who may be engaging in badness. There are perks and dangers of this lifestyle:

I got everything I wanted and it was just through who I was with in that gang so I didn't have to do any kind of courier activity. I just sat back and just relaxed and I loved it. I thought this money was never going

to run out, this money isn't going to run out, he'll never get caught, nothing will happen to me I didn't do anything, but then I realised I was doing something because obviously by being involved in it I was being affiliated. When they raided our house I was still arrested because although the guy knew that stuff wasn't mine I was still in the house, I still knew it was there. I knew what was going on. I had to learn the hard way but I did. I can understand it, I had it, I had all the glamour the glitz everything (Natalie, Youth practitioner)

Natalie also used the situation to her advantage by proceeding to learn the skills needed to become independent:

I was involved with a King, but to me he wasn't a gang leader he was someone who loved me. This was the person who took care of me, in my head this was the person who looked after me when my sister kicked me out. I didn't need anyone else because I had this person looking after me, food, clothes, everything. Then I got pregnant with my son, who is eighteen now, I was nineteen at the time. I ended up playing a big part in the gang thing. When I left him the first time I was still in love with him thinking I don't need you, I know how to get money now, I know how to sell a bit, I know how to cook up a bit of coke to make into crack

This demonstrates the potential fluidity in being classed as a girlfriend as there is the potential for a shift in roles from dependence to independence. Coercion can

be viewed as a gendered pathway to crime, although it is important to move beyond the 'he made me do it' hypothesis according to Barlow (2016, p. 79). Coercion and agency should not be considered as binary opposites, rather they are interwoven, as the reality of people's lives is far more complex. When young women learn their trade they can set up their own enterprises which serve to sustain them financially. Whilst a young woman's involvement in badness may start off due to their relationship, this does not mean that they are forever defined by this relationship, and their role has the potential to change over time. This is supported by Lauderback et al. (1992) who found that women learned drug dealing skills from their boyfriends and then broke it off to set up their own businesses. A respondent in Burris-Kitchen's (1997, p. 48-49) study also demonstrates how she was taking care of business without the intervention of a partner, 'I just learned more things, this was my education. This is a career…fuck being the little boy ho, buying your own shit is much better'. Leadership roles allow young women to inhabit prominent positions:

> There's this whole stereotype thing about girls not really doing much in gangs. When people talk about girls and gangs and they say the girls are only used as girlfriends, I don't think that's true. I was trusted by the gang members if I needed money I would just ask it but hanger on girls were told 'Come suck my dick if you want money'. I can't believe I let them talk to girls like that. I made my name without doing anything sexual. I didn't talk to the police, I was equal with men, and they never made me do things that I didn't want to (Asha, 21)

Brown (1999, p. 61) has suggested that young women are not pressured to take part in activities, they may be used for sexual opportunities, but they don't have the 'automatic connotation of being a sexual object'. The idea that women are coerced by men is a complex issue, therefore it's important to acknowledge that the binary opposites of coercion and agency are too simplistic. Levels of coercion will vary according to the individual relationship and could ultimately result in providing young women the skills they need in order to survive without their partner. Young women will not necessarily be exploited:

> Then it's this whole issue around the woman saying well you know they will be prepared to do anything for their man. The reason why they'll be prepared to do anything for their man is because it's in the hope that they will be number one. It's not because they want to do anything for their man because that's what women do (Morgan, Senior Gang Practitioner)

The relationship could be a mutually exploitative one wherein the young woman is manipulating the situation to achieve what she wants based on her own ulterior motives using her partner as a stepping stone. Or it may be a relationship in which the woman is solely exploiting the man and she may view herself as an offender first and a girlfriend second (Barlow, 2016). However, the role of girlfriend should be ascribed agency:

> A woman will protect her man and guide her man and women in gangs with males act the same way. They are still gonna protect and

make sure things are good for their man. Women are the bosses, women are always the bosses let's not get it bent out of shape, they will lead and that's what they do. They will be by their men's side, and they will be loyal, but they will lead and they will be in the men's ear and tell them what to do and what not to do. If there's a chase they will be the ones holding the guns and they will be the ones who put you in a hiding place and lie to the police for you to ensure your protection. Women are needed they actually balance it out. Women are the ones who say listen there's no money over there you're only gonna get yourself arrested, or stabbed, or shot, it makes no sense. The girl in my gang she led, she was very friendly with the main man, and she was all in his ear saying things like 'That one's got too much money, that one's talking about you, that one I saw him talking to a guy from the other gang we need to do something about it'. So in my time she was leading (Reece, Youth Practitioner)

Women can be the bosses of men and take on a more leadership roles within the perceived confines of the girlfriend association. She has the power to influence situations and the types of activities which her partner involves himself in. This challenges the perception of the passive girlfriend role. As Giordano (1978, p. 69) suggests, it is not a 'simple case of the girl adopting a passive role in going along with her boyfriend' or that he simply uses her as an accomplice while he gets on with the real work of criminality.

<u>Thrills, spills and recognition</u>

Explanations for young women's involvement in badness are limited compared to their male peers, as a result the notion of excitement and the status that can be accumulated from risk taking activities is particularly under researched. This can be seen as an outcome of young men being positioned as risky, while young women are located as 'at risk' for the most part. Reasons why females commit crime have tended to be overly deterministic, rather than also considering the potential for agency. This is challenged by interviewees:

> Girls get involved probably for having fun (Desiree, 19)

> Might be exciting for a girl just to be doing something different than usual (Casey, 20)

> All girls want excitement and want to get out there (Perri, 25)

This implies that there is more to road culture than resistance to harsh structural conditions, a response to family neglect, or being coerced by a boyfriend. As Carlen (1988) has highlighted, criminality amongst women can be based on structural limitations but also other factors such as fun and excitement. Katz (1988, p. 9) illustrates the importance of free will in offending decisions, and alludes to how the seduction of the 'sneaky thrill' and 'getting away with it' can be part of an individual's motivation. He suggests that researchers have not understood why their respondents refuse to accept the cold hearted gang label as it negates other aspects of their personalities:

The excitement, being part of something that was like against the rules, against the norm. For me I was always attracted to drama and mischief. I had a group of friends and we went from like doing little things to big things and then you find yourself in it. It could start off as a little gang, it was not a joke but we were young it was like a group of eleven year olds with a name growing up and then you start hanging around with a bigger gang and then that's it you're part of it. So you have all of their drama, all of their beef, everyone who doesn't like them now doesn't like you and puts it to a different level (Chantelle, 19)

Going against the norm can create excitement, in addition to the act of rule breaking, which Gunter (2008, p. 357) refers to as the 'urban rebel'. Chantelle also explains how the level of crime developed as her group transitioned into adulthood to find herself more entrenched in badness. In Brown's (1999) research it was also the thrill and the action which drew young women in as their primary motivation. This was also supported by the Youth Justice Board (2007) who suggest that females are more likely than males to be in the pursuit of thrill seeking when it comes to crime, and that they can ultimately cause more trouble than their male peers. Part of thrill seeking embodies risk taking, and whilst risk has been generally been associated with the deviant behaviour of young men, the exhibition of risk taking behaviour helps a young woman both demonstrate, and sustain, her status according to interviewees:

It's more about the respect and reputation like if I do this I get that respect and people respect me in this way. I'm doing this because I'm getting the respect from these people (Shelayna, 18)

Status, quick money, establishment, some people like to be known it's like a celebrity kind of status but within their own community and rival community, 'Oh that girl's hard she can't be tested' (Perri, 25)

Respect can be generated from a young woman's reputation if she is viewed as bad. Celebrity status in local and surrounding areas, coupled with displays of toughness, can also confer status. This links to the young women in Fishman's (1995) study who were socialised to be risk takers, as it was acknowledged that this trait would be necessary on the streets. As criminal activity is often explained as a response to living in a deprived area this has to, some extent, sought to deny young people agency. Lyng's (1990) concept of edgework highlights an individual's desire to take risks. He argues that on one hand risk takers are eschewing mainstream norms, while on the other they are conforming to the norms within that culture of risk. In tandem to this, Garot (2015, p. 151) notes that those young people living in deprived neighbourhoods have more risks to navigate than their more affluent counterparts, with some elements of risk 'foisted upon them'. Edgework has been primarily associated with the deviant behaviour of young men but it can be just as readily applied to the experiences of young women who take risks due to necessity and for thrill seeking.

Social recognition was also regarded as important by the young women in Barry's (2007) research, in addition to the ability to gain respect from being known and often feared. Gaining status in this manner can be a natural progression for those who are not achieving respect by legitimate means such education or employment, as Natalie (Youth Practitioner) illustrates, 'It's an identity thing, they want status so they can walk out on road with their head held high, this is my road this is my block'. Achieving respect is something which all individuals seek out, although how that status is gained, and maintained, is likely to differ according to personal circumstances and what is structurally available to them. The status attached to being bad can fulfil these self-esteem needs, it is dependent upon how a young woman carries themselves to demonstrate that they are 'supporting the "hood'' (Harris, 1998, p. 156). It was acknowledged that having a reputation is crucial in order to establish a respected position:

> It's just about having your name popping on the streets it's not because I've got problems with this person and stuff like that. It's basically just to prove something to the guys that you're hanging around with and stuff like that (Anyika, 24)

> A lot of people look up to them and that's the boys and girls (Bianca, 18)

> People get involved for a number of reasons, because it's in the in thing, for notoriety, like they're moving with a certain gang so it improves their street cred. It's all about reputation, in a business

enterprise it's all about reputation. Put it this way a gang is a business do you see what I'm saying? And the business is crime (Zharnel, Youth Practitioner)

How young men gain respect on the street as a response to multiple marginalisation has been well documented compared to their female counterparts who are similarly 'in search of equal treatment, recognition, opportunities for leadership, and increased self-value' (Brotherton & Salazar-Atias, 2003, p. 201). With this in mind, young women are also seeking respect and status in similar ways:

> I'm not gonna lie, it was a buzz, it was a very big buzz, knowing that I could call on my gang anytime to back me up. I had power, respect and I still get it now. The fact that I was the only girl in my school who could phone up a whole bunch of men and get all these boys down to my school when someone was chatting shit to me, that was a rush, that was an adrenaline rush. I would go into school and say 'What? You gonna start shit today yeah?' Girls in my year they were big big girls and when I'm talking big girls I'm talking big girls but they wouldn't trouble me because they knew the word would get round. Whereas when it came to my family life everyone was quick to attack me, like 'Your Mum don't care about you, your Mum don't this, your Mum don't that, so I had the back up of 'Well shall I call the boys yeah?' Do you see what I'm saying? That helped me get through school or the whole time or I would have got 'Your Mum don't care

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about you'. Whereas once one person said that to me and I called all the boys I never heard about my Mum again, it was me making the jokes about my Mum, to the point that people were too scared to even laugh. Now I miss the fact that if someone violates me I can't call up all the boys (Asha, 21)

This links to Young's (2009, p. 8) research which suggests that rather than treat them as second class citizens, young women were protected by males who were 'aving their back'. Being known meant that Asha commanded respect to the point that her peers wouldn't dare to mention her family background. This also resonates with Ness (2010, p. 72) who found that if a young woman has back up there is less chance of her being 'rolled on'. It is this sense of collective empowerment based on neighbourhood networks which can be an attractive element:

Some girls they want to be in a gang, they want to be in the videos, they want to be in the songs, they want people to know 'I'm a gangster, I'm a gangster bitch that's who I am' do you know what I mean? (Shara, Youth practitioner)

Whilst the majority of young women may choose not to publicise their activities, or identify themselves as a gang member due to the risks that this can entail by being known by authorities, others are actively seeking this recognition. One of the ways in which working class young men have been characterised as building up their status is via their propensity for aggression and toughness, as respect tends to be

understood in 'masculine street terms of power and control' (Hunt & Joe-Laider, 2001, p. 664). It is the same for young women:

> When you're in that culture wanting to achieve a degree of respect that you feel you're not going to get anywhere else so if you become number one you've achieved it to its fullest (Senior Gang Practitioner, Morgan)

Young women who take the lead will gain respect both from peers in her group and from those outside of it:

> When all the boys were out together and they would call me and say 'Where are you? We'll come pick you up' with a bunch of people who's not even part of this gang and these people are saying 'How do you always get lifts? How are they always coming to pick you up?' You know you're in care but you've always got money so it is a boost ain't it? Especially when you don't have your family, it's a boost because there was these people living at home and they didn't have half the clothes I had so they was looking at me like how do you do it? That's what my adrenaline was. Someone tried to rob me from another gang and instead of me getting robbed I was like 'Take it, but by the time I get home I will have that' and what happened? By the time I got back I had it back. To me that was 'Yeah I'm big out here like'. I can just get my things back automatically to the point where I hand it over to you and you can hand it back to me (Asha, 21)

Regan's (1996) respondents also enjoyed feeling feared and not to be messed with due to the reputation they had acquired. This links to the work of Batchelor (2007) who indicates that young women experience an adrenaline rush and enjoy exerting power over others which, in turn, raises their self-esteem:

> People were afraid of you, no one would mess with you, you got money, respect, you pretty much could run anything. You could say anything to anyone and no one would attempt to talk back or retaliate or anything (Chantelle, 19)

> They feel empowered by intimidating people that gives them power. If their behaviour is not challenged that makes them feel that they are untouchable knowing no one can touch, me no one can tell me nothing, do you get me? (Pasha, Youth Practitioner)

Bourgois (2003) has illustrated how women can gain respect by displays of public aggression, as a means of acquiring status which may not be possible via conventional means. Aggression and bravado is played out on the streets through performances of badness:

> I used to walk up and down the road in a tracksuit, not because I think I'm bad, but I'd know that shit will get cracking if anyone was to look at me. I used to do it when I was in a bad mood so like if someone was to come up to me I was ready. Or you're just going out to purely cause mayhem and mischief. If you see someone that you think has got

something on that is nice you might try and attempt to rob them or you

might fight someone randomly for no reason (Ashleigh, 20)

The Youth Justice Board's (2007) research demonstrates how young women also experience a rush and buzz from acting tough and engaging in robberies. By challenging people to look at her, Ashleigh could use this as a reason to kick off and start a fight. Ultimately being seen as bad can enable young women to feel good. Chesney-Lind (1999) also points out that they have always engaged in more criminal and violent behaviour than is expected from the feminine stereotype, with their involvement in street cultures also being more entrenched than previously acknowledged.

Conclusion

This chapter marked a shift from framing the experiences of young women in relation to the gang and instead theorises their experiences within a framework of road culture, a specific subculture linked to badness. The aim was to centre on the individual and her actions, rather than the gang itself. Interviewees identified that living in deprived neighbourhoods can be risky for young women in terms of their exposure to higher levels of marginalisation and badness. These areas tend to lack the same educational and employment opportunities found in more affluent locales. With that in mind, whilst a young woman may have a choice about whether she commits crime, she is doing so against a backdrop of limited legitimate opportunities. The pull towards road culture then can become regarded as a rational choice given the lack of alternatives, although this should not be considered as a causal link, as the majority of young women in these areas do not

participate. Financial gain is a strong motivator towards offending, in terms of the strain of living in an economically deprived area, coupled with the influence of an accelerated consumer society. It was also acknowledged that the family can play a varied role in terms of young women's involvement in badness. One way which this is realised is through socialisation processes of growing up with siblings and family members who are involved in crime, whereby these behaviours become normalised. That said, road culture is not simply a result of social reproduction without any element of free will, as not all young women in these contexts will take part, regardless of whether they are on road or not. Being around criminality can deter young women because they don't want to spend their lives going in and out of prison in the same way as their relatives. The other way in which a family can be influential is through patterns of neglect and/or abuse, wherein young women use road culture as an escape route in order to survive financially and also experience a sense of belonging. With that in mind, it is also important not to overstate this, as parents, particularly mothers who are lone parents, are too often blamed for youth crime rather than the impact of poverty and social exclusion. Young women may be brought up in families which care for them, but are too strict, which can result in them rebelling and being drawn to the roads. Interviewees also identified that coercion of young women by their boyfriends is a means by which they are drawn into road culture, for those females may who feel they lack choices. It shouldn't be assumed that young women from deprived areas completely lack agency, however there will be different levels associated with each individual which work to limit the potential of some more than others. Furthermore,

coercion and agency should not be considered as binary opposites, they are instead interconnected and more nuanced. These intimate relationships are one way for young women to feel they are gaining status, even if this is not a view shared by everyone due to the way in which they are achieving it. However, these are not necessarily solely exploitative relationships as suggested by gang discourses because young women can use the situation to their own advantage and learn the tricks of the trade to become more independent. It was also acknowledged that part of the lure of badness is the thrill and excitement which young women feel by being known for displaying a tough persona and carrying out criminal activities. This demonstrates that engagement in road culture must be due to more than social reproduction and a response to structural conditions, or the family, in order to make it attractive to young women.

Chapter 7

Doing badness: Young women and road culture

Introduction

The previous chapter explored why young women can be drawn into road culture, with the impact of marginalisation and social exclusion being a key factor. Financial gain was identified as key, both in terms of the effects of poverty and also the pressures of living in a consumer society. The family was also regarded as influential, in relation to being born into a criminal family, in addition to neglect and/or abuse prompting young women to look elsewhere for belonging and security. Being drawn into badness by boyfriends was also discussed, in addition to the buzz of taking part in criminal activities and being known in their area as someone with a tough reputation. This chapter will draw further on the views of the interviewees and identify what young women are getting up to on road by acknowledging a range of competing on road femininities. Starting with the dominant perception of them as exploited victims, it will also consider the rarely discussed issue of young men as victims, in addition to young women's ability to manipulate their sexuality in order to commit crime, commonly referred to as the honey-trap. The other principal way in which young women are linked to badness is in their role as auxiliaries, the suggestion that the accompanying activities are necessarily peripheral and coerced will be challenged. Finally the chapter will explore the ways in which young women can be central to road culture by focusing on their activities such as drug dealing and robberies, in addition to them being equal to their male peers and leaders in their own rights. Due to the variations

within peer groups, some young women will have more independence and agency than others.

The exploitation debate

Young women and group sex

It is well documented that young women are considered to be second class citizens, who lack agency (Pitts, 2007; Young and Trickett, 2017). With this in mind, sexual exploitation has been presented as a new phenomenon, a moral panic which positions it as an isolated issue within the gang agenda, rather than something which is part of the fabric of society. The sexual object is the most dominant role attributed to young women, traditionally in the form of girlfriend or link, and more recently in the form of sexually exploited victim (Beckett et al. 2013; HM Government, 2016):

> There was one girl that I brought in and she had [sex with] everybody, I'm not gonna say it again. I didn't have much respect for her anyway so us being men, especially gang members, we would make you feel like the most special thing in the area just to get what we want. Once I got what I want I couldn't care less about you, you could fall over on the road I would walk on cos you don't mean nuttin to me (Zharnel, Youth Practitioner)

This demonstrates how young men are able to manipulate the emotions of young women in order to meet their own agendas. According to Pitts (2007) young females can be passed around the group for sex, and relationships can be

abusive. However, such relationships are not limited to young people on road and reflect a wider societal trend. Whilst acknowledging that young women do engage in sex with multiple partners, Young and Trickett (2017, p. 234) suggest that one explanation for this is that they are attempting to create a 'credible' identity, but can end up 'getting played' in the process. As noted by interviewees in chapter six, some young women may associate themselves with a bad boy in order to gain status amongst their peers and benefit from the spoils of crime in the form of material goods:

> I mean a lot of girls will get enticed by gangs and the guys are like 'We'll protect you we'll give you this we'll give you that' but in the end lots of girls end up being used like in the worst way possible as well. I think some of them are so deep in it they can't get out so it's not so much that they enjoy it, some of them are there because they enjoy it, but some of them are there because they're scared as well because guys hold a lot of power. Sometimes when you are tied to one person you have a certain level of respect and you don't want to lose that. Many young women don't see themselves as being sexually exploited they may enjoy group sex and the ratings it can bring them (Bianca, 18)

Some young women are sexually exploited, and may be too scared to do anything about it due to power relations within the group. Whilst on the other hand, there are those who engage in the same sexual activities, but instead may enjoy it because it confers associated status. These young women believe their actions

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can help them achieve respect via this association within the group. Some young women may not realise, or acknowledge, that they are being sexually exploited because they enjoy group sex, an issue which is not readily discussed:

> You got the ones that sket to the ones on the street. The ones who are sexually exploited those are the links, those are the ones called the Sket, they don't mind the gang rape and the sleeping with more than one in a line up. You know they don't mind that. They'd rather have that than have a proper relationship. I would say there are women out there who do it for pleasure and that's been happening for years (Melissa, Female Gang Practitioner)

Young women who sleep with multiple partners can be known as 'skets', while others prefer causal links to a monogamous relationship. This connects to Bianca's comments about how group sex can be seen to confer respect via association within the group. It also challenges the idea that young women are coerced into sex with multiple partners, and don't have a penchant for linking up with their peers in the same way as their male counterparts. Consequently, young women in these spaces still have the potential to exhibit agency, as one of Young and Trickett's (2017, p. 247) interviewees revealed, 'It's like saying all us women involved in gangs are used for sex; that's not true!' Fishman (1995) also found that it is not only young men who may have more than one sexual partner, females too may have several partners, so these perceived exploitative relationships can work both ways:

Because of the sexualisation of how we see things now through the media it has become the norm and it's not a taboo anymore to have group sex. But I feel there is more that we haven't looked at and we need to start looking. A lot of girls don't think they're been exploited. We tend to put it as sexual exploitation because we go through this gender thing where girls are always victims (Shara, Youth Practitioner)

Young women may not regard themselves as being exploited despite gendered discussions of sexual violence positioning them as victims. This dominant focus presupposes that 'women have *only* ever been victims, that they have never successfully fought back, that women cannot be effective social agents on behalf of themselves or others' (Harding, 1987, cited in Miller, 2003, p. 23). Miller also argues that whilst victimology studies are an important area of debate, focusing on more of a range of women's experiences would be beneficial so they are not constantly sidelined into passive roles. According to interviewees, some young women will have sex with every member of the group:

There was a girl I was working with, she was actually the pass round girl for the group. She was sleeping with everyone, she just wanted to be known, she didn't care about the gang exploiting her, she didn't care about none of it. Then when I asked her if she was fine with that and she was like 'Yeah' she said 'As long as I'm known I don't really care'. So I did sexual exploitation work with her and self-esteem and

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self image work with her so she can see for herself what she looks like (Natalie, Youth Practitioner)

Rather than considering themselves to be victims, they use these experiences in order to boost their own notoriety. This links to the respondents in Disley and Liddle's (2016) research who suggest that such behaviours give young women the opportunity to brag and gain ratings in order to improve their status. There are different ways in which young women and her siblings will position themselves:

Me and my sister were in the same gang innit and when I look at the difference she was like the girl everyone would go to for sex and I was a rude girl. I was the money maker out of my sisters and one time I did have an elder from the ends approach me, I'll never forget this day. We were all sitting outside one of my boy's house and this is exactly what he said to me 'You know you've got to suck my dick innit' and I looked at him and said 'What?' I said 'Naaaah mate that ain't me' and he turned round and he said 'I know I was just testing you'. But in my head up until this day it wasn't a test. Now it was a test to see if you could flip me, but you couldn't, so where I looked you up and made a bit of a scene some of the other boys started looking over he had to go with what I was saying because if I said 'No' and you try to say something else what would've happened to you? Do you see what I'm saying? (Asha, 21)

As someone who had respect which was equal to the young men, Asha was not someone who could be exploited sexually. Her sister on the other hand was known as the pass round girl, i.e. someone who has sex with multiple members of the group. This demonstrates how within the same family young women can be taking on diverse roles, indicating that it is more than family and environment which impacts on a young women's relationship with badness. Young women can be viewed as 'easy prey' due to discourses of vulnerability and ability to be manipulated by men according to Ricard-Guay & Denov (2016, p. 62). Young women can be tested, but do not necessarily comply:

> For a girl to get respect from a guy, one hundred percent respect where the guy wouldn't even disrespect her, its like guys test you when you're a kid innit. They touch you, they do all these things if you allow that and don't say nothing about, it it's like they won't respect you do you understand what I'm saying? I used to fight guys I used to beat guys up for that like 'No you're not touching me' and then they'll respect me for that do you know what I mean? (Montell, 21)

In order for a female to achieve the top level of respect from her peers she cannot be known as someone who is vulnerable to exploitation. This indicates that whilst young women who sleep with multiple partners believe they are gaining ratings, i.e. achieving respect and notoriety, it is unlikely to be from peers within the group. Interviewees in Young and Trickett's (2017) research linked behaviour to self-worth and suggested that it was their choice to sleep with multiple partners and define themselves in this way. For some however, they may feel they lack the

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ability to choose a successful alternative identity if they are not able to adopt a tough image. Each young woman will experience life in a different manner because they do not construct their gendered identities in identical ways. Montell on the other hand would fight those who tried to test her in order to demonstrate resolve and to maintain her status as someone who is not to be messed with Similarly, for Nicola, 19, in order to cement your position it is about showing strength, 'When someone is weak they will be controlled and become a sex slave or someone who carries weapons and stores things in their house'. Young men can exploit females who appear to be vulnerable:

> I want to break you, it's all about control so if you have sex with everybody you've just degraded yourself. Now if I tell you to 'Jump' you're gonna tell me 'How high?', I'll say 'Keep jumping' do you see what I'm saying? Now you're not gonna find a woman who is headstrong and try and break her because it's too much work. You find a woman that is already broken and then put the pieces together and mould them the way you want them to be moulded do you see what I'm saying? Especially in gang culture females are an intricate part I'm not gonna lie to you because there's a saying, most females, especially young females like a bad man. The allure of it, it's not until they get older they realise it's not about that so we the top guys in the area will get the females so that is where that comes to play as well. But then again most guys we talk 'Oh I slept with her' you're the

biggest man ho around because you just swing it anywhere and

everywhere (Zharnel, Youth Practitioner)

This illustrates the double standard of sleeping with multiple partners, whereby this attracts respect as a male activity, whereas as noted by Melissa, when females exhibit the same behaviour they are labelled skets.

The forgotten young men

As demonstrated in chapter three, young black men in particular have been associated with gang membership and positioned as being synonymous with serious criminal and violent behaviour (Joseph & Gunter, 2011; Gunter, 2017). Such misplaced ideas are underpinned by a 'biased imperialist white-supremacist patriarchal mass media' (hooks, 2004, p. 27). There appears to be particular preoccupation with presenting the stories of women as victims and males as the perpetrators in these contexts. This can be seen to be underpinned by the American historic stereotype of the potential rapist, who was viewed as deserving of being lynched due to stigmatised perceptions of their black masculinity (Collins, 2004). This scaremongering impacts negatively on young people:

I don't wanna be some conspiracy theorist yeah but kids are constantly pushed with negativity, all the stuff you see, the sexual stuff like the rapes it's horrible. It's pumped into everyone's brains so everybody's on edge innit, their energy's not like flowing they're just people on edge and not calm do you know what I mean? (Joel, Author)

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The prevalence of negativity can create further unnecessary stress and anxiety in the lives of young people. Breeding a culture of fear is also contributing to, and exacerbating, society's distrust of working class young people according to Regan with Hoeksma (2010). It's not just females who are the targets:

> Gangs are changing, how they operate is changing. Is it that there are a lot of young women getting involved. Yes in terms of sexual exploitation, but also as members. I suppose the concern for me is that a lot of focus goes on women who are sexually exploited and we forget that men are sexually exploited too (Morgan, Senior Gang Practitioner)

This challenges the gendered polarisation of female and male identities, the idea that young men can also be exploited is one which is not openly acknowledged. This is despite the fact that they are also victims of sexual violence in these spaces, and within wider society. As Shara (Youth Practitioner) points out, 'We never look at the fact that boys are victims too within the gang'. It's been established that a remarkably small amount is known about male sexual exploitation (McNaughton et al., 2014). Researchers are not capturing this due to viewing males solely as perpetrators and females as victims (Turchik & Edwards, 2011). Interviewees agreed that there needs to be more of a focus on young men and the risks which they can be subjected to:

> We don't hear much about men being sexually exploited. It's another example of something which is happening but we're not hearing about

it. The research always starts with the women seen as victims and the men as perpetrators. We need to start to unravel that, and actually explore that, and turn things on its head because things are changing (Katarina, Probation Officer)

Because men are not going to come and say I've been raped, they're not going to but it is happening. Recently I had a vulnerable young person, he had gunshots fired at him, and he managed to get away but his friend didn't and when he showed me the clip. They actually got the boy to strip naked and do star jumps. Another young boy was raped by other youths and they use this as initiation (Melissa, Female Gang Practitioner)

The binary terms of victim and perpetrator contribute to the lack of awareness on the subject of sexual violence. Young men being victims of rape is rarely discussed, one reason for this could be that males, like many females, are not readily going to admit it, so the prevalence of such activity is not known. Respondents acknowledged that they can also be victimised in other ways:

I know a boy for example, when I was part of that gang there was one boy who literally didn't want to be part of it but he had no choice. The boys would go to his house and pick him up in the morning and he would be with us all day and he would be sitting there saying 'I don't wanna be here' and they would be slapping him because he's saying 'I don't wanna to be here'. The boy got sent to prison because

somebody was running away and they put a gun in his pocket and he was just sitting there with the gun in his pocket and he got four years for that and he didn't actually want to be part of it (Asha, 21)

If you ain't doing something right you're gonna get a whooping do you see what I'm saying? And keep getting whooped. So it's all about control. I will control somebody, if I can't do it physically then mentally, do you know what I'm saying? I would get someone else to do my dirty work and keep my hands clean (Zharnel, Youth Practitioner)

Violence is a tool of control, and the threat of violence can become enough of a deterrent to sustain power. McNaughton-Nicholls et al. (2014) suggest that exploited young men's perception of their masculinity is likely to be compromised through exploitation. This can result in the process of demasculisation according to Asha, 21, 'There are vulnerable men, and if a man is weak and I slap him then he's gonna get the piss taken out of him. Women dominate men too'. Young men also run the risk of further stigmatisation if attacked by a female. Understandably, there is a silence around male victimisation:

There are vulnerable young boys out there but you only hear about the tough ones, the ones at the top trying to get attention, rather than those who are easily led or are in a gang because they've been forced to and bullied. We don't hear that so much but that also occurs. There's a lot of peer pressure, you have to be with us and if you're not with us, you're one of them, there's a lot of that. The peer pressure is

where the fear is, and also witnessing what's happened to their friends and not wanting the same thing to happen to them (Cindy, Female Senior Gang Practitioner)

It is young men with tough personas, ascribing to dominant norms of what it means to be masculine, which are over publicised rather than those which may be victims of violence. Peer pressure can contribute to some young men getting involved in crime, this can be through force, or underpinned by fear of what might happen to them if they don't comply. Men who don't engage in authentic performances of badness can be viewed as weak, and unlike women they do not have other personas which they can adopt in order to create an alternative successful identity.

<u>Here come the girls</u>

Hustles and honey-traps

Whilst the dominant discussions around young women are focused on their role as sexually exploited victims, as has been discussed, the notion of exploitation is more complex. Some may not acknowledge that they are being exploited, whilst others enjoy sex with multiple partners. Very little is known about women exploiting men as the main focus tends to be on how males operate to exploit females. Although it should be noted that some young women will have more agency than others in these spaces in terms of making decisions about what they do and don't do. That said, an alternative way to consider the capabilities of young women is to highlight their ability to exploit young men using their sexuality. This skill was recognised by respondents:

I think with girls, it's not a good thing, but I think they can be better at getting what they want because if you're pretty and you know how to dress you can just go to a club meet a nice guy and ransack his house, go back to his house and get all your mates to come round and take all his stuff (Ashleigh, 20)

Girls will trap guys, they will arrange to meet them after a kiss on the cheek and then turn up and rob their Rolex just so the girl can have a free night out. This gang thing is taking young women to a deeper level (Nicola, 19)

This resonates with research which has indicated that females manipulate their sexuality to target males which is shift from the sexual victim stereotype (Contreras, 2009). Young women can be multi-skilled in terms of their criminal capabilities:

Girls can be very diverse, I would say they are more diverse than males because males can't do certain things a female can. They can't set up a guy, there's a lot of things a girl can do. If a girl wanted to get a guy arrested she could do a lot to a guy that a guy could not do. If she wanted to go to his house and rob all of his drugs she could do it by herself, whereas another guy could not actually do that, it's a lot different it's very diverse in a gang. They'll just be put into that sort of position because of the type of character they are and the type of person that they are (Montell, 21)

This highlights the variety of activities young women can get involved in, by setting men up, getting them arrested and robbing drug stashes. Females are considered to be 'street smart', despite a lack of formal education they display intelligence and an aptitude for manipulation according to Donovan (1993, cited in Mendoza-Denton, 1996, p. 50). Pearce and Pitts's (2011) research suggests that young women use their sexuality to obtain certain information. They will sleep with guys, go through their pockets, and phone their male peers so they are waiting outside the flat:

> The girls are honey-traps because that's what we would do. Boys just see some mad car, it's a proper mad car there is no one in the car, just him yeah, and you'll see fifty man come out and he has to get out his car so it's kinda like we set it up and we get money out of it. But you don't know it's us because you don't know that we're part of them (Asha, 21)

Young women can be involved in set up crimes, dubbed as honey-traps, without the victims realising they are involved. Females often perform the role of spy to uncover information from rival groups about their planned activities. They may form relationships to achieve this and then report back, and will also offer sexual services to lure unsuspecting males to areas where rivals are awaiting them (Brown, 1999). Interviewees were familiar with the honey-trap:

> Female gang member's use their emotional side which makes them smarter because they manipulate others to get what they want. For

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example, the murder of Shakilus Townsend in 2009, referred to as the honey-trap murder because a female was involved in his death. Her boyfriend told her to manipulate Townsend by acting as if she likes him and to get him to meet Samantha at a spot where her boyfriend and his friends will be waiting for Townsend to murder him (Zahiya, 23)

They can be used to set up other gang members, or opposing gang members, and in the last couple of years females are being convicted of things such as conspiracy to murder by being involved in that. We had a case where there was a female in the box with the other male defendants because the firearms were found at her address she had to say 'Yes'. She had to stand there be told that she'd been used to keep firearms and no one really cared about her so it's just unpleasant for her on both cases. She went to court specifically for possession of firearms but yes it can be looked as conspiracy because the firearms were proved to be used in a murder (Marie, Detective Constable)

This links to the work of Liddle and Disley (2016) who found that young women are being used to instigate, or set up, violent encounters, with one respondent noting that she knows of guys who have been set up and died as a result. Being labelled a honey-trap girl however is not appreciated by tough young women:

At first they were saying I'm the honey-trap girl. I was in the local newspaper as the honey-trap girl do you know how embarrassing that

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was? I hate any sort of attention but the fact they called me a honey-trap girl it wound me up cos I was thinking to myself yous lot don't know what I've done here it just makes me look like I'm sat here and I'm letting the boys take the mick out of me but it doesn't go like that (Asha, 21)

Young women who have high status will reject the association with this term as it could suggest that the extent to their criminal involvement is reducible to the set up chick, when in fact their participation is far more diverse and entrenched. The ways in which they can exploit and manipulate their sexuality, in addition to being exploited themselves, demonstrates how the dominant perception of them as victims does not fully capture their nuanced experiences. Maher (1997, p. 200) suggests that the binary preoccupation with victims fails to enable young women to be seen as 'resistant and complex actors' who are managing their survival strategies in marginalised communities.

Drugs and weapons

Young women are acknowledged predominantly in relation to their perceived auxiliary role, carrying weapons and drugs. For Zharnel (Youth Practitioner) 'Females are used to carry things, see what I'm saying, they're used to carry things such as blades, guns and stuff'. Pitts (2007, p. 40) also argues that they are carrying and hiding drugs and weapons 'for the boys' which implies that that decisions are made by men with young women being coerced:

Girls can be just as much part of the gang as guys can be. You've got girls that hold stuff for guys, they keep secrets for guys, inform guys about things that are happening and stuff like that you've got those type of girls. Whether it's holding guns, holding drugs for someone, or taking drugs to another person on behalf of somebody else you're still a part of it do you know what I'm trying to say? (Anyika, 24)

Whilst holding weapons and drugs may be carried out by young women this is a central activity, rather than something which should be regarded as peripheral. This is due, in part, because the auxiliary role has become synonymous with young women, rather than young men (Batchelor, 2011). This is supported by Medina et al. (2012) who found that when young men engage in similar activities, such as holding guns, they are not regarded as appendages to the group. According to Ria, 23, 'There's some young women out there who believe that she will get respect by and holding drugs or she's gone to rob the shop, I'm the one who knows, I'm the one who knows all the ins and outs'. Young and Trickett's (2017) interviewees suggested that sexual activity was marginal compared to the prevalence of carrying drugs and weapons. There was a consensus by interviewees that young women will do whatever they need to do to be part of the action:

Respect in terms of what they can do. If they can get out of a rap, if they are being told to carry money or drugs, and they just get a warning or something like that then that gives them more authority. It depends on what they are doing that can elevate themselves and

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what they've been through and how tough they are (Cindy, Senior Female Gang Practitioner)

When they are associated with the gang everybody wants to be the number one girl, nobody wants to be the loose link, nobody wants to be the one who is seen as the runner. Everybody wants to be the main girl so those who understand what the gang means they will do what it takes (Morgan, Senior Gang Practitioner)

The respect which young women can earn by carrying money or drugs can be viewed as a stepping stone in order for her to prove herself. They may not want to be viewed as a runner but understand that this is part of what it takes to become a main player:

It's quite similar you get your male and your female drug couriers. I think it's no different in terms of what they're doing, I don't think it's any different (Katarina, Probation Officer)

Definitely girls are carrying drugs and knives and dealing but boys carry stuff too which sometimes gets forgotten (Tom, Former Police Officer)

It is not just young women who are performing these necessary activities. Fishman (1995) has identified that the carrying of weapons as an essential part of life, which links to the reluctance of authorities and criminologists to classify young women as central to road culture by stereotyping them as helping hands. Rather

than being relegated to the margins, females are a key factor to the continuing survival and success of group according to Brotherton (2008). It's also useful to pick up on Harris' (1988) work here, which illustrates how young men sometimes actually perform these perceived secondary roles for their female counterparts. It was recognised that it is more strategic for young women to be couriers given that they are less likely to be detected by police:

> The girls were more likely to be carrying stuff for guys because obviously they won't get searched, or are more unlikely to be searched than guys (Chantelle, 19)

> Girls also hold money and weapons because they're least likely to be stopped and searched, or have their houses raided, but they do play a big role. They see themselves as important people, they play themselves against gang members. Because the work that they do is so important they then get benefits from it, they might hold respect, they might even get paid for it to have this kind of status or protection over them (Imani, 24)

Young women are acutely aware that they are less likely to be searched than their male peers, so the decision to carry drugs or weapons is a rational one rather than an indication of their second-class status. Most young women who carry drugs and weapons are not coerced into doing so, rather it is a means of making money. Despite how she may be viewed as being on the periphery, in reality she is central

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to the operations according to Brown (1999). Stop and search tactics by police are targeted towards young men:

> The police are more likely to pull over a gang of guys than a gang of girls. Girls are more likely to get away with it in the sense of the fact that guys will do nothing and still get pulled over and searched whereas girls don't as much (Jade, 21)

Only seven percent of those being stopped and searched between April 2017 and March 2018 were female according to the Metropolitan Police (2018). These figures present a huge disparity in terms of who is coming to the attention of the police, and more widely the criminal justice system. It also implies that females are not being viewed as suspicious in order to warrant the use of stop and search compared to the experiences of young men, particularly those of colour, who are routinely stopped and searched:

> Police would for example stop us, and this is where I think the girl role kind of gets dismissed, because police would stop us and I would have everything on me but they wouldn't find nothing on the boys because obviously they didn't have a female officer to search me. So I'm walking around with all these drugs on me and things like that and they can't do nuffin so I'm not giving away their stuff. Bearing in mind it takes a female officer at least fifteen minutes to get out to that call, in that time you can be gone, you can go anywhere, do anything with the drugs, money, whatever it is. When you say girls are in a gang you

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look at them and think 'Oh whatever, she can't be in gang' a lot of people look at me and say the same thing about me. I've got young people that I work with who said to me 'You ain't been in a gang' and I will show them things and they're just like 'Rah' (Asha, 21)

By dismissing female involvement in badness the police are overlooking their activities. Less female officers on patrol also impacts on the ability to conduct searches on young women. Interviewees in Liddle and Disley's (2016) study also acknowledged that young women were not likely to be searched, as a male officer was prohibited from doing so, and therefore held the weapons and drugs:

When I was younger it was a thing where they would send male officers, so there were no female officers, so you could never search me, so it would never get to an arrest. I'm not gonna give you my details unless you arrest me and because there were no female officers there they had no reason to arrest me so I think that's a big thing (Chantelle, 19)

The impact of a lack of female police officers being present when searches are being carried out enables young women to avoid detection and potential arrests. This further demonstrates how logistically the carrying of weapons and drugs is particularly suited to young women, and it should not be assumed that these duties are performed due to them being coerced. If not being stopped and searched at the same rates it's because they are not on the police radar:

Girls to do the dirty work because you're not gonna really suspect a girl are you (Bianca, 18)

In these areas they know everybody's names every gang member's names and know who's up to what mischief. They rarely know about girls, I mean very rarely (Chantelle, 19)

Interviewees highlighted how young women continue to be of less interest to authorities than their male peers who are known by name to the police. Sikes (1997) suggests this is because they are preoccupied with females being sex objects which limit the scope of what they are capable of. A narrow approach has been taken to young women, which focuses on sexual offences at expense of other crimes 'relegating other aspects of female delinquency to a modicum of discussion with little accompanying analysis' (Brown, 1999, p. 57). Many respondents commented that there is a lack of detection of what they are getting up to:

I think it goes back to girls putting more effort into detail. They're not likely to hang out on their own on estates they're more likely to gather at someone's house where it's behind closed doors and you can't see. Whereas boys they'll just hang out anywhere on an estate. So it's hard I guess when you're looking at boy gangs you kind of associate the type of clothing with them as well, the hoody, the trainers, the dark clothing. Girls I think they just wear whatever they want and someone

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looking in could just look at it as they're just wearing fashion clothes (Bianca, 18)

From a policing point of view they aren't noticed as much, you could argue that it's because they don't get caught compared to males. Girls often indulge in a range of risky behaviours, drugs, carrying weapons, and everything else, so it's the same people (Tom, Former Police Officer)

Endeavouring to capture young men through the information provided by young women, whilst evading detection themselves, is something which Shelayna, 18, and Phillips (Youth Practitioner) are familiar with:

Shelayna: If the police don't have enough evidence to say you did that they're just gonna try and slap it on the boy and say 'You did this, you did it innit'

Phillips: Its one rule for them and one rule for a girl innit?

CC: Some people say that girls are getting away with stuff

P: They do

Shelayna: With gangs and all those kind of things girls do get away with it. If it's a proper girl gang, or if a girl is in a relationship or something, and she was the abusive one and they went to jail they would say 'You're lying' and laugh at the boy that he let a girl do that

Phillips: That's how I see it

Shelayna: There are girls out there who are beating up big men and you think how could that happen? But girls are powerful and the police are doing nothing about it so they getting more powerful because they're like okay if I do something I'm getting away with that

Phillips: And in the long run is it's gonna backfire

Shelayna: Yeah it's gonna backfire on the police and what happens then? You keep arresting the same people who are not doing anything

Phillips: And they ain't gonna realise it's a girl

Shelayna: Because there's a girl who's been doing it for how long you can't even do nothing to her because it happened ages ago, there is no evidence, there is no nothing, she could sit there and tell you that she did it but where's the evidence?

Young women are able to evade prosecution for their crimes due to the focus on prosecuting young men, which can provide young women with a cloak of invincibility. This was also found to be the case by Taylor's (1993, p. 33) interviewees who said that they didn't invite the same interest as their male peers from authorities because it was assumed they were not capable, 'We would do all kinds of shit and the boys would get the blame…Now, we would be laughing 'bout how dumb the cops would be asking us shit 'bout the boys'. Shelayna and Phillips expand on this:

Shelayna: If they found a girl for example in a gang, holding a gun, or selling weed, or selling some sort of drugs, in the police interview they wouldn't say 'Why did you do it?' They would say 'Which boy made you do it?' The question changes, if it was a boy in the interview they would be like 'So why did you do that?'

Phillips: Yes, yes

Shelayna: If it was a girl in the interview they will show you pictures to influence you so you will say it's a boy that done it. The questions should be the same it shouldn't change whether it was a girl that done it or whether it's a boy that done it.

Phillips: They think the girls haven't got the skills to actually do that but they'd be so surprised

Shelayna: They've got their main boys that they know, you run this gang, you are the head of that gang, you told this person to do this. They know who they're looking for so if a case comes up that a girl's done something they're thinking alright that boy told you to do it. He's the head of that area they're thinking you done this, it must've been linked to this person. So say if a shooting happened they're going to arrest that main guy that they think it is because you must know everything you've told everyone to do everything so that's how the police work. They're never ever gonna think outside the box. They're just gonna try and slap it on the boy and say 'You did this, you did it

innit'. There's some girls running boys heads and telling them to do their work

Authorities behave as if young women don't possess the capability for badness and the police will try and pin the crime on their male peers, even if he has been influenced by her. This resonates with the 'he made me do it' hypothesis identified in chapter six (Barlow, 2016, p. 79). Forty years ago Shacklady-Smith (1978) reported how young women were taken to the police station but were not charged for their misdemeanours as the police were more interested in prosecuting the young men. Interviewees also had similar experiences of police:

> I don't think it's fair. When I used to get into trouble that was because I wanted to do stuff no one could say 'Ashleigh do this' and I'd do it. Most of the time my friends would be like 'Ashleigh stop what you're doing like just leave it' and whenever I got interviewed by police sometimes they used to say 'Who made you do this?' I'd say 'No one I did it myself', but I think it's unfair because people yeah they might get pressured into doing something, but then a lot of the time people don't. There might be things going on in their life and they might think I've got to do this to do this, I'm not getting nothing from this, so I've got to do what I've got to do. Police that do that, especially with girls, it's not fair. I don't actually know what the police do. I don't know what their interest is. It seems to me that they're only interested in tackling men in gangs (Ashleigh, 20)

Therefore, whilst certain young women may be coerced into badness, this should not be taken as the norm. Pollack (1950, p. 151) suggested that females were being overlooked because they were not being detected or reported as 'police officers dislike to arrest them'. This is based on the notion of chivalry, the idea that women need to be protected due to their weakness and passivity in comparison to men. With this in mind, the suggestion that practices of chivalry applies to all women regardless of their classed and raced positioning is questionable. For example Potter (2013) points out that young black women are often considered hostile by law enforcement and not given the chivalrous treatment which is more likely to be embraced for white middle class women. However, it is more than likely that this lack of attention of young women is more to do with criminal justice professionals wanting to capture young men who are known to them, than an example of chivalrous treatment.

Robbers and shotters

Whilst the importance of carrying drugs and weapons has been underestimated, young women are also involved in crimes which are regarded as more central, such as robberies and the supply/sale of drugs. Far less is known about these activities than those associated with the auxiliary role, and it has been established that the 'full picture is not known' (Disley & Liddle, p. 138). The types of badness young women are involved in depends upon how they carry themselves:

> The ones who don't fit into the sexual role will fit into the carrying role, carrying drugs, setting up robberies and stuff like that. It gives them status. I think the young women are involved in a whole host of things

they commit robberies, kidnapping, money-laundering, prostitution. They are involved in drug selling, drug importation and fraud (Natalie, Youth Practitioner)

I think that women play a whole host of different roles and there is evidence that they can sometimes be in lead roles. I could be as a woman the one who is initiating and setting up drugs deals, money-laundering, setting up people to murder, people getting involved in kidnaps (Morgan, Senior Gang Practitioner)

According to respondents, those who don't provide sexual services will either work as a courier or get involved in a range of other crimes such as robberies, drug sales and importation. Females are not limited to a narrow range of roles and can take on leadership positions. This resonates with Pearce & Pitt's (2011, p. 38) study which indicates that young women are engaged in street crime and drug dealing on an equal basis with their male peers:

Some girls are used a getaway drivers, some are just used, so the role differs depending on the female. When you went out and done street robberies or robbing shops, holding up shops, the guys would be involved (Melissa, Female Gang Practitioner)

Fighting and robberies are the offences most likely for females to be involved in outside of the more traditionally gendered crimes such as shoplifting and prostitution (Youth Justice Board, 2007). Things have changed for young women these days:

I think it's probably changed, girls in gangs on the streets doing crime have got a lot harder and tougher. But then I think the streets have got tougher. I think everything's got tougher and girls are getting money as well do you know what I mean? Girls are wanting to make money, girls are fighting, robbing, stealing, just getting involved (Joel, Author)

Being on road has become a more dangerous place, and consequently young women have responded to this, stepping up to make money in the same ways as young men. This implies that in spite of the gendered constructions of crime, their criminal behaviours are not too dissimilar. It has been suggested that young women can in fact commit more serious crimes than young men (Haymoz & Gatti, 2010):

Girls can be nasty and evil, equal to, and often worse than, the guys' behaviour. They are strategic and central to the gang. They rob people, rob their friends, deal drugs and stab people. Those are the girls who are active, and when I say they are active they are out there selling drugs, they are actively committing anti-social behaviour on a daily basis. Women are also travelling to country to pick up, and sell drugs, and this is all underreported as well. But this gang thing has advanced and the young people I know, that I engage with now, it's a whole different language. Some of them I don't even know what they're saying but the rules are still the same. Get that money and protect your area, otherwise you will get people like me who will come and rob your drugs, rob your stash, take your gold and the money, sell

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it, set up next door to you and tell you to go away so you can get on with your business (Reece, Youth Practitioner)

Their crimes can not only be equal to, but more vindictive, than those of young men because they also abide to the same rules on road. Shacklady-Smith (1978, p. 85) pointed out that the activities of females were being overlooked, those who were interviewed left her 'in no doubt of that fact that their group involvement was serious'. They know how to take care of business according to interviewees:

> You learn skills when you are dealing drugs on country, how to count, how to organise yourself and others. Girls are out on country at the plantation chopping things up, you don't need to teach girls what an ounce or quarter is these days they know, they have been educated (Nicola, 19)

Young women are dealing drugs outside county lines, whereby they travel to different cites to set up businesses and sell drugs. This resonates with the Burris-Kitchen's (1997) interviewees who felt that they were moving away from the traditional dependent female roles. Participating in road culture may not differ significantly based on gender:

> I've seen cases where females have been involved in violence, being involved in the trade of drugs. So in terms of the type of criminality my experiences haven't shown me much of a difference There were several types of female which included leadership attached to the girls

in which they had a more active role in criminality and management of the gang (Ben, Police Analyst)

Say you've got a weed shotter and a coke shotter, the girl is doing the same as the boys, but if she's a girl she doesn't look like she's doing the same thing. Say you've got a boy whose making five grand a day you've a got a girl that is doing exactly the same (Chantelle, 19)

They are taking more active and central roles but may not be receiving the same attention as their male peers when selling drugs. Whilst females are less involved in badness than males, Auyong et al. (2018) have argued that young women living in socially disorganised neighbourhoods may be more likely to turn to crime due to these structural factors. Being involved in high level offences is one way for a young woman to prove herself as somebody:

From what I'm hearing, the other day I had a fourteen year old and she's talking to another girl in the class and she goes 'Yeah so we robbed them mans on the bus' so I turned round and said 'What you robbed some men?' It was two girls on the bus but the way they said it is sounded like they were robbing men to big themselves up (Natalie, Youth Practitioner)

Yeah certain girls they've actually got the same rep as men and nowadays everything is changing. Back in the day I'm not sure how it worked but from nowadays if girls wanna get involved they'll get

involved. All the boys wanna see is girls proving themselves (Delano, Youth Practitioner)

Some females have the same fearful reputation as their male peers and will actively commit crimes in order to cement, and sustain, a tough persona. Such behaviours are also encouraged within the group as a way of verifying these identities. That young women are potentially as criminally deviant was noted by respondents in Taylor's (1993) study. Activities which are integral to the running of the group are being overlooked because the links are not being made by authorities:

> If you're talking shoplifting to order we're not associating young women who steal to order with money that the gangs need to buy drugs. So if you're not equating the crimes with a much bigger picture those women are just seen as young women engaging in crime, but if you don't ask the questions you don't know whether or not the links are there. Then you've got those who are not active but their houses are being used as cannabis farms and crack houses, storing guns, meeting places for deals to go down and all those kind of things that actually don't get picked up but help to make the gang activity process happen (Morgan, Senior Gang Practitioner)

Types of offences which may not be regarded as central, such as shoplifting, can be important in terms of contributing to the running of the sale and supply of drugs. As a result, the role of young women can be underestimated in terms of the

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significance of their actions as the right questions are not being asked by authorities.

Bosses and leaders

The dominant perception of young women is that the roles they inhabit within road culture are secondary, such as that of auxiliary. However, they are also actively involved in the supply and sale of illicit drugs, in addition to robberies. Furthermore, Disley and Liddle (2016) found that there are many young women who take on central, sometimes leading roles. This was also highlighted by interviewees:

> The girls who sell themselves get no respect from either males or females. They were slags who were told to 'Shut up', I wasn't. They were sent to the shops, or told to carry guns but I didn't as I was respected. I grew up with the gang, I never gave myself up. How you enter the gang is how you are defined, if you command respect from the start you will continue to be respected. If you join for sex you will never gain respect. You can't change your sexual reputation so I stood there with the males. My sister was a hanger on and had sex with everyone, I used to think 'Why do you let them do that to you?' She didn't know where to find love and had had a hard life. I used to say to her 'You're made, you know you're my sister, you can go anywhere you know'. But to her she felt like she had to do it to get her ratings she had to go round sleeping with them (Asha, 21)

This suggests that in order to be respected as a female, it is about distancing yourself from those young women who are perceived as sex objects, in order to avoid being targeted and to sustain independence. According to Burris-Kitchen (1997) if young women get involved in badness in the same ways that young men have traditionally done so, they are more likely to achieve equality and respect. Respondents also highlighted that young women have to be resilient to survive:

> You have to be strong otherwise you'll get used, you'll get used and abused, you have to be strong in the sense of the lifestyle. Yes there was females around that was very timid and always got used, you know to do bad things, they basically took liberties with them, great liberties. I was game for anything really you know I weren't afraid and I suppose at the same time like now being a different individual I'm the life of the party and people just wanted to be there because you joke around you have fun you wanna do things and so forth. So it was the fact that I was there and I would go and do it, I wasn't afraid. I think it goes back to how others see you and if someone's timid they will only do it to impress but if certain things were going on I'd say 'Nah I ain't doing that, I ain't doing it' and you're not going to intimidate me or force me to go and do it. I'm just not doing it whereas the other girls 'Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah' so they can get that little bit of reputation the little bit of yeah yeah yeah, that's alright but for me if I weren't gonna do it I weren't gonna do it (Melissa, Female Gang Practitioner)

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Some young women will not allow themselves to be exploited by displaying their mental toughness, whereas others may participate in whatever is asked in order to improve their ratings. This resonates with the interviewees in Freudenburg et al.'s (1999) study who mooted the importance of not presenting yourself as weak:

> If a girl is a hard nut from the beginning and she comes into a gang and they say 'You're gonna do this and that' and she says 'I'm not gonna do that' and she holds her own, and can give as good as a boy, that's when the guys are saying 'All right she's on our level, we can't even penetrate her like that'. And you are gonna find a lot of girls like that now (Shara, Youth Practitioner)

The manner in which a young woman carries herself will influence how she is treated by her peers in terms of becoming a central player:

> I remember for my thirteenth birthday everyone saying to me 'What do you want?' and I said 'I want a proper gun' and they said to me 'Alright cool' and then one of the other girls turned round and said 'How come she gets to do that but for my birthday I don't even get told Happy Birthday' and he turned round and said 'Because she's on my level' and that's when I realised there were different levels. I wasn't doing much but I always had money. I always had this and that but I'm selling the drugs to all the girls, I'm doing all these things, so if they were making five hundred pounds a day I was making five hundred pounds a day. They started to get bigger as I got older that's how I got

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into the robberies, it wasn't street robberies it was car robberies so it wasn't small stuff. As you get older it gets worse from selling Thai, to selling weed, to selling hash, to selling coke, to selling crack, to selling brown. That's all I knew, weighing up drugs, selling drugs, setting up people. All I knew was the gang life. I had respect, I was equal to the guys, and kept my reputation by carrying out more and more serious crimes. Once you're at that level you have to continue to prove yourself to show how far you're willing to go (Asha, 21)

For young women to sustain their reputation at the top, the crimes they get involved in will become progressively more entrenched. A respondent in Pearce and Pitt's (2011) study also identified this natural progression in terms of how she started off selling soft drugs, but then moved onto cocaine and crack. The idea that gender is perhaps less salient than is assumed was put forward by interviewees:

The role you play, regardless of whether you're a woman or not, it's about the role you take on in the gang determining how smart you can be (Morgan, Senior Gang Practitioner)

It depends on the type of female. I grew up being a tomboy so I was never a victim. When I used to hang around with boys I was like the only girl but they used to look at me as mandem. They would call me 'Mandem, yeah you're mandem' so if they would see me now they'd

be like 'Oh my gosh you've changed' but yeah I got to grow up innit do

you know what I mean? (Montell, 21)

This suggests that it's about street smarts, rather than gender, which enables a young person to successfully operate. The persona you adopt is linked to the treatment you receive in order to deflect perceptions of being vulnerable and weak. This can create a feeling of being 'somebody' within a context which allows them to achieve success (Harris, 1988, p. 120). Inner city areas can limit opportunities to raise individual's self-esteem so feeling like 'somebody' can be the goal for young women (Ness, 2008, p. 48). For some that respect was instant:

I was respected I guess and could hold my own. I think I had that

respect straight away. I came in quite young so the boys around me

were young and the older boys weren't too bothered with controlling

me so I grew up in a way that I had the respect I needed to be

independent (Chantelle, 19)

This links to Hagedorn and Devitt's (1999) research who found that positive experiences are more likely to be felt by those young women who have more control of their lives than others. Interviewees discussed the importance of being independent:

I don't like being talked down to by men, I can't stand it. I'm a woman,

I've got as much right as you have so you can't tell you what to do

because I'm a girl. I might be your girlfriend but you can't bully me into

doing this or that, or holding this, or going out there to do that, cos it's

not that kinda party, it's not that kinda party. Women who are leaders must've been through something along the lines of men to become strong and independent. To become independent, to say 'I am a leader and yes I'm not gonna take shit from no one I'm gonna do what I gotta do'. And that's how women become leaders (Desiree, 19)

Achieving respect is about not putting up with anything you are uncomfortable with. Being independent from men was also really important to Taylor's (1993, p. 150 & 155) respondents because it meant not having to 'Listen to their shit' because they 'Don't need nobody and that's how it is'. Demonstrating strength through violence is rewarded:

> You have different roles for women. There was one I took a liking to, I don't know why. I was actually in a fight with five or six other people and I didn't even know the girl when she jumped in and started ruckin out with guys and I was like 'Right you're coming with me'. I made her a leader because she could handle her own, now if you can show me you can handle your own, you get some respect. Now this is one saying that I like to say 'You get what you're given', so if you have self respect for yourself, and if you don't have none then I'll take liberties. But she had that so I said 'Alright listen you didn't have to do what you did but I rate that I'm gonna bring you in, you're gonna make money, and you're a sister' (Zharnel, Youth Practitioner)

This potential for equality of capabilities between the sexes is recognised by Taylor (1993) who found that women are just as cut throat as men:

> So for every top boy you've got, you do have a girl on the same level. You need to have a girl on the same level to manage the girls. If a boy goes up to a girl and says 'Go and sell this to someone or I'm gonna beat you up' she's gonna run off and never come back. Whereas if you've got someone on the same level and you say to them 'Here's a shot' the first thing they're gonna say is 'Cool where is it?' So for every top boy there's a top girl. They wanted me to make sure that when it came to the females, all the females, I was on point so if one was selling something I had to make sure that money was coming in. I had to make sure they wasn't getting robbed, they wasn't making up lies to say that for example they got set up with the drugs or something. So when it came to girls I was their leader. So even though there was girls older than me, where I had been in it for so long, these boys had pushed me higher up into it. There was always a choice of what I wanted to get involved in. I would get a call from the elder to see if I wanted to get involved in any criminal activities they were doing rather than be forced to do anything against my will (Asha, 21)

Young women are far more heavily involved in badness than most people give them credit for. As noted by Chesney-Lind and Shelden (2014), they are not necessarily coerced and have a choice in what they do and partake in. Women want to be leaders:

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There is a rising girl gangsta rap music and girls wanna be like female bosses. When the girl is not manipulated or violated she sees herself as like a man a proper gangster. But then obviously there's girls who really wanna be down like the male members, they see the male members gain certain things, do you know what I mean? And they want that as well do you know what I mean? They see the easy money and things. Everything is about gaining respect innit? (Joel, Author)

Gaining respect through leadership can be equally attractive for both males and females who seek to be at the top of the pecking order. It's been suggested that there can be more freedom on the streets than elsewhere in society due to the limitations of traditional passive femininity, as young women fight and hustle to make it (Fishman, 1995):

If you want a comparison with a male gang, if they are gonna rob you they will just rob you and beat you up and take what you've got and take your chain. There was a girl gang who for me were much meaner than male gangs. Females in male gangs were much more orchestrated so they were calling the shots with the males and the main man, they would influence them, tell them were to go, where not to go, who was cool, who wasn't cool (Reece, Youth Practitioner)

Not only are young women fully entrenched in badness, they can also call the shots in terms of influencing their male peers and take on leadership roles. This

links with Disley and Liddle (2016) who suggest that women have power, money and are respected by men in these contexts. However, people may not be ready to accept this:

> Girls being classed as the perpetrators, society is not ready for it, they're not ready to say girls are the leaders and girl power, they're just not ready for that. It was fine when Margaret Thatcher led the country as a Prime Minister, and you could accept it because it was politically correct. But the woman being the leader of the gang or sending out young men to do violence and commit violence, no way why would a woman be like that? (Shara, Youth Practitioner)

Despite the existence of powerful respected women on road, there is an unwillingness by wider society to recognise them as perpetrators, and even less so in terms of their capacity to take charge of their male peers. With this in mind, the interviewees in Burris-Kitchen's (1997) study stated that they can do anything the guys can do, and if anyone thinks any differently they are ignorant.

Conclusion

It is important not to stereotype and pigeon hole the roles of young women and the range of competing femininities which they exhibit on road, which can range from victim to perpetrators, and variations of the two. Failing to acknowledge that they can, and do, have varying levels of agency serves to narrow their potential identities in terms of the diversity of their experiences. The narrow discourses driven by the gang agenda surrounding young women's femininities therefore

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require a more nuanced approach. The purpose of this chapter was not to replace the label of victim with one of perpetrator, as such binary opposites are unhelpful given that victims can become offenders. The aim was to demonstrate how female badness is both complex and misunderstood. Whilst the victimisation of young women is an important area of debate, this has tended to dominate common understandings of these contexts, thus positioning this group as passive and without choices. Although young women who are heavily entrenched in road culture may not be atypical, it is important that their experiences are empirically recorded. Interviewees acknowledge that victimisation can be part of life, however they also point out that vulnerable young men can be targets, an issue which is rarely discussed. They also indicate that rather than simply being victims of sexual manipulation, young women can use their own sexuality to exploit men in order to commit crime and/or violence. The auxiliary role was also explored, the prevailing notion being that this is a peripheral and exploitative position was challenged by interviewees. They suggested that not only was hiding drugs and weapons a central activity, but that young women were not necessarily being coerced into it. It was established that because females are not on the police radar, in the same way as their male counterparts, it is a rational decision for them to be carrying the stash if they are far less likely to be stopped and searched. This was explained by authorities being primarily focused on capturing young men known to them, and during interrogations assuming young women are manipulated against their will into badness. Interviewees also identified lesser known activities which young women regularly participate in, such as robberies and drug dealing. They also

challenged the idea of young women lacking agency by indicating that they can be viewed as equal to their male peers. This is in addition to taking on leadership roles enacted through the performance of a tough reputation and as someone who can't be tested.

Chapter 8

Fighting females: Violence, respect and reputation

Introduction

The previous chapter explored a range of diverse on road femininities in addition to the ways in which young women participate specifically in road culture. Interviewees challenged the dominant idea, created by the gang agenda, that their main identity is that of victim, as someone who lacks agency and power. It also considered the ways in which young men can be victimised, in addition to young women using their sexuality to manipulate men in order to commit badness. Interviewees acknowledged that in terms of the auxiliary role this is not a peripheral activity, and young women are not necessarily coerced into carrying drugs and weapons. The lack of police interest in crime and violence was also established due to their focus on male peers. Interviewees indicated that young women are central to the action, through drug dealing and robberies, and that they can be equals in addition to taking on leadership roles. Research has tended to ignore how young women construct meanings on road, and there is a particularly large gap in knowledge in terms of the ways in which they generate status and respect through violence as part of road culture. The literature tends to focus on the experiences of young men, the prevalence of which can be over exaggerated. Therefore this chapter will consider interviewees' views on how it tends to be assumed that women have less of a propensity for aggressive behaviour than men. Even though female perpetrated violence is not a new phenomenon, and those young women who engage with it are not atypical, again it is important to

empirically capture their experiences. It will then explore how the myth of the angry black woman has served to stigmatise this group, based on their cultural history which has positioned them as innately more violent than their white counterparts. Next it will discuss the ways in which interviewees perceive female violence and consider the essentialising notion of young women being couched as 'acting like men' when they adopt tough personas. Finally it will draw on views on young women's propensity for violence and how they can be more severe than young men, as in these spaces female violence can become normalised rather than constructed as unnatural.

Reconciling violence and femininity

It has tended to be regarded as an undisputed fact that men, rather than women, are the natural aggressors, and as a result violence by men, and violence against women, has attracted the most attention. According to Dina, 19, 'Society doesn't want to accept that women and girls could do such violent things to people'. Female violence is a controversial issue due to the legacies of the past, whereby young women have not been presented as central to criminal or violent activities. This has resulted in narrow, and limiting, constructions of what constitutes female behaviour and what is potentially possible (Coughlin & Venkatesh, 2003). Partly as a result of these passive stereotypes, they have tended to be associated with being victims rather than perpetrators of violence. However, the notion of female perpetrated violence was not a new phenomenon for interviewees:

> What society fails to realise is that as females we can put that cloak on, we can hide behind the idea that men are violent. They are the

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ones that are the perpetrators, they're the ones that will go out with a gun and knife, they will go down the road and rob. They will be the ones who are seen as the perpetrators in society and to accept the fact that women can be like that, and they are like, that and they do walk on our streets like that today, but it's not recognised and it's still not recognised (Shara, Youth Practitioner)

Young women are able to hide the extent of their violence as it not expected from them, despite the fact that gender roles are not static and constantly in flux. Ignoring the issue of female perpetrated violence also plays into the stereotypical image of the violent and criminal male, which can result in the promotion of 'exaggerated patterns of masculine behaviour' (Shacklady-Smith, 1978, p. 84). Shara goes on to say that the role of the youth practitioner demands an understanding of the different ways in which aggression manifests itself:

The people I work with are very open minded because of the girls we've seen and how we are seeing girls be quite violent towards the boys. We've kind of taken that approach and had discussions about the fact girls can be violent. I do know of girls who have taken baseball bats and nearly beat another girl to death, and not only a girl but a boy too. So when it comes to violence it doesn't matter if you're a boy or a girl if you're their target end of. But when society sees a girl acting violently it kind of doesn't fit with what you expect, it comes out of the box and people are like 'Oh my gosh why is this girl so violent

> why she behaving like that?' And people question it more when it's a girl but when it's a boy it is considered to be part of being a boy

In society male violence is normalised and something expected as part of their identity, whereas it continues to be surprising when similar behaviours are displayed by females. With this in mind, the young women in Batchelor's (2005) study indicated that violence was part of their identities, which demonstrates the mismatch in perceptions in terms of what is actually happening. It also helps foster an understanding into why females are viewed as being more deviant than their male peers when they exhibit the same behaviours. This had led to them being sentenced more severely:

> There's a stigma and stereotype of the woman who is angry, who is violent and aggressive. She is supposed to be like the Madonna, the carer, so I think society really can't deal with a woman who is outside of that. That's a long generational history which is still impacting on how women are seen in society and what they are allowed to do and what they're not allowed to do. There are cultures where women are fighters and leaders in armies yet there is still the virgin Madonna stereotype in terms of how women are seen compared to men in terms of committing offences and violence. The sentencing of violent women tends to be greater than that of violent men, they tend to be sentenced more harshly than a man (Cindy, Senior Female Gang Practitioner)

There is a lack of willingness to acknowledge women's propensity for violence, based on constructions of what it means to be masculine and feminine. This links to the work of Campbell (1984, p. 15) who suggests that a 'bad girl' is someone who competes with men in regards to crime, whilst a 'good girl' is feminine and compliant. As Skeggs (1997, p. 102) notes, femininity is rarely profitable for working class women, therefore alternative ways of performing identities will naturally be sought out, as to be 'completely feminine would be to be without agency, to be a sign of powerlessness'. Therefore, as femininity is devalued compared to all forms of masculinity, females learn the skills which have been traditionally associated with road culture, such as fighting:

> A woman knows how to defend herself if she needs to defend herself and I chose to defend myself. I wasn't going to back down. As women we've learnt to stand up for ourselves and fight for ourselves. Why should women be taking it? Women have had to stand up and be stronger when it comes to fighting and they've taken on more of a masculine role to some degree but women have learnt to become more of a male figure so I can see younger girls fulfilling that role and becoming more masculine and defending their territory. You still get those quiet ones who want to be in charge of their lives but they're at the lower end of the pecking order of the group (Perri, 25)

There is a sense of empowerment and status amongst young women who have, due to necessity, been forced to stand up and take care of themselves. Whilst violence, or the threat of violence, cuts across all social classes for many young

women this can be a result of being at the intersection of multiple inequalities. The argument that women have been liberated as a result of feminism is a spurious one, as Young (2010) notes, low paid work is hardly liberation for black working class women. The notion of 'feminism gone wrong' has also been inappropriately, and readily, applied to discussions around female association with violence as fighting back, or instigating violence, can be part of young women's everyday experiences. For example, those in Sikes' (1997, p. 23) study felt it was simply 'part of life in their contested landscape'. Whilst violence can be a means of exerting agency, it is often a survival strategy for those in deprived communities rather than the 'demonic character' of the young women (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2013, p. 50). For interviewees, it is these strong and aggressive females who will be successful:

> People talk to me about young women and fighting and I think to myself women have been fighting for years. Women are more willing to use violence. Violence has become more of a tool used to settle a score than it would have been in the past and that comes back to young people having more difficulty communicating so if you can't communicate verbally you tend to fight (Morgan, Senior Gang Practitioner)

> I didn't used to talk. If someone is talking so much the first reaction I would have is just box you for running your mouth. If you are that bad you wouldn't even have spoken, you would have just hit me, do you know what I'm trying to say? (Ria, 23)

Fighting females are neither new, or limited to, isolated domestic incidents. The use of violence can be a replacement for verbal communication, which is supported by Harris' (1988, p. 174) research whereby young women in these contexts, 'fight instead of flea, assault instead of articulate'. In terms of Ria preferring to use her fists, rather than a weapon, this resonates with Hagedorn and Devitt (1999) who found that young women in their research fight differently to young men, including less weapons use.

The myth of the invincible angry black woman

Whilst there appears to be some reluctance in wider society to acknowledge young women as having the propensity for violence, when it comes to black women this situation differs due to the aggressive stereotype attached to this group. As noted in chapter one, specific, dominant norms, of femininity were developed in the nineteenth century and this version of passive white middle class femininity is the 'normalised yardstick' from which all women are judged (Collins, 2004, p. 193). Being labelled a strong black woman is complex:

> The way black women express themselves can be seen as aggressive. A lot of black women are in tune with their spirituality and their self-worth and because we know our history of slavery and how women were beaten, raped, pillaged and sold it solidifies a woman's strength. I've been told I'm aggressive, 'Oh another black woman why is she so aggressive?' As a manager and I've been told through the grapevine that my managing directors have said to others 'She

speaks her mind, she doesn't take no shit and she's very aggressive', but I'm not, otherwise why would young people gravitate towards me the way that they do? It's alright for a man to show aggression, that's ok, he's a man. When we grow up we're told women are sugar and spice and all things nice that's what girls are made of as that's the illusion we're under. A woman going to war is like 'Oh my gosh how come this woman is going to war?' Why is there this myth of the angry black woman when there were warriors back in the day, Nanny of the Maroons, there's so many female black warriors. What we are saying is it's ok when you're in the role of a warrior or in the army to be an aggressive black woman but in everyday life we can't show that side. It's hypocritical and takes away the equality of being a woman to be able to express herself and not being labelled as the aggressive black woman, and particularly the labelling of groups of women. We're not bad women (Shara, Youth Practitioner)

Black women have been stereotyped as more aggressive than their white counterparts due, in part, to the myth of the angry black woman. This image is rooted in the legacy of slavery and positions this group as pathologically aggressive. Wallace (1979, p. 95) however, doesn't subscribe to this myth, it makes her cringe because it's referring to the historical version of her, 'the monolithic me – the invincible black woman'. Alder (1975, p. 90) for example suggested that black women, due to their history of slavery, exhibit 'aggressiveness, toughness and a certain street-wise self sufficiency'. The extent

to which society has progressed from Du Bois' statement is questionable, 'there is a widespread feeling that something is wrong with a race that is responsible for so much crime, and that strong remedies are called for' (1899, cited in Potter 2015, p. 154). With this in mind Jones (2010, p. 8) notes how black women are particularly vulnerable to the 'formal and informal sanctions' when appearing to challenge gendered stereotypes. This resonates with Burris-Kitchen (1997) who found that that within the formal work economy black women are viewed as too aggressive, whilst these qualities are a requirement of the informal economy:

> We as black women are known to be violent and angry. I feel this is because we are taught not to tolerate shit from anyone and we are raised to be strong and independent. I also feel that freedom of speech is something to be scared of or frowned upon as a black woman. We are not scared to speak our minds and in society that is judged as being loud and aggressive and violent. People fear us as we are strong and independent and not scared to be by ourselves and stand on our own two feet. In a world full of oppression being black comes with many labels and stigmas and being angry is just one of them. Especially with labels of the typical black woman how they are deemed within society and our local communities. A black woman has a rude boy image (Perri, 25)

Part of the reason why black women are stereotyped is due to socialisation processes whereby they can be educated to be tough, although this should not necessarily be interpreted as aggression. Taylor (1993, p. 201) notes how black

women have been particularly stereotyped as 'wild women of the streets, completely lacking any humanising qualities'. The 'rude boy' construction Perri refers to may apply to a minority of black young women but it is unacceptable to assume they all adopt this persona. This type of imagery also plays into the idea that they are inherently more criminal than their white counterparts with the disproportional amount of offenders used to imply that they are 'typical' criminals (Young, 1994, p. 79). This suggests that the perceived deviant character of the black female is one which is set in place before any crime has been committed. Whilst it is clearly problematic to generalise across entire populations, such controversial views do help aid an understanding of why the discourse of the angry black woman has persisted over time. A young women's background can be key to whether they are violent or not:

> One thing you got to remember is yeah it's not who they are or what they are but it's what they've been through because that makes them who they are today. With black girls it depends on the background and if she has older brothers, and it depends on the brothers as well, if they have older brothers who are really tough and then they grow up tough anyways (Montell, 21)

Life experiences can determine the ways in which a young woman carries herself. This indicates how it is impossible to consider motivations for fighting without taking into consideration an individual's position in society based on the structural intersections of their identity and the influence of the family. Whilst black women from deprived communities have plenty to be angry about, this anger is not

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pathological, rather if it exists, it is caused by the environment. Regardless of racial background, young women living in poverty are more likely to be involved in violence than their more affluent counterparts. If society has little to offer women of colour in deprived areas, females may get drawn into badness as a result of 'situated survival strategies' (Jones, 2010, p. 53). With violence being part of the informal economy, displays of toughness is part doing business for females in order to demonstrates the ability to look after themselves (Lauderback et al., 1992).

Playing the game: Bad ass femininity

Very little is known about young women who perpetrate violence as this is not atypical for young women living in deprived areas. The prevalence of their behaviours is underestimated however compared to their male counterparts in the context of road culture. This is due, in part, to the lack of recognition that they could perpetrate such harmful acts, in addition to the predominant focus of them as victims of violence. However, fighting can be pervasive in the lives of both young men and women as a means of gaining respect:

> Some of my insight is based on some of the girls in my graffiti gang but then when I came out of graffiti and was just involved in crime and stuff in London I saw other street gangs in London and girls in those environments. In the graffiti world it's mainly males so as a girl you have to be tough do you know what I mean? My gang was counted as a street gang really and the graffiti was going out the window that's

when they had girls in it, they sort of wanted to be with the boys. They wanted to get respect they wanted to fight as well (Joel, Author)

Respondents agreed that young women are seeking respect in similar ways to young men by demonstrating strength:

There's a lot of trouble on the fighting side of things they think if they can fight and put someone else down that will make them look good and then the guys will have more respect for them too (Jade, 21)

When a young woman wants to climb the hierarchy in a gang she becomes viscous to achieve that position. She craves power and respect from other members, they really do want to get involved in the action (Delano, Youth Practitioner)

In keeping with their male peers, young women use violence as a means of building respect and maintaining a tough reputation. This is supported by Batchelor (2009) who suggests that they often engage in violence for the same reasons as young men, with respect being an important currency:

Yeah because if you're the dweeb within the group how are you gonna be taken seriously? You need to have that bravado to show that I'm somebody to be reckoned with. You need to reconfigure what you're thinking about yourself and look what I bring in because I'm bringing more to the table. Who's the baddest girl in the room kind of thing (Perri, 25)

Displays of badness can cement a young women's reputation in order to maintain her position. According to Brown (1999) it shouldn't come as a surprise that it can be as common for women as it is for men. For Ben (Police Analyst), 'The violence noted by the females was comparable to that the males in cases'. She enjoys being perceived as a 'bad ass', she is 'aggressive, tough, crazy and violent' (Hunt & Laider, 2001, p. 675). Interviewees established the importance of not showing weakness in order to be taken seriously:

> Basically it's like honestly you have to show something of yourself. You have to show that you're not scared of no one, like you're strong like you got things. So even if someone does try and touch you know you've got comeback. So obviously relating to me when I was younger I was really feisty cos coming from my background everyone I knew who was. My cousin were boys, I was around boys, so I grew up with a boy mentality instead of having a girl mentality so obviously I thought I was bad and all of this (Desiree, 19)

Part of gaining respect is about not showing fear. This is resonates with Miller & Brunson (2000, p. 433) who reveal that females gain status by adopting a male mentality and being 'down for whatever'. Part of their honorary male status was based on their willingness to fight:

> Girls are fighting boys just as often as boys are fighting boys on the streets they can be just as violent (Imani, 24)

> The girls from my gang even if they weren't attacking another girl they'd be attacking one of the male rival members (Joel, Author)

These observations correlate with the young women in Sikes' (1997) research who not only fought with both men and women, but also took pride from doing so:

> Back in the day it used to be a rare occasion if you got a girl that could fight like a guy and there was like one or two but you knew who they were. Now girls are just fighting everywhere they are just as bad as guys now there's no line anymore (Casey, 20)

> Young women are adopting a tough streetwise persona in order to achieve respect, maintain their reputation and to prove themselves. It's the same way as young men, very much the same. It's about being tough. I know someone who has done some dirty stuff like killed a couple of people and that's one of the only ways that as a girl you're gonna get respect because it's to be able to do guys work then your scene is up to par with the guys (Bianca, 18)

A successful reputation can be achieved by adhering to the localised norms of road culture such as not backing down from a fight. This links to the young women in Shacklady's (1978) study who said they were treated equally by male peers and earned their respect due to attending the big fights and going to war for each other. Interviewees agreed that young women are known for fighting with both males and females:

They knew it was not just women, they knew it was guys and stuff like that, don't mess with Ria you know. Now I've still got it but then they see like I'm real that's another thing I take that with me everywhere. No man can tell me what things look like or how it goes do you know what I'm trying to say? I probably fight better than some men. It's too easy to bring a knife in, I'm more of an old fashioned girl I'd rather fight you then pick up any sort of weapon (Ria, 23)

Young women can rival other men in terms of her fighting prowess which helps cement their reputation as a bad ass. The respondents in Burris-Kitchen's (1997) research also indicated that they can, and will be, as cut throat as men to get what they want, as by acting traditionally feminine can result in a loss of street credibility and hold them back. High levels of female violence are being observed by those working with young women:

I had a girl who, put it this way, her mother said to me when she found her at the bottom of the staircase of the flats in which she lives she didn't recognise her. She thought she'd been beaten up by group of men and that's the level to which she was battered. There are a lot of very angry girls and young women but believe me the girls, especially the last eight that I was working with, the levels of violence are no different to any boy's violence. In fact I've met a lot of aggressive girls which people don't seem to focus on, explosive young women, but no one wants to talk about the forgotten girls (Heather, Youth Practitioner)

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There is a lack of attention given to young women and their violent behaviours as society would prefer to ignore the potential harm they can cause. Anderson (1999) illustrates how aggression can be a rational response for those young men alienated from mainstream culture through poverty and social exclusion, and alludes to the adoption of the 'code of the street' in terms of generating respect. In terms of managing violence young women also ascribe to this code according to Jones (2008):

> Okay speaking from a young woman's perspective, I think young women get more respect if they act more like a boy. Boys call me a man, they're like 'Ashleigh, why are you like a man talking slang?' I talk a lot of slang I can't help it but obviously when I'm working I keep it professional but when I'm outside of work I talk a lot of slang but most of the guys are like 'Ashleigh why are you acting like a man? Be like a lady, be a lady' I'm like 'Why?' I like being like this, if you don't like it go over there it's fine find someone else, leave me alone, but that's how I am (Ashleigh, 20)

Performing a perceived masculine role can be more profitable for females than a passive feminine one, evoking the notion of 'acting like men' when they exhibit aggression, due to the association of violence with masculinity rather than femininity. With this in mind, Beckett et al. (2013, p. 7) identify that young women 'adopt male personas'. This demonstrates the binary terms in which forms of femininity and masculinity continue to be referred to, whilst failing to appreciate that badness can be considered to be a way of performing of femininity. This

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polarisation of gendered attributes has become firmly entrenched in the minds of the criminologist, the media, and in turn, some young women themselves:

> One woman I work with could hold her own she said 'You know what's out here, in this world you can't be the female you want to be, you got to act like a guy you got to be a guy to actually survive'. So when she was first released from prison and came into the office she came in a very nice feminine maxi dress and within weeks that changed she became very aggressive wearing jeans and trainers, I could see the change. But it was about her having to hold her own, she could be the pretty female she wanted to be, but she had to switch and do what she needed to do. That tomboy kind of thing but at the same time if she wanted to be the feminine female like Jekyll and Hyde that's just about survival. It makes you realise that it's hard (Katrina, Probation Officer)

This switching of identities demonstrates how young women are well aware of what works for them in terms of creating and sustaining a tough image, illustrating the ways in which they can put on and take off a range of attributes according to the situation they find themselves in. Differences between females are articulated by ways in which they construct their version of femininity according to Messerschmidt (1997) who suggests that they are not performing masculinity, but instead redefining what it means to be feminine. In keeping with this, Ilan (2015, p. 47-48) uses the term 'street femininities' to capture the nuanced construction, and presentation, of female identities. He suggests that when it comes to 'street

masculinities' on the other hand these tend to be clearly defined by violence, connecting to this to Messerschmidt's (1997) idea of how certain men 'do masculinity'. 'On road femininities' is also a phrase then which could be operationalised in this way to take into account the diversity of street identities, from those who are viewed as sexual objects or victims, to those on the fringe of badness, and those that are heavily entrenched. However the more specific identity of those who have tough personas and engage in road culture can be referred to as a performance of 'bad ass femininity'. This term has been recognised in relation to female breakdancers by Johnson (2014, p. 15) for whom 'badass femininity is a one version of a multiplicity of femininities. It re-signifies qualities typically associated with masculinity'. This street based description links closely to the idea of the female bad ass on road described by interviewees in my research.

Whilst the potential for female violence may not be acknowledged in the same way it is for males in wider society, fighting can become normalised within these contexts and young women are encouraged, rather than discouraged, to get involved. Mendoza-Denton (2008, p. 170) refers to 'macha' which enables a gendered flux of identities, rather than polarising behaviour as essentially masculine or feminine, based instead on the idea of what it means to be macho. Rather than 'acting like men', young women are picking and choosing their identities which are successful according to their environments. Defining forms of female behaviour as male denies the potential for 'a thinking girl, a girl with

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agency, a girl who is actively trying to make sense of her social world (Jones, 2010, p. 85).

Taking care of business: Levels of female violence

Whilst the amount of serious youth violence attributed to young men has been overstated, young women can also be involved in these incidents. In addition to it being acknowledged that young women are engaging in similar forms of violence to that of their male peers, interviewees also revealed that females are known to behave in harsher ways:

> There's no difference between what young men and young women are getting up to the streets except that young women can be crazier and more vindictive. Gender isn't a thing, it's more about the behaviour of individual and it's the environment, females are fully part of criminal activities (Nicola, 19)

> I think females are worse. I think women have got something to prove. Even though we don't, I think some of us may feel like we do (Ashleigh, 20)

The quest to be somebody through displays of badness can be rooted in personality and the impact of the surroundings. This is despite the fact that violence is 'generally considered femininity's polar opposite' (Jones, 2010, p. 76). Dietrich (1998) argues that young women are attempting to exert control by rejecting passive versions of femininity. One way of doing this is the performance of the bad ass:

If there was a robbery in progress or something like that say, say if they had three boys and one girl, obviously I know because I was involved in madness back in the day, so with three boys and one girl the boys would just hover around and whoever saw us felt threatened obviously and then the girl hyped herself up basically and did certain things that we wouldn't have done but the only reason she did it is because we was there. As boys we'd fight and all of that but whenever a girl's involved the girl wants to be involved in that little section that you're in they push you to the back. Say if I start beating on a certain person laying into them on the floor and that the girl would jump over and start stamping on his face and just go reckless on him (Delano, Youth Practitioner)

This links to Ness (2010) who found that the crazier the violent behaviour exhibited, the more respect they can gain from their peers. Females use violence as a way of creating, and maintaining, a reputation for themselves and sometimes they have work twice as hard to achieve this according to Sikes (1997). Whilst acceptance in the group may be a given for young men due to the normalisation of violence attached to what it means to be masculine, young women may have to prove themselves as a fighter and earn their reputation as someone who is up for anything (Brown, 1999). Respondents discussed examples of young woman's violent behaviour:

Looking back on it I've seen girls do some messed up things, one girl stabbed five people literally heart shots, stabbed straight in the heart

and turned the blade. I was like 'You're heartless'. I'd never seen anyone stab someone in the heart and twist the blade and laugh while they're doing it I said 'What? She was a nutcase and I said to her 'In this game it's about longevity'. She only got caught for one of the five stabbings and is probably still in jail now (Zharnel, Youth Practitioner)

This reveals the levels of violence which young women can engage in, which even has the potential to shock someone who has participated in, and witnessed, a great deal. It's been noted that females will want to make their mark as a reminder to the victim of their encounter, they can be violent and deadly as they carve out their identity as a tough fighter according to Brown's (1999) respondents. There was a consensus amongst interviewees that they can be extremely vicious when they fight:

> Women are very violent I think, I think even more violent than men. To get the respect and stuff they go bit further, yeah definitely are more violent than men. What they do to other women is more calculated, say a guy was going to stab someone he would stab them but I think a girl would get someone in their face, places where it would be seen. She will go for appearance (Chantelle, 19)

> Girls will stab you probably stab you in the ear or somewhere horrible like that or stab you in the bum so you can't sit down. They will stab people in places which will take longer to heal (Reece, Youth Practitioner)

Interviewees indicate how young women may aim to take things to the next level, making it personal by stabbing their victims in places that their male peers may not. This links to the young women in Sikes' (1997, p. xvi) research who said 'We go for your weak spot...Your face, your throat, your eyes so we can blind you':

> If you've stabbed someone in the eye they're not gonna come back for you. Also I know one girl who everyone used to be scared of because she was a psycho, literally psycho. So what she used to do is tell these boys come for sex and she used to take them in the room one by one and beat them up, literally she would take them into the room one by one and beat them up. To the point that they were so scared they wouldn't go round her house no more. Every time she called they were like 'It's the psycho bitch'. As much as women are sensitive and mothers and things like that the violence comes out. As a mother now I think I would do more damage to someone now who tried to put me in that position than before. This girl was a young mum from fourteen so for her it was easier to beat them up then have them coming round and having sex with her (Asha, 21)

Stabbing someone in their face this can act as a level of protection to prevent retaliation for the attack. This links to Campbell's (1993) work whereby females would also use their reputations to protect themselves by being known as crazy for cutting people's faces. Young women may cut people in the face as a symbolic gesture, whilst the males in Ness' (2010) study were not likely to do the same. Asha also points to the way which men can be manipulated with the promise of

sex which then turns into a violent encounter. As previously discussed in chapter seven, this is known as the honey-trap. It was suggested by interviewees that females can be more vindictive:

> Women can be very spiteful, especially if there's a fight going off between girls and guys. Guaranteed the girls would be ten times more dramatic about the whole situation. They'll make everyone stop and stare and when people are looking they're going to give them something to look at. Like when I used to get angry or whatever and commit crime and do violence it was kind of no mercy. I'm a female, I don't care if you're a man or a giant, I don't care as far as I'm concerned, I'm going to hurt you. That's how I used to go around (Ashleigh, 20)

> Girls have vendettas. I've seen a girl stab someone up, I've seen a girl do everything. When a guy stabs someone he might look away but with a girl she will look you right in the eye and finish you off they proper want to make sure 'Yes my name is Nicola, remember my name, I did this to you'. They might drive around with someone in the back of their car suffocating them to make them scared. They have the most vindictive ideas, more vindictive than guys, trapping someone in a cupboard or in a car is not just something that can physically hurt you but can mentally hurt you as well so you can then turn that fear into control and turn people into slaves (Nicola, 19)

Whilst in wider society female violence tends to be presented as something abnormal, within the context of road life it can become both normalised and encouraged. For example when Taylor (1993, p. 109) asked one of his respondents about this, she replied, 'Its violence and aggression to y'all 'cause ya from somewhere soft (laughing and mocking the investigators). What's violent? If you don't take care yo'self ain't nobody else gonna do it for ya'. There is pride attached to being a successful fighter, if a young woman is taking survival into their own hands this can provide her with a sense of empowerment (Jones, 2010). Shelayna, 18, and Phillips (Youth Practitioner) discuss the similarities and differences between female and male perpetrated violence:

Shelayna: I think males and females they do the same sort of violence

Phillips: Yes

Shelayna: But with male gangs it's more frequent, when a girl does it they fight, they fight for people, but when it gets down and it starts to get deep they will literally be more violent than the boys because they have something that they call no mercy. They literally don't care, your eye, your face, they don't care where it is, your heart, they know what they're going for

CC: Some say they have more of a vendetta which motivates them

Shelayna: They have, they have

Phillips: It's a woman scorned

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Shelayna: They have, they'll get to the point where they do anything to damage you, and when they make damage they damage. I believe that when boys do their thing they're not mindful when they do it but girls run wild, they literally run wild, when she's angry she's angry so she's running wild. Her friends might be as they say 'Gassing up her head' or getting the better of her so when she's got that the girl she can't look like an idiot cos that's her name. So if this girl loses a fight that's all over social networks once again so she has to do what she needs to do because it's that girl. Everyone knows it's you, with boys if there was a gang of you, you don't know who it is cos you're just seeing a bunch of black hoodies. But if it's a girl you can see that girl's face, what she looks like you can see everything, everything, so they feel like they have to prove a point once again they don't have no sort of mercy there's no stop to it

In addition to outlining how much damage young women are capable of, the importance of winning confrontations is key so that reputations are not tarnished and then played out across social media. The loss of face can ultimately result in a reduction of ratings for that young woman which equates to a loss of respect:

When women resort to violence they mean business. When young women get to that point where it all comes out and they get into the violent activities it is almost as if you're groomed not to, so when you do you're gonna get it. When you do get violence in prison it's always been noted that when women are violent, and they're imprisoned,

they're always more violent than men. It's always been the case, even

when you were younger and two girls had a fight it was always more

vicious than when the boys had a fight. They pull your hair, punch you

in the eye, but you're going for the jugular, you're going for the kill, it's

always been like that. That animal driving instinct that says alright I'm

going to fight. I don't know what it is but when women fight it's do or

die (Morgan, Senior Gang Practitioner)

Fighting females are not a new phenomenon, Campbell (1999, p. 225) suggests that it should be no surprise that they choose to play the 'hardwoman' against a backdrop of poverty and crime. Such acts also help them gain status for being 'bad, crazy, or wild', and those who fit this role will be given hierarchal status according to Harris (1988, p. 136). The badder the young woman can be the fiercer her reputation will become:

You've got girls that, say someone is being kicked in, and they're

really kicking them in, the girls will get involved. They get involved in

the sense of stabbings as well, but as I said they're not looking at girls

they're looking at the mandem, so girls who have vendettas over each

other you know. They are bitches and they're very violent towards

each other as well (Melissa, Female Gang Practitioner)

This demonstrates their commitment when it comes to fights, the participation of which being a declaration of 'individual proficiency at defending the 'hood...displaying one's badness' to indicate their loyalty (Messerschmidt 1997, p.

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82). Melissa also points to the fact that female violence, in the same way as their criminal activities, is being overlooked by authorities. The result of this is that aggression continues to be regarded as a normal part of masculinity rather than also a form of femininity. As Portillos (1999, p. 244) puts it, to understand young women 'we cannot view them as simply a new breed of violent women involved in masculine crimes...Their lives and the decisions they face each day are far more complex than such labels suggest'.

Conclusion

Little is known about young women who perpetrate violence, which is due to the dominant conversations stemming from the gang agenda focusing on those who are victims rather than perpetrators. Due to the gang literature dominating the landscape in terms of how young people are currently framed in Britain, this tends to be the main source of information about young women's relationship with badness. The aim of this chapter was to demonstrate that when it comes to violence, they are not necessarily passive victims or bystanders to the action. Interviewees acknowledged that fighting is part of the everyday for a minority of young women living in marginalised communities, despite the reluctance of wider society to admit what females can be capable of. Black young women on the other hand have been viewed as inherently more violent than their white counterparts due to the myth of the angry black woman. This pathological reasoning ignores the intersection of multiple oppression and fails to acknowledge that badness is more likely to be used as a strategy survival in deprived communities as a way of taking care of business. Interviewees alluded to the notion of young women 'acting like

men', whereby roles are gendered and essentialised due to violence being viewed as a masculine rather than a feminine pursuit. For young women, being an honorary man through the development of a tough streetwise persona is a way for her to achieve status and gain respect. However, rather than displaying masculinity, they are performing their own version of femininity, bad ass femininity, which is one of a range of diverse and competing on road femininities. Interviewees agreed that not only are young women engaging in violence, but they can be as brutal as young men. Within road culture, rather than being seen as something unnatural, fighting is celebrated and normalised for young women who seek to prove themselves via displays of badness. It was suggested that some females can be more vindictive than their male peers, choosing to stab their victims in the face as symbolic gestures of strength and a means of warding off potential retaliation. When it comes to fighting they can display extremely violent tendencies in order to be noticed and gain ratings. A young woman may feel she is required to do more to prove herself in these contexts due them being regarded as masculine spaces.

<u>Conclusion</u>

Very little is known empirically about young women on road in the UK, consequently discussions about those who engage in badness are extremely sparse. Due to this lack of research a small number of scholars have influenced the gang agenda by promoting misinformation and scaremongering. The body of work on contemporary gangs in Britain can be best understood as a continuum of the racist and sexist gang agenda, of which it helped to create and continues to sustain. The American super gang import has been adopted in Britain as atypical, despite the diversity in these contexts, and regardless of the fact that this stereotype has also been questioned in relation to US soil. A small minority of gangs are likely to fit this hierarchical and hyper violent model which has informed media and policy to the point that it's believed that there is an epidemic. Consequently it is young women's lives and experiences living in deprived areas, and their relationship with road culture, which I am interested in rather than the gang per se. Given that young women are either being completely ignored, or reduced to victim status, I was compelled to attempt to fill the gap through frustration about how their identities were being wrongly constructed and attributed. My intention was to debunk some of the key myths which surround their experiences and demonstrate how badness can be a strategy deployed by both young men and women in deprived neighbourhoods as a way of resisting mainstream values in order to feel respected and gain status

One of the myths which have been generated by the gang industry is that the gang is a new phenomenon. The gang member has become the new folk devil in

society based on a moral panic created due to an overstated connection to gun and knife crime. However, the empirical evidence to support this claim remains lacking. Rather than being a new entity, gangs simply mirror the characteristics of historic subcultural groups which have been prominent in the UK since the Second World War. Interviewees suggested that rather than being a new phenomenon gangs are intergenerational subcultures which have evolved organically over time via groups of peers and family members who have grown up together in deprived neighbourhoods. Whilst formal recruitment may take place, it was argued that informal recruitment was far more likely through people that young women already knew from within their locality. These subcultures represent a cyclical news cycle which mirrors the treatment of the Mods and Rockers, whereby disturbances were blown out of proportion and exaggerated by the media in order to create fear and anxiety. In keeping with the right-wing press today, conflict between groups is fuelled by the media in order to capitalise on the notion of lawlessness, which in turn results in calls for tougher policing by the public. The major difference between the Mods and Rockers and the modern day subcultures is the issue of race, wherein black young men have become the target of the nation's fears and viewed as demonic outsiders rather than a product of the state.

Given the ways in which the gang has come to represent something wholly negative it is easy to comprehend why a young woman may not want to admit that she is part of one. Equally, many do not believe that their crew, or squad, constitutes a gang. With this in mind, young women would understandably want to avoid being subjected to the same scrutiny as their male counterparts. What

doesn't add up however is that despite the heavy focus on sexually exploited young women by the police and government agencies, thus highlighting their involvement, they are not considered a threat due to their victim status or recorded as a gang member. That said, whether she is part of a gang or not isn't important. What young women are getting up to as part of road culture is of far greater consequence, whether that be as part of a group or on an individual basis, road culture being a specific subculture connected to badness adopted by both young men and women in deprived urban areas. It is the behaviour and experiences of young women, rather than the collective itself, which is the central point of interest. Rather than focus on the gang as an entity in itself, researchers should shift their attention to young people and their behaviours, as ignoring the impact of living in a deprived area means that the root causes of badness are not being fully addressed. Future research should adopt a more holistic approach to understand the nuances of young women's engagement with badness. Moving away from the discipline of criminology, and the gang enthusiasts which have served to position black youth as dangers to society, we need to reposition the debates within the field of sociology and youth studies to progress empirically and theoretically.

The dominant perception of young women's relationship with road culture is that they are either not involved, or are on the periphery. Both of these myths were challenged and dismissed by interviewees who indicated that their participation is far more significant than is generally assumed, even if it is not atypical of the experiences of young women on road. In addition to an unwillingness to accept that they have the potential for badness, it was also felt that the police are far too

focused on capturing young men who are known to them so females remain under the radar. Whilst being interrogated it was acknowledged that police routinely ask young women which of their male peers made them commit the offence, rather than accept that females possess the agency to make their own decisions. Whilst this suggestion of coercion may be true in some cases, the binary agency/coercion debate is more complex, therefore young women should not be considered as a homogenous group without the potential to act freely as autonomous agents.

The reasons why females get involved in badness are similar to those of their male peers, as they both grow up in the same areas, experiencing structural inequalities and lack of decent educational and job opportunities. It will come as no surprise that financial gain was the most dominant explanation put forward by interviewees. This was expressed in two ways, as a response to the strain of living in deprived areas, and by the impact of living in a society which prizes conspicuous consumption, to which the streets are no exception. Stigma and exclusion are by-products of not being able to compete, with this potentially impacting negatively on the identities of young women. The temptation to engage in badness is exacerbated by a neo-liberal society, whereby jobs are short-term and low paid, with little changing in this respect for working class women since the Second World War whose opportunities remain limited. Ultimately the goal for any individual is respect, this is regardless of socio-economic background or standing in society. For young women this can be gained through the acquisition of material goods and/or through the thrill of being known and feared in their neighbourhoods. In keeping with the values of hegemonic masculinity, being viewed as tough is a

way to gain respect, and also a means of protection through the adoption of a formidable persona. Badness is a performance which works as a successful survival strategy for both genders on road, it is a universal street code.

In regards to more gendered explanations of why young women engage in road culture, the idea that they emerge from abusive backgrounds is regularly mooted. However, as identified by interviewees, this fails to take into account that young men may also have experienced neglect and/or abuse which may prompt them to seek solace with neighbourhood peers groups. It was also acknowledged that whilst young women may participate in badness due to relationships with their boyfriends, these weren't necessarily exploitative relationships as is commonly assumed. To suggest that the girlfriend role is one that lacks necessarily lacks agency was challenged by interviewees. Females may be calling the shots, or using the encounters to further their own criminal careers.

Another myth attached to road culture is that young women are not involved. However they display a range of diverse on road femininities, with bad ass femininity best capturing their relationship with this subculture. The role of the auxiliary is one which they are heavily linked with, and in regards to carrying drugs and weapons this tends to be viewed as a secondary activity when performed by a female. However, when a young man takes on these responsibilities it is regarded as central. As young women are stopped and searched at far lower rates, holding drugs and weapons becomes the obvious and rational choice. The notion that they are necessarily second class citizens was challenged by interviewees who indicated that their participation in badness can be entrenched. The sale and

supply of drugs, in addition to committing robberies, are key crimes which young women can engage in. That they can be bosses and take on leadership roles also demonstrates their potential for independence. The purpose of this study was not to replace the victim label with one of perpetrator as such polarised terms are unhelpful, but instead to highlight that the lives of young women on road, and the range of femininities which are present, are far more diverse than current academic and policy literature allows for. These accounts reflect young women who are engaging in badness, and whilst their involvement is significant compared to their male peers, their experiences are not necessarily the norm for young women living in urban deprived areas.

In terms of violence, it still appears to be difficult for academics and policy makers to acknowledge that females are actively involved in aggressive encounters, particularly in terms of their propensity for serious violence. That said, alongside this denial, runs the contradictory stereotype of the invincible angry black woman who is perceived as innately more aggressive than their white counterparts due to the cultural legacies of slavery. Whilst violence is less prevalent for young women in the context of road culture compared to young men, it nevertheless remains part of life for a minority. Strategies of gaining respect, being known and feared, are adopted by both young men and women as part of the territory. Interviewees indicated that not only could female violence match that of their male peers, their levels of aggression had the potential to surpass them. It was established that young women are more likely to stab their victim in the face so the memory of that attack stays with their victim. It is also an approach adopted in order to be seen as

a bad ass, with the intent to ward off potential future retaliations. It also demonstrates how some young women may feel they have to do more than their male counterparts in order to achieve that respect and status.

In terms of future research, what's needed is a less polarised view of gendered identities, one which acknowledges the complexities of the lives of young men and women so they are not positioned as binary opposites of perpetrators or victims. There is a need for an intersectional approach to be adopted in relation to the study of young women, in addition to more widely across the field of British criminology, in order to centralise class, gender and race to assist in the production of meaningful debates. To address these gaps further, studies of urban young women are needed with a focus on the family, education, leisure, in addition to employment in the formal and informal economies. Young women from deprived urban areas, particularly those of colour, require more platforms from which they can be heard. They should also have the opportunity to challenge the stereotypes and myths which have historically been placed upon them, as Lorde (1982) says, 'If I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive'.

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Appendices

19 October 2018

Dear Clare

UEL PHD STUDENT CLARE CHOAK

STUDENT NO 1443607

The following confirms the Graduate School's record of your enrolment on the PhD programme with UEL.

I can confirm that you were enrolled with Middlesex University London on their MPhil/PhD programme prior to joining UEL. Whilst at Middlesex University London you received ethical approval for your PhD research study on 8 June 2014 and you transferred from MPhil to PhD status on 19 September 2014.

You then transferred to the University of East London as a PhD Direct student on 12 January 2015 and your ethical clearance from Middlesex University has been accepted by UEL.

Yours sincerely

Avinder Bhinder

Graduate School Administrator

Middlesex University London

Clare Choak
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Criminology & Education
University of Greenwich
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Main switchboard:
020 8411 5000

18th November 2016

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Clare Choak
Student Number: M00441901
Programme: PhD

This is to confirm that the above named student's ethical approval was approved by Dr Sarah Bradshaw on the 8th June 2014.

I hope this is useful for your purpose. Please do not hesitate to contact me on 020 8411 4836 or to e-mail me p.babatunde@mdx.ac.uk if you require further information.

Yours faithfully,

PP

Patricia Babatunde
Senior Research Degrees Officer
Research Office
Middlesex University