



Collateral damage

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CHAPTER FIVE

Collateral Damage: Territory and Policing in an English Gang City

Judith Aldridge, Robert Ralphs and Juanjo Medina

Introduction

This chapter explores the relevance of ‘territory’ – variously understood – with regard to youth gangs using data arising from an ethnographic study of youth gangs in an English city. Gangs are usually assumed or argued to be territorial entities – in the popular imagination, by police authorities and even by academic researchers (e.g. Ley and Cybriwsky 1974; Pitts 2008). A consistent finding of research in the UK, and elsewhere, is that youth gangs appear to be grounded in territory (particularly place of gang members residence) (e.g. Marshall et al. 2005). For some, territoriality is a defining characteristic of gangs. Klein (1997: 517) for example, distinguishes between highly territorial ‘traditional’ gangs and ‘specialist’ gangs that ‘define territory by their criminal market’. The linkage between gangs and territories also has important policy implications. In the USA it has led, for instance, to targeted policing strategies based on mapping gangs and their ‘turf’ as a means of providing crime reduction (e.g. Kennedy et al. 1997). In the UK, following the American lead, the salience of territory is critical for understanding the application of gang injunctions used to limit the association of gang members in public spaces. Understanding how territory functions in youth gangs, therefore, is important in assessing both the appropriateness – and the theoretical groundedness – of such policy interventions.

We begin with the question of whether or not youth gangs in ‘Research City’¹ map onto neighbourhood of residence. Gangs in the Inner West part of the city developed directly from specific neighbourhood areas, and two of the gangs with the greatest notoriety and longevity (approximately 30 years) were named in connection with particular geographical localities. Notwithstanding this, over the ensuing decades what we term ‘residential outsiders’ have become more visible in these gangs. Residential outsiders arise for a range of reasons that we identify and discuss below, and they have important implications for how gangs are policed.

‘Territory’ has multiple and overlapping referents and its markers include: identifiable neighbourhoods marked by physical boundaries; particular streets or areas ‘adopted’ by a gang (see Tita et al. 2005); public or private venues such as gyms, youth centres, pubs; illegal (normally drugs) ‘markets’; and the domiciliary positioning of people (especially family members and sexual partners, usually girls and women). In our research, gang members’ accounts of their ‘turf’ were highly individualised, differing in the level of risk they perceived within particular areas and, thus, their spatialised patterns of movement. Young people in Inner West gangs, for example, sometimes reported ‘hanging around’ in public places, but only rarely did we directly observe this. Visible street presence was not the norm amongst the Inner West gangs of Research City – at least not to the extent that it appears to be amongst

¹ The city in which we carried out the research remains anonymous in our public references to it (see later).

gangs in the USA - and we will consider possible reasons for this difference. We will also assess the implications of this finding for dominant conceptualisations of gangs that emphasise 'street orientation' as a defining criterion.

Moreover, as we have discussed elsewhere (Ralphs et al. 2009), 'space' and 'place' are significant for how non-gang affiliated young people living in 'gang' neighbourhoods inhabit or avoid particular territory, both close to home and further afield. Here we investigate the means by which gang members and their families navigate space, and the risks they face both in 'home space' and in 'non-gang territory' – particularly the city centre. Although there are many similarities in the experiences of non-gang affiliated young people and gang members in this regard - both experience restricted movements - paradoxically, gang members and, indeed, their families (Aldridge et al. 2009), more often described actual victimisation, sometimes involving serious levels of violence and injury.

Police perceptions of young people's use of space and place are critical to the means by which they identify and police gang members. During the late 1980s and the early 1990s in Research City, this was a fairly straightforward matter comprising observations of substantial numbers of gang-involved young people making sales within, gang-dominated open drugs markets. However, the shift over the last two decades from open drugs markets (situated within clearly defined public places) to closed markets (where transactions are carried out in a range of often non-public locations) has created something of an 'intelligence vacuum' for the police in Research City. Furthermore, the fact that the police rely substantially on young people's use of space in relation to how they characterise, define and police gangs in the city - and determine their 'membership' – has serious implications, particularly in light of new legislation on 'gang injunctions'.

Research Methods, Sites and Conceptual Definitions

We conducted our study in a large English city where authorities had recognised the existence of a violent 'gang problem' and implemented explicit gang suppression and prevention measures. As stated – and explained in greater detail elsewhere (Aldridge et al. 2008) - we do not reveal the identity of the city in order to protect the identity of individuals we engaged with throughout the research, but also to avoid further stigmatisation of certain areas within the city. Other researchers have adopted a similar approach (e.g. May et al. 2005) and, apart from ethical and political considerations, it also served to facilitate access, win confidence and secure trust, even if it places certain limitations on the contextualisation of results.

Data were collected over 26 months between 2005 and 2008 by way of direct observation, individual interviews and focus groups (Aldridge et al. 2010). Additionally, administrative data was collected and collated in order to assist the contextualisation of our primary findings. The project employed five different field researchers assisted at times by 'native' interviewers. Throughout we worked closely with members of the community and individuals associated with gangs in Research City, and we studied and incorporated their critical feedback into our own interpretations. Observations involved: engagement in community activities and events; volunteering in youth centres and community groups concerned with gang violence; participation in police-community consultative groups; and meeting

informally with gang members and associates, ex-gang members and others in the community (including friends and relatives of gang members). Field notes were kept deriving from such observation and engagement. We also conducted 130 formal interviews: 41 with ‘gang members’ (ranging from individuals in their teens to others in their thirties); 62 with people who had a close connection to gang members² (such as family members, friends and partners) and; 27 with ‘key informants’. Finally, these data were complemented by nine focus groups: three with non-gang youth; three with parents; and three with agency and community representatives. We worked in six discrete areas of Research City and established access to six gangs that differed in terms of their longevity, ethnic composition, public profile and (to some degree) nature of criminal activity.

Each of the six areas comprised disadvantaged communities afflicted by structural youth unemployment and related indices of social disadvantage. As Hobbs (2001) has indicated, informal and distinctly localised social systems underpinned by criminality have been an entrenched feature of urban Britain for many decades. The areas we studied were no exception and each evidenced actors actively operating within the criminal economy. The six areas were essentially enveloped within two broader urban zones which, for simplification, we refer to as *Inner West* (a corridor of historically marginalised neighbourhoods with a substantial black and minority ethnic population and an officially recognised gang and gun problem), and *Far West* (a large, predominantly white, council estate with a self-identified gang problem that was *not* officially recognised by local state authorities). The data underpinning this chapter are drawn from Inner West alone, for it is in relation to Inner West that issues around territory and territorialism are particularly pertinent, given the notorious status of the gangs there: highly criminal, gun-carrying, territorial and warring. Data arise primarily from two gangs in the *Belmont* neighbourhood: *Upperside* and *Lowerside* named after two residential streets in Belmont and, to a lesser extent, two other Inner West neighbourhoods: *Shanklytown* and *Windham*³.

There is considerable academic debate and disagreement regarding the definition(s) of gangs. Such definitional disputes have exercised researchers from the seminal work of Thrasher (1927) and they explain, at least to some degree, contrasting research findings. We used the ‘Eurogang’ definition in order to construct our sample. According to this international group of researchers, a gang is a durable street-oriented youth group whose identity includes involvement in illegal activity (Klein et al. 2006; Weerman et al. 2009). Hallsworth and Young (2008) have used a partially modified version of this definition in the UK in order to differentiate ‘gangs’ from less criminally involved peer ‘street groups’. We believe that the ‘Eurogang’ definition provides a sensible starting point given both its international salience and

² Only individuals for whom there was clear evidence of gang involvement were classified as ‘members’. The ‘gang’ sample included many people considered to be ‘original gangsters’ from the late 1980s and early 1990s together with and current ‘lead’ figures in Research City gangs.

³ Pseudonyms for areas, neighbourhoods and gangs were derived in one of two ways: either by using generic names (for example, ‘Inner West’, ‘Far West’, ‘Upperside’ and ‘Lowerside’), or by using the names of towns picked (randomly) from the state of Ohio in the United States. The ‘real’ towns in Ohio bear no intended resemblance to their corresponding neighbourhoods in Research City. Any similarity in size, population, demographics, socio-economic status (or indeed any other characteristic) is entirely coincidental. The names of all individuals referred to here and in all publications that emanate from the wider research are pseudonyms.

its conceptual latitude, allowing us to engage with the diversity of groups that we found in Research City. However, as we argue later, we take issue with the 'street oriented' requisite of the 'Eurogang' definition.

Complexity and Contestation: Territory, 'Turf' and Policing

Although gang members (and gang discourses) often emphasise the significance of *territory* and *'turf'*, we learned through our research that their conceptualisations were much more complex than popular 'boys in the hood' representations imply. This raises core questions pertaining to the legitimacy of conventional modes of policing gangs.

Gang affiliation and neighbourhood: the evolution of 'residential outsiders'

Gangs in Research City evolved from neighbourhood areas. The two main Inner West gangs ('Upperside' and 'Lowerside') are named after areas within the neighbourhood of Belmont, divided by the bisecting Kendall Park Road. There was a common perception, amongst both gang members and the police, that it was the police themselves who first coined the gang names, although they were subsequently adopted to embody strong area-based identities. In other words, the 'labels'⁴ were initially applied by the police, and then adopted by the gangs themselves before being recognised more widely within the communities and, ultimately, local and national media.

Over time, however, Inner West gangs evolved in such a way that territorial boundaries became more fluid and it was no longer necessary for gang members to be resident in neighbourhoods corresponding to their names. Husky, a 25 year old Inner West gang member from Windham explains:

Back in the day it used to be if you were Upperside you had to live on Upperside, if you were Lowerside you have to live on Lowerside, no ins or outs about it. It's not like that no more, they're just shipping in people from anywhere and everywhere. So you've got a guy from Shanklytown, chilling in Belmont, chilling with Lowerside. And then his mates might think, "Well, they're chilling now with the Lowerside, and one of them Lowerside boys beat my sister's boyfriend up years ago, and give me a slap at the same time so fuck you, I'm gonna chill with Upperside."

In the US context, it has long been recognised that gang members' territory and neighbourhood of residence are not necessarily directly coterminous (Moore et al. 1983). Similar divergence was evident in Research City, as explained by an Upperside gang member:

Most gangs are people that live directly near each other, say five/ten guys are definitely from that estate. But as you get more established now you get people from all over that want to be with their cousin, friends, whatever, you know: meeting in jail, however you meet. Hanging around, going out for a few beers, you get part of the gang. I know people from Belmont gangs,

⁴ The effect of these gang labels in reinforcing and freshly generating deviance is a key issue in relation to youth gangs. We do not address this here, but have in Ralphs et al 2009.

probably ten/fifteen people that's not from Belmont, they haven't got addresses from Belmont.

So, whilst close neighbourhood affiliations may underpin the original names of gangs, over time membership often evolves to include what we term 'residential outsiders'. Members of Inner West gangs commonly had addresses outside of the immediate gang neighbourhood. Indeed, some had addresses in areas deemed to be 'rival' gang neighbourhoods. Residential outsiders arose as a result of three primary processes: first, re-housing; second, residing outside of the gang neighbourhood but having family members (usually fathers) residing within it and, third; transition between schools.⁵

Residential outsiders can result from gang members being voluntarily or involuntarily re-housed. Indeed, re-housing is a recommended gang 'exit strategy' advocated by the Home Office (2008) and it featured explicitly as part of the multi-agency gang strategy in Research City. In some cases we found that re-housing could produce positive outcomes in terms of gang exit. However, in many other cases, re-housing gang involved young people and their families had little impact. We noted numerous examples of Inner West gang members being re-housed into neighbouring communities – sometimes a few miles away, sometimes further afield – but retaining their gang activity as residential outsiders. Alongside this, numerous gang members that we encountered in Inner West voluntarily moved from Belmont - where they considered attention from the police to be too great a hassle - to neighbouring areas. Crash, a 37 year old Upperville gang member, refers to some in his gang moving out of Belmont to neighbouring areas: 'I think they moved, because obviously, the area's hot.' 'Heat' could refer to unwanted attention as a result of conflict with others in or outside of the gang, or arise from intensive surveillance from the police. The formation of a dedicated firearm/gang unit with a remit for high profile policing - including regularly stopping suspected gang members and gathering intelligence on their movements - reinforced the view amongst some gang members that identifiable streets, parks and/or other venues associated with these Inner West gangs, are 'too hot' to spend time in.

The most common explanation for the existence of residential outsiders derived from the influence of family connections within the gang neighbourhood. This typically resulted where gang members were raised outside of Belmont by single-parent mothers, whilst their fathers resided in Belmont. Spending time with fathers – some of whom were gang involved themselves – facilitated gang involvement. Deb (a 33 year old former member of a girl gang), and her three brothers (all Upperville gang members), moved from Belmont to neighbouring Cortland when she and her siblings were still in primary school:

We moved to Cortland. But my dad's been in Belmont from the start, and everyone around that area knows us, because we had a good relationship with everyone... So the connections that we had through [primary] school, we still kept, the boys included, in Belmont.

⁵ There are other possible processes that are not explored here, including associations made whilst in prison and the development of 'splinter groups' of a gang in its neighbouring areas.

The third process giving rise to residential outsiders involved moving from one school to another. This was particularly common in the transition at the age of eleven from smaller local primary schools to larger secondary schools sometimes located outside of the neighbourhood of residence. Jon, Toby and Billy, three brothers ranging in age from 24 to 32 years, resided during their childhood in Cortland, a few miles out of Belmont, but after leaving their Cortland primary school, they travelled to the nearby Belmont secondary school (known for having a high proportion of gang members on its roll) and, as a consequence, became involved in the Upperside gang. In Research City, the likelihood that educational transition at the age of eleven would involve children and young people travelling to schools outside of their immediate neighbourhood was accentuated by the trend towards the provision of larger schools (in common with other cities and towns in the UK).

Gang 'turf', movement and street presence

The popular association of drug dealing with gangs often underpins the belief that gangs have clearly defined 'turf' on which they conduct and control their drug trade. Similarly, inner city violent crime – especially gun crime – is frequently associated with turf wars thought to erupt between gangs as they vie for control of area-based drugs markets. Such images were no doubt bolstered in the popular imagination when Conservative Shadow Home Secretary, Chris Grayling, commented in an August 2009 speech (Watt and Oliver 2009), that some of Britain's inner-cities were beginning to resemble Baltimore, USA. Baltimore had, of course, been portrayed in a popular television series - 'The Wire' – in such a way to suggest that open drugs markets routinely operate on street corners where violence is rife. Whether this specific representation of Baltimore is accurate or not, there is evidence to suggest that such drugs trading does feature within US cities (see for example Taniguchi et al. in press); within what has been termed gang 'set space' (Tita et al. 2005: 280): 'the actual area within the neighbourhood where gang members come together as a gang'. But is this being replicated in Research City and other areas of the UK? Do Inner West gangs have 'set space'? Is such space recognised as gang space by others? Is it conceptualised as 'turf' over which gangs vie for control?

There was general awareness – amongst the police, gang members, non-gang young people, and adult residents of Inner West – that the residential areas on each side of Kendall Park Road were associated with the Upperside and Lowerside gangs respectively. Beyond this, locations such as particular streets, parks, youth and community centres, shops and especially fast food takeaways, were *sometimes* identified as 'belonging' to one gang or another. There was, however, dissensus as to what specific territorial areas 'belonged' to any one gang.

Indeed, gang members' accounts of territorial spaces were highly individualised; some felt their movements were curtailed and restricted in particular places whilst others did not. Furthermore, territory could be perceived as shifting and changing, depending upon who inhabits it at any one time. This is exemplified for some gang members in their attempts to venture into the city centre – the non-gang affiliated 'down town' shopping and nightlife centre of Research City. Carl a 23-year-old Inner West gang member describes how:

‘Some people can’t go to town now to a club on their own with a girlfriend because the gang activity they’re getting into so much, as I say, they can’t afford to get seen on their own, doing their own thing’.

Similarly, Darryl, a 25-year-old member of Lowerside explains that the presence of an adversary at certain pubs, clubs or city centre venues may restrict the movement of individuals, but not always of groups:

‘Depends though who you go in there with. Why can’t you go there? It depends on who’s going. Maybe [someone just] can’t go there on his own. [...] Where we used to go [...] we used to roll down there 30-handed and that. [...] You’d have to sometimes.’

He continues to explain that venturing into non-affiliated territory like this could be extremely dangerous:

‘We came out of the club and all that, and I had like pure mantrap. [...] I come out and like 20 of them lined up. And I was with five people. [...] I had me feet on [laughs] – you know, on the side of the pavement and all that, lipped up to fuck, trying to get me in the boot [of a car].’

We also found members of the same family, residing in the same home, but belonging to different gangs and others who professed allegiance to more than one gang, demonstrating that turf cannot be exclusively determinant of the movements gang members make within, or across, territory. The extent to which individuals were fearful of ‘straying’ or ‘transgressing’ was often linked more to previous conflict with particular individuals (sometimes even members of their own gang), than to rival gang status *per se*. In such cases, they were fearful in home territory, ‘rival’ territory and further afield (such as the city centre). Such observations contradict simple and straightforward coterminous mapping of territory – of delineated geographical space – to gangs.

As Tita and colleagues (2005: 273) have argued, ‘gang set spaces’ are places where gang members collect to ‘hang out’. Younger gang members in Inner West sometimes referred to hanging out in parks, local youth centres, and on streets (especially outside their houses). Older gang members sometimes referred to a particular bar or gym as being associated to their gang. However, manifest street presence was not the norm amongst the Inner West gangs of Research City and it was certainly not as prevalent as it appears to be amongst gangs in the USA. More often, gang members spent their time inside one another’s houses and flats.

It is important to distinguish between ‘hanging out’ in public places and exerting control over such places. Our research indicates that Inner West gangs did not generally have, or attempt to impose, control over public places and social institutions in ways articulated by gang researchers in cities such as Chicago (Venkatesh, 2008) or Rio de Janeiro (Arias 2006; Venkatesh 2008). We found no evidence to imply that spatial boundaries were deliberately enforced to mark turf and, throughout the 26 month period of fieldwork, there was nothing to suggest that any fatal shooting incident occurring in Inner West was related to territorial disputes. Indeed, a key finding in our research was that violent conflict rarely derived from disputes over territorial drugs markets and/or protection rackets.

There is some evidence that turf wars may have been a characteristic of Inner West gangs in the Belmont area twenty years ago, when such formations comprised ‘quasi-specialist’ drug dealing gangs (see Medina et al. 2010). Even then, however, those who operated successfully in such markets questioned this, as illustrated by 36-year-old ex-Upperside member Vader:

‘That’s never been the case. You know, when they say gangs fighting over drug territory and all that. How [one] gang made their money doesn’t really – never really – had an effect on how [another] gang made their money. I’ve not seen that in my time.’

Similarly, the following exchange with Levi about his experience in the Belmont open drugs markets of the late 1980s and early 1990s illustrates the blurred and fluid nature of territoriality and territorial conventions:

We had like our own area, and they had their little area, and it was like a silent agreement, and once you go over there, you know... [Interviewer: But you knew clearly what your area was?] Yeh, yeh, you just know what boundaries not to step over and if you do, you know you might get in a bit of trouble. [Interviewer: Is that just to do with dealing drugs? Or is that to do with actually walking into an area [...], so basically, you can’t just even go into an area?] You can go there but you would have to be more aware of what’s going on when you go there. You have to be more on your toes when you do go in certain places. You know, it’s like you can go and sell drugs anywhere you want really. But [you take a certain amount of risk] standing up and selling drugs in certain places.

In the USA, Block and Block (1993) have shown that the majority of gang-related incidents recorded by the police⁶ were ‘turf’ related; that is, conflict over geographical space identified as belonging to one gang or another. In Research City, the evidence we have gathered suggests that the majority of conflict experienced between Inner West gangs was not over turf. Although inter-gang violence could result in tit-for-tat retaliatory action we found intra-gang conflict to be as, or more, important on a day-to-day basis. Jealousies and rivalries over illegal acquisitive opportunities tended to occur *within* rather than *between* gangs as one member explains:

‘All of a sudden you start to sell drugs, obviously, and it starts to be like jealousy. We were clashing with each other so before you knew it everybody had like beef with each other. They started to rob people.’

We regularly encountered girls and women being treated as the ‘property’ of gangs. As Hannah points out:

⁶ It is important to note that the Chicago police department who generated the data on which this research is based defines street gangs as having a geographic territory. Findings that highlight the importance of territoriality and ‘turf’, therefore, may result in part through data collection specifically around territorial groups.

‘If you are actually seeing a gang member, you’re their girl. [...] If, for instance, I cheated on that guy then, you know, I don’t know what would happen. Do you know what I mean? But obviously that didn’t happen. I was well trusted in that sense.’

Similarly, the identities of family members – especially sisters – were often defined in accordance with secondary gang ‘affiliation’. In this way, Angie, the sister of one Lowside member and the girlfriend of another, explained that she needed to be very careful which ‘blues’ [also known as ‘shebeens’: illegal African-Caribbean drinking/dance clubs] she attended as a result of having a brother in Lowside gang:

‘But I did go to a blues, I think it was on [X] Street. There was an Upperside guy in there [a prominent/leading member], and he asked me for a cigarette, and I didn’t have one, so he head-butted me.’

Angie also recounted how she became embroiled in a situation related to her brother’s conflict one night when she tried to persuade him not to go out when there was trouble brewing:

I said that I’m going with you then if you are going out. So we were arguing [laughs] and he’s telling me to go home and then we saw two guys on bikes riding towards us and they had pulled down balaclavas. So he was just like ‘run’, you know when they were going in the coats [reaching for a weapon?], so we both ran in different directions and I ran and hid down this alley. It was open at both ends and I was scared because I just expected them to be at one end, whichever way I went. So I stayed in the alley for what felt like ages, but it was probably only about five minutes. I saw one of the kids on the estate on a bike and I said “have you seen any guys on bikes with balaclavas?” and she went “they went that way, if you run quick now you can get home” and she was only like seven [years old], but she knew, like, what was going on. And then I got in and my mum was holding him in the house because he was trying to come out and look for me because he’d ran round and gone in the back, so it was like then you’re living in fear as well because you’re associated with that person and they would do something to you to get to them.

One signifier of gang-based territoriality that the local authority, related local state agencies and the police (especially the dedicated firearm/gang units), pay particular attention to is gang-connected graffiti in public places, known as ‘tagging’. Spray-painted gang names or symbols are taken as marking out boundaries and, in particular, the police tend to treat new graffiti as evidence of gang activity. An interview with a senior police officer in the city’s specialist ‘gang unit’, for example, revealed that graffiti was photographed and removed immediately. Our observations confirmed that graffiti rarely remained in place for more than 24 hours. In contrast to the perceptions and actions of the police, however, the young people involved in Inner West gangs attributed little importance to graffiti. Gang members were aware of children and young people tagging one gang name in another’s territory but such activity was dismissed as having little real importance or significance. We found no evidence that graffiti was symbolic of gang identity in any meaningful sense for young people in Inner West gangs.

Overall, therefore, gang members understood, experienced and interpreted territory in complicated ways and held much less clearly defined spatial boundaries than accounts provided by city officials suggested. There was considerable dissensus amongst gang members about what constituted ‘gang set space’. Gang members tended not to protect or guard territory, and rarely fought over control of territories defined as markets for illicit earning opportunities, such as the drugs trade, even though many participated in drug sales (especially cannabis). However, and in spite of the fact that we found conceptions of territory and turf to be contested, gang members and members of their families could sometimes feel and be restricted in their use of space.

Policing gangs, policing space

Young people’s use of space and place is critical for police in identifying and policing gang members. We can see this in how police talked about the (ostensibly) gang-dominated open drugs markets in the Belmont of twenty years ago, as well as in how youth gangs in Inner West are policed today.

As stated, twenty years ago gangs in the Belmont area of Research City could best be described as ‘quasi-specialist’ drug dealing gangs. Members were routinely involved in street level dealing in open drugs markets (primarily heroin and crack cocaine), with a smaller number working as middle level dealers involved in multi-kilo purchases and sales. We interviewed people employed by the Police, both as officers and in civilian positions. Jake Jennings, who was specially tasked with policing the Inner West drugs market for over twenty-five years, described the process of closing down the gang-dominated open drugs markets in Belmont:

We used what you call ‘punter pulling’ whereby you would take observations on the market. You just pull punters coming away to see what commodities... It was trying to associate [those drugs, that buyer] to a dealer. [...] Then moved onto things like ‘test purchase’, using ‘coverts’. It meant that you could tackle the market as a market and not the individuals within it. And there were several major operations that I was party to whereby we would take out between 15 and 20 dealers at the time [...] and in effect take out a large chunk of that gang.

Thus, the open drugs markets provided a specific locus for the policing of gangs and, in turn, gang affiliation could be determined by observing dealers working together in such markets (one part of Belmont being dominated by the Lowerside gang whilst another was recognisably Upperside territory). However, Jake was far less certain about the extent to which gang members were involved in the drugs trade in Inner West today. The move from open to closed - and thus less visible - drugs markets effectively created an intelligence vacuum with regard to gangs and drug sales. Like Jake Jennings, Detective Inspector Terry Cummings, an officer coming to the end of a 30 year career - mostly centred around policing illicit drugs markets - was unable to shed light on contemporary gang involvement in drug dealing in Research City:

What’s [been] lost is that intimate knowledge of the way gang members are involved in the drugs market. Everybody can say [...] “it used to be like this and it used to be like that”, as I’ve done sat here. And I think every police officer in

Research City could probably talk like that. [...] Unless you're working specifically looking at [gangs] in relation to drugs, you can be out of date.

There are, no doubt, a range of reasons for this intelligence vacuum but it is clear that the absence of clearly identifiable territory in which open – and observable – drug dealing takes place, is key.

During the life of our fieldwork, the police continued to rely substantially on young people's use of space for the purposes of policing gangs even though the open drugs markets had disappeared. The policing of Research City - in common with other 'gang' cities in the UK - is characterised by community or 'neighbourhood' style policing (Newburn and Reiner 2007) that focuses attention on high crime residential areas. This heavy concentration of policing in particular places and spaces is often combined with intervention and surveillance techniques developed in the US (Bullock and Tilley 2008 describe one implemented in Manchester). The same approaches draw upon US-style 'gang databases' (Barrows and Huff 2009) in which intelligence used to identify potential gang members is often based on people's associations with 'known' gang members. The overall result is the construction of 'suspect populations' (e.g. Quinton et al. 2000) in particular neighbourhoods attracting high levels of police attention. In Research City the police reported that they explicitly employed intensive and focused techniques – akin to 'harassment policing' - in which young people were routinely stop-checked when they ventured into areas that the police associated with gang 'territory' (in practice, areas where known gang members resided, or in public places, such as parks, around them):

If we suddenly see Crestside Crew emerging on Long Lane, bang, get over there, get our uniform lads to absolutely hammer them, harass them, do them for anything they can. So they basically think, "We've had enough of this" and we can dampen things down [...] but [hanging around on the streets] from our point of view makes them a target. Lowside lads can drive by, so if we're dispersing them and displacing them, it's diminishing the problem again.

This kind of policing was confirmed by young people living in 'gang neighbourhoods' like Belmont, whether they were gang-involved or not (see Ralphs et al. 2009). Moreover, patterns of association were ultimately taken to comprise 'proof' as this police office indicates:

OK, if somebody says to me "Is Joe Bloggs a gang member?" And I will obviously look at what we know about him and say, well, if he's been stop-checked once or twice with a known gang member, he's on the periphery. But he's getting stop-checked regular, then you've got to say, "Well look, by the company that he keeps, we believe that he's a gang member."

Policing gangs is based on the fundamental assumption that they comprise territorial, street-based entities. Territory – place and space – are essential referents for the police in defining gangs and gang members, informing how they are assumed to function and, ultimately, determining how they are policed. In turn, these assumptions - and the policing activity that follows from them – serve to reify police understandings of gangs as territorial and street-based entities in forms that appear to substantially exceed the realities discussed above.

Rethinking Gangs and Gang Control

We began this chapter by noting the typical constructions of youth gangs - as street-based entities operating within clearly defined territories – that commonly underpin explanatory accounts of urban conflicts. Such hegemonic conceptualisations dominate public and policy discourse and are embedded within criminal justice responses to youth gangs. The data presented here challenges this characterisation and, in doing so, it questions the legitimacy of policy responses to gangs based upon notions of clearly defined territorial boundaries. In drawing attention to the anomalies between gang members' use and negotiation of space on the one hand, and the methods of policing them on the other, we argue that territory-focused responses are based on outdated and/or stereotypical assumptions of gang membership.

The two gangs on which the analysis here focussed – Upperside and Lowerside – had widespread notoriety across Research City and further afield and were routinely characterised as: highly criminal; highly likely to use firearms; highly territorial and permanently warring. Against this imaginary, our research has revealed substantial dissensus amongst gang members themselves, and between gang members and the police, with regard to what constitutes gang 'set space' the levels of risk that they attribute to movement around the city.

Rather than gang members residing and spending most of their time in fixed 'gang' neighbourhoods, we found much greater mobility and fluidity with gangs in the Inner West area of Research City; comprising members who reside in areas across the city and, indeed, beyond the city's boundaries. A further blurring of spatial territorial boundaries was evident in that some gang members resided in areas widely viewed as rival gang territory, and some even had members of rival gangs in their immediate families. This finding in particular – in addition to undermining a strongly territorial characterisation of these two Inner West gangs – further challenges simplistic understandings of gang members 'belonging' to the gang alone. Loyalties and ties are far more complex.

Furthermore, gangs in Inner West have evolved considerably over the past thirty years. Despite no longer organising around the sales of drugs in open markets, substantial resources are centred on policing them in ways that seemingly fail to take account of these changes. Certainly the police are aware of 'residential outsiders' but policing methods that heavily focus on neighbourhood and employ 'harassment techniques' are problematic. They serve to reify enduring (but outmoded) conceptualisations of gangs as highly territorial by focusing their attention only on young people residing in 'gang neighbourhoods'. Where this involves males – especially young black men – deemed to be 'at risk' of gang involvement (that is, being related to, or seen in the company of, 'known' members), net-widening and labelling ensues. In turn, this invokes 'disrespect' for the police amongst those non-gang involved young people inadvertently captured via this territorial gaze (see Ralphs et al 2009) whilst, paradoxically, gang involved youth are residing or 'chillin' elsewhere. Indeed, youth gangs were often conspicuous by their absence on 'gang neighbourhood' streets. Pervasive or 'ambient' policing (Loader 2006), such as that found in Research City, may ultimately undermine citizen security - particularly for identifiable groups - rather than enhance it.

Although, Upperside and Lowerside gangs were noted for their relative absence of street presence, this did not necessarily detract from their engagement with violence and/or criminal activities (including drug dealing). All this raises profound questions of dominant conceptualisations pertaining to gangs. Indeed, as stated, having a street orientation is part of a set of defining criteria used to differentiate youth gangs from other youth formations in the internationally recognised 'Eurogang' definition (Klein et al. 2006). Our findings, therefore, imply that this definition might need to be modified to accommodate non-street-based groups and/or gangs. Heavy policing of public places, legislation prohibiting gang members from gathering in public places, court-mandated curfews and a global trend for young people to spend more time indoors - and especially online - may all be factors contributing towards a less conspicuous street orientation for gang members than was the case in previous decades.

We turn finally to the controversial question of gang injunctions. Legislation that limits the association of gang members in public spaces has existed in the USA since the 1980s (Rosen and Venkatesh 2007). Recent UK legislation in the form of the Policing and Crime Bill 2009 (part four, section 34, 'gang related violence injunction') provides to prohibit individuals deemed to be in a gang from: being in a particular place; being with particular persons in a particular place; wearing specific types of clothing in a particular place; or being in charge of a specified species of animal in a particular place. 'Place', therefore, is key. The civil liberties implications that such legislation brings are obvious, insofar as injunctions can be used to prevent the ordinary activities and everyday movements of individuals who have committed no crime, but who are thought to be gang connected.

In the USA, where these injunctions are increasingly popular, the benefits for reducing crime and fear of crime have been shown to be variable (Maxson et al. 2005). More significantly, ethnic minority areas are disproportionately targeted and, perhaps inevitably, the excessive discretion that gang injunctions afford the police has been shown to lead to discrimination and stigmatisation:

'Some of these youth might be labelled "associates" of gangs simply because they belong to racial minorities and share living quarters or public spaces with street gang members. Others might actively affiliate with street gang members but lack the specific intent to further a gang's criminal activities. Either way, anti-gang civil injunctions promise to perpetuate racial stigma and oppression' (Stewart 1998: 250-1).

Given that just over a decade has passed since London's Metropolitan Police force was found to be 'institutionally racist' (Macpherson, 1999), we might have similar concerns about the use of gang injunctions in the UK.

Rosen and Venkatesh (2007) argue that such policies and interventions rest upon a conceptualisation of the city as consisting of distinct and separate communities with clear boundaries. Our findings suggest that over time such boundaries begin to blur. Furthermore, gang injunctions appear to work on the premise that 'gangs need to operate in public to survive; take away their freedom of association and one dramatically reduces the likelihood that gangs will be able to function' (Rosen and

Venkatesh, (2007: 624). But the research presented here provides that: young people in gangs do not always have a street presence; many do not reside in gang neighbourhoods and, most importantly; the policing of public spaces that is required when injunctions are applied often imposes damaging, net-widening and labelling effects (Aldridge et al. 2009; Ralphs et al. 2009; Medina et al. forthcoming).

Meanwhile, whilst new gang injunction legislation may well lead to young (particularly black) males – especially younger gang members with the greatest street presence and the most limited access to alternative locations to socialise – being disproportionately targeted, older and potentially more active and criminally involved gang members (who reside or hang out elsewhere) may well manage to evade them.

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