

**Growing through Gangs:
Young People, Identity and Social Change in Glasgow**

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Glasgow for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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University of Glasgow, September 2010

Abstract

This thesis explores the social meanings and lived realities attached to the phenomenon of youth gangs for children and young people growing up in Langview, a community in the east end of Glasgow, during the early part of the twenty-first century. Drawing on a two-year period of participant-observation, the thesis situates young people's understandings, experiences, and definitions of gangs in the context of broader social, cultural, and spatial dynamics within the area. In this way, the thesis analyses the complex and differentiated ways in which gang identities are enacted, and explores their intersection with developing age, gender, and group identities. In so doing, the thesis seeks to challenge pathologising stereotypes of youth gangs, drawing on nuanced accounts of gang identities that demonstrate the role of social development and youth transitions in the meanings and motivations of gang involvement. Against representations that construct the gang as an alien other, this thesis argues for an understanding of gangs that is sensitive to the fluidity of, and contradictions in, the formation of all youth identities – of which the gang identity is one. In sum, the thesis argues for the need to move 'beyond the gang' in understanding youth violence and territorial identities.

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Acknowledgements

I always find it strangely appealing, before reading a book, to read the acknowledgements – they represent a perversely personal glimpse at the unknown faces and unseen experiences that sit behind what are often quite impersonal writings. I have attempted, throughout the thesis, to reveal some of the mess that went into the process; but this section remains an important space in which to directly acknowledge those most important. In the four years it has taken to move from blank slate to printed page, I have built up innumerable debts – personal, emotional, and financial – to a host of wonderful and remarkable individuals. This small acknowledgement does not do them justice; suffice to say they are behind and between the lines of every page.

My family and friends have supplied unstinting moral support throughout the process. My Mum and Dad – Hazel and Keith – kept me going with well-timed phone-calls, texts, and visits; pulling my head gently out of the PhD sand to remind me that life goes on, and that ‘this too shall pass’. Their generosity in giving me free reign on their caravan provided me with much needed breathing space. My sister Lisa, brother-in-law Graeme, and nephews Aidan and Murray provided a constant glow of family warmth; and my sister Sheila helped me through some stressful moments, giving of her time to help balance the demands of work and PhD. Many friends – too many to name – helped me in their own individual ways: particular thanks go to Ryan and Linda, who put up with my constant chatter about LYP and gangs while I lived with them; and Dave, Kathryn, Catherine and Jamal, who all generously let me stay with them as the fieldwork stretched beyond my time living in Langview. Special thanks to Andy Ross – who introduced me to LYP – and to Jane Hamilton, who patiently, assiduously, and enthusiastically proof-read every word of the thesis – I owe you both big-time.

Many staff and students at the University of Glasgow played an important part in my PhD journey. My supervisors, Michele Burman and Susan Batchelor, have been a model of supervision through every stage of the research process – a reliable source of critical advice, patient support, and loyal encouragement at every turn. I hope they know how much I appreciate them. Warm thanks also to Lindsay Farmer, my undergraduate tutor, who encouraged me to apply for the PhD; to Bridget Fowler, who gave instructive comments on my use (and possible abuse) of Pierre Bourdieu in the thesis; to Justin Kenrick, for enabling my attendance at the phenomenal Scottish Training in

Anthropological Research training week; and to Sarah Armstrong, for running the ethnography reading group that provided an outlet for ideas on methodology. Peers and colleagues in the department and beyond helped immeasurably in both moral and intellectual support – special thanks go to Stephen Ashe and Teresa Piacentini (Team Hidden Communities), Jennifer Fleetwood (and the BSC postgraduate committee), Poppy Kohner, Chris Kidd, Christian Holz, Angela Bartie, Alasdair Forsyth, Jon Pickering, Brendan McGeever and Caroline Douglas. I couldn't have done it without you, pals!

Thanks are also due to all of those involved with my period as a Visiting Scholar at the University of Illinois-Chicago, USA, from September to December 2009 – this experience gave me much needed distance and perspective on my time in Langview, and was invaluable to the development of the thesis. Special thanks to John Hagedorn, whose teaching, insight and introductions – particularly to Ivory, Chuck, and Bobby – made the experience both profound and unforgettable. Thank you to the Mac Robertson Travelling Scholarship who funded the trip. Huge thanks are also due to the Adam Smith Research Foundation, who funded the PhD – it is a privilege and a luxury to study a PhD, and I am eternally grateful.

Most importantly of all, I want to extend my warmest gratitude to all of the staff, young people and parents involved with Langview Youth Project, Langview Outreach Project, and Langview Academy – who generously allowed a stranger into their lives, and helped me with enthusiasm and resourcefulness. To the project manager of LYP – whose strength, resolve and determination have been a constant inspiration – and to the Langview Boys, the 'school-leavers', and the 'hidden majority' (of whom more to follow) who made this all possible: this thesis is dedicated to you. I only hope it does you justice.

Lastly, unending gratitude to my lovely Beth. You have put up with me throughout with patience, love and forbearance – and read and commented on drafts of a thesis like only a loved one could. This is for you.

Author's declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature _____

Printed name _____

He was standing on the bridge looking over the parapet into the dirty water, at the very spot where Boswell had stood and looked at the widest streets in the whole of Europe. Gles Chu! Glasgow! The dear green place! Now a vehicular sclerosis, a congestion of activity. He felt again a wave of nostalgia for another kind of existence ... all the symbols of confidence, possibility, energy, which had lived before in this knotted tight, seized up reality which was around him had come to be.

Archie Hind, *The Dear Green Place* (1966)

Chapter One

Introduction: Confronting the 'Glasgow Gang' Complex

The city of Glasgow has a longstanding reputation for violence, youth disorder, and gang behaviour. Territorial groups of violent young people – referred to as gangs – have been reported in Glasgow since the 1880s (Patrick 1973: 123), and have been a recurring feature of media reportage, popular fiction, television documentaries, and film-making in and on the city since this time.¹ At certain points in Glasgow's history, the issue has also resulted in interest from the police, policy-makers, and academic researchers.² Despite a recent surge in academic interest in the issue (Deuchar 2009; Donnelly 2010; Bannister et al 2010) and a small handful of historical studies (Patrick 1973; Armstrong and Wilson 1973a, 1973b), however, there remains a significant dearth of knowledge in relation to how young people in Glasgow understand, experience, and identify with gangs. In particular, there is a notable lack of in-depth, critical scholarship engaging with the social meanings and lived realities of gangs for children and young people growing up in Glasgow. This thesis seeks to provide a balance to popular depictions of gangs in Glasgow, through analysis of the complex meanings and understandings that different groups of young people attribute to gangs.

Concurrent with the recent increase in attention to Glasgow gangs, the gang phenomenon in the United Kingdom more generally has become an area of intense scrutiny over the past five years, generating a range of policy, policing, and media responses. Sparked by a series of high-profile teenage deaths in Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and London – in seemingly gang-related incidents – 'dealing with gangs' now forms a central plank of political discourse on law and order.³ In this context, media scrutiny and public furore has quickly outrun the empirical evidence in relation to gangs in the United Kingdom – leaving researchers finding difficulty in making their voices heard. In the current academic literature, there are inherent conflicts and contradictions between arguments of the novelty

¹ On portrayals in the 1930s, see Davies (1998, 2007a, 2007b); on the 1960s, see Bartie (2010). For an overview of media portrayals throughout the twentieth century, see Damer (1990) and Spring (1990). For a history of cultural representations of Glasgow as a 'violent city', see Fraser (2010).

² On the policing of gangs in the 1930s, see Sillitoe (1953) and Davies (1998); on the 1960s, see Armstrong and Wilson (1973) and Bartie (2010). For the current policing and policy response, in particular the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV), see www.actiononviolence.com [Accessed 17/07/2010]

³ BBC News (2007) 'Brown pledges crackdown on gangs', 23/08/2007. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/6959695.stm [Accessed 27/08/2007]; Wintour, P. and Travis, P. (2007) 'Labour's new crime drive: zero tolerance', Thursday September 27, *Guardian*; available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/crime/article/0,,2177804,00.html> [Accessed 27/08/2007].

of the dangers posed by gangs (Pitts 2008) and those that are more cautious of these claims (Hallsworth and Young 2008; Alexander 2008; Aldridge et al 2007). Amid these debates, however, the distinctiveness of the trajectories, histories, and identities associated with gangs in different locales, and in different cities, is frequently overlooked. The long history of gang identities in Glasgow, for example, is frequently collapsed into a single UK narrative – a trope that obscures more than it illuminates. Against such universalising definitions and understandings, therefore, this thesis seeks to contribute to these debates through analysis of the nature of gang identities in a specific area of Glasgow – which I have called Langview – and is intended to be read and understood first and foremost within this context.

The tensions present in recent UK gang research replicate longstanding debates within gang research in the United States, and more recently, elsewhere in Europe. Gang research in the United States has a long history, stretching back to the pioneering work of Asbury (1927) and Thrasher (1936), and encompassing several classical texts within the canon of criminology (Whyte 1943; A. Cohen 1955; Cloward and Ohlin 1960; Matza 1964). However, as gangs have emerged as an entrenched social and cultural phenomenon across the United States, and police and policy responses have become more repressive and severe, research has increasingly sought to universalise definitions and categorisations. This form of administrative gang research – frequently funded by federal government or law enforcement – has been criticised by a number of US gang scholars (Brotherton and Barrios 2004; Katz and Jackson-Jacobs 2004; Hagedorn 2008). These tensions, between administrative and critical gang research, can also be seen in recent studies in Europe, under the aegis of the Eurogang Network (Klein et al 2001; Gemert et al 2008).

A developing seam of international, critical gang studies,⁴ connecting insights and experiences from the global South alongside those in the global North, seeks to understand the gang phenomenon from the point of view of the young men and women involved. Drawing principally from ethnographic and qualitative methodologies, this research seeks to challenge universalising definitions and discourses, instead locating the understandings and experiences of gangs within specific local histories, group biographies, and community contexts. Importantly, many of these studies deal explicitly with the unequal divisions of power, gender, age, wealth, and ethnicity that structure the experiences of gangs in

⁴ Conquergood 1996; Chesney-Lind and Hagedorn 1999; Kontos et al 2003; Dowdney 2007; Hagedorn 2008; Mendoza-Denton 2008; Garot 2009.

different environments. This thesis seeks to contribute to these studies, in locating the understandings and experiences of gangs in Glasgow within the local context of Langview, and the wider structural context of post-industrial Glasgow.

In sum, this thesis seeks to develop an understanding of the meanings and experiences attached to gangs for children and young people growing up in Langview; situating these experiences against the backdrop of broader social, spatial, and cultural dynamics in Langview and Glasgow more generally. In contrast to popular stereotypes of gangs – which presume a fixed and static entity – this approach demonstrates the complex and individual nature of young people’s gang identities. As such, the thesis argues for an understanding of gangs that is sensitive to the broader vagaries of identity inherent in the experience of growing up. In establishing this wider lens, it is hoped that researchers can move ‘beyond the gang’ in understanding youth violence and territorial identities.

Methodology and research questions

The thesis is based on a two-year, multi-method, participant-observation study of an urban community in the east end of Glasgow, called Langview. During this period of fieldwork, I worked as a volunteer youth worker, street outreach worker, and secondary school tutor in Langview, as well as living in the area for a period of 18 months. While I had different roles within these different sites, and worked with different groups of children and young people, the focal questions remained consistent. The key data-sources drawn on in the thesis are as follows:

- Fieldnotes from a two-year period of participant-observation in a youth project in Langview, called Langview Youth Project, where I worked as a volunteer during the period of fieldwork. I spent approximately 960 hours in the youth project during this period, working with a range of children and young people aged between eight and 15 years.
- Fieldnotes from a ten-month period of participant-observation with a street-based youth outreach project in Langview, called Langview Outreach Project, where I was employed as a youth worker during this period of fieldwork. I spent approximately 300 hours on the street through this work, working with a range of children and young people aged 12-16 years.
- Fieldnotes from an 18-month period spent living in Langview, where I variously worked, interviewed, volunteered, observed, socialised, and researched during the period of fieldwork.
- Eighteen tape-recorded discussion groups with different groups of children and young people from Langview Youth Project and Langview Academy, with ages ranging from 13-17 (20 males, 10 females). The majority of these groups were conducted with young people I had known for at least a year prior to the research being carried out.

Research questions and objectives

The initial study on which the thesis is based set out to answer the following three questions:

- What is life like for young people growing up in Langview today?
- What role, if any, do gangs play in the lives of young people in Langview today?
- What impact have social, spatial, cultural, and economic changes in Langview – and the wider city of Glasgow – had on these experiences?

The key objectives of the study, therefore, were as follows:

- To gain an ‘appreciative’ (Matza 1969) understanding of the meanings, understandings, and experiences that children and young people in Langview attach to gangs.
- To explore the intersection of these meanings and experiences within the broader context of young people’s leisure, peer relationships, and use of space; with particular attention to the role of developing age, gender, and group identities.
- To situate these experiences in the context of broader changes to Langview, as processes of globalisation and social change are refracted through the local area.

Statement of key argument

Based on the data gathered, the thesis will argue the following three points:

- Unlike popular stereotypes of gangs, which construct gangs as a fixed and static entity, this thesis will argue for an understanding of gang identities that is fluid and context-specific. This understanding of gangs emphasises the symbolic, non-violent role that gangs play in the lives of young people in Langview – representing belonging, *communitas*, and group solidarity.
- Gang identities, as complex and individuated ephemera, are therefore best understood within the wider context of other developing identities in young people’s lives. In Langview, these identities revolved around age, gender, locale, and group status.

- Gang identities most frequently emerge in social environments where poverty, lack of amenities, and overcrowding are particularly pronounced. A fully social understanding of gangs, therefore, must incorporate analysis of local patterns of power, inequality, and globalisation. In Langview, these patterns have resulted in a constrained social and cultural environment, in which gang identities serve as a route to status, masculinity, and respect.

Contribution of thesis

The thesis contributes a grounded, critical analysis of young people's gang identities, situating these experiences in both a local and global context. It therefore contributes materially to ongoing debates within gang research in the United Kingdom, the United States, Europe, and beyond, specifically in relation to the role of learning and social development in the performance of gang identities and the local historical context of gang identities. Through in-depth analysis of a specific local example, the thesis contributes to knowledge of contrasts, as well as similarities, in the nature and form of gangs in different times and places.

Methodologically, the thesis contributes a series of innovative strategies, which draw from the 'new social studies of childhood' (James, Jenks and Prout 1998), in researching gangs. Incorporating a range of visual, performative, and action-research methods, the thesis contributes to the development of methodologies that move 'beyond the gang' in understanding young people's gang identities. Alongside traditional methods – such as participant-observation – this methodological approach seeks to combine appreciative insight with participatory methods, seeking to capture the multiple meanings that young people ascribe to gang identity.

In blending insights from the classical and modern canon of gang research with contemporary social theories of identity, community, and globalisation, the thesis contributes a novel conceptualisation of gang identities to the current criminological literature. In emphasising the role of learning, social development, and identity in the enactment of gang behaviour, the thesis introduces themes and ideas that are absent in theories of gangs. Locating these gang identities within a local and global structural context – in particular drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1990) – the thesis

also aims to contribute to broader sociological insights relating to the impact (or otherwise) of globalisation.

While the theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions of the thesis are principally in the field of gang research, the broader focus on youth identity, youth transitions, and the impact of globalisation also resonates with the wider field of youth sociology and the ‘new social studies of childhood’. Similarly, while the thesis principally makes a contribution to academic knowledge and theory, there are direct implications for both policy, and practice. In arguing for research to recognise the complexities and specificities in young people’s gang identities, this thesis makes a strong case for policing, policy and practice to similarly move ‘beyond the gang’ in approaching youth violence. In locating the local distinctions of the gang phenomenon, too, the thesis argues for an approach to policing and policy-making that is grounded in local meanings and understandings, as opposed to national or global ideations.

Structure of thesis

Chapter One, the current chapter, introduces the background, context, argument, and contribution of the thesis. This chapter is intended to give an overview of the contours of the thesis, introducing the core claims, themes, and approaches employed in the thesis.

Chapter Two sets out the academic background and context for the study, in the form of a critique of extant literature on gang behaviour. The chapter focuses principally on gang research from the United Kingdom and the United States, with additional points and insights drawn from developing research elsewhere in Europe, and the global South. In this chapter, I trace the trajectories of gang research on both sides of the Atlantic – comparing and contrasting the historical trajectory of gang research in the US and the UK. I argue that the universalising tendencies of US gang research – whereby gangs are reduced to a symbolic other – is increasingly evident in UK gang research, despite a more critical tradition of youth studies and subcultural analysis. In contrast to these universalist discourses, I draw on historical and contemporary research on Glasgow gangs (Armstrong and Wilson 1973a, 1973b; Davies 1998; Bartie 2010) that emphasises both similarities and differences with gangs in other places and times. In framing the analysis in this way, I align my own approach to research with a developing seam of critical international gang scholarship, which seeks to move ‘beyond the gang’ – and beyond traditional gang criminology – in making sense of the gang phenomenon. This is intended to turn attention toward the lived experiences of young people growing up in Langview, and the multiple competing and contradictory identities that young people negotiate.

In Chapter Three I describe and analyse the methodologies, methods, and orientations that informed and guided the process of data-collection in the study. In the first part of the chapter, I outline the methodologies that influenced my approach to the study – the Chicago School, Birmingham School, and critical ethnography – while locating the research within broader currents of method and theory; aligning my own approach with a range of in-depth, participatory, and critical methodologies. In the second part of the chapter, I describe the ways in which these insights were combined to create a mixture of traditional and innovative methods, appropriate to the setting and context of the research. Drawing on practical examples and reflections, I explain the research procedures, ethical dilemmas, and analytical frames that underpin the data presented in the thesis.

Chapter Four sets out the theoretical framework for the thesis. Following on from my analysis in Chapter Two, I set out a theoretical framework with a view to moving ‘beyond the gang’ – and beyond criminology – in understandings of the gang phenomenon. Moving the focus beyond the narrow framing of young people’s lives through the gang lens, I propose a theory more sensitive to the multiplicity of identities involved in young people’s social development, as well as the broader structural forces at work in shaping these experiences and opportunities. Challenging the assumption that gangs are fixed, uniform, and static entities, I draw from social theories of identity, social development, and social change to suggest that the gang identity is best understood within the broader context of youth transitions and development. Further, drawing particularly from the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 2005), I argue that the structural conditions of late modernity, refracted through Langview and Glasgow more generally, have patterned the nature and form of gang identities for young people in Langview today.

Chapter Five introduces the young actors whose meanings, understandings and experiences form the immediate foreground to the thesis narrative. This *dramatis personae* of the characters who take centre-stage in the thesis – the Langview Boys, the hidden majority and ‘school-leavers’ – seeks to illuminate, appreciatively, the complexities and subjectivities of their daily lives. The chapter focuses attention at the level of lived experience, group dynamics and status politics; focusing particularly on the ways in which these everyday interactions reproduced age, gender and group hierarchies. These ways of creating and co-producing meaning – being ‘in the know’, the ‘best at stuff’, a ‘gemmae’, ‘wan ae the boays’, and ‘havin the patter’ – cohere around a ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Connell 2002) in which physical toughness, verbal aptitude, and group loyalty are highly prized; regulated and policed through varying physical, verbal and symbolic techniques. These aspects of hegemonic masculinity represent a core element in the learning and enactment of gang identities – as the gang identity represents an idealised form of these ways of ‘being a man’. In emphasising the importance of locale in the shaping of young people’s identities – against the backdrop of a changing Glasgow – my intention is to foreshadow a form of analysis that, while grounded at the level of individual experience and action, takes seriously the global forces that form the backcloth on which these lives are written.

Chapter Six focuses on the role of place and space in the lives of children and young people growing up in Langview. As Glasgow has undergone significant cultural, economic, and spatial alterations in recent history, so too have young people's relationship to place and space altered and reconfigured. In this chapter, I analyse the impact of several distinct changes in the socio-spatial architecture of the city of Glasgow on the lives of children and young people in Langview; drawing out continuities and contrasts with historical data relating to young people's use and interpretation of space. In essence, I argue that while certain youthful desires and identities have remained relatively consistent – the importance of local area, public space, differentiation, and risk-taking – the environment in which these play out has altered, with significant consequences. Processes of exclusion, gentrification, suburbanisation, and delocalisation have narrowed the opportunities for young people's use of public space and increased surveillance and policing on the few areas available. As a result, young people remain spatially constrained and seek out ways to own or appropriate these limited spaces.

Chapter Seven extends this argument into the field of leisure, consumption, and technology. While the array of choices for youth leisure has expanded exponentially since the post-war period – in line with the increase in available leisure-time – the tastes and habits of children and young people are relatively consistent with previous generations. Group activities that allow space for individual creativity, status, and excitement – predominantly sport-based – and individual activities revolving around mediated escapism – cinema, television, computer gaming – remain the most popular pastimes for young people in Langview. However, the narrowing of traditional leisure pursuits in the context of the growth of global capitalism – delocalisation of cinemas, vast increases in admission prices to football matches, the trend towards out-of-town shopping complexes – have engendered a range of adaptive responses among young people. These involve, on one hand, the conscious resistance of the commodification of leisure – the 'sneaky thrills' (Katz 1988) of illegal entry into football matches or cinemas – and on the other, the use of new technologies – social networking, internet and mobile technologies, computer gaming – in a way that emphasises both group and area identity. In sum, these chapters argue for the continuing, indeed increasing, importance of local area in the identities of young people growing up in Langview today.

Chapter Eight builds on the arguments in the previous chapters to probe the role of gang behaviour in the lives of children and young people growing up in Langview. As the

opportunities, spaces, and futures available to young people in Glasgow have been reconfigured, so the fixity of locale has retained a powerful place. Gang behaviour, in both symbolic and violent forms, represents perhaps the most potent symbol of this localism. Identification with a local gang becomes the confluence of area identity: a root of identity, status, and carnival in an uncertain and unsteady world. Importantly, however, gang identities may wax and wane through young people's social development. In this chapter, I focus on the role of gang identities through various stages of transition; emphasising the different roles it plays during different periods of social development. For younger children, the gang is a form of play – a childish fantasy to be acted out with peers. For young teenagers, the gang becomes more closely tied to area identity, and the acting out of group dynamics, status politics, and developing gender identities. As individuals begin to age and mature, however, these identities, relationships, and priorities tend to shift and refocus: friendship groups change, patterns of leisure and recreation alter; and generally more adult pastimes are sought out. Gang identification, in this context, begins to relate more to group deviance – in the form of alcohol, drugs, violence, and vandalism. For all, however, the gang is more of an idea than a reality, to be drawn on and used as a resource in highly specific and contingent ways.

Chapter Nine, the conclusion, argues finally for an understanding of the gang phenomenon that is grounded in the experiences of children and young people, yet sensitive to the local and global structural contexts that pattern these experiences and identities. The city of Glasgow has undergone significant changes over the past century, reconfiguring the lived experience of young people growing up in the city. These developments have modified the nature of work, leisure, play, and space in Langview, alongside significant changes to the nature of youth identity and consumption. Young people grow up in an environment that is spatially constrained, yet globally connected through new technologies and forms of communication. In this context, gang identities are perhaps best understood as a root of communal identity in a changing world – a means of establishing collective meaning in an increasingly constrained social landscape.

A word on narrative: Fragments from the field

Written accounts of research frequently present a polished narrative in which problems, dilemmas, contradictions, and contrasts are elided for the sake of narrative clarity. My experiences in Langview, however, were messy, complex, and riven with subjectivities and

personal emotions – intricacies that traditional approaches to thesis narrative fail to capture. For this reason, while the thesis is structured in a conventional format, a number of techniques have been employed to give voice to the personal, academic, and professional narratives that form the back-story to the research. Fieldnotes are drawn on extensively as primary data; the unpredictable and serendipitous nature of access, methods, and ethics are discussed; and reflective writing from different stages of the research are included at the beginning of each chapter (denoted by italics). In describing the intellectual, emotional, and practical lessons I have taken from the fieldwork, and communicating the complexity and texture of these fieldwork experiences, my intention is to demonstrate the conflicting meanings and identities that I myself brought to the field. The patchwork of identities, experiences, and understandings that form this thesis – albeit in a different form – are thus comparable to the fleeting moments in which gang identities are inhabited and enacted. In explicating, as far as is practicable, the meanings and motivations which underpin my analysis, my intention is to highlight the partial and subjective nature of all social action and the constancy with which meanings are made and re-made, for children and young people growing into gang identities, as much as researchers growing into academic ones.

Chapter Two

Entering the Gang Complex: A Critical Review of Literature

The critical approach I take to gang research in this chapter is grounded, fundamentally, in my research experiences in Langview, in particular the lack of fit between what I had read and what I saw, heard, and experienced during my time there. I entered the field replete with learned theories on gangs in Glasgow, having completed an MSc dissertation on the subject. Steeped in both classic and modern American gang research, and having drawn out ‘clever’ conclusions on Glasgow gangs based on autobiographies, popular histories, and novels, I began visiting youth projects. When confronted with the complex jumble of everyday life, however, the theoretical house of cards I had constructed in my dissertation quickly came tumbling down. Early in the fieldwork, I visited a youth project in the east end of Glasgow, working directly with issues surrounding gangs and territorialism. I spoke to one of the staff there about gang definitions – a subject I thought I knew something about. The member of staff told me about gangs being highly organised in the area, some having a number of groups with individual leaders, yet loyalty to the larger whole. This, he said, was particular to the area, but had been discredited by ‘academics’. The following fieldnote relays something of my response:

I don’t know whether I bristled at his derision towards ‘academics’, but I couldn’t equate what I’d read with what he was telling me—my first response, naively, was to reject it [his statement]. I kept trying to situate what he was saying, place it within the literature I had read—drawing a blank, my reaction was to think ‘that’s not how Glasgow gangs are talked about in the literature, so you must be wrong!’ (Fieldnote, 4th April 2007)

On reflection, this incident was the beginning of a process of challenging, critiquing, and probing the literature on gangs and youth violence. To coin Hagedorn’s (2008: xiv) evocative phrase, I thereby set about a process of ‘unlearning’ the literature on gangs, and approaching the study from a different perspective.

Introduction

The city of Glasgow has a longstanding reputation for violence, youth disorder, and gang behaviour. Territorial groups of violent young people – termed gangs – have been a feature of media reports, novels, and films – not to mention policing tactics, policy strategies, and academic research – about the city over the past century. Over the past five years, notably during a time in which rates of violence are declining,⁵ the issue of Glasgow gangs has once more attracted the attention of a range of interest groups. Concurrent and connected with this increase in attention, the issue of gangs has become prominent in the United Kingdom more generally – particularly in London, Manchester, Liverpool, and Birmingham – and now forms a central touchstone in debates over youth violence and the so-called ‘broken society’ (Centre for Social Justice 2009). Owing to the competing motives and agendas of different groups, however, the gang phenomenon in both Glasgow and the UK is riven with tension and debate – definitions, approaches, and responses to the phenomenon vary widely. As a result, debate on gangs frequently occurs at a level removed from the children and young people it seeks to describe. In this chapter, I argue for critically grounded, in-depth gang research that seeks to understand the complex meanings and motives involved in gang identities – eschewing over-generalised claims, and giving primacy to the voices and lived experiences of young people. In this way, I endeavour to move ‘beyond the gang’ in the thesis – contrasting the lived realities of young people in Langview with the representations of the ‘gang complex’ (discussed later in the chapter), to uncover the politics of representation that lie beneath. In this way, the study of gangs can become a lens through which processes of power, exclusion, and social change can be analysed.

The tensions and debates within the UK gang phenomenon mirror, albeit on a smaller scale, longstanding conflicts within the field of gang research, policy, and practice in the United States. From the pioneering research of Frederic Thrasher (1936) and the later clutch of subcultural studies (A. Cohen 1955; Matza 1964), gang research in the United States has grown into a vast academic industry, as federal and state governments attempt to control the endemic violence affecting communities across the United States. For some gang scholars, however, this increase in attention has resulted in a lack of regularised critique and debate within studies of gangs – with research becoming a self-sustaining,

⁵ Scottish Government (2009) Recorded Crime in Scotland. Available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/09/28155153/0> [Accessed 28th July 2010].

self-referential, and autopoietic entity. For Hagedorn, many gang researchers, ‘like U.S. journalists in the Iraq war, have become embedded in the law enforcement bureaucracies that are waging war on gangs, drugs, terror, practicing a kind of domestic orientalism’ (Hagedorn 2008: 135). Following in the wake of these criticisms, an emerging seam of critical, international scholarship seeks to understand the gang phenomenon from the point of view of the young men and women involved,⁶ eschewing universalist definitions and categorisations in favour of in-depth study of the specific local histories, group biographies, and community contexts through which gang identities are enacted. Importantly, many of these studies attempt to act as a brake on the gravitational pull the US gang phenomenon exerts on gang research, policing, and policy-making in cities across the global North and South. For these scholars, the allure of the gang complex must be challenged with research and theory that engages directly, and appreciatively, with the children and young people affected; while analysing, and critiquing, the structures of age, gender, class and ethnicity that pattern these experiences.

In what follows, I critically review these literatures and arguments, clearing a theoretical and empirical path for the approach in the present study. In section one – Gangs in Glasgow – I review historical and contemporary research into the gang phenomenon in Glasgow, locating this research within the context of representations of Glasgow as a ‘violent city’, and assessing the extent to which representation outstrips reality. In section two – Gangs in the United Kingdom – I describe and analyse historical and contemporary gang research in the United Kingdom, arguing that despite fundamental differences, the Glasgow gang phenomenon has frequently, and unjustifiably, become elided with these recent developments. In section three – Gangs in the United States – I critically analyse a range of past and present research into the US gang phenomenon, focusing particularly on the developing seam of critical gang scholarship mentioned earlier. In this way, I hope to demonstrate the value, contribution and approach of the thesis which follows.

⁶ Conquergood 1996; Chesney-Lind and Hagedorn 1999; Kontos et al 2003; Dowdney 2007; Hagedorn 2008; Mendoza-Denton 2008; Garot 2009; Batchelor 2009.

Gangs in Glasgow

The city of Glasgow has a long history of, and reputation for, youth gangs and violence. Indeed, the majority of cultural representations of Glasgow are entwined with images of gangs and youth violence (Spring 1990; Damer 1990a; Fraser 2010) – the forthcoming Peter Mullan film, *Neds*,⁷ is only the latest in a long line of this genre. Alongside this gamut of novels, documentaries and films, there is also a unique genre of Glasgow gang lore: populist accounts of gang violence, culled from media reports and pub stories, which are sold in Glasgow bookshops alongside academic histories and new novels.⁸ In examining the gang phenomenon in Glasgow, therefore, fact and fiction frequently merge and blur, making it difficult to disentangle reality from representation. Glasgow gangs thus represent a cogent example of what Jeff Ferrell calls the ‘spectacle and carnival of crime’; in essence ‘an infinite hall of mirrors where images created and consumed by criminals, criminal subcultures, media institutions and audiences bounce endlessly off the other’ (Ferrell 1999: 397).

In this section, I attempt to disentangle representation from reality by tracing the broad history of the Glasgow gang phenomenon, before drawing on this historical perspective to illuminate current responses to gangs in Glasgow. The section is divided into three parts. In the first – Gangs and social conditions in Glasgow – I will argue that gang identities have emerged most prominently in areas of Glasgow with high densities of housing, large youth populations and a severe lack of work and amenities. These conditions have existed in communities throughout Glasgow’s history; and the institutionalisation of gang identities in these communities should be read in the context of these ongoing social conditions. In the second – Gangs and moral panic – I will argue that, despite this continuity, gangs have only emerged as a distinctive social problem at quite specific moments in Glasgow’s history – often relating more to wider societal fears, political expediency, or media amplification than any distinguishable alteration in the phenomenon itself. In the final section – Gangs in the twenty-first century – I will analyse the recent increase in attention to the issue of gangs from the vantage point of these historical perspectives, arguing that once again this attention seems to bear little reference to the lives of children and young

⁷ Mullan (2010, forthcoming).

⁸ Reg McKay, the author of a series of these pulp texts, is reputed to be the ‘most stolen author’ in the Glasgow branch of Borders Books (Musson 2009).

people in Glasgow. As with previous periods, this surge in interest appears to have more to do with a broader set of public fears and anxieties, and the different motives and agendas of competing groups, than in understanding the issue from the point of view of those affected. The intention in making this argument is to begin to unravel the competing voices within the Glasgow gang phenomenon and to make sense of both continuities and changes in the life-circumstances for children and young people growing up in Glasgow today.

Gang identities and social conditions in Glasgow

Groups of young people engaging in territorial violence have been reported since the 1880s, with some level of continuity in reportage throughout the twentieth century (Patrick 1973: 150) – in certain cases, with the same gang names recurring consistently throughout this period⁹ – and sporadic reporting demonstrates some level of continuity since this time: from reports of a gang ‘reign of terror’ in 1916 (Patrick 1973: 123) and 1930 (Davies 2007a), to discussion of police ‘gang lists’ in the immediate post-war period (Mack 1958); and from the ‘New Wave of Glasgow Gangs’ in 1966 (Armstrong and Wilson 1973a; Bartie 2010), to longitudinal data illustrating continuity in gang identities between 1974 and 2008 (McKinlay 2008). Throughout this time, gangs have been reported in working-class communities in Glasgow marked by a lack of amenities, frequently accompanied by high levels of overcrowding and high populations of young people. As Davies notes of the 1920s and 30s, ‘Gang formation was most heavily clustered in the poorer districts of the city’s East End and South Side, but gang activity was also reported in working-class districts such as Maryhill and Anderston to the North and West of the city centre’ (Davies 2007a: 408).

Early reports of gangs correspond closely with Glasgow’s hiatus as the ‘Second City of the Empire’ (1875-1914), during which time the city had become the shipbuilding capital of the world (Checkland 1981: 1; Maver 2000: 113). As the number of jobs available brought several waves of migrants from Ireland and the Scottish Highlands – resulting in the city population reaching over one million in 1911 (Maver 2000: 170) – the density of housing became increasingly extreme:

⁹ For example, the Baltic Fleet, from Baltic Street, Dalmarnock, in Glasgow’s East End, were first reported in 1916 (Patrick 1973: 123) and remain listed on Strathclyde Police intelligence databases to this day (Donnelly 2010).

There were by 1914 no less than 700,000 people living in three square miles, thus creating the most heavily populated central area in Europe ... One of the consequences of this concentration was to ... [create] strong sub-loyalties, to the many former villages of which Glasgow was composed (Checkland 1981: 18)

While Glasgow was relatively prosperous in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there remained a high density of population, with successive waves of migration, and strong territorial loyalties. For Frederic Thrasher, writing about a comparable period of Chicago's history, these conditions created the perfect storm for the development of gang identities. Thrasher argues that gangs emerged in areas of Chicago with high densities of population – principally composed of poor migrants – where large numbers of children and young people populated public spaces, with little in the way of amenities or resources (Thrasher 1963: 23). Forming into natural play-groups, they were forced to defend their space, or play privileges, from other groups – in 'its struggle for existence a gang has to fight hostile groups to maintain its play privileges, its property rights, and the physical safety of its members' (Thrasher 1963: 117). In this way, for Thrasher, groups become gangs via a process of being 'integrated through conflict', developing a group consciousness, a 'high-sounding name' and a territory (Thrasher 1963: 193). As a model for the development of gang identities during a similar period of industrialisation and migration, Thrasher's thesis offers a useful starting point in excavating a genealogy of gangs in Glasgow.

In the 1920s and 30s, as the Depression began to bite, Glasgow lost much of its industry, and with it her status as the 'Second City of the Empire'. In the space of three years (1920-1923), the shipbuilding tonnage of the Clyde fell from 672,000 to 175,000 (Maver 2000: 204). From this point in Glasgow's history, a different reputation began to pervade the popular consciousness. In 1924, William Bolitho famously described Glasgow not as 'Second City of the Empire', but as the 'Cancer of Empire'. The period subsequent to the Depression brought significant decreases in the overall population (as well as the working population) of Glasgow. From the high point of over one million in the early twentieth century, Glasgow lost population at a rate of almost 10,000 a year for four decades – in 1951, the population stood at 1.1 million; by 1991, that had decreased to 681,228 (Maver 2000: 218). The processes of urban separation between the rich and the poor – the 'virtuous cycles of growth and vicious cycles of decline' (Maver 2000: 218) – quickened,

as the wealthier classes moved increasingly to the west of the city, and the worse off were left with the overcrowded, unsanitary mass slum accommodation in the east.

In this context, the historian Andrew Davies has documented the activities of one specific gang in 1930s Glasgow – the Beehive Boys, from the Gorbals in Glasgow’s south side. Unlike the majority of gangs at the time, ‘which they viewed disparagingly as being merely concerned with non-instrumental violence’ (Davies 1998: 253), the Beehive Boys regarded themselves as ‘criminal specialists’ (ibid), involved in organised theft, housebreaking, and robbery. Davies firmly locates the development of the Beehive Boys from an unsupervised peer-group into a more organised gang in the context of the severe unemployment that Glasgow in general, and the Gorbals in particular, experienced during the 1930s: ‘While it is too crude to depict unemployment as the “cause” of gang conflicts in interwar Glasgow, the decline of heavy industry does appear to have led to an upsurge in property crime among gang members’ (Davies 1998: 260). Crucially, too, the Beehive Boys must be understood in the context of working-class life during the period. Davies relates the development of the support and solidarity within the Beehive Boys to the ‘vitality of bonds’ in the Gorbals at this time, revolving around mutuality and interdependence (Davies 2007a: 408). As Sean Damer, a historian of working class communities in Glasgow, argues ‘a *common* way of adapting had to be found, or individuals and families would have gone under – as many did’ (Damer 1990a: 86; emphasis in original). Undoubtedly, the Beehive Boys generated fear and instability within the community – levying fines to pay bail money from residents and shopkeepers (Davies 2007a) – but nonetheless were a communal resource for identity and solidarity during tough economic times. The emergence of these gang identities, therefore, must be located within the social conditions of the time.

Another key example of the relationship between gangs and social conditions can be found in the development of the post-war Glasgow housing estates: Easterhouse, Drumchapel, Castlemilk and Possil. In these estates housing was prioritised above any other amenities, resulting in populations of up to 40,000 with no shops, schools, churches, recreation facilities, or other amenities. Half of the population of Easterhouse, for example, was under the age of 21; with no resources or amenities, large numbers of young people congregated on street corners and in public spaces (Armstrong and Wilson 1973a: 67). When amenities were installed, however, these were local to each area within Easterhouse, resulting in a lack of mixing between different schemes. The result, for Armstrong and Wilson (1973a:

66), was for ‘residents of all ages to identify with their own neighbourhood, rather than with the Easterhouse area, the most explicit expression of which has been the “territory-based gang.”’ In a format similar to that described by Hagedorn in relation to Milwaukee – whereby gangs emerged from a pre-existing friendship group, and from ‘break-dancing crews’ (Hagedorn 1998a: 157) – Armstrong and Wilson describe the development of gang identities from football teams. They quote a ‘gang boy’ as follows:

It was through playing football that it all started. Used to hang about the corner after a game. After I left school there was nothing to do except hang about, you’d just hang about with the same crowd. If anyone got dug-up [usually a *verbal* provocation] you’d all go down; that was classed as a “gang fight.” (Armstrong and Wilson 1973a: 67; emphasis in original)

This quote neatly demonstrates the relationship between gang identities and social conditions – with the gang operating as an ongoing source of protection, support, and youth identity in communities with few resources or opportunities for young people – but also the disjuncture between the representation and reality within the gang phenomenon. Where the interviewee saw a relatively innocent skirmish, outsiders classed the incident as a ‘gang-fight’. In the following section, I explore this discord in more detail – arguing that representations of gangs give an important insight not only into the phenomenon itself, but also into the broader history and politics of representation in Glasgow. In this sense, the study of gangs offers a unique vantage point from which to analyse the changing fears, mores and values of societies in different times and places.

Gangs and moral panic

Stan Cohen’s seminal *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (1972) and Geoffrey Pearson’s equally canonical *Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears* (1983) offer a useful starting point in analysing the history of responses to the gang phenomenon in Glasgow. Cohen’s formulation runs as follows:

Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned ...

the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates. (S. Cohen 1972: 9).

For Cohen, moral panics are a recurrent feature of modern society, with new generations finding a new ‘folk devil’ onto which the fears and prejudices of the day are projected. To this, Pearson adds an acute historical analysis of fears of youth crime and disorder, tracing these fears back to the 19th century and beyond. For Pearson, frequently the nature and form of these episodes tell more about the society of the time than about youth behaviour itself:

... for generations Britain has been plagued by the same fears and problems as today; and this is something which should require us to reassess the shape of our present difficulties and the prospects for the future. (Pearson 1983: ix)

Pearson’s argument, crucially, is not that the nature and form of youth behaviour is immutable and unchangeable, but rather that there are continuities, as well as changes, in the long arc of history (Pitts 2008). In this section, I will argue that the recurrence of popular fears in relation to Glasgow gangs is often only tenuously related to the behaviour itself; more frequently serving as a lightning rod for societal fears, fed by media stereotype, or a malleable social construct through which power is exerted. These moments allow us to glimpse the changing conditions, as well as the changing fears, of societies during different times and places – but require historical interrogation in relation to the lived realities of young people during these periods. I will concentrate on two specific periods – the 1930s and the 1960s – as two periods in which the issue of gangs achieved popular notoriety (Murray 2000: 120). Crucially, too, it is during these two periods that academic attention has focused in on the gang phenomenon.¹⁰

The ‘Case of the Beehive Boys’ (Davies 2007b), described above, is an illustrative example. Davies (2007b) argues that, despite the manifest crime and violence in which the gang engaged, the response from the media and police was also bound up with power and the politics of representation in 1930s Glasgow. At that time Glasgow was establishing a global reputation for crime and violence – most notably through the publication of

¹⁰ My suspicion is that historical research would uncover further continuities in gang identities in different periods of Glasgow’s history. Nonetheless, this section will concentrate on the periods which have already attracted academic attention, in the knowledge that these may merely represent manifestations of a cyclical ‘moral panic’ (S. Cohen 1973).

Alexander McArthur and Kingsley Long's novel *No Mean City: A Story of the Glasgow Slums* – and stories of Chicago gangsters became a staple of popular coverage, resulting in the emergence of Glasgow's reputation as the 'Scottish Chicago' (Davies 2007b). These fears fused into the construction of Glasgow gangs as a 'folk devil', resulting in a dedicated policing effort to break up the city's leading gangs (Davies 1998).

The novel *No Mean City* is based on the notes of Alexander McArthur – an unemployed baker in 1920s Gorbals – in which he detailed minutely the everyday goings-on of the area in that period (Damer 1990b). The novel was co-written by Kingsley Long, a London journalist assigned the task of translating the notes into a publishable novel (Damer 1990b: 27-28). It was, therefore, from the first an interpretation and reconstruction of the realities of street culture it sought to depict, a state of affairs that was to set a tone for both the immediate and long-term reception of the text. The novel's graphic descriptions of violence, drunkenness, and poverty, though dismissed by some with a snort of 'incredulous amusement' (House, quoted in Damer 1990b: 33), were nonetheless the cause of a great deal of controversy at the time of publication. The novel was intentionally not stocked by the Glasgow Corporation¹¹ libraries (Damer 1990b: 32) and invoked contempt from some quarters of the Glasgow media. As the following extract illustrates, the novel was seen as adding further fuel to the reputation of Glasgow as a city of 'ferocious revolutionaries' and 'savagery':

Unfortunately, it seems to us that the book may positively be harmful. The reputation of our city is undeservedly evil ... Glasgow has got a bad name, and Glasgow is suffering because of that bad name; and this book, which is widely noticed in the Press, will tend to confirm the evil reputation of our city. (Evening Citizen, 28 Oct 1935; quoted in Damer 1990b: 32-33)

At this time, the issue of gangs became a repository for a range of extant fears of the day. Gangs were linked to 'an epidemic of thefts and small burglaries, a "sex war" between young wives and their husbands, and a spate of aggressive begging' (Davies 2007a: 415), thus serving as a 'focal point for a host of economic, social and cultural anxieties' (p.409) relating to the rising rates of unemployment in the city. Coupled with this, reports of Al Capone and Chicago gangsters were increasingly reported alongside stories of Glasgow gangs, eliding the fears of organised crime and violence with the much less sophisticated

¹¹ Glasgow Corporation was the previous name of Glasgow City Council.

Glasgow gangs (Davies 2007b: 513). Crucially, this surge in popular fears was exploited by police and the courts:

Invoking the term gangster provided an effective rhetorical ploy for police officers in court ... those labelled gangsters were likely to suffer disproportionately severe punishments, irrespective of the crimes of which they were convicted. (Davies 2007b: 520).

The 1960s witnessed a resurgence of gang panic, this time allied to popular fears relating to youth leisure, social change, and public housing. In a recent article, Angela Bartie notes that gangs were not mentioned in the Glasgow press until 1966 – youth violence was instead referred to in terms of ‘hooliganism’ – until attention began to focus on Easterhouse in 1965 (Bartie 2010: 4). Bartie charts the development of a classic moral panic, culminating (in 1968) in a visit to Easterhouse by popular entertainer Frankie Vaughan to bring together young people from different gangs, and build a youth project in the area. Researchers Mary Wilson and Gail Armstrong – part of the original National Deviancy Conference – examined this chain of events from the emergent perspective of symbolic interactionism and deviance amplification; and found that the representation far outstripped the reality:

While the existence of gangs in the area could not be denied, they were neither as highly organised nor as widespread as the press indicated ... One boy had posed as a gang-leader in order to get a free plane trip to Blackpool (Armstrong and Wilson 1973a: 62).

Armstrong and Wilson argue convincingly that the reputation of Easterhouse – and, correspondingly, Glasgow – came about not as a result of the gang behaviour itself, but as a focal point for broader societal concerns of the day. They report that the Assistant Chief Constable of Strathclyde Police, after conducting a survey of youth violence in Glasgow, declared Easterhouse to be far from the worst (Armstrong and Wilson 1971), yet public anxieties over the lack of amenities and poor social conditions in the new housing estates became concentrated on the issue of Easterhouse gangs; in turn, the issue became a political football in the 1969 council elections, where law and order was a key issue (Armstrong and Wilson 1971). The authors summarise the Frankie Vaughan episode in the following terms:

It appears that groups most successful in solving the ‘problem’ of Easterhouse were those which had the power to publicise and activate their own definitions of the situation – namely the Glasgow administration who faced the problem of their own control ideologies being discredited by the existence of the [Easterhouse] project (Armstrong and Wilson 1971 p.18)

Therefore, the response to gangs at particular moments in Glasgow’s history may reveal broader processes of cultural politics, power relations and popular fears than about the gang phenomenon itself.¹² In the following section, this idea – of ‘gangs as lens’ – will be drawn on to reflect on current responses to the gang phenomenon in Glasgow.

Gangs in the twenty-first century

These episodes in Glasgow’s history give some pause in considering the current wave of interest in the Glasgow gang phenomenon. Over the past five years, a series of television documentaries, newspaper ‘special issues’, practitioner conferences, and academic articles have emerged in relation to the gang phenomenon. A dedicated ‘Gangs Taskforce’ has been implemented by Strathclyde Police, alongside the much-publicised Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV).¹³ In 2009, the Scottish Government commissioned the first ever Scotland-wide study of ‘Troublesome Youth Groups, Gangs and Knife-Carrying in Scotland’ (Bannister et al 2010), and have released dedicated funding for youth projects dealing with gangs. Most recently, a parent-line has been set up for parents who

¹² In fact, the comparatively muted public reception of Armstrong and Wilson’s research, in contrast to the now-infamous *A Glasgow Gang Observed* (Patrick 1973) – researched and published concurrently – stands as a testament to this broader politics of representation. While Armstrong and Wilson were reporting on similar issues, their work was primarily appreciative and critical; Patrick’s more descriptive and, in parts, more sensationalist. Armstrong and Wilson’s research gained little or no public attention, while Patrick’s book was serialised in *The Observer* and appeared in a number of prominent television broadcasts (Damer 1973).

¹³ CIRV, based on the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence project in Cincinnati, USA. The project seeks to target gang-members in Glasgow, with individuals signing a ‘no-violence’ contract in return for access to the CIRV team—composed of a range of police, health, social work, and education workers offering professional advice and support. In addition, the project has access to a large number of apprenticeships, as well as counselling services and alcohol and drug support. The criteria for access to this gamut of services is, quite simply, that the individual has an intelligence marker in the police database for gang-membership. If an individual wishes access to these services and does not have this marker, they must make a declaration to a police officer that they are a member of a gang. More information available at: <http://www.actiononviolence.co.uk/node/160> [Accessed 29th August 2010].

suspect their children of being gang-members.¹⁴ The Glasgow gang, it would seem, has become something of an industry.

Amidst the increase in interest and attention, rates of violence in general, and youth violence in particular, have been gradually declining in Glasgow and Scotland more generally. While no statistics relating to gang violence are collected by Strathclyde Police, rates of violent crime have been decreasing over a five year period in Scotland (Fraser et al, forthcoming 2010). Further, despite evidence to suggest high levels of gang involvement in Edinburgh (Smith and Bradshaw 2005), very little attention has been focused on this city. Crucially, too, contemporary research on the Glasgow gang phenomenon has not established any novelty – gangs still emerge in communities with a lack of amenities and high densities of youth populations – and has generally overlooked an expanded focus on youth violence outwith these areas; leading to something of a self-fulfilling prophecy (Bannister et al 2010).

Part of the explanation for this paradox lies in the rapid increase in interest in the UK gang phenomenon and its role, as Davies notes, as a ‘focal point for a host of economic, social and cultural anxieties’ (Davies 2007a: 409). In the context of popular fears over youth disorder and knife crime, the gang has recently emerged as an all-purpose folk-devil for the twenty-first century – amplified and extended by a range of moral entrepreneurs. As this has become a central focus for law and order rhetoric in the wider national context, so the issue of gangs in Glasgow has become elided into a UK-wide gang phenomenon, overlooking the historical distinctions and continuities discussed in this section. For example, a recent series of high-profile documentaries on gangs – focusing on London, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and Glasgow – combined the issues of gangs in England with those in Scotland, overlooking the distinctive shape and history of the Glasgow gang phenomenon, the specificities of the youth justice and legal system in the Scottish context, and the differential role of religion and ethnicity in structuring youth identities in Scotland. The *Breakthrough Glasgow* report, published by the Centre for Social Justice, explicitly links the Glasgow and London gang issues:

There are estimated to be more than 170 gangs in the Glasgow city region – this compares to 169 identified by the Metropolitan Police Service in London,

¹⁴ Violence Reduction Unit (2010) ‘New helpline service for parents worries about gangs’. Available at <http://www.actiononviolence.co.uk/node/160> [Accessed 29th August 2010].

a city over six times the size. [62] By Glasgow's ratio of gangs to population, there would be over 1,000 gangs in London. (Centre for Social Justice 2008: 12-13)

The *Breakthrough Glasgow* report came alongside the *Channel 4 Weapons Commission* (2009), echoing a popular (and recurring) representation in Channel 5's *MacIntyre Uncovered*, in 2005, which labelled Glasgow 'Britain's most murderous city, where only the ruthless survive' (*MacIntyre Uncovered*, 19/04/05). Such representations not only collapse the different trajectories and issues involved with gangs in different cities, they universalise and homogenise the very different and distinct experiences of different groups across the United Kingdom. In reviewing the extant literature, and clearing a path for the present study, it is to the UK gang literature than I now turn.

Gangs in the United Kingdom

In the previous section I outlined a genealogy of gangs in Glasgow, arguing that gangs have been a longstanding and recurrent feature of working-class communities in Glasgow for over a century. While rates of violence, and young people's involvement in gangs, has waxed and waned over this period, it is difficult to disentangle representations from reality – generally speaking, it is only when the issue becomes highlighted as a 'social problem' that researchers become interested, with the potential of creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. In a concurrent development to the recent increase in attention to Glasgow gangs, the gang phenomenon in the United Kingdom has become an area of intense scrutiny over the past five years, generating a range of policy, policing, and media responses. Crucially, this 'gang fever' (Hallsworth and Young 2004: 12) has developed quickly and spontaneously, with very little evidential base (Squires et al 2008: 105). As Alexander notes, "the gang" has developed a public life independent of any empirical foundation or conceptual exploration – full of its own sound and fury, but signifying very little' (Alexander 2008: 3). The level of debate and controversy, coupled with the number and breadth of competing actors and agencies, has left researchers struggling to gain purchase in public debate. As a result, the UK gang literature is composed of a dizzying and conflicting range of methodologies, epistemological perspectives, political agendas, and definitions.

On one hand, John Pitts (2008), based on a series of community studies in London, argues forcefully that the UK gang phenomenon represents a fundamentally new and unique set of dangers and instabilities – cohering around a set of social, cultural and economic circumstances similar to that of the United States. On the other, Simon Hallsworth and Tara Young, also drawing on a series of qualitative studies with young people in London, argue that the violent street-worlds their research participants inhabit are not reducible to the 'garrulous discourse' of 'gang talk' (Hallsworth and Young 2008: 177) – and that the subcultural and critical academic traditions of the United Kingdom are more apt to describe these experiences. Alternatively, Aldridge et al, based on an intensive two-year ethnography in an unnamed English city, argue that debates over the existence – or non-existence – of gangs in the UK in fact obscures the lived realities of children and young people growing up in communities where violence and gang labels are extant (Aldridge et al 2007). Drawing on these studies, alongside other academic and policy contributions to the field, I will argue that the key lesson to draw from the UK gang literature is the need to seek out the situated understandings and experiences of children and young people in

relation to the gang phenomenon, and caution against unjustified generalisations and universalisms.

Like Glasgow, certain cities in the United Kingdom have a long history of territorial groups, referred to explicitly as gangs. In a recent article, Geoffrey Pearson documents gang-like groups in London, Manchester and Liverpool from the nineteenth century (Pearson 2006). Similarly, Andrew Davies (2008) has investigated so-called ‘scuttler’ gangs in Manchester, Liverpool, and Salford during the early part of the twentieth century. Notably, however, he comments that the Glasgow-based Beehive Boys demonstrated far higher levels of criminal organisation than comparable groups in Liverpool or Manchester (Davies 2007a: 421). Historically, these groups have been akin to Thrasher’s depiction of ‘unsupervised peer groups’, rather than later incarnations of American gangs (discussed below).

The first dedicated academic studies of gang behaviour in the UK were published in the 1950s and 60s, in the form of an article in the *British Journal of Delinquency*¹⁵ by Peter Scott (1956), and David Downes’ book *The Delinquent Solution* (1966). Both involved applications of the burgeoning US research and theory to delinquent groups in London, and both found comparable examples difficult to trace. As Scott describes, ‘It is indeed difficult to find good examples of gangs, nor do the few that are found conform with the picture of healthy devilment, adventurousness, pride of leadership or loyal lieutenantcy, that is often painted’ (Scott 1956: 11). Basing his conclusions on ten years of experience with young offenders and youth groups, Scott finds that the majority of group offenders were more frequently ‘fleeting, casual delinquent associations’ or ‘adolescent street groups’ than ‘gangs proper’ (Scott 1956: 20). Downes’ *The Delinquent Solution* (1966), based on ‘informal observations’ in the streets of the Stepney and Poplar boroughs of London, similarly found ‘American-style’ gangs to be a myth:

Delinquent groups in the East End lacked both the structured cohesion of the New York gangs described by Cloward and Ohlin, and the fissile impermanence of Yablonsky’s ‘near-group’. If the definition of delinquent gang is that of a group whose central tenet is the requirement to commit delinquent acts—i.e. ‘delinquent subcultures’ as defined by Cloward and Ohlin—then observation and information combined point to the absence of

¹⁵ Now the *British Journal of Criminology*.

delinquent gangs in the East End, except as a thoroughly atypical collectivity.
(Downes 1966: 198)

The study of youth groups in the UK has largely, until recently, fallen under the heading of subcultural studies – in particular the output of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (BCCCS) and the National Deviance Conference. This critical, Marxist, subcultural approach to youth studies has inspired a long legacy in the form of grounded, symbolic-interactionist understandings of youth culture and identity – discussed in more detail in Chapter Three – particularly with reference to the works of Cohen and Pearson highlighted earlier. In general, however, while the youth groups studied by the BCCCS and successors were generally deviant, their deviance was relatively peaceable and non-violent in comparison to the level of violence attributed to youth gangs. The sudden wave of violence in contemporary London and elsewhere, alongside the frenzy of media interest in the apparent influx of ‘US-style’ gangs, therefore presented some academic researchers with a conundrum. The rapidity of the recent moral panic relating to gangs in the UK was not easily located within the Birmingham School tradition – itself situated in a specific historic and cultural context – leaving commentators to look elsewhere for inspiration. In this context, the American gang literature has become increasingly prominent in UK studies. Laurie Taylor put this dilemma most succinctly, in criticising gang research that relies too heavily on Cohen, Pearson, and left realist criminology more generally:

Although I’m sure it’s a very valuable exercise to explode the conventional nonsense about a Golden Age ... and although I’m also sure that it’s valuable to show how the alleged causes of street violence constantly recur ... it does often strike me that this knowledge can seem irrelevant, almost an academic distraction, when we’re emotionally confronted by the sad fact of yet another wasted life. And perhaps that’s the enduring dilemma in this area. How to reconcile our commendable empathy with victims of violence with an intellectual appreciation of how, given an historical context, that violence is sadly nothing new. (Laurie Taylor, *Thinking Allowed*, 31st December 2008)

As Taylor summarises, the surge of interest in the UK gang phenomenon left researchers pondering as to how best to analyse the phenomenon, locate it within critical intellectual traditions, and counter the wave of sound and fury extant in the popular press. As Squires

et al (2008: 5-6), prefacing their report on gang behaviour in the United Kingdom, point out:

Throughout the period during which this report was being compiled, virtually every other news bulletin, every day, featured stories about another person, often young, being stabbed or shot on Britain's apparently dangerous streets ... Drafting this report [on gangs and knife crime] in such a climate has been like trying to negotiate a river crossing in full flood.

As the authors go on to reflect, when 'popular concern and political reactions drive the debate along, the danger often is that policy making begins to outrun the available evidence base' (Squires et al 2008: 105). Notably, the empirical basis for knowledge of gangs in the UK remains weak. Put simply, quantitative surveys invariably find relatively high levels of fixed gang membership – though varying by the cohort involved, and questions asked – while qualitative and ethnographic accounts demonstrate the fluidity and situational specificity of gang identities (Batchelor 2009). For example, Bennett and Holloway's study, involving adult arrestees across 14 sites in England and Wales, found that 15% of arrestees self-defined as having 'current or past experience as a gang member' (Bennett and Holloway 2004: 311); the Offending, Crime and Justice Survey found that 6% of 10-19 year-olds were a member of a 'delinquent youth group' (Sharp *et al* 2006: v); and the 'Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime' reports that some 20% of 13 year-olds report gang membership (Smith and Bradshaw 2005: 3). Contrastingly, qualitative and ethnographic research consistently finds that gang-membership is fluid, messy and in most cases indistinguishable from other peer associations. As Aldridge et al state, 'gangs are very much like informal friendship networks whose boundaries vary according to whom you ask in the network. Indeed the notion of "membership" was somehow alien to the vocabulary of young people we interviewed' (Aldridge et al 2007: 17). The recent Youth Justice Board report (T. Young et al 2007) found that distinguishing between gang-members and young people who offended in groups was inherently problematic, due to 'young people's own claims to gang status in order to boost their credibility; labels ascribed by others to any form of group offending by young people; [and] the groups young people are involved in tending to overlap and continually change' (T. Young et al: 15).

Another method of assessment, utilised in a number of recent policy reports (Centre for Social Justice 2008; Squires et al 2008), is that of police estimates of gang membership. The Centre for Social Justice Report, *Dying to Belong* (2009), represents a collation of published research and police gangs statistics in London, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, and Glasgow. The bald statistic that ‘Strathclyde Police identified 170 gangs operating within their geographical remit’ (Centre for Social Justice 2009: 55) – mentioned earlier – has frequently been contrasted with the figure of 171 for London (Centre for Social Justice 2009: 53). The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies report (Squires et al 2008), however, is more circumspect. Quoting a similar figure of 166 gangs in Strathclyde Police area, and contrasting this with the same cities, the authors indicate the potential problems of relying on police estimates:

Strathclyde Police ‘have no definitive description for gangs’ and their database on gangs operates on a rather loose definition of gang membership: it is based on known facts, criminal convictions but also softer intelligence and simply associations. Therefore, a number of the people on the database are likely to not be strictly involved in gangs themselves, but may be associated with a gang member i.e. related, partner, etc. (Squires et al 2008: 82)

A recent article by Ralphs et al (2009) makes this point more forcefully, based on their intensive investigation of gangs in an English city:

Young people with family relationships to gang members, who attended the same schools, youth provisions or set spaces, or who lived on the same streets as gang members were in danger of being considered by police to be gang members themselves, or at least ‘gang associated’ and subjected to increased surveillance and intervention, regardless of criminal involvement. (Ralphs *et al* 2009: 496).

Similarly, as part of the research on which this thesis is based, I worked on a collaborative project with another PhD student, analysing the methods through which young people become labelled ‘gang members’ within the Strathclyde Police intelligence database. We found the process to be largely uncoordinated, subjective, and arbitrary; failing to capture the fluidity of young people’s gang identities (Fraser and Atkinson 2009). Owing to this complexity, therefore, it is difficult to ascertain general trends or longitudinal data in

relation to gang membership (Hallsworth and Young 2008). From this point of view, as Jock Young argues, while certain phenomena are capable of definition, ‘there are many others that are blurred ... because it is their nature to be blurred’ (J. Young 2004: 25-26). Claire Alexander summarises this idea:

‘The Gang’ exists more as an idea than a reality – a mode of interpretation rather than an object, more fiction than fact. It becomes self-fulfilling prophecy, self-fulfilling and axiomatic, impossible to disprove and imbued with the residual power of common-sense ‘Truth’ (Alexander 2000: xiii)

Despite the demonstrable difficulty in ascertaining the nature and extent of the gang phenomenon, several publications have made broad, universalised claims as to the novelty and danger posed by gangs in the UK. The Centre for Social Justice report, for example, makes several broad assertions based on fairly scant evidence and a notable lack of empirical evidence. Broadly, the argument presented is that ‘the gang we are faced with now is semiorganised, violent, criminal and born out of acute deprivation’ (Centre for Social Justice 2008: 81). Elsewhere, the report expands on the point:

Over the past decade British society has seen an increase in gang culture and its associated violence. In addition, the composition and nature of gang culture has shifted: gang members are getting younger, geographical territory is transcending drug territory and violence is increasingly chaotic. (CSJ 2009: 19)

In an area of such acute public concern, media stereotype and political scrutiny, claims relating to a universalised ‘gang we are faced with’ reduce what are in fact quite distinct and disparate phenomena to a vague ‘folk devil’. While it is important not to underplay the significance of group violence in the United Kingdom, or overstate the semantics of the word ‘gang’ (Aldridge et al 2007), generalisations such as these deflect attention from the lived realities of the specific communities affected, replacing these with a blurry and unformed threat. These vagaries, moreover, lend weight and legitimacy to the engineers of moral panic. As Hallsworth and Young argue, ‘[b]y imposing, without any reflection, a framework of reference that begins with and always returns to the gang, so an interpretive grid has been erected around violent street worlds that permit only one interpretation: it is the gangs that are responsible’ (Hallsworth and Young 2008: 182).

These dynamics of representation and response emphasise the inherent dangers in claims which universalise and over-generalise research findings. While successive studies in the United Kingdom have emphasised the variability in the understandings, experiences and meanings attached to gangs (Aldridge et al 2007, 2008), and their variation across time and space (Young et al 2008), the ‘interpretive grid’ of the gang collapses these differentiated experiences. In England, as the indefinable threat posed by gangs has become inflated, so a range of other popular fears are collapsed into the gang phenomenon – notably those related to gender and ‘violent women’ (Batchelor 2009; T. Young 2009), ethnicity and marginalisation (Aldridge et al 2007), gun and knife crime, immigration and asylum (Alexander 2008), and violent extremism (HM Government 2010). Discussing the English response to gangs, Alexander notes that ‘explanations of “the gang” say more about the construction of racial/cultural difference, defined against the norm of (white) Britishness, than about “the gang” itself (Alexander 2008: 15). Importantly, these ‘gang fears’ show up a quite different set of concerns to those described above, in relation to Glasgow; although there are distinct echoes.

The universalist claims of some UK gang research, moreover, lends legitimacy to increasingly repressive criminal justice responses. Ralphs et al, for example, point to the ways in which the gang panic has real and lasting consequences for children and young people growing up in communities labelled ‘gang areas’. In these areas, unjustifiable labelling of young people as ‘gang associates’ has resulted in school exclusions and heavy-handed police tactics (Ralphs et al 2009). The recent introduction of ‘Gangbos’¹⁶ is further evidence of universalism in policy-making. Crucially, there is no empirical evidence for the efficacy of gang-specific intervention. A recent comprehensive review of UK gang interventions – a report of some 155 pages – found that: ‘overall, the comprehensive interventions had a positive, but not statistically significant, effect on reducing crime outcomes compared with usual service provision’ (Hodgkinson *et al* 2009: 5).

While there are a number of emerging studies that approach the issue from a grounded perspective, eschewing universalised claims (Aldridge *et al* 2007; T. Young et al 2007; Hallsworth and Young 2008), such critical studies are frequently overshadowed by less

¹⁶ A ‘Gangbo’ is a civil injunction which ‘will include bans on meeting other gang members, wearing gang colours, going to certain locations or having a violent dog in a public place.’ Guardian, 21st November 2009, available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2009/nov/21/gangbos-antisocial-behaviour-policing-pledge> [Accessed 17th September 2010].

nuanced narratives that support the dominant tropes of the gang complex described below. As Alexander notes:

There is very little sustained qualitative work into ‘gangs’ in Britain, while sociological accounts of youth cultures and identities have been excluded from the discussions. There is an urgent need for more intensive and long term empirical investigation into youth identities and violence that takes as its focus the mundane encounters of everyday life and conflict. (Alexander 2008: 17)

Several points emerge from the above discussion that are relevant to the present study. First, against efforts to universalise definitions or responses to the gang phenomenon, there is a need for understandings that are rooted in specific, local community contexts, and that eschew over-generalised claims. In this context, the role of wider historical and structural forces are, however, extremely important. Second, against understandings of gangs that seek to impose meanings, motives, and definitions on children and young people, there is a need to understand the issue from the point of view of children and young people themselves – in particular the importance of developing age, gender, and group identities which intersect with all aspects of growing up. It is interesting to note, for example, that one of the few longitudinal studies of gangs, the Edinburgh Study (Smith and Bradshaw 2005), found the numbers of young people self-identifying as gang members altered significantly as the cohort aged. Third, while it is necessary to analyse young people’s gang identities in the context of previous research, there is also pressing need to move away from the fetish of gangs; to move ‘beyond the gang’ in understandings of youth violence.

In outlining the background, context, and approach of the present study, and demonstrating the value and contribution of the thesis, I will turn, finally, to the most pervasive discourse within the field of gang studies – gangs in the United States.

Gangs in the United States

As I have argued, the gang phenomenon in the United Kingdom is composed of a range of competing actors, definitions, and understandings, overlaid with a highly emotive and sensitive public debate. As a result, policing and policy responses have frequently overtaken the empirical evidence, relying instead on media stereotypes and localised research findings that support dominant stereotypes relating to ethnicity, class, and gender. In this context, the research and stereotypes of American gangs loom large. Media reports frequently elide the UK gang phenomenon with that of the United States; itself a vastly complex, misrepresented, and frequently misunderstood issue, riven with longstanding and deep-seated tensions and conflicts. More than one American researcher has commented that this situation is the wrong way around, to say the least (Decker 2007). The cities where gangs have institutionalised to the largest extent – Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia – have homicide rates that dwarf rates in Glasgow, which is widely (though incorrectly)¹⁷ labelled the ‘murder capital of Europe’ (McKay 2006). While there is much to be learned from US gang research, this comes from critical, grounded scholarship, as opposed to the more prominent field of administrative gang research.

In this section, I will review a series of studies from an emerging field of critical gang research from the United States. These studies demonstrate the value of in-depth, qualitative research that takes seriously the lived realities, symbolic meanings, and searches for identity composing the lives of children and young people in gang communities within the United States. In moving away from models of gang research that prescribe formulaic definitions, make broad generalisations, and are largely uncritical of the academic gang industry, this research seeks to connect with research and theory ‘beyond the gang’ – towards concepts of globalisation, identity, and performance – in challenging the dominant tropes associated with gangs. Conquergood summarises the representation of gangs in the United States – a representation which, arguably, describes well the current situation in the United Kingdom – in the following terms:

Today’s master symbol for excluded Others—the barbarian hordes threatening to crash the gates and destroy the foundations of civilization—is the gang

¹⁷ The homicide rate in Glasgow, while high by UK and Western European standards, is well below the rate of Estonia and Lithuania, for example. See Scottish Government (2008) *Homicide in Scotland 2007/08*, available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/12/15155727/0> [Accessed 28th September 2010].

member. The gang member is our urban savage, an all purpose devil figure onto which we project our deepest fears about social disorder and demographic change. (Conquergood 1996)¹⁸

In elaborating the approach drawn on this thesis, I will cover two key areas: administrative gang research and critical gang studies.

Administrative gang research

It must *not be* concluded from the fact that most of the groups in the case-studies exhibit delinquencies, that the gang is inherently evil. It is a spontaneous group and usually unsupervised; its activities tend to follow the line of least resistance. (Thrasher 1936 [1963]: 51, emphasis added)

Whatever may have been the history of the term *gang* and whatever may have been the desire—in many ways legitimate—to avoid stigmatizing youth groups with a pejorative term, it is time to characterize the street gang specifically for its involvement, attitudinal and/or behavioural, in delinquency and crime. (Klein 1995: 23)

Within the US gang literature, the link between gang-membership and crime is frequently undisputed. Indeed, it is the apparent statistical correlation between gang-membership and increased likelihood of offending that sustains academic attention to the issue. As Thornberry et al make clear: ‘the observation that gang members, as compared with other youths, are more involved in delinquency – especially serious and violent delinquency – is perhaps the most robust and consistent observation in criminological research’ (Thornberry et al 2003: 1). Yet, as the quote from Thrasher above indicates, the link between gang behaviour and crime was not always taken for granted. Rather, for Thrasher, the gang was viewed as a relatively benign form of social organisation, a natural outgrowth from juvenile excesses; importantly, neither as inherently criminal or particularly remarkable. Yet all too often in the contemporary US literature, the gang is reduced to an abstract and alien other, inherently criminal and crime-generating, not obviated by structural inequality, nor enlivened by individual circumstances or choice. They are simply a gang-member; a particularly hazardous strain of an inherently dangerous breed: the criminal.

¹⁸ Quoted on www.gangresearch.net [Accessed 29/08/2010].

The development of this asymmetry can be traced back to the 1970s, at a time when a marked sea-change occurred within the study of gangs. From studies which concentrated on the theoretical value of close-up research, with little need for comparability (Bloch and Niederhoffer 1958, Cloward and Ohlin 1960, Yablonsky 1962, Short and Strodtbeck 1965) – some of which are discussed in Chapter Four – the field shifted toward attempts to categorise, compare, and programme. In 1967 Malcolm Klein coordinated the first national conference on gangs, bringing together practitioners, researchers, and scholars (Klein 1967: v). Up until this point, Klein criticised ‘findings from various studies and projects [which] tend to be limited to the geographical areas from which they emanate’ (Klein 1967: v). Without doubt, this conference was seen as a positive move in the search for an understanding of this apparently growing social phenomenon. However, from this point, the study of gangs became increasingly beholden to the demands of law enforcement, short-circuiting fundamental questions of theory and critique.

Nowhere is this trajectory more apparent than in the history of debate as to the definition of the term gang. It is obligatory, in gang studies, to devote a significant level of attention to the difficulty of the definitional question; what Hagedorn refers to as ‘criminology’s nit-picking definitional fixation on “what is a gang”’ (Hagedorn 2008: 245). As Maxson and Klein, to pick one of numerous examples, describe:

The definitional issue has probably been the stickiest one that gang scholars have had to confront in the almost eight decades since Frederic Thrasher’s pioneering efforts in Chicago (1927). All of the attention paid to it has not until now yielded much consensus, a fact which in itself testifies to the complexity of the issue and the need felt by all gang scholars to find a useful and acceptable approach. (Maxson and Klein 2006: 4)

When viewed from a historical perspective, however, the nature of this debate takes on new significance. As I have argued above, the term was in fact used relatively unproblematically for much of the eight decades since Thrasher’s research – the term was generally defined in relation to specific research projects, with little attempt at generalisation. It was not, in fact, until the 1970s that any form of consensus was sought (Miller 1975) – a period neatly coinciding with the increasing attention to the gang phenomenon by national government and the necessity (as well as means) for large-scale

quantitative survey (Hagedorn 1998a: 82-84). The fact that Miller's consensus definition – involving a wide range of youth workers, criminal justice agents and self-identifying gang members – had some 1400 features suggested (Ball and Curry 1995: 228) attests to the absurdity of the notion. That the resulting definition¹⁹ revolved around criminal activity, however, is equally telling. For Hagedorn, though there have been numerous later attempts to define the term, these definitions are seldom designed to comprehend the lived experiences of young people, but rather to serve the ends of law enforcement and to 'justify applications for federal grants to support special gang units' (Hagedorn 1998a: 82). As such, much of the gang literature may be said to constitute an autopoietic entity, self-sufficient and self-sustaining, and often operating at a distance from the lives of the children and young people they seek to describe. Academic research thus plays a key role in sustaining what I term the gang complex, a concept I will elaborate on below.

The gang complex

'the harder researchers look, the bigger the gang problem becomes'

(Hobbs, 1997)

The academic industry in US gang research – of which there are distinct resonances within both the UK and Glasgow gang literature – represents a blurring of the boundaries between fact and fiction, myth and reality. Katz and Jackson-Jacobs characterise this debate well as being 'essentially an argument over the correct description of a ghost' (Katz and Jackson-Jacobs 2004: 106) – an argument over an invisible symbol, the projection of our worst fears. These processes result in something I have termed the gang complex; the constant reinvention, reconstruction, and (partial) resolution of the problem of gangs by a range of interest groups. In essence, the gang complex consists of the view that there is something out there called a gang which is:

- a) structured, organised and cohesive;
- b) static, with fixed membership, leadership and values;
- c) criminal, and violent;

¹⁹ A self-formed association of peers, bound together by mutual interests, with identifiable leadership, well-developed lines of authority, and other organizational features, who act in concert to achieve a specific purpose or purposes which generally include the conduct of illegal activity and control over a particular territory, facility, or type of enterprise. (Miller 1975: 121)

- d) homogenous across time and space; and
- e) discernible, and capable of categorisation.

As I have argued throughout this chapter, this is a caricature which is seldom – if ever – borne out by empirical evidence. In discussing young people using the terminology of the gang – be it in academic, media, or policy contexts – further weight is added to this stereotype, and young people are increasingly typecast and criminalised. The gang complex is a powerfully homogenising force – a representation of children and young people that is distorted and one-dimensional, undermining the complexities of biography, age, gender, class, and ethnicity, as well as differences of geography, culture and social context. In this context, the term ‘gang-member’ becomes a dangerously indiscriminate label – collapsing the lived realities of children and young people into a single and universal narrative.

This phrase gang complex is also intended to connote a number of different aspects of the response to the gang phenomenon. On one level, it is complex in the most obvious sense – a complicated, convoluted, multifaceted mish-mash of actors, representations, and vested interests. On another level, however, it is also an insecurity, a source of shame, a hang-up; like a motorway traffic jam caused not by the accident itself but by drivers rubbernecking to view the damage. It is complex as both noun and adjective, arguably saying more about the current hopes, fears, and insecurities of contemporary societies than about the lived realities of children and young people. In this thesis, therefore, I seek to move beyond this construction – beyond the gang complex – in thinking about the role of youth gangs in young lives. In the final section, I draw on the literature that I find helpful in conceptualising this approach.

Critical gang studies

I have concluded that traditional criminology has worn out its usefulness in helping us understand gangs. My critique of criminology’s dated theoretical framework has led me to look elsewhere for inspiration ... I am indebted more to Jean-Paul Sartre than James Short. My theoretical inspiration is from Manuel Castells and Touraine, not Robert Park or Frederic Thrasher. I prefer the poetry of Luis Rodriguez to the prose of Malcolm Klein. (Hagedorn 2008: 134)

Hagedorn's searing critique of administrative gang research is a forceful statement of intent for research that moves 'beyond the gang', and beyond traditional criminology, in comprehending the complex global and local processes that underpin the gang phenomenon. Research of this kind – which I term 'critical gang studies' – seeks to challenge the dominant stereotypes of the gang complex through exploration of the lived experiences, situated meanings, and local context of gangs in different times and places. Engaging with structures of age, class, ethnicity, and gender, alongside critical social and historical theory, this seam of research seeks to develop an understanding of gangs from the perspectives of the young men and women involved.

Against models of gang research that seek top-down, universal definitions, research within the ambit of 'critical gang studies' approaches the issue from the bottom up. The work of Dwight Conquergood (1991, 1994a, 1994b) and Robert Garot (2007, 2010), for example, draws on ethnomethodological, phenomenological and performative approaches, understanding young people's gang identities as complex, situational, and subjective. As Garot explains:

Rather than conceptualizing young people as gang members and gangs as a static group, this analysis shows how the doing of gangs is strategic and context sensitive. Such an approach provides an alternative to conceptualizing identity, and especially gang identity, not as a fixed personal characteristic but as a sensual response to a moment's vicissitudes (Garot 2007: 50)

Drawing on the field of performance studies, Conquergood describes the complex and situated meanings through which young people enact gang identities. Basing his arguments on four years of living in Big Red, a notorious housing estate in Chicago's South-Side, Conquergood conceptualises gang identities as a means of forming a collective solidarity in the context of socio-economic marginalisation:

Against a dominant world that displaces, stifles, and erases identity, the homeboys create, through their communication practices, a hood: a subterranean space of life-sustaining warmth, intimacy and protection. (Conquergood 1994a: 47)

For Garot, like Conquergood, gangs are not fixed, static entities – with universal characteristics and forms – but a fluid and ephemeral identity, to be used and drawn in different ways, by different individuals, at different times. Drawing on the developing field of cultural criminology,²⁰ Garot argues that gang identities are enacted within the broader life circumstances and community contexts of young people – and young adults – and must be understood within this broader context. For example, in his recent book *Who You Claim?* (2010), Garot analyses young people’s responses to the pedagogy of an alternative school – building on Willis’ classic study *Learning to Labour* (1977) – as a means of exploring the wider dynamics of alienation and resistance that underpin the situational enactment of gang identities. Crucially, Garot locates these gang identities within the broader context of social development in young people’s lives; contrasting this everyday image with the repressive machinery of the gang complex:

Adolescence is especially recognized as a time when one needs to experiment with identity, as the choices one makes in terms of career and family may have long-lasting ramifications ... Yet such insights tend to be overlooked when we speak of inner-city youth, and especially when we talk about gang-members: fear clouds our thinking. When we feel threatened by those commonly referred to as “monsters” or “superpredators,” it seems irresponsible or even dangerous to appreciate the artful nuances of their ways of performing identity’ (Garot 2010: 1)

This approach, which locates gangs in the broader context of identity and social development, has important implications for the study of gangs. Rather than conceptualising gangs as an alien other – to be researched to more effectively target criminal justice interventions – the enactment of gang identities becomes a way of understanding the interleaving structures of age, gender, ethnicity in young people’s lives. ‘Doing gangs’, for Garot, represents a way of ‘doing masculinity’ in a way that holds currency in the street-worlds his research participants inhabit.

²⁰ Cultural criminology is an ‘emergent theoretical orientation that investigates the convergence and contestation of cultural, criminal and crime control processes. Cultural criminology emphasises the role of image, style, representation and meaning both within illicit subcultures, and in the mediated construction of crime and crime control (Ferrell 2005:13). See Ferrell et al (2008), the journal *Crime, Media, Culture* and the website <http://www.culturalcriminology.org/> for further information.

Garot's situating of gang identities within the broader context of young people's social development – and the ways in which 'doing gangs' can resist, as well as recreate, the structures of power that young people find themselves in – is developed in a sensitive and nuanced way by Norma Mendoza-Denton, in her ethnographic and socio-linguistic study of young Latina women in California (1996, 2008). Mendoza-Denton (1996) documents the complex ways in which these young women use and appropriate gang symbols – colours, music, makeup – in the construction of a particular configuration of femininities 'that not only confounds wider notions of how girls should act, dress, and talk, but throws into question the very gendered category that girls are expected to inhabit' (Mendoza-Denton 1996: 48). Crucially, too Mendoza-Denton emphasises the temporal aspect of enacting these configurations of gang identity, 'where girls speak of gang participation as the transition to adulthood, and equate getting out of gangs with growing older' (Mendoza-Denton 1996: 61). This point – a corollary of the broader conceptualisation of gang identities – will be explored in more detail in the final chapter, 'Growing in and out of gangs.'

These studies are united by a sensitivity to the broader structures of power, ethnicity, and gender that pattern the experiences of young people growing into gang identities in marginalised communities across the globe. Critical of the assumptions regarding ethnicity, gender, age, and class inherent in the gang complex of mainstream gang research, these studies seek to confront and problematise the role of masculinities and femininities (Hagedorn 1998b, Chesney-Lind and Hagedorn 1999) in the construction and enactment of gang identities, and the multiple and contested ways in which these gender identities intersect with structures of class, age and ethnicity. It is this stable of 'critical gang studies' from which I draw inspiration from in the thesis I present.

Conclusion

This chapter has critically reviewed a range of research on gangs and gang identities in Glasgow, the United Kingdom, and United States. I have argued throughout for research that eschews universalised definitions and situates meanings and motives at the level of children and young people – locating these understandings and experiences in the context of local history, group biography, and symbolic meaning – in an effort to challenge the dominant tropes of the gang complex. In this way, gang research can be drawn on both as a means of understanding young people’s identities, struggles, and conflicts, and of the structures of age, class, gender and ethnicity that pattern these experiences. The study of gang identities thus becomes a lens through which to analyse – and challenge – the power and politics of representation. In the context of Glasgow, for example, moral panic over gangs has recurred at various points in Glasgow’s history – representing a focal point for popular fears of the time. From this vantage point, the study of contemporary gangs in Glasgow may offer a unique insight into broader societal patterns. This review has cleared an empirical and theoretical path for the present study, which seeks to address these arguments through a long-term, in-depth study of young people’s gang identities in a specific area of Glasgow, called Langview. In the following chapter, I will outline the methodologies, methods, and orientations I employed in the study.

Chapter Three

The best laid schemes: Methods, orientations and reflections

As intimated in Chapter Two, experiences from my early fieldwork highlighted the distance between much of the literature I had read and the complex flow of everyday life that I had entered. I felt an instinctive urge to understand the gang phenomenon from the point of view of the young people, but had little knowledge or experience of youth work. I started volunteering in the youth project in Langview, but initially felt keenly embarrassed and unsure of myself – like the new kid at school. During my first visit, a member of staff took me outside to meet some of the young people; I was completely lost. The following fieldnote, written later that day, conveys some of this feeling:

I felt like a fish out of water when I actually went outside when young people were there: I had no idea how to act, how to engage, how to be liked, how to be authoritative. Fuck, I felt like I was flouncing around, just shaking everyone's hand, including the eight year-olds who seemed like they'd never shaken a hand in their life! (Fieldnote, 20th March 2007)

There followed a long and humbling process of learning – and once again 'unlearning' – a new set of vocabularies, identities, and relationships. I experienced crushing self-doubt, testing incidents, and constant difficulties in shape-shifting between my roles in the university and youth project. In fact, I didn't begin discussion groups until a year after this first visit, by which time I had committed myself fully to conducting a community ethnography in Langview. By this point, I had been living in the area for six months, and had begun work as a tutor in the local secondary school, and as a street-based youth outreach worker for another project – Langview Outreach Project. During this time, too, I had become influenced by the youth-led principles underpinning Langview Youth Project, and sought to integrate principles of participation and reciprocity in my work and research. The methodologies, methods, and orientations I drew on in the study, therefore, were strongly influenced by my experiences of fieldwork.

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I critically reviewed a range of approaches to the gang phenomenon in Glasgow, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In order to challenge the dominant stereotypes of the gang complex, I argued that there is a pressing need for research that is critical, engaged, and grounded in the understandings and experiences of children and young people. In particular, I argued for the need to move ‘beyond the gang’ in understanding the gang phenomenon; focusing on the complex and contradictory meanings underpinning young people’s group behaviours. In shifting the focus away from supposed gang activity, and towards young people’s lives as a whole, the dehumanising narratives of the gang complex can be effectively challenged.

In this chapter, I describe the process through which these ideas and concepts were put into practice – through an ethnographic study of a specific community in the east end of Glasgow called Langview. Alongside traditional methods such as participant-observation, I drew on principles and techniques from participatory action-research and visual methods, in an effort to move beyond conventional approaches to gang research. Taken as a whole, these methods sought to capture the multiple meanings that young people ascribe to gang identity, introducing new methods and methodologies to the field of criminology generally and gang research specifically. Crucially, these methodologies and methods, while grounded in specific literatures and traditions, were designed to allow for fluidity, change, and iteration. Before discussion of particular methods of data-collection and analysis, therefore, I describe the methodological orientations influencing my approach to data-collection – the deep-seated questions, concerns, and sensibilities that I carried between field and office. Thereafter, I detail the particular methods I drew on in the course of the research – the improvised techniques, strategies, and negotiations that created the research. The following epithet, from Scots poet Robert Burns – also a good example of the original Scots meaning of the term ‘gang’ (to go) – neatly summarises the argument and content of this chapter, and the efforts to embrace the inherent messiness of research in the thesis as a whole:

The best-laid schemes o' mice an 'men;
Gang aft agley [Go often awry].

Robert Burns, *To A Mouse* (1786)

Methodological orientations

Ethnography is broadly defined as ‘social research based on the close-up, on-the-ground observation of people and institutions in real time and space, in which the investigator embeds herself near (or within) the phenomenon so as to detect how and why agents on the scene act, think and feel the way they do’ (Wacquant 2003: 5). Within the field of criminology, ethnographic research most commonly involves observation of, and often participation in, the illicit activities of research subjects – what Jeff Ferrell refers to as criminological *verstehen* (Ferrell 1997). Within the oeuvre of gang research, some of the most illuminating and influential studies have involved *in situ* observation of this type.²¹ The sole ethnography of gangs in Glasgow – James Patrick’s *A Glasgow Gang Observed* (1973) – also drew on this approach.

These studies aside, however, many of our ideas about gangs come not from the realities of life for children and young people, but from the unquestioned assumptions and stereotypes of those with the power to define – the architects of the gang complex described in Chapter Two. While *verstehen* ethnographies, at their best, can function as a powerful antidote to these accounts – humanising the complex and contingent life-styles of young people involved in gangs – my aim was to understand the more banal, everyday role that gang identities played in the lives of all young people growing up in an area with a perceived gang problem: whether self-identifying as gang members or not. My ethnography was therefore of young people living in this community – Langview – and the particular techniques and tactics were those which were appropriate to these aims, and to the ages of children and young people participating in the research. Though it began as a study of gangs, it ended as a study of young people.

In what follows, I outline the intellectual, methodological, and practical roots of my approach to ethnography; influences which have been explicitly or implicitly drawn on, critiqued, and developed during the course of the research. These influences – the Chicago School, Birmingham School, and critical ethnography – represent key reference points in my approach to method. The list is not intended as a complete or coherent statement of antecedents – absorbing these influences did not occur in a linear or calculated way. Nonetheless, this section represents an effort to stake out my approach to these debates, and to map the sensibilities underpinning the methods of research and analysis employed

²¹ Thrasher 1927; Whyte 1943; Campbell 1984; Sanchez-Jankowski 1991; Venkatesh 2008.

in the thesis. This is an example of the iterative approach to reflexivity employed in the process of data analysis and writing: revisiting underlying assumptions and beliefs at different stages of analysis, layering reflexivity into the fabric of the text in an effort to make transparent the knowledge-claims contained within.

This too, forms part of the rationale of placing discussion of methods before that of theory. As will become clear in these chapters, while certain theoretical threads guided my approach to method, the theoretical framework used emerged iteratively from the data. In this chronological sense, methods came first – this is reflected in the structuring of the chapters.

The Chicago School of Sociology

The approach to research formulated by Robert Park and Ernest Burgess at the University of Chicago in the 1920s – commonly known as the ‘Chicago School of Sociology’ – represents a central methodological touchstone. Park and Burgess set out to conduct a unique and pioneering experiment in sociological research: taking the quintessential industrialising city – Chicago – as a petrie dish upon which to examine forms of human organisation in the urban environment (Faris 1967). The Chicago School thus sought to distinguish patterns of interaction, association and order amidst the rapid population and urbanisation of the city. Crucially, one of the most prominent methods of discovering these patterns was through direct observation of the phenomenon being studied. As Park, a former journalist, famously exhorted his students:

Go and sit in the lounges of the luxury hotels and on the doorsteps of the flophouses; sit on the Gold Coast settees and on the slum shakedowns; sit in the Orchestra Hall and in the Star & Garter Burlesk. In short, gentlemen, go get the seat of your pants dirty in *real* research (Robert E. Park, speaking circa 1920, quoted in Lofland 1971)

This instruction was taken up by a generation of graduate students, leading to the publication of scores of observational studies of Chicago during this period – famous examples including *The Hobo* (N. Anderson 1923), *The Taxi-Dance Hall* (Cressey 1932), *The Ghetto* (Wirth 1928), *The Gold Coast and the Slum* (Zorbaugh 1929) and, of course, *The Gang* (Thrasher 1936). While the ideological assumptions of the Chicago School have

been subject to later critique and revision (Hagedorn 2008), particularly in the context of globalisation (Burawoy 2000), the principle of up-close, in-depth, appreciative urban research on which it was founded remains a model for critical, grounded gang research. Several of the most important contributions to the gang literature, past and present, have been within this tradition.

The Birmingham School

In seeking to move ‘beyond the gang’ in understanding the meaning and motives drawn on by young people in enacting gang identities, I sought to connect with the tradition of critical, grounded, symbolic research pioneered by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (the ‘Birmingham School’). The Birmingham School, founded by prominent members of the New Left²² in the 1960s, brought Chicago School methods of participant-observation to the study of youth culture in 1970s Britain,²³ emphasising the collective and symbolic routes through which cultural identities are formed. Drawing together sophisticated Marxist theory and grounded methods, studies focused on the symbolic meanings and identities involved in the spectacular youth cultures of the 1970s – punks (Hebdige 1977), skinheads (Clarke 1975), and Teddy Boys (Jefferson 1975) – in seeking to make sense of the growing tensions and worklessness within wider working-class culture (Mungham and Pearson 1976). As Phil Cohen summarises: ‘the latent function of subculture is this – to express and resolve albeit “magically”, the contradictions of the parent culture’ (P. Cohen 1972: 23, quoted in Mungham and Pearson 1976: 150). To the Chicago School’s methods of grounded, journalistic methods, therefore, the Birmingham School contributed an understanding of the role of power, social conditions, and political agendas in the production of culture.

Like the Chicago School, the Birmingham School’s approach to ethnography was ‘not [as] a single method, but a repertoire of methods, even including survey techniques and statistics’ (Roberts 1976: 245); drawing on naturalistic methods of appreciative inquiry (Matza 1969) alongside theories of labelling and social construction (Becker 1963). The

²² The New Left is a collective term for a range of radical left-wing political and intellectual movements in the 1960s and 70s, who sought to break away from the ‘Old Left’ of traditional Marxism.

²³ Though originating in a different time and place, the National Deviancy Conference (NDC) brought similar methodological and theoretical agendas to bear on the study of crime and deviance; breaking away from what was perceived to be the positivist dogma of the period. The work of the ‘New Criminologists’ (Taylor, Walton and Young 1973) was also a key influence.

blending of participant-observation, critical analysis of power-relations and grounded theory is most fully realised in the collaborative projects *Resistance through Ritual* (Hall et al 1975) and *Policing the Crisis* (Hall et al 1978), along with the work of notable graduates: Paul Willis' *Learning to Labour* (1977), David Robins and Phil Cohen's *Knuckle Sandwich* (1978) and Paul Corrigan's *Schooling the Smash Street Kids* (1979). In both a Scottish (Fitzpatrick 1972; Armstrong and Wilson 1973a) and a UK context (Alexander 2008; Hallsworth and Young 2008; Aldridge et al 2007), these traditions have made important critical insights into the gang phenomenon, shifting the line of inquiry 'beyond the gang' and towards situated meaning, in the construction of gang identities.

Critical ethnography

Finally, in seeking to critique the dominant tropes of the gang complex, and move beyond some of its epistemological assumptions, I sought to integrate principles and practices from the emergent field of critical ethnography. In the context of a broader movement towards critical studies and reflexivity (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), re-readings of Chicago and Birmingham School publications have repositioned the epistemological underpinnings of key publications from both Schools within their historical and social context (McRobbie 1980; Burawoy 2000; Hagedorn 2008). These critical developments form part of a broader intellectual current that explicitly critiques the structures of power through which knowledge is created (Bourdieu 2004). This approach, termed critical ethnography, seeks to engage with issues of power and powerlessness through appreciative understanding of both powerful and powerless groups. Critical ethnography consists of a merging of a range of critical perspectives from feminist, anthropological, and post-structuralist perspectives; seeking to challenge the epistemological and ontological foundations of ethnographic research, while unearthing and confronting relationships of power and domination (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Conquergood 1991). As Behar argues, ethnography is a loaded term, coded with specific claims to, and methods of, knowing the social world:

Ethnography began as a method, which was discovered, perfected, and institutionalized in western centers of power, for telling stories about the marginalized populations of the world. It has its origins in the flagrant colonial inequalities from which modernity was born and in the arrogant assumptions that its privileged intellectual class made about who has the right to tell stories about whom. (Behar 2003: 15-16)

Critical ethnography thus blends the traditions of appreciative inquiry and political acuity from the Chicago and Birmingham Schools with a reflexive awareness of the structures of age, class, ethnicity and gender through which knowledge is produced. In the field of gang research in particular, these works are critical of the structures through which stereotypes of gangs are produced and seek to challenge these accounts with grounded, critical research – which may or may not have an explicit focus on gangs. Claire Alexander's *The Asian Gang* (2000), Phillipe Bourgois' *In Search of Respect* (1995), Robert Garot's *Who You Claim?* (2010), Norma Mendoza-Denton's *Homegirls* (2008) and the varied output of Dwight Conquergood (1991, 1994a, 1994b, 1996) are illustrative examples of this approach.

Reflections on methodological orientations

While the specific methods I used in the research were at times due more to spontaneity and serendipity than a carefully planned research strategy, the principles and practices, as well as conflicts and contradictions, of Chicago School, Birmingham School, and critical ethnography operated as guiding threads throughout my fieldwork. With hindsight, it is possible to draw out specific examples of these influences – as I will elaborate below – but during the research these were latent, submerged in the complex range of emotions, relationships, and identities I was negotiating. However, as Ferrell (2009: 16) argues, 'ethnography, rather than existing as a "method" of research, in fact operates most usefully as a *sensibility* about the external world and a *sensitivity* to its nuanced ambiguities.' These approaches and schools of thought are perhaps best thought of similarly, as the sensibilities and sensitivities that guided my fieldwork experiences.

Without question, my decision to focus on an in-depth study of a particular community – and within that, a group of young men in a range of locations within that community – was heavily influenced by the tradition of Chicago School participant-observation, in particular William Foot Whyte's *Street Corner Society* (1943). Like Whyte, I wanted to understand the group dynamics, peer relationship, and collective identities through which young people made sense of the changing world around them – as I describe below, I focused on the Langview Boys as a representative example of these group processes. Unlike Whyte, I

had no single key informant – no ‘Doc’²⁴ – but rather built up relationships with each member of the group over a period of two years. The broader focus on the interplay between the development of Langview and the city of Glasgow, and the lived experiences of young people living through these changes, was also influenced by Thrasher and the broader Chicago School, as well as the later revisionist critiques mentioned earlier. In this context, Chicago School ethnographies of Glasgow (Damer 1989) were an important methodological guide.

The influence of the Birmingham School came most prominently through Paul Willis’ *Learning to Labour* (1977) and Paul Corrigan’s *Schooling the Smash Street Kids* (1978); as well as the re-imagining of the Birmingham School in the context of both historical (Fitzpatrick 1972) and contemporary gang research (Hallsworth and Young 2008). Through these works, I was sensitised to the broader social and political context of growing up in Langview, and the ways in which the group of young men I was working with created meaning in this context. As I became close to this group – the Langview Boys – I also saw first-hand the physical and symbolic alteration of Langview in the wake of deindustrialisation: factories reconstructed as gentrified flats, call-centres and artist studios; cinemas abandoned or destroyed; playing-fields turned into housing. I was also aware, however, of the critique of the focus on spectacular youth cultures within the Birmingham School – as well as that of cultural criminology, which formed another important early influence – and was keen to avoid becoming a ‘zoo-keeper of deviance’ (Gouldner 1968; O’Brien 2005). As such, I focused as much on the mundane, everyday sources of identity and meaning as on gangs and gang identities, and I looked to critical ethnography for balance.

Critical ethnography is perhaps the most dominant, yet most dissolute, of influences on the study. Without doubt, I was acutely aware of the power imbalance between myself, the researcher, and the children and young people with whom I worked and researched; and was keen to challenge and critique the existing paradigms of power and knowledge through which the gang complex is produced. In working through the layers of power, gender, class, and age that composed the group interactions of the young people I worked with, I sought out both theoretical and practical means to make sense of these contested and embodied structures. I went to great lengths to encourage active participation in the

²⁴ ‘Doc’ was the infamous gatekeeper in Whyte’s study of Cornerville – and is now a byword for an access-broker in ethnographic research.

research – designing discussion groups that drew on participatory action-research and visual methods from the ‘new social studies of childhood’, supporting staff and young people to contribute ideas, observations, fieldnotes, and diaries. In this way, I sought to integrate critique of the gang complex, traditional gang methodologies, and structures of power-knowledge into the practice and writing of the research.

In grounding the research fundamentally in the understandings, experiences, and opinions of young people in Langview – blending traditional and innovative methods – my approach to methodology sought to move ‘beyond the gang’, and toward the situated meaning, in making sense of young people’s gang identities. Locating the experiences of children and young people growing up in Langview against a backdrop of social change in the area, while recognising the structures of age, gender, and class through which knowledge is created, this approach seeks to draw together the advances of the Chicago and Birmingham Schools with contemporary approaches to critical ethnography. In this way, I seek to contribute to general methodological debates relating to the nature and value of ethnography in the twenty-first century, as well as specific methodological debates relating to researching young people and gangs. In the following section, I outline the specific techniques and methods through which this methodological orientation was enacted in the research.

Methods

The methods used in the research consisted of a two-year period of participant-observation in Langview Youth Project; a ten-month period of participant-observation with Langview Outreach Project; 13 discussion groups with groups of young people at Langview Youth Project; five discussion groups with young people at Langview Academy; and general notes, observations, and experiences from living in Langview during the period of fieldwork. These methods generated approximately 500 pages of typed fieldnotes and 18 hours of transcribed interviews and discussions. In this section, I will present an overview of the research site – Langview – followed by a discussion of each of these research methods – covering issues of access, ethics, and analysis. Thereafter, I discuss issues of sampling, and analytical considerations.

Research site: Langview

Langview (a pseudonym, discussed below) is a traditional working-class community in the east end of Glasgow. Built in the late 19th century to house workers in the manufacturing plants in Langview and neighbouring communities, the area has undergone significant changes since this time. Successive waves of deindustrialisation, depopulation, and gentrification has resulted in a mixture of housing; traditional sandstone tenements, local authority housing schemes and, more recently, modern flat developments for the rental market. The area is defined, by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, as being within the 5% ‘most deprived’ areas in Scotland – having rates of unemployment and benefit claimants well above the national average – and has an established reputation, in media and police reports, as being an area with a ‘gang problem’. Despite this reputation, however, there has been a recent influx of new residents. Thus, while the area retains a reputation for gang violence, it is developing a separate reputation as an area of gentrification. It thus stands as a microcosm of the processes of deindustrialisation, gentrification, and marginalisation that have occurred in the city of Glasgow as a whole. The continuities and changes in the cultural and social landscape of Langview are discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

Langview emerged as the research site in part owing to serendipity – through my involvement with Langview Youth Project (LYP) – and partly because of methodological considerations. In the first stages of my time at LYP, though I was aware of Langview’s

reputation for gangs, I saw very little that would evidence this reputation but for vague rumours and folk-tales. After living in the area for a period, and getting to know a range of children and young people in the area, I still felt like ‘the gang’ was something of a ghost – always talked about, but never seen. The following fieldnote conveys some of this scepticism:

What is this sick feeling that has come over me today? I sense it is a deep unease with something to do with the research that I’m doing; an impression that what I’m doing is shit. It feels like ‘the gang’ is elsewhere – everyone talks about gangs, but I get the feeling this is bravado, or something else. (Fieldnote, 12th December 2007)

My decision to focus on Langview, despite these initial reservations, came as a result of my developing interest in critical ethnography – and in particular on research that challenged the stereotypes of the gang complex. I had become deeply suspicious of much of the media coverage of the gang phenomenon, which appeared to portray the issue as being confined to the most deprived areas of Glasgow, in turn adding further stigma to marginalised communities (Damer 1989). I decided that a focus on the multiple meanings that young people in Langview attached to gangs – in a gentrifying community that, while not without its problems, was far from the most deprived in the area – as a way of demystifying and destigmatising the gang phenomenon in Glasgow.

Having made this resolution, I began volunteering two nights a week, with the intention of building on my skills in youth work, and getting to know a wider range of young people attending the project. Little by little, I began to form solid relationships with a number of young people attending the project, as well as some of the parents. By September 2007, I was helping out with coaching sessions, and taking on additional responsibilities in the project. In October, I moved to the area; I took a small box-room in a flat approximately 100m from LYP, and began the next stage of the research story.

Participant-observation: Langview Youth Project

Langview Youth Project is a recreational facility for children and young people aged 0-16. On an average night, attendance is around 30 to 40, though during busy spells such as the summer holidays, this number can rise to over 100. My role within the project was a

volunteer youth/play-worker, responsible for general support and supervision of young people using the project. The fieldnote below, written after my first visit to the project, conveys something of the project's layout and ethos, as well as my breathless excitement and confusion at this stage of the research. The project is described and analysed in more detail in Chapter Seven.

I arrived at around 1pm, as arranged, to be whisked around the outdoor (5-a-side football pitch, assault course, makeshift tennis court, play area) and indoor (table-tennis table, pool table, PCs, Nintendo Wii, Playstation II) areas of the project, with a rapid-fire explanation of the principles and practice of the project (young people's voices should be listened to; young people should have power and responsibility; good behaviour should be rewarded and bad behaviour punished; punishment should be fair, predictable, and standardised), and an in-depth discussion with a number of the staff, and community police who happened by, about my research, gangs, youth work and the local area. I left 5 hours later, exhausted but enthused, with an agreement that I would begin volunteering the following week. (Fieldnote, 20th March 2007)

Initial access to Langview Youth Project (LYP) was arranged through a friend who volunteered there. On his recommendation, I contacted the project manager, who was very enthusiastic, both in relation to my offer of volunteering and (surprisingly, to me) my research ideas. I explained that I was concerned about young people getting a 'bad press', and that I wanted to understand what young people thought about things. She suggested, early on, that I start running workshops and discussions with groups of young people; but it wasn't until I had been volunteering at the project for a year that I felt confident both in my role and my relationships with young people at the project to begin this stage of fieldwork. Thus, whilst access to the project itself was relatively straightforward, social access to participants was a long, humbling, and testing process. As I will describe below, though I didn't intend initially to focus solely on Langview Youth Project, or indeed Langview itself, the research developed organically from my time there – and LYP became the core site for the study.

Through my initial volunteer work with LYP, it became clear that participant-observation was the most effective means of generating data. The outdoor area of the project was comparable in size and feel to a school playground – my role thus allowed me to mingle

and interact freely with groups of children and young people. As such, I was able to fulfil my responsibilities as a youth/play-worker, in supporting and supervising different groups of children and young people, whilst also making general observations in relation to my research. At this stage of fieldwork, I kept anonymised fieldnotes on general observations within the project – where asking direct questions in relation to the research, at this stage I explained verbally that I worked at the university, and was interested in what life was like for young people in Langview. As the research progresses, as I will explain below, I developed more concrete and generalised means of gaining informed consent.

This early period of fieldwork at LYP was loaded with personal and emotional identity-work, which in turn shaped the nature of my interactions with young people in the project. As I became more immersed in the field, I felt further and further away from the university, causing difficulties in maintaining a research identity. On one occasion, these conflicting identities were brought into sharp focus. I had established a kind of ritual in shifting between different identities—a wash, a change of clothes, and a change of glasses for contact lenses. One evening, however, I had locked my keys in the office, and was therefore unable to perform the ritual. Unexpectedly, I felt quite different; but this collapsing of identities was itself illuminating:

I suppose that I feel some kind of identity as a youth worker when I'm dressed like that, and therefore feel more confident in the role. Also, it marks out in a clear way the distinction between my 'academic' self and my 'ethnographic' self; there is some sense that I don't want the kids at the project to see the 'academic' me, as I am, on some level, embarrassed by it in front of them. Of course, the young people in the project didn't appear to notice any difference. (Fieldnote, 10th March 2008)

As mentioned earlier, my initial volunteer work at LYP was not intended as part of the PhD research, but as a means of gaining general experience in youth work, to inform a later period of data-collection. As time went on, however, and I got to know a range of groups of young people, LYP emerged as a natural focus for the research. As LYP crystallised as the key site of the research, I set about a range of strategies both to gather data and ensure informed consent. Initially, I presented to the Board of Directors at LYP, supplying an information sheet relating to the nature of participant-observation, anonymity and confidentiality, and my role within the project (Appendix A1). The Board were

assured that there would be no change in the nature of my volunteer work – only the fact that I would keep a record of what goes on, and that I would be in the project more frequently. After gaining the consent of the Board, posters advertising the nature and content of the research were placed in prominent locations around the building (Appendix A2), and opt-out information letters were sent to all parents/guardians (Appendix A3). In the information sheet presented to the Board, the information poster, and opt-out letters, assurances relating to anonymity and confidentiality were made clear. Names of individuals, the youth project itself, and the wider community are anonymised in the thesis, such that no individual can be identified either directly or indirectly.

In reality, of course, there is no bright line separating overt from covert participant-observation. Though I strove to ensure ongoing informed, informal consent – negotiated in the course of conversation with different groups of young people – inevitably this was simply impractical in each and every case. To encourage more direct participation, therefore, I placed a box labelled ‘Ali’s Anecdotes’ within LYP; designed for children and young people, as well as staff, to contribute their thoughts to the process of data-collection. While, in reality, only one member of staff contributed to this element of data-collection, this technique was designed as another means of highlighting the nature of my role within LYP. In the thesis, aside from those individuals who participated in discussion groups and gave explicit written consent, only generalised observations are made from fieldnotes and ‘anecdotes’, with no names attributed to individuals.

In addition, I spent weeks compiling a list of addresses of parents/guardians, and sent off some 80 letters inviting parents, guardians, and young people to an information evening relating to the research. While no parents attended, the nature of the research was explained to thirty children and young people attending the project – with sample fieldnotes distributed to both staff and young people. These strategies were designed to renegotiate my role and identity within LYP, and communicate – as far as was practicable – key aspects of informed consent, and ethics. A key aspect in this procedure – and of the process of data-collection more generally – was the introduction of discussion groups with groups of young people in LYP, discussed below.

Participant-observation: Langview Outreach Project

I had felt for a long time that my experiences with LYP, important as they were, only allowed me a brief snapshot into the lives of children and young people in Langview. I was keen to engage with children and young people in a more naturalised setting, but due to the distance in age between myself and the young people I was working with, simply ‘hanging around’ with them on the streets was not an option. Through my work with LYP, I became aware of another youth project in the area – Langview Outreach Project – which engaged with children and young people in public spaces, supplying information on available leisure opportunities, as well as more general support and advice. Influenced by the work of Walter Benjamin (1979), Michel de Certeau (1984) and Jonathan Raban (1974), I felt that the nature of street-work would allow me access to young people in a less controlled environment; allowing me a view from the streets of Langview.

Access to Langview Outreach Project (LOP) was initially quite problematic. Staff from LOP dropped into LYP frequently, and I inquired several times as to whether I could accompany them out on shifts. While they were outwardly encouraging, nothing came of these initial inquiries. Much later, another youth worker from the outreach project, Suzie, confided that she had initially been suspicious of my motives and intentions. After much persistence, the project manager recommended that I complete the council-approved training course in outreach work. Around two weeks after completing the course, a position came up as a part-time outreach worker – I applied and became a paid employee. I spent two or three evenings a week, for a ten-month period, walking the streets of Langview with my streetwork partner, John.

The nature of street-outreach work is not dissimilar from the work of an ethnographer. As with LYP, I was able to engage with a wide range of children and young people in Langview. The nature of interactions, in public space, meant that I was able to gauge the nature and form of young people’s understandings and experiences of the area, as well as the group dynamics that occurred there. I had agreed with the project manager, and Board of Directors, that I would keep anonymised fieldnotes during my work with LOP, but in fact this procedure closely accorded with their own recording practice. At the end of each shift, we completed a map of the local area detailing the route we had taken, a sheet recording the number of contacts we had made with children and young people – including age, gender, and nature of interaction – as well as more general ethnographic observations

on what had occurred on the streets during the shift. The project manager allowed me to copy these recording sheets for my own research and these formed the foundation for my fieldnotes for each period of fieldwork. The practice of memorising routes and conversations for these recording sheets proved invaluable for later recall. Crucially, too, my streetwork partner, John, was tremendously helpful in the process of generating themes and ideas. During the long nights on shifts, I discussed research ideas and themes with John – and other colleagues – who provided a sounding board for emerging findings. An experienced youth worker with strong views on young people's voices being heard, John's outlook was an important way of maintaining an approach grounded in the understandings and experiences of young people.

For LOP, after discussion with the project manager, I did not seek informed consent for participant-observation. The street-based nature of the work was such that a clearly defined role was necessary for workers; it was felt that explanations of the research would unjustifiably, and unnecessarily, confuse this role. As such, it was agreed that the fieldnotes I would take would be completely anonymised, with only age or gender noted, in line with standard recording procedure within LOP itself. In the thesis, the fieldnotes I present from LOP are of general, observational nature, which do not deviate significantly from the record-keeping of LOP.

Discussion Groups: Langview Youth Project and Langview Academy

While participant-observation with LYP and LOP generated a large quantity of generalised observations relating to young people's interests, activities, and use of public space, the nature of interactions in these settings was often too brief to probe the meanings and motives behind their group behaviour in any detail. Further, I had built up a strong relationship with one particular group – the Langview Boys – who I saw daily in LYP and on the streets of Langview, and whom I knew from numerous conversations had knowledge and experience of gang behaviour. I had also observed the complex status politics, group dynamics, and pecking orders through which their group behaviour was enacted, and felt that engaging this group with the research would illuminate several of the themes I was interested in. The method that felt most appropriate was that of a workshop-based discussion group (Bloor 2000: 5-6).

As such, with the support of the project manager of LYP, I instigated a series of discussion groups with young people drawn from the older teenagers attending the project. In order to generate interest, I invited a school-based police officer at Langview Academy – a well-liked and respected figure amongst young people in the area – to deliver a presentation on issues of gangs and territorialism, using the controversial DVD *As It Is*.²⁵ This proved very popular, with approximately 20 young people attending. Thereafter, the groups were advertised through posters and leaflets in the project, with information and consent forms distributed amongst those attending the talk. Later, I repeated this process for a different group, this time inviting youth workers from another youth project to deliver the DVD, with a similar response. The result was a series of 13 discussion groups, with a revolving group of 14-15 year-olds who attended LYP regularly (14 male, 2 female). Groups took place outwith the normal opening hours of the project, between 5pm and 6pm, with attendance entirely voluntary. The discussion groups, therefore, represented an important method of renegotiating my identity as both researcher and youth worker. The following fieldnote, written after the first of these sessions, reflects some of this process:

Tonight was the night on which I began, in fits and starts, to renegotiate my identity to that of a researcher/youth-worker. The community police officer came in and gave the 'As it Is' presentation, to stimulate interest in the discussion groups. On the whole, I think it came off pretty well. (Fieldnote, 1st April 2008)

Due to the possibility that participants might feel pressured to participate as a result of my more general youth-work role, special attention was paid to ensuring ongoing informed consent. Written consent from participants was ensured, along with written or verbal consent from parents/guardians (Appendix A4). While the recordings of the groups were often difficult to decipher – with five or six individuals speaking over one another at any one time – listening back soon after, alongside the materials from the groups (photographs, word associations, posters, maps) I was able to transcribe a large portion of each, and incorporate generalised observations into my fieldnotes. Participants were assured that all information disclosed during the research would be subject to a limiting guarantee of confidentiality – while past behaviour would be kept confidential, current or future harm to self or others, would not. In reality, the groups themselves exerted informal social control

²⁵ Autonomi (2008) The DVD uses graphic images and videos alongside emotional accounts from both perpetrators and victims of gang violence.

over what was and wasn't recorded. Where they felt that an issue was particularly sensitive (though notably not relating to any current or future harm), they requested that the tape-recorded be switched off, as in the following fieldnote:

The tape recorder was switched off, at the boys' request, about half way through the discussion group. The reason for its being switched off was that the young people were keen to talk about a violent incident, which they did not want recorded. Without doubt, they became more talkative after the recorder was switched off; they discussed the incident (in a roundabout way), then went on to discuss various injuries they have sustained over the years. (Note from discussion group, 23rd July 2008)

The group discussions were designed to minimise potential distress by working through issues in some detail, over an extended period. A list of sources of external support was provided (Appendix A5); I was subject to a full Enhanced Disclosure to enable work with children and young people, in both LYP and LOP, and completed a rigorous process of ethical review through the University of Glasgow.

The groups were designed, in conjunction with the project manager, in the format of short workshops – drawing on methods, principles and techniques from youth work, participatory action-research, and visual methods. Influenced by the principles and methods of critical ethnography, and the anthropological literature on action research (Nelson and Wright 1995), I sought to create a space in which discussion would be led by participants. To achieve this, I used a range of interactive visual and performative techniques drawn from principles and practices from the 'new social studies of childhood' (Travlou et al 2008) and youth work methodologies (Feinstein and Kuumba 2006) – for example the use of maps, photography, and role-play. The intention in using these techniques was that of creating a platform for debate, allowing space for young people to explore issues from their perspective (session plans attached in Appendix A6).

The groups were by turns rowdy, uncontrolled, spontaneous, and enlightening; individuals dipped in and out of discussion, and also the room, at random intervals. The group brought the status politics, group rivalries, and pecking orders from outside the project into the room, resulting in a complex web of insult, collective abandon, and brutal honesty. Though attendance was sporadic – many an evening was spent waiting around to see if anyone

turned up, or phoning round houses with reminders – interest remained consistent. While there were a number of occasions where nobody turned up, it became clear that the young people enjoyed participating in the groups, and they became a talking point within the project. The discussion groups became known as ‘that mad group hing’, and more young people wanted to join. As time went on, young people attending the groups began to suggest themes and topics for discussion; in fact, the groups became used as evidence of good practice in funding applications for LYP, resulting in money becoming available to finance materials and staff time. These funds were used to take the groups on an outing – connected to the themes of discussion – to *Singin I’m No A Billy He’s A Tim*, a play about violence and sectarianism in Glasgow.

The discussion groups were mostly, though not always, carried out with the participation of the project manager at LYP; and at all times there were other staff on the premises. In the event of any instance of violent or aggressive behaviour, the research was governed by the policy of the youth project. During the first discussion group, this principle was put to the test. I had left the group alone for a moment while I phoned a parent to ensure verbal consent, and as I was walking back into the room I witnessed one of the boys in the group punching another full in the face. Having dealt with such incidents on a number of occasions previously in my role at LYP, initially I handled the situation as I would have done in a non-research setting in LYP – separating the boys, and discussing the issue with them. As it was outwith normal project hours, however, some discretion was possible. After discussion with the project manager, we decided that it was important to continue the group. After discussing the incident with both involved (discussed later, in Chapter 8), we brought the issue into the group discussion.

These discussion groups were supplemented by a series of similar groups at Langview Academy, one of two local secondary schools serving the area. Access to Langview Academy was achieved through my employment in the ‘widening participation’ programme of Glasgow University, which targets secondary schools with low levels of participation in further education. Near the end of the programme of tutoring, I approached the relevant teacher about carrying out focus groups with pupils participating in the programme. This was agreed and arranged during school hours, with written consent gained from each participant; as the participants were over the age of 16, parental consent was deemed unnecessary by the school. As the nature of the ‘widening participation’ programme encouraged debate on social issues, this form of discussion group was a natural

corollary from the programme. These groups were audio-recorded, annotated, and transcribed at the earliest opportunity. I carried out discussion groups with two cohorts of 16-17 year-olds (8 female, 4 male) from the programme, as well as two further discussion groups with young people identified as needing additional support and supervision (4 males). This proved an invaluable way of accessing a different group of young people from Langview, as well as maintaining a presence in a range of sites the area (discussion group guides are attached in Appendix A7).

Sampling

The research focuses on the understandings, experiences, and opinions of one particular group of young men – the Langview Boys – while drawing on more general observations of different groups of young people during the course of the research. The decision to focus on the Langview Boys was based on a number of practical and methodological concerns. The research sought to focus on the lived experiences of children and young people growing up in Langview, in particular the ways in which young people's gang identities intersected with wider life experiences, developing age and gender identities, and group meaning. As such, from the first I was interested in exploring the collective, contested, and conflicting nature of group interaction, and the ways in which group dynamics and pecking orders related to the enactment of gang identities.

In this context, the group of young men I term the 'Langview Boys' emerged quite naturally from my time in Langview. They were a constant presence during my early fieldwork – through LYP, LOP, and Langview Academy – and I could barely walk five metres down the street during my time living in Langview without bumping into one or more of the group. I had built up a strong relationship with most of the boys through my time at LYP – playing football, pool, and table-tennis, and generally hanging about in the project – and through these conversations, and more general observations, became aware of their involvement in gang activity. Their names were spray-painted, with gang tags appended, all over Langview – including the back door to my building – and the school-based police officer I got to know informed me of their reputation as 'big time gang members'. The Langview Boys, therefore, were in every sense the usual suspects in the area. I had also observed the key role that status, rivalry, and reputation played within the group, and was keen to probe the part that this group meaning played in their enactment of

gang identities. The discussion groups proved an invaluable means of exploring these issues.

I am confident that the group dynamics and gang identities of the Langview Boys are representative of the experiences of other groups of young men growing up in Langview. Several younger groups of boys I got to know had very similar characteristics, with similar seeds of status rivalry and masculinities evident. However, while my focus on the Langview Boys allowed me a unique insight into the ways in which gang identities are formed and enacted in this environment, I was also aware that this sample was not representative of all of the experiences of children and young people in Langview: there are notable silences in the data that do not accord with the epistemological underpinnings of the research. In particular, I was aware that the majority of gang research, in the UK as much as the US, was conducted by male researchers, with male participants (Batchelor 2009) – thereby re-creating gendered assumptions of young women's violence, while fetishising the nature and form of young men's. In particular, I was keen to move beyond the 'zoo-keepers of deviance' (Gouldner 1968; O'Brien 2005), or 'nuts, sluts and perverts' (Liazos 1972) view of criminology, which the more uncritical studies of gangs could certainly be accused of.

Therefore, while the thesis focuses principally on the Langview Boys' accounts of group and gang identities, I focus explicitly on the ways in which age, gender, and power structure their patterns of interaction – with one another, with other groups of young men, and (to a lesser extent) with groups of young women. In addition, I draw on accounts from a range of different groups of children and young people in Langview – whom I term the 'hidden majority' – who experience the Langview Boys, and others like them, as an inherently frightening group, discouraging them from spending time in public space. For these young people, the Langview Boys contribute to the formation of 'tyrannical spaces' (Percy-Smith and Matthews 2001), described in more detail in Chapter Six.

By drawing on the experiences of the hidden majority – participants in the discussion groups in Langview Academy, and others from LYP and LOP – I hope to communicate a more rounded picture of young people's experiences of growing up in Langview, contributing a critical perspective to so-called 'underdog' understandings of gang identities (Gouldner 1968). Inevitably, however, there are silences in the data – specifically relating to the experiences of young women in Langview, and of the role of ethnicity in structuring

young people's identities. While I draw on some of the interactions of the Langview Boys with groups of young women, my research methodology was not designed to explicitly capture these experiences; but rather those of young people in youth projects, and public space in Langview. Put simply, there were not any identifiable groups of young women, either in LYP or in public space in Langview, during the entire period of fieldwork. While this is an intriguing finding in and of itself – particularly given the apparent shift from young women's 'bedroom cultures' in the 1970s (McRobbie and Garber, 1976), to a more prominent role in public space in recent studies (Burman and Batchelor 2009) – regrettably, uncovering these hidden experiences was not an explicit part of the research strategy.

Similarly, while the issues of ethnicity play an important role in structuring the lifeworld of young people in gang communities in the US, and elsewhere in the UK, the Langview Boys – like 97% of the population of Glasgow – are ethnically White European. While Langview has a small population of different ethnic groups, particularly of African descent, young people from these communities were not present in public space, and only in very small numbers in LYP, for the duration of the research. While the stories and experiences of these groups is very important, my methodology was only designed to capture those in LYP and public space in Langview; a focused study of the role of ethnicity in the lives of young people in Langview remains for the future.

Analytical considerations

Fieldnotes were typed up, and discussion groups transcribed, at the earliest opportunity, resulting in over 100,000 words of written text. All written text was transferred to qualitative data analysis software NVivo, and coded during several iterations. Guided by an initial set of 'sensitising concepts' (Willis 2000: xi) stemming from my early research questions – identity, youth transitions, edgework, and space – I read each entry chronologically at regular intervals, coding passages relating to these concepts, as well as themes which emerged from my experiences and data. This procedure enabled me to visit, and revisit, earlier thoughts and reflections in light of developing ideas and themes. Gradually, the initial sensitising concepts were honed into four overarching categories – group dynamics, space and place, boredom and leisure, and gang identities – which most closely approximated the key themes emerging from fieldwork and data analysis. This structured approach nonetheless allowed for a high level of fluidity in relation to *a priori*

and emergent themes – the themes and findings included in the thesis, therefore, are firmly situated in the understandings and experiences of children and young people in Langview.

In a very real sense, theory is grounded in these experiences – not in the pure sense of ‘grounded theory’ advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), as a method of ‘objective’ social science, but in the more moderate sense of ‘analytic realism’ advocated by Altheide and Johnson (1994), which is:

not so much the objective truth of what is being stated as it is the process or way of knowing. We should continue to be concerned with producing texts that explicate how we claim to know what we know. (Altheide and Johnson 1994:496; quoted in Treadwell and Williams 2008)

My focus on these areas reflects the methodological orientations described at the beginning of the chapter, and more importantly my core aim of moving ‘beyond the gang’ in understanding young people’s enactment of gang identities. I chose to focus on the broader interests and experiences of young people in Langview as a means of challenging and critiquing the gang complex, but also as I felt that making sense of gang identities necessitated a broader understanding of daily life for the Langview Boys. These struggles and conflicts told an important story about the changes which had occurred, and that still occur in Langview – themselves a reflection of wider processes of social change in the city of Glasgow. As will become clear, the focus on the authentic voices of children and young people in Langview resulted in my transcribing the accents and dialects of young people *verbatim* – following the example of Damer’s classic study *From Moorepark to Wine Alley* (1989: x), I have not attempted ‘the last word in orthographic purity’, but rather tried to ‘get the *sound* of Glaswegians speaking down with comprehensibility’. For some less obvious Scottish idioms, I have adapted a Scottish dialect glossary from Batchelor (2007), attached in Appendix B1.

Tellingly, I began by keeping two distinct sets of fieldnotes—one recording facts and observations from my time in the youth project; the other recording emotions and personal reflections on my experiences. Initially, I felt the need to keep the two identities distinct; to distinguish the two aspects of the research. As the fieldwork progressed, and I became more comfortable in my role, however, this kind of separation became less necessary; personal thoughts and reflections became interwoven with the fabric of my fieldnotes, as I

increasingly found them inseparable. My fieldnotes thus became a combination of emerging analytical themes, personal reflections, and general observations – somewhere between a personal diary, a research journal, and an analytical jotting-pad. This method of data-collection and analysis illustrates well the fusion of personal, intellectual, and practical threads which compose the methods of data-collection and analysis within the thesis – and the combination of community and research identities that I developed in the process.

Conclusion

This chapter has described and analysed the methodologies, methods, and orientations that underpin the thesis as presented. I have sought to make clear the various personal, intellectual, and practical issues that guided my choice of research design, method, and analysis – and make transparent the epistemological and ontological assumptions forming the basis for the analysis. The methodology and methods of the research, in essence, seek to comprehend the lived experiences of a specific group of young men growing up in Langview in the early twentieth century – locating their enactment of gang identities within the context of their wider interests, activities, and group dynamics, as well as the broader currents of economic political change that configure their experiences of learning, identity, and social development. These situated meanings, however, will be balanced by accounts from different groups within Langview – the hidden majority – in an effort to situate the experiences of the Langview Boys within a broader social, as well as economic, context.

Chapter Four

Thinking beyond the gang complex: Theoretical perspectives on gang identity and social change

In September 2006, I began my PhD in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Applied Social Sciences at the University of Glasgow. Having never studied sociology, anthropology, or any applied social sciences, however, I felt like something of a fraud. I came to the PhD through an undergraduate degree in Law and a postgraduate in Criminology – both of which involved some aspects of sociology, but often in a relatively superficial way. As a result, early PhD classes in social theory – and related conversations with other new PhD students – made me intensely insecure about my own knowledge of theory. It seemed that everyone not only knew what the word epistemology meant, but that they had carefully and judiciously carved out their own epistemological positions, and were approaching their studies with a thorough, balanced theoretical framework. I blundered through, retreating to my fieldwork in Langview at the first available opportunity. As I went through the testing experiences of fieldwork, theory was admittedly far from my mind. For me, leaving the ground-level of fieldwork, both physically and figuratively, created feelings of intellectual vertigo. As Agar notes, ‘any ascent up the ladder of abstraction leaves one with a sense of betrayal’ (Agar 1983).

Through the patient influence of my supervisors Michele and Susan, however, I began slowly to see that scaling the ‘ladder of abstraction’ may give a better view of what sits at ground-level. My interest in Bourdieu emerged, after a fashion, quite organically from my fieldwork experiences and data. As I began to see the concepts of habitus and field play out in my field-sites in Langview, Bourdieu became a central framework for organising my thoughts on masculinities, space, leisure, and gang identities – as well as means of drawing the history of gangs in Glasgow into the present. I began to realise the value in translating ethnography into theory – framing the experiences of young people in Langview in a way that improves our understanding of the world they live in, and the broader context of their lives.

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I outlined the ways in which the thesis draws together methods from past and present research on gangs and youth culture. In blending traditional and modern methodologies, my aim is to gain an appreciative, nuanced, and situated understanding of young people's gang identities; analysing these meanings and motives within the context of their social, economic, and cultural context. In this chapter, I outline the theoretical perspectives that I draw on, engage with, and contribute to in the thesis. Broadly, I seek to combine classical and contemporary theories of gang formation, identity, and social development (Thrasher 1936; Matza 1964; Conquergood 1994a), with an analysis of the broader structures of power, age, and gender that pattern the formation of gang identities (Connell 2002; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Garot 2010). Drawing on and developing Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and capital, I outline a theoretical framework which seeks to account for the role of both structure and agency in the learning, development, and enactment of gang identities.

The chapter is structured in two main sections. In the first – Gangs and Social Theory – I critically analyse contemporary theory in the field of gang research, arguing that there has been a fundamental neglect of critical social theory in extant gang research. In so doing, I outline two key deficiencies in contemporary gang research – namely the lack of a critical account of history in the enactment of gang identities, and of the differentiated ways in which children and young people learn and embody gang identities. In the second section – Gang Identity and the Habitus – I draw on the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu – in particular his concept of habitus – in an effort to integrate these two areas into a conceptual framework through which to understand gang identities in Langview. In combining classical and contemporary gang research with critical insights from the wider field of social theory, I aim to move 'beyond the gang' in theory, as well as method.

Gangs and Social Theory

While the early body of American gang research (Thrasher 1936, A. Cohen 1955, Bloch and Niederhoffer 1958, Cloward and Ohlin 1960, Short and Strodtbeck 1965) was rich in theoretical sophistication – local, situated analysis of gangs were transposed into general theories of youth development, social class, and community formation – more recent contributions to the field of gang research are notably light in this area. As described in Chapter Two, the increase in administrative gang research – conducted for law-enforcement, or government policy-makers – has softened the critical edge of contributions to academic knowledge. While the broader fields of criminology and sociology have recognised the role that academic discourse plays in recreating structural inequalities – in gender, class, age, and ethnicity – theory in gang research has remained resistant to these intellectual developments. In this way, some academic gang research has fuelled the assumptions of the gang complex, which projects and recreates – rather than confronts and challenges – popular fears and prejudices relating to race, class, and gender. As Jock Young argues more generally of so-called 'voodoo criminology' (2004), there has been an over-reliance on quantitative method, short-circuiting fundamental questions of theory and critique. As a result, gangs are reduced to an alien other – a fixed, static and universalised entity, homogenised into statistical equations or criminal definitions. The reductionism of the gang complex, however, belies the complex and individuated meanings and motives that compose young people's gang identities. As Hallsworth and Young, from a British perspective, write:

It is our contention that in its administrative form, with its commitment to the numbers game, the empirically driven gang research tradition not only fails to grasp group life as a space of cultural production, it actively misrepresents the reality of group life in the reductive empiricist analysis the phenomena brings to bear to describe it. (Hallsworth and Young 2008: 187)

For Hallsworth and Young, the tradition of administrative gang research in the United States – and increasingly the United Kingdom – neglects fundamental questions of 'political economy' or 'phenomenology' and instead replaces these 'with a mechanistic commitment to typologizing' (p.187). Where classical theory is drawn on, it is most often a caricature, or simulacrum, of the original - and not drawn from the wider currents of

political, social, or sociological theory. For Venkatesh, in this context, nuance and subtlety become 'lost in much of contemporary scholarship in which the gang may be depicted as a monolithic entity, with a single-mindedness of purpose and outlook' (Venkatesh 2003: 8).

In seeking to move 'beyond the gang', I develop two key approaches in this thesis – Gangs and Social Development, and Gangs and Social Change. As I will elaborate below, the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu – melding an agentic account of learning and cultural reproduction with a structural account of power and powerlessness – offers key insights in constructing a theoretical framework through which to analyse these issues.

Gangs and Social Development

While many early gang studies analysed the role of age and developing gang identities (Thrasher 1936; Whyte 1943; Matza 1964), these early insights have largely become lost within the universalising, homogenising force of the gang complex. Gangs in the United States have altered significantly since Thrasher's research, however the overwhelming majority of those involved are still young people, particularly teenagers (Sanchez-Jankowski 1991: 13). Yet, most theoretical accounts of gang identities – where they exist at all – do not engage with broader research and theory in the field of youth criminology, sociology, or social theory. Further, while the role of gender in the construction of violent identities has become prominent in these broader fields (Connell 2002; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), accounts of masculinities and femininities remain marginal in mainstream gang research. In this thesis, I seek to engage with research and theory relating to social development, gender, and youth transitions, in making sense of young people's gang identities.

For Thrasher, gangs were a natural outgrowth from juvenile excesses – a vehicle through which to act out childish fantasies, and test out developing social identities, in the search for play, creativity, and excitement. In this sense, the gang is understood as serving a social function of maturation between childhood and adulthood: 'a manifestation of the period of readjustment' (Thrasher 1963: 32); a space for creating and mimicking adult identities, criminal or otherwise (Thrasher 1963: 32). Similarly, William Foot Whyte's classic study, *Street Corner Society* (1943), also illustrates the group dynamics and peer relationships inherent in gang behaviour. The young men in his study – Doc and the Nortons – were not fundamentally criminal or violent; Whyte's detailed case-history of the area instead reveals

the (often banal) routine and normality which pervades their lives. In Clifford Shaw's classic biographical study *The Jackroller* (1936), the main character's involvement in gang activity is fleeting and situational; part and parcel of his drift in and out of the slum areas of Chicago and further afield.²⁶ Similarly, several of the classic studies of gangs in the United States in the 1950s and 60s analysed and theorised young people's gang identities explicitly in the context of learning and social development. Bloch and Niederhoffer (1958), for example, discuss the role of developing sexual identity and group status in the push and pull towards gang identity; Cloward and Ohlin (1960) describe the ways in which subcultural gang identities 'resolve' issues within the parent culture; Miller (1958) describes the ways in which gang identities form part of the process of 'preparing the youngster for adult life within that culture' (Miller 1958, quoted in Klein 1971: 36). David Matza, in *Delinquency and Drift* (1964), famously described the process of 'drift' between legal and illegal activities, which young people negotiate in making sense of the normative order. More broadly, studies that looked 'beyond the gang' into the wider life-world of children and young people found *criminal* gang activity to be in fact quite marginal. As Bloch and Niederhoffer argue: '[t]he fighting, burglaries, delinquency, are a very small part of the range' (Bloch & Niederhoffer 1958: 178). In Glasgow, MacCallum makes a similar observation:

For the most part gang members and their hangers-on spent the majority of their time doing other things. Chasing lassies; having a carry-on; hanging about street corners bored and restless; watching television; playing football; following the Teddy Bears [Rangers FC] or the Tic [Celtic FC]; boozing; sleeping; working...school and the thousand other trivial rituals that occupy daily life. Fighting was only a small part of the whole and rarely lasted for more than 20 minutes. Gangs did not fight every day and most would go weeks without being involved in any sort of shenanigans. (MacCallum 1994: 2)

²⁶ In fact, some of the most powerful and illuminating accounts of gang experiences are to be found within biography. Auto/biographies of ex-offenders, like no other form of media, convey a holistic view of the varying role of crime and violence in an individual's life. Invariably, such accounts locate violent and/or criminal dispositions within an often brutal wider context, frequently evoking sympathy and understanding on the part of the reader. In these accounts, the role of the gang takes on a new and distinct cogency, particularly in comparison to academic research which focuses on the gang identity in isolation. Though there are undoubtedly issues relating to the politics of representation in these accounts—as Thompson notes, 'memories will have faded but also there are axes to grind, scores to be settled, no longer with knives but in print' (Thompson 1995: xiv)—the best autobiographies stand as stories of personal redemption (Nellis 2010, forthcoming), and pull no punches in confronting the demons of the past.

However, despite successive longitudinal data-sets that illustrate the complex, contingent, and age-related nature of gang identities – as noted, the Edinburgh Study reports a significant dropping off in self-defined gang behaviour as the cohort grew older (from 18% at age 13, to 12% at 16, and 5% at 17; Smith and Bradshaw 2005: 9) – much contemporary gang theory neglects the role of age and youth transitions.

Gangs, moreover, are predominantly a male phenomenon (Thornberry *et al* 2003: 34). This has been a consistent finding throughout research into gangs: only 6 out of 1,313 gangs in Thrasher's study were female, a finding consistent with the majority of early research. More recently, Spergel's study found 95-98% of gang members to be male (Spergel 1990: 219) and the 1998 Youth Gang Survey estimated 92% male involvement (Thornberry *et al* 2003: 34). As Batchelor (2009) notes in the context of the broader 'malestream' in criminological research, this consistent finding has led to a lack of attention to the role of gang identities in the lives of young women – with studies focusing on young men's accounts of women, rather than drawing on the voices of young women themselves. For Batchelor, this has resulted in the reproduction of stereotypes of young women's involvement in gangs and violence. To this, however, I would add that there has been a fundamental neglect of the broader role of gender in gang research – in particular the complex and contested nature of both masculinities *and* femininities in the enactment and embodiment of gang identities. In Scotland, for example, the Edinburgh Study reports that, at the age of 13, a higher percentage of females claim gang-membership (21.5 percent girls versus 18.8 percent of boys); by the age of 17, however, the figure reverses (8.0% males; 3.5 females%) (Smith and Bradshaw 2005: 9-11). This finding points to the role of both gender *and* age in the construction and self-definition of gang identities. In this thesis, therefore, I aim to analyse the intersecting role of gender in the learning, development, and performance of gang identities.

Rather than imposing a fixed and static definition of gangs, it is necessary to understand the complex, situated, and conflicting identities of young people growing into gangs. In this thesis, therefore, I draw on insights from social learning theory, the emerging field of the 'new social studies of childhood', and theories of gender identities and masculinities (Hagedorn 1998b; Chesney-Lind and Hagedorn 1999; Messerschmidt 2004; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), in situating the meanings and motives of young people's gang identities. From this perspective, it is possible to integrate an account of structure and

agency in the construction and enactment of gang identities. As I will elaborate below, drawing on Bourdieu's concept of 'tormented habitus' (Bourdieu 2000), gangs form part of the conflicting, contradictory, and developing identities of young people growing up in Langview – encoded with specific configurations of masculinity, gender, status, and respect – which are in turn connected with broader social, cultural, and economic changes within the area.

Gangs and Social Change

In homogenising the gang phenomenon into an abstract entity, research and theory within the gang complex fails to account sufficiently for the situated histories of gangs in different times and places. As described in Chapter Two, while groups termed gangs have a long history in Glasgow, their nature has altered and developed during different periods of the twentieth century, in the context of broader social changes within the city (Davies 1998; Bartie 2010). In countering the dehumanising narratives of the gang complex, therefore, it is crucial to integrate an analysis of the role of social change in the formulation and enactment of gang identities. In this way, the study of gangs can provide a meaningful lens through which to analyse the broader structures of power that shape these experiences.

Emerging theory from the field of critical gang studies (Sanchez-Jankowski 2003; Hagedorn 2008; Brotherton and Barrios 2008), eschewing universalised definitions and meanings, seeks instead to locate the individuated biographies and histories of gangs within specific local contexts; in particular the social, political, and institutional contexts that form the backdrop for the emergence of gangs. As Martin Sanchez-Jankowski argues:

missing from the sociological literature on gangs is an appreciation of how progressive social changes have produced concurrent transformations in the functional shape and behaviors of gangs. Gangs operate in society, and societies remain in a constant process of social change; both alter dialectically in relation to each other ... Thus, to fully understand gangs in a particular era, one must consider broad social changes that have affected them at specific times. (Sanchez-Jankowski 2003: 202)

Sanchez-Jankowski, in a wide-ranging history of gangs in the United States, locates different gang formations within the context of successive changes to the political and

economic infrastructure in the country – immigration, blue-collar expansionism, drug deregulation, mass incarceration, and market monopolisation (Sanchez-Jankowski 2003). Honing in on a particular city, Hagedorn locates the history of gangs in Chicago within the context of the racial segregation, political nepotism, police brutality, mass incarceration, and drug capitalism that has dominated the social, cultural, and spatial history of Chicago. Drawing on the concept of 'polygenesis' – which seeks to weave together the 'multiple threads of structure and agency that combine over time to form a gang's particular shape' (Hagedorn 2011, forthcoming) – Hagedorn firmly grounds his analysis at the level of the city and the particular institutional, social, cultural, and economic patterns of power and powerlessness shaping the experiences of young people in gangs. This approach connects with his broader work, which looks toward theories of globalisation, the 'global city' (Sassen 1991), and 'resistance identities' (Castells 1997) in comprehending the meaning and motives for individuals involved in gangs across the world (Hagedorn 2007, 2008; Dowdney 2007; Rodgers 2006).

In seeking to balance the universalising tendencies of the gang complex, and think 'beyond the gang' in understandings of youth violence, this thesis seeks to engage with these debates and contributions through the study of social change on the lived experiences of children and young people growing up in Langview; understanding the local area, and the city of Glasgow more generally, as the lens through which global forces refract, magnify, and concentrate inequality. As Willis and Trondman argue, this approach seeks 'lines of connection or parameters which make for a global relevance allowing "place-bound", necessarily always local, ethnographic writing to carry across the world' (Willis and Trondman 2000: 7). In locating these cultural, historical and social processes within the context of gang identities in Langview, the theoretical concepts of Pierre Bourdieu are particularly instructive. As I will elaborate below, Bourdieu's concept of habitus offers a useful starting point in explicating both continuity and change in young people's gang identities.

Thinking 'beyond the gang': habitus, development, and social change

In the previous section, I outlined the aspects of extant theory I aim to elaborate in this thesis. Through analysis of gangs and social development, I aim to develop an understanding of gang identities located in the conflicting and contradictory identities involved in growing up – as one option among many in the construction of identity. At the same time, through engaging with debates surrounding gangs and social change, I aim to situate these identities within a historical and cultural context – understanding gang formations as representative of processes of change in a specific locale. In this way, I hope to demonstrate the complex and differentiated forms, meanings and identities associated with gangs. In this section, drawing on the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu, I elaborate these aspects of theory into an account of both continuity and change in the Glasgow gang phenomenon.

The section is divided into four parts. In the first – Habitus, field, and capital – I outline Bourdieu's broad conceptual schema, which merges objective and subjective accounts of the social world into a powerful theoretical approach combining structure and agency. In the second section – Street habitus and community field – I use this theoretical model to develop a broad framework through which to analyse young people's experiences of growing up in Langview. In the third – Gang identity and hegemonic masculinity – I connect these ideas with gang identities through engagement with Connell's (2002) concept of hegemonic masculinity. The final section – Gangs, social development, and social change – draws on Bourdieu's wider oeuvre alongside insights from the 'new social studies of childhood' and critical gang studies, to set out a general theoretical framework through which to analyse young people's gang identities in Langview. In sum, I seek to draw on Bourdieu's concepts and ideas to account for the role of social development and social change in making sense of gangs in Glasgow. This framework is intended, first and foremost, to sharpen analysis of young people's gang identities in Langview, but it is also intended to contribute to the field of gang studies, and the application of Bourdieu's theory of habitus to youth and social development.

Habitus, field, and capital

Stated broadly, habitus refers to the set of durable character dispositions – habits – that all individuals possess. These dispositions are both intellectual and physical – habits of thought, and habits of behaviour – and frequently operate at an unconscious, or *preconscious* level; giving the feeling of being instinctive (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Bourdieu 2005). These traits allow individuals to negotiate, or 'improvise', the situations that present themselves in daily life – what Bourdieu refers to as 'practice' (Bourdieu 1977). While each human interaction is different, and the range of responses infinite, our approach is in fact structured by our habitual range of responses; learned during early childhood, and repeated *ad infinitum*. Bourdieu likens this to a 'feel for the game' – an instinctive response to learned rules, like playing a sport one is proficient at (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 128). Behaviours that are experienced as spontaneous and unplanned, therefore, are in fact patterned by the hinterland of individual history and biography.

Crucial in the formulation of habitus is the role of the body. In a physical sense, habitus is embodied in everyday action – not only are our range of responses to interactions patterned by habit, but so too are the ways in which we comport our bodies during these interactions (Webb et al 2002: 36-38). Our backgrounds, biographies, and histories are therefore encoded in the minutiae of social interaction: in non-verbal cues, body movement, language, and tone. Habitus is thus distinguishable, in a phenomenological sense, in the micro-dynamics of social interaction (Bourdieu 2000, 2001). As Jenkins notes, for Bourdieu 'the body is a mnemonic device upon and in which the very basics of culture, the practical taxonomies of the habitus, are imprinted and encoded in a socialising or learning process which commences during early childhood' (Jenkins 2002: 75-76).

This experiential, improvised set of unique practices represent the internalisation of external social structures. For Bourdieu, the world is patterned by relationships of domination and subordination, power and powerlessness – existing both on an objective level 'out there' and a subjective level 'in here'. Hierarchical structures of gender, age, and class form part of the learned dimension of habitus – as illustrated in *Masculine Domination* (Bourdieu 2001) and *Language and Symbolic Power* (Bourdieu 2000), these structures are also implicit in our use of language. For Bourdieu, these structural patterns are reproduced insidiously, through an endless cycle of minute actions, practices, and vocabularies. This results in an unquestioning attitude to inequality, as actors become

complicit in relationships of power and subordination. Bourdieu calls this process symbolic violence:

The realistic, even resigned or fatalistic, dispositions which lead members of the dominated class to put up with objective conditions that would be judged intolerable or revolting by agents otherwise disposed ... [that] help to reproduce the conditions of oppression (Bourdieu 2000: 217)

Unlike physical violence, which is tangible and immediate, the operation of symbolic violence is a subtle and intangible process – akin to Foucault's conceptualisation of disciplinary power, in which the micro-dynamics of power invisibly constrain and channel lived experience (Foucault 1977). For Bourdieu, symbolic violence is detectable in a wide range of minute phenomenological moments and is engrained in the language, thought, and action of habitus. This is a theory of internalised social structure, of inequality concretised and solidified through socialisation – experienced as natural, a 'second skin'. Crucial to this formulation is Bourdieu's concept of doxa, namely:

the coincidence of the objective structures and the internalized structures which provides the illusion of immediate understanding, characteristic of practical experience of the familiar universe, and which at the same time excludes from that experience any inquiry as to its own conditions of possibility. (Bourdieu 1990: 20)

Doxa is thus the outer limits of habitus – the 'world we know'. Unequal structures of power – of gender, age, class, and ethnicity, for example – are inculcated in this world-view, thus making each individual accepting of the status quo. Symbolic violence, therefore, is that which is 'exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity' (Bourdieu 1992: 167). In Bourdieu's terms, through this process the world as we know it becomes 'misrecognised' as the way the world must be; and our behaviours (or habitus) aligned to reflect this world. Thus we do not question the fact of our existence. As Bourdieu and Wacquant note:

Cumulative exposure to certain social conditions instils in individuals an ensemble of durable and transposable dispositions that internalize the necessities of the extant social environment, inscribing inside the organism the

patterned inertia and constraints of social reality. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 13)

In explicating his concept of habitus, Bourdieu makes reference to two other distinct but complementary concepts: field and capital. In simple terms, field refers to spheres of activity that we enter into in our daily life – examples from Bourdieu's writing include the academic, scientific, economic, and educational fields, as well as the field of cultural production (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Continuing the metaphor of habitus as 'feel for the game', field refers to the various fields of play on which actors enact the game. In this sense, therefore, the metaphor of field functions in a similar way to a sports field – a space in which the game of practice is played out. On another level, however, the concept of field also relates to the structures of power operating within each of these spheres – each field has its own unique logic, hierarchy, and system of social relations that structure the experience of actors within it (Jenkins 2002: 85): just as each sport has its own set of explicit and implicit rules, which every player must embody when acting on that field. In Bourdieu's conceptualisation of field, however, these rules relate to power and status, the logic of which every player must submit to. In this sense, field also functions as a metaphor for the force of these relations of power – a gravitational 'field' similar to that exerted by planets. For Wacquant, therefore, field is defined as 'a *relational* configuration endowed with a specific gravity' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 16-17).

For Bourdieu, every field is relational and contingent, and is thus the site of competition and conflict. Jenkins, paraphrasing Bourdieu, defines field as 'a social arena within which struggles or manoeuvres take place over specific resources or stakes and access to them' (Jenkins 2002: 84). Each actor within a field occupies a position of 'domination, subordination or equivalence' (Jenkins 2002: 85) in relation to other actors within the field. Power, status, and authority within any given field are conferred through a system of agreed currency, or capital. Bourdieu distinguishes a number of forms of capital – principally economic capital (money), social capital (contacts), cultural capital (distinction), and symbolic capital (respect or recognition) – which cohere to form an actor's position within any given field. To achieve power and authority in the economic field, for example, more than money is necessary – having the right 'distinctions' for status, knowing the right people, and harbouring their respect are also important. Importantly, forms of capital exist in a market for capital – economic capital can be traded

for cultural capital in the form of qualifications, or symbolic capital in the form of philanthropy. The value of different forms of capital, however, varies from field to field.

These concepts introduce the relational context of habitus, field, and capital – both between individuals, and between individuals and material conditions. On one hand, habitus is created and constructed within the context of a particular field, or set of fields, giving the feeling of being a 'fish in water' (Webb et al 2002: 20). On the other hand, different fields – outwith the experience of habitus – are experienced as 'horrific and barbaric' or 'absurd and comic' (Webb et al 2002: 39). As Bourdieu points out, 'in all the cases where dispositions encounter conditions (including fields) different from those in which they were constructed and assembled, there is a *dialectical confrontation* between habitus, as structured structure, and objective structures' (Bourdieu 2005: 46). Crucially, the habitus does not automatically accede to the new conditions of the field – as the saying goes, 'old habits die hard'. Rather, as the behaviours and traits of the habitus are contained within the body, and frequently exist at an unconscious level, they may reproduce and perpetuate largely independent of the material conditions that gave rise to them. As I will elaborate below, this conceptualisation represents the beginning of an account of both continuity and change in relation to cultural practice – while dispositions of habitus may continue long after the conditions that gave rise to it have dissipated, this does not necessitate a fixed or deterministic approach to historical development.

Habitus, therefore, is the unique configuration of psychological and bodily habits which pattern daily life; constituted by the history, background, and biography of the individual actor. The everyday activities, behaviours, and identities of children and young people in Langview, therefore, may be said to reflect broader structural patterns relating to the experience of growing up in Langview. Young people grow up learning what behaviours and identities are legitimate and expected, and have these lodged deep within; these in turn constitute reference-points for decisions and strategies in later life. In the following section, I develop these concepts into a broad framework through which to analyse the role of social development and social change in the formation and enactment of gang identities.

Street habitus and community field

As discussed earlier, missing from most theory and research on the gang phenomenon is an account of social change, and social development, in the development of gangs; as well as the powerful structural influence of age, class and gender in the enactment of gang identities. In this context, Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital offer a valuable starting point. Conceptualising gang identities as a learned aspect of the habitus, to be 'improvised' through practice under certain circumstances, allows for an account of both structure and agency – as well as social development and social change – in understanding gangs. This approach will be elaborated more fully below, under the heading 'Gangs, social development, and social change'. To develop this approach, however, it is useful to further develop the concepts of habitus and field.

A core aspect of young people's gang identities – in Langview, and Glasgow more generally (Kintrea et al 2008) – is local territory. As will be explored in Chapter Six, gang identities are firmly allied with a specific geographical area, delimited by natural boundaries such as roads, railways or canals. In this sense, territorial identity is embodied in and through gang identities – local places and spaces, bound up with individual and collective memory, become fused with self identity, and the family, friendships, and relationships that occur there. In this way, area identity becomes an important badge of selfhood, to be defended at all costs. The repetition of behaviours in physical space thus fuses with the habitus – in a similar way to Bourdieu's description of external devices, such as computer keyboards, becoming integrated into habitus – and the streets become an extension of self. Leach, drawing on both Bourdieu and Michel de Certeau, describes this process (of territorialisation) in the following terms: 'Through habitual processes of movement, by covering and recovering the same paths and routes, we come to familiarise ourselves with a territory, and thereby find meaning in that territory' (Leach 2005: 299). Space thus becomes part of the unconscious of habitus, forming a backdrop on which to enact identity. In the thesis, I refer to this fusion of space and self as *street habitus*.

Young people's street habitus represents the deep-seated amalgamation of space and self, the embodied routinisation of local geographies. Young people grow up with a deeply cast, intuitive sense of the streets they live in. The streets they inhabit are routinised aspects of daily life, known like the back of your hand – instinctively, without thinking or looking, just there. These processes interlock to produce the street habitus through which territorial

and gang identities are enacted. Crucially, the concept of street habitus connects with the theories of gangs, globalisation and social change described above, under the heading 'Gangs and Social Change'. In the context of global flows of capital and culture, and the growing importance of the 'global city' and 'footloose' economy, mobility becomes a crucial shaping force (Aas 2007: 58). As Bauman argues:

Alongside the emerging planetary dimensions of business, finance, trade and information, a "localizing", space-fixing process is set in motion ... freedom to move ... fast becomes the main stratifying force of our late-modern or postmodern times (Bauman 2000b: 2).

Young people's street habitus, therefore, can be understood as the internalisation of the 'space-fixing process' of globalisation. As spatial mobility is continually constrained by the forces of globalisation, small pockets of available space take on additional meaning and urgency – and the gang operates as a legitimate means through which this spatial autonomy, or street habitus, is enacted. In Bourdieu's conceptualisation, these responses can be understood as an internalisation of external social structures; as Conquergood argues, gangs create complex system of values which affirm street politesse, status, and respect in the context of a society which 'displaces, stifles, and erases identity' (Conquergood 1994a: 47).

These globalised changes assume concrete form in the geographical and symbolic space composing young people's lived experience: Langview. This space is what I term *community field* – the set of local economic, spatial, and cultural relations through which broader social changes are refracted, and which form an interdependent relation with young people's street habitus. The lived environment of Langview can be said to constitute the gravitational cultural and spatial field for young people; those that give the feeling of being a 'fish in water'. In this sense, the cultural pull of Langview exerts a similar force to Bourdieu's examples of the cultural, or artistic field. As it is continually contested by powerful groups (in the form of property developers, community activists, gentrifiers, and local authorities), Langview itself is 'a social arena within which struggles or manoeuvres take place over specific resources or stakes and access to them' (Jenkins 2002: 84). As in Bourdieu's conceptualisation, the community field of Langview is composed of forms of capital, which represent the distinctive cultural configuration through which habitus is enacted. For the Langview Boys, these forms of capital are

dominated by the formulation and enactment of forms of masculinity. As I will describe in Chapter Five, these formulations represent different facets of traditional working-class masculinities; inculcated in the habitus, along with an acceptable range of behaviours and strategies for embodying these forms. These aspects of capital, operating in a relational configuration with the community field, allow the development of local reputation, and status.

This conceptualisation illustrates the dynamics of power, domination, and subordination underpinning the alterations in field and capital noted. Young people in Langview have little capital to change the 'rules of the game'. As Bourdieu notes (2000: 214-215): 'Those who talk of equality of opportunity forget that social games are not "fair games" ... the competition resembles a handicap race that has lasted for generations'. Or as Bodie, a character in *The Wire* summarises more pithily, 'this game is rigged'.²⁷ In this way, the conflicting identities, meanings, and motives of gang behaviour for young people in Langview can be understood as a reflection of the continuities – and changes – in the economic, cultural, and spatial environment of the local area.

Gang identity and hegemonic masculinity

Crucial to the formulation of street habitus, as described, is the role of gang identities and gender, specifically the role that masculinities play in the improvisation of gang identity through practice. As discussed earlier, despite the consistent finding that gangs are principally composed of young men, analysis of gangs and masculinities – but for a number of notable exceptions (Hagedorn 1998b; Garot 2010) – have suffered from 'academic benign neglect' (Hagedorn 1998b: 153). In thinking 'beyond the gang' towards the broader life circumstances of children and young people in Langview, therefore, the intersection of gang identities and masculinities are of central importance.

Jenkins (2004) suggests two dialectical forces in the construction of identity: identification and categorisation (also see Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Identification, in this context, refers to self-identification – a temporary attachment, or 'suturing' (Hall 1996), to an imagined community (B. Anderson 2006) with an attendant set of values and behaviours.

²⁷ *The Wire* was a series made by American cable network HBO, and ran from 2002-2008. Focusing minutely on the micro-level interactions between drug-dealers, hustlers, police-officers, journalists and politicians, the series was critically acclaimed for its human depiction of what a sociologist would call structure and agency. The quote comes from Season Four, Episode 13. For more information see: <http://www.hbo.com/the-wire/index.html> [Accessed 19th September 2010].

Categorisation, on the other hand, refers to external categorisation – the ‘placing’ of an individual within a constructed category – in a similar conceptualisation to that of labelling theory (Becker 1963). As has been argued, the gang complex focuses on the various ways in which young people might be *categorised* as gang members; by contrast, gang identity refers to the ‘fluid, contextual, and shifting’ (Garot 2010: 3) ways in which individuals identify with, and enact, a the persona of a gang-member. The persona, and role, of a gang-member – discussed further in Chapter Five – is learned, embodied and enacted as part of the street habitus; a practice that demonstrates the deep-seated connection between space and self. Far from the fixed, static, violent other which pervades much of the gang literature, performance of gang identities is therefore situational, and can represent a source of identity, community, and support – a way of expressing belonging and loyalty to a community in difficult environments. Gang identity is, therefore, perhaps best understood as a form of community (Pickering 2010), an ‘open system of cultural codification’ (Delanty 2003) that is used and drawn on in different ways by different individuals as they grow up, but also by different generations.

The learning and enactment of gang identities is densely woven with the practice of young men’s masculinities in Langview. As will be discussed in Chapters Five and Eight, the persona of a gang-member represents an idealised form of local configurations of masculinity, and is thus experimented with by young men ‘in search of masculinity’ (Bourgois 1996). In connecting gang identities with street habitus in this way, Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity (2002) is particularly important. Drawing on Gramsci, hegemonic masculinity referred – in its initial formulation – broadly to the ‘question of how an unequal and oppressive system of social relations stabilizes itself’ (Connell 2002: 89), and specifically to how pattern of practice that ‘allowed men’s dominance over women to continue’ (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 832). It was therefore an attempt to conceptualise unequal gender relations in a nuanced way, which recognised the complex and contingent ways in which gender is enacted (Connell 2000; Murphy 2009). Hegemonic masculinity, therefore, took its place within a hierarchy of masculinities; including ‘subordinated’, or ‘marginalised’ masculinities:

It embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men. (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 832)

While the concept has come under close scrutiny and criticism (Jefferson 2002; Hall 2002), and applied in a wide range of contexts (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), several core aspects are useful in analysing the connections between gang identities and masculinities in Langview. As will be discussed in Chapter Five, the Langview Boys enact a specific configuration of masculinities – learned and embodied through the development of street habitus – in which the persona of the ‘gang-member’ represents the most demonstrative example. Gang identity, in this context, represents the hegemonic masculinity of the group, with deviations from this form of masculinity – marginalised or subordinate masculinities – denigrated. Hegemonic masculinity is therefore a relational disposition within the street habitus, which the Langview Boys – and other groups of young men and women – position themselves in relation to. However, as Connell and Messerschmidt note:

hegemonic masculinities can be constructed that do not correspond closely to the lives of any actual men. Yet these models do, in various ways, express widespread ideals, fantasies, and desires. They provide models of relations with women and solutions to problems of gender relations. (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 837-838)

Hegemonic masculinity thus creates a model for social relations between men and women; in the case of the Langview Boys, this generates exclusionary practices towards groups of young men viewed as having ‘subordinate’ masculinities, and towards young women’s participation in sport. As Connell and Messerschmidt note, however, this hegemonic masculinity is also elusive; never fully realised, yet forming a constant presence in group activity. As will be discussed in Chapter Five, this generates insecurity and constant tests of masculinities within the Langview Boys’.

Gang identity, therefore, represents an idealised form hegemonic masculinity among the Langview Boys – the practice of which demonstrates the deep emotional connection between space and self, in the form of street habitus. As will be discussed in the section that follows, the continuity of social conditions that give rise to this configuration of masculinities – despite more generalised changes to the city of Glasgow in general, and Langview in particular – form an important element in our understandings of the continuity influence of gang identities in Glasgow today.

Gangs, social development, and social change

The application of Bourdieu's broad concepts of habitus and field to the experiences of children and young people growing up in Langview, combined with the conceptualisations of gang identity and hegemonic masculinity, give a general theoretical account of the role of gangs in the lives of children and young people in Langview. In essence, growing up with limited resources and spatial mobility, and spending a large proportion of time within public space, young people form a deep connection with the streets of Langview. This fusion of space and self develops alongside a particular configuration of masculinities, in which the persona of the 'gang-member' is hegemonic. The enactment of gang identity, therefore, can be read as a symbolic performance of loyalty – to the area of Langview, and the friends, family and relationships that occur there. However, this general framework – like Matza's critique of theories of a 'delinquent subculture' (Matza 1964) – does not allow sufficiently for the multiplicity of experiences of children and young people in Langview, presenting an overly deterministic and monolithic picture. In particular, this general framework requires further elaboration to account sufficiently for the role of social development and social change in the enactment of gang identities.

While Bourdieu makes clear that habitus is formed through socialisation processes in early childhood, the model of social reproduction this imposes has been criticised, particularly from a British perspective, as being overly deterministic (Jenkins 2003) – lending weight to the much-criticised 'cultures of poverty' argument (Lewis 1959; Leacock 1971). While Bourdieu himself disputes these claims (Bourdieu 2005) – arguing that it consists of an incomplete reading of his work – the account of 'learning' involved in his conceptualisation of habitus creates some grounds for these criticisms. Children and young people are not viewed as competent social actors, actively involved in the formation and development of the habits, attitudes, and behaviours they will carry forward into later life. Rather, during the formation of habitus, they appear simply as receptacles for the habits and values of their family, teachers, and peers.

In Western culture, childhood and youth are particularly potent and formative periods, during which young people pass through a series of biological, psychological, and social stages – from childhood 'innocence' to adult 'experience'. Though research evidence emphasises the importance of early years in social development, research from the 'new social studies of childhood' has focused on problematising the traditional view of children

and young people as 'human becomings rather than human beings' (Holloway and Valentine 2000: 5). For much of the period since the 'invention of childhood' in the 15th century (Aries 1962), childhood was viewed as a stasis before adulthood, where children were controlled before entry into the adult world; the freedom of children was not emphasised (Jenks 1996). Current thinking instead views young people as active agents, within certain restraints set out by adult society. From this perspective:

Children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of societies in which they live. Children are not just the passive subjects of social structures and processes (Prout and James 1990: 8; quoted in Holloway and Valentine 2000: 8).

While certain habits, identities and behaviours of young people in Langview are deeply embedded, they are also drawn on and used – 'improvised' – in ways that do not denote a fixed or static meaning. Gang identities, for example, are incorporated into play behaviour, to subvert authority, or in developing group solidarity – indicating that young people were themselves active in transforming and shaping their habitus. Children and young people were engaged in a constant process of active boundary-testing, both in peer-groups and with adults. In this context, Bourdieu's conceptualisation of a 'tormented habitus' (which results from 'paradoxical relations' between fields) is instructive. As Batchelor notes, in relation to young women's violence:

Paradoxical relations may result in a 'tormented habitus' riven by the tension and contradictions of social marginalisation, which may, in turn, form the source of social transformation. According to this formulation the habitus is not necessarily adapted to its situation nor is it internally coherent. (Batchelor 2007: 64)

In this thesis, I conceptualise the process of learning and social development as 'tormented habitus' writ large. The processes through which young people grow into adult roles and identities are riven with conflict, doubt, impulse, and apprehension – the habitus is therefore variously developing, melding, and congealing throughout the process of growing up. Playing on Bourdieu's concept of 'torment', this process might be best captured by the term 'angsty habitus'. While there is no definable age at which the habitus

becomes solidified, this conceptualisation allows considerable theoretical space for 'growing out' of gang identities, for example, or Matza's notion of 'delinquency and drift' (1964). These arguments will be elaborated in Chapter Eight.

An account of the differentiated role of learning and social development in the development of street habitus, and gang identities, questions the broader role of social change on these aspects of individual disposition. As discussed in Chapter Two, gangs have a long history in Glasgow – indicating that gang names, and gang identities, may be re-appropriated by successive generations, despite significant alterations in the cultural, social and economic landscape of Langview. Young people in Langview do not enjoy the certainty of labour in the large steel-works and production plants that once patterned the east end of Glasgow; young adults in Langview are likely to experience a 'churn' between different forms of low-paid jobs, unsubstantial government training schemes, unstable or insecure agency work, and unemployment (Fraser 2009). Furlong and Cartmel (1997), explicitly analysing the position of young people amidst these changes – as a 'barometer' for social change – argue that 'young people today have to negotiate a set of risks which were largely unknown to their parents ... points of reference previously helped smooth processes of social reproduction have become obscure' (Furlong and Cartmel 1997: 1).

In the context of these alterations to the community field of Langview, young people's reliance on street habitus, hegemonic masculinity, and gang identity represents a root of common identity in the midst of a changing social world. As Nash (1999: 184) argues: 'since it is embodied, the habitus develops a history and generates its practices, for some period of time, even after the original material conditions which gave rise to it have disappeared.' As the community field of Langview has altered in recent years – with traditional working-class values coming into conflict with gentrifying influences – the street habitus of the Langview Boys has a longer lag, and thus comes into direct conflict with these new field arrangements. In this sense, the gang identity acts as an 'open system of cultural codification' (Delanty 2003) that is used and drawn on in different ways by different individuals as they grow up, but also by different generations; and the ways in which these identities are embodied and enacted tell us something about the period in which they lived. In this way, gang identities carry over time with new generations, and new individuals taking on these roles and identities.

In Bourdieu's conceptualisation, therefore, the community field of Langview inhabited by young people in Langview has altered, resulting in a fragmented and unstable future. In this context, the habitus experiences a dialectical confrontation with the new conditions – as Webb et al (2003: 41) state, the habitus is 'potentially subject to modification ... this occurs when explanations of a habitus no longer make sense.' The responses of young people in Langview to these alterations in the field, however, indicate only minor modifications – adapting to the new conditions under the old rules of habitus. The Langview Boys' re-enactment of earlier leisure behaviours, masculinities, and gang identities can, indeed, be viewed as an adaptive response to the uncertainties of the lived environment. This argument is comparable to the underlying logic of much of the work of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Hall and Jefferson 1976, Mungham and Pearson 1976, Hebdige 1979) – described in Chapter Three – which viewed the 'spectacular' youth culture of the 1970s as a 'magical' resolution to the unemployment within the parent culture. As Robins and Cohen (1978: 73-74) argue of territoriality:

What we refer to as 'territoriality' is a symbolic process of magically appropriating, owning and controlling the material environment in which you live, but which in real terms is owned and controlled by 'outsiders'... Territoriality is, therefore, deeply engrained in most working-class parent cultures, even if its functions are diffused through a number of institutions...But the kids have only one institution to support this function...the 'gang'.

Anoop Nayak, in his study of youthful masculinities in the North-East of England, comes to a similar conclusion. In the context of risks and uncertainties in the world of work, he sees young men re-embodying the characteristics of the traditions of past cultures in the context of the contemporary post-industrial city:

As creative actors, young men respond to change by intertwining new and old cultures. This is seen in the determined preservation of older drinking customs in new times; the redeployment of 'grafting' through a cultural apprenticeship of crime; the enactment of a muscular, body-capital to gain credibility on the street; and a fierce commitment to traditional notions of 'respect' (Nayak 2006: 828)

The re-enactment of leisure behaviours and gang identities from previous generations, therefore, can be viewed as a way of creating meaning in a world where the future is uncertain and precarious – adaptive responses to the conditions of late modernity within the ‘glacial forces’ of habitus (Appadurai 1996: 6). Where globalisation has created instabilities and uncertainties, the deeply embedded routines and characteristics imbued in habitus offer a way of ‘improvising’ a response that allows these traits to retain value. The re-enactment of both leisure and gang identities, therefore, can be seen as an improvisatory response to the lived experience of structural instability in the contemporary era.

Conclusion

This chapter has set out the foundations of a theory that will be expanded and explored throughout the thesis. Grounding these concepts in the core findings of the research, I have outlined a broad sketch of the thesis – describing the long arc of youth culture alongside the swirl of rapid social progress. Drawing on and developing Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, capital, and symbolic violence, the habits and behaviours of young people in Langview have been conceptualised as deeply embedded, learned, and reproductive, in the context of structures of political economy. The strategic and context-specific improvisations which result, moreover, have been located within the context of a exclusionary and uncertain future for young people in Langview – specific embodiments of hegemonic masculinity, enacted through gang identities, have been situated as adaptive responses to these uncertainties. In analysing gang identities through the frame of habitus – and particularly through that of the 'tormented habitus' of social development – I argued that the gang identity can be viewed as an 'open system of cultural codification' (Delanty 2003) that is learned, drawn on and enacted in different ways by different generations. In this way, the differentiated ways in which hegemonic masculinity and gang identities are embodied can be analysed from a historical perspective, as identities alter and reconfigure over time.

Chapter Five

The Langview Boys: Group Dynamics, Status, and Masculinities

I was brought up in a village in central Scotland called Tillicoultry. My parents were both employed in public sector, caring professions – one teacher, one social worker – and came from different backgrounds (one grandfather was a minister, the other worked in a bakery). The area they chose for us to live was, I think, a fair reflection of these sensibilities – though it is small, there are some pockets of quite severe poverty, and a resulting mixture of class demographics. The population of the school I went to, therefore, represented a combination of these backgrounds. In the first few years of school, I was friendly with a group of people from a range of different backgrounds – some similar to my own, some different. Though relationships within the group were fluid, with allegiances changing and mutating on a regular basis, some combination of the group were to be found together during break-times, evenings, and weekends for a period of three or so years. The group was governed by powerful norms of masculinity – regulated and policed through insult and piss-take – to which I didn't measure up, resulting in a constant feeling of insecurity; resulting in my moving on to a different group of friends.

In my early experiences of fieldwork, these feelings came flooding back. My fieldnotes from around this time make repeated mention of my feeling 'naked', 'stripped' and 'uncertain'. At this stage of fieldwork, without the means of gaining status with young people in the project, I became a docile body; a simple presence, neither authoritative nor respected. At this time, I overheard two young people talking about my role in the project at this time, which neatly summarised the way I was feeling: 'That's what he's here for. Tae be humiliated.' As I worked through these emotional and practical challenges, and became more confident in my work and research roles, I nonetheless became sensitised to the powerful role that group dynamics, status politics, and developing masculinities played in the lives of the boys I got to know in Langview – and the impact that these dynamics had both on individuals within the group, and on other groups in the area. Though Langview is, on the face of it, a very different area to the one I grew up in, the group dynamics, status rivalries, and insults that form the basis of many of the young people's interactions in Langview – and form the basis for the enactment of gang identities – are not too dissimilar to my own.

Introduction

In the previous four chapters, I outlined the background, context, methodology, and theoretical approach of the thesis. Broadly, the thesis seeks to analyse the situated meanings, understandings, and experiences attached to the gang phenomenon for young people growing up in Langview – a community in the east end of Glasgow – in an effort to challenge the dominant tropes of the gang complex. This approach understands gang identities as complex and individuated ephemera, intersecting with a range of developing age, gender, and group identities. Drawing on the conceptual schema of Pierre Bourdieu, the thesis seeks to locate these lived experiences within an analysis of historical and structural changes within Langview, which reflect and refract broader processes of social change in the city of Glasgow. In this context, gang identities can be conceptualised as a root of common identity, and protective solidarity, in the midst of physical and symbolic challenges to the community field of Langview. This chapter represents the first of four substantive chapters in which these arguments are elaborated in the context of empirical data.

In what follows, I make three key arguments in pursuance of these larger themes; focusing principally on the group dynamics amongst the Langview Boys. First, against understandings of gangs as a fixed, static, and homogenous entity, I emphasise the fluidity, complexity, and situational specificity of the Langview Boys' gang identities. Gang identities are enacted and embodied amidst the constant flow of banter, rivalry, and challenge which make up the Langview Boys' collective activities – and developing masculinities – and must therefore be understood within this wider social and cultural context. Second, developing Bourdieu's concept of tormented habitus, I argue for the importance of learning, social development, and gender in the construction and enactment of gang identities. In particular, I analyse the role of the peer-group – the Langview Boys – in constructing and re-creating a specific configuration of masculinities, in which physical aptitude, toughness, and verbal fluency are highly prized; in this context, the gang identity represents as an idealised version of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2002). Third, while these group dynamics and hegemonic masculinity evidence a powerful sense of group solidarity and area attachment, they also constitute an idealised, and elusive, configuration of masculinities – resulting in insecurities and challenges among the Langview Boys, and frequent mocking and denigration of groups of young men and women who do not conform. The result is a complex and contingent series of relationships between children

and young people in the area, in which different forms of capital and masculinities are contested. These challenges to the community field of Langview illustrate broader changes to the community, and in the city of Glasgow.

This chapter is divided into four parts. In the first – Introducing the Langview Boys – I sketch the characters and relationships forming the immediate foreground to the thesis narrative. This *dramatis personae* of key actors within the thesis is intended to introduce the differentiated and distinctive characteristics within the Langview Boys, and their individual and collective reputations within the area. This section also introduces a number of other key actors – in particular those I worked with at Langview Academy – who supply some of the alternative and conflicting perspectives within the thesis. In the second – Group Dynamics, Status, and Masculinities – I describe the complex layering of masculine identities, status politics, and group rivalries through which the Langview Boys create collective meaning; focusing specifically on the various configurations of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2002) that inhere in the group. In the third – Regulating Identity: Learning, Development and the Tormented Habitus – I discuss the symbolic and physical ways in which masculinities are regulated both within and outwith the group. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of tormented habitus, I argue that the Langview Boys create a force around which other groups must gravitate – resulting in frequent denigrations for those, particularly younger groups of males, who do not conform to the hegemonic masculinity of the group. In the final section – Masculinities and Social Change in Langview – I discuss some of the developments that have occurred in Langview, which challenge – or threaten – the hegemonic masculinity of the Langview Boys. This final section foreshadows a broader discussion of continuity and change in later chapters.

Introducing the Langview Boys

The Langview Boys are a shifting group of 12-16 year-old males; a constant presence in the streets surrounding Langview Youth Project (LYP), and a constant source of frustration, bemusement, and contention within LYP and the community more widely. They are a jack-in-the-box of energy, enthusiasm and spirit, straining to burst out of whatever confines they find themselves in – resulting in anger among some community residents, fear or resentment among others, and awed respect from some younger groups in the area. The majority of the boys live in the streets immediately surrounding Langview Youth Project, and most of their time is spent in this small geographical area. Many of their parents are close friends with one another, and the boys spent much of their childhood together – in school, in one another's homes, in LYP, and on the streets of Langview. There is a powerful bond both between the boys themselves, and between the group and their local area. They know each other intimately: how to wind one another up, what can be said to whom, how to bring one another down to size. There is an unspoken bond of friendship between them; for most, the group constitutes a fundamental influence in guiding both opinion and action. However, this is not to suggest a romanticised portrayal of a uniform, unified, or unproblematic set of group relationships. While there is a keen loyalty to one another, there is nonetheless a fierce rivalry within the group, manifested in insults and contests for hierarchy. In what follows, I provide a brief character sketch of the key figures within the group. While these individuals represent only half of the wider group that makes up the Langview Boys, they are the group I got to know best, and whose voices I draw on most frequently in the thesis. Although, in the thesis as a whole, I most often refer to the Langview Boys as a coherent group, it is important to emphasise the different characteristics and personalities that compose their group identity.

Kev Carson is sixteen, has left school and, after a stint as an apprentice builder, is currently unemployed. He is tall and stocky, strong, and well-built; the charismatic and physical authority of the group. An excellent footballer and all-round sportsman, he is feared and respected by the group – and more widely – for his physical size, aggression, and willingness to fight. He was constantly in trouble in LYP, repeatedly excluded for aggressive behaviour; but his wit and mischief also endeared him to many. He has a number of minor convictions for vandalism, was described by several key figures in the area as a 'gang member'; and admitted to carrying a knife. His older brother is serving a prison sentence for a violent offence. Notably more mature than many of the others, he

attended almost every talk, discussion group, and outing related to the research; taking on a facilitating role in later groups.

Daz Bryant is sixteen, has also left school, and after a period of time as an apprentice joiner, is also currently unemployed. He is tall, slender, strong and quick-witted; he has a ready response or insult to any situation. He is an exceptionally skilful footballer – in activities he is less proficient at, he gains one-upmanship through a constant barrage of verbal abuse. He is in perpetual motion – walking and talking, searching for a way of getting one-up on whoever is nearest. Due to his constant verbal insults, he is feared but not fully respected by others in the group – evidenced in back-handed comments, and rumour-spreading, by other members of the group. He is well-known to local police officers, but has not been convicted of any offences. His name, along with Kev and James', is spray-painted all over Langview – including the back door of my flat during the research – with the gang-tag 'LYT' (Langview Young Team) appended. Markedly less mature than Kev, Daz attended several discussion groups and outings, but was regularly dismissive and disruptive.

Gary Prentice is fifteen, still at school, and achieving good grades. He is tall for his age, lanky, and quietly thoughtful; yet with a fierce temper and competitive streak. Though he was described to me as a 'big time gang member' by a local community police officer, he described himself not as a member of a gang, but 'jist a pedestrian' in Langview. He has lower status than Kev or Daz, but holds his own in most of the group's exploits. On one hand, he is strong and competent on the football pitch, but often one of the last to be picked. On the other hand, he is exceptionally good at computer games, and spends much of his spare time playing football and war games on the X-Box 360, or Playstation III. Gary attended almost all of the discussion groups at Langview Youth Project, and two of the groups at Langview Academy.

Tommy Mack is fifteen and still at school. Tall and gangly, loyal and good-natured, he is closest in personality to Gary; and the two are close friends. Like Gary, Tommy was described to me by the leader of a local youth project as a 'ring-leader', but within the group was mocked for his lack of coordination, and slowness on the uptake. Despite this, he is cheeky and mischievous, and takes these insults in good humour. Tommy attended several of the discussion groups at LYP.

Mark Duff is fourteen, and close friends with Gary and Tommy. Though he no longer lives in Langview, he remains at school at Langview Academy and, as his parents run a business in the area, is present there as often as any of the others. He is quick-witted and good-natured, though mocked at times for being slightly overweight. Like Tommy, he is less proficient at most group activities than either Kev or Daz, which he accepts and manages good-naturedly. He participated in the focus groups at Langview Academy.

James Smith is fifteen, still at school, loud, funny, and mischievous. Shorter and more self-conscious than the others in the group, he is frequently mocked on account of his being slightly overweight. As a result, he is extremely sensitive, and quick to take offence. He has two older brothers, both well known in the area – one of whom was in prison for a violent offence during the period of fieldwork. He participated in every aspect of the discussion groups.

Willie Jamieson is fourteen, still at school, and frequently (and frequently deliberately) confused with his twin brother, Fraz. He is small for his age, wiry and athletic, and plays for a local football team. Though Willie got into a lot of trouble when he was younger, he is mature for his age, and is becoming conscientious and focused. He participated in the later series of discussion groups, and the focus groups at Langview Academy.

Sean Balfour is twelve, though his physical size and build make him appear much older. He is the best footballer in the group, playing for a professional team; it is this which allows him access to, and status within, the Langview Boys. He is closest to Kev, and participated sporadically in the first set of discussion groups.

Marty Archer is fifteen, and one of a small number of the Langview Boys' group who does not live in Langview, but in the neighbouring area of Swigton. He got to know Kev and Daz through school, and began attending LYP regularly during the period of fieldwork. Tall and boisterous, he is closest in personality to Daz, but with a more easy-going nature. He attended the second series of discussion groups, and took a leading role in conversation.

As discussed in Chapter Three, under the heading of *Sampling*, the Langview Boys constitute the main focus of study in the thesis. However, the thesis also includes a range of competing, conflicting, and alternative perspectives other than those of the Langview Boys. These perspectives come from two groups: the hidden majority and the ‘school-leavers’. The hidden majority is a broad categorisation for the general population of children and young people in Langview – consisting of the large number of individuals and groups I got to know in different capacities during my time in Langview. The breadth of this definition is not intended to imply homogeneity within or between different groups of young people, but rather as a heuristic device to emphasise the range of different experiences and perspectives of children and young people growing up in Langview – most often, this group is referred to as a counterpoint to the experiences of the Langview Boys. The experiences of the Langview Boys – while typical of some – are not representative of all.

The ‘school-leavers’ are two groups of 17-18 year-old pupils at Langview Academy, with whom I worked over two four-month periods as part of the widening participation programme at Glasgow University; in which university students tutor final-year pupils at schools with low levels of university participation. I conducted discussion groups with both groups towards the end of my time in the schools. These groups were composed of young people from Langview who were going on to college or university, from a school with traditionally low levels of access to, and participation in, further education. They were quite remarkable groups of young people – resilient, articulate, engaged, yet streetwise and street-smart. Their perspectives offered various insights into the ‘hidden’ life of young people not present in public space, but also those who had resisted, or desisted from, street-life and gang violence – discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight. The perspectives and insights from both groups will be drawn on – in this and following chapters – as a way of emphasising the diversity and differentiation among children and young people, and illustrating the relational context which the Langview Boys orbit.

Group Dynamics, Status, and Masculinities

In Chapter Two, I outlined the central tropes of the gang complex – a universalising discourse, which collapses vastly differentiated experiences into a simplistic and deterministic category. As was discussed in the previous section, however, while the Langview Boys were referred to as ‘gang members’ by several key actors in the community, and enacted gang identities in various ways, these activities were neither central to, nor differentiated from, the entirety of their collective activities. Rather, these instances were bound up with the complex and contested group dynamics, status politics, and developing masculinities that inhered in the group. In this context, enacting gang identity was a means of creating collective meaning and group solidarity; embodying a specific configuration of idealised masculinities.

In this section, I examine five key aspects of status and group dynamics within the activities of the Langview Boys, representative of the hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2002) among the group: being ‘in the know’, being ‘best at stuff’, being ‘a gemmie’, being ‘wan ae the boays’, and having ‘the patter’. These aspects of group life are, superficially, similar to Walter Miller’s (1958) ‘focal concerns’ of young men in a working-class community in the United States – trouble, toughness, smartness, excitement, fate, and autonomy. However, where Miller posits these attributes as particular to the anachronistic ‘lower class culture’, I aim to emphasise the relative similarity of these attributes to those found in studies of ‘middle class gangs’²⁸ (Greeley and Casey 1963) and ‘ruling-class gangs’ in public schools (Poynting and Donaldson 2005, see also Connell 2000: 137). In so doing, I aim to contribute to Hagedorn’s call to move ‘beyond the gang’, and ‘show these young men as people, not as stereotypes’ (Hagedorn 1998b: 165).

The five aspects of status described speak to various aspects of the hegemonic masculinity of the Langview Boys – which draws on a long tradition of working class masculinities in the locality, and Glasgow more generally. While this section presents a frozen snapshot of status, group dynamics and masculinities within the group, these aspects must be understood as fluid, contested and under constant challenge among group-members. As a result, pecking orders, hierarchies, and masculinities are perpetually threatened. As will be discussed in the following section, this is best represented within Bourdieu’s concept of

²⁸ The conviction of a group of males from an upper-middle class area of Glasgow for group violence is a case in point. See BBC News (2007) ‘Service order for private school pupils’, available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/glasgow_and_west/7114940.stm [Accessed 28th September 2010]

‘tormented habitus’ – as an aspect of development, not fully formed. Within this context, performance of gang identity is a means of accomplishing a particular formulation of masculine identity.

Being ‘in the know’

While academic knowledge was not generally valued by the group – and in certain instances was actively devalued – street-knowledge was highly prized. Any information that had a direct, or indirect, bearing on the Langview Boys was clamoured for. Once gained, it was held close, and delivered back to the group for maximum kudos, for example: names of those being excluded from the project, or included in the LYP football team, local gossip, or up-to-date information regarding key areas of interest, such as football. Forms of knowledge, much like forms of masculinity, were hierarchical – where certain forms of knowledge were prized, others were dismissed. In this context, the knowledge most sought after – most mysterious, and most treasured – was that relating to gangs. Individuals who held reputations as gang members were discussed in awed tones, and the group were keen in discussions to demonstrate their knowledge. In one discussion group, when asked to associate words with the term ‘territory’, the group jostled to display their knowledge of gang names elsewhere in Glasgow. Similarly, in examining a map of Glasgow, the group were keen to display their street-knowledge of gang territories across the east end.

The importance attached to being ‘in the know’ also extended to the activities of the group. There is a desire to be involved in, and have knowledge of, everything that has relevance to the group; conversely, there is a keen sense of anxiety if access to anything is denied. The group therefore becomes the reason to climb the fence back into LYP after closing; to vandalise; to drink; to participate in every activity: so as not to miss out on anything that might have a bearing on status in the group. To take an example from LYP:

Kev was put out of the football pitch; he was then a little far out to hear exactly what was going on. This was clearly a major annoyance – I remember specifically somebody saying something to Kev, him being unable to hear, and his getting very irate as a result. (Fieldnote, 11th February 2008)

Layered into these knowledge dynamics, however, is a richly textured shared knowledge – of group activities, community histories, and local scandals – which constitute a core of meaning in group interaction. Unquestionably, it is the shared aspect of the boys’ biographies that creates this unquenchable thirst for local knowledge – as one method among many of creating distinction in the community field of Langview. Crucially, however, group dynamics and ‘pecking orders’ (Phillips 2003) also formed a central element in claims to knowledge. The value placed on certain knowledge claims was often relative to the status of the individual making the claim, rather than to any external source of proof – while high-status group members could make unchallenged assertions, lower-status members had knowledge-claims frequently challenged and derided. For example, when Gary started talking about the history of gangs in Glasgow – starting as ‘wee stone fights o’er the Clyde’ – for example, he was universally mimicked and mocked, despite the fact that what he said was based on an identifiable source (a website I had seen). On the other hand, when Kev informed the group that the world was going to end that day, as a result of a ‘black-hole machine’ being switched on and ‘sucking in the sea’, the idea was taken up and discussed excitedly.²⁹

Being ‘the best at stuff’

Being ‘the best at stuff’ refers to the ability to turn your hand to any and every sport, activity, or game that you are presented with; there is little or no desire to *learn* to be good at a sport, but rather the ideal is to be *instantly* good at something. Raw athleticism and natural talent – effortless skill and unblinking competence – are therefore the most likely attributes to gain status. As with the hierarchies of knowledge mentioned above, the sports and activities most highly prized are those which accord most closely with the hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2002) within the group. In this context, football – evincing as it does toughness, aggression, loyalty and distinction – is a crucial arena. Like the boys in Epstein et al.’s study, football (and fighting, discussed in the next section), represents a central axis around which status and masculinities cohere:

For these boys, being a ‘real man’ is established through their prowess in both activities [football and fighting], and they gain popularity and status both with other boys and with girls through them. Football and fighting become a measure of success as boys/men and a more important achievement than

²⁹ The story was in fact an obscure re-telling of the unveiling of the Large Hadron Collider – a vast and complex particle accelerator – in Switzerland.

academic success, while relative failure or lack of interest in them becomes a marker of stigmatized effeminacy (Epstein et al 2001: 159).

These ways of being a ‘real man’ – being strong, skilful, effortless – are embodied on the football pitch, and the boys’ positions in relation to this hegemonic masculinity accords quite closely with the overall pecking order within the group. Those who are less skilful at football, however, constantly challenge the rest of the group by presenting new arenas for becoming the ‘best at stuff’ – table-tennis, pool, computer games – requiring higher status individuals to constantly assert and reassert their masculine dominance in each of these games. This perpetual one-upmanship results in a pressure to perform, and continually pushes the boundaries of risk and status. Within this dynamic, however, there was a common standard of skill in all activities – the contest was not for competence, however, but for *distinction*. As Bourdieu argues:

a ‘real’ man is someone who feels the need to rise to the challenge of the opportunities available to him to increase his honour by pursuing glory and distinction in the public sphere. Exaltation of masculine values has its dark negative side in the fears and anxieties aroused by femininity ... Everything thus combines to make the impossible ideal of virility the source of an immense vulnerability. It is this vulnerability which paradoxically leads to sometimes frantic investment in all the masculine games of violence, such as sports in modern societies. (Bourdieu 2001: 51).

While there are similarities between being the ‘best at stuff’ and the importance placed on sporting prowess in the Adlers’ (1998) ethnographic study of ‘pre-teenagers’ in the United States, there are also important crucial differences. For the Adlers, sporting competence ‘was so critical that individuals who were proficient in sport attained both peer recognition and upward mobility’ (1998: 39). While sporting competence is important to the Langview Boys, it seldom operates in isolation from other attributes – those who are exceptionally good at sport, but do not have ‘the patter’, for example, will be given grudging respect in their area of expertise, but will be given no quarter in other activities.

Being 'a gemmie'

Being a 'gemmie' refers to an attitude of fearlessness, of violent defiance, and of fighting your corner against all odds. This is an attribute prized above all others, and is visible in every group situation and interaction. Being a 'gemmie' translates to an ability to hold one's own in every situation, as Kev and Daz describe:

AF: So there's always one person you respect more than everyone else.

Daz: Aye. Gemmer, bolder.

AF: What's does a gemmie mean?

Daz: You wouldnae run.

Kev: Jist someb'dae ye wouldnae mess wi'. See in every scheme, there's always wan.

James: In every single scheme, there's always wan person who everyb'dae 'hinks is the gemmiest an aw that.

For the boys, there is always one individual who they respect and fear above all others; who sits at the top of the local hierarchy. From this perspective, territorial boundaries can in fact be read as a means of creating a social space for formulating a local reputation; for forging a particular form of social identity. Gang identification, be it symbolic or violent, can therefore be read as a defence of the local hierarchy, with this individual at the top. This attitude represents the core of hegemonic masculinity within the group, and forms a central strut in both historical and contemporary representations of working-class masculinities, in Glasgow and elsewhere (H. Young 2007). James Patrick, describing the attributes most prized by young men in 1960s Maryhill, talks of being 'a gemmie' as 'someone who is prepared to fight, whatever the odds, even if defeat or physical punishment is inevitable' (Patrick 1973: 85). The leader of the gang he was involved with was described as 'the gemmiest boay in Glesga, the first wan to go right ahead wi aw thae mugs' (Patrick 1973: 35). This continuity in masculine identities will be discussed below, under the heading of 'Masculinities and Social Change in Langview'.

Being 'wan ae the boays'

Being 'wan ae the boays' refers to loyalty to the norms of the group – being 'up for' anything that is suggested. As noted in the first section, this is also strongly linked with

area identity; the boys have grown up together, and the power of peer-relationships is intimately bound up with their place and space in Langview. Being ‘wan ae the boays’ denotes a minimum level of conduct in group activities: for example, there is a minimal level of dress (up-to-date football tops, tracksuits, and trainers), proficiency at sport (good enough to be competitive in chosen activity), available income (able to afford group activities) and verbal interaction, discussed below. Deviation from these standards results in informal group controls, in the form of ritualised insults. Being ‘wan ae the boays’ also means remaining loyal to the group, and everything the group is involved in; one of the boys spoke reverentially of a young man from Langview who now plays for a Premiership football club, but ‘still climbs in the LYP for a game’ when he’s home.

The dynamics surrounding being ‘wan ae the boays’, moreover, gives an insight into the precarious and insecure nature of masculinities within the group. Like ‘being in the know’, remaining loyal to the group necessitates a constant need for validation in all group interactions. As Bourdieu notes:

Like honour ... manliness must be validated by other men ... and certified by recognition of membership of the group of “real men” ... Some forms of “courage” ... spring, paradoxically, from the *fear* of losing the respect or admiration of the group, of “losing face” in front of one’s “mates” and being relegated to the typically female category of “wimps”, “girlies”, “fairies” etc. (Bourdieu 2001: 52)

Being ‘wan ae the boays’ also necessitates an implicit acceptance of the norms and rules associated with the hegemonic masculinity of the group. Younger, or weaker boys are viewed through the lens of ‘subordinated masculinities’ – denigrated as ‘wee poofs’. Females are not allowed to play football (or any other sport the boys want to play) unless they are incredibly good. In this sense, the group is closed to those that are not seen as ‘wan ae the boys’. As will be discussed later in the chapter, this dynamic creates tensions within the group, as well as with groups of females and younger males among the hidden majority.

Having 'the patter'

Having 'the patter' is basically the means of gaining verbal one-upmanship in any social encounter – either through insults, or verbal manipulation; operating as a means of distinguishing both group solidarity and individual distinction. Verbal sparring, on one level, involves a strong sense of group cohesion. Repeated reference to common tropes (the size of Gary's nose, James being overweight, someone's mum being seen as attractive), draw a laugh from all of those present. This humour also, however, plays a powerful role in the regulation of the bounds of hegemonic masculinity. As Collinson argues in relation to the shop-floor culture in a lorry factory in the 1980s – 'only "real men" would be able to laugh at themselves by accepting highly insulting nicknames' (Collinson 1988: 185).

Like the factory workers described by Collinson, there is an unmistakeable sense that the ability to 'take a slagging' is a key component in the masculine camaraderie that characterises the group; being able to 'take a slagging' marks out an individual as worthy of some respect. More, there is a sense in which this aspect of shared humour reflects a shared history, in that 'in-jokes' are known by all in the group (Sanders 2004). In many ways, 'slagging' plays a similar role to what David Matza refers to as 'sounding': 'a probing of one's depth, taking the form of insult' (Matza 1964: 53). The metaphor of 'sounding' is particularly apt to the Langview Boys, as many of the insults are retracted as soon as proffered; reverberating off the victim and back to surface. The device most commonly used to achieve this goal is that of veiled humour. Frequently, a barbed remark or comment will be followed by the phrase 'kiddin oan' (meaning 'only joking'), thereby testing the edge of what is acceptable to say without fear of reprisal. For humour is the ultimate defuser: if the professed intention is to make a joke, anger at the comment is suppressed by a shameful feeling of not being able to take a joke. This, too, is done knowingly – in one discussion group, asked about the constant stream of insults, Marty replied that 'we jist say these things tae each other, we dinnae take it tae heart.' The constant stream of insult and retraction, testing and sounding, on one hand induces cohesion, as there is tacit group agreement of 'acceptable standards' of insult-trading – the minimum level of conduct discussed above as part of being 'wan ae the boays'. As Gabriel notes, 'this may lead to a continuous state of insult-trading which may be contained within certain parameters (as with football crowds)' (Gabriel 1998: 1347). As will be discussed below, however, this tacit agreement was frequently abused.

These attributes represent a specific configuration of hegemonic masculinity within the group – emphasising group solidarity, attachment to the local area, exclusivity, and the search for distinction among peers. As will be discussed in Chapter Eight, in this context, enacting gang identities serve as an idealised form of these dynamics – demonstrating solidarity, distinction, area identity, and a symbolic and physical embodiment of hegemonic masculinity. Each, however, also evinces a darker side – involving frequent denigrations to those deemed to embody ‘subordinated masculinities’, both within and outwith the group, and constraining young women’s involvement in sport to a normative gender order. In the following section, I analyse the role of learning, identity, and regulation in the co-creation of these masculinities – analysing the ways in which age operates as a ‘pecking order’ in itself, between different groups in the area.

Regulating Masculinities: Learning, identity, and the ‘tormented habitus’

As Connell (2002) makes clear, while masculinities represent a temporally fluid and situationally flexible set of dispositions – shaping and reshaping according to different circumstances – these forms of practice occur in the context of a hierarchy of masculinities, in which hegemonic masculinity predominates. Like habitus, these forms of gender-practice are learned, embodied, and experimented at different stages of social development: ‘Adult masculinities are produced through a complex process of growth and development involving active negotiation in multiple social relationships’ (Connell 2000: 31). In Bourdieu’s terms, therefore, developing masculinities can be conceptualised within the context of the ‘tormented habitus’ described in Chapter Four. For the Langview Boys, as discussed in Chapter Four, the gang identity represents the core of hegemonic masculinity – present in each of the five aspects of status outlined earlier. However, as has been argued, hegemonic masculinity is seldom fully embodied, but rather is a situational accomplishment – in seeking out masculinities, therefore, pecking order and status are continually tested and contested in different environments, resulting in a perpetual cycle of insult-trading, physical rough-housing, and competition.

In this section, I discuss two ways in which masculinities are regulated both within and outwith the group: *verbal* and *physical regulation*. As will be argued, through their group activities – of which humour and violence are key components – the Langview Boys create a cultural orbit that other groups of young men and women must position themselves in relation to. In this way, the hegemonic masculinity of the Langview Boys is learned, enacted, and embodied by younger groups of males – illustrating the means by which habitus is formed and reproduced, and demonstrating the means through which patterns of masculinities – and, crucially, gang identities – carry forward over time. However, as this process is fluid, contingent, and tormented, changes in the social world of Langview can impact on, and reconfigure, patterns of hegemonic masculinity. As I will discuss in the final section, processes of gentrification have challenged the definition of the community field of Langview, resulting in a new set of field arrangements in which masculinities are learned and enacted.

Verbal regulation: Humour and insult

Humour is quintessentially a group activity, deriving its nature and form from shared social meaning (Zijderveld 1983: 3). By its very nature, therefore, it is both *inclusive* and *exclusive* – those who are ‘in’ on the joke, and those who are not – marking the boundaries of social groups, solidifying boundaries, and creating symbolic ties between members (Zijderveld 1983: 47). In the context of everyday interaction, however, it is a complex and layered phenomenon, where pecking orders, gendered stereotypes, and status are coded into jokes and laughter (Murphy 2009: 115). As Kehily and Nayak note, ‘[t]hose most skilled at employing sophisticated insults had higher status in the group’ (Kehily and Nayak 1997: 73). As a social phenomenon, humour is also learned; its meaning and rules derived from countless social interactions: observed, mimicked, and re-enacted. In this context, humour plays a constitutive role in the learning, enactment and embodiment of specific configurations of gender. Among the Langview Boys, jokes and insults are powerfully encoded with stereotypes and constructions of gender – defining the edges of normative masculinities and femininities through denigration of those who deviate. In this sense, only a ‘real man’ can ‘take a slagging’ (Collinson 1988). As Kehily and Nayak state in the context of school cultures, ‘humour plays a significant part in consolidating male peer group cultures ... offering a sphere for conveying masculine identities’ (Kehily and Nayak 1997: 69).

Within the Langview Boys, humour plays a crucial role in regulating the masculinities both within and outwith the group. The vast majority of verbal interaction revolves around jokes, jibes, and insults; belittling, mocking, and testing; ‘slaggin’ and ‘kiddin oan’. These verbal interactions are richly layered, coded with messages of power, status, and authority. Humour constructs hegemonic masculinity by deriding and emotionally belittling those who embody subordinated masculinities (Bourdieu 2001: 24) – deviations from hegemonic notions of body-image, for example a large nose or being overweight, result in insult and mocking. As Kehily and Nayak note:

Young men who did not circumscribe to the hyper-heterosexual practice of masculinity were ridiculed through humorous rituals. Consequently, those who worked hard at school, or exposed sexual vulnerabilities in relationships with young women, were targets for banter and abuse...The rituals of humour involve the embodiment of heterosexuality where disciplinary techniques

operate as an 'anatomy of power' (Foucault, 1977). (Kehily and Nayak 1997: 84)

As discussed earlier, however, hegemonic masculinity is an elusive accomplishment; for this reason, the enactment of masculinities is deeply layered with fear and anxiety. As Gabriel notes, insults may 'be endured passively, generating feelings of shame, anger, and guilt for the victim. Alternatively, however, they may ... escalate into ever-increasing, offensive and damaging actions' (Gabriel 1998: 1347). Within the Langview Boys, those with higher status frequently pick on those with lesser standing, creating a powerful tension within the group, as tempers fray and snap in turn. As Collinson notes, '[a]n unanswered insult ... is highly effective at reaffirming power relations and laying bare relations of domination and subordination' (Collinson 1988: 19). As a consequence, there was often a very fine line between insult and joke, play and violence – resulting in a constant need to reaffirm masculine identity, and a constant edge to playful banter.

Importantly, however, 'slagging' also acts as both a test for non-group members, and as a cruel tool of oppression for those outwith the group, from the hidden majority of children and young people in Langview. As Gabriel argues:

some insults can be read as *tests*. They can function as initiation rites, establishing inclusion and exclusion, or classification rites establishing status and power hierarchies or tests of loyalty, establishing coalitions and alliances. The assailant's motive then is to provide him/herself and his/her target with a challenge, an opportunity to prove themselves, from which they hope to improve their position in the pecking order. (Gabriel 1998: 1349)

The Langview Boys are a group in a constellation of other groups – in LYP, in Langview, and in school. In the microcosm of LYP, however, they are the eldest, most well-known, and highest-status grouping; thereby eliciting both fear and adulation amongst younger groupings of boys. This is important to the boys – as Kev says, of a photograph of some of the younger boys in LYP:

AF: Do they all know ye?

Kev: Aye. They all praise me. They all bow down to me.

As a result of this deference, the Langview Boys frequently insult, mock and ‘test’ younger boys – along similar lines to those which would be used within their own group. Younger groups of boys are generally subordinated – physically, verbally, symbolically – and rarely afforded any clemency; if there is any glimmer of respect, it comes from unusual prowess in one or more of the five attributes noted above, for example Sean’s prodigious talent at football. It is clear that this is how the Langview Boys themselves were treated by their elders in previous years, and this is how these cultural ideas are learned and transmitted – the boys talk about the ‘older ones’ in the area, including their own elder brothers, in awed tones. The in-group processes of interaction and domination are without doubt heightened in dealings outside of the group – the ability to manipulate the ‘younger ones’ is undoubtedly a feather in the cap of the Langview Boys. For ‘younger ones’ with little status amongst their peers, the esteem for the ‘older ones’ is amplified greatly, creating frequent opportunities for exploitation – as will be discussed in Chapters Six and Seven, this dynamic creates tyrannical spaces (Percy-Smith and Matthews 2001) in both public space and leisure.

As a result of the cultural force of hegemonic masculinity exerted by the Langview Boys, younger groups of boys are forced to position themselves in relation to it – and sink or swim. In the following fieldnote, Kev is ‘doing masculinity’ (Messerschmidt 1993) by writing sexualised comments about group members; in excluding a younger male from the joke, he affirms the boundaries of masculinity, and age-based hierarchy:

Kev was scrawling highly sexualised and derogatory insults in the pages of a Thomson’s directory, directed at specific individuals; such as ‘Tommy sucks cocks and then sticks them up his bumhole.’ There was a very young boy present (aged 8) who was obviously interested in what was going on, and admiring of Kev and the other older boys. Kev kept telling him to go away, asking ‘have you ever had a lassie’; implying that sexual experience and knowledge was crucial to understanding his writing. He was particularly taken by the fact that some of the spaces in the directory were labelled ‘Notes’, and delighted in taking his own type of ‘Notes’, and showing them off to other males of similar ages. (Fieldnote, 2nd October 2007)

In this way, the force of hegemonic masculinity which the Langview Boys cohere around are learned and reproduced amongst certain younger males. In the following fieldnote, a

group of younger males in the project – described by some in LYP as the ‘new set’ of the Langview Boys – struggle with balancing masculine identities with an activity perceived by them to be feminine: dancing.

There is a DVD of Grease showing, in preparation for a short production that some of the girls are putting on, with a dance teacher coming in weekly to help out. A few of the younger boys (aged 10) are interested, but are obviously caught between wanting to participate and not wanting to be seen to be ‘girly’. The boys were struggling with being seen to be enjoying it too much in front of one another, and ended up acting hard, making a joke of it, laughing, being disruptive, and being asked to leave. (Fieldnote, 20th October 2008)

Crucially, a similar dynamic is in evidence in the boys’ discussion of gangs. In the following discussion, the boys are reflecting on a specific stage in their developing gang identities (discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight):

AF: How do you join your gang?

Gary: Jist hang about wi us

Daz: Ye’ve goat tae dae a challenge. Mind we done that tae Franco.

The boys go on to describe the ‘challenge’ they made a young man from the area do – namely pulling his trousers down and running down the street. Crucially, however, it was clear that there wasn’t any rules or logic involved, but simply a spontaneous – and cruel – instance of manipulation and exploitation. In this way, gang identities are learned and enacted in the context of age-based hierarchy, local status, and power.

Physical regulation: Football and fighting

While verbal interaction is crucial to an understanding of the internal group dynamics of the Langview Boys, these exchanges occur in the context of continuous exchanges of physicality and embodied hierarchy. In a similar way to everyday insults, traded as part of group identity, much of the physical interaction between the boys consists of ‘play-fighting’; similar to the ‘rough-housing’ described by Thrasher (1963: 78). These contests of masculinity and domination include play-fights, wrestling, and other ‘body-reflexive practices’ (Connell 1995, quoted in Epstein et al 2001: 168), in which being the ‘best at

stuff’ is reduced to basic strength and aggression: ‘[s]ymbolic exchanges fusing violence with play’ (Kehily and Nayak 1997: 72). This kind of ‘rough and tumble’ (pushing, tripping, jumping on one another) is a key element in the boys’ physical interaction. In a photography exercise carried out as part of the discussion groups described in Chapter Three, for example, a significant number of the photos were of the boys’ pushing each other around, or piled on top of one another. This form of contact can be viewed as a culturally acceptable means of contact – friendly exchanges, within the boundaries of acceptable masculine conduct – but also as a means of distinguishing and solidifying status hierarchies and masculinities. In the following fieldnote, the play-fighting engaged in by the boys creates a space in which the strongest gains status:

Tonight, the boys were playing a game of ‘hardest nut’—simply, going forehead to forehead, like rutting stags, and pushing until one backed down. The best at it shouted it from the roof-tops, particularly as his diminutive stature rendered him generally less able in other play-fighting situations. (Fieldnote, 15th May 2007)

In the same way that ‘kiddin oan’ might be used to test the boundaries of acceptable engagement with the individual, so play-fighting tests the limits of acceptable physical interaction – challenging members of the group to conform to the norms of hegemonic masculinity within the group. These physical exchanges, however, can frequently escalate into more serious violent exchanges. Les Back, in his ethnographic study of a youth project in 1980s London, discusses the ‘ritual duelling’ of young people, and the interplay between insult, ‘play’-fighting, and violence; in particular the inherent difficulty in ascertaining ‘the line between play and non-play behaviour’ (Back 1996: 78).³⁰ Back describes two concurrent incidents in the youth project, involving the same boy – the first round of ‘duelling’ ended in laughter, the second in violence. Back locates the difference in the nature of confrontation (and perhaps relationship); the latter involved a challenge to the other’s masculinity, in physical terms. Among the Langview Boys, there is a recognition that physical conflict is necessary, as Back describes (1996: 78-79), in retaining ‘face’ in encounters of differential status:

³⁰ In fact, the etymological root of the word ‘play’ is the Latin term ‘pleg’; which translates as a ‘blow; game, sport, usually skirmish, fight’ (Jephcott 1967: 98).

Willie: See like Kev and Daz, they'd do us [beat us up in a fight]. But
we still wouldnae back doon. Ah'd rather take a doin.

Mark: Cos if you know someb'dae's gonnae batter ye, ye jist need tae
try an fight back...

Gary: ...defend yirsel...

Mark: ...cos ye cannae jist sit there...

Gary:... Aye see if ye jist sit there, you're gonnae get an even worsen
doin than ye would before. Ye have tae stand up for yourself.

This dynamic has direct parallels with Batchelor's (2007: 180) research with incarcerated females, in which 'the young women expressed the importance of being *seen* to "stand up for yourself," repeating the mantra: "Better a sair face than a red face"'³¹ – emphasising the nuanced way in which culture, gender, and age interplay in the enactment of violent identities.

Joke, insult, play, and violence are thus finely graded – balanced precariously in group interaction. While jokes create group solidarity, and construct group masculinities, the potential for violence is ever-present. In Collinson's study of factory humour, even some of its most ardent adherents were emotionally wounded: 'joking was often misinterpreted ... the result was that its victim would "snap" ' (Collinson 1988: 193). In the following fieldnote, precisely such a 'snapping' is in evidence, as a pattern of insult results in a violent encounter between two of the Langview Boys:

As I was walking back into the room, Tommy was punching Connor full in the face. I took both of them out of the room and sat them down separately, and spoke to them about what had happened. I had heard some murmurings of this earlier, but essentially the night before Tommy had been round at one of the other boy's houses playing the computer, and had got an erection. He had been getting mocked mercilessly for the previous 24 hours for it, and had eventually just snapped, and lashed out at whoever was nearest; which turned out to be Connor. Daz and the others had also, however, been goading Connor into fighting with Tommy for a while—Connor is taller than most of the boys, but two years younger than the oldest, and gets manipulated by some of the older

³¹ 'In other words, it is better to fight and lose (i.e. get a sore face) than have the embarrassment (i.e. red face) of backing down'. (Batchelor 2007: 180, n61)

ones. So the punch was between two boys towards the bottom of the group pecking order; in essence fighting for who was at the bottom. (Fieldnote, 22nd April 2008)

The relational nature of violence in this context exposes the ‘pecking orders’ within the group – in which those at the top can peck, but not be pecked (Phillips 2003). Batchelor (2007), discussing the dynamics of status, friendship, and violence within a group of young women, draws on Freire’s (1971) concept of ‘horizontal violence’ in illuminating this hierarchy of violence: ‘girls and young women engage in relational aggression because it is the safest and easiest outlet for girls’ outrage and frustration’ (Batchelor 2007: 42). In this way, among the Langview Boys, the logic of hegemonic masculinity is recreated and reproduced at all points in the pecking order. This logic, however, also creates constraints for those ‘higher up’ the order. As Phillips notes, status can result in ‘reluctant fighting to protect a reputation’ (Phillips 2003: 717). While in other times and places Kev, as ‘top dog’, was the individual with the greatest degree of scope for acting outwith group norms (e.g. talking about ‘love’ in a discussion group), in other ways he was also the individual most bound by them. In the following fieldnote, Kev had received an abusive phone-call from young people from Swigton, and left to challenge them to a fight:

There has been a situation developing between boys between Langview and Swigton over the past few weeks, culminating in an abusive phone call to Kev at the Sunday night drop-in. As a result of this, Kev left the project, puffed full of bravado, alone, and attacked two males, punching and kicking both of them repeatedly. The youth worker present beforehand expressed surprise that one minute before the attack, Kev was sitting chatting away, the picture of good cheer. After the call, they had never seen Kev so angry. (Fieldnote, 9th November 2008)

In this incident, Kev’s high level of status in the group dictated – in no small part – that he act in the way he did. As will be discussed in Chapter Eight, the constraints of reputation and status play a crucial role in the persistence of violent gang identities into young adulthood.

The finely graded differences between play and violence – joke and insult – are nowhere more evident than on the football pitch. In LYP it is the crucible of status, whereby all of

the core attributes discussed are to the fore, and there is an amplified reliance on other group-members (i.e. in the form of team-mates). As with William Foot Whyte's analysis of The Norton's and bowling (in which the highest status members were also those that were most proficient) (Whyte 1943), those with highest status in the Langview Boys are frequently those that are most proficient at football; although, as described above, it is by no means a simple relationship, intersecting as it does with the other attributes listed. However, those with lower status receive passes less frequently – just as Gary is overlooked in group discussion, so he receives less than his fair share of the ball. The status games, and regulation of masculinities, that occur on the football pitch thus also plays a crucial role in the learning and enactment of the physical means of 'being a man'.

The football pitch also operates as a key social arena for the learning and enactment of hegemonic masculinity for groups of younger males and females. The football pitch in LYP was dominated by the Langview Boys, requiring younger males and females who wished to play to 'measure up' against the rough physicality and verbal insults which inhered the boys' play (Eveslage and Delaney 1998). While games could, if well managed, result in the challenging of age and gender hierarchies, these balances were often contingent and precarious. As Epstein et al argue of football in an ethnically mixed youth project in London: 'team friendliness and solidarity that went across ethnic boundaries could suddenly become polarized into ethnic, even national division' (Epstein et al 2001: 164). Similarly, in LYP, hierarchies of age could erupt into violence:

Four of the Langview Boys challenged the younger ones (about 18 of them) to a game; this both sides relished. The older ones got a chance to show off, and the younger ones got a chance to vent their frustrations at being younger and smaller. Tempers were running high, and the younger ones began venting their pent-up frustration at being younger, smaller, and picked-on by taking wee digs at the older ones. The boldest among them, Boab, starting cursing them, and putting in rough challenges; the older ones stopped putting up with it, and started hitting them back with insults and physical challenges. The end result of this was Boab upended on the floor, cursing like a trooper. I asked him to calm down – his first response was 'Nae fucking wonder, he fucking snapped me'. After discussing it indoors with Boab, it became clear that the whole incident is reflective of the frequent injustices levelled on the younger group by the older

ones. In a situation whereby there was strength in numbers, they felt empowered to seek retribution. (Fieldnote, 3rd June 2008)

The retribution sought, crucially, was on the terms of hegemonic masculinity described in this chapter – insult and violence. In this way, these configurations of masculinities are learned and enacted by younger males – demonstrating the means through which patterns of masculinities continue through time. Crucially, however, these processes constitute a fluid current of masculinities – shaped and reshaped from moment to moment – and the Langview Boys cultural orbit, powerful as it is, is not the only identity available to children and young people in Langview. In the final section, I foreshadow a broader argument within the thesis – the reshaping of Langview through processes of gentrification. While these developments challenge, to a certain extent, the hegemonic masculinity described in this chapter, they also create new opportunities for the hidden majority of children and young people in Langview.

Masculinities and Social Change in Langview

The previous sections have explored the ways in which the hegemonic masculinity of the Langview Boys is produced, reproduced, and enacted through learning, development, and social interaction – pointing to some of the ways through which a gendered habitus (Bourdieu 2001) is formed. However, as Connell notes, masculinities – like habitus – are not a fixed or static aspect of social identity, but alter and realign during social development, and at successive points through history. As such, masculinities – and, correspondingly, gang identities – must be understood within the broader context of social changes that refract through the community field of Langview. Much like Bourdieu's concept of habitus, these gendered attitudes are learned and embodied during various stages of social development – through play, experiment and mimicry – thereby creating the possibility of continuing local configurations of masculinities. As Connell points out:

hegemonic masculinity is a concept which may function in a number of ways in analyses of violence. Used with awareness of historical context – and not as a catch-all formula – it may help explain the cultural embedding and specific shape of violence in communities where physical aggression is expected or admired among men. (Connell 2002: 93)

While this historical aspect of hegemonic masculinity has played an important element in the history of gang identities in Glasgow, in this section I will suggest that processes of gentrification and rebranding in Langview – and Glasgow more generally – have challenged the hegemonic masculinity of the Langview Boys, resulting in a number of constraints and opportunities.

McIvor (2010), discussing the history of working-class masculinities in Glasgow, suggests that the particular embodiment of the Glasgow 'hard man' was forged in the heavy industries in the early part of the twentieth century – whereby hard physical labour necessitated a desensitised and hardened configuration of masculinities. In this context, sport, leisure and drinking – associated with the independence associated with earning a wage – became allied with this hardened masculinity, with office-work viewed as effeminate and subordinate. Mat Archer, the protagonist in Archie Hind's 1960s Glasgow novel *The Dear Green Place*, symbolises this cleavage well; he switches from a job in an office to that of an abattoir, where he feels more at ease. Since this time, however – as

described in Chapter Two – Glasgow’s industry has reformulated away from the traditional industries of manufacture and ship-building, towards a service economy revolving around tourism, leisure and retail. For some, these alterations have resulted in threats to the ‘violent city’ and ‘Glasgow hard-man’ tropes which are traditionally associated with Glasgow.³² In Langview, these processes are very visible. New residents – mainly young professionals renting properties due to their relative proximity to the centre of Glasgow – and new businesses – arts studios, trendy bars and cafes – now sit cheek by jowl with old-style pubs, social housing and local businesses. In this context, the reconfiguration of the community field of Langview has challenged the dominant forms of hegemonic masculinity in the area – as discussed in Chapter Four, an exploratory study I conducted of young people’s school-to-work transitions in Langview found that while young men still wanted to work in labouring jobs, in reality the occupations available were in call-centres, or the service industry. As highlighted earlier, while Kev and Daz left school to begin apprenticeships, the work has recently dried up. Discussing this issue, the comments of Glasgow City Councillor Jim Coleman are emblematic:

It’s unfortunate, but under this climate, there’s a lot of people can’t get jobs on building sites. We’ve got to try and convince them there are opportunities, maybe in call-centres, retail, leisure, where there is growth.³³

In this context, the enactment of gang identities can be understood as a reassertion of hegemonic masculinity under the threatening new conditions of the community field.³⁴ Drawing on an ethnography of violent young men in New York, Phillipe Bourgois argues that unemployment and corresponding challenges to traditional ‘bread-winner’ masculinities form an important backdrop to the enactment of violent masculinities:

Fewer and fewer men are able to find stable, unionized jobs that pay them a family wage with family benefits as factories relocate overseas in search of inexpensive labour. Unable to provide economically for their conjugal unit,

³² In recent years, the gender-stereotyping inherent in the mythology of the Glasgow ‘hard man’, intimately bound up with the ‘violent city’ trope, has come under close scrutiny in various cultural representations of Glasgow. In the work of James Kelman (1984, 2008) and William McIlvanney (1977) in literature, as well as Bill Forsyth (1981, 1983) and more recently Andrea Arnold’s (2007) work in film, the stereotypical ‘hard man’ of earlier representations has been problematised, constructing ‘a complex, vulnerable and damaged masculinity [which] can be seen as a concerted effort to critique and move beyond the Glasgow ‘hard-man’ stereotype’ (Petrie 2000: 167, quoted in McNair 2008).

³³ BBC (2010) *Revealed: Glasgow’s Gang Wars*.

³⁴ Taylor and Bain’s recent (2003) work on masculine humour and subversive trade-unionism in Glasgow call-centres can be viewed similarly as an example of the resistance of habitus to new field conditions.

they lose the material legitimation for demanding autocratic ‘respect’ and domineering control over their wives and children (Bourgois 1996: 413)

For Nayak, writing of a group of young men in the North-East of England, processes of economic and social change may result in the consolidation of hegemonic masculinity, as a bulwark against social change (Jefferson 1997; MacDonald and Shildrick 2007). The group of young men Nayak studied, for example, ‘were negotiating various life-paths that would *preserve* rather than eradicate their subcultural allegiance to football, drinking and going out’ (Nayak 2003: 151):

Significantly, the cultural re-imagining of Geordie masculinities reconfigures the relationship to production within the fields of leisure and consumption. In doing so it offers a reassuring, masculine means of preserving local identities and managing change in what appear to be uncertain, risky times. This would suggest that in an increasingly globalised and ‘shrinking’ world, place-based identities continue to be of significance (Nayak 2003: 156)

In the chapters that follow, I will argue that the hegemonic masculinity – and gang identities – of the Langview Boys can be read as a means of creating and co-producing cultural meaning in the context of broader changes in the economic and social landscape of post-industrial Glasgow. As has been argued in this chapter, patterns of capital, humour, and violence exhibited by the Langview Boys represents a core of working-class masculinities in Glasgow; a configuration that is learned and enacted by some younger males in the area, but also creates complex fears, instabilities, and insecurities within the Langview Boys themselves, and more generally with the hidden majority of children and young people in Langview. While processes of gentrification may have further solidified these identities, they have also resulted in new opportunities and spaces for other groups of young people – in terms of new youth projects, and ‘clean’ public spaces. Processes of social change, therefore, have resulted in a complex range of consequences – for identities, masculinities, development and habitus – which must be understood in a relational context. These points form an important foundation for the nuanced understandings and experiences of gang identities discussed in later chapters.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced a *dramatis personae* of the characters who take centre-stage in the thesis – the Langview Boys – both individually and collectively; and the competing group dynamics, status politics, and pecking orders which make up their group identity was analysed. These ways of creating and co-producing meaning – being ‘in the know’, the ‘best at stuff’, a ‘gemmie’, ‘wan ae the boays’, and ‘havin the patter’ – cohere around a specific configuration of hegemonic masculinity in which physical toughness, verbal aptitude, and group loyalty are highly prized. These masculinities are regulated and policed through varying physical, verbal and symbolic techniques – humour, insult, play and violence – continually challenging and contesting the masculinities of group-members. In this context, gang identities emerge as an idealised form of masculinities which embodies these ways of ‘being a man’. While the ways in which these masculinities are learned, enacted and regulated gives an indication of the reproductive aspect of habitus, changes to Langview have challenged these forms of masculinities, foreshadowing a broader discussion of continuity and change in later chapters.

Chapter Six

Growing up in Langview: Space, territory and identity

The town I grew up in was one of a series of four small villages, approximately two miles apart, stringing the shadow of the Ochil Hills in central Scotland. Originally built for the local industries of milling and weaving, the villages now serve as commuter hubs for the larger towns nearby. While the nature and form of housing is quite similar in the four villages, there are marked differences in the reputation – and image – both between and within each area – a set of geographic and symbolic boundaries dividing known and unknown, safe and dangerous, ‘good’ and ‘bad’. Growing up, these divisions instilled a keen sense of belonging and attachment to the places and spaces I knew, and a corresponding feeling of trepidation when exploring an unknown area – amplified considerably if this was in another village. These bounded geographies, and alternating emotions, found form in childish chants and games, in which children from neighbouring villages were constructed as different; as other. I remember in particular being on the primary school football team, and getting the bus to play a team from one of the neighbouring villages, Alva. We were all about nine or ten, getting whipped up into a ritual frenzy of excitement, making up songs and rhymes that expressed our togetherness and denigrated our rivals:

*Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus stood up and he said:
‘We are Tilly, we are Tilly! Noone likes us: we don’t care.
We hate Alva, fucking Alva – And we’ll chase them anywhere!’*

These childish chants gave voice to powerful processes of group solidarity, othering and identity-formation – that continued until we went to secondary school in Alva, and gradually these divisions faded into a vague memory. The connections between space and self I describe in this chapter are, on the face of it, very similar to my own experiences; yet the boundary between Tillicoultry and Alva consisted of three miles of no-man’s-land countryside, rather than a 20m bridge between two densely populated urban areas. The density of population in the city, coupled with the lack of leisure activities for young people in the area, amplify and extend these processes to a considerable degree.

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I introduced the faces of Langview – the Langview Boys, the hidden majority, and the ‘school-leavers’. Analysing the status politics, group dynamics, and developing masculinities of the Langview Boys, I argued that the *habitus* of the group – embodying of a specific configuration of masculinities – represents a powerful cultural force, which other groups of young people must position themselves in relation to. As discussed in the final section of Chapter Five, however, this configuration of masculinities is being increasingly challenged by alterations to the community field of Langview, and Glasgow more generally. The narrowing of economic opportunities for young people in Langview, alongside the increasing gentrification of the Langview community, has resulted in a new set of risks and dangers for the Langview Boys. In this context, the gang identity represents a root of masculine identity, and group solidarity. In this chapter, I extend this argument through analysis of the places and spaces of Langview – and the Langview Boys’ use of, and relationship with, their local area. While the boys look to inhabit the leisure sites of previous generations, increasingly these are turned into exclusive spaces, resulting in the narrowing of available spaces in which to enact group and area identity.

The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section – Introducing Langview – I outline the broad socio-spatial history of the area – covering demographics, employment, and housing – and the ways in which these developments mirror and refract wider changes within the city of Glasgow. Incorporating both impressionistic and statistical perspectives on Langview, I hope to convey a sense of the area from both the street, and the point of view of an academic researcher – foreshadowing the alternating perspectives used through the chapter, and thesis more generally. In the second – The Langview Boys: Space, territory, and identity – I examine the ways in which the group use and imagine their local area, focusing on the deep-seated connections – and resulting divisions – which the group have with the streets of Langview, which I term *street habitus*. In this context, I discuss the role of learning and development in the reproduction of territorial boundaries among younger groups, and the ways in which these boundaries are used and drawn in different ways at different times; as well as their intersection with developing age and gender identities. In this section, I also discuss the ways in which these uses of space create fears and anxieties for other groups of young people in the Langview area – creating so-called tyrannical spaces (Percy-Smith and Matthews 2001). In the final section – Langview as

lens: Globalisation, gentrification and exclusion – I explore the ways in which the reconfiguration of public spaces in Langview has impacted on the Langview Boys' group identities. In sum, I will argue that gang identities represent for some a legitimate outlet through which to resist the changes to their lived environment; through a symbolic link to previous generations.

Introducing Langview

Langview is a traditional working-class community in the east end of Glasgow, with a population of approximately 7,000. The area has undergone successive periods of regeneration and gentrification, resulting in significant alterations to the places and spaces its children and young people inhabit; thus representing a microcosm of processes occurring in the city of Glasgow more generally. In this section, I outline two perspectives on Langview – *soft city* and *hard city* – in an effort to convey both the structural changes in the area, and the visible street-level consequences of these changes:

The city as we imagine it, the soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare,
is as real, maybe more real, than the hard city one can locate on maps and
statistics (Raban 1974: 10)

Jonathan Raban's *Soft City* (1974) offers a useful starting point when composing an image of Langview. The 'soft city' deals in interpretation, experience, and meaning: the city from below. The 'hard city' deals in facts, numbers, graphs: the city from above. The hard/soft dichotomy is of particular relevance to Glasgow – as discussed in Chapter Two, cultural representations of Glasgow frequently play into the 'hard city' trope.³⁵ These perspectives form a crucial backdrop to the discussion that follows, which explores the Langview Boys' use of, and attachment to, the streets of Langview – and the ways in which these experiences intersect with developing age, gender, and gang identities.

Soft City

From the street, Langview appears like countless other inhabited areas of Glasgow. People busy about their daily routine, walking dogs, prams, toddlers. School-children swarm the streets, in small knots, dodging traffic. Queues form in the many fast-food outlets, interspersed by lone smokers, grimacing outside pubs. Shops, off-licences, bookmakers, and tanning salons jostle for attention on the high street with boarded up shops, trendy cafes, and social housing. Walking through the largely residential areas which punctuate the two thoroughfares, street-life quickly fades, replaced by streets teeming with parked

³⁵ This representation is perhaps summarised most pithily by William McIlvanney: 'It was a hard city. The city of the stare.' (McIlvanney 1983: 1).

cars and dogshit. Once you leave the tenements that form the core of Langview, the buildings are a mixture of different ages, styles, and conditions of social housing. Social housing built for different reasons – in different ways, in different periods, and in different states of repair – stands chic by jowl with large-scale, polished blocks of modern housing developments. Factories that once patterned the area have been reinvented as artist spaces and call-centres, or have been refurbished as new flats. Some buildings are in a state of total dereliction: windows broken, front locks damaged, storage cupboards open; covered in graffiti, inside and out. The result is a dizzying combination of different spaces, images, and ideas in housing – a mish-mash of past and present.

The outer perimeter of Langview can be negotiated in under an hour; its axes some twenty minutes each. The perimeter is defined, on every side, by flows of urban transport: roads and railway lines, motorways and canals. Points of entry and exit—breaks in the flow—are carefully monitored. Traffic lights stop the pedestrian abruptly at the main arterial exit-points; foot-traffic is shepherded toward specific flyovers and railway bridges. CCTV cameras monitor each of these areas, adding to the feeling of watched boundaries. The overall effect is that of being hemmed in by modernity. Approaching the motorway that bounds the north edge of Langview, spray-painted names and tags are repeated on railings, police notices, and the path itself, as it winds up toward the busy road. Under the flyover, the middle strut of is covered in graffiti. It is clear that this is an area of contention – names have been sprayed on top of other names – but there is a rough divide halfway along between the tags. Crossing the boundary into the unknown, with cars whistling beneath your feet, there is a palpable sense of unease. On the horizon, it is possible to discern, in one glimpse, a holy trinity of Glasgow history: Glasgow Cathedral, the Necropolis and Tennent's Brewery. On the ground, the legend 'You Are Now Entering Fleetland' is thickly painted, with a crude arrow.

On a map, the streets of Langview appear uniform. In the centre of the area, buildings are regimented tenements, constructed in regularised horizontal rectangles; roads are gridded, with right-angled junctions between each row of flats. As the eye drifts toward the peripheries, the landscape takes on a more haphazard design with parkland, factories, and greenspace commingled with diagonal roads, densely clustered housing and cul-de-sacs. A long curve of railway, meeting the motorway at the area's north-eastern corner, retains the sense of a bounded space; however, as the view pans further out, the boundaries become

less and less defined. Langview appears as any other area—it is difficult for the eye to separate the space from any surrounding area, or indeed in Glasgow as a whole.

Hard City

Langview was built as a working-class community in the nineteenth century, in the midst of Glasgow's hiatus as 'Second City of the Empire', and represents something of a microcosm of the wider currents of change that have occurred in Glasgow since this time. The tenement flats of Langview were built during the huge upsurge in Glasgow's population during the late 19th and early 20th century – described in Chapter Two – to house the workers at the manufacturing plants that patterned the east end of the city. The period subsequent to the Depression brought significant decreases in the population (and working population) in Langview and Glasgow more generally. In the east end, over a thirty year period, the collapse of industry resulted in the loss of some 20,000 local jobs in engineering plants at Parkhead, Cambuslang and Tollcross. The large decreases in population in the decades of the 1950s to the 1970s were the result of economic migration, but also a series of large-scale regeneration policies by the Glasgow Corporation. As described in Chapter Two, this included the building of the four peripheral housing estates of Easterhouse, Drumchapel, Pollok and Castlemilk; but also included the construction of new transport routes (the M8 and M74) and connected new towns of East Kilbride, Erskine and Cumbernauld. For many, these developments caused fundamental ruptures in the tight-knit working-class communities of the past.³⁶

More recently, successive waves of regeneration, gentrification, and redevelopment have reshaped the streets of Langview, and in Glasgow as a whole. As the traditional industries of Glasgow have fallen into decline, so the city has reconfigured around new economies of service and tourism – culminating in Glasgow's status as 'City of Culture' in 1990, 'European City of Architecture' in 1999, and more recently being listed as one of the top ten cities in the world by Lonely Planet (Carrell 2008); though simultaneously the city of Glasgow has comparatively high rates of crime, particularly violent crime, and comprises some of the most deprived areas in Scotland.³⁷ Langview, for example, encompasses a

³⁶ McKay, J. 'Modern Times: 1950s to the Present Day', *The Glasgow Story*, available at: <http://www.theglasgowstory.com/storyf.php> [Accessed 28th September 2010].

³⁷ Scottish Government (2007) *Recorded Crime in Scotland 2006-2007*, Table 7, available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/03/06120248/14> [Accessed 29/08/2008] ;

number of pockets that fall within the 5% ‘most deprived’ areas in Scotland by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Official figures place the population of Langview at a little under 7,000. In terms of age demographics, Table 6.1 illustrates the various proportions of different age-groups in Langview. As can be seen, there is a significantly higher proportion of young people (aged 16-29) living in the area than the national and city average; though a significantly lower proportion of under-16s.³⁸

Table 6.1: Age demographics of Langview, Glasgow and Scotland (2002)

	Langview	Glasgow	Scotland
0 to 15	12.8%	18.4%	19.2%
16 to 29	26.2%	21.2%	17.5%
30 to 44	23.2%	23.7%	23.0%
45 to 60	16.7%	16.2%	19.3%
60 and over	21.1%	20.4%	21.1%

Source: Scottish Census Results Online Warehouse³⁹

As Table 6.2 illustrates, there is a small proportion of minority ethnic groups, with the largest single group being Pakistani and other South Asian. Though these proportions are greater than the national average, they are below the city average. As discussed in Chapter Three, the Langview Boys – and the population of children and young people I got to know in Langview – were almost entirely of white Scottish descent.

Table 6.2: Ethnicity of Population of Langview, Glasgow and Scotland (2002)

	Langview	Glasgow	Scotland
White	97.3%	94.5%	98.0%
Indian	0.3%	0.7%	0.3%
Pakistani and other South Asian	1.2%	3.0%	0.8%
Chinese	0.4%	0.7%	0.3%
Other	0.7%	1.0%	0.6%

Source: Scottish Census Results Online Warehouse

Table 6.3 presents the occupational grading of residents of Langview. As is illustrated, residents are most likely to fall into the social grades C1, C2, D or E, with more than a

Scottish Executive (2006) *Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation: General Report*, p.6 Available at: http://www.rics.org/Practiceareas/Property/Regeneration/scottishindex_multipledeprivation2006_enewsno06.htm [Accessed 02/05/2008].

³⁸ 2002 was the last national census. No more up-to-date data was available at the time of writing.

³⁹ Available at: <http://www.scrol.gov.uk/scrol/warehouse/warehouse?actionName=choose-area> [Accessed 01/05/2008]

third of people of working age population claiming state benefits or otherwise unemployed. Indicators for public health in Langview (life expectancy, smoking, hospital admissions) are significantly worse than the national average.⁴⁰

Table 6.3: Social Grade of Working Age Population in Langview, Glasgow and Scotland (as % of local population)

	Langview	Glasgow	Scotland
AB Higher and intermediate managerial/professional	9.8%	14.5%	19.0%
C1 Supervisory, junior managerial/professional	24.8%	23.7%	26.6%
C2 Skilled manual workers	10.5%	10.7%	14.6%
D Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers	19.2%	17.9%	17.5%
E State benefit, unemployed, lowest grade workers	35.7%	33.2%	22.4%

Source: Scottish Census Results Online Warehouse

However, crucial to an interpretation of these statistics – and to the argument presented in this chapter – is the difficulty in *defining* the geographic and symbolic space which comprises Langview. While census data is available for a number of geographical areas, none of these accord with the area referred to as Langview by local people. As one report on the health profile of Langview admits: the ‘process has been carried out largely without detailed local knowledge of areas and the choice of names has been intrinsically subjective’ (NHS Health Scotland 2004: 2). Local estimates of population size, from a community website, are approximately three times that reported in the census – emphasising the need to counter-balance statistical data with interpretation, but also pointing out the importance of space and territory in Langview; for adults as much as young people. This will emerge as a recurrent theme within this chapter.

The disjuncture between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ impressions of Langview is nowhere more clear than in relation to gangs. In common with many traditional working-class communities in Glasgow, Langview has a longstanding reputation for gangs: the names of the Langview groups – Langview Young Team and Langview Fleet – are listed repeatedly in various official and unofficial records of gangs in Glasgow.⁴¹ As with the dominant tropes of the gang complex, however, these diverse and differentiated groups are frequently presented as homogenous and universalist entities – quite apart from the social meanings and lived realities of the children and young people described in this thesis. Consequently, responses to youth gangs in Langview have largely been blunt instruments – allied to popular fears

⁴⁰ NHS Scotland (2004) *Langview: A community health and wellbeing profile*; Health Scotland: Edinburgh.

⁴¹ The Community Initiative to Reduce Violence, and Violence Reduction Unit ‘gang databases’ contains these gang names, as do the several unofficial ‘gang lists’. See MacCallum (1994) for an example.

and stereotypes, as opposed to lived experience. As will be discussed later in the chapter, these responses have a profound impact on the lives of children and young people growing up in Langview.

The Langview Boys: Space, territory, and identity

In this section, I combine the analysis of group dynamics in the previous chapter with discussion of the Langview Boys' use of, and attachment to, public space; reflecting on the ways in which this intersects with other groups' use of space. In particular, I focus on the ways in which the Langview Boys – and others – construct the geographical and symbolic space of Langview, and the ways in which these territorial boundaries between Langview and neighbouring areas are learned, experimented with, and integrated into group activities. As I will argue, these connections – in combination with the developing masculinities described in the previous chapter – form a crucial element in the learning and enactment of gang identities. The section is divided into four bounded parts – *use of public space*, *street habitus and public space*, *street habitus and territoriality*, and *tyrannical spaces*.

Use of public space

The street represents a space in which young people can gain some degree of autonomy, and create 'rules of engagement' (Leonard 2006: 232) on their own terms, away from both home and school (Soja 1996). Away from adult control, young people are free to engage in creative play in the urban environment, to develop individual and collective identities through verbal and physical 'testing'. The Langview Boys spend a great deal of their time in public space, bored and restless, seeking diversions from the mundane everyday. Willie describes the Boys' evening routine:

See tae be honest, right, we go hame fae school, we get our dinner an that, we go tae LYP at 6, we go oot fae LYP we get a game ae hunt roon the streets.

When LYP is closed – at weekends, and after 8pm on weekdays – the Langview Boys spend much of their time, together or in smaller knots, patrolling the streets of Langview, in search of creative diversion of any kind. As Willie mentions, the street-game 'hunt' was a popular activity. 'Hunt' is basically hide-and-seek on a broader canvas, and with added risk and excitement; played in the dark, in nooks and crannies in the cityscape. Emphasising both group solidarity and individual distinction, the game represents well the relationship between play, excitement and space within the Langview Boys' group activities in public space. The game is played in the area surrounding the boys' homes –

within the space of a few streets – and is thus geographically bounded, with inside/outside groupings woven into its fabric.

More generally, the Langview Boys' use of public space represents a series of arenas in which the status games and group dynamics described in the previous chapter are played out. Cohen, drawing on Goffman (1959), refers to these processes as 'character contests':

These are ways of seeing who will have the honour and character to rise above the situation. Action gets restructured around the familiar settings of streets, sports ground, the weekend by the sea, railway station. The settings are given new meanings by being made stages for these games (S. Cohen 1973: 53)

'Character contests' represent a continual challenge to individual status – creating risky situations in which individual distinction can be achieved while maintaining the bond of group solidarity and hegemonic masculinity. This involved, for the Langview Boys, re-appropriating found objects and the built environment to create exciting games: light fittings, found in bins, became jousting sticks; large sticks became fighting poles; cardboard boxes the site of a game of hide-and-seek; smashed-up telephone boxes the goals in a game of scratch football. It involved throwing eggs at passers-by from a hidden space near the main street, or using a shopping trolley as a racing car – pushing it to the top of an enormous hill, and taking turns to ride the trolley at breakneck speed towards the main road. The Langview Boys' use of public space is a perpetual repetition of group activities in the same public spaces – while constantly searching for a new excitement, dares, and risks through which to test individual distinction and reaffirm group cohesion.

The Langview Boys' use of public space has important resonances with earlier generations in Langview, Glasgow, and elsewhere. Pearl Jephcott, in a study of youth leisure in 1960s Glasgow – discussed in more detail in the following chapter – found that the majority of young people's time was spent in public space, looking for creative excitement: '[t]he activities referred to ... were often hatched up on the spur of the moment to fill in a blank evening at low cost' (Jephcott 1967: 64). Similarly, Ian Taylor and Paul Walton (1973: 93) describe an almost identical game to one described above, amongst a group of 10-11 year olds in writing of Bradford in 1973:

They had stripped down several supermarket trolley baskets and had perfected their own roller coaster gliding down the car-park slope at hair-raising speeds, all the time spinning round in circles, hanging cheerfully on to their stripped down machines.

These resonances point to a marked continuity in young people's use of public space; similar to the seminal reinvestigation of Lynch's study of young people and space in Melbourne in the 1970s (Matthews et al 1998). As Matthews et al describe:

urban poverty need not give rise to a childhood of environmental impoverishment ... some of the poorest areas had the most vivid and varied experience of place...The harsh and violent nature of the place produced ambivalent feelings in young people; a co-existence of fear and excitement' (Matthews et al 1998: 199).

In Langview – in a pattern similar to that described in the previous chapter – this continuity results in no small part from the mixture of ages in public space, and the mimicry of the Langview Boys amongst younger groups. In the following fieldnote, the icy pitch at LYP was out-of-bounds owing to the risk of injury – the boys' saw it as the opposite:

Winter has arrived with a vengeance. Ice coats the pavement in the street; on streetwork I walk slowly, slowly, taking baby steps down towards LYP. The streets are busy with people walking gingerly, sliding, laughing, and looking up to see if anyone noticed; only to make eye-contact with someone doing exactly the same. There is an air of lightness to the street—people brought together by the adversity of conditions. At LYP, the outdoor area of the park is has become a perfect sheet of black ice. The moon glints hugely in the ice; the few pockets without ice appear dull and lustreless. The Langview Boys are on the pitch, sliding around and having a great time; successive groups of younger boys join in, copying and showing off. This was truly a spontaneous excitement, a natural oasis in the midst of the urban experience; the boys went mad for it. (Fieldnote, 1st December 2008)

Despite this continuity, however, there are also important changes that have occurred in the social fabric of Langview, which have had ramifications for the Langview Boys', and

others', use of public space. Areas that were the 'go-to' spaces for previous generations have been regenerated and gentrified, resulting in a narrowing in the available spaces for group activities; though coinciding with the opening of mediated cyber-space, discussed in Chapter Seven. In illuminating this conflict, it is helpful to return to the concept of *street habitus* introduced in Chapter Four, and in particular its relation to territoriality.

Street habitus and public space

The creative use of place and space described in the previous section illustrates the ways in which the Langview Boys imbue the streets of Langview with creative potential and meaning, while reaffirming and contesting group dynamics and status politics. Crucially, however, these activities are patterned by broader structures of age and opportunity. Activities take place within a very small geographical area, with limited opportunity for leisure activities; these same streets and activities, therefore, form the social and spatial territory of the Langview Boys' group experience, past and present. In this context, space itself becomes a critical resource in constructing and developing identity. As Loader describes of an older group in Edinburgh:

Denied the purchasing power needed to use, or even to get to, other parts of the city (and most importantly the city centre) unemployed youths are for the most part confined to the communities in which they live...as a result, the 'locality' tends to retain a prominent place in the lives of marginalised young people, both as a site of routine activities and as the basis of their identities. (Loader 1996: 112–113)

In this context of limited resources for leisure and activity, space itself – and, arguably, body capital and verbal aptitude – becomes a resource to be drawn on in carving out distinction and identity. While Langview offers some structured leisure opportunities for the Langview Boys – discussed in the next chapter – these hold limited appeal, and limited opening times. As a result, public space represents the key arena in which group identities are acted out. Childress, drawing on the work of Ingold (1987), notes that:

Teenagers have limited ability to manipulate private property. They can't own it, can't modify it, can't rent it. They can only choose, occupy and use the

property of others. This limitation is true in their communities, it's true in their schools, and it's true in their homes. (Childress 2004: 196)

In this context, the concept of street habitus represents the deep-seated connection the Langview Boys have with the local area of Langview, formulated and embodied by a childhood spent in a small geographical area searching for excitement and ideas, but constrained by a broader set of structural obstacles. Local places and spaces, bound up with individual and collective memory, become fused with self identity, and the family, friendships and relationships which occur there. In this way, area identity becomes an important badge of selfhood, to be defended at all costs.

The Langview Boys' street habitus, therefore, represents the deep-seated amalgamation of space and self, the embodied routinisation of local geographies. The streets they inhabit are routinised aspects of daily life, known like the back of your hand – instinctively, without thinking or looking, just there. The boundaries between Langview and neighbouring areas, therefore, become important staging grounds for the defence of this identity; for the performance of a range of developing age, gender, and territorial identities. In the context of late modernity, this place attachment can be understood as a defensive response to the uncertain economic conditions of post-industrial Glasgow. As Crow and Maclean (2000: 237), drawing on Castells, describe: 'the defence of a place is a powerful element in the construction of what he calls "communal havens" that offer to provide anchor points for an individual's identity in an uncertain world'.

The pride with which the Langview Boys speak about Langview comes in the knowledge of its reputation for gang activity. Indeed, just as the boys exhibit a deep-seated embodiment of the streets they know so well, so this reputation is incorporated in the imagined community of Langview. In the following discussion, Kev talks with pride of a poll that rated the main street in Langview as the 'dirtiest street in Scotland'. In this way, the reputation of Langview – feeding into a configuration of masculinities that prizes violence – is appropriated as a badge of reputation for the group:

Dylan: Lang St Number One (thumps table twice)

Kev: There's only one. It's the worst street in Glesga.

AF: Where did you get that?

Kev: In the newspaper.

AF: Worst for what?

Kev: Ah don't know. Just every'hin. The blackest. Aw the litter, an abandoned shoaps an every'hin. An plus aw the graffiti.

James: What do you want it tae be dirty for?

Kev: No the dirty bit. It just says 'worst street in Glesga', so it makes us look worse, 'hnnnggg' (noise made like when straining to tense muscles). Kiddin' oan.

The symbolic construction of Langview as a 'communal haven', and embodiment of hegemonic masculinity, creates a symbolic attachment both between the Langview Boys, and with the geographical space of Langview. In bounding this symbolic and geographic space, however, an inherent division is constructed between Langview and neighbouring areas – Swigton, Oldtoun, and Hillside. The development and enactment of street habitus, therefore, is bound up with territoriality; embodying complex dialectics of inclusion and exclusion, self and other, friendship and enmity. As Sibley argues, '[t]he construction of community and the bounding of social groups are a part of the same problem as the separation of self and other' (Sibley 1995: 45). In the following section, these boundaries are explored in the context of territoriality in Langview.

Street habitus and territoriality

Sack defines territoriality as 'the attempt by an individual or group to influence, affect, or control objects, people, and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic space' (Sack 1983: 56). In contrast to Sack's definition, however, rather than territoriality resulting from an attempt to control resources, for the Langview Boys area *becomes* a resource; a means of differentiating identity. The creation of boundaries between areas serves as a symbolic means of both differentiating identity, and creating a space in which some level of local status can be gained (Bannister and Fraser 2008).

These processes are embodied in the symbolic boundaries that delimit the Langview Boys' imagining of the Langview 'territory'. Between Langview and neighbouring areas – Swigton, Oldtoun, and Hillside – there exist a series of boundaries marking Langview out as distinct. These boundaries, while not obvious to a casual observer, are known by all children and young people growing up in Langview. Robert, one of the school-leavers, reflects on this division:

AF: Why is there boundaries there? Where do they come from?

Robert: It's jist an invisible boundary that every'bdae knows. Once you cross that boundary, you know you're in Langview, you know you're in Swigton. Don't know how it came aboot.

In Langview, as elsewhere in Glasgow, boundaries are demarcated by natural contours in the flow of urban development. Viewed from above, the city of Glasgow is haphazardly gridded, densely populated, and largely amorphous. Upon closer inspection, however, there are urban faultlines snaking through the cityscape; rivers, canals, roads, and railways dissect the city into so many patches, as on a patchwork quilt. Like Thrasher's description of Chicago in the 1920s, these patches constitute a 'mosaic of little worlds which touch but do not interpellate' (Thrasher 1963: 6). The irony, therefore, is that mobility itself plays a part in the restriction of the Langview Boys' geographies: roads and railways, engineered to facilitate greater mobility to and from the city centre, take on a different quality—they become immobile borders, no longer linking but separating. For some, the globalisation and development of transport has created new configurations of time and space; for others, these developments have placed further boundaries – economic, spatial, and social – on their lives. In this context, the role of town-planners in re-creating territorial boundaries must be taken into consideration (see Suttles 1990).

The border lines between Langview and neighbouring areas, therefore, represent liminal zones between safe and unsafe, known and unknown territories. On one level, the line that separates Langview from Swigton, for example, is a socially constructed border, arbitrarily defined by the urban landscape. On another level, however, it is an intensely powerful hinterland, embodying complex dialectics of inclusion and exclusion, self and other, friendship and enmity. For James and Kev, continuing the discussion above, these areas are linked directly to conflict, and violence.

AF: How do you know where the boundaries are?

James: It's bridges separating them aw.

AF: Why d'ye think that is?

Kev: I don't know. Cos the people made them so ye could fight o'er them.

Kiddin'oan.

James: Cos there's a railway. An a motorway...cos there's motorways an aw that.

While these boundaries are common knowledge to young people in Langview and neighbouring areas, some play a more active role in their communication and enforcement. In the following discussion, Kev had taken a picture of the railway line near LYP, which represents the boundary between Langview and Swigton:

Kev: Aye! We're on the Langview side, and that's the Swigton side. Wait til

Ah show you. See that wee fence? That's the Swigton end.

AF: How do you know that?

Kev: We know that, they know that. See when they walk o'er the bridge...see

that bridge, see when ye walk doon it, that's you in Swigton, that's

you in Langview. There's a wee line saying 'Fleetland', naw

'Welcome to Fleetland', an done a wee arrow. There used tae be.

James: Remember we writ that.

For the Langview Boys, the construction of boundaries between areas, while fostering cohesion *within* a community, simultaneously fosters mistrust of those *outwith* that community. In constructing one's own area as pure and clean, so the neighbouring area is constructed as 'polluted' (Douglas 1966). In affirming self identity, therefore, the Langview Boys perpetually denigrate bordering communities. These denigrations are woven into the fabric of group conversation, tossed *ad hoc* into ongoing banter in a playful and knockabout manner: 'Have you ever seen a Swigton close? It's aw menchie's'; 'Ma sister says that people in the Swigton nick yir shoes.' The gang name in Swigton is the Swigton Young Team, or SYT – when young people from Langview see SYT, however, they shout in unison: 'Steals Yir Trackies.'

The tropes which these humorous interludes play into, however, are illustrative of powerful processes of othering and culture-building. Making reference to a Swigton close as being 'aw menchie's', and people from Swigton being likely to 'nick yir shoes' or 'steal yir trackies' constructs Swigton residents squarely as other. Importantly, these tropes and denigrations were far from particular to the Langview Boys, but were in evidence amongst both younger children and older teenagers. One of the school-leavers, Pamela, describes the response of a male friend to her suggestion of attending a party in Swigton;

representing well the hierarchical ways in which ‘subordinated masculinities’ are woven into processes of othering:

See someb’dae that Ah know, like see if ye’re no fae their scheme, [he’s like that] they’re aw gay. Ah’m like, ‘go tae this party’, an they’re like ‘naw, it’s pure full ae gays, they’re poofs, they’re gayboys’. Jist because they don’t stay in the same place that they dae. It’s absolutely ridiculous.

Later in this discussion with the school-leavers, Pamela reflects on the ways in which these tropes played out in the context of dating relationships. The construction of young people from Swigton as different, and inferior, extended to friends’ opinions of her choice of boyfriend:

See, like, if yir a lassie, an yir going oot wi somebdae, when ye were younger, see when ye were going oot wi somebdae, an it is like fae a different scheme, like people in your scheme wid slag ye fur it. Like, if she wis fae Oldtoun, an she wis going oot wi a guy fae Swigton, they’d be like ‘aye, going oot wi a Swigton boay’.

The inside/outside dialectic in evidence in the Langview Boys’ group activities, therefore, represents a more general sense of bounded habitus. Implicitly, it is inclusive of everyone who lives within the bounded geographical area, and exclusive of those who live outwith it; though this mistrust is particularly pronounced for those in border communities.

However, as noted in Chapter Five, during the period of fieldwork a number of young men from Swigton began attending LYP, and spending time with the Langview Boys; as a result, the Langview Boys began spending time in Swigton. Similarly, Michael (one of the school-leavers), reflecting on his earlier involvement in gang fighting, described how the Langview and Swigton Young Teams ‘went pals’, and called a truce; hanging around together for periods of time. Therefore, while the boundary serves on one level as a catalyst for enmity and distrust, it can also be appropriated, subverted and played with – its existence can be viewed as playing a symbolic role for young people on both sides, expressing unity and solidarity for young people in both Langview and Swigton. In this context, James Short – writing in the United States in the late 1960s – notes that that the status of any one group is *directly dependent* on the existence of a rival. Much gang graffiti

in Langview includes gang tags with the number one afterwards; in order for this perception to carry weight, there must be others included. For Short, conflict is both the ‘major source of status within the gang’ (Short 1968), and the major impetus for continued attempts at differentiation.

Importantly, these symbolic boundaries – and connected gang identities – carry forward over time. One youth worker, reflecting on growing up in the area in the 1970s, remembered the boundary well:

Ah used tae stay in between Swigton and Langview, and Ah used tae watch them aw running, right up in the middle over that wee bridge tae get tae the Lang St side ... it’s always been the divide, it wis the same when Ah wis wee ... it’s like a common divide.

In this context, learning and social development plays a critical role. Several of the Langview Boys reminisced about being young children, and watching fights over the boundary between Langview and Swigton. As Willie remembers:

See at the LYP, the tree on the corner inside the LYP? Ye kin look down the bridge. We used tae always sit there ... there wis a best seat and Kev always goat it ... they were aw fightin so we could see every’hin.

Similarly, one of the ‘school-leavers’, Michael, reflects on the development of his territorial identity with Langview in reference to elder brothers:

AF: So, from a young age, did you have an awareness that there was a boundary between Langview and Swigton?

Michael: Cos ma pals had aulder brothers, an they’d be a couple ae steps ahead in the whole process.

In this way, the geographic and symbolic area of Langview becomes fused with self-identity – creating a fluid street habitus through which group identities are enacted. As will be discussed in Chapter Eight, the form and meaning of these boundaries alters and reconfigures at different stages of social development – through play, mimicry, and experimentation – intersecting with developing age, gender, and group identities (Bannister

and Fraser 2008). In this way, the various stages of social development are overlaid with symbolic boundaries and othering, acting as a social arena and context in which developing masculinities and gang identities are enacted.

Tyrannical spaces

Matthews et al (1998), analysing children's geographies in public space, describe the ways in which different groups seek out hidden spaces in the urban environment – looking for a safe haven of identity away from home and school (Leonard 2006, Travlou 2003). In the context of limited space and resources, young people create 'microgeographies' and 'microcultures', gaining spatial autonomy from adults' control, and a sense of individual and group identity (Matthews, Limb, and Percy-Smith 1998, 2000). 'Ownership' of space is demonstrated, for example, through the construction of 'dens' (Percy-Smith and Matthews 2001), or through use of graffiti (Ley and Cybriwsky 1974; Childress 2004). As Childress argues:

Teenagers occupy a different space than most of their adult counterparts: the meaning-laden space of use and belonging; the political space of appropriation; the temporally fluid space of arriving, claiming and departure. Kids make great use of their communities' leftovers – the negative space in the positively planned and owned world (Childress 2004: 204).

In areas with limited space, however, these 'microgeographies' frequently overlap and collide, creating a contest for space not unlike Thrasher's theory of gang formation (1936), described in Chapter Two. As a result, certain spaces become 'no go' areas for certain groups of young people. Percy-Smith and Matthews (2001) describe these areas as tyrannical spaces:

...some children, through their propinquity within neighbourhood spaces, clash and collide to such an extent that their experiences of a locality become severely blighted. For these unfortunate young people local environments are tyrannical spaces, defined in terms of 'no-go areas', danger and threat. (Percy-Smith and Matthews 2001: 49)

Ailsa Winton, describing the use of public space in areas of Guatemala with a reputation for gangs, highlights the amplification of these ‘no-go’ areas by the construction of youth gangs as particularly dangerous and threatening:

fear of violence leads to the spatial exclusion of community members, particularly young people, whereby assaults and territorial gang conflicts construct public space as dangerous and therefore restrict the extent to which young people feel positively connected to the community.’ (Winton 2005: 180)

In Glasgow, both quantitative and qualitative research has found a similar dynamic at play in relation to young people’s use of public space – particularly in relation to a perceived threat from youth gangs. The Ipsos Mori Youth Survey, for example, reported that 25 percent of young people did not feel safe in their area; and that young people living in housing schemes, or areas with problems with youth ‘gangs’, felt particularly intimidated (Ipsos Mori 2003: 15-16). Similarly, qualitative research on territoriality in Scotland⁴² has uncovered a perception of heightened risk in these areas among young people, and a corresponding fear of public space. Consequently, young people report a restriction on mobility both within their local areas, and beyond; impacting on both friendship networks and leisure opportunities (Bannister and Fraser 2008: 102-103; Frondigoun et al. 2008: 43-50). Young people employ various risk-avoidance techniques – staying within ‘safe’ areas, remaining in groups, and returning at ‘safe’ times (Seaman et al. 2005: 51-54). Research also identified the ‘double-edged sword’ of these avoidance strategies. When hanging around in groups, young people found that they may attract attention from the police, or local residents, who perceive them to be a youth ‘gang’. The report thus highlights the ‘need to distinguish between individuals “ganging together” to keep safe and “gang behaviour”’ (Turner et al. 2006: 463).

In a mapping exercise with the Langview Boys – in which I asked the boys to place stickers on a map of Langview illustrating their homes, their friends’ homes, and the places where they spent time – it was notable how clustered the stickers were around the space of a few streets. Significantly, however, none of the stickers illustrating ‘no-go’ areas in Langview, but were instead clustered around the areas immediately over the boundaries with Swigton, Oldtoun and Hillside. Thus, while the Langview Boys felt confident

⁴² Ipsos Mori 2003; Seaman et al. 2005; Turner et al. 2006; Bannister and Fraser 2008; Frondigoun et al 2008; Kintrea et al. 2008; Suzuki 2009; Deuchar 2009; Bannister et al 2010.

roaming within Langview, in fact they spent the majority of their time within this relatively small geographical area. In discussion with other groups of young people in LYP or during periods of streetwork, however, it was clear that this freedom within Langview was not felt by all – in certain cases as a consequence of the Langview Boys' ubiquity. Young people I met during the course of my streetwork indicated their fear of various spaces in Langview – with fears of older groups overlaid with other trepidations of 'stranger danger', unknown areas, and groups from different areas:

Spoke to a 12 year-old male, known to me from LYP, who has spoken to me previously about threats against him and his family by another family in the area, which now it seems has resulted in two older members of the offending family appearing at his family home, armed with knives, and shouting that they were going to 'chop you up into wee bits'. As a result, the male felt unable to walk the streets. Another girl (11) talked of her fear of going to the top end of the area due to a threat from older girl. (Fieldnote, 18th June 2008)

Like the young people in McDonald and Shildrick's study in the north-east of England, it was clear that young people within the hidden majority operated with 'subjective, mental maps of their area that sub-divided it into separate locales, each with their own reputations (i.e. greater or lesser associations with crime and risks to personal safety) (MacDonald and Shildrick 2007: 345). One of the school-leavers, Susan, describes her feelings of apprehension in crossing the boundary between Langview and Swigton:

AF: What do you think of living in Langview?

Susan: I think it's all right. It's just the Swigton is a wee bit dodgy sometimes, coming o'er the bridge, when I'm walkin back at night...

AF: You mean the bridge between Langview and Swigton?

Susan: Aye. Cos see sometimes when ye've been at school, like ye've been at school for study, an it's pure dark, it's quite dodgy walking o'er there yerself. It is! It's scary but...

AF: Aye, cos it's all undercover as well, you feel like you're walking down this dark tunnel...

Susan: Aye, ye think ye can hear footsteps behind ye, it's pure scary and that. But Langview Ah think's fine. Ah don't bother.

These interlocking fears and insecurities indicate some of the reasons for the relative emptiness of the streets of Langview at certain points. During streetwork, for example, there would be long periods each night in which few contacts were made with groups of young people – despite, as highlighted in the first part of this chapter, the comparatively high number of children and young people residing in the area. In this context, others among the school-leavers describe, again, a quite different experience of public space in Langview. For the young women in the following discussion, negative body-image, a preference for the sanctity of the home, or lack of parental consent resulted in their ‘staying in’:

AF: I mean, what about the rest of you? Why did you not want to go and hang about on the streets [and drink, get into trouble]...

Mel: My ma wouldnae let me, so...

Pamela: Ah wisnae allowed, but Ah jist done it anyway.

Caroline: Ah didnae like hingin about the streets cos Ah wis fat and cold...and didn't like walking about the streets! Ah wis just lazy. Ah just wanted to stay in and watch telly.

Susan: Ah never wanted tae dae that. An my ma an da would have pure killed me, but it jist wisnae what Ah wanted tae dae. It didnae bother me.

AF: At that age, when you were 14, 15, were you in a minority? Were most people out on the streets every Friday and Saturday night?

[All]: Aye

Susan: People would say stuff tae ye, mair the boays, like ‘oooh’, pure ‘ye never go oot’ an whatever, an it's jist like...it didnae bother me.

Julie: It wis easier jist tae go oot.

While the Langview Boys spent much of their childhoods in the public spaces and streets of Langview – and remained ubiquitous in these spaces during the period of fieldwork – there were large numbers of young people absent from these spaces. As a result of fear, informal social control, preference, or available leisure outwith the area, these individuals exhibited a less marked emotional attachment to the streets of Langview – expressing a desire to move away at the earliest opportunity. One of the school-leavers, who dressed in the clothes and make-up characteristic of the Goth subculture (Hodkinson 2002) – though didn't define herself that way – wanted to move away from the east end, and towards the more middle-class west end, at the earliest opportunity:

Just the whole place, Ah don't like it. Can't wait tae move ... nobody in my area the same as me, if you get me, into the same stuff as me...

The conflicts and contests for space and identity in Langview – in evidence in these alternative accounts of tyrannical spaces – highlight the changes which have occurred in Langview alongside the continuities in territorial identity described. In the following section, I focus on the ways in which processes of gentrification, exclusion, and securitisation have reconfigured certain aspects of public space in Langview – with important consequences for the group identities and developing masculinities of the Langview Boys.

Langview as lens: globalisation, gentrification, and exclusion

As described earlier in the current chapter, Langview represents something of a microcosm of broader processes of regeneration, gentrification, and social change in the city of Glasgow – refracting the uneven development of global capitalism. The experiences of place and space for children and young people growing up in Langview can, therefore, tell an important story about growing up in Glasgow – and the globalising, post-industrial city more generally – in the 21st century. In this section, I locate the Langview Boys' relation to space within the broader context of these processes: *globalisation*, *gentrification*, and *exclusion*.

Globalisation and territorial identities

The constrained geographies and territorial identities of the Langview Boys can be read through the lens of globalisation, with flows of capital and transport bounding the boys' lived experience, both figuratively and literally. While theories of globalisation and post-modernity frequently stress the decreasing relevance of local communities in the formation of identity (Mooney 2009), the experiences of the Langview Boys – and others in the area – suggest that locale remains a fundamental aspect of group life.

The importance attached to locale, however, must be read in the context of broader alterations to the nature and form of both Langview and Glasgow. As described earlier, Glasgow's economy has reconfigured around the service and tourism sector. This new image, and role, takes place within a broader reconstitution in the nature of urban life globally, as certain cities become globally connected 'hubs' for financial and economic sectors. In this context, a new 'global elite' operate in 'non-spaces' which are reproduced precisely across the globe: airport lounges, Starbucks, hotels. These processes are represented by a 'footloose economy' of new world citizens skipping between cities with no heed for nation-states – globally connected and locally disconnected (Aas 2007: 58).

The flipside of these developments are those left behind by the developing global economy – both cities at large, or sections within them. Cities operate as concrete examples of the consequences and causes of globalisation; as Sassen argues, 'large cities in the highly developed world are the terrain where a multiplicity of globalization processes assume concrete, localized forms' (Sassen 2007: 102). In this context, mobility becomes a crucial

shaping, ‘space-fixing’ force (Bauman 2000b: 2). The importance of locale to the Langview Boys, therefore, must be read within the wider currents of social change engendered by the progress of globalisation. The Langview Boys’ attachment to the streets of Langview, in this sense, can be understood as an example of Wacquant’s formulation of gang identities, in which ‘identification with one’s place of residence can assume exacerbated forms that reflect the closure of one’s lived universe’ (Wacquant 2007: 271).

The continuation of gang identities, therefore, must be understood within the ongoing lack of resources and activities – and opportunities for work – for young people growing up in Langview. In this context, space itself becomes a resource in the construction of identity; and gang identity a root of community amid a changing social landscape.

Gentrification and restricted geographies

Gentrification is, both physically and conceptually, the site of contest and conflict (Smith 1996: 70). Broadly, the concept refers to a range of inclusive and exclusive strategies aimed at ‘community improvement’ – involving the upgrading or redevelopment of housing, facilities, or cultural amenities to attract new, wealthier residents. As opposed to the one-time push to the ‘frontier’ of undeveloped land, the ‘new frontier’, is the urban inner-city: ‘Economic expansion today no longer takes place purely via absolute geographical expansion but rather involves internal differentiation of already developed spaces’ (Smith 1996: xvi). For Smith, along with many others, gentrification is thus an inherently classed process – excluding those who do not meet the developers’ vision of the new community (Smith 1996: 39). As Smith concedes, however, gentrification often proceeds in unpredictable or uneven fashion – with unanticipated consequences, resistances and alliances (Smith 1996: 104). For Hagedorn, while these instances of ‘space-fixing’ are not specific to late modernity – he charts, for example, the role of the State in spatially segregating ethnic groups in the early 20th century (Hagedorn 2011, forthcoming)⁴³ – late modern processes of gentrification, securitisation, and exclusion have resulted in historically specific instances of tension and conflict. In Chicago, for example, as the housing projects that were once the stronghold of organised gangs were destroyed, and gang-members were re-housed across the city, new turfs were contested through repeated violent conflicts (Hagedorn 2008: 124). In Glasgow, these developments have

⁴³ On this point, see Gerald Suttles’ (1990) revisionist history of Chicago, and the Chicago School.

resulted in ‘hidden injuries’ amongst traditional working-class communities, whereby older residents are priced out of the new market; resulting in a crisis of identity (Paton 2009).

The deep-seated connection that the Langview Boys exhibited to public space in Langview, while connected to the ‘space-fixing’ dynamic inherent in globalised capitalism, also tells an important story in relation to global processes of gentrification. To take an example, one of the spaces most profoundly connected with young people in Langview is the site of the old secondary school – demolished in the 1970s, it was turned into the sole greenspace site in the area, and quickly became a space in which large groups of young people congregated. Latterly, however, this parkland has been sold to developers, and new, gentrified flats erected in their place. Like Elijah Anderson’s study of Jelly’s Place (E. Anderson 2006) – where the men continued to meet outside the bar despite its closure – the space remains powerful in the collective memory of groups of young people in Langview. The Langview Boys in particular found and used a ‘hidden’ space within the new flats – a refuse area, under cover. In this space the boys built a den, with sofas and furniture culled from skips and bulk refuse – a powerful example of the search for safe ‘microgeographies’, ‘communal havens’, and owned spaces in the context of a largely adult-controlled world. As the boys discuss, however, this den did not last long:

Gary: Ages ago we hud a den, that’s why the polis pulled us up. Up the new flats.

Willie: Couches an aw that.

Gary: The polis came an said ‘ye better take it away or we’re gonnae charge ye, fine ye or something like that’. Then the clenney came and told us we could move it. Then the polis came an took it away.

AF: How did you feel?

Gary: We were pure raging. How long did it take us tae build that, about 2 days?

AF: Were there complaints?

Gary: We only had like one complaint.

On bringing this up with the manager of Langview Outreach Project, he smiled wryly, and told me that this had been a topic of hot debate on the local community internet forum, with a fairly even split between those that saw it as good honest fun, and those that saw it as a nuisance. Clearly, those that had shouted louder had more power to prevent the boys

behaviour; the manager inferred that those who had called the police were some of the new, owner-occupier tenants, not originally from the area. The boys, on the other hand, relied on trust and community ties—some of their parents had checked with friends in the block that this was acceptable, and the boys themselves had sought to establish some degree of legitimacy. In this way, the struggle for redefinition of the community field of Langview rubs up against the street habitus of the Langview Boys, demonstrating powerfully the lack of cache the Langview Boys' capital holds in this new arrangement.

Securitisation and exclusion

The processes of gentrification and globalisation so far described represent concrete examples of unintended consequences coupled with the 'uneven development' of the globalised economy (Smith 1996). These processes – of othering alongside restricted mobilities – are also fostered by the development of securitisation and exclusion towards the Langview Boys, and other groups of young people in the area (Zedner 2009). CCTV cameras have been installed throughout Langview; policing tactics have focused on dispersing groups of young people from public space; and areas where young people congregate have been fenced off. As discussed above, the machinations of the gang complex have the potential to redefine young people's presence in public space; and processes of target-hardening and exclusion are available responses. In the following example, the project manager of LOP had described a concentrated police presence in a specific area of Langview, for a three month period:

The project manager told me there had been 3000 incidents recorded in a small area of Langview over a three month period—38 of which had been for a snowball fight involving youth workers and young people! This is a perfect example of the construction of a crime problem, and the power dynamics involved. Once a problem had been created (part reality, part fiction), the moral barricades had been manned by the local councillor, resulting in an order banning groups of young people from an area of Langview—monitored 24/7 by police officers. It became a running joke between LOP workers, and the police, that there were no young people around—'you seen any young people tonight?' 'No. If we see any we'll give you a call'. This lasted for 3 months. It was the gang moral panic in miniature. (Fieldnote, 18th February 2009)

Figures of authority therefore play an important role in the definition of community field. The police, in particular, are responsible for the creation of ‘landscapes of powerlessness’ (Matthews et al 1998). In the following excerpt, the Langview Boys discuss the impact that conflict with police has on their mobility:⁴⁴

Gary: They always pull us up for nae reason. Sometimes the polis are sound, like they jist talk tae ye an that. But see ones that jist come in, like when we’re in the new flats, we’re jist getting a game of hunt, and be like that ‘jist because yous live in a shithole doesnae mean ye kin turn this place intae wan’. And like that’s still our local area, if you know what Ah mean. They’re like ‘where ye’s fae’, an we’re like that ‘Lang St’, an they go ‘well get back doon Lang St then’.

Willie: [Pointing at map] There’s ma street there. Say we’re along the chippie or some’hing, the polis pull us up. They say ‘get back tae your street an get hame’ an aw that.

Gary: It’s as if you’re no allowed to leave your street.

As discussed in Chapter Four, Bourdieu defines the concept of field as ‘a social arena within which struggles or manoeuvres take place over specific resources or stakes and access to them’ (Jenkins 2002: 84). The struggle for definition of the community field of Langview, therefore, plays out in the spatial dynamics described in this chapter – with the Langview Boys’ lack of capital resulting in their lack of ability to change the ‘rules of the game’. In Langview, the development of the new flats – and with them the influx of new residents – has resulted in similarly complex, though far less violent, dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. These flats – sold as aspirational spaces, advertised with photographs not of Langview, but of Glasgow city centre – with no connection to the hinterland of tradition that composes Langview. As with the process of regeneration in Glasgow (Spring 1990), history and context are absent. The design of these new flats, crucially, is also in direct contrast to the traditional tenements in Langview; encouraging as it does a lack of contact between residents, and communal use of space. In contrast to old tenements, there is nowhere for people to meet and talk, and nowhere for young people to play. More generally, new community groups now rub up against more established community groups, and similar denigrations and territorialisation to those described above in relation to young people are also in evidence amongst adults.

⁴⁴ For an interesting discussion of the policing of fashion, see Treadwell (2008)

Conclusion

This chapter has described and analysed the role of space and place in the experiences of children and young people growing up in Langview. Incorporating both ‘soft’, impressionistic perspectives and ‘hard’, statistical interpretations of Langview, the chapter emphasised the continuity and change occurring over the past three decades in Langview – locating these alterations within the context of broader changes in the city of Glasgow, and beyond. Through a shared childhood spent on the streets of Langview, the Langview Boys have a deep-seated connection to the bounded physical and symbolic space of Langview; a connection that can be read as an instance of ‘space-fixing’ amid a changing social landscape. This street habitus while emphasising an inclusive group and area identity, is bounded by symbolic borders between Langview and neighbouring communities, resulting in processes of territoriality and exclusion towards young people from these areas. These boundaries operate as spaces in which developing masculinities and gang identities are acted out in the context of risk-seeking behaviours. The Langview Boys’ propinquity in public space, however, create fears and anxieties amongst the hidden majority of young people in Langview – resulting in restricted mobility, and tyrannical spaces. These differentiated understandings and experiences of public space, and gang identities, offer an insight into the broader changes in Langview – and the city of Glasgow more generally – which form the background to the thesis narrative.

Chapter Seven

Jist fir the buzz: Leisure, edgework, and social change

Fieldwork was a deeply chaotic period of my life. I spent my time continually cross-cutting the city, divided between the various fieldwork sites and the university. It was emotionally unsettling and turbulent, and intensely humbling; I spent this period feeling completely submerged by the project, unable to take time out physically or mentally. In this context, the long periods on streetwork became a welcome period of repetitive sanctity. While these periods of streetwork were productive in terms of observation in the way I had intended, equally there were long periods of time – particularly during the winter months – when there were very few young people on the streets. Much like the Langview Boys, therefore, we walked the streets of Langview in a seemingly endless round – stopping at the same places, having the same conversations. The following fieldnote, written as the winter was shaking itself off, reflects some of my feelings at the time:

Last night, the feeling of unending, listless boredom was almost overwhelming. Nights on streetwork are a Groundhog Day—walking the same old streets, talking about the same old stuff, looking for some sort of excitement, or something out of the norm; anything, to relieve the overwhelming sensation of listlessness. (Fieldnote, 20th March 2009)

This experience caused me to reflect on the Langview Boys' group activities, and on my own experiences of growing up. I remember the random rituals and spontaneous silliness which stemmed from simply having nothing to do – long hours spent in parks, on 'missions', in one another's houses; the excitement and anticipation involved in a trip into 'town' – Stirling – which in fact most often involved a dull trudge round the same old shops. In-jokes and out-jokes, random patterns of behaviour and speech, sheer youthful idiocy; these activities make sense only in the context of boredom. Albeit in a different environment, with a different expression, the logic of the Langview Boys' throwing eggs at strangers, of setting off fire-hydrants, and of experimenting with gang identities, follows a similar pattern.

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the Langview Boys' street habitus – the deep-seated amalgamation of space and the self, embedded through the routinisation of local geographies – was contrasted with the symbolic and physical reconfiguration of these streets, through processes of gentrification and exclusion. The streets the Langview Boys inhabit are customary aspects of daily life, known like the back of your hand. In the context of wider processes of re-branding in the city of Glasgow, however, these known places are changing – playing fields turned into gentrified flats, communal areas surveilled and policed, bridges and underpasses closed off with spiked fences. The result is an increasingly limited number of public spaces available to the group, and a disjuncture between their street habitus and the community field that constitutes the street. These processes interlock to produce the street habitus through which group dynamics, developing masculinities, and gang identities are enacted. While these activities and identities are explicable in this context, however, they nonetheless have important consequences for other groups of children and young people in the area – creating fears and anxieties in relation to public space, and gang activity.

In this chapter, I develop this argument in relation to the leisure opportunities available to children and young people in Langview. In a perpetual search for excitement – and crucially group-based excitement – the Langview Boys switch and flow between different leisure activities, pin-balling from one to another in a cycle of boredom-relief. New risks and challenges – playing into the hegemonic masculinity discussed in Chapter Five – are continually created and contested, through the invention of edgework activities (Lyng 1990, 2005). In this context, 'weird ideas' (Corrigan 1979) such as setting off fire hydrants, throwing eggs at strangers, or spraying gang graffiti emerge spontaneously, as aspects of practice (Bourdieu 1990). Lying behind this foreground, however, the leisure opportunities for children and young people in Langview have altered quite fundamentally over the past three decades. Traditional leisure pursuits in Langview have reconfigured – delocalised, commercialised, privatised – squeezing the Langview Boys into an increasingly limited range of activities. In these circumstances, gang identities survive as a means of instilling group identity, affirming area identity, and forming a symbolic link with previous generations. As will be discussed in Chapter Eight, gang identities are thereby integrated into the flow of daily life – be it in real or virtual worlds – drawn on and enacted as a way gaining purchase on the self in a changing world.

As discussed in the previous chapter, however, the experiences of the Langview Boys are not representative of all children and young people growing up in Langview. The ‘weird ideas’ the boys have accord to the logic of masculinities described in Chapter Five, and are thus dangerous and threatening to those who do not conform to this model of masculinity – be it younger groups, groups of young women, or figures of authority. There is staunch resistance, for example, to younger boys or females being involved in games of football – in this way, certain leisure pursuits become ‘tyrannical’ in much the same way as certain areas of public space. In this context, while some processes of gentrification have had an exclusionary effect on the hidden majority of young people in Langview – the dispersal order being a key example – others have had more beneficial effects, in terms of new clubs and associations. Thus, while the street habitus of the Langview Boys is learned and enacted by some younger groups, the contested reconfiguration of the community field of Langview has also opened up new opportunities for the habitus of young people in Langview. As a longstanding focus for young people in Langview, which incorporates both old and new aspects of the community, LYP plays a central role in these conflicts and resolutions.

The chapter is split into four sections. In the first – Leisure, edgework, and social change – I describe the broad contours of youth leisure in the 21st century, locating the risk-seeking leisure activities of the Langview Boys within the context of consumption and boredom. In the second section – Learning, leisure and Langview Youth Project – I describe the ways in which leisure is enacted within Langview Youth Project, and the ways in which these leisure identities, imbued with ‘hegemonic masculinity’, are learned and mimicked by younger groups in LYP. In the third section – Weird ideas, violence and the Langview Boys – I describe and analyse the role of leisure in the daily lives of the Langview Boys, locating these group activities in the context of the previous chapters on masculine identities and public space, and contrasting their approach to leisure with that of other groups of young people in Langview. In the final – Leisure and social change in Langview – I locate these activities and pastimes within a historical context, using Pearl Jephcott’s (1967) study of youth leisure in Glasgow as an anchoring point. Describing the processes of delocalisation, commercialisation, and privatisation that have occurred in youth leisure during the latter part of the 20th century, I argue that the new arrangements of the community field in Langview has created marked conflicts with certain aspects of the

Langview Boys leisure habits – resulting in efforts to recreate, or reimagine, the leisure pursuits of the past, albeit in a new context.

Leisure, edgework and social change

As has been argued throughout the thesis, gang identities emerge amid the cut and thrust of daily life, intersecting with group dynamics, status politics, and area identities. The street habitus of the Langview Boys, inculcated through repetitive group activities in the places and spaces of Langview, embodies a distinction between Langview and neighbouring communities – serving as an arena in which to enact developing age, gender, and group identities. These aspects of habitus and practice, however, are not fixed or static, but rather operate in a dialectic relation to the social environment that the Langview Boys inhabit. In this section, I locate these experiences within the broader context of work, leisure, and edgework (Lyng 1990) in post-industrial Glasgow. The challenges these developments pose to the habitus of the Langview Boys will be discussed in the sections that follow.

Edgework

Stephen Lyng's (1990, 2005) theory of voluntary risk-taking, or edgework is a useful starting point in analysing the Langview Boys leisure activities. Adapted from the work of infamous gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson, edgework refers to human action that tests the edges of human skill and experience, such as extreme sports, activities, and occupations, which are engaged in as an escape from the routinisation of work and life:

People find in some leisure pursuits a requirement for the types of skills that have been systematically purged from the labor process, under capitalist ownership and experience what they cannot in work—an opportunity for action that is conscious, purposive, concentrated, physically and mentally flexible, and skilful ... edgework is one of the few experiences in modern life where 'success' (survival) can be unambiguously attributed to individual skill. (Lyng 1990: 871-3)

These activities represent efforts to puncture the routine of everyday life – reclaiming a sense of self and identity through highly individual examples of adrenaline and excitement. The edgework activities of the Langview Boys, however, are quite different from the

‘hang gliding, rock climbing, motorcycle racing/car racing, and downhill ski racing ... fire fighting, test piloting, combat soldiering, movie stunt work, and police work’ (Lyng 1990: 857) to which Lyng refers. Batchelor (2007) discusses this disparity pointedly:

There can be little question that class, gender and ethnicity impact upon both the opportunities for edgework and its underlying imperatives. Socially excluded and socio-economically disadvantaged young people, for example, have little connection with the world of work and typically lack access to pre-arranged excitements such as skydiving or base jumping. Rather, they spend much of their time ‘bored,’ hanging about street corners with their peers. (Batchelor 2007: 144)

As described in Chapter Four, the learning, development, and boundary-testing inherent in the formation of habitus – conceptualised as a ‘tormented habitus’ – overlaps fundamentally with Batchelor’s conceptualisation of edgework. Youth represents, ultimately, a period of boundary testing – in one sense, social development is marked by a range of edgework experiences, in the development of a range of social identities. Edgework therefore represents a useful analytical concept to explore the interface of physical, social, and structural boundaries of children and young people. As will be described later in the chapter, the edgework activities of the Langview Boys – testing boundaries in different leisure spaces, seeking out risk through violent conflict – can be read as the confluence of street habitus and developing masculinities. Rather than escaping from the world of work, the Langview Boys edgework activities are an escape from boredom and routine, and adult-controlled environments, in a context of diminishing opportunities for work.

Boredom, work, and leisure

Changes in the youth labour market over the past three decades have resulted in a decline in predictable school to work transitions for many young people, with a stable manufacturing and construction industry giving way to more insecure and precarious employment in the service industry (MacDonald and Marsh 2005; Furlong and Cartmel 2007; Willis 1977; Jones 2002: 1). Young people in the 21st century increasingly delay transitions to housing and work, by remaining financially dependent on parents, and/or entering further education. This has led researchers to speak of a new stage of social

development, represented as ‘post-adolescence’ or ‘pre-adulthood’; a period, after school, in which young people remain relatively free from many of the responsibilities of adulthood (MacDonald and Marsh 2005: 32; Furlong and Cartmel 2007: 37).

Against this backdrop, a great deal of research activity has evolved around the concept of ‘youth transitions’, which ‘can be understood as the pathways that young people make as they leave school and encounter different labour market, housing, and family-related experiences as they progress towards adulthood’ (MacDonald and Marsh 2005: 31). Youth transitions, therefore, are increasingly viewed from a holistic perspective, taking account of transitions in family, relationships, housing, and health (MacDonald and Marsh 2005). As the labour market has seen an increasing demand for educated workers, so the youth labour market has become increasingly hostile for those left behind by the education economy. For many across Europe, school to work transitions are marked by casualised, part-time, or temporary employment (Quintini et al 2007; Furlong and Cartmel 2004), with these problems disproportionately impacting on those with fewer educational qualifications. Gill Jones, summarising a diverse range of contemporary research on youth transitions, concludes that ‘young people are becoming more and more sharply divided, between those who have and those who have not’ (Jones 2002: vi).

In Glasgow, as discussed in Chapter Two, the youth labour market is increasingly fragmented, unstable, and difficult to negotiate. A short piece of research I conducted with 18-25 year-olds in Langview, for example, illustrated well the type of future work opportunities available to the Langview Boys (Fraser 2009). The study found that this group of young adults – variously unemployed, or employed in the service sector – experienced a ‘churn’ between different forms of low-paid jobs, unstable or insecure agency work, and unemployment. The young people interviewed found the types of work available to them to be unsatisfying and unfulfilling, but found it difficult to break the cycle owing to money-constraints. All of the young people interviewed had non-traditional, non-linear transitions between school and work. Steven, for example, had been unemployed for the last six months. Now 20, he left school at 15, with no qualifications, to attend a local college course in cookery. He left this course after 6 months, and began a bakery apprenticeship at a supermarket. He was paid off from this job, and began a long series of different jobs, and periods of unemployment. Most of the work he has done has involved manual labour, including carpet-fitting, painting and decorating, construction and labouring. He had become increasingly frustrated at the lack of work currently available,

and extremely disillusioned with a number of employment agencies, in particular the Jobcentre. He hoped to get an apprenticeship in construction or joinery, but didn't know where to go for information, and was put off by a range of negative experiences with employment agencies.

MacDonald et al (2001) characterise this process as 'Snakes and Ladders', being 'messy, complicated and circuitous', with 'steps taken sometimes lead sideways or backwards, rather than upwards or downwards' (MacDonald et al 2001: para 5.3). For the young people interviewed, experiences were similar to the model described by MacDonald and Marsh (2005), in their study of transitions in the lives of young people from disadvantaged areas. These experiences were found to involve:

erratic, complex and economically marginal transitions, consisting of much swapping between training and education courses of mixed quality, spells of unemployment and episodic engagement with usually low-paid, low-skilled and temporary jobs (MacDonald and Marsh 2005: 62).

In this context, leisure and social identities emerge as an important means of balancing the boredom and monotony of the forms of work available.

Leisure, edgework, and social change

For Bauman, boredom is a defining feature of contemporary culture, but its meaning has reconfigured from the linear connection to work and alienation to which Lyng alludes. Where boredom was once conceptualised, in a Marxist sense, as an activating, captivating emotion of resistance to conditions of alienated labour (Barbalet 1999; Ferrell 2004), for Bauman this dialectic is now shot through with the logic of consumerism:

Boredom is one complaint the consumer world has no room for and the consumer culture has set out to eradicate it ... To alleviate boredom one needs money - a great deal of money - if one wishes to stave off the spectre of boredom once and for all, to reach the state of happiness (Bauman 1998: 39).

For Bauman, relief from boredom to a 'state of happiness' is illusory – a fleeting experience – traded in during the moment of consumption. The logic of consumption

thereby not only encourages, but actively creates boredom, while excluding many from attaining the leisure careers sold as antidotes. For Jock Young, in an elaboration of Merton (1957) and Nightingale (1993), this process results in what he calls ‘social bulimia’, in which those most excluded economically are simultaneously the most included in consumer culture – swallowed up by consumption, but vomited back by the economy: ‘[t]hey are barred from the racetrack of the meritocratic society yet remain glued to the television sets and media which alluringly portray the glittering prizes of a wealthy society’ (J. Young 1999: 12). For Furlong and Cartmel, these processes represent a fundamental ‘epistemological fallacy’ (Furlong and Cartmel 1997: 54) amongst young people – in which the prize of individual choice is packaged and sold as an elusive commodity, blurring the lines of class, age, and gender that underpin these decisions.

Tables 7.1 and 7.2 illustrate some of the fundamental alterations in the nature and form of youth leisure in Glasgow over the past four decades. Table 7.1, extrapolated from Jephcott’s survey of youth leisure in 1967, gives a good overall indication of the nature and form of leisure activities for young people growing up in Glasgow in the 1960s. Activities revolve around group-based, organised leisure, alongside time spent ‘hanging out’ in public space. Dancing, cinema, and cafes feature most prominently – though for many the majority of leisure time was spent at home, watching TV (Jephcott 1967: 59). While the questions asked are not directly comparable, Table 7.2, taken from a MORI Scotland poll of youth leisure in Scotland in 2003, demonstrates some of the reconfigurations that have occurred in the field of youth leisure. Consumption of new technologies – mobile phones, computer games, and internet activities – predominate, alongside more traditional activities such as cinema-going and going to friend’s houses. For Rojek, these alterations are related to processes of ‘privatization, individuation, commercialization, and pacification’ (Rojek 1985, quoted in Furlong and Cartmel 1997: 54) – a typology adapted below, in discussions of leisure and social change in Langview.

Table 7.1: Participation in leisure activities in 15-19 year-olds, by gender (%) (1967)

	All	Male	Female
Dancing	69	62	76
Cinema	82	83	81
Café	51.5	57	46
Pub	11	16	6
Skating	6.5	6	7
Bowling	3	3	3
Spectator Sport	4.5	8	1
Read magazines	68	55	81

Source: Jephcott (1967)

*Table 7.2: Weekly leisure activities among 15-20 year-olds, by age (%) (2003)**

	15	16	17-18	19-20
Listen to music	90	75	92	91
Watch TV/videos/DVDs	87	61	86	85
Go to friend's houses	85	58	77	72
Text friends	80	55	-	-
Talk on the telephone	75	49	-	-
Surf the net	70	68	71	79
Go to the cinema	64	24	55	58
Play computer games	61	55	-	-
Go shopping	64	50	51	52
Read books or magazines	55	37	-	-
Go to a pub/bar	-	-	66	83

Source: MORI Scotland (2005)

*NB. Some different questions were posed to 15 and 16 year-olds than 17-20 year-olds.

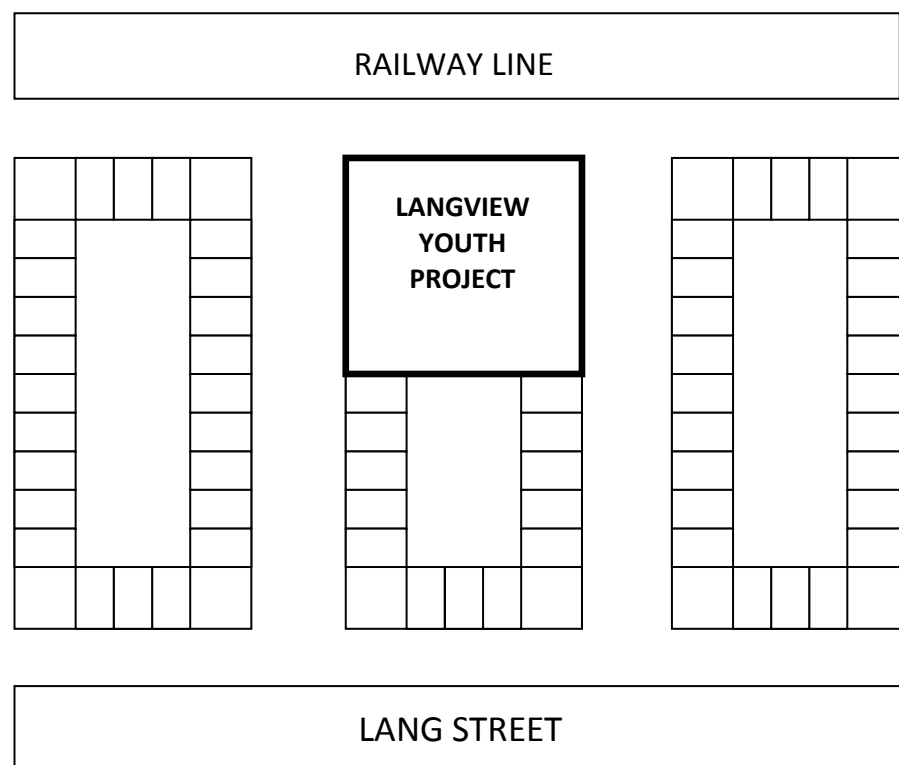
Part of the Langview Boys' edgework activities – in which excitement is manufactured through rule-breaking, defiance, playfulness, and carnivalesque group dynamics, as well as through consumption of technology and computer games – can therefore be read as a response to the conditions of consumer capitalism, that simultaneously include and exclude. As has been described throughout, however, these configurations of consumption do not represent a clear or definable 'break' with previous generations, but a dialectic process of old and new, learning and reimagining. In a process similar to that described by Jefferson (1997) and Nayak (2003), leisure activities – and the masculinities enacted through them – represent efforts to recapture, or reimagine, the activities of previous generations. In this context, the hegemonic masculinity – and gang identities – of the Langview Boys can be read as a means of creating and co-producing cultural meaning in

the context of these changes. The re-enactment of leisure behaviours and gang identities from previous generations, therefore, can be viewed as a way of creating meaning in a world where the future is uncertain and precarious – adaptive responses to the conditions of late modernity within the ‘glacial forces’ of habitus (Appadurai 1996: 6). Where globalisation has created instabilities and uncertainties, the deeply embedded routines and characteristics imbued in habitus offer a way of ‘improvising’ a response that allows these traits to retain value. The re-enactment of both leisure activities and gang identities, therefore, can be seen as an improvisatory response to the lived experience of structural instability in the contemporary era.

Learning, Leisure, and Langview Youth Project

One of the principal arenas for the Langview Boys' leisure time is Langview Youth Project – in which the processes of group dynamics, masculinities, and status rivalries are acted out in a concentrated geographical area. Langview Youth Project (LYP) is located in a lozenge of gridded tenements in the south of Langview. Bordered on one side by a railway line, the other by a main thoroughfare, the area consists of five streets of (mainly) housing association tenements (Fig 7.1.). To the east of this central area is a large patch of wasteland, overshadowed by two tower-blocks in neighbouring Swigton; tenements have been demolished, replaced by two waves of modern housing developments. Importantly, due to the density of housing, there is no public greenspace in Langview – as described in the previous chapter, the Langview Boys in public space alternated between patrolling the streets, or 'hanging around' in passageways, 'backs',⁴⁵ or spaces under railway bridges.

Fig.7.1: Geography of Langview Youth Project



As illustrated in Fig 7.1, LYP is located between two of the central streets in Langview, in full view of around 60 individual flats; creating a sense of informal, community

⁴⁵ Back courts in Glasgow tenements (the rectangular areas in the centre of the buildings in **Fig.1.**)

surveillance. As parental supervision is required up until the age of eight, LYP also operates as a place for parents to meet and form networks, and is thereby woven closely into community life, gossip, and memory. It is a core aspect in the Langview Boys' geographies – and a central element in the street habitus described in the previous chapter. The Langview Boys have been attending LYP since they were very young, and there is a corresponding attachment to the park – after closing time, the boys frequently climb the barriers to use the (locked) facilities. Discussing a new youth project that had recently opened in the area, the Langview Boys were staunch in their support of LYP:

AF: What would you do if the LYP closed down?

Willie: Go tae the new place ... but right, this might sound weird, but see how they've got better technology, an computers an aw ae that...Ah prefer the LYP.

Mark: Aye so dae Ah.

Gary: See how they've only got a PS2 an aw that, Ah still prefer the LYP.

For most of the boys, LYP was the default position after school hours, in the evening, and during school holidays, for their childhood and early teenage years. In part, this stemmed from the central position (both geographically and metaphorically) that LYP occupied, and continues to occupy, in the Langview community – but also the reputation and respect garnered by the Langview Boys being 'well kent' in the project. The sentiment of one young parent attending LYP with her young son is emblematic: 'Ah've grown up in LYP'. The place that LYP occupies in the identity of the Langview Boys was also illustrated in the context of the discussion groups. In each of the groups, the boys were asked to associate words with the term 'community'. In each, Langview Youth Project was amongst the first of these. Similarly, when the boys were given disposable cameras, and asked to take pictures of 'things that were important', each included a picture of LYP. The following discussion, based on these images, demonstrates the above points well:

AF: What about the two pictures of LYP?

James: It's a great park.

Kev: LYP's ma life.

AF: How long you been comin here?

Kev: Since ever.

Sean: Ah've been coming here since Ah wis born. 12 year.

In LYP, the hegemonic masculinity, age-based hierarchies, and status politics described in earlier chapters are in full evidence. Given the wide age-range attending the project (0-16) there is a great deal of overlap, learning, and hierarchy between different age-groups – in this way, the force of the Langview Boys' cultural orbit is concentrated within a still smaller geographical area, resulting in the processes of learning and re-enactment described in the previous chapter. Further, the edgework that forms the substance of the boys' group behaviour translates to a constant testing of the norms, rules, and procedures of LYP, resulting in a perpetual cycle of exclusions and re-entry. In the following example, the football pitch had been closed for refurbishment and was out-of-bounds – as the testing of the boundaries of project rules gave way to group enmity towards the project:

A vicious circle began whereby every time someone was caught they were excluded for another week—some of them for up to four weeks. As a knock-on effect, the punishment value of excluding them from the project lost its weight, and they collectively turned to give a 'fuck you' to the project; egging one another on to sneak in, having competitions to see who could get barred for the longest, knocking on windows and doors and running away, throwing rubbish over the fence, and eventually throwing stones at the project; all of this while continually sneaking in. The end result of this was the exclusion of 16 boys. (Fieldnote, 25th November 2008)

This form of edgework was also a core aspect of younger boys' behaviour in the project; particularly when the older boys were present. In the following example, a younger boy acts up in a manner similar to the older boys:

Boab (9) was showing off masculinity by holding out until the last possible moment to give ground to authority—a member of staff counted down to zero when asking for a wee golf club he had; he waited until the split-second before zero before handing it back. Similarly, yesterday, he had been told to leave the computer room immediately—he picked up a connect four piece and put it in the slot, and walked out: to say 'I will do as you say, but I will deliberately subvert it; once I have done this, then I am happy'. (Fieldnote, 20th November 2007)

In the previous chapter, I described the ways in which certain public spaces may become constructed as ‘no go’ areas – tyrannical spaces – for the hidden majority of children and young people in Langview, owing to their proximity to the orbit of older teenagers. Through their propinquity in public space, the Langview Boys created a gravitational force of hegemonic masculinity which other groups had to position themselves in relation to – learning and enacting these masculinities, rejecting or steering clear. In fact, a very similar dynamic is in evidence in relation to leisure spaces in LYP and more generally. In LYP, despite the best efforts of the staff, the boys frequently monopolised their chosen activities – table-tennis, football, Playstation – leaving younger groups to fight for participation. The following fieldnote illustrates this dynamic:

The park is quiet tonight; the ghost of the exclusions continues to hang quietly in the background. Though some of the older boys drift in and out of the project in bunches, they do not stay. The younger boys have begun to realise their new-found freedom; they can rule the roost. As a result, the younger group act up, shouting and running and carrying on beyond the bounds of the norm. This, in turn, allows younger groups access to table-tennis and pool; items previously monopolised by the oldest group. (Fieldnote, 1st December 2008)

The example set by the Langview Boys, during the period of fieldwork, was the cultural force that other groups gravitated around – as with the discussion of hegemonic masculinity in Chapter Five, it required everyone (male or female) to position themselves in relation to it. While there was sporadic attendance amongst groups of young women during my time there, there were continued contests over ‘ownership’ of the football pitch. At some times, the boys would be happy to play alongside the girls; in other situations, however, the group would decide that it was boys-only, and make it impossible for the girls to play – by mocking them, kicking their ball away, or (if mixed sides) never passing to them. These in-group processes of interaction and domination are without doubt heightened in dealings outwith the group – the ability to manipulate the ‘younger ones’ is undoubtedly a feather in the cap of the Langview Boys. For ‘younger ones’ with little status amongst their peers, the esteem for the ‘older ones’ is amplified greatly, creating frequent opportunities for exploitation:

For most of the night, the younger ones (primary school aged) were in the pitch themselves. At some point, though, the older ones wanted to use the pitch—Kev in particular just started playing with them. There was little I could really do; the ball they were using belonged to Joe, who Kev had charmed into saying he could play. Later, though, I found Joe out of the pitch, and asked him where his ball was—his response was that Kev and that were playing with it, and he didn't want to play anyway. Clearly, Joe looks up to the older ones, and is willing to do anything to curry favour with them. (Fieldnote, 20th May 2008)

As will be described in a later section, the nature and form of leisure in Langview has reconfigured over the past four decades – with increasingly few cheap and easily accessible options for children and young people. In this context, LYP has emerged as a bulwark in the community – a safe, supervised place away from the fears and insecurities associated with public space. However, as leisure opportunities have diminished for young people in Langview, so Langview Youth Project – initially intended as a play facility for younger children – has developed as a bulwark against the alterations to the community field described. As the tensions and conflicts in public space described in Chapter Six have decreased the leisure opportunities for young people in Langview, so LYP has become a space for older males – such as the Langview Boys – as well as younger children. Crucially, however, this has had the knock-on effect of the creation of tyrannical spaces in leisure as well as public space.

'Weird ideas', violence and the Langview Boys

A constant refrain of the children and young people I met in Langview – be it in LYP, on the street, in school, or elsewhere – was 'this is pure borin'. On further prompting, this was frequently followed by 'there's nuthin tae dae', or sometimes 'there's nivir any'hin tae dae'. The implication was not literal – in every case, there were options – but rather that everything there was to do had been done a hundred times before, and was therefore completely drained of any novelty, value, or creative potential. The streets, as I described in the previous chapter, had been walked a thousand times; the youth projects, shops, and public spaces visited and revisited until there was nothing left to excite any interest. In this context, edgework represented the collective creation of risky activities as a means of combating boredom and monotony in adult-controlled environments, and as an arena in which to act out the status politics, group dynamics and hegemonic masculinity which inhere in the group.

Leisure, for the Langview Boys, consists of a fluid cycle of activities between home, public space, commercial venues, and local youth projects. Time and activity in each of these spaces is relatively unstructured – following the independent logic of group dynamics, edgework, and hegemonic masculinity – but also encompassing venues of consumerism and consumption. In each environment, the boys are brimming over with enthusiasm and mischief – mocking, insulting, bantering, testing. This group dynamic, both individually and collectively, pushes the boundaries of order and control in each leisure environment. Whether it is pushing the edges of rules and acceptable behaviour in the youth project, testing security guards and police in commercial venues, or creating edgy excitement in public space, the group engage in edgework for control and excitement in each leisure environment.

Time is spent, by and large, pin-balling between youth project, public space, one another's homes, and shopping centres, depending on available funds, company, preferences, and time. As a result of these factors – lack of funds, or mobility – much of the Langview Boys' time is spent in public space, roaming around in search of excitement. In this context, edgework is manufactured creatively with the spaces and materials available. To take an example, the following fieldnote describes a discussion with the boys about their spectating at a football match:

The boys said it was good to be a football fan for the buzz that you get from being in the crowd - singing, dancing, cheering - the atmosphere above all. This experience struck me as being a nice example of edgework - for the duration of the match, as the boys acted out, you are jumping around like a carnival, forgetting everything else - not on the edge of life and death, but on the edge of something, and certainly with that 'strange music' playing. I also thought about how powerful these opinions and experiences are in relation to the global juggernaut of football, and the multinational forces which now shape the phenomenal wealth of football teams and players - in reality, for these young men, all that exists is an opportunity for carnival, and a means of getting one over on your mates. (Fieldnote, 23rd September 2008)

The phrase 'fir the buzz' – for the excitement, for a laugh, for the sheer hell of it – is a pivotal phrase in the vocabulary of the Langview Boys. When leisure time is spent in a constant round of dull monotony, any exciting moments of spontaneity like these take on special significance. These activities are best described within the context of Lyng's concept of edgework – as exciting breaks in the flow of boredom, manufactured within the context of available opportunities. In this context, gang identities emerge as a means of living out an exciting, idealised form of hegemonic masculinity. In the following excerpt, the boys are discussing James setting off a fire hydrant:

Kev: That's just a bad boay. See when he done it...

AF: Why did you do it?

James: Cos he said he wis gonnae batter me. Kiddin' oan. Fir a buzz.

AF: How d'ye mean?

James: Cos they wanted me tae dae it, so Ah done it. Jist fir a buzz.

In this context, seemingly insignificant events acquire disproportionate importance, and seemingly meaningless activity finds justification. Paul Corrigan, in *Schooling the Smash Street Kids* (1979), describes a similar phenomenon. The 'Smash Street Kids', a group of working class boys in Sunderland, discuss the 'weird ideas' that emerge from the 'talking, joking and carrying on' which constitute 'doing nothing' (Corrigan 1979: 103-104; attribution 'PC' added) – much like the 'fir the buzz' activities discussed by the Langview Boys:

PC: Do you ever go out and knock around with the lads?

ALBERT: Sometimes when I feel like it.

PC: What do you do?

ALBERT: Sometimes we get into mischief.

PC: Mischief?

ALBERT: Well somebody gets a weird idea into their head, and they start to carry it out, and others join in.

PC: Weird idea?

ALBERT: Things ... like going around smashing milk bottles.

For Corrigan, 'weird ideas are then are born out of boredom and the expectation of future and continuing boredom ... a good idea must contain the seeds of continuing change as well as excitement and involvement' (Corrigan 1979: 104). In this context, as described in Chapter Five, 'weird ideas' accord with the hegemonic masculinity of the group – emphasising toughness, testing, and loyalty – and intersect with the idealised masculinities that inhere in the image of the gang. The Langview Boys' gang graffiti is a good example of the commingling of edgework experiences with boredom, area, and group identity. The names of the Langview Boys are everywhere in Langview – on abandoned walls, street signs, paths, bins, and railings – but it is not a planned or coordinated activity; more a 'weird idea' that emerges in the moment. James, for example, spoke about how he sprayed his name all over the area 'cos Ah'm crazy'.

In this context, violence emerges as the confluence of these factors – boredom and edgework, status and group dynamics, masculinities and reputation. Gang-fighting, as a spectacle and activity, represents a free and accessible source of excitement. Liam, one of the participants in the Langview Academy discussion group, describes the gang-fighting he sees every weekend in another area of Glasgow:

Liam: Every weekend.

AF: An are the polis out every weekend after folk?

Liam: There's always polis about. Up an doon the road an that, up the park.

But they nivir catch anyb'dae, cos they aw wear big red jaickets.

When everyb'dae's fighting, someone'll jist shout 'edgy' [danger] and everyb'dae jist runs.

The conceptualisation of learning and social development outlined in Chapter Four – in terms of Bourdieu's concept of 'tormented habitus' – is particularly relevant to the confluence of violence and edgework. The processes through which young people grow into adult roles, masculinities, and identities are riven with conflict, doubt, impulse, and apprehension – the habitus is therefore variously developing, melding, and congealing throughout the process of growing up. Edgework represents the means through which the 'tormented' or 'angsty' habitus of youth is developed and refined – testing the 'edges' of experience through risk-seeking street activity. In this context, street violence involving the symbolic boundaries between Langview and Swigton represents a crucial element – with new groups of boys successively testing these boundaries. In this context, gang identities emerge as a way of experimenting with, and enacting, these various aspects of habitus. In the following discussion, one of the school-leavers, Michael, describes the development of a gang-fight from the context of 'standin about':

AF: How do fights happen? How do they get organised, and how do they happen, right there an then?

Michael: Dunno, jist get a group ae the boays, an jist go tae the bridge, an ye'd shout down the bridge, like 'ye want a fight' or something like that. An if there wis a couple ae them standin aboot they'd say 'we'll go an get a team'. An it wid jist happen fae there.

In the context of conflicting and contested masculinities, where any means available is used and drawn on to create excitement, violence emerges as an exciting way of passing time. As Corrigan argues, 'within the context of 'doing nothing' on a street corner, fights are an important and exciting occasion ... an easy and an interesting event' (Corrigan 1979: 131-132). Julie, one of the school-leavers, describes the spectacle of violence in public space by drawing a comparison with the frenzied excitement surrounding a fight in school:

It's like, see in this school, see when there's a fight, it's like pure 'yaas', everybody's pure jumping up oan chairs [general laughter and agreement among participants].

Crucially, the enactment of violent masculinities in this way resonates strongly with descriptions of youth violence from the 1960s in Glasgow. Jephcott, drawing explicit

parallels between fights and ‘boys from a “superior” background ... rock-climbing’ (Jephcott 1967: 98), describes young men’s attitudes to ‘Trouble’:

Another set of those involved in Trouble, and a much larger one numerically, were the boys who looked on it as a pleasurable break in an otherwise tame existence. There was an exciting element of unpredictability about Trouble. ‘Once a fight starts *anything* can happen.’ This attitude to fighting, combined with the opportunity to prove one’s guts, suggested that it was not so far removed from play in the original sense of the word. (Jephcott 1967: 139)

This continuity of violence in public space can be understood as the observation, learning, and re-enactment of street habitus and hegemonic masculinity by successive generations. As I will discuss in Chapter Eight, the intersection of street habitus with developing age, gender, and group identities – in particular the use of violence to test the ‘edges’ of experience – form a crucial backdrop to the learning and enactment of gang identities. In the following section, I expand on the historical context outlined above – locating the Langview Boys’ leisure activities within broader processes of change in youth leisure.

Leisure and social change in Langview

In Chapter Two, I described and analysed the social conditions giving rise to the development of gang identities – principally, a large number of young people in public space, with few resources and limited leisure opportunities (Thrasher 1936). Throughout the thesis, I have discussed the ways in which these gang identities carry over time – through learning and re-enactment of territorial boundaries, overlaid with developing age, gender, and group identities. As has been emphasised throughout the thesis, however, while gang *names* may continue over time, gang *identities* – the ways in which these names are drawn on and appropriated – are used differently by successive generations. Analysis of the particular nature and form of gang identities in a specific time and place, therefore, can offer broader insights as to the experiences of growing up in that period. In the context of the Langview Boys, their experiences speak to the alterations in Langview – and Glasgow more generally – over the past four decades. Examining studies of youth leisure from Glasgow and elsewhere in the 1960s, there are remarkable continuities, as well as changes, in the leisure activities of the Langview Boys with these previous generations. Leisure time remains, in the main, unorganised and fluid, spent largely in search of ways of relieving boredom, but the opportunities for leisure have reconfigured. Youth leisure has become an increasingly commodified enterprise, structured by the logic of consumerism and profit; winding the cycle of boredom and relief tightly to access to economic capital.

In this section, the Langview Boys' leisure activities will be placed within the context of changes to the cultural, spatial, and economic architecture of Glasgow. Again, the anchoring point for this analysis is Pearl Jephcott's classic study of youth leisure in Glasgow, *Time of One's Own* (1967).⁴⁶ This study provides a comparative baseline for the present study; historical trends that may account for the changes will be suggested. This approach draws on the field of critical leisure studies, which views leisure as a fundamental element in the privatisation, individuation, commercialisation, and pacification of society (Furlong and Cartmel 1997: 54). Setting the experiences of children and young people against these theories of leisure and social change allows these ideas to be put to the test.

⁴⁶ This study is remarkable in that it used an extensive team of voluntary community researchers – teachers, health visitors, youth workers, nurses – and included some 3,000 young people, 600 of whom were interviewed.

The broad reconfigurations of work and leisure, described in the previous section, resonate with the experiences of children and young people growing up in Langview. Young people in Langview do not enjoy the certainty of labour in the large steel-works and production plants that once patterned the east end of Glasgow. While Jephcott could state with confidence, in 1967, that ‘the great majority [of young people] make the vital transition from school to work at 15’ (Jephcott 1967: 3), young people in Langview are no longer ‘getting on’ with the skills and opportunities they have; rather, they are simply ‘getting by’ (MacDonald et al 2005: 884). In this context, as will be discussed in the following sections, the Langview Boys seek out leisure activities that reimagine the behaviours and pastimes of the past – but find these activities increasingly delocalised, commercialised, and privatised.

Delocalisation

Popular leisure in Langview – much like work – has by and large become delocalised. The most popular activities listed in Jephcott’s survey – cinema and dancing – were easily and cheaply available in the Langview of the 1960s. Three local cinemas, a large local dance-hall, and extensive playing fields constituted the main leisure attractions for young people in the area, and work was to be had in the numerous factories in the immediate area. The cinemas, after various incarnations as bingo-halls, dance-halls, and pubs have fallen into disrepair; the space of the local dance-hall, reopened as a supermarket, is now occupied by a car-park and a modern flat development – as are the playing fields. The factories have been converted into chic artists spaces and outsourced call-centres; or flattened to make way for apartment blocks. Only one café from the 1960s remains – one of the few in the area where young people spend any length of time. The others have either closed down, or replaced by the ‘global nowheresvilles’ (Bauman 2003) of Subway sandwiches and Dominos pizzas.

This shift towards globalisation and delocalisation of leisure is emblematic of fundamental changes to the city of Glasgow over the past 40 years. As Spring (1990) argues, consumption has in a very real sense replaced industry as the *raison d’être* of the city – former hubs of manufacturing have been transformed into the shopping centres and cinemas frequented and subverted by the Langview Boys. A powerful example in the east end of Glasgow can be found in the Parkhead Forge steel-works – once employing upwards of 10,000, now the site of the Forge Retail Park. For Spring, this change is

emblematic of the image-making and mythologising of the 'New Glasgow', in which the past is repackaged in a consumer-friendly manner eliding the history of working-class life in Glasgow (Spring 1990: 105):

a visit to the Forge is no ordinary experience, it is, like so many elements of the New Glasgow, an adventure. It is *a trip to the mysterious east*. The metaphor is extended in the advertising material for the centre. There are allusions, for example, to Aladdin's cave, to mysterious treasure ... Nothing could be more paradoxical, or unusual, than that this corner of Glasgow, the poverty-ridden, traditionally downtrodden east-end, should now be redefined as mystical, mythological, mysterious ... The pyramid is, of course, a particularly large and ostentatious tomb.

The trend towards delocalisation in youth leisure, bound up with the globalisation and redefinition of the city of Glasgow, results in the narrowing of opportunities for young people in Langview to public or commercial spaces. In their search for edgework experiences, these commercial spaces play a dual role – at once as centres for boredom-relief through consumption, and as spaces bound by rules and constraints that can be subverted and played with. In this way, identities become at once allied with the local area – further confirming the street habitus lying beneath territorial and gang identities – and with patterns of consumption and consumerism. Edgework experiences thereby become merged with consumer experiences, as will be described below.

Significantly, the Forge Retail Park also incorporates a multiplex cinema, as a replacement for the cottage industry cinemas of an older Langview (Bruce 1999).⁴⁷ This development illustrates, in a very real sense, the argument that leisure has replaced work in the construction of working-class identities in the contemporary era (Charlesworth 2000). While cinema still rates highly in young people's preferred use of leisure time, it is quite a different phenomenon to this period; and unquestionably a far greater expense. As a result, the Langview Boys 'sneaky in' to the cinemas, combining edgework with carnival and the re-appropriation of leisure space. In the following excerpt, the boys discuss an exciting chase scene, retold with requisite cinematic effect:

⁴⁷ For a comprehensive database of traditional cinemas in Scotland, and the stories of their closure, see <http://www.scottishcinemas.org.uk/>

Gary: We got chased off the security this weekend

Willie: Aye, in the pictures, there wis about, at least twenty people chasing us
or something cos we tried tae sneak in.

Gary: The other side started chasing us, she started radioing in and aw that. An
see the fire exit...

Willie: What the workers use tae get intae the screen, tae go through the mad
staff exit bit, that's whit we were walking through...when we go in
the lift we huv tae cover up the mad security camera bit...

In a similar way to the boys' revisiting of the places and spaces inhabited by previous generations, the Langview Boys also discussed revisiting an old, disused cinema in the area:

AF: Have you all been in there like?

Mark: Aye, we've aw been in

Gary: Aye

AF: What, just sneak in? Cos it's all shut up and that.

Mark: Aye, it's aw shut up

Gary: It's like a pure horror movie, man. Ye walk in with the torch, it's pure
pitch black. Aw ye kin see is jist, yir, immediate path with yir torch.

Mark: Ye know that movie 'Most Haunted'? It's like that.

Gary: Ye cannae see any'hing. Like your jist lookin about wi' the torch.

In this way, the Langview Boys seek to reimagine the leisure activities of the past, re-appropriating leisure spaces and pastimes in a way that instils group identity and promotes edgework. As will be discussed in Chapter Eight, this cultural reimagining of leisure holds direct parallels with the Langview Boys' re-appropriation of gang identities.

Commercialisation

In a development parallel to delocalisation, youth leisure has become increasingly commercialised and profit-driven. Football matches, which 'arose to meet the needs of large urban populations with limited time and money and a new legal right to a free Saturday afternoon' (Jephcott 1967: 14), had waned in popularity in the years before Jephcott's study; but remained a relatively cheap and accessible form of leisure. For many

young people growing up in Glasgow today, as noted earlier, football is the single most popular and important leisure activity; yet spectating at games remains beyond the pocket of most teenagers – most Celtic and Rangers matches are only available to season ticket holders. As with the cinema, however, several of the Langview Boys devised strategies to get into games without paying.

For Spring, Princes Square in the city centre of Glasgow stands as a cogent example of the tensions involved in the 'New Glasgow'. Describing the role of the 'shopping mall', Spring describes the globalised privatisation of public space – the privatised 'security bubbles' that exclude the poor and the young. For Spring, Princes Square is the 'epitome of Postmodern consumer culture' (1990: 59):

The mall is not, of course, for practical shopping, but for recreation – shopping is a new culturally rich, leisure experience. Princes Square is characterised by its extravagance. Built from the skeleton of an old galleried warehouse, it has been adorned with mahogany and beech, brass, marble and glass, arranged in fanciful designs ... In some ways, however, this is all movement without a purpose – the escalator, for example, is a notably inefficient method of getting up and down, primarily designed for pleasure. (Spring 1990: 59)

The increasing importance of commercial spaces for youth leisure represents a fundamental alteration in the field of activity for children and young people in Langview. The street habitus extends to these consumer spaces, with young people transplanting the rules and street games of the street to shopping centres and cinemas. As Gary and Mark describe below:

Gary: We aw got a chase in Princes Square, we aw got a game ae hunt an that
so we could get a chase aff the security guard.

AF: Did yous get a chase?

Gary: Naw, no really. They tried tae run, bit they jist did walkin.

Willie: See the couches? The couches you sit in. See Daz, he wis pushin

Frankie oan wan ae they wee couches, an see they escalators, the
wans that go doon, he pushed him oan that oan the couch. We wur aw
laughin an that.

Whilst it may be a stretch to present The Langview Boys' use of Princes Square as a playground – including their deliberate efforts to block the escalators – as a noble effort to subvert the New Glasgow that has marginalised their leisure, their behaviour undoubtedly offers a striking example of the consequences of changes in youth leisure over the past 40 years. Commercial spaces are viewed in the same light as public spaces, but with an added edge of control, authority, and supervision in the form of surveillance and security. As Hayward, paraphrasing the work of Mike Presdee, observes: 'shopping centres, with their mobility and (apparent) anonymity, were also functioning as sites of exploration, play and "invasion"' (Hayward 2004: 189). Presdee himself argues that:

Young people, cut off from normal consumer power, invade the space of those with consumer power. They have become the 'space invaders' of the 1990s, lost in a world of dislocation and excitement; a space where they should not be. (Presdee 1994: 182)

Though Hayward argues that this reading is in fact outdated – 'the shopping mall now epitomises a world of conformity and mundanity' (Hayward 2004: 189), with surveillance swamping non-conformity and subversion – the actions of the Langview Boys would suggest that the collision of consumerism and the street remains an important aspect in their leisure time.

Privatisation

The final change to the contours of youth leisure is the privatisation of leisure activities, in the form of new technologies. As the findings of the MORI survey described earlier attest, a substantial portion of young people's leisure time is spent playing computer games, browsing or communicating via the internet, or using mobile phones. The comparison in this regard to leisure of the 1960s – or indeed the 1980s – could not be more striking. Technology has moved on apace – for many, reconfiguring the form and nature of interaction and identity.

But for young people in Langview, new technology does not necessarily mean new lifestyle. In a landscape whereby group interaction in physical space is increasingly difficult and contested, and options for affordable and enjoyable group leisure are few and

far between, new technologies are increasingly used to foster traditional forms of individual and group identity. During the period of fieldwork, social networking sites, mobile phones, and instant messaging represented new ways of maintaining contact with friends, and were used in much the same way as physical interaction. A vivid example of this trend came from a conversation about computer gaming with Gary:

Gary talked tonight about the games he normally played—war games, and football games—and in particular about the X-Box 360, which allows players (with an internet connection) to play one another. He said that he often spent evenings in his own house, playing with up to 10 of his friends, all in their own houses, either on the same team or against one another. Friendships are still localised, but they are conducted remotely. (Fieldnote, 27th January 2009)

Of the photographs the Langview Boys took at home, as part of the discussion groups, the majority were taken in bedrooms – televisions, computer games, and football posters featured prominently – and tenement closes. Both of which, notably, can be construed as private spaces – away from adult supervision and control. As will be discussed below, the opportunities available in ‘bedroom leisure’ have altered fundamentally in the last two decades, with televisions, DVD players, computer games consoles and stereos proliferating to an unprecedented degree. Computer gaming makes up a significant portion of some of the Langview Boys’ leisure time – as the following fieldnote, from a chat with Gary, reveals:

I asked Gary how long he spends playing the computer each day, and he was very precise in his reply: ‘I get in from school about 4, and play computer until about 6, then come to LYP until half 8, then go home and play again until about 12. So I guess about 5 hours a day.’ (Fieldnote, 27th January 2009)

These technologies were also used, however, to facilitate more malign forms of interaction. A number of young people I spoke with talked about ‘getting a slagging on Bebo’ – having vicious insults posted on their public profile. In one case, a 12 year-old from LYP had been getting regular ‘slaggings’ on Bebo from a specific individual; on challenging the individual, he claimed that someone must have known his password.

These uses of new technology connect with wider debates relating to leisure, consumerism, and youth. Exciting edgework can be experienced through computer gaming, both individually and collectively, and has become increasingly integrated into the daily physical lives and interactions of the Langview Boys. Computer gaming has become a spectator sport in LYP, with up to ten boys watching the action, mesmerised; the play and commentary as close to reality as to necessitate a double-take to recognise it as fantasy:

Daz sits, staring smugly at the playback of Pro-Evolution Soccer 6 on the Playstation II, switching the angles and zooming in to see the ball flying into the net from the best possible vantage point. In the usual run of things, this kind of gloating replay is actively discouraged by both participants and spectators; distracting and time-consuming as they are for all. There being limited time for all to play, there is a democratic expectation that time will not be wasted. In this instance, however, the goal was unusually spectacular, and the unwritten rules allow for some degree of gloating. ‘Who’s yir da?’ he shouts at James. (Fieldnote, 7th August 2009)

This reliance on consumer technology to relieve boredom, however, has resulted in continual fads and fashions in technology and gaming; and an unquenchable desire for new and different forms of consumption. To take an example, on one occasion in LYP, I suggested to one 11 year-old that he played the X-Box while he waited his turn on the table-tennis table. To this, he expressed disgust – ‘who plays that anymair’ – as the technology had since been updated to the X-Box 360. This represents a discernible change in attitudes from youth leisure in the 1960s, as demonstrated in Jephcott’s study. Stevie, a youth worker at the project who grew up in the east end in the 1960s, makes this point clearly:

The only thing Ah couldae done when Ah wis younger wis a big adventure playgroom, wi six inch nails, wid, an rope: that wis it. It’s no like the stuff yir getting nooadays: Playstation games, the [Nintendo] Wii, y’know, the X-boxes ... aw that kinda thing.

In Bourdieu’s conceptualisation, therefore, the fields in which young people in Langview exist have altered quite dramatically. In this context, the habitus experiences a dialectical

confrontation with the new conditions – as Webb *et al* (2003: 41) state, the habitus is ‘potentially subject to modification...this occurs when explanations of a habitus no longer make sense.’ The responses of young people in Langview to alterations to work and leisure, however, indicate only minor modifications – adapting to the new conditions under the old rules of habitus. The re-enactment of leisure behaviours, can, indeed, be viewed as an adaptive response to the uncertainties of the lived environment.

The re-enactment of leisure behaviours from previous generations, therefore, can be viewed as a way of creating meaning in a world where the future is uncertain and precarious – adaptive responses to the conditions of late modernity within the ‘glacial forces’ of habitus (Appadurai 1996: 6). Where globalisation has created instabilities and uncertainties, the deeply embedded routines and characteristics imbued in habitus offer a way of ‘improvising’ a response which allows these traits to retain value. The re-enactment of both leisure and gang identities, therefore, can be seen as an improvisatory response to the lived experience of instability in the contemporary era.

Conclusion

This chapter has described and analysed the leisure habits of children and young people in Langview, focusing on the Langview Boys as a microcosm of these experiences. The Langview Boys, like all young people, inhabit a world largely controlled by adults, in a routine of regularised leisure activities. As a result of this constraint and repetition, boredom is a constant threat. To counteract boredom, the boys seek creative excitement in various ‘fir the buzz’ activities – pushing the boundaries of rules, acceptable behaviour, and laws to reclaim identity and control in each environment. Despite alterations in the cultural, social, and economic landscape in Langview and Glasgow, however, these leisure habits exhibit some similarities with previous generations. Though processes of globalisation have reshaped leisure opportunities for young people in Langview – delocalising, commercialising, privatising – the effect of these alterations has not been as profound as could be expected. On one hand, these processes have further limited the leisure spaces available to children and young people, resulting in more time spent in public space, and the corresponding continuation of young people’s street habitus. On the other, commercial leisure has come to occupy a prominent place, resulting in the transplanting of the street habitus to commercial venues and virtual worlds. In the following chapter, these arguments will be developed in the context of young people’s gang identities.

Chapter Eight

Growing through Gangs: Learning, Development, and Identity

When I tell people about my research, I'm sometimes asked 'were you ever in a gang?' The truthful answer is yes – but not the kind of gang you're thinking about. When I was about six, I had two best friends – Jamie and Murray – and together we formed a coherent, close-knit unit. We had a territory, the small patch of my home town called Devonside: a symbolic and geographic area that we called our own. We had a mission: to defend our patch against intruders. And we had a name: the JAM gang. When Jamie wasn't around, we were the depleted, but still resolute AM gang. This was, I suppose, my first social peer-group. It drifted apart when both Murray and Jamie moved elsewhere, to be replaced with successive new groupings, each with their own internal dynamics, in-jokes, hierarchies, and politics.

This reflection, on the role of peer-groups and juvenile 'gangs' on my own experiences of growing up, made me question more profoundly what brought me to the research; what psychic urge was being dealt with, or resolved. Michael Agar writes that the narrative of alienation is common amongst ethnographers – a feeling of detachment from social life, and a corresponding quest for 'the experience of other cultures as a search for identity that makes sense to them' (Agar 1980: 3). In my own case, I think that my experiences with peer-groups at school created a heightened sensitivity to group dynamics and hierarchies. The following reflective fieldnote, written on my first day of fieldwork brings this out:

After a while, I started hanging about with a different group of people, some of whom I became very close friends with—but amongst whom it was alternative means through which status was gained. Ever since, I can't help thinking that I've spent my life between a diverse range of groups, without really feeling fully attached to any. (Fieldnote, 27th March 2007)

This characteristic, I think, forms part of the patchwork of reasons that led me to the PhD research. Ethnography necessitates the balancing of a conflicting range of relationships; learning from and connecting different groups of ideas and individuals. This chapter – indeed the thesis as whole – is an attempt to stitch together these various biographical, analytical and ideational threads together into a coherent idea: growing through gangs.

Introduction

Previous chapters have aimed, in various ways, to move ‘beyond the gang’ in representing the lives of children and young people growing up in Glasgow today. Focusing on the everyday lives of the Langview Boys, I have sought to dislodge the assumption that gangs in Glasgow are self-evident, homogenous, or static entities. On the contrary, I have argued that youth gangs, such as they exist in Langview, are a situational aspect of group identity, which cannot be understood apart from the broader experience of growing up in the area. Boredom and leisure, group dynamics and status rivalry, sport and character contests, computer gaming and hanging around: these constitute the mainstay of life for the boys and young men involved in the study. Gang identities, where they exist, are densely woven into these activities, and are only explicable through them. Nevertheless, these ephemeral identities can have real and lasting consequences. Gang graffiti, the presence of reputed ‘gang members’, and fear of violent retributions can restrict the movement of the hidden majority of young people in Langview; performance of gang identities can result in extreme violence and injury; and gang reputations can result in lasting restrictions on mobility.

In what follows, I wish to make the argument that some young people in Langview may grow *into*, *out of*, and *through* gang identities. For some, the role and persona of ‘gangs’ is learned and embedded in early childhood, through play and observation. This persona, representing a specific manifestation of the street habitus and hegemonic masculinity described in earlier chapters, is then experimented with during the development of social identity; drawn on selectively in the establishment of group solidarity and developing masculinities among peers. In this way, gang identity functions like an item of hand-me-down clothing: it is passed down, and tried on for size; initially ill-fitting, it is grown into, then chopped and tailored to fit. It is not worn all of the time, but selectively, when mood or situation dictates; crucially, too, it may go out of fashion, or be grown out of. This item, however, is polysemous – it is understood and imagined differently by different groups, be they other young people, police officers, or community residents. As a result, while ‘the gang’ may only exist in fleeting moments, it has real consequences in terms of reputations and responses.

This approach seeks to build on and develop the pioneering work of Dwight Conquergood (1994a) and Robert Garot (2007, 2010) in analysing gangs as an individual and collective

identity. This approach locates the enactment of gang identities at the level of the individual, whilst recognising the cultural and structural backdrop for these performances. These studies, however, focus on young men in their late teens, and are predicated on an already-established basis for the performance of gang identities. Garot, for example, bases his findings on the ‘gang ecology’ – an environment in which the meanings and motives of gangs are already extant. In focusing attention on the ways in which gang identities are learned and enacted – specifically in relation to Bourdieu’s theory of habitus (1977) – I hope to contribute to an understanding of the process through which gang identities are learned and embodied. In approaching gang identities in Langview in this way, I am also seeking to contribute to the developing seam of international critical gang scholarship, which eschews universalist definitions or methodologies (Klein et al 2001) and embeds analysis at the level of a specific community, or city (Brotherton and Barrios 2004; Brotherton 2007; Hagedorn 2008; Aldridge et al 2007). From a British perspective, this approach also adds to the rich tradition in studies of working-class youth (Parker 1974; Corrigan 1979; Nayak 2006; Winlow and Hall 2006; MacDonald and Marsh 2005).

The chapter is structured into six parts. The first – Growing into Gang Identities – outlines the thesis of the chapter – conceptualising gang identity as a learned and enacted persona. The second – Gang Identity and Street Habitus – explores the relationship between performing gang identity and the connection of space and self developed in Chapter Six. The third section – Playing Gangs – analyses the ways in which gang identities are learned and enacted during childhood – in much the same way as the territorial boundaries described in Chapter Six. Doing Gangs – the fourth section – explores the various ways through which gang identity is performed in the context of developing masculinities; the fifth – Talking Gangs – reflects on the role of gang identities in verbal interactions. The final section – Growing in and out of Gangs – discusses the persistence of, and desistance from, gang identities amongst the school-leavers. This chapter pulls together the threads of previous chapters into a broader argument of the role of gang identities in the lives of children and young people growing up in Langview.

Growing into Gang Identities: A Theory

As discussed in Chapter Four, Jenkins (2004) suggests two dialectical forces in the construction of identity: identification and categorisation. Identification, in this context, refers to self-identification – a temporary attachment, or ‘suturing’ (Hall 1996), to an imagined community (B. Anderson 2006) with an attendant set of values and behaviours. As has been argued throughout, the gang complex focuses on the various ways in which young people might be categorised as gang members. By contrast, this chapter will focus on the *identification* of young people with gangs.⁴⁸

In recent years, Garot states, ‘social scientists have increasingly turned from essentializing identity as a fixed characteristic to understanding identity as fluid, contextual, and shifting’ (Garot 2010: 3). Here, I wish to argue that gang identities may be better conceptualised – in the context of the current study at least – as being both fixed *and* fluid, static *and* slippery. Young people have a remarkably similar definition of what a gang ‘is’, and a similarly proximate impression of what a ‘gang member’ persona looks like. If, when, how, and why an individual identifies with and enacts this persona, however, is contingent and situational (Hall 1996). In Bourdieu’s terms, if the persona of the gang-member forms part of the habitus, the performance of that persona represents the improvisation of practice (Bourdieu 1977). Far from the fixed, static, violent other pervading much of the gang literature, the performance of gang identities represent a source of identity, community, and support; and a way of expressing belonging and loyalty to a community in difficult environments. The gang is perhaps best understood as a form of community (Pickering 2010), an ‘open system of cultural codification’ (Delanty 2003) that is used and drawn on in different ways by different individuals as they grow up, as well as by different generations.

For certain groups of boys and young men growing up in Langview – bored, with limited leisure opportunities, in search of identity and edgework – the gang identity is learned as an available persona, and experimented with in various ways. The role is learned, played with, and tried on for size; like a hand-me-down, it is a loose and baggy fit at first but by degrees, groups of young people make it their own – establishing in-group solidarity

⁴⁸ There is some evidence which would allow for a more direct application of labelling theory to gangs in Glasgow. I heard, for example, of a groups of boys being taken into a police station, and asked which gang they belonged to. Not having thought of themselves as such before, they made up a name on the spot, *Usual Suspects*-style, from a notice on the board in the police station.

through communicative codes and symbols. For some, the gang plays a purely symbolic function – connecting young people both with one another, and with the area. For younger children, ‘the gang’ is a form of play – a childish fantasy to be acted out with peers. For young males in their early teens, ‘the gang’ becomes more closely tied to area identity, masculinities, and the acting out of group dynamics, status politics, and developing gender identities. For all, however, ‘the gang’ is more of an idea than a reality, to be drawn on and used as a resource in highly specific and contingent ways.

The gang identity, therefore, is an ‘imagined community’ (B. Anderson 2006) – an ideational role, persona, and configuration of idealised masculinities and femininities – that is used and drawn on in different ways by different individuals, at different stages of social development. More than this, though, it is an ‘open system of cultural codification’ (Delanty 2003) which carries forward through generations (Davies 1998, Bartie 2010) and is appropriated in ways that reflect and refract broader processes of social change. In the context of Langview, as the opportunities, spaces, and futures available to young people have been reconfigured, so the routes to identity and self-expression have reformed and reformulated. In this environment, locale retains a powerful hold – street habitus remains a foundational strut in the construction of identity. Gang behaviour, in both symbolic and violent forms, represents perhaps the most potent symbol of this localism: identification with a local ‘gang’ becomes the confluence of area identity: a root of identity, status, and carnival in an uncertain and unsteady world. However, as will be discussed below, these activities are polysemous – creating unintended meanings and consequences in the minds of community residents, other groups of young people, and police.

Gang identity and street habitus

In Chapter Six, I outlined the deeply embedded connection to the streets of Langview exhibited by the Langview Boys– learned and imbibed during childhood, and solidified through long hours spent within a small geographic area. This connection, bound up with ties of family and friendship, as well as time spent in the area itself, constitutes an important component in the psychosocial make-up of the Langview Boys – a strong, deep-seated bond based on urban proximity and dense social networks. This unconscious, or *preconscious* connection (Bourdieu 1977) is what I term street habitus.

Gang identity refers to a performative role within the street habitus, through which symbolic identification with the local area is enacted through a series of subculturally prescribed activities. These activities involve, mainly, graffiti and violence; but take place marginally, amid the flow of a range of other leisure activities. The metaphor of performance is used to capture the combination of fixity and fluidity in gang identities outlined above – though the role of ‘gang member’ is learned, the acting out of this role is performed. As Conquergood argues (1991: 187), ‘the language of drama and performance’ offers:

a way of thinking and talking about people as actors who creatively play, improvise, interpret, and re-present roles and scripts ... the creative, playful, provisional, imaginative, articulate expressions of ordinary people grounded in the challenge of making a life in this village, that valley, and inspired by the struggle for meaning.

Gang identity and the street habitus have a symbiotic relationship. The performance of gang identities embodies deeply embedded connections to the local area, channelling this connection into performative action. In the following example, Kev articulates his rationale for spraying gang graffiti:

AF: Why do you write [gang-tag] after your name?

Kev: Cos that’s where ye’re fae.

For Kev, along with the rest of the Langview Boys, identification with the local area was embodied through performance of gang identity. In this way, space is transformed into self-identity, and projected onto the performance. The gang name, used as a shorthand for this space, becomes a symbol of self-identity. In ‘protecting’ the area, therefore, an individual is protecting all that they hold dear, kith and kin. In the following excerpt, Kev and James discuss the performance of physical violence in this way:

AF: What makes a gang then?

Kev: See, people from Swigton try tae come in Lang St tae walk aboot, they
jist start fightin wi’ them. But they don’t gang-fight any mair.

AF: They would though, if boys from the Swigton tried to walk in?

James: Aye. They don’t like people walking through Lang St.

AF: Why not?

Kev: Cos it's their community.

As described in Chapter Six, both street habitus and gang identity are bounded physically and symbolically. Urban faultlines that cross-cut the city – train-lines, motorways, rivers, parks, pathways – demarcate the boundaries of young people's street habitus, confining this connection to a specific geographical area. As Robert articulated: 'It's jist an invisible boundary that every'bdae knows. Once you cross that boundary, you know you're in Lang St, you know you're in Swigton. Don't know how it came about.' This boundary represents, in symbolic terms, the concentration of emotional attachment and community solidarity *within* the boundary, with a corresponding lack of positive emotional attachment to communities *outwith* the boundary. This, in turn, creates a specific stage and backdrop for the performance of gang identities.

Conquergood (1994a) argues that the 'cosmology' of gangs is best understood as a richly textured pattern of in-group solidarity set against a prejudiced and marginalising world. Drawing evocatively on Bourdieu, de Certeau, and bell hooks, Conquergood argues that the 'homeboys' of Big Red, Chicago, were in a constant negotiation of a symbolic '“dwelling-place” within dominant space' (p.39): 'Against a dominant world that displaces, stifles, and erases identity, the homeboys create, through their communication practices, a hood: a subterranean space of life-sustaining warmth, intimacy and protection' (p. 47). This in-group solidarity, however, was in constant symbolic and physical threat, fostering intricate and elaborate systems of secret communications – written codes of conduct, subtle hand-signals, and dense graffiti. Graffiti in particular represented a constant struggle for primacy and authority in space – gang tags frequently involved subtle disrespecting of bordering gangs, through inverted lettering or broken iconography – in an ongoing negotiation of inclusive solidarity and exclusive rivalry (Conquergood 1994a).

In Langview, inscribing gang identity plays a very different, though comparable, role. While the hierarchical structure described by Conquergood (both within and between gangs) bears little comparison to Langview, the role of gang identity and graffiti is more analogous. Graffiti in Langview is concentrated around the border areas with Swigton, Oldtoun, and Hillside – on railings, bins, fences, walls, and hoardings. The graffiti here consists of a less intricate web of signs and codes than that described by Conquergood – usually the nickname or initials of the tagger, followed by the gang tag or initials. There is

some symbology involved; most often the initials are merged to form a single symbol, with dates (of tag) or initials of individuals fitted into the gaps. These graffiti visually unite the group together within the symbol of the gang. Most tags also have proclamations of supremacy and/or denigrations of other groups appended. The tag LYT, for example, is normally followed by the phrase ‘Number 1’ or ‘F[uck].T[he].Rest’. These displays, in their way, proclaim the Latin scripture sculpted into the old way-station in Tollcross, Glasgow: *Nemo me impune lacessit*, ‘No-one attacks me with impunity’. These displays are a collective act of area identity, constructing an exclusive and elite imagined community; firmly tied to the spatialised street habitus. When Sean discovered I lived just off Lang St, for example, he told me I should start writing ‘LYT’ after my name. As in Conquergood’s study, there is a deliberate secrecy woven into the graffiti, making it more difficult for outsiders to decipher. As Kev says:

AF: Why is it important that you write LYT1 after your name?

Kev: So they know where Ah’m fae.

AF: Who?

Kev: Whoever wants tae know aboot it.

AF: But it’s only your initials, so would it not only be people that knew you wrote it that would know, know what Ah mean? Why don’t ye write Kevin Carson?

Kev: Cos then they come an try an jail me again.

AF: So it’s only for people you know to know.

Kev: Aye.

These visual symbols are drawn obsessively on any available surface – during discussion groups, Kev, James, and Sean would sketch tags constantly on pieces of paper – diaries and maps were handed to me covered with similar etchings. The boys’ email addresses have gang initials appended to them (e.g. kevcarsen LYT 1@...); school jotters, bathroom walls, and desks are similarly inscribed. These tags are repeated all over the city – the toilets of Glasgow Sheriff Court and the holding cells in Barlinnie, notably – with the phrase ‘On Tour’ appended. The writing of a gang tag in a border community, however, forms part of the play of boundaries of self and other. As Conquergood argues, ‘The trespass of borders and the desecration of symbols, in short, transgressions of the space of the Other—both physically and figuratively—are the performative moments of gang

identity' (Conquergood 1994a: 200). In the following excerpt, Daz, Dylan, and Kev are discussing the reasons why gang tags are sprayed around boundaries:

Daz: So they know no tae mess.

Dylan: An try tae dae any'hin. Cos if they dae any'hin, they're deid.

AF: Why's that important? So people won't come in to your area?

Kev: Aye, so they don't try an mess your area up, writin hunners ae menchie.

Like the group in Conquergood's study, some level of physical symbology is also employed on occasion. LYT is represented by an L-shape made with the arms; one forearm vertical, with a clenched fist, the other horizontal, with a fist meeting the elbow. As will be elaborated below, these symbols are employed as a semi-secret code to emphasise group identity and solidarity:

During the (all-male) training, it was fairly regimented, but I noticed numerous small and large-scale efforts to subvert the authority of the situation; Fraz when stretching made the L (for LYT) sign; Frankie made some sign I didn't catch for the SYT; James mocked a T for Hillside Tongs. (Fieldnote, 11th February 2008)

All of these examples represent a concentrated effort to instil a group identity, which is densely woven into the public space of Langview, and which is exclusive of those outwith those boundaries. The phrase young people use to refer to gangs – 'team' – is further evidence of this bond (see also Conquergood 1994a: 26).

Gang identity, for the young men involved in the study, therefore played a number of important roles. Young people's street habitus consists of a deep connection to the local area; with the bounded space of the community forming an important part of young people's self-identity. Gang identity represents a crucial means of collectivising this street habitus – interacting with common symbols through engaging in common activities, thereby drawing individuals together in their area identity. Gang identity, in this sense, is a process involving both group and community solidarity, and cohesion. However, in a dynamic intimately bound up with the construction of the gang complex described in Chapter Two – and elaborated in Chapter Six – these symbolic gestures feed into a broader reputation for Langview as a 'gang area'. A friend, who had recently moved to Langview,

told me of her fears and anxieties in relation to groups of young men hanging about outside of her building (in the new development) – and the sense of unease she felt about the gang graffiti in her close. Thus, while the enactment of gang identities plays an important role in affirming a shared group identity, these activities can create concerns for local residents, as well as the construction of tyrannical spaces for other groups (Turner et al 2006).

Within this, however, the gang identity plays different roles during different stages of social development. Very young children integrate the gang identity into play behaviour, in particular pretend or fantasy play; young males in their early teens draw on it as a space in which to experiment with different social identities – ‘a liminal space for neighbourhood youths to experiment and play with gang symbolism and traditions without a full commitment’ (Conquergood 1994a: 37) – and males in their older teens as a vehicle to act out masculinities, aggression, and status rivalry. This process represents a gradual development, consolidation, and refinement of the gang identity; becoming more or less fixed and central to self-definition during this process of development.

Playing ‘gangs’: learning the script

George Herbert-Mead (1934) and Jean Piaget (1955), early pioneers of the interactionist method and social learning theory, note that learning occurs through observation, mimicry, and copy-acting – imbibing signs, symbols, and behaviours from peers, family, and teachers. The *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977) is thereby formed in social interaction with peers, through the acting out of relations and the testing of boundaries. In this sense, children’s gangs – of which the JAM gang is an illustrative example – may be said to constitute a core element in the constitution of *habitus*. Children’s gangs are therefore an element of social development and peer association; through which meanings, identities, and understandings of the wider world are learned, enacted, and co-produced. In the following fieldnote, I observed exactly this form of children’s gang acting out a conflict game near LYP:

When I was walking down to the train station tonight, I walked passed some very young children playing in the new flats. The game (conducted behind a metal gate) was to throw stones at one another, in groups of two or three, hiding for cover under two bench-like slabs of stone, set approximately 10 feet apart. In fact, seemingly custom-designed for the purpose. The children could not have been more than 6 or 7. (Fieldnote, 12th May 2008)

In Langview, layered into these stages of peer association and development are the roles, personas, and identities associated with ‘Langview Young Team’, the gang identity synonymous with the area. The following fieldnote relates a story told to me by a community police officer, who had been approached by a parent asking for advice:

The woman’s son, aged 5, was playing with his toy soldiers, arranging them into separate and rival factions. On being asked what he was playing, the boy pointed out the rival factions as ‘Langview Young Team’, ‘Swigton Fleeto’, and ‘Hillside Tongs’. (Fieldnote, 12th October 2007)

Alongside this development of an awareness of othering towards young people from Swigton – as discussed in Chapter Six, the phrase SYT, ‘Steals Yir Trackies!’ is tossed into conversation by children in LYP playfully, but reflects a broader process of inclusion and exclusion. As these stereotypes and myths are created and enacted, an increasing

awareness of the boundaries between Langview and Swigton becomes apparent through observation of the ‘big wans’ in the area. As Michael replied, on being asked where his knowledge of boundaries came from: ‘Cos ma pals had aulder brothers, an they’d be a couple ae steps ahead in the whole process.’ The denigration of young people from border communities finds form, for example, in sporting rivalry. In the following fieldnote, a group of boys from Swigton had come to LYP for a game of football. In the context of group competition, involving some children aged 9 and 10, these rivalries quickly gave way to violent conflict:

The ‘Swigton v Langview’ game from the previous week was reconvened. Tonight the rivalry was in full flow; one Swigton boy in particular, Chris, was pushing and swearing and bullying his way round everyone on the opposite team; at one point one of the bolder Langview boys (aged 10) retorted ‘who are you talking to’; Chris immediately squared up to him. This kind of thing was occurring left, right, and centre—there was one point where Chris was pushing around a younger boy from Langview, and several of the Langview boys started shouting ‘fight back, fight back’. (Fieldnote, 3rd June 2008)

Awareness of boundaries, and gang identities, also emerges from direct observation, in connection with play. In the following group discussion, Mark, Gary, and Willie talk about watching gang-fights over the same bridge when they were much younger:

Mark: Aye we wur talking aboot this last night. We used tae always go tae the bridge, when we were pure young, we used tae always kid oan we were fighting wi’ the Swigton.

AF: The bridge at the LYP?

Mark: Aye. Every time aw the big wans used tae fight wi’ the Swigton...

Gary: We used tae pure stand at the back, fling bricks an aw that

Mark: We used tae run down tae half-way, then run back up as if we’d done something.

AF: Did you like sitting watching the fight?

Gary: Aye

AF: Why?

Willie: Entertainment

Gary: It wis jist pure funny, everyone’s pure shoutin at each other, pure callin

each other this and that, an we were pure jist sitting watching.

The Langview Boys' involvement in these fights, crucially, was as an extension of play behaviour – this development shows why gang-fights might be described as being 'simply a game of chases like Cowboys and Indians with gang names used' (Kintrea *et al* 2008). One night in LYP, for example, I saw first-hand the fine line dividing play and violence, children's gangs and gang identities:

Tonight, there was a group altercation at the bridge separating Langview from Swigton. A group of mixed age boys, one cluster 8-10 years old, one cluster 10-12, and one 12-14 were congregated near the bridge when a group of 8-10 year-olds from the other side came across. There had been verbal exchanges, and dares, and taunts; it culminated in the very young ones swiping each other with long thin pieces of wood (like stripped bamboo). (Fieldnote, 15th October 2007)

In this example, the younger boys are keen to impress, and gain the praise of, the older boys. In this way, territorial identities and violent resolutions are carried on, as successive generations of children seek to play out and perform in front of generations of respected elders. This age-gradation is reflected in the following quote from a youth worker in Ironside:

A lot ae it these days, it's the younger wans, seeing their aulder brithers an that fight, so it's basically 'we need tae carry oan the name', that's whit it is wi' a loat ae them up ma way. A loat ae them will jist shout so many names, they don't know who they belong tae, but they jist shout it cos they seen other people daein it before, so that's whit ye need tae do. Wee toaties ... 8 an 9 ... running up an down, shouting names and throwing bricks.

Frederic Thrasher, in his canonical study of gangs in Chicago, describes the imaginative realm of street-play, in which unappealing spaces can be magically transformed into exciting areas for play. He includes in this the gang names that create a 'magical' transformation from humdrum lives to 'Bandits', 'Blood Kings'; or 'Fleet', 'Monks', 'Thugs' and so on. The phrase 'kiddin oan', discussed in Chapter Five, here takes on new significance. 'Kiddin oan', as well as joking, can also mean *pretending*. As Mark says: 'We

used tae kid oan we wur the pure LYT. ‘Pure’ is a slang term for something like ‘complete and total’, but it takes on a double semiotic meaning. The *pure* LYT identity, which existed in the world of fantasy – unsullied and unmuddied by reality – can be contrasted with the tarnished identity which resulted.

In this way, for the Langview Boys and other younger groups of males – bubbling up through the stages described – gang identities are learned and incorporated through individual and group play; woven into the fabric of social development. The meaning of gang identity is thereby deeply lodged in the unconscious of young people in Langview, connected with the deep-seated association between area and self. As noted earlier, however, gang identities are polysemous – read, experienced, and interpreted in different ways by different groups. The *idea* of gangs, and gang identities, is therefore a very real element in the construction of the tyrannical spaces described in Chapters Six and Seven.

Doing 'gangs': performing the script

James Messerschmidt (1993), in his path-breaking work on crime and masculinities, describes the situational and contingent means through which masculinities are enacted and accomplished in different contexts – in simple terms, how young men 'do gender' through crime or violence. In this section, I will argue that the situational enactment of gang identities – 'doing gangs' – represents a playing out of the idealised masculinities represented by gangs. This accomplishment, crucially, intersects with a range of developing social and sexual identities – as a means of establishing and maintaining group solidarity and pecking orders, and establishing a local reputation.

Gang identities, as described above, represent a defiant, anti-authoritarian role, which offers a space in which to foster solidarity and community with peers; therefore acting as a useful vehicle through which to catalyse group cohesion, and establish identity. In this sense, the gang identity represents the convergence of the various sources of cultural capital available to children and young people in Langview – being 'in the know', 'the best at stuff', 'wan ae the boays', and 'a gemmie', as well as 'havin the patter'. In a word, the gang identity is *gallusness* personified. In the following example, Gary and Willie are discussing an episode when they were 13 years of age; for the first time taking the initiative to penetrate the space of a border community. After learning the street habitus, watching fights and 'playing gangs', the boys decide to seek out cultural capital by performing gang identity:

Gary: We were aw like, 'who kin reach the furthest intae Hillside'? Then we decided tae try an get them aw runnin, it wis dead icy, an we thought they'd pure slip on the ice an faw.

AF: Why do you think you were doin that?

Gary: Cos we wur jist daft wee boays at the time.

Willie: Tryin tae get a name for ourselves.

Gary: Aye, cos we aw used tae ... aye aboot a year ago, two year ago, we used tae think we were the pure LYT an aw that. But see compared to people from, like, Hillside an aw that, we wur pure wee guys.

In this example, the boys realise their own naïveté in testing the boundary in this way. Their fantasy world of the gang – 'we used *tae think* we wur the pure LYT' (emphasis

added) – was brought face-to-face with the reality of the team from Hillside, young men in their late teens and early twenties. Performing the gang identity, however, had the effect of consolidating group cohesion and solidarity – in Thrasher’s evocative phrase, the group was ‘integrated through conflict’ (Thrasher 1936). Discussing the same episode later in the discussion, the boys create a collective narrative of the incident, reliving the emotional fear, reimagining the visceral response as an experience of collective solidarity, reaffirming the bonds of loyalty and friendship through talk:

Mark: See if someb’dae tried tae do us, Ah wouldnae be scared cos Ah know
aw ma pals would back me up.

AF: Have you ever had to put that to the test though?

Gary: One time up Hillside. Ah didnae want tae fight, but James got caught
they aw started running doon ... and when we looked around we
couldnae find James. An that’s when Ah thought ‘they’ve caught
James’. Then Ah done that ‘let’s fucking go!’ Me, Willie, Daz and
Dylan...

Willie: When we thought oor pal got caught, that’s when we all came
round .. see when that adrenaline’s kicking through ye...

Gary: We were all bottling it at the time, bit see when we thought oor pal got
caught, that’s when we thought ‘naw, we’re no taking this, we want
tae back up our pal here’

In this sense, the Langview Boys’ behaviour is much like the ‘gangs in embryo’ described by Thrasher. In seeking out collective solidarity and identity, the gang identity is drawn on, used, and appropriated. In the following example, one of the school-leavers, Michael, describes his route into gang-fighting; with friends he had known since early childhood:

AF: Did you get involved in some of the fighting then, over the bridge?

Michael: Aye, Ah used tae when Ah wis younger.

AF: Why do you think you got involved in it at the time?

Michael: Ah think it wis jist, aw ma pals were daein it. Ah’d known aw ma
pals fae when we were all in cots. Like we’d jist go tae the LYP, an
ye’d jist like grow up wi them an then that wis jist what happened.

For some young people in Langview, establishing a violent reputation through performance of gang identity is a route to excitement, as well as group solidarity. As has been described in earlier chapters, young people frequently test and stretch the boundaries – of authority, of rules, of knowledge – in seeking out a sense of the world and their place within it. Instructive in this context is the concept of edgework, which argues that such ‘edges’ of experience are commonly pushed or reclaimed in situations of boredom, monotony, and lack of volition, as a means of experiencing a rush of self-actualisation (Lyng 1990, 2005). As young people grow up, the need for individuality and status becomes apparent; to fashion a version of the self that distinguishes one from the mass of individuals in school, in the community, and in the city (Simmel 2002). There is therefore a pressure for distinction, and distinctiveness. For the Langview Boys, gang identity, in both physical and symbolic terms, offers a route toward cultural capital which ‘fits’ with the streets habitus of young people growing up in the area. It is also, however, explicitly edgework – allowing participants to physically and psychologically ‘test the edges’ of space and self, and step into the murky and denigrated world beyond. The boundaries between Langview and Swigton, therefore, operate as both symbolic and physical ‘edges’ through which masculinities can be risked, tested, and co-produced – and local reputations created, bolstered, and reinforced. In the following discussion, Dylan and Kev discuss the ‘buzz’ of a gang fight:

AF: Are there any good things about fighting?

Dylan: What’s it cault? Adrenaline.

Kev: Rush. Coming right through ye an yer just, you’re up for it, an ye crack someb’dae an rush o’er their heid.

These episodes, it must be emphasised, have victims as well as offenders. Michael, one of the school-leavers, described the use of bricks, bottles, machetes, and knives; resulting in serious injury in some cases. Michael described getting ‘hit in the eye wi a bottle, hit in the heid wi bricks an that ... caught an like punched an stuff like that’. Robert, one of the school-leavers, describes an incident when he was ambushed by a group of young men from Swigton:

Robert: Aye. Ah had tae walk by it, every night, when Ah wis coming hame fae the shop, or the LYP even. I even got jumped one night.

AF: What happened?

Robert: Ah wis jist, walking home fae the LYP, the bottom way, tae ma street, an then three ae them came up an asked where Ah wis fae. An I didnae answer them, Ah wis only in first year or something, an Ah just kept walkin, an then the three ae them jist grabbed us and jist started punching intae us. An Ah couldnae dae nothing obviously, cos there wis three ae them. An then jist a couple ae wummen jist walked by an split it up, an then they jist ran away.

The performance of gang identities, crucially, represents the acting out of an idealised form of masculinities – in which fighting, ‘bein a gemmie’, and bein ‘wan ae the boays’ are highly prized. In this context, as young men begin to develop an awareness of young women, gang identities merge with developing gender and sexual identities; and performance of gang violence becomes an activity charged with emotional energy. Two of the young women from the school-leavers group, Pamela and Julie (aged 17), reflect on their teenage years spent in public space, watching their male friends act out these developing identities:

Julie: Ye walk up the street, go tae the shops, go o’er tae the hill, aw the boays fight, and then ye come hame.

Pamela: Every Saturday, like, when Ah used tae hang about the streets every Saturday, without a doubt, Langview an Swigton wid fight. Like ye jist knew it was gonnae happen at some point during the night.

Julie: An there’s always lassies involved.

AF: In what way?

Julie: They’re always just fightin cos ae lassies. Always.

AF: An are there boys as well watching on the sidelines or is it mainly girls standing on the sidelines, or eh ...

Pamela: It’s maistly jist lassies.

Julie: It’s maistly jist lassies. That’s when the boays think they’re bold, cos they’re tryin tae show aff, cos they’re got an audience.

Pamela: Aye, an they try tae show aff.

At this stage of ‘doing gangs’, the boys were keenly aware of the fact of being watched – ‘showing aff’ to the young women present. Later in the discussion, however, it became

apparent that both Pamela and Julie hated the violence, and tried to prevent it from occurring – though they were in a minority:

Julie: That's how Ah always greet, cos Ah try an split it up.

AF: I mean, were you the only person that felt like that though? Or were other people, were they happy to, cheering on an stuff?

Julie: Well, a lot of them...aye. They though it wis pure good.

In this context, there was an important connection between developing masculinities and sexual identity in the case of the Langview Boys. The following fieldnote describes a night at LYP in which a young woman – attractive to all the boys – came to the project to watch the Langview Boys play football:

One of the most important/interesting events of tonight was that of Sarah-Jane watching the boys perform on the football pitch. She is in third year, and chose to come into LYP alone, and watch the boys from outside the pitch. They were all extremely aware of being watched. James in particular would go over to where she was and make small comments to her, and put his hand up against the wire while she did the same. Kev made repeated comments to her, but from afar; Daz repeatedly took the ball in that direction, but didn't really communicate with her. They all obviously wanted to show off, and were more ball-greedy than usual, but also more testy/tetchy than usual. (Fieldnote, 18th May 2008)

Talking 'gangs': Editing the script

While Hallsworth and Young (2008) perceptively deconstruct the 'gang talk' of control agents and the media, a similar approach can be levelled at the talk and interaction of children and young people, not to mention that of adults in the community. I quickly lost count of the number of times the boys in Langview Youth Project were casually labelled by other young people, police officers, and local residents as 'gang-members' – often 'big time' gang members. The truth of the matter was that in almost every case this perception was pure fantasy – for many of the adults, this perception resulted mainly from the boys being dressed in tracksuits and caps, hanging around in a group, and being in public space regularly. 'Gang talk' amongst young people, however, played a different role – related to the construction of Langview as an 'imagined community', and the co-creation of group identity.

'Talking gangs' represents the co-production of meaning and creation of in-group solidarity – 'talking gangs', for young people, reinforces the validity of the gang identity, and co-creates a bond between young people and the local area. This is true of both younger children and older – in the earlier example of a gang 'precursor' fight, whereby a game of chases escalated into a fight with sticks, afterwards I heard the children creating narratives and fantasies about the event, and glorifying the involvement of some. In another group discussion, Dylan and Kev discuss the 'talk of the town' after Dylan attacked a male from a bordering community:

Dylan: Ah hud a big log an Ah threw it at he's legs an he fell. Decked it a heavy belter.

AF: Did that make you feel good though?

Dylan: Aye. (laughs)

Kev: He's still feeling good the noo.

AF: Did everyone talk aboot it afterwards?

Dylan: Aye. Saying ma name.

Kev: He wis the big man.

This masculine bravado and braggadocio in 'gang talk' serves to confirm, consolidate, and legitimise the violent aspect of gang identity. Reputation – in Bourdieu's (1984) terms, cultural capital or *distinction* – becomes embodied and realised through talk; it is talk that

normalises and neutralises negative emotions. The role of the ‘big man’ in talk serves to unite the group both through reference to the local area, and gang identity. This precise phenomenon is discussed by William McIlvanney in his novel *The Big Man* (1985):

This communal sense of identity found its apotheosis in a few local people. Thornbank knew itself most strongly through them. They were fixed as landmarks in the popular consciousness. If two expatriates from that little town had been talking and one of them mentioned the name of one of that handful of people, no further elaboration would have been necessary. They would have known themselves twinned. (McIlvanney 1985: 21).

Jimmy Boyle, in *A Sense of Freedom*, discusses a similar form of reputation-building through talk:

I was very excited and chuffed at the idea of being classed as a good fighter and loved it when they said I was crazy as this is meant as a compliment within our culture ... It was all part of the sub-culture for everyone to go about trying to impress everyone else (Boyle 1977: 50; 107).

In the following example, Michael and Robert discuss the pressures towards establishing a reputation for young teenagers, and the pull this exerts towards gang-fighting:

Michael: You want tae make a name for yourself. Ye don’t want tae be jist anyb’dae. Ye don’t jist want tae be wan ae these faces in a crowd.

Robert: It’s aw about reputation. Aw gang fighting. There’s nothing in it anyway, except for reputation. Jist so some people will say ‘he’s crazy’ an that.

Asked why people gang-fight, Willie repeats this sentiment almost verbatim: ‘Tae get a name for themselves. Tae get a reputation. Tae get “aw look at me, Ah’m the hard-man”. Local reputation, and identity, is thus bolstered by ‘gang talk’, with some measure of celebrity attached. Kev, Daz, and Dylan, for example, talk exultantly about the biggest gemmie in Langview:

Daz: See in every scheme, there's always wan...

Kev: In every single scheme, there's always wan person who everyb'dae 'hinks
is the gemmiest an aw that.

AF: So there's always one person you respect more than everyone else.

Dylan: Aye. Gemmer, bolder.

AF: What's does a gemmie mean?

Dylan: You wouldnae run.

CM: Jist someb'dae ye wouldnae mess wi'.

This form of 'gang talk' reaffirms both core group values and identity, but also contributes to the fantastical persona of the 'gang member'. This becomes a reference point in enacting gang identity, consolidating area identity through mimicry – in much the same way as younger children 'play gangs'. 'Gang talk', and 'gang identity', help create a superior group identity – LYT are Number 1, FT Rest. In this way, too, masculinity is emphasised through the construction of those in neighbouring communities as embodying subordinate masculinities:

AF: Why do you think people want to gang-fight?

Kev: Tae keep your gang's name up on the leaderboard.

AF: The leaderboard?

Dylan: There's no a leaderboard.

Kev: Aye there is. D St's number wan.

Daz: So people are scared ae ye.

AF: Why do you want people to be scared of ye?

Daz: So people don't come in an start hinking they can sit, and walk aboot ...

Kev: That they kin be the big man in your scheme

Growing through gangs: desistance and persistence

In this final section, drawing mainly on the voices and experiences of the school-leavers, I analyse the ways in which gang identities intersect with developing age and gender identities amongst young men and women in their late teens. For some, gang identities become a more fixed aspect of identity, fusing violent masculinities and local reputation with group status and area attachment. For others, following similar processes as those involved in more general patterns of desistance from crime (Smith and Bradshaw 2005; Thornberry et al), and ‘delinquency and drift’ (Matza 1964), gang identities are simply grown out of – a hand-me-down that no longer fits.

In this section, I draw mainly from the narratives of four of the school-leavers – Michael, Pamela, Steph, and Julie. Michael had been involved in gang violence for a prolonged period in his early teens, establishing a local reputation – and a police record – in the process. Pamela and Julie, separately, had spent much of their early teens hanging around border areas between Langview and Swigton, or Swigton and Hillside, in large groups – drinking, and watching gang fights emerge between young men from these areas. Steph lived elsewhere in the east end, and spoke of her own experiences of gang fights and reputation. In each case, they had left the street-life behind, and were going on to university courses – articulating well the dynamics between persistence and desistance in gang identities.

Persistence

As has been discussed throughout this chapter, gang identities must be understood within the context of social development, and the conflicting and contradictory identities bound up in this process. The school-leavers, as young adults reflecting on this period of their lives, discussed some of the ways in which these fluid identities became more fixed aspects of selfhood – through the development of a local reputation, combined with a limited and limiting social geography. As Pamela and Julie describe, what begins as group excitement can quickly escalate into a reputation:

AF: What do you understand a gang to be?

Julie: Jist pals really. It is. Jist people that stay in the same scheme that talk.

Pamela: An that back each other up.

Julie: That's what it is. Like there's always somebdae oot tae get wan ae them. An that's how they end up aw jist fightin. Cos they're aw pals, an if somebdae batters your pal, like, right in front ae ye (Pamela: Ye'll have something tae say about it). Like ye dae something, ye widnae stand an watch yir pal getting battered. An then ye just gie yersel a name. An then they get a name fur themsel an they think they're pure invincible. It is.

For Michael, his involvement in gang fighting reflected an embodiment of street habitus and hegemonic masculinity. As he says:

AF: Did you enjoy it at the time though? Were there good things about it?
 Michael: Obviously ye think it's fun, an ye think ye're some sort ae hard man, cos ye kin run aboot in a group an pick on people that are stonnin theirsel an that.

In the context of the Langview Boys, this dynamic played out in the context of a violent confrontation between Kev and a group of young men from Swigton. As a charismatic authority within the Langview Boys, Kev could not be seen to 'back down' from an insult, resulting in a violent encounter:

There has been a situation developing between boys from Langview and Swigton over past few weeks, culminating in an abusive phone call to Kev while he was in LYP. Kev left the project, puffed full of bravado, alone, and attacked a group of three, one of whom continued walking up to LYP (this is one of the boys who has been attending the project recently), punching and kicking both of them repeatedly. Before the attack, Kev was sitting chatting away with her, the picture of good cheer. After the call, the staff-member said she'd never seen him that angry. (Fieldnote, 8th November 2009)

Crucially, once a reputation has been established, it is difficult to erase from collective memory. Steph, for example, described the way in which her dad's friends referred back to his youthful reputation: 'Even now ... ma da goes tae the pub wi people he's known since he wis wee ... an his pals are like that 'your da's mental'. Similarly, a police officer described to me an incident whereby a man in his 30s was stabbed in a cinema by a man he

had fought against in his teens. For some of Michael's friends, gang identities in their early teens led on to more consolidated violent masculinities, and increasingly risky behaviour.

It never goes away, cos you're still in the area, an even when Ah'm with ma new pals, Ah'd still see ma auld pals, an there'd still be like the odd occasions where situations would come up. An it widnae be your fault, jist the situations would come up.

The school-leavers also discussed the ways in which gang identities continue into the places and spaces of young adulthood – in particular pubs and clubs in the city-centre. Michael, again, described an incident of meeting a previous rival in a nightclub: 'He wis like that – you hit me in the heid wi' a brick once. An I wis like 'Aye'. An he wis like 'how you doin!?', shaking ma hand an aw that.'

Desistance

In seeking to move 'beyond the gang' as a fixed and static entity, toward an understanding of the complex and contingent role that gang identities play in young people's social development, there are distinctive parallels with criminological approaches to desistance from crime (Maruna 2001; Thornberry *et al* 2003). The critique of the implied fixity of the term 'offender' within the desistance literature – a 'state' that an individual is either 'in' or 'out' of – can be applied equally to the approach of the gang complex; in both, the process of desistance is seldom clear and immediate, but rather a complex and individuated process of drift and identity-reconstruction. The approach employed in the thesis – growing through gangs – has particular resonance with Moffitt's theory of adolescent-limited offending; namely that many young people undergo a process of boundary-testing, that is gradually grown out of (Farrall and Calverley 2006). As Vigil notes, most young people 'mature out through a process of gradual disaffiliation and breaking away from the gang' (Vigil 1988: 106-107). As such, it may be productive to conceptualise the process of 'growing through gangs', in some cases, as a relatively unremarkable stage of social development; to be distinguished from the more extreme cases of violence carried out by the few. Indeed, some of the school-leavers believed strongly that they had *grown* through the process of spending time on the streets, watching gang fights – in the sense of becoming street – and world – wise:

AF: Are you still in touch with people that you were friends with then?

(pause)

Pamela: If ye pass them in the street ye say hello.

Julie: Aye ye say hello.

Pamela: But that's it.

AF: An how did you feel in yourself? I mean, did you always know that it was the wrong thing to do, and that you'd be right in the long-run, and that you had bigger fish to fry sort of thing?

Julie: Ah liked daein it.

Pamela: So dae Ah. Ah don't regret daein it. It's not affected me. Ah'm gaun tae uni an aw that, an pure...(Julie: It makes ye mair streetwise) getting on in life, but Ah've still experienced it. An had a good laugh.

Julie: It's like, if ye don't dae it, ye don't actually underston whit's actually happenin, an hink hings are much easier. An a loat ae them think, like, 'they're aw wee neds', like she said before, it's 'neds, just neds'. But it's no. It's jist the way they are. An that's aw right.

For Pamela and Julie, the experience of time spent in public space, witnessing gang violence, was a relatively normal part of growing up – indeed, the experience forms a positive element in their self-definition, as they now understand something more of life. In a very real sense, Pamela and Julie have *grown through* these experiences – forming new friendships and refashioning their identities – and while others may not have the same experience, this temporal development is important to a social understanding of gangs. The last word on this goes to Michael, as he reflects on the role of learning, development, and peers on gang identities:

Ah used tae fight, an Ah used tae have a name, but now Ah don't enjoy that. Cos that's jist putting a label oan ye. It's jist no good. When ye take a step back an look at it, like at how stupid it is ... when you're wee boys, an you're aw at primary, and you're fighting against other wee guys fae aw the different areas,

an then as soon as it hits secondary, we aw end up in this building here [the school]. An yir sittin in class next tae guys. You're like that 'kin Ah get a bit ae help wi number four' an that, an then later oan he's hitting ye over the heid wi' a brick. It's jist stuff like that, it's crazy. How kin this be enjoyable, how kin this be your life.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to demonstrate the various ways in which children and young people in Langview understand and experience gangs. Gang identities, roles, and scripts are learned during early childhood; played out and experimented with in group interaction, and enacted through mimicry of older teenagers. While gang identities may overlap powerfully with play behaviour, however, they may also result (occasionally) in violent conflict – which in turn may be reinforced through ‘gang talk’. On the whole, however, in Langview gang identities are best understood as playing a symbolic role in binding together a group of friends, and constructing masculinities. Crucially, these efforts towards camaraderie and community are best understood in the context of the broader experiences of growing up in Langview. As outlined in earlier chapters, many children and young people in Langview grow up with limited opportunities for play and leisure; ensuring that locale, and space, retains a powerful importance. Young people’s street habitus represents a search for meaning and community in a limiting environment – performance of gang identities is perhaps the most powerful symbol of this search, as young people use the symbols and tools available to create culture and meaning. As Conquergood eloquently summarises, we can see gang identities as ‘magnifying mirrors in which we can see starkly the violence, territoriality and militarism within all of us’ (Conquergood 1994b: 219).

Chapter Nine

Conclusion: Growing through Gangs

Reflecting back on the four years which have made up the PhD, I realise that this document – the thesis – represents a final stage of the personal, intellectual and emotional journeys this period has covered. Moving from blank page to written word has involved many mis-steps, blind alleys and U-turns, as the spontaneous experiences which made up the fieldwork were processed through the act of writing; inevitably, much of these experiences are written out, either consciously or unconsciously. Despite these tangents and deviations, however, there is a sense in which the thesis grew, organically, from my first experiences in the field. In fact, these developments illustrate well the staggered development which made up the entirety of the PhD experience: of which the thesis is simply the final act. It is a patchwork document, with different sections written at different times; stitched together towards the end as the overall design became clear. But as a result of this, it offers a fair reflection of the patchwork of stories, people, places, mistakes, discord and ideas that make up the PhD.

The overall design of the thesis is encapsulated in the thesis title ‘Growing Through Gangs’ – an overarching thread that I have attempted to weave through the arguments presented in each of the chapters, and which I endeavour to bring to the fore in this final concluding chapter. It strikes me, however, that this title also summarises both the rationale for, and arc of, the ‘fragments from the field’ which preface each chapter. These fragments trace the chronology of intellectual, practical and emotional lessons alongside the development of theories, ideas and concepts; in an effort to make transparent the process by which the arguments contained in the thesis were arrived at. These fragments attempt to show, moreover, the ways in which I myself have grown through the process of the research. The PhD has allowed me the privilege of sharing the lives and experiences of some remarkable and inspiring individuals; enabling the community and youth work roles which now form an important part of who I am. It has given me the time and space to carve out my own academic identity, and grow into a more grounded and aware individual. In a very real sense, therefore, I have grown through this research – as with any period of growth, this has not occurred in a straightforward or linear way, and not without profound periods of doubt and conflict – but with hindsight in a quite fundamental way.

Overview

This thesis has explored the social meanings and lived realities attached to the phenomenon of youth gangs for children and young people growing up in Langview, a community in the east end of Glasgow, during the early part of the twenty-first century. Drawing on a two-year period of participant-observation, the thesis has situated young people's understandings, experiences, and definitions of gangs in the context of broader social, cultural, and spatial dynamics within the area. In this way, the thesis has analysed the complex and differentiated ways in which gang identities are enacted, and explores their intersection with developing age, gender, and group identities. In so doing, the thesis has sought to challenge stereotypes of youth gangs in Glasgow, drawing on nuanced accounts of gang identities that demonstrate the role of social development and youth transitions in the meanings and motivations of gang involvement. Against representations that construct the gang as an alien other, this thesis argues for an understanding of gangs that is sensitive to the fluidity of, and contradictions in, the formation of all youth identities – of which the gang identity is one. In sum, the thesis has argued for the need to move away from pathologising and fetishising approaches to youth gangs, in Glasgow and elsewhere; growing through and beyond the gang in understandings of youth violence.

The thesis title, 'Growing through Gangs', is intended to summarise a number of core arguments contained within the thesis. First, and most important, is the idea that gang identities, in many cases, may be a temporary aspect of young people's experiences of growing up – a fad, or rite of passage, that is grown out of and through. Second, this experience should not be thought of as entirely negative – in many ways, young people might grow as individuals through the processes of group loyalty, community identification, and local pride which form the core of gang identity. In a social and cultural environment characterised by change, gang identities form a source of fixity – through which to act out important aspects of social development. Third, these realisations can assist us – as academic researchers – in challenging pathologising accounts of young people in gangs; growing and mobilising research through and beyond the gang. Fourth, in this way, research on gangs can become a lens through which wider processes of social change, moral panic and popular fears can be analysed – in this way, academic knowledge can be enriched and grown through the study of gangs.

In this chapter, I revisit the questions and arguments outlined in the thesis in light of these conclusions. As has been emphasised throughout, these conclusions are not intended as definitive statements on gangs – in Glasgow or beyond – but as an in-depth analysis of the meanings and understandings of gangs for specific groups of young people in Langview during the early part of the twentieth century. As will be discussed below, however, these conclusions and conceptualisation may have distinct resonances with the study of gangs in other times and places.

Revisiting research questions

The study set out to answer the following three questions:

- What is life like for young people growing up in Langview today?
- What role, if any, do gangs play in the lives of young people in Langview today?
- What impact have social, spatial, cultural and economic changes in Langview, and the wider city of Glasgow, had on these experiences?

These questions sought to establish a broad lens through which to analyse young people's understandings and experiences of gangs, and gang identities. As outlined in Chapter Two, while there has been a long history of public attention to gangs in Glasgow, there have been very few studies that seek out the ways in which gangs, and gang identities, are understood and experienced by different groups of children and young people. At the same time, there is increasing evidence of a Glasgow gang complex – a myopic, reductive and distorting view of gangs, which overlooks the broader context of young people's lives – that echoes dominant responses to the gang phenomenon in the United States, and elsewhere in the United Kingdom. As such, the research questions which underpin this study sought to avoid pre-defining the issues involved for children and young people, and establish a broader focus on their lives in the round. In this way, the gang complex can be located within a historical context – as argued in Chapter Two, gangs have emerged as an area of concern only during distinctive periods in the history of Glasgow. As such, these research questions sought to grapple with the broader questions of continuity and change in the city of Glasgow – taking young people's gang identities as a lens through which to analyse these broader processes.

Chapter Three outlined the methods and methodologies through which these questions were operationalised. In seeking to analyse the broad context of young people's lives against a backdrop of change in the city of Glasgow, the research integrated traditional, Chicago School participant-observation with the grounded, critical perspectives of the Birmingham School and critical ethnography. In order to include as wide a range of children and young people in the research area as possible, and understand as far as possible the context of young people's gang identities, I worked as a volunteer youth worker, street outreach worker and secondary school tutor over a two-year period; and lived in the area for a period of eighteen months. In focusing in on the ways in which young people's gang identities intersected with other areas of social development and peer interaction, I carried out eighteen discussion groups with children and young people from the school and youth project, in which one particular group of young men – the Langview Boys – featured prominently. While this group became the main focus of the study, however, I sought to incorporate alternative perspective from the hidden majority of young people in Langview, including a group of school-leavers I worked with at Langview Academy. In this way, I sought to move 'beyond the gang' in both method and approach – combining traditional and contemporary methodologies and methods to analyse the broader contexts through which gang identities are learned, enacted and imagined by a range of children and young people in Langview.

Chapter Four set out the theoretical framework through which these research questions were answered. Combining traditional concepts within the oeuvre of gang research – in particular the work of Frederic Thrasher (1936) – with critical perspectives from the wider field of contemporary social theory (Bourdieu 1977, 1990), I sought to elaborate a broad historical perspective which allowed for the role of both continuity and change in making sense of young people's gang identities in Glasgow. This framework, involving the development of Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field into street habitus and community field, sought to frame the research questions relating to the broader context of young people's gang identities. In analysing gang identities through the frame of habitus – and particularly through that of the 'tormented habitus' of social development – I argued that the gang identity can be viewed as an 'open system of cultural codification' (Delanty 2003) which is learned, drawn on and enacted in different ways by different generations.

In this way, the differentiated ways in which gang identities are embodied can be analysed from a historical perspective, as identities alter and reconfigure over time.

In describing the various literatures, methodologies, and theories which underwrote the research, I developed these original questions into three specific objectives I sought to realise through the latter four chapters of the thesis:

- To gain an ‘appreciative’ (Matza 1969) understanding of the meanings, understandings, and experiences that children and young people in Langview attach to gangs.
- To explore the intersection of these meanings and experiences within the broader context of young people’s leisure, peer relationships, and use of space; with particular attention to the role of developing age, gender, and group identities.
- To situate these experiences in the context of broader changes to Langview, as processes of globalisation and social change are refracted through the local area.

Chapter Five introduced the young actors whose meanings, understandings and experiences form the immediate foreground to the thesis narrative. This *dramatis personae* of the characters who take centre-stage in the thesis – the Langview Boys, the hidden majority and ‘school-leavers’ – sought to illuminate, appreciatively, the complexities and subjectivities of their daily lives. The chapter focused attention at the level of lived experience, group dynamics and status politics; focusing particularly on the ways in which these everyday interactions reproduced age, gender and group hierarchies. These ways of creating and co-producing meaning – being ‘in the know’, the ‘best at stuff’, a ‘gemmae’, ‘wan ae the boays’, and ‘havin the patter’ – cohere around a hegemonic masculinity in which physical toughness, verbal aptitude, and group loyalty are highly prized; regulated and policed through varying physical, verbal and symbolic techniques. These aspects of hegemonic masculinity represent a core element in the learning and enactment of gang identities – as the gang identity represents an idealised form of these ways of ‘being a man’. While this chapter focused primarily on the immediate daily lives of the Langview Boys, the themes of history, development, and social change were highlighted; foreshadowing the evolution of this objective in later chapters.

Chapter Six spooled out from this initial focus on everyday interaction to an analysis on the broader community of Langview, exploring the role of space and place in the experiences of children and young people growing up in Langview. Incorporating both ‘soft’, impressionistic perspectives and ‘hard’, statistical interpretations of Langview, the chapter emphasised the continuity and change which has occurred over the past three decades in Langview – locating these alterations within the context of broader changes in the city of Glasgow. Through a shared childhood spent on the streets of Langview, the Langview Boys have a deep-seated connection to the bounded physical and symbolic space of Langview; a connection which can be read as an instance of ‘space-fixing’ amid a changing social landscape. This street habitus, while emphasising an inclusive group and area identity, is bounded by symbolic borders between Langview and neighbouring communities, resulting in processes of territoriality and exclusion towards young people from these areas. These boundaries operate as spaces in which developing masculinities and gang identities are acted out in the context of risk-seeking behaviours. The Langview Boys’ propinquity in public space, however, create fears and anxieties amongst the hidden majority of young people in Langview – resulting in restricted mobility, and tyrannical spaces. These differentiated understandings and experiences of public space, and gang identities, offer an insight into the broader changes in Langview – and the city of Glasgow more generally – which form the background to the thesis narrative.

Chapter Seven shifted and broadened the focus once more, incorporating views on the Langview Boys’ activities outwith Langview, and broader changes to the city of Glasgow – narrated through analysis of the leisure habits of the Langview Boys. In a perpetual search for excitement – and crucially group-based excitement – the Langview Boys switch and flow between different leisure activities, pin-balling from one to another in a cycle of boredom-relief. New risks and challenges – playing into the hegemonic masculinity discussed in Chapter Five – are continually created and contested, through the invention of edgework activities (Lyng 1990, 2005). In this context, ‘weird ideas’ (Corrigan 1979) such as setting off fire hydrants, throwing eggs at strangers, or spraying gang graffiti emerge spontaneously, at random. These leisure activities emerge in the continual contest of masculinities which form the Langview Boys’ gravitational orbit – which is learned and re-enacted by some younger boys in Langview – but also creates restrictions on the leisure activities of others. These experiences, crucially, offer a perspective on broader changes to the leisure opportunities for children and young people in Langview over the past three

decades. Traditional leisure pursuits in Langview have reconfigured – delocalised, commercialised, privatised – squeezing the Langview Boys into an increasingly limited range of leisure activities. In these circumstances, gang identities emerge as a means of instilling group identity, affirming area identity, and forming a symbolic link with previous generations.

In Chapter Eight, I drew together concepts, ideas and objectives from the previous three chapters to outline a general theory – based on the experiences of the Langview Boys – I term ‘growing through gangs’. In essence, this theory posits the gang as an ‘open system of cultural codification’ (Delanty 2003) – an idea, and identity, that is drawn on and used in different ways at different stages of social development, and by successive generations. For the Langview Boys, the gang identity was learned and imagined from a young age through group play; reimagined in the context of ‘character contests’ and group solidarity in their early teens; and appropriated as a means of establishing developing masculinities, and sexual identities, through edgework activities. This pattern was also in evidence amongst some younger males ‘growing in’ to gang identities, and from the ‘school-leavers’ who reflected on their growing out of, and *through*, gang identities. In this way, gang identities function like an item of hand-me-down clothing: passed down, and tried on for size; initially ill-fitting, it is grown into, then chopped and tailored to fit. It is not worn all of the time, but selectively, when mood or situation dictates. This item, however, is polysemous – it is understood and imagined differently by different groups, be they other young people, police officers, or community residents. As a result, while ‘the gang’ may only exist in fleeting moments, it has real consequences in terms of reputations and responses. Crucially, too, it may go out of fashion, or be grown out of. In sum, the thesis argued three core points:

- Unlike popular stereotypes of gangs, which construct gangs as a fixed and static entity, this thesis argued for an understanding of gang identities, which is fluid and context-specific. This understanding of gangs emphasises the symbolic, non-violent role which gangs play in the lives of young people in Langview – representing belonging, *communitas* and group solidarity.
- Gang identities, as complex and individuated ephemera, are therefore best understood within the wider context of other developing identities in young

people's lives. In Langview, these identities revolved around age, gender, locale and group status.

- Gang identities most frequently emerge in social environments where poverty, lack of amenities and overcrowding are particularly pronounced. A fully social understanding of gangs, therefore, must incorporate analysis of local patterns of power, inequality and globalisation. In Langview, these patterns have resulted in a constrained social and cultural environment, in which gang identities serve as a route to status, masculinity and respect.

Contribution of thesis

These arguments, and the data which underpins them, contribute to academic knowledge in a number of ways. The thesis contributes a novel, grounded and critical analysis of gangs in a specific place and time – Langview, in the east end of Glasgow, in the early part of the twentieth century. While situated firmly within this place and time, the thesis nonetheless makes a considerable contribution to academic knowledge beyond this site – developing, or challenging, a range of ideas and theories within the academic literature on young people and gangs. In this section, I will outline the specific contributions to literature the thesis seeks to make.

First, against representations of gangs as a fixed, static and alien other, the thesis contributes an understanding of gang identities that is fluid, temporal and rooted in the experience of growing up. This approach seeks to contribute to a developing seam of critical, international gang scholarship (Conquergood 1991, Garot 2010, Mendoza-Denton 2008) that locates gang identities within the broader context of individual's lives – emphasising the essential similarities between those who enact gang identities with those who do not. In focusing on the role of learning and social development in this context, however, the thesis contributes a novel approach to gang identities; emphasising the temporal aspect to the enactment of gang identities.

Second, against accounts of gangs which seeks to universalise and categorise, the thesis contributes a critical, grounded approach to gangs that eschews generalised definitions; locating analysis firmly in a specific time and place. This approach critiques and

challenges accounts of gangs in Glasgow that generalise young people's experiences and understandings in a specific community to an illusory 'Glasgow gang' (Bannister et al 2010). However, in locating the experiences of young people in Langview within a broader theoretical and historical framework, the thesis offers the raw material for a revisionist history of gangs in Glasgow – one that locates their development within the context of the broader history of specific communities, as they refract broader alterations in the city of Glasgow. This approach seeks to contribute to recent work (Hagedorn 2011, forthcoming) that locates the genealogy of gangs within the trajectory of particular aspects of city histories. In this way, the study of gangs can become a lens through which to analyse broader social changes, the formation of identity, and the exercise of power.

Third, the thesis contributes a series of innovative strategies, which draw from the 'new social studies of childhood' (James, Jenks and Prout 1998), in researching gangs. Incorporating a range of visual, performative and action-research methods, the thesis contributes to the development of methodologies which move 'beyond the gang' in understanding young people's gang identities. Alongside traditional methods, such as participant-observation, this methodological approach seeks to combine appreciative insight with participatory methods, which seek to capture the multiple meanings which young people ascribe to gang identity.

Fourth, in blending insights from the classical and modern canon of gang research with contemporary social theories of identity, community and globalisation, the thesis contributes a novel conceptualisation of gang identities to the criminological literature on gangs. In emphasising the role of learning, social development and identity in the enactment of gang behaviour, the thesis introduces themes and ideas which are absent in theories of gangs. In locating these gang identities within a local and global structural context, in particular drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1990), the thesis also aims to contribute to broader sociological insights relating to the impact (or otherwise) of globalisation. In particular, the conceptualisations of street habitus and community field allow young people's gang identities to be located in a broader structural context; and are likely to have broader import to the study of young people, gangs and social change.

Fifth, while the theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions of the thesis are principally in the field of gang research, the broader focus on youth identity, youth

transitions and the impact of globalisation also resonates with the wider field of youth sociology and the ‘new social studies of childhood’, in particular those which draw on the insights and perspectives of the Birmingham School.

Finally, while the thesis principally makes a contribution to academic knowledge and theory, there are direct implications for both policy and practice. In arguing for research to recognise the complexities and specificities in young people’s gang identities, the thesis makes a strong case for policing, policy and practice to similarly move ‘beyond the gang’ in approaching youth violence. In locating the local distinctions of the gang phenomenon, too, the thesis argues for an approach to policing and policy-making which is grounded in local meanings and understandings, as opposed to national or global ideations.

Implications of thesis

These conclusions and contributions have implications for further research in the fields of gang studies, youth sociology and youth violence. In this section, I outline aspects of the thesis that would benefit for further research and elaboration.

First, the historical perspective which underpins the research – arguing that gang identities, and the gang complex which surrounds them, alter and develop over time – suggests the need for further inquiry into the nature and form of gangs during different periods of Glasgow’s history. While historical research has successfully illuminated specific periods in the history of gang identities in Glasgow – specifically the 1930s and 1960s – further investigation into earlier and later periods would be beneficial; both in terms of illuminating the meaning of gang identities to children and young people, and as a lens through which to analyse the development of the city of Glasgow.

Second, the developmental perspective on gangs argued for in the thesis – ‘growing through gangs’ – suggests further inquiry at a number of levels. With the historical research described acting as a broad frame of reference, research on the processes through which children learn, play with and enact gang identities would offer considerable insights into the historical continuities in the Glasgow gang phenomenon – suggesting appropriate ways of harnessing the positive aspects of gang identities, while intervening in the more problematic, violent elements. Similarly, the process through which young people desist

from gang identities bears further exploration. There is little research on the interplay between desistance and gangs, and a great deal can be gained from integrating the rich criminological literature on desistance with that of gang research.

Third, while this study has focused primarily on young men, who identify with gangs in various ways, the research has also highlighted the impact that gangs have on the lives, experiences, and mobilities of the hidden majority of young men and young women in Langview. As such, the thesis suggests further study of the ways in which gangs are understood and experienced by young people who resist identification, and the factors which promote resilience of this kind. As with the hidden majority, young women's views and perspectives are frequently silenced by the focus on young men's in gang research. While the thesis has sought to explore the role of gender in the formation of young men's gang identities, the role of gangs in the construction of young women's gender identities requires specific attention.

Fourth, the research has highlighted the value in moving 'beyond the gang' in methodological and theoretical approaches to the gang phenomenon. These benefits suggest the need for further collaborations between gang researchers and other disciplines – in particular insights from anthropology, urban sociology, youth studies and social theory.

Fifth, while the thesis has focused explicitly on the understandings and experiences of children and young people – with the aim of challenging the dominant tropes of the gang complex – the thesis commends further research on the gang complex itself. The processes through which various messages relating to gangs are communicated, the ways in which different actors come to define an individual as a 'gang-member', and the consequences of these processes for individuals, would benefit from further exploration. In this regard, the model set out in Hall *et al*'s *Policing the Crisis* (1978) represents a central touchstone.

Finally, the analysis of the developing gang complex in Glasgow alongside the more established gang complex in the United States – and increasingly the United Kingdom – has important implications for policing and policy responses. Lessons from the United States suggest an approach to the youth violence that moves 'beyond the gang', in policy as well as research; focusing not on arbitrary, universalising definitions and responses, but

rather on approaches that recognise the individuated nature of gang identities, and the positive role that these may play in the social development of children and young people. This style of policy-making fits well with the Kilbrandon ethos that forms the tradition of youth justice in Scotland (McAra 2008). Based on this progressive approach to youth justice, this thesis suggests that policy-makers – as well as criminal justice practitioners, academics, journalists, and young people – grow through and beyond gangs to focus on the complex and individuated needs of young people growing up in Glasgow, and Scotland, today.

Appendix A: Information and Consent Material

A1: Fact-sheet: Participant-Observation at Langview Youth Project

Research Project: Growing Up in Glasgow 2008

The proposed research involves a period of participant-observation at Langview Youth Project, Glasgow. This sheet covers key points and questions involved in the research.

What is Participant-Observation?

Participant-Observation is a type of research which involves a researcher getting an insight into the everyday lives of people involved in the research. Most often, this will involve the researcher *participating* in some way in the research site, as well as *observing* what happens. The aim is to gain an in-depth understanding of the perspectives of research participants—from this, all research conclusions are based on real life, and in context.

What would it involve?

This would involve me keeping a record of things I see, hear, and do when I am at LYP—the conversations I have, things I am told, how people interact—to help me understand what life is like for young people growing up in Langview, and therefore to understand how issues of gangs and territorialism are understood and experienced.

What would this mean for LYP?

This would mean an agreement for me to keep an anonymised record of what goes on, including general observations relating to children and young people attending the project. There is no intention to be secretive about this fact—I will take every step necessary to inform all of the relevant parties (young people, parents, carers etc) about the research, either through posters (sample poster attached to this sheet), information evenings, or presentations.

What would this mean for my role?

There would be no change whatsoever in the nature of my volunteer work—only the fact that I would keep a record of what goes on. The only other change I anticipate is an increase in the number of hours I volunteer per week, in order to observe and participate in

a wider range of activities at the project. Ideally, this would involve 8-10 hours per week, in a combination of day-time and night-time shifts.

Will the records be kept confidential?

Any record kept will have the names of individuals, the youth project and the area anonymised. Pseudonyms will be used, so that no individual can be identified. Notes will be stored on a password-protected computer file, or in a locked drawer.

What is the role of the University?

The university have strict rules about research ethics. An application to carry out this research will be made, with the decision based on whether the research ensures openness, honesty, and fairness, and how well it minimises potential problems.

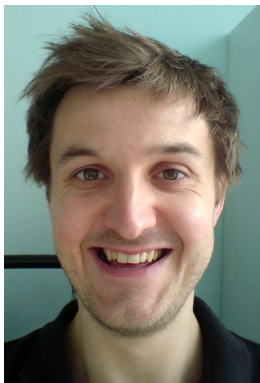
For more information, please contact me, either in person or at the address/email above, or my project supervisors (below).

Project Supervisors

Professor Michele Burman Email: m.burman@lbss.gla.ac.uk Tel: 0141 330 6983

Dr Susan Batchelor Email: s.batchelor@socsci.gla.ac.uk Tel: 0141 330 6167

SCCJR, Florentine House, 53 Hillhead Street, University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12 8QF.

*A2: Information Poster: Participant-Observation at Langview Youth Project***RESEARCH PROJECT—‘GROWING UP IN GLASGOW 2008’**

As well as being a volunteer at Langview Youth Project, I am also a student at Glasgow University, doing research on what it is like for young people to grow up in Glasgow—good things, bad things, things you would change. A lot is said in the media about young people in Glasgow, about gangs and ‘neds’, but I want to find out what things are really like. You can help by:

- Taking part in one of the discussion groups I will be running; or
- Talking to me informally about your opinions and experiences; or
- Writing a note, or leaving a message for me with another member of staff.

I will be keeping some notes on some of the things that go on at LYP over the next few months, though I won’t take notes on anything you don’t want. Also, Everything I see, hear or am told will be private and confidential (except if you said that you or someone else were in danger. I won’t tell anyone the names of young people that took part in the research.

If you have any questions, please ask!

A3: Information Letter: Participant-Observation at Langview Youth Project

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am writing to you as we have your details on record as being the parent/guardian of a child or young person who attends Langview Youth Project on a regular basis.

I am a volunteer youth worker at LYP, and have been working there since April 2007. I am also a student at Glasgow University, doing research for a postgraduate degree on young people's understandings, opinions and experiences of their local community. To assist me in my research, I would like to keep a record of some of the conversations I have with young people (aged 8 and over) attending LYP over the next 12 months. This letter is intended to give some information about the research, and address some key issues.

A lot is said in the media about young people in Glasgow—about youth 'gangs', territorialism, and anti-social behaviour by young people. My research is concerned with what young people think about these issues, what experiences they have had, how this has impacted on them, and their thoughts and opinions on all of this. The key aim of the research is to challenge some of the stereotypes about young people in Glasgow, and to highlight some of the realities of growing up in Glasgow today. I want to gain an in-depth understanding of these issues from the perspectives of young people themselves to ensure that any findings are based on real life, and in context.

Over the next 12 months, I would like to record some details of some of the conversations I have with young people attending the project—experiences they have had, opinions on the community, things they like, things they don't. Whether or not certain details or opinions will be recorded will be decided with the individual young person. Any record kept will have the names of individuals, the youth project and the area fully anonymised, so that no individual can be identified.

The LYP Board of Directors and Project Manager have given consent to the research being carried out with young people attending the park. If, however, you do not wish your child to participate, or wish to find out more, there will be an information evening at LYP on _____, where there will be opportunity to ask questions or raise potential problems.

Alternatively, I can be contacted via email (a.fraser.1@research.gla.ac.uk), phone (0141 330 8416), or in person on Monday or Tuesday nights at LYP. There will also be an information session for children and young people on the same night, at 6pm.

Yours faithfully,

ALISTAIR FRASER

A4: Discussion Groups: Information Sheet and Consent Form

Dear Participant,

RESEARCH PROJECT: YOUNG PEOPLE, CRIME AND COMMUNITIES

Introduction

I am a researcher based at Glasgow University, interested in young people's understandings, opinions and experiences of their local community. A lot is said in the media about young people in Glasgow—about gangs, neds, territorialism, and anti-social behaviour—and I want to know what you think about these issues, what experiences you have had, and how this has impacted on you.

The Project

We will be running a series of six discussion groups around issues of community, gangs and territorialism, in an interesting, fun and interactive way; with DVDs, games, maps of the local area, posters, photo-diaries and talks from outside agencies. The sessions will be organised around what you want, and what you think—I am really interested in your ideas, opinions, and experiences. To make it easier for me to remember what has been said, the discussions will either be tape or video-recorded.

What will be I be asked to do?

Attend LYP at the times scheduled for the discussion groups. The groups will last 60-90 minutes, and will take place weekly over six weeks.

What will I get from it?

The chance to learn something about your area, put across your views, be listened to, and to come up with creative solutions to local issues. Whether you do or do not want to participate, however, this won't affect your access to LYP.

Who will be involved?

Ali Fraser will organise and run the sessions, which will be open to 8-12 young people, aged 12 and above.

Confidentiality

Everything you write down, say, or do will be treated as confidential and private (except if you said that you or someone else were in danger, or were breaking the law). When I report on the research no one will know your name or the name of the youth group that took part in the research. You can drop out of the research at any time.

What To Do Next

If you would like to be involved - this is what you should do:

First, fill in the top of the consent slip which says: **YOUNG PERSON** and sign it

Second, take the letter and consent slip home for your parents/guardian to sign

Third, bring the consent slip back to LYP.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me any time.

Yours sincerely,

ALISTAIR FRASER

Dear Parent/Guardian

RESEARCH PROJECT: YOUNG PEOPLE, CRIME AND COMMUNITIES

Introduction

I am a researcher based at Glasgow University, interested in young people's understandings, opinions and experiences of their local community, and the wider world. A lot is said in the media about young people in Glasgow—about gangs, neds, and anti-social behaviour—and I want to find out how young people themselves think about these issues. In particular, I am interested in giving young people a voice in a debate that normally excludes them, and looking for ways to think about these issues in a positive and creative way.

The Project

The idea is to run a series of voluntary discussion groups around key themes of the research, in a way that is interesting, stimulating, and beneficial to everyone involved. Though the discussions will be organised and coordinated by staff, the focus will be on young people speaking in their own words, on their own terms. To facilitate this, a range of interactive learning tools will be used. If everyone is comfortable with this, to make it easier for me to remember what has been said, the discussions will be either tape or video-recorded.

Aims

- To encourage young people to think about their role in the local community
- To build confidence in young people to express opinion and challenge stereotype
- To support young people in exploring the myths and realities about gangs
- To engage with young people to devise creative solutions to problems.

What this would mean for your son/daughter

Taking part in a series of 6 discussion groups, lasting 60-90 minutes each, around issues of community, gangs and territorialism. He/she is free to drop out at any time. Whether or not they participate, however, this won't affect their access to LYP.

Your Permission and Confidentiality

We need your consent for your son/daughter, if he/she wishes to take part. **Please fill in the attached consent slip for your son/daughter to return to LYP.** Anything your son/daughter says will be treated as confidential (except where a boy/girl told us he/she or someone else was in danger, or breaking the law). When we report on the research no one will know your son/daughter's name, or the name of any of the groups that took part in this research project.

If you require further details about any aspect of this research please contact me at the number below. I would be more than happy to answer any questions you may have.

Yours sincerely,

ALISTAIR FRASER

CONSENT FORM: 'YOUNG PEOPLE, CRIME AND COMMUNITIES'

Part A – to be filled in by young person

Part B – to be filled in by parent/guardian

NOTE - If you want to take part in this research project you must sign Part A and get your parent or guardian to sign part B, and returned to LYP.

Part A - FOR YOUNG PERSON

(PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS)

Your name:

Your date of birth:

I consent to participate in group discussion for the 'Young People, Crime and Communities' project.

I do/do not consent to the discussion being audio or video-taped.

I understand that any information I give will be kept confidential, and that in the event of publication of data my name will be made anonymous.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Part B - FOR PARENT/GUARDIAN

(PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS)

Your name:

Your relationship to child:

I consent to my child participating in group discussion for the 'Young People, Crime and Communities' project.

I do/do not consent to the discussion being audio or video-taped.

I understand that any information I give will be kept confidential, and that in the event of publication of data my child's name will be made anonymous.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

*A5: Advice and Support Information Sheet***Children and Young People – Advice and Support**

Listed below are some helplines and websites where children and young people can get information, advice and support.

- **SupportLine Telephone Helpline: 020 8554 9004**, email info@supportline.org.uk
- Provides emotional support and information relating to other helplines, counsellors and support groups throughout the UK including helplines and face to face for young people.
- **Brook Young People's Information Service: 0800 0185 023**, www.brook.org.uk - Information, support and signposting service for young people under 25 on sexual health. Centres throughout the UK offering free contraception, pregnancy testing and counselling.
- **Childline: 0800 1111**, email info@childline.org.uk, www.childline.org.uk, - Emotional support for children and young people on issues relating to child abuse, bullying etc.
- **Eighteen and Under: 0800 731 4080** (Scotland), www.18u.org.uk - Support, information and helpline for young people under 18 who have experienced any type of abuse.
- **Get Connected: 0808 808 4994**, email help@getconnected.org.uk, www.getconnected.org.uk - Free telephone and email helpline which can connect a child or young person to any UK helpline where appropriate.
- **Macmillan Youth Line: 0808 808 0800**, www.macmillan.org.uk, email youthline@macmillan.org.uk - Macmillan supports young people (aged 12 to 21) who are affected by cancer – either that of a family member or if they are ill themselves.

- **NSPCC Child Protection Helpline:** 0808 800 5000, www.nch.org.uk – National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children helpline is a free national 24-hour service that provides counselling, information and advice.
- **Samaritans:** 0845 790 9090 (Republic of Ireland - 1850 60 90 90), email jo@samaritans.org, www.samaritans.org - 24hr service offering emotional support.
- **Sexwise:** 0800 28 29 30, www.ruthinking.co.uk - Helpline providing information, advice and guidance for young people aged 12-18 on sexuality and sexual health. Issues dealt with include contraception, pregnancy, family planning clinics, sexually transmitted diseases, peer pressure and relationships.
- **Talk Don't Walk:** 0800 085 2136 - Support and advice for young people who have run away from home or are thinking of running away from home or care.

A6: Session Plans for Discussion Groups – Langview Youth Project

Overview

The proposed discussion groups are intended to explore participants' attitudes, opinions and experiences of their local community, gang behaviour and territorialism. The focus of the discussion groups is to allow participants space to explore ideas and experiences in a creative and supportive environment.

Week One – Introduction

A guest speaker will introduce the topic to young people (aged 12-16) attending LYP, by delivering the Strathclyde Police DVD 'As It Is'. I will deliver a short presentation after this input advertising the discussion groups. It will be emphasized that though anyone is welcome to attend, numbers are limited. However, dependent on interest, further groups may be run.

Aim of Session: To introduce the research to all young people attending the project, to give the opportunity to decide whether or not they wish to participate.

Week Two – Space, Territory and Community

This session will revolve around young people's perceptions of their local area, and community; establishing where time is spent in the local area; where in the surrounding area is seen as 'safe' and 'unsafe', at what times, and the reasons for this. In addition, the nature and purpose of the research will be explained in more detail, covering issues of consent, withdrawal, and confidentiality.

Session Plan

Icebreaker—Walking Trust Circle

Definitions exercise—territory and community

Mapping exercise

Photo-Diary, Stage One (Cameras distributed)

Aim of Session: To explore young people's interpretations and use of their local area, identifying potential problems and solutions.

Week Three – Risk, Security and Identity

This session will focus more explicitly on the 'dangerous' areas identified during the previous week, and the ways in which participants adapt their behaviour as a result of perceived danger. This will be used as a basis for discussing conflicts with neighbouring areas, and gang behaviour more generally.

Session Plan

Photo-Diary, Stage Two (Cameras returned)

Icebreaker—Sharks

Groupwork Exercise—'Taking a Risk'

Groupwork Exercise—'Where Do You Stand?'

[If there is time] 6. Roleplay Exercise—'Red Flags'

Aim of Session: To explore participants understandings of risk and security in their local area.

Sample questions:

Do you know people from areas around Langview?

Do you know people from other areas who fight?

Who fights with who? Where and when?

How do you know about this?

Week Four – People, Places and Objects

In this session, photographs from the photo-diaries will form the basis for discussion. Participants will be asked to give short presentations on the reasons why they took pictures of certain people, places and objects. The differences and similarities between participants' pictures will be used to discuss the importance of people, places and objects in participants' lives.

Session Plan

Display of photo-diaries

Short individual presentations on themes from photos, inc. questions.

Identification of common themes

Discussion of themes in relation to points from earlier weeks.

Leisure diaries distributed.

Aim of Session: To explore participants understandings of risk and security in their local area, and locate understandings and experiences of gang behaviour in that context.

Week Five – Leisure, Boredom and Time

This session will focus on participants leisure time; focusing on discussion of the leisure diaries participants have filled in during the previous week.

Sample questions

Describe average day/week

What do you like to do? Food; film; TV; computer games; other games; sport; clothes.

Time spent on each?

Aim of session: To explore participants leisure activities; time spent in different activities.

Week Six – Gangs, Groups and Group Identity

This session will focus more explicitly on the understandings and experiences of participants of gang behaviour in the local area. Discussion will centre on the definition of a gang, the difference between a gang and a group, and the ways in which young people are perceived by others (e.g. the community, the police).

Mapping gang territories

Mapping physical space (from book); room as Langview

As a group, work out different territories; mark on map; how are these territories known; how are they communicated; how big are the areas.

Week Seven – Citizenship

A friend of mine is training to be a photographer, and has a project to do on the subject of ‘Citizenship’. She has asked me if she could involve some of the young people I work with, and I was wondering 1) if you would be interested, and 2) if you had any ideas about what sort of thing you’d like to do for the photos. For this reason, the subject of this week’s discussion will be CITIZENSHIP.

1) First of all, have you heard the word citizen, or citizenship, before?

Word association on paper for the word CITIZENSHIP

2) Citizenship involves being an active member of a society, holding certain rights, and fulfilling certain responsibilities to themselves and others in that society—for example the right to vote, and the responsibility to jury duty, pay taxes etc. On a local level, however, citizenship can mean helping out in your community in some way, or taking either individual or group responsibilities within the community—for example volunteer work, or helping a friend, or taking responsibility for your friends or your community.

3) Is citizenship important to you? Why/why not?

4) What makes a good citizen? What makes a bad citizen?

Divide paper up into two sections: good and bad.

5) Do you think that you do anything that makes you a good citizen?

6) What would you like to see photographed in your local area as examples of citizenship, or where would you like to be photographed in front of? Any ideas?

Week Eight – Sectarianism, Football and Supporters

Previous Sunday: group went to see ‘Singin I’m No A Billy He’s a Tim’

Thoughts and opinions on the play. What was it trying to say?

Writing exercise

Team supported – why, for how long, friends/family, going to games.

Discussion – sectarianism; items from play (toilet roll, football top); newspaper articles; songs (content – reasons); Donald Finlay. 90 minute bigots.

Discussion – experiences of sectarianism; positives and negatives of being a fan; swap shirts.

A7: Session Plan for Discussion Group – Langview Academy

Mapping Space, Community and Gangs

Introduction

Anonymity; confidentiality; trust; confidentiality between participants; limiting guarantee of confidentiality; don't have to answer; can speak to me later in confidence if not happy about speaking in front of group.

Mapping Exercise

Where do you/friends/family live? [MARK ON MAP]

Probe: In area/out of area; close by; far to walk.

Where do you like to go in your area? [MARK ON MAP]

Probe: quiet/noisy; friends/family; services; parks etc

What are the good things about your area?

Where do you not like to go in the area? [MARK ON MAP]

Probe: Danger; day/night; weekdays/weekends; with friends, family/alone

What are the bad things about your area?

Are there boundaries between your area and other areas? [MARK ON MAP]

Probe: What and where; experiences

Gangs

What do you understand a gang to be? Is it any different to any other group of friends? How?

Are there any gangs in your area? What are they like? Who is involved in them? Why do people join gangs?

Have you ever been challenged on the basis of a gang/area identity? What did you do? How did you feel?

Have you ever been involved in any gang-fighting, either watching or participating? What was it like? Why did you do it? How did it make you feel?

Why do you think that you didn't get involved? [or] How did you stop being involved?

B1: Glossary

Aboot: about
 Ae: of
 Aff: off
 Ah: I
 Ah'd: I'd
 An: And
 Auld: old
 Aye: yes; always
 Batter: to physically assault
 Belter: something good or pleasing
 Billy: supporter of Rangers Football Club
 Boay: boy
 Bottle it: lose confidence in your ability to do something
 Brithers: brothers
 Buzz: thrill, rush, good feeling
 Cannae: cannot, can't
 Cault: called
 Chuffed: happy
 Clenny: cleaner
 Couldnae: could not, couldn't
 Da: father
 Dae: do (sometimes: don't)
 Daein: doing
 Deck it: fall over
 Deid: dead
 Didnae: did not, didn't
 Dinnae: do not, don't
 Doesnae: does not, doesn't
 Doing: physical assault
 Doon: down
 Edgy: danger
 Fae: from
 Faw: fall
 Fur: for

Gaun: going; gone

Gemmie: (of an individual) aggressive, fearless, violent, defiant

Gie: give

Gonnae: going to

Hame: home

Hard: tough, aggressive

Heavy: very

Heid: head

Hud: hold

Hunners: hundreds; a lot of.

Jaiket: jacket

Ken: to know, to understand

Kiddin oan: just joking

Kin: can

Lassie: female

Ma: my; mum

Mad with it: drunk or drugged, intoxicated

Mair: more

Maist: most

Menchies: mentions, of friends (often in graffiti)

Mess wi'

Mind: remember

Nae: no

Name: reputation (e.g. for violence, sexual promiscuity)

Nane: none

Naw: no

Neds: derogatory term for young Glaswegians

Nick: steal

Noo: now

Nuttin: nothing

O: of

Patter: talk

Polis: police

Poof: homosexual

Pull up: to be stopped by the police

Pure: absolutely, very

Raging: angry

Roon: round

Sair: sore

Scheme: council housing estate

Shite yourself: to be terrified

Slag: to insult

Snap: tackle aggressively (in football)

Square up: to take an aggressive position, prepare to fight

Tae: too

The pictures: cinema

Thegither: together

Tim: supporter of Celtic Football Club

Toaty/toaties: small; young.

Trackies: tracksuit bottoms

Wan: one

Wasnae: was not, wasn't

Well kent: well known

Wid: would

Wis: was

Wur: our

Ye: you

Yir: your

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Feature Films

- A Sense of Freedom* (1979) (Director: John Mackenzie, Writer: Jimmy Boyle and Peter McDougall, Producer: Jeremy Isaacs, Raymond Day)
- Gregory's Girl* (1981) (Director and Writer: Bill Forsyth, Producer: Davina Belling, Clive Parsons)
- Local Hero* (1983) (Director and Writer: Bill Forsyth, Producer: David Puttnam)
- Neds* (forthcoming) (Director: Peter Mullan)
- Ratcatcher* (1999) (Director and Writer: Lynne Ramsay, Producer: Gavin Emerson)
- Red Road* (2007) (Director: Andrea Arnold, Writer: Andrea Arnold, Anders Thomas Jensen, Lone Scherfig, Producer: Carrie Comerford)
- Small Faces* (1996) (Director: Gillies MacKinnon, Writer: Billy MacKinnon, Gillies MacKinnon, Producer: Billy MacKinnon, Steve Clark Hall)

Television Series

Chewin' The Fat (1999-2002) (Director: Brian Horsburgh, Writer: PB McBeath, Iain Davidson, Robert Florence, Greg Hemphill, Ford Kiernan)

Rab C Nesbitt (1988-1999) (Director: Colin Gilbert, Writer: Iain Pattison)

Taggart (1983-present) (Director: Lawrence Moody, Richard Holthouse, Writer: Glenn Chandler, Barry Appleton, Producer: Robert Love, John G Temple).

The Wire (2002-2008) (Creator: David Simon, Executive Producers: David Simon, Robert F. Colesberry (Seasons 1-3), Nina Kostroff Noble (Seasons 3-5))

Documentary sources

Channel Five (2005) *MacIntyre Uncovered*; Broadcast 19/04/2005.

BBC (2010) *Revealed: Glasgow's Gang War*; Broadcast 12/06/2010.

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